

Surveys for Pressure Groups: a Contribution to "Survey Aid"

Jeff Evans

For some time now, Radical Statistics has had a Surveys for Pressure Groups subgroup. Recently, Dave Drew, the previous contact person, and myself have made contact with John Hosker, Deputy Director of the Consumers' Association, who is interested in promoting the idea of "Survey Aid".

Survey Aid involves the offering of help of various kinds by survey researchers and statisticians to consumer groups. This help includes: relevant information (data, reports); advice about the planning and execution of surveys; workshops. This is one of a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening the consumer movement in general. Others include Planning Aid (help in constructing and confronting planning applications); and local initiatives such as Common Cause, a network of over 50 local consumer and pressure groups in York.

In May, I met with James Fearnley, coordinator of Common Cause in York to discuss how the idea of Survey Aid, and inputs from Radical Statistics, might help groups within Common Cause, especially with their needs to produce dependable and credible information from surveys. We produced the following proposals:

- (i) providing a simple guide to the gathering of information through social surveys;
- (ii) presenting a pilot training workshop, if demand exists; and
- (iii) providing access to advice, if necessary.

On (i), I give below a list of available resources, so that a judgement can be made as to whether it is necessary to produce a further resource - or simply to adopt / adapt existing one(s). **Readers' comments on the appropriateness of these resources for the purposes mentioned, plus suggested additions, would be most welcome.**

Concerning (ii), John Bibby is currently gauging demand for a workshop in York. On (iii), James Fearnley suggested there should be a two stage process. The local group member seeking advice would contact a local Survey Aid coordinator who would deal with as many inquiries as possible; if necessary, more difficult inquiries would be referred to one of a list of available professionals. The suggestion is that this advice would be charged for only if a substantial amount of work were involved. **Volunteers for this sort of advice work are solicited, in the York area in the first instance.**

Initial list of available resources for survey research

Judith Bell, *Doing your Research Project*, Open Univ., 1987.

John Carr, *Survey Work: a Guide for Groups Planning Door to Door Surveys*, Age Concern Scotland, 1985.

Ariene Fink and J. Kosecoff, *How to Conduct Surveys: a Step-by-Step Guide*, Sage, 1985.

Eileen Kane, *Doing your Own Research*, Marlon Boyars, 1985.

Dave Phillips, *Do-It-Yourself Social Surveys: a Handbook for Beginners*, Research Report No.4 Survey Research Unit, Polytechnic of North London, 1981 (available from the Dept. of Applied Social Studies, University of NL).

M. B. Youngman, *Designing and Analysing Questionnaires*, Rediguide 12, School of Education, Nottingham University.

Various units in the Open University course DE304: *Research Methods in Education and the Social Sciences*.

Please send comments and further suggestions to Jeff Evans (1 Granville Rd., LONDON N4 4EJ; tel. (081) 348-5514).

Please send volunteers for advice work in the York area to Jeff, or to John Bibby (1 Straylands Gro., YORK YO3 OEB; tel. (0904) 424381).

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