

The Social Survey Unit (SSU) is dedicated to building capacity in social science research through promoting the critical analysis of methodology, ethics and findings of social scientific surveys. Our primary activity – the Cape Area Panel Study – is breaking new ground in survey research in South Africa. Workshops hosted by the SSU have provided unique fora for the planning and analysis of longitudinal social science research. Our research fellows and student scholars are conducting important research in a range of areas.

Thinking critically about longitudinal research

The SSU hosted three workshops on longitudinal social science research, with a focus on panel studies where a panel of respondents is re-interviewed repeatedly over a period of time. In October 2001 we held the first-ever South African workshop on panel surveys, bringing together for the first time researchers from different parts of the country who were engaged in or were planning panel studies. In March 2002, a second workshop was held, in conjunction with the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI). The workshop focused on the use of surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, the official statistical agency) for longitudinal analysis. Presentations by StatsSA personnel were followed by critical presentations by a number of scholars and robust discussion. The workshop provided an invaluable opportunity for StatsSA, which spends huge sums on collecting survey data, to engage with the scholars who use the data. In August 2002 the CSSR hosted a third workshop, at which experienced scholars from the USA gave presentations on the collection and analysis of panel data elsewhere in the world.

Following this third workshop a smaller group of South African and international scholars met for two days to plan a national household panel study in South Africa. Written proposals on various topics were discussed at this planning meeting, and the meeting made great progress toward the goal of a multi-disciplinary panel study based on international collaboration (revolving around Michigan's ISR in the USA and UCT's CSSR in South Africa). Funding applications are to be finalised in 2003, with the goal of going into the field in 2005.

Other Research Projects

During 2001-02 the SSU engaged in a range of other research projects through our research fellows, student scholars and other UCT faculty.

Dr **Margo Russell** joined us as a Research Fellow for four months. Margo, a sociologist, wrote up two projects as working papers for the CSSR series. The first was a study of contemporary black South African households, examining whether urban and rural black South Africans have adopted a Western nuclear family household pattern. Margo concluded that it is a mistake to view urban black households as imperfect transitions to a Western nuclear-style pattern; rather, they should be understood as the response of people from a lineage-based system to the very same pressures of individualisation that the nuclear family is itself experiencing.

Margo Russell's second project examined domestic work in Cape Town, focusing on the employment of domestic workers by black Capetonians, including women who were themselves working as domestic workers.

Dr **Rachel Bray**, an anthropologist, spent most of 2002 as a Research Fellow at the CSSR. As her previous work has focused on childhood in South Asia, Rachel brought a critical comparative perspective to bear on South African research on childhood.

Jolene Skordis, a Masters student in the School of Economics, was appointed as a Junior Research Fellow for 2002. She worked primarily on the administration of the Cape Area Panel Study, but also conducted research on the economics of AIDS treatments, methodologies for assessing household income data in surveys, and the problem of refusals in surveys (using the experience of the Cape Area Panel Study). For this last project, she is examining interviewers' performance in terms of their response and refusal rates, and will compare this to the interviewers' self-reported data on their attitudes and approaches to 'getting in the door'.

The SSU also helped to fund two projects run by **Malcolm Keswell**, a lecturer in the School of Economics. Malcolm's first project entailed the re-analysis of earnings data in a series of South African surveys. Different cross-sectional data-sets have been used to calculate very different returns to education and premia to union membership in South Africa. Malcolm sought to understand why different data-sets generated different results. The SSU funded this project through a grant to Malcolm's assistant (and co-author), **Laura Poswell**, who is a Masters student in the School of Economics.

Malcolm Keswell's second project was running a third partial survey in KwaZulu-Natal using a sub-sample of the panel of respondents from surveys conducted in 1993 and 1998. The focus of the survey was on financial networks, and especially their relationship to labour market dynamics.

In addition, **Jeremy Seekings** (the Director of the SSU) and **Owen Crankshaw** (Acting Director, whilst Jeremy was in the USA in the first half of 2002) conducted research within the SSU. Jeremy continued to work on a variety of topics, including education, class formation, attitudes around distributive justice and welfare reform. He authored and co-authored a number of working papers. He also edited a series of issues of the journal *Social Dynamics* on topics that are relevant to the CSSR: Volume 27, no. 1 (Summer 2001) comprises a set of quantitative analyses of South African society by economists; some similar work by political scientists was included in the following issue.

Volume 28, no.1 (Summer 2002) comprises a special issue on Aids and Society (edited within ASRU in the CSSR) and volume 28, no.2 (Winter 2002) examines welfare reform in South Africa. Owen (an Associate Professor in the Sociology Department) completed some co-authored research on Johannesburg, including two working papers and a book (*Uniting A Divided City: Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg*, published by Earthscan in the U.K.).

The SSU also funded several students in 2002. **Heidi Matisonn**, a Masters student in the Politics Department at UCT, received financial support for her research on the basic income grant in South Africa. **Una Lee**, a Masters student in Economics, is studying attrition in panel studies, using the experience of CAPS. The thesis is in part methodological (studying the methodology of tracking in a panel study in a developing country) and in part analytical (examining the reasons why respondents are vulnerable to attrition, through an analysis of how and why young people move residence, work or school, and why their social networks might be disrupted so as to make more difficult tracking via friends or relatives). **Steven Kent** is working on schooling issues for the dissertation component of his Masters degree in Development Studies. His research uses the CAPS data to examine the relationships between school quality, home background and educational outcomes.

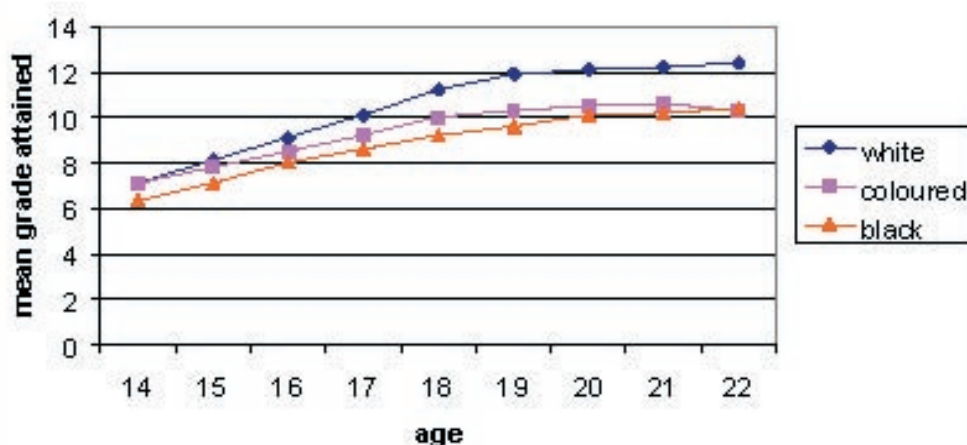
Working with – and learning from – scholars elsewhere in the world

Building capacity in South Africa requires us to learn from the experiences of scholars elsewhere in the world. The CSSR is very fortunate in having a close relationship with the ISR at Michigan, as well as with top international scholars at other institutions in the USA and Europe. The Cape Area Panel Study and the planned national panel study are both international collaborations.

The CSSR hosted a number of other smaller seminars and talks through the year, including a presentation by Roger Jowell, co-founder and now International Director of the National Centre for Social Research in the U.K..

The CSSR is also collaborating with scholars from Bela Horizonte (Brazil), Michigan (in the USA), Warsaw (in Poland) and Beijing (in China) in the so-called 'social Hubble' project. This is a five-city comparative study focused on issues of inequality and distributive justice. In February 2002 the CSSR hosted a week-long planning meeting to develop common modules to be included in surveys in each participating city.

**Young people in Cape Town:
School grade attained, by age, by race**



Source: CAPS

The Cape Area Panel Study

The SSU's primary activity in 2002 was the launch of the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS). CAPS is the largest panel study ever initiated in South Africa (and the largest household survey ever conducted in Cape Town). A representative sample of almost 5000 young people, aged between 14 and 22, was interviewed in the second half of 2002, as well as a representative sample of almost 5000 households. This 'panel' of young people will be re-interviewed at length in 2005 and 2008, and more briefly in the intervening years.

CAPS is focused on the transition from school to adulthood, including work, unemployment and parenthood. The first 'wave' of interviews with young people collects data on living arrangements, schooling, work, family background and sexual and birth histories. Our young respondents also complete a test to evaluate literacy and numeracy. The household-level interviews collect data on household composition and income, primarily. When our data is combined with data collected independently on schools and neighbourhoods, we will be able to begin to analyse how schools, families and communities affect developments in the lives of young people in Cape Town.

CAPS is a joint project of the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan and the CSSR at UCT. The fieldwork for the first wave of interviews was conducted by the established market research firm Markinor. Questionnaire design, sampling and quality control were undertaken by joint ISR/CSSR teams, including UCT students.

A major challenge facing panel studies is to reduce attrition among our sample of respondents. We shall be running a massive operation to track our respondents in order to reduce attrition. Planning for this began in late 2002.



Sorting CAPS questionnaires in the CSSR