

SURVEY SAMPLING. By Leslie Kish. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965. 643 pp. Tables and figures. \$10.95.

A few years ago the national press reported the results of a sample survey conducted by a well-known sociologist. These results contradicted some of the cherished beliefs about occupational mobility held by Americans generally; and so the trouble began. Our hero received letters and phone calls from truck drivers, clerks, salesmen, housewives—

from literally everyone. Most were critical. Many were openly hostile and ran to a discussion of deficiencies in his I.Q., character, and probable parentage. They cited data on their great uncle Max that contradicted his results. But a great many got right to the heart of the matter: they condemned the details of his sampling procedure.

We live in an era of inquiring reporters, market analysts, and opinion pollsters. Each man has become his own sampling expert. A set of—largely mythical—beliefs about sampling and estimation has developed and spread. Even sociologists are typically uninformed about any but the simplest sample designs. We often ignore questions of efficiency, bias, and the like. The net result is that surveys frequently produce equivocal results at a cost far in excess of that needed for the production of relatively precise answers to survey questions.

At least part of this problem stems from the fact that, until now, information on sampling was hard for most sociologists to get. Much of the available literature has been confined to journals that are exotic and difficult for the typical sociologist to read (*Annals of Mathematical Statistics* and *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, for example). Moreover, many of these articles are concerned primarily with derivations of estimators and the like; the adaptation of these estimators to specific survey problems is left to the reader. What has been lacking is a systematic comprehensive review of sample designs and estimators that is oriented toward the solution of practical survey problems. This is precisely what Kish has provided.

Kish is the ideal author for such a book. He is a sampling expert—in the true sense of the term. Moreover, he is a sociologist with a rich background of experience in survey research. This nearly unique combination of knowledge and experience provides Kish with a dual sensitivity. He is aware of both the range of problems that arise in survey work and the range of sampling procedures that can contribute to their solution.

The orientation of this book is practical. Procedures for sampling are introduced in the context of the types of questions for which they may be used to provide answers. Illustrative applications are described, and problems of estimating costs, precision, sources of bias, and the like for various sample designs are emphasized. The author's coverage of sample designs is exhaustive, his reasoning is clear, and his literary style is lucid and direct. Kish has produced an encyclopedic review of useful procedures for every conceivable kind of survey sampling problem.

This is not a book on the theory of sampling. Theoretical issues are, for the most part, avoided entirely. Only the simplest derivations are included, and broad methodological issues are put off until the last chapter. There, such topics as the utility of tests of significance in survey work, the Bayesian approach to inference, and the relative advantages and shortcomings of experimental procedures are raised. More extensive and elaborate

discussions of these questions might have been desirable, but the statements that are made are cogent.

In short, Kish has accomplished the task he set out to do. He has produced a practical handbook on sampling for survey researchers. It is primarily a "how-to-do-it" manual; but it is a good one and it meets a real need in the field of sociology.

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