A large part of our activity at the UW SRC over the past six months has concerned the running of the third Kitchener-Waterloo Metropolitan Area Survey. The 2003 KWMAS was notable for the strong participation from local agencies comprising two branches of the Regional Government of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo, The John Howard Society, and THS Associates, a local environmental engineering firm. Two faculty members (from UW and U of Guelph) had questions in the survey. In addition, two graduate students from UW and one from WLU participated, witnessing work on the survey for question space. The survey this year was a partnership between the UW SRC and the Laurier Institute for Studies in Public Opinion Polling (LISPOP) represented by Steve Brown from WLU Political Science.

Call for (very short) papers: If you have experiences, tips, small methodological experiments to do with survey research, too minor to warrant a full journal publication, perhaps we can use them in this Newsletter. We are not quite the equivalent in stature to Public Opinion Quarterly or the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, but the dissemination of information about survey practice with a local angle could be useful to the local research community in this area. We would be looking for pieces with somewhat less detail than a research note in a journal. If you have a page or two write-up that seems appropriate, contact John Goyder (Sociology, UW).

Room change: The Survey Research Centre office is now located in Room 6127, just outside the telephone lab, still in the MC building. Fiona Heath's extension remains 3671.

Southwestern Ontario Research Data Centre (SWORDC) News

SWORDC Session for Graduate Students, held at the University of Waterloo, 3rd Oct., 2003

We had good turnout for this event, which repeated a similar presentation held last year. We intend to conduct such an orientation for new graduate students and new faculty members annually.

SWORDC Representatives:

UW: John Goyder [jgoyder@uwaterloo.ca],
Keith Warner [wmar@uwaterloo.ca],
Fat Newcombe-Welsh [fatevercombel@uwaterloo.ca]
WLU to be named
UG: Be Wadsworth [be@sgsps.ca]
Brock U: Mohammed Dore [dore@adcm.com].
U Windsor: Cathy Maskell [cmaskell@uwindsor.ca]
SWORDC Mini-Conference held at the University of Western Ontario, 25th April, 2003

The conference this year was held in conjunction with Rod Beuker and his group at Western, who are in the process of forming their own RDC. Thanks to the UWO people for hospitality and assistance in mounting the conference. The program and abstracts for the Mini-Conference appear on the SWORDC website www.idc.uwaterloo.ca

Mini-Conference Photo Gallery
Pre-Contacts and Cash Incentives in a Telephone Survey

John Goyder
Department of Sociology, UW

Pre-contacting and the payment of cash incentives are well-proven techniques for improving response rates on mailed surveys. Such methods are less commonly applied in telephone mode surveys, for if the sampling plan is random digit dialing there is no name nor address to use for sending preparatory information to.

If, however, a sampling frame of names and addresses is used in telephone mode, encouraging results can result from applying knowledge of postal surveying. This became evident in fieldwork completed in fall 2002. Sampling was from the city directory for Kitchener. As part of a pilot test, an experienced telephone interviewer was engaged to make calls at 100 sample households from Kitchener. In an experiment, 50 randomly selected cases were phoned “cold”, without pre-contact, while the other 50 were mailed introductory letters which included a $5 prepaid in anticipation of co-operation. In the interests of economy, since the main concern was the experiment rather than the absolute response rate, only four calls per household were attempted, but these were carefully timed to optimize chances of achieving contact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Pre-Contact with $5 Cash Incentive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-contact (no answer after four attempts)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineligible (moved, deceased, wrong address)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentages</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion (complete/ all 50)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (complete/complete+ refusal+non-contact)</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the pre-contact and cash, there was just one refusal out of 50 cases. A benefit of the pre-contact showed in the rate of post office returns, accounting for six of the 50 in the pre-contacted group and, by definition, none in the control cell. Many of the 13 no answers in the cold call cell (compared to just 5 among the pre-contacted) would have numbered among those non-deliverables, often vacant houses or apartments. By pre-contacting, the interviewer was saved from making many wasted calls. The 12% (6 out of 50) post office returns is in line with similar losses when the municipal assessment records have been used as sampling frame.

Two percentage summaries are shown above. The completion rate is completions divided by all sample draws. This gives a raw success rate, with no differentiation of reasons for non-completion. Occurrences of post office returned, non-working number and cases where the person sampled had died were removed from the denominator in computing response rate. Here we are re-defining the sample frame to exclude those for whom it is logically impossible to co-operate in the survey (“ineligible”), and this is the most meaningful percentage. The 26 percentage point gap between pre-contacts with cash versus cold call is massive, by the norms of research on nonresponse. It is easily statistically significant even in this small pilot study (Chi-square = 5.888, 1 df, p < 0.03).

A response rate of 82% on a telephone survey comes near to the standards achieved by Statistics Canada. To encounter response rates in excess of 80% by university-based survey researchers, in a survey of the general public, one has to go back many years.
Comparing the two sub-samples across some socio-demographic variables, the people in the higher response
cell are, on average, older (at the .05 level of significance). They are also less educated and of lower occupational
status, although these differences are well short of significance in this small data set.

A limitation, of course, of the design is that the independent effects of pre-contact versus cash incentive are
unknown. However, from the 1988 KWMAS mailed questionnaire study we have the result that response from pre-
contacted cases receiving $5 was 12.8 percentage points higher than for non-paid but pre-contacted cases. It
therefore seems plausible that about half the 26 point advantage for the full-treatment set within the 2002 pilot survey
is due to the cash payment and half to the pre-contact letter itself. Additional corroboration for that interpretation
comes from another direction: Goldstein and Jennings (2002:612) reported on an experiment with pre-contact letters
on a telephone survey of registered voters in the State of Arizona. Here, with no cash incentives in the picture,
response was 11.7 percentage points higher with, compared to without pre-contact. Combining the two figures, 12.8
and 11.7, just about makes up the 26 points from the present experiment.

Work Referenced:


Acknowledgements. The study was funded by UW-SSHRC grant number 1990-500-105-0732-104226. Occupation coding
was by Fiona Heath, UW-SRC Manager.

SRC and SWORDC Speakers and Seminars

Held Last Spring (2003) Term:

On June 19th, François Brisebois, Senior
Methodologist at Statistics Canada, visited Waterloo
and gave a talk on the National Population Health
Survey (NPHS) and the Canadian Community Health
Survey (CCHS). Using a highly effective application
of Power Point, François reviewed the longitudinal
design of the NPHS, question content, weighting
schemes, analytical subsets. The CCHS, a newer and
perhaps less well-known cross-sectional rather than
longitudinal initiative by STC in the health area, is an
enormous study of some 150,000 Canadians from
ever 100 Health Regions, interviewed every two years
beginning in 2000-2001, with a smaller (to of around
30,000) but more topic-focused version planned for
intervening years. Printed copies of the slides from the
talk, or the Power Point version, can be obtained from
Pat Newcombe-Welsh (see SWORDC news, above,
for contact details).

François Brisebois
Scheduled for Fall (2003) Term:


All comers welcome.

This is a repeat of a session from last winter, and is aimed at graduate students although all are welcome. Pat Newcombe-Welch, instructor of the new course on longitudinal survey analysis (see below), will be there, and this will be a good opportunity to learn more about this winter 2004 term course. We are designing the presentation this year to be an entry point for people taking the new course as well, we hope, as having some stand-alone value.

Planned for Winter 2004:

Seminar on the 2003 KWMAS. Details TBA.

Courses

The SRC now offers three interdisciplinary graduate level courses in survey methodology: STAT 890 (Statistical Issues in Sample Survey Design and Analysis, taught by M.E. Thompson), SOC 697 (Practicum in Survey Administration, John Goyder), and the new SOC 719 described below. Each course is funded by the respective department.

New Course in Longitudinal Analysis of Surveys

The Department of Sociology at UW is offering a new graduate course entitled Longitudinal Survey Analysis. This will be held in the Winter 2004 term, meeting Wednesdays, 9:30 to 12:20, room TBA. The course number is SOC 719.

The course will be taught by Dr. Pat Newcombe-Welch, the Statistics Canada Analyst at SWORDC. This course is open to graduate students from all departments, so long as they have a reasonable background in social statistics, normally meaning some prior graduate level course in statistics or research methodology. STAT 890 is the ideal preparation. The course can be taken as an audit, for credit, or graded. It is the perfect preparation for anyone contemplating a thesis using one of the longitudinal data sets housed at the SWORDC. Students from the SWORDC partner universities are welcome. For details, or to discuss eligibility, contact Pat Newcombe-Welch at 519-888-4567, ext. 5304, or via e-mail to panewcombe@uwaterloo.ca.

Over page: SOC 697 and STAT 890 Class Photos, Spring 2003

(All names left to right)
Gordon Adefemi, Wen No, Sinem El-Saraf (Mas Sci), Heather Wiens, Julie Jozzi (AHS), Steven Svenson (Soc), Lisa Silbert, Becky Hodge (Mas Sci), Joanna Jacob (Soc), Nancy Pearce (AHS). (John Geylder, instructor, taking photo).