

Special Notes

The International Social Survey Program

The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) is a continuing, annual program of crossnational collaboration. It brings together pre-existing national, social science projects and coordinates research goals by adding a crossnational perspective to the individual, national studies.

ISSP grew out of a bilateral collaboration between the Allgemeinen Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften (ALLBUS) of the Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden, und Analysen (ZUMA) in Mannheim, West Germany and the General Social Survey (GSS) of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), University of Chicago. Both the ALLBUS and the GSS are replicating, time series studies. The ALLBUS has been con-

ducted biennially since 1980 and the GSS annually (except for 1979 and 1981) since 1972. In 1982 ZUMA and NORC devoted a small segment of the ALLBUS and GSS to a common set of questions on job values, important areas of life, abortion, and feminism. Again in 1984 collaboration was carried out, this time on class differences, equality, and the welfare state.

Meanwhile, in late 1983 Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR), London, which was starting a social indicators series (the British Social Attitudes Survey) similar to the GSS and ALLBUS, secured funds from the Nuffield Foundation to sponsor meetings to further international cooperation. A meeting was held in London in June, 1984 with representatives from ZUMA, NORC, SCPR, and the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. This group,

Table 1. Status of ISSP modules

Organization	Country	Role of government	ISSP themes	
			Social networks and support systems	Inequality
RSSS	Australia	planned 86	planned 86	planned 87
IS	Austria	underway 86	underway 86	planned 87
ZUMA	Germany	done 85	underway 86	planned 87
Eurisko	Italy	done 85	planned 86	planned 87
Tarkai	Hungary	-	uncertain	planned 87
SSUC	Ireland	-	planned 86	planned 87
SCP	Netherlands	-	uncertain	planned 87
SCPR	United Kingdom	done 85	underway 86	planned 87
NORC	United States	done 85	done 86	planned 87

RSSS, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University

IS, Institut für Soziologie, Graz University, Austria

ZUMA, Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden, und Analysen, Mannheim

Eurisko, Milan

Tarkai, Tarsadalomkutatasi Informatikai Tarsulas, Budapest

SSUC, Department of Social Science, University College, Dublin

SCP, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Rijswijk, The Netherlands

SCPR, Social and Community Planning Research, London

NORC, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago

soon to be christened the ISSP, agreed to 1) jointly develop topical modules dealing with important areas of social science, 2) this module would be a 15 minute supplement to the regular national surveys (or as a special survey if necessary), 3) include an extensive common core of background variables, and 4) to make the data available to the social science community as soon as possible. Each nation funds its own data collection and bears any costs that it incurred through participation in the cooperative effort.

Since its initial meeting in 1984, ISSP has grown to include nine nations, the original four – Germany, the United States, Britain, and Australia, plus Austria, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Hungary. Other countries are currently applying for membership.

ISSP's first theme was the role of government. This covered attitudes towards civil liberties and law enforcement, education and parenting the economy, and welfare and social equality. (See Table 1 for the timing and status of this and later modules.) The second theme was social networks and support systems. This consisted of a detailed account of one's contact with various relatives and friends and then a series of questions about where one would turn to for help when faced with various situations such as financial need, minor illness, career advice, and emotional distress. The third module, on social equality, is now being developed. Questions focus on equality of income, wealth, and opportunity. Respondents are asked for their perceptions of the extent of present inequality, explanations for inequality, and support for government programs to reduce inequality. The fourth module (1988) will deal with working women and the family, and the fifth (1989) with work and leisure.

In 1990 ISSP will repeat the role of government theme. By replicating substantial parts of earlier modules, ISSP will not only have a crossnational but also a time perspective. We will be able to compare nations and test whether similar social science models are valid for different societies. We will also be able to see if there are similar international trends and whether equivalent models of social change hold for different nations.

ISSP brings several new features to the area of crossnational research. The collaboration among nations is not spurratic or intermittent

but routine and continual. Although the international collaboration carried out by ISSP is more circumscribed than special crossnational research projects, ISSP makes crossnational research a basic part of the nation's research agenda. For further details contact the ISSP secretariat, Roger Jowell, SCPR, 35 Northampton Square, London EC1V OAX, England.

Tom W. Smith
National Opinion Research Center
Chicago, Ill.

The Methodology Research Center

In 1985, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in Chicago, Illinois, USA, established a new division, the Methodology Research Center (MRC) that specializes in survey methods research. NORC has always been especially concerned with methodological questions, and the MRC is intended to strengthen NORC's capabilities as a leading center for methods research. Most of the MRC's staff are faculty members at the University of Chicago and come from a variety of interdisciplinary backgrounds. MRC's director is Bruce Spencer, Associate Professor of education and statistics at Northwestern University and Sampling Statistician at NORC. The staff consists of eight research associates, two research analysts, and an administrative assistant. It is MRC's responsibility to do research and assist other parts of NORC in developing and implementing new methodology for all aspects of planning, executing and analyzing a survey. The following discussion of current MRC projects illustrates the type of work carried out at the center.

Research Associate Dariell Bock is currently working on basic and applied research in educational and psychological measurement. Topics include scaling, latent trait modeling, modern methods of factor analysis, adaptive testing, and the development and application of models for analyzing and reporting educational assessment data. These topics play a central role in a number of NORC's major surveys.

Under the direction of Research Associates Norman Bradburn and Roger Tuurangeau,

we are also studying the cognitive processes invoked when one responds to a survey question. This research involves the development and testing of theories of the response process. This work will contribute to our knowledge about contest effects, item wording effects, and affective carryover effects in survey questionnaires.

Another project is the development of a theory of diagnostic inference. This theory seeks to explain the causal processes that generate observed effects. This includes both the generation of hypotheses, i.e., we make sense of data, and judgements concerning the strength of evidence. The diagnostic inference theory is basic research on the psychological bases of causal judgements and the process people use to evaluate evidence. This research, directed by Research Associates Hillel Einhorn and Robin Hogarth, has implications for the analysis and use of data. Other projects deal with how complex sampling designs (stratification, unequal selection probabilities, and multistage selections) should be taken into account when making statistical inferences. We are also working on models of how data get used in public policy-making.

Other researchers seek to identify the environmental characteristics that help or hinder the learning of probabilistic relationships and to understand the processes by which people acquire and use information in probabilistic environments.

We are developing and testing a method known as "multiple imputation" that is used to impute values for missing data for item or case nonresponse. Multiple imputation has the advantage of reflecting the uncertainty inherent in imputation methods. This method is currently being applied to a large and important database, under the direction of Associate Donald Rubin.

In addition to these research activities, the MRC runs a series of workshops in cooperation with other research centers. The MRC also regularly consults with the NORC Operations Group about methodological issues in ongoing and proposed surveys.

Bruce Spencer
Northwestern University
Evanston, Ill. and
NORC

Call for Papers

First International Conference on Statistical Data Analysis Based on the L_1 -Norm and Related Methods

31 August–4 September 1987
University of Neuchâtel
Switzerland

The Site

Neuchâtel

A town of yellow stone, Neuchâtel was founded upon a hill that has been dominated by the castle and collegiate church since the twelfth century. Behind the town are the forests of Chaumont with splendid vineyards on both sides. From this vantage point Neuchâtel looks over the lake, the largest in the country to be entirely surrounded by Swiss territory.

Opening on to the lake is the market square with its charming market hall. An embankment of four kilometers stretches along the shores where families stroll, old people idle, and children romp.

University of Neuchâtel

Founded in 1838, the University of Neuchâtel is situated within a few steps from the lake. Though most famous for its French language studies, the University offers courses in most branches of science and accommodates students from over 25 countries.

L_1 -Norm and Objectives of the Conference

The L_1 -norm criterion can be applied in statistical data analyses as varied as estimation, model-fitting, (constrained or unconstrained), analysis of variance, hypotheses testing, cluster analysis, and nonparametric analysis. This criterion goes by a number of different names: minimum or least absolute deviations, errors, or residuals; and the L_1 -norm method (from minimizing the L_1 -norm of the vector of deviations). Historically, the L_1 -norm method was suggested and studied in simple models in the early works of Boscovich (1757) and Laplace (1793).

The familiar least squares criterion enjoys certain optimality properties for Gaussian parametric models and is, in fact, a minimization of the L_2 -norm. The lesser used minimization of the L_1 -norm is, however, a recognized

robust criterion for a wide class of distributions, especially well-suited for longer-tailed error distributions. Increasingly, the minimum L_1 estimator is recommended as a preliminary (consistent) estimator for one-step and iteratively reweighted least squares procedures.

Recently, considerable progress has been made in this field and a substantial amount of knowledge has been accumulated. This body of knowledge is, however, too dispersed. Thus, a concerted effort is needed to help organize what we already know and give coherence to this relatively new field. Therefore, the primary purpose of this conference is to bring order to our current knowledge and simplify the theory and thereby lay the ground for many new potential applications.

Program

The conference will take place over five days and will comprise Invited talks and Contributed papers. The following scheduled sessions and organizers are:

1. Historical Development
R.W. Farebrother
University of Manchester
U.K.
2. Computational Aspects
J. Gentle
IMSL
U.S.A.
3. L_1 Estimation of Linear Models
Jana Jureckova
Charles University
Czechoslovakia
4. Constrained L_1 Estimation
J. Dupacova
Charles University
Czechoslovakia
5. Tests and Diagnostics for L_1 Regression
R. Koenker
University of Illinois
U.S.A.
6. L_1 Analysis of Variance
J.W. McKean
Western Michigan University
U.S.A.
7. L_1 and the Analysis of Tables
W.L. Steiger
State University of New Jersey
U.S.A.

8. L_1 Cluster Analysis
P.J. Rousseeuw
Delft University of Technology
The Netherlands
9. L_1 Nonparametric Estimation
L. Györfi
Technical University of Budapest
Hungary
10. Statistical Packages
W. Härdle
University of Bonn
Germany
11. Applications
Y. Dodge
University of Neuchâtel
Switzerland

Invited Speakers

The following researchers from universities and industry have accepted to speak at the conference:

J. Antoch (CZ), L. Birgé (France), G. Bassett (USA), P. Bloomfield (USA), L. Devroye (Canada), J. Dupacova (CZ), R. Dutter (Austria), H. Eklom (Sweden), R. W. Farebrother (UK), A. Gaivoronski (USSR), J.E. Gentle (USA), L. Györfi (Hungary), W. Härdle (Germany), T. P. Hettmansperger (USA), J. Jurekova (CZ), L. Kaufman (Belgium), J. Kempermann (USA), R. Koenker (USA), J. W. McKean (USA), A. Marazzi (Switzerland), J. S. Marron (USA), S.C. Narula (USA), M. R. Osborne (Australia), S. Portnoy (USA), P. Rousseeuw (Netherlands), R. M. Schrader (USA), S. Sheather (Australia), H. Späth (Germany), W. L. Steiger (USA), E. Trauwaert (Belgium), I. Vajda (CZ).

Contributed Papers

Those wishing to present papers at the conference are asked to submit an abstract in English (limited to one typed page) no later than December 31, 1986 to the conference organizer. Notification of acceptance of the abstracts will be given by January 31, 1987. Contributed papers may be orally presented on any statistical topic related to the conference theme. Contributed papers on other statistical topics may be presented in poster sessions.

The Best Paper by Recent Graduates

There will be a special prize for the best paper from recently graduated students.

Opening Session

The opening session of the conference will be held at the University of Neuchâtel on Monday 31 August 1987. The opening lecture will be given by Professor C.R. Rao of the University of Pittsburg, USA, and the Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi, India.

Registration and Accommodation

All meetings will be held at the University Campus where accommodation and meals will be available at reasonable rates in the students residences. Accommodation will also be available in the inner harbour area at the Hotel Beaulac, Hotels des Beaux-Arts, Eurotel, City Hotel, Hotel Terminus, Hotel du Marché and Hotel de Chaumont (top of the hill overlooking the city, 1170 m).

Proceedings Volume/Computer Facilities

The North Holland Publishing Company will publish the conference proceedings. About 30

terminals connected to the System VAX/VMS will be made available, as well as a number of PC's.

Conference Fee

The conference fee will be \$100 U.S. which includes cost and conference proceedings and other related materials.

Important Dates

31 December 1986

Deadline for submission of abstracts.

31 January 1987

Acceptance notification of abstracts.

The program will be circulated in March 1987.

15 April 1987

Deadline for submission of final version of papers.

Address for Correspondence

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