

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor will be confined to discussions of papers which have appeared in the Journal of Official Statistics and of important issues facing the statistical community.

### Reply

#### Survey Research Ought to Be Viewed and Practiced as Applied Statistics

Dear Sir,

Professor Dalenius's recent letter appearing on pp. 71 and 72 of Vol. 2, 1 of your *Journal* regarding

- (i) allegations of statistical quackery in the social, behavioral and liberal arts disciplines,
- (ii) lack of interest in university statistics departments in providing instruction on sample survey theory and methods, or as he puts it "survey research," and
- (iii) what amounts to considerable annexation of the area of sample surveys by sociologists,

raises a lot of questions.

The following facts on these matters may interest your readers. In January, March, or May of each year, the Institute of Mathematical Statistics publishes in its Bulletin the titles of approved Ph.D. theses submitted in the previous twelve month period, viz. June

through July. I have examined these lists for a span of ten years from July 1975 to June 1985 and have found that out of a total of 2 242 approved theses written in the universities of Canada, Sweden and the U.S.A., and a lone university in Israel, only 63 were on the subject of sample survey theory and methods. In a poor year there were only 2 sample survey theses out of 225, and in a good one 11 out of 234.

There is no smoke without fire. Despite the possibility of errors in these figures, it may very well be that many of the causes for (i) and (iii) lie in (ii). Whatever the nature of the root causes, however, while attempting to convince others that "survey research ought to be viewed and practiced as *applied statistics*," it would be equally appropriate to ask university statistics departments to give more time to the subject.

*Yours truly,*  
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