

Social Surveys

Charlotte Greenhalgh

Historians who study social surveys consider some of the earliest forms of survey research, which is now a vital part of policymaking, reporting, and social knowledge. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, social survey researchers invited everyday people to participate in their research by inquiring about their lives directly in questionnaires and interviews. In doing so, social survey projects pointed to the value of the experiences and opinions of ordinary people and made them vital to intellectual credibility in the field. These developments point to some of the key 'social' features of the research, which persisted until the middle decades of the twentieth century. Social survey researchers pioneered methods of door-to-door research that made personal interactions part of the research process and helped to spread new ideas about social science. In their published forms, social surveys embedded statistical findings in detailed descriptions of the history, geography, society, and culture of the populations they studied. By the 1970s, strengthening commitment to evidence-based policy coexisted with criticisms of positivist social science that would eventually weaken its authority within the academy and in public commentary. At the same time, new patterns in the working lives of researchers and subjects made house-to-house surveys difficult and moved survey research into print, telephone, and online forms.

Historic social surveys compel the attention of scholars because they contain rare and revealing archival discoveries about the experiences, material circumstances, and attitudes of everyday people and experts in the past. Social historians read social survey questionnaires, budgets, and statistics to understand the lives of the people who participated, including working people, older people, and immigrant communities. Historians of science examine how and why survey directors selected particular research topics, categories of analysis, and methods, and consider the

legacies of their work up to the twenty-first century. In a recent strand of scholarship, historians and social scientists investigate the technologies, resources, and labour that produced some of the most authoritative social surveys and argue that, in the course of their social survey research, interviewers and research subjects co-produced vital historical data. The unequal nature of these exchanges underlines the influence of inequalities of social class, race, and gender over the development of modern social science.

I. The history of social surveys

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, a series of path-breaking social surveys built on the work of earlier social investigations including public health surveys, population surveys, urban statistical societies, and investigative reporting.¹ The directors of the earliest studies in the genre shared the concerns of journalists, statisticians, and religious and civic leaders who had long worried about the social and political effects of industrial labour and the expansion of cities. The Belgian government statistician Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874), for example, used statistics to discern ‘laws’ of the social world, while French doctors were mobilised by the 1832 cholera epidemic to investigate ‘social illness’ among the ‘underclass’.² Directors of social surveys used concepts and techniques that were first developed by these statisticians, reformers, and philanthropists. For example, Toynbee Hall Settlement, where middle-class reformers lived and worked among the poor in order to learn about their lives, shaped Charles Booth’s influential survey of London (1886-1903).³ Toynbee Hall was a ‘work station’ for Booth’s survey and provided its research team with collaborators, source material, and informants such as

¹ E.J. Yeo, 'Social Surveys in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in T.M. Porter and D. Ross (eds), *The Modern Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 83-99.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

³ S. Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform, 1880-1914: The Search for Community*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

businessmen, clergy, and tradesmen.⁴ Similarly, the Philadelphia Settlement co-sponsored W. E. B. Du Bois' founding social survey in 1896-1897.⁵ Du Bois lived in an apartment in the Settlement while he personally visited and interviewed 5,000 subjects in the city's Seventh Ward. His book *The Philadelphia Negro* was the first social survey of race in urban America and the first population study of African Americans.⁶

The earliest social surveys adopted the morals and methods of religious and reform movements that housed them. Many of their sources and terms matched those used by the charity reform movement—including casebooks that presented the life stories of people who applied for charity, and Booth and Du Bois' descriptions of the 'lowest classes' in London and Philadelphia as 'vicious' and 'semi-criminal' (see Figure 1).⁷ Like Booth, the Charity Organisation Society (established in 1869) aimed to rationalise charity by distinguishing 'who should receive help and who should not', a project that had dire consequences for working people.⁸ Du Bois' commitments to the principles of social science and neutral language were central to his innovations. Yet black colleges that employed the majority of African American researchers shared the aims of churches and schools to train exemplary citizens and contribute to racial 'uplift' in African American communities.⁹

⁴ R. O'Day and D. Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1993, pp. 12-13.

⁵ M.B. Katz and T.J. Sugrue, 'Introduction: The Context of the *Philadelphia Negro*', in M.B. Katz and T.J. Sugrue (eds), *W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City: "The Philadelphia Negro" and Its Legacy*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998, pp. 1-6, 23.

⁶ A. McDaniel, 'The "Philadelphia Negro" Then and Now: Implications for Empirical Research', in M.B. Katz and T.J. Sugrue (eds), *W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998, p. 155.

⁷ C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1, 9 vols., Poverty, London and New York: Macmillan, 1902, pp. 37-38.

⁸ T.R.C. Gibson-Brydon, *The Moral Mapping of Victorian and Edwardian London: Charles Booth, Christian Charity, and the Poor-but-Respectable*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016, p. 7. On the legacy of these reforms up to the twentieth century see S. Hussey, 'An Inheritance of Fear?: Older Women in the Twentieth-Century Countryside', in L. Botelho and P. Thane (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*, Harlow: Longman, 2001, pp. 186-206.

⁹ J.S. Holloway and B. Keppel, *Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in the Twentieth Century*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 11.

Booth and Du Bois were path-breaking researchers because they produced data in direct contact with subjects, rather than relying on expert testimony alone.¹⁰ Booth's study effectively demonstrates this change because it combined established and innovative techniques. Rather than visiting East Londoners directly, for example, Booth and his team (Maurice Eden Paul, Jesse Argyle, and George Arkell) interviewed London School Board Visitors, building managers, rent-collectors, and missionaries in order to classify every household in East London by social class and degree of want.¹¹ Booth judged School Board Visitors to be qualified informants because they produced an annual census of school-age children in their district, as well as investigating truancy and unpaid school fees. A team of researchers used the same methods to classify 13,600 streets across London between 1886 and 1891: Graham Balfour studied Battersea, Clara Collet did much of the interviewing in central London, and Argyle was responsible for London north of the Thames.¹² After 1891, however, Booth and his researchers adopted new approaches and they spoke directly to factory owners, workers, trade union representatives, and members of church congregations in order to document London's industries and religious life.¹³

The intellectual priorities of social surveys created particular employment conditions and social interactions on the ground among researchers and subjects. The scale of early social surveys typically required teams of researchers and vast resources. Booth, who was a wealthy shipping magnate, self-funded his project and employed 34 researchers, including two full-time, salaried positions.¹⁴ His ambitious survey created nearly two decades of employment opportunities in particular social circles, especially for 'the newly educated woman', 'the young ambitious

¹⁰ C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 17 vols., London: MacMillan, 1902; W.E.B. Du Bois and I. Eaton, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1899.

¹¹ O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, p. 44; C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. 1st Series: Poverty*, 4 vols., London and New York: Macmillan, 1902, p. 7.

¹² O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, pp. 44, 54.

¹³ C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. 2nd Series: Industry*, 5 vols., London: Macmillan, 1903; C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. 3rd Series. Religious Influences*, 8 vols., London: Macmillan, 1902.

¹⁴ O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, p. 10.

graduate', and 'intelligent clerks' who received training to analyse as well as produce data.¹⁵

Prominent members of Booth's team researched and authored discrete case studies, which filled two of the four volumes within the influential first series of the London survey on poverty.

Beatrice Potter, for example, wrote essays on the docks and on Jewish communities in London, and she co-authored a study of the tailoring trade with Arkell, who also co-wrote a section on women's work with Collet.¹⁶ Although the 17 volumes of the London survey were published

under the name of its high-profile director, only the final series on religion was written by Booth alone.¹⁷ The high cost of survey work that was met by wealthy businessmen and philanthropists

disadvantaged African American scholars, who were underfunded and who worked and published 'behind the color line' long after the end of formal segregation.¹⁸ This occurred even

as wealthy industrialists in the United States established the philanthropic Russell Sage

Foundation (1907), Carnegie Corporation of New York (1911), and Rockefeller Foundation

(1913) and began to fund and influence social research across the globe.¹⁹

Over the course of their study, Booth's team developed a system of semi-structured interviews

that shaped social surveys deep into the twentieth century. By the time of the third and final

thematic series, which considered religion in London, the team knew to write to research

subjects in advance of their interviews. Researchers delivered printed schedules of questions that

served as checklists to ensure that interviews covered the key questions of the survey and

generated coherent data. Their interviews lasted for around two and a half hours. During these

lengthy visits, researchers aimed to 'observe the interviewee very closely and make an assessment

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 59-95.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 173-198.

¹⁸ Holloway and Keppel, *Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁹ On some of the global dimensions of philanthropic funds see J. Collins, 'Creating Women's Work in the Academy and Beyond: Carnegie Connections, 1923-1942', *History of Education*, vol. 38, no. 6, 2009, 791-808; R. Glotzer, 'A Long Shadow: Frederick P. Keppel, the Carnegie Corporation and the Dominions and Colonies Fund Area Experts 1923-1943', *History of Education*, vol. 38, no. 5, 2009, 621-648.

of character' and 'reliability'. In this way, they produced standardised interview reports that recorded name, date, location, age, a thumbnail sketch of the interviewee, and 'mediated responses' to the questions that were asked, including ostensible 'direct quotations' that were paraphrased or recorded from memory.²⁰ Booth's emphasis on generating knowledge that was comprehensive (requiring surveys of entire populations) and objective (because it was produced through direct contact with subjects) created challenges of scale at every stage of the research.

The most influential social surveys were published as books that presented authoritative accounts of cities, populations, and social issues. Booth's early example set the standard for the wide reach and intellectual authority of published surveys. Contemporary reviewers pointed out that Booth's studies were impressive, but messy. In 1902, reviewer Charles Masterman wondered at the 'nine bulky volumes' with their 'mazes of statistics, ordered and classified, maps of picturesque bewilderment of colour, infinite detail of streets and houses and family lives'. George Arkell directed the production of a series of maps that colour-coded the streets of London according to their level of poverty, thereby communicating large amounts of data and their meanings at a glance.²¹ These poverty maps successfully presented the survey's novel and detailed data in ways that caught the public imagination, influenced Du Bois and Robert Park at the University of Chicago, and made them popular and recognisable images up to today.

Figure 1: One sheet of Charles Booth's map of London, which famously quantified the city's poverty street-by-street and in visual form. 'Map Descriptive of London Poverty, 1898-9', Booth/ E/ 1, Charles Booth Archive, London School of Economics Library, London.

The methods and presentation of social surveys changed during the early decades of the twentieth century when university-based researchers developed scientific sampling. In 1915, Arthur Bowley and Alexander Burnett-Hurst studied working-class households in four British

²⁰ O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, pp. 167-168.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

cities and demonstrated that surveying a representative portion of a population produced an accurate account of the entire group.²² Researchers no longer needed to visit every person or household in a population in order to produce broad-reaching and independent data. University-based researchers like Bowley, who taught statistics at the London School of Economics, authored increasingly streamlined accounts of their results. Published surveys now opened with accounts of the study's scientific methods and descriptions of its target populations, sampling, interview techniques, and degree of success in the field. Authors then zoomed out to provide comprehensive geographical, historical, and social overviews of the relevant region or population. Subsequent sections presented statistical results and analysis of the key questions of each survey. In the three-volume study of Merseyside (1929-1932) that came out of the University of Liverpool, for example, volume one introduced the region, volume two reported on unemployment and industry, and volume three identified local patterns of leisure, church attendance, charitable aid, and fertility.²³

During the 1920s and 1930s, researchers in the United States introduced a series of innovations in opinion polling, community surveys, and government funding that established American leadership in the field. The community survey movement, which aimed to encourage community participation in social surveys through exhibitions, tours, and contests, produced the greatest number of social surveys in the first half of the twentieth century, including the Pittsburgh Survey (1908) and the Springfield Survey (1914).²⁴ In Springfield, 900 volunteers contributed to an exhibition that attracted 15,000 visitors. The era of 'modern polling' began in the 1930s when George Gallup applied his method of a small, quota samples designed to 'mirror' the national

²² A.L. Bowley and A.R. Burnett-Hurst, *Livelihood and Poverty: A Study in the Economic Conditions of Working-Class Households in Northampton, Warrington, Stanley and Reading*, London: G. Bell & Sons, 1915.

²³ D.C. Jones and University of Liverpool, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, 3 vols., Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1934.

²⁴ J.M. Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 24.

population.²⁵ Political polling earned international attention and trust when three separate polls forecast Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1936 election victory. Gallup predicted the result based on a poll of just 1500 Americans, while *Literary Digest* magazine got it wrong despite running a postal poll of millions of telephone subscribers.²⁶ The United States government increased funding for social survey projects in the 1930s and ran the first National Health Survey (1935).²⁷

Social survey researchers claimed to provide an ideal format for global research through standardised methods, categories, and social theories that researchers could apply to any population. As a result, social surveys contributed to colonisation, decolonisation, and nation building projects in China, India, Egypt, and Hawai'i.²⁸ Research methods, personnel, and funding often travelled from the global north outwards, according to dominant practices of academic training, hiring, and funding.²⁹ For example, philanthropic foundations based in the United States provided considerable financial support for research in former and current British colonies and the Pacific. The Carnegie Corporation established a Dominion and Colonies Fund in 1926 to make countries 'more efficient, more professional and more scientific in their approaches to social and economic problems' and to strengthen cultural and political connections between Anglophone nations.³⁰ By 1934, the Carnegie Corporation had endowed

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 114-117.

²⁶ T. Osborne and N. Rose, 'Do the Social Sciences Create Phenomena?: The Example of Public Opinion Research', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1999, 377.

²⁷ M. Bulmer, 'Governments and Social Science: Patterns of Mutual Influence', in M. Bulmer (ed.), *Social Science Research and Government: Comparative Essays on Britain and the United States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 1-26.

²⁸ See for example T. Lam, *A Passion for Facts Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation State, 1900-1949*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011; N.B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001; B. Bush, 'Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire: The West Indian Social Survey, 1944-57', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2013, 451-474; T. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; C. Manganaro, 'Education for the Future: University of Hawai'i Sociology, Assimilationist Historicity, and the Making of Settler Colonial Culture', in W. Anderson, M.C.L. Johnson and B.L. Brookes (eds), *Pacific Futures, Past and Present*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018, pp. 224-238.

²⁹ T. Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850-1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013; C. Greenhalgh, 'The Travelling Social Survey: Social Research and Its Subjects in Britain, Australia and New Zealand, 1930s-1970s', *History Australia*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2016, 124-138.

³⁰ J. Collins, 'Creating Women's Work in the Academy and Beyond: Carnegie Connections, 1923-1942', *History of Education* 38, 6 (2009), 792.

the Australian Research Council, set up the Australian Council for Educational Research, and provided funds to found the New Zealand Council of Educational Research.³¹ In doing so, Carnegie established the key research organisations in these nations. In turn, researchers in Australia and New Zealand were keen to produce reliable data about standards of living in urban and rural areas that would be comparable to famous studies in the global north.³² The University of Melbourne social survey (1941-1943), which is the case study for this chapter, built on almost a decade of research activity in the Faculty of Commerce that aimed to understand local living conditions and refine statistical method in line with the latest developments in Britain and the United States.

The Second World War expanded data collection and analysis by governments across the globe. Pressing questions about the attitudes and behaviour of soldiers and civilians under wartime conditions required newly subjective measurements of people's opinions and feelings. The United States government, for example, surveyed military morale, used polls and surveys to investigate morale among civilians, and conducted up to 4,000 interviews to understand enemy morale in occupied Germany and Japan.³³ In Britain, where civilians were under direct attack, the government established the Wartime Social Survey in 1941 and completed over 100 studies by the end of 1944.³⁴ In Australia, the Commonwealth government provided significant funding to the University of Melbourne social survey and other studies on the condition that researchers aligned their work with the government's wartime priorities. Government involvement reshaped the field in the United States, where large numbers of academics participated in government

³¹ S. Macintyre, *The Poor Relation: A History of Social Sciences in Australia*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2010, p. 17; Collins, 'Creating Women's Work in the Academy and Beyond: Carnegie Connections, 1923-1942' p. 797.

³² See for example W.T. Doig, New Zealand Social Science Research Bureau and New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, *A Survey of Standards of Life of New Zealand Dairy-Farmers*, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research Bulletin Wellington: E.V. Paul, 1940.

³³ Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*, pp. 165-180.

³⁴ L. Moss, *The Government Social Survey: A History*, London: H.M.S.O, 1991; M. Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 195.

projects and developed new methods for attitudinal research. After the war, prominent United States researchers such as Samuel A. Stouffer reanalysed wartime survey work and published *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II* in four volumes.³⁵ By contrast, wartime data in Britain was covered by the Official Secrets Act and was not open to academic researchers, lessening its impact on the field.³⁶

From the 1950s, social survey research benefitted from increased government investment and elevated public status. During this period, new institutions for social survey work employed professionalised interviewers, who faced challenges including rising costs and reduced participation.³⁷ American researchers with wartime experience established major survey organisations including the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Colombia, the National Opinion Research Centre at the University of Denver, and the Survey Research Centre at Michigan.³⁸ The British Government Social Survey established the Family Expenditure Survey in 1957, the first of a number of influential continuous surveys in Britain including the 1958 National Child Development Study.³⁹ From the 1970s, trendsetters such as Jean Atkinson in the Government Social Survey fieldwork department introduced rigorous training and guides for interviewers, with new attention to consistent methods and the effects of their interactions with participants.⁴⁰ Yet social survey researchers encountered problems during the 1970s as skilled

³⁵ Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*, p. 217; S.A. Stouffer, *The American Soldier*, 2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949. C.I. Hovland, A.A. Lumsdaine and F.D. Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication*, Studies in Social Psychology in World War II, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949; S.A. Stouffer, *Measurement and Prediction*, Studies in Social Psychology in World War II, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.

³⁶ C. Marsh, *The Survey Method: The Contribution of Surveys to Sociological Explanation*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 34.

³⁷ R. Ayrton, *Time for a Revival? A Historical Review of the Social Survey in Great Britain and the United States*, National Centre for Research Methods Methodological Review Paper, Southampton: University of Southampton, 2017.

³⁸ Converse, *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*, pp. 268-373.

³⁹ F. Whitehead, 'The Government Social Survey', in M. Bulmer (ed.), *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 83-100; G. Hoinville, 'Methodological Research on Sample Surveys: A Review of Developments in Britain', in M. Bulmer (ed.), *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 101-120; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain*, pp. 203-204.

⁴⁰ Marsh, *The Survey Method: The Contribution of Surveys to Sociological Explanation*; J.M. Williams, *Interviewer Approaches*, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993.

workers proved unwilling to take on low-paid interviewing jobs, and fewer people were at home and available for interviews during working hours.⁴¹ Survey research increasingly shifted to postal, telephone, and online formats, where it encountered fresh barriers to participation.

During the post-war decades, influential researchers integrated quantitative and qualitative data and used social survey research to generate explanatory theories for social change. Social survey researchers working in the University of Chicago School and the Institute of Community Studies in London authored 'descriptive' social surveys, which investigated working-class family, kinship, and social mobility. Led by Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and Michael Young, researchers in these organisations presented their findings in statistical tables supported by quotations taken from interviews, giving numbers a 'human face'.⁴² Influential researchers from the United States academy, including Herbert Hyman, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Morris Rosenberg, championed 'explanatory' social surveys that identified and theorised causal relationships in social life.⁴³

As social survey research became increasingly popular, marginalised groups adopted its methods in pursuit of their professional and political goals. A series of influential surveys conducted by women working 'on the margins' of professional social science put women's paid work at the centre of public debate in Britain.⁴⁴ Viola Klein, the co-author of *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* (1956) and author of *Britain's Married Women Workers* (1965), relied on short-term research contracts and speaking fees into the 1960s, encouraging her to publicise her findings.⁴⁵ Likewise, Judith Hubback gave press interviews, television appearances, and wrote for the *Manchester*

⁴¹ P.H. Rossi, J.D. Wright and A.B. Anderson, 'Sample Surveys: History, Current Practice and Future Prospects', in P.H. Rossi, J.D. Wright and A.B. Anderson (eds), *Handbook of Survey Research*, London: Academic Press, 1983, pp. 1-20.

⁴² F. Tonkiss, 'History of Social Statistics and the Social Survey', in C. Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture*, 2nd edn., London: Sage, 2004, pp. 58-71.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ H. McCarthy, 'Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-War Britain', *Past & Present*, vol. 233, no. 1, 2016, 269-305.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 277-278.

Guardian and these activities generated keen interest in her book *Wives Who Went to College* (1957).⁴⁶ Precarious employment had long been a feature of women's work on social surveys.⁴⁷ At mid-century, the determined and creative responses of women like Klein and Hubback expanded public discussions of survey research and women's lives.

In 1966, a group of New Zealand women who were frustrated by the absence of reliable data on women's lives established a voluntary research organisation, the Society for Research on Women. By 1968, the Society had 1,000 members, mostly women who were caring for young children, who trained themselves in survey methods and conducted research in study groups around the country.⁴⁸ In 1972, the Society's first major study *Urban Women* displayed the group's interest in quantitative method, technical skills such as coding, and studies that were vast in scale and subject matter.⁴⁹ The research team conducted 5,400 interviews and their interview schedule asked 124 questions over 26 pages.⁵⁰ This was exacting work, especially for previously untrained volunteers, but many among them were convinced that the most effective intervention in women's lives was the expansion of this kind of social research.⁵¹ By the 1970s, however, social scientists working in the academy increasingly questioned the value of large-scale, quantitative research that did not make the kind of theoretical contributions that were prioritised by researchers working in the United States. Thus, in the forward to *Urban Women*, Professor James Robb of Victoria University praised the Society's grunt work rather than their intellectual contributions.⁵² Yet the Society continued to champion large-scale, quantitative research, alongside their smaller, qualitative projects, in order to generate comprehensive statistics about

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 288-290.

⁴⁷ E. Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*. London: Rivers Oram, 1996.

⁴⁸ E.J. Gawith et al., *Women Centre Stage: A Study of SROW and Its Research*, Wellington: Society for Research in New Zealand, 1993.

⁴⁹ Society for Research on Women in New Zealand, *Urban Women*, Dunedin: Society for Research on Women in New Zealand, 1972.

⁵⁰ History of SROW, p.3, Society for Research on Women, National Records, box 2, folder 9, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland.

⁵¹ Society for Research on Women in New Zealand, *Urban Women*, p. 4.

⁵² Ibid.

women's lives and equip women across the country with research skills and enthusiasm about the transformative power of social knowledge.⁵³

II. Historiography and social surveys

Social historians have examined social survey publications and data in order to learn about the lives of everyday people in the past. Kate Darian-Smith, for instance, has used data from the 1940s University of Melbourne social survey to understand the effects of housing shortages caused by wartime building restrictions and urban migration.⁵⁴ In doing so, Darian-Smith has evoked the texture and variety of domestic life in the early 1940s. The Melbourne survey provided a historical record of Melburnians' home ownership, rents, tenancies, and sometimes-terrible living conditions in substandard and condemned houses, shoddily constructed sleep-outs, lodging houses, and beds occupied in shifts.⁵⁵ Social workers and physicians had long worried about the ill effects of overcrowding for people's health and morality.⁵⁶ The Melbourne survey assessed these dangers by recording the size and function of rooms, establishing the degree of privacy and space inhabitants had while they slept, ate, and rested, and calculating the amount of overcrowding by a ratio of people to rooms.⁵⁷ The Melbourne survey also documented the burden of keeping households clean and in good repair—and washing and feeding their inhabitants—by counting the available kitchen, laundry, and bathroom facilities, and noting any dampness and vermin. Darian-Smith used this data to evoke the 'domestic drudgery' of the 1940s, when close to a quarter of households in the city had to go outside for

⁵³ M. Shields, *The Society for Research on Women: A Case Study of a Recent Voluntary Organisation*. Johnsonville: The Society for Research on Women, 1972, p. 12.

⁵⁴ K. Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 86.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-93.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

water, fewer than one fifth had hot water, less than half had a kitchen sink, and only 8 per cent owned a refrigerator.⁵⁸

The work of intellectual and cultural historians shows how researchers' selection of categories of measurement and classification shaped their findings, influenced public perceptions of social life, and affected the lives of the subjects of repeat investigations including working people and immigrants. Social surveys were not objective, despite their success in popularising exactly this idea. Rather, historic social survey data reveal how experts and everyday people contributed to intellectual and social life in new ways during the twentieth century, co-producing influential social science data in the process. Following these insights, cultural historians have analysed how the tools and presentation of social surveys represented social life and shaped public ideas and attitudes. Judith Walkowitz, for example, has identified the ways that the 'wilderness of figures' presented in Booth's survey of London invited his readers to imagine the city as 'a dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth' and contributed to fears about the dangers of urban life.⁵⁹ Claire Langhamer has examined written responses to Mass Observation surveys in order to understand how and why Britons' expectations about love, romance, and marriage changed across the mid-twentieth century, including in their responses to public events ranging from Princess Margaret's love affair with Peter Townsend to the cold war.⁶⁰

Historians and sociologists have combined the approaches of intellectual, cultural, and social history to ask how individuals and communities identified with scientific surveys across the twentieth century. Sarah Igo has analysed public responses to the survey of a 'representative'

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

⁵⁹ J.R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, London: Virago, 1992, pp. 31, 17.

⁶⁰ C. Langhamer, 'Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2012, 277-297; C. Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

American community dubbed *Middletown* (1929), Gallup polls, and Alfred Kinsey's sex surveys (1948 and 1953). In doing so, Igo charted the growing authority of depictions of the 'averaged American' and explained the process by which 'statistical majorities, bell curves, and impersonal data points came to structure Americans' social imaginations' in the twentieth century.⁶¹ Mike Savage has examined the political and cultural implications of evolving methods of British social research, from 'gentlemanly' observation to the collection of 'direct' accounts in questionnaires and interviews.⁶² Savage showed how sample surveys contributed to the remaking of the 'modern, rational nation' by replacing 'romantic' depictions of Britain, embedded in literature and history, with a 'statistical account' of its 'average' or 'ordinary' characteristics.⁶³ These studies have connected the development of new survey methods to the public adoption of scientific ideas and explored the consequences of these developments for twentieth-century culture and politics, ranging from the heightened significance of daily life to fresh perspectives on selfhood.

Historians have returned to raw survey data such as research notes, completed questionnaires, and interview transcripts in order to trace the effects of survey projects on the ground, sometimes rewriting the findings of influential surveys in the process. Post-war investigations of social class in Britain, for example, generated vast archives of surveys data and interviews that scholars use to identify the consequences of 'social science encounters' between interviewers and subjects.⁶⁴ Personal interactions were important to the development of mid-century survey research because the 'protocols' involved researching everyday lives were 'uncertain', and the 'terms' of each interview were negotiated on the spot.⁶⁵ By the time of John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood's 1962 Affluent Worker study, for example, many Britons treated a visit by

⁶¹ S.E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 6.

⁶² Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain*, p. 94.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁶⁴ J. Lawrence, 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in Early 1960s England', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2014, 215-239.

⁶⁵ Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain*, p. 5.

researchers as a special occasion that required best clothes, extra cleaning, and high tea, while others refused to let interviewers inside or attempted to continue watching television rather than responding to survey questions.⁶⁶ Even when conversations flowed easily, the class dynamics of these interactions shaped the findings of influential surveys.⁶⁷ During Goldthorpe and Lockwood's studies, for example, researchers and subjects each attempted to 'paper over' awkward class differences by 'disavowing' such social distinctions.⁶⁸ As a result, the researchers were mostly blind to the 'status consciousness, individualism and social aspiration' that Jon Lawrence has identified in their notes.⁶⁹ Likewise, the archived Family and Kinship study contain testimonies that 'run sharply counter' to Michael Young and Peter Willmott's central claim that life on the new council estates threatened to destroy the tight-knit family life of working people.⁷⁰ In the published study, Lawrence has concluded, the researchers 'muted' the voices of those who 'testified to the limits of community and kinship bonds' in inner cities and 'exaggerated' the 'alienation and anomie' of life in suburban estates in the service of their argument.⁷¹

These varied approaches to historical social surveys demonstrate their strengths as primary sources. Researchers' desire to engage their research subjects directly shaped social surveys from the late nineteenth century and generated archives of unique social information about people's lives, households, families, work, income, and beliefs. During the early decades of the twentieth century, researchers developed new standards of scientific research, attempted to generate consistent and comparable data, and published extensive contextual information about the successes and failures of these methods on the ground. By the 1950s, the growing popularity of

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 1-4.

⁶⁷ Lawrence, 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in Early 1960s England' p. 217.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 218, 223-228.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 218.

⁷⁰ J. Lawrence, 'Inventing the "Traditional Working Class": A Re-Analysis of Interview Notes from Young and Willmott's Family and Kinship in East London', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 59, no. 02, 2016, 574.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 593.

semi-structured interviews provided new opportunities for everyday people to share their opinions and experiences and to shape the social scientific and historical records. Historians have used the resulting archives to understand key developments of the twentieth century including the growing power of experts, new forms of participatory citizenship, and the cultural significance of information about everyday life.

III. Checklist

1. What were the intellectual, cultural, and political motivations for the survey?
2. Which categories and concepts did the survey use and how did they mix empirical observations with normative expectations?
3. What were the survey's key technologies and methods, such as observation, interviews, questionnaires, sampling, mapping, transcription, and tape recording?
4. Who produced the data? What was the nature of their training and employment?
5. How did participants respond to the survey?
6. How did researchers disseminate their findings? How did the public receive the results?

IV. Case study: The University of Melbourne social survey, 1941-1943

The designers of the first large-scale survey in Australia—a survey of households and income in Melbourne in the early 1940s—shared many of the ethical and scientific aims of researchers in Britain and the United States. While planning their survey, economists in the University of Melbourne Faculty of Commerce, overseen by Douglas Copland, made a rousing argument for the political, ethical, and pragmatic value of survey research.⁷² Soon after the outbreak of the

⁷² 'Note on the Problems of Economic Research, box 177, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest papers, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne (UMA).

Second World War, they described the ‘moral compulsion’ that drove their plan to quantify poverty, malnutrition, and inadequate housing, a collection of issues that were ‘a constant reproach’ to the Australian nation. The survey would serve political purposes, too, in light of the Australian government’s growing commitment to economic and social planning. Copland had already advised the state government of Victoria on responses to economic depression, thereby influencing the divisive and fiscally constrictive ‘Premier’s Plan’ (1931).⁷³ Yet the Melbourne economists argued that the aims of such social scientific research were ‘wider and more farseeing’ than the immediate concerns of civil servants. The Melbourne social survey, they believed, would contribute to international scholarship at the same time that it galvanised national action on social issues. A draft questionnaire, written in March 1941 by Gordon Wood and Richard Downing in consultation with Jean Hyslop, the director of social work education, proposed a broad inquiry into social life and its problems through questions on immigration, nutrition, crime, and alcohol consumption.⁷⁴ Vice-Chancellor John Medley anticipated that the survey would capture ‘social conditions in Melbourne’ and emphasised its scholarly credentials and access to those with ‘specialised knowledge and training’ who would form its steering committee.⁷⁵

However, during the Second World War the Commonwealth government of Australia intervened to transform the Melbourne survey. Copland had been seconded to Canberra in 1939 to become economic adviser to the Prime Minister, together with his faculty colleagues Downing and Lyndhurst Giblin. Wilfred Prest directed the social survey from March 1941.⁷⁶ That year, the

⁷³A. Millmow, ‘Douglas Copland and the Aftershocks of the Premiers’ Plan, 1931-1938’, *History of Economics Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2011, 25-43.

⁷⁴ ‘Social survey of Melbourne, the need for the project’; Jean Hyslop to Gordon Wood, 26 November 1940 box 70, 1963.0028, Faculty of Economics and Commerce collection; Jean Hyslop to Wilfred Prest, 28 March 1941, Box 26, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁷⁵ John Medley, letter of invitation, 21 March 1941; Jean Daley, Greig Smith, Betty Wilmot, Samuel Wadham, Ken Cunningham, Oswald Barnett, John Wall, Roy Douglas Wright, and Jean Hyslop, letters of acceptance, Box 70, 1963.0028, Faculty of Economics and Commerce collection, UMA.

⁷⁶ Letter, 18 March, Box 26, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

Commonwealth government's newly formed Reconstruction Division began to fund university research that served its wartime priorities.⁷⁷ The Division quickly became the major funder of the Melbourne social survey, outstripping contributions made by the University and local businesses. Accordingly, Melbourne researchers rewrote their survey to address the government's concerns over family budgets, changes to living standards, housing shortages, and the requirements of the labour market during and after the war.⁷⁸ To do so, the researchers introduced a second stage of the project that revisited households in the strategic western suburbs of Williamstown and Footscray—homes to much of the state's shipping and rail production, a defence barracks, and one of the largest munitions factories in the country—to collect inhabitants' views on the war and post-war society. Roland Wilson, head of the Reconstruction Division, reviewed the schedule and sent three pages of revisions that reshaped the final version of the survey.⁷⁹

The Melbourne survey forms display the combined influence of international scholarship and the wartime government of Australia. The boxes at the top and side of the sheet record data that fitted with long-established concerns about overcrowded and unhealthy housing, for instance by inquiring whether inhabitants slept in kitchens or living rooms. Researchers used methods of observation and measurement. Was the bath inside? Was there space to eat in the kitchen? What was the size of the property? Many of their queries answered the government's questions about family budgets and assessed the possibility of billeting in response to housing shortages. For instance, were people conducting businesses from their properties? And how many rooms were not in daily use? The central table of the schedule squarely addressed the government's concerns

⁷⁷ S. Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015, p. 69.

⁷⁸ Gordon Wood to Roland Wilson, 30 July 1941; 'University of Melbourne, programme of reconstruction research', Box 70, 1963.0028; 'Brief record of conference of representatives of Australian universities on reconstruction research', Box 70, 1963.0028, Faculty of Economics and Commerce, UMA.

⁷⁹ Roland Wilson to Wilfred Prest, 14 August 1941 and 4 September 1941, Box 26, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

by recording the makeup and earnings of households and by asking whether inhabitants hoped for new jobs and residences after the war.

Figure 2: One of over 7,000 completed survey forms. Survey 44, 23 July 1942, box 13, 1973.002, Wilfred Prest collection, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne (UMA).

On the ground, the Melbourne research reveals some of the gendered hierarchies of university research and employment in the first half of the twentieth century. The organisers of the University of Melbourne survey initially thought that infant and maternal welfare nurses, kindergarten teachers, or social workers would complete the necessary interviews unpaid, in the tradition of women's philanthropic and voluntary work. However, the city's nurses, teachers, and social workers each declined the offer of unpaid labour, citing their busy working lives and professional codes of conduct that emphasised confidentiality over data gathering.⁸⁰ Instead, the survey employed women connected to the university as students, graduates, and the relatives of academics.

Researchers collected the survey's data door-to-door during interviews with Melburnians who often needed to be convinced that the study was worthwhile, and that the interviewers were trustworthy. The contract interviewers, who were almost all women, were paid 2 shillings and 6 pence for each completed questionnaire, on a piecework basis and with no job security.⁸¹ Major challenges of their work included travelling long distances across the city only to encounter empty houses and uncooperative inhabitants. In September 1941, for example, researcher Agnes Young rode the train 30 kilometres from the centre of Melbourne to seaside Chelsea and used a bicycle to cover the long distances between houses that she was required to visit on the outskirts. She joked that she would have been better off riding a horse. One foggy morning she was lost in

⁸⁰ Helen W. Paul to Jocelyn Hyslop, 1 July 1941; Vera Scantlebury-Brown to John Medley, 21 June 1941, box 26, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁸¹ Gordon Wood to Johnson, 12 September 1941, box 70, 1963.0028, Faculty of Economics and Commerce collection, UMA.

the bush until two children redirected her. Over two days, Young reached 23 houses but completed only 15 survey forms.⁸² If she wanted to earn more, she would have to return to find the people who had not been at home.

The completed survey forms reveal Australians' attitudes towards social science, privacy, and surveillance in the 1940s. Some among the Melbourne sample responded enthusiastically to the survey for a mixture of personal and political reasons. Interviewing on Bell Street in the new suburb of Preston, interviewers met three particularly enthusiastic women: a 24-year old who was 'very amiable and anxious to help', a woman who hoped 'that the survey will bring higher wages', and another who 'was very willing to talk as she is lonely'.⁸³ On nearby Bowden Street, a husband and wife in their early 40s proved friendly and 'interested in the aims of the survey'.⁸⁴ In Mordialloc, however, a woman peered through a crack in her door to demand 'who are you anyway? Who sent you?'.⁸⁵ She slammed the door shut without waiting for a reply. In the early 1940s, the backing of the University of Melbourne did not necessarily confer authority on the project. One older man opined that 'never in his life had he heard of University helping anyone' and he 'could not think it likely to start now'.⁸⁶ Instead, many Melburnians assumed that the purpose of the wartime survey was to regulate housing, taxation, or benefits. Ultimately, two hundred and fourteen people refused to participate in the survey, and many others provided partial answers, a factor that made an additional 98 survey sheets impossible to code.⁸⁷

Responses to the survey split along lines of social class and income. Reflecting long-standing ideas about charity and means testing, people argued that researchers should survey other people

⁸² Agnes Young to Wilfred Prest, 21 June 1941, 1986.0024 Wilfred Prest collection, box 26, UMA.

⁸³ Survey 20, 9 August; survey 16, 12 August; survey 19, 12 August, box 16, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁸⁴ Survey 26, 18 August 1942, box 16, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁸⁵ Survey 141, 19 July 1942, box 22, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁸⁶ Survey 174, 2 January 1942, box 21, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁸⁷ 'University of Melbourne Social Survey', summary of preliminary results, 18 October 1943, Box 27, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

instead: the poor, people in the slums, and sometimes the neighbours.⁸⁸ Australian governments built means testing into social security and benefits so that, in affluent Toorak at least, people worried that they would have to take in extra borders or that their taxes would go up.⁸⁹ In middle-class Caulfield, a family were resentful that the Housing Commission had ordered improvements to properties that they owned, an intervention that ‘firmly decided’ them against participation in the survey.⁹⁰ By contrast, in the shipbuilding suburb of Williamstown a woman worried that participation in the survey would encourage the Housing Commission to condemn her broken-down rental, forcing her to pay more elsewhere.⁹¹

Archived survey sheets display the intellectual and political contributions of women who worked as contract researchers. Interviewers visited 7,609 addresses between September 1941 and January 1943. Ultimately, almost 6,500 of the forms were judged complete, reliable, and relevant to the study, and these were coded and used to produce preliminary results in the forms of tables and statistics. The organisers of the University of Melbourne survey left a number of the survey’s most difficult or sensitive inquiries to the back of the survey sheet and to the discretion of interviewers. In response, investigators were diligent in their note taking, especially in response to the requests that they comment on the reliability of the data and the state of people’s houses.⁹² Among the Melbourne researchers, Pat Counihan single-handedly completed over 2,000 questionnaires, including at the address in Northcote (Figure 2).⁹³ She worked hard to finish an average of eight surveys per day and pocket £5 each week. This income was an improvement on what she had earned when she taught at a Church of England Grammar School and allowed her

⁸⁸ Survey 139, 28 August 1942; survey 300, 2 September 1942, box 16; survey 129, 13 October 1941; 37 Park St Abbotsford; survey 186, 12 August 1942, box 22, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁸⁹ Survey 381, 24 November 1941, survey 409, nd.; survey 415, 21 December 1941, box 15, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁹⁰ Survey 172, 31 December, no year, box 22, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁹¹ Survey 200, 6 October 1941, box 20, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁹² ‘Instructions to investigators’, box 27, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁹³ B. Smith, *Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary*, Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1993, p. 177.

to support her husband, the artist Noel Counihan.⁹⁴ The survey also provided Counihan with opportunities to document exploitation of tenants and workers, which served her personal politics as a member of the Communist Party and aligned with her previous work for the Workers' Educational Association and anti-war campaigns in New Zealand.⁹⁵

On the back of her survey sheets, Counihan described the poor conditions of houses across Melbourne and detailed their broken windows, leaking ceilings, and verandas repurposed as children's bedrooms. At the address in Northcote, she recorded,

Interviewed wife—who has lost hand (burnt off). Head lives in Tasmania. Only comes home for holidays. He has miner's cough. House v. damp—mattresses bought recently have already rusted—clothes have to go out to air frequently to prevent mildew. Of 4 sons, only 1 has been accepted for army (he has not lived in house). Other 3 have bad coughs and were rejected because of bronchial trouble. Firm where son (32) works—used to make cawls and baby's rattles—now makes bullets. Son suspected to have diabetes. A v. old house in appalling repair. Foundations badly dropped—water pressure v. poor ... house not done up for years. Family can pay more, want a better house but can't get one. Landlord will do nothing.⁹⁶

Counihan was alert to the diverse causes of human suffering across Melbourne and she noted troubles ranging from financial losses in the depression to mental breakdowns, desertions, loneliness, legal disputes, spoilt children, and neglected gardens, with medical problems sounding a constant note of pain and expense. In the face of injustice, Counihan took the opportunity to name unethical landlords like King O'Malley.⁹⁷ Across dozens of the most shocking records, she repeated the phrase 'the landlord will do nothing'. With this understated observation, Counihan made thousands of survey forms testify to the common hardships she encountered across the city, the particular exploitation of tenants during housing crises, and the persistent unfairness of people's lives.

⁹⁴ Smith, 163

⁹⁵ 'Transcription of conversation between Nancy Radford (Hitchcock) and Pat Counihan (Edwards)', February 1994, MS-Papers-5695-1, Patricia Counihan Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; Smith, *Noel Counihan: Artist and Revolutionary*, pp. 153-155.

⁹⁶ Pat Counihan's comments on the back of the survey sheet in Northcote. Survey 44, 23 July 1942, box 13, 1973.002, Wilfred Prest Collection, UMA.

⁹⁷ Survey 81, 22 November 1942, box 8, 1973.0002, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

Despite researchers' efforts and the survey's striking findings that six per cent of Melbourne households earned less money than they needed to live—a figure that rose to ten per cent in the central city—Prest never published the survey's overall findings.⁹⁸ Three short articles appeared in the journal of the Economic Society of Australia.⁹⁹ The only monograph, which had limited circulation, described data collected from several hundred families who lived in the industrial areas of Footscray, Williamstown, and Sunshine.¹⁰⁰ Melbourne researchers had reduced the scientific value of the study when they compromised the sample—which was intended to be one in every 30 houses but became one in 60 houses in the affluent eastern suburbs—in order to re-visit Footscray and Williamstown on the government's behalf.¹⁰¹ Public interest in the research diminished as it narrowed to a study of family budgets and changes in living standards, despite the urgency of housing shortages across the country.¹⁰² The contrast between the Melbourne survey's achievements in the field and its failure to produce publications demonstrates how early forms of government funding created both new opportunities and fresh challenges for researchers. Ultimately, women working on low-paid contracts and everyday people across Melbourne produced the survey's key contributions to social science and history: those thousands of completed survey forms. The Melbourne survey's rich archive underlines the significance of popular participation in survey research and the intellectual contributions of its interviewers.

⁹⁸ 'University of Melbourne Social Survey', summary of preliminary results, 18 October 1943, Box 27, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

⁹⁹ W. Prest, 'The Present Number of Dwellings in Melbourne', *Economic Record*, vol. 19, no., 1943, 230-237; W. Prest, 'Rents in Melbourne', *Economic Record*, vol. 21, no., 1945, 37-54; D. Cochrane, 'Travelling to Work', *Economic Record*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1946, 199-121.

¹⁰⁰ W. Prest, *Housing, Income and Savings in War-Time: A Local Survey*, Melbourne: University of Melbourne Department of Economics, 1952.

¹⁰¹ 'University of Melbourne Social Survey', summary of preliminary results, 18 October 1943, Box 27, 1986.0024, Wilfred Prest collection, UMA.

¹⁰² Colin Roderick to Wilfred Prest, 14 February 1948, Box 20, 1973.0002, WP, UMA.

Historians read social surveys in different ways: for the data and information that they contain, for the resources, labour, and participation that produced these data, and for the empirical gaze and the categories that informed surveys and shaped their results. Historians apply these key methods to ask and answer a range of questions about social, cultural, and intellectual life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Surveys recorded structured, quantitative evidence about the material lives and experiences of large numbers of people in ways that advance our knowledge of everyday life and inequalities in the past. Social survey researchers authored detailed accounts of how and why they produced these data, opening windows onto the development, spread, and legacies of social science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Examining the research process of a survey—from design to publication, via interviews in the field—connects the intellectual history of social science to wider transformations in education, employment, and the role of expert knowledge in everyday life. When people participated in social surveys, they witnessed some of these changes first-hand, and many among them took the opportunity to speak back to experts and shape the historical record.

Select Bibliography

Bulmer, M., Bales, K., and Sklar, K.K. (eds), *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Converse, J.M., *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*, Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1987.

Gibson-Brydon, T.R.C., *The Moral Mapping of Victorian and Edwardian London: Charles Booth,*

Christian Charity, and the Poor-but-Respectable, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016.

Greenhalgh, C., 'The Travelling Social Survey: Social Research and Its Subjects in Britain,

Australia and New Zealand, 1930s–1970s', *History Australia*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2016, 124-138.

Holloway, J.S., and Keppel, B., *Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in*

the Twentieth Century, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Igo, S.E., *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public*, Cambridge,

Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Lam, T., *A Passion for Facts Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation State, 1900-1949*,

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Lawrence, J., 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in Early 1960s

England', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2014, 215-239.

McCarthy, H., 'Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-War Britain', *Past &*

Present, vol. 233, no. 1, 2016, 269-305.

O'Day, R., and Englander, D., *Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London*

Reconsidered, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1993.

Savage, M., *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*, Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2010.

Yeo, E., *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*, London: Rivers

Oram, 1996.