The Study

The subject of social change is much discussed these days, both by those who put forward "demands for meaningful change in the system" and those who regret the seeming "erosion of values embodied in the traditions of our national life." There can be no doubt that things really are changing, whatever our individual desires for change may be. Yet, when so much is in flux, it is not easy to be sure exactly what is going on. Casual observers may secure biased impressions and commentators may stress selectively the sensational aspects of change. While interpretations of change and reactions to change will necessarily differ from one person to another, there is need for reliable observations of change to provide a sound and widely accepted factual basis for public discussion.

This report submits a substantial body of social facts obtained by a well-developed and time-tested method—the sample survey of a human population. Although there is general appreciation of the capabilities of surveys, this method has not been exploited as much as it might be for the purpose of recording and analyzing social change. In undertaking this study, it was our intention to demonstrate the potential usefulness of the survey method for this purpose and at the same time to generate measurements of some important changes occurring in a metropolitan community during the past two decades.

A project of this kind was feasible because of the work of previous investigators. Since 1952, the Detroit Area Study, a facility for training graduate students in social research at the University of Michigan, has carried out an annual study in metropolitan Detroit. By repeating portions of a survey done in 1956, for example, we could secure comparative measurements spanning a 15-year period. Nearly all of our 1971 survey was based on this procedure, replication of items drawn from the original (base-line) surveys. We took special interest in the surveys done each year from 1953 through 1959 for two reasons: first, select-

ing them for base-line purposes maximized the time span over which change might be measured; and, second, for various technical reasons the replication was easier to accomplish than would have been the case for some of the surveys done during the 1960s. For one particular topic, racial attitudes, we used base-line data from later surveys.

In regard to the topics to be studied—or, aspects of change to be measured—our approach was opportunistic and eclectic. We simply considered each question asked in a base-line survey as a potential item in the new study and required it to pass some obvious tests: it should not be too dated by its wording or subject matter (as, for example, a question on preference for Eisenhower or Stevenson); it should be relevant to some problem of current public concern or to some continuing issue of sociological theory; it should be the kind of question that would be manageable in a long interview covering diverse subjects. All items were pretested and those causing serious difficulty in understanding were dropped. Our aim was to explore as many different aspects of change as possible, even if that required some sacrifice of depth on particular topics. Thus, we were not able to use all the questions from the earlier surveys that seemed to merit replication.

While our measurements pertain to a variety of topics, there are many aspects of social change we could not attempt to cover. The professional social scientist reading this report will find estimates of change in many characteristics and responses for which such estimates have never before been available. At the same time, the general reader may wonder why our coverage of significant trends is not broader. Our hope is that future studies, both those using a strategy similar to ours and those taking different approaches, will indeed broaden the base of information about trends. Needless to say, the things we would *like* to know about social change will always outnumber those we think we *do* know.

This report is comprehensive in that it provides a statistical summary for almost all the items included in the 1971 survey. The summary is not, however, highly analyti-

cal. Most of the interpretations suggested are somewhat superficial, and some may be changed after we complete a detailed statistical analysis. In this report, however, we have tried to be sure that the changes described are statistically reliable even if their causation and implications may be obscure. Although there is no display of the apparatus of statistical inference, chi-square tests have been carried out in all cases to rule out the possibility that an ostensible change might easily have resulted from mere accidents of random sampling. Unless there is indication to the contrary, differences between years discussed in the text are statistically significant at the nominal .05 level of probability. However, we do not wish to stress unduly the problem of sampling error, since there are various other obstacles to correct inference—some of which are pointed out along the way—that are equally important.

In the 1971 survey the interviewers associated with the project—students in the Detroit Area Study and professional interviewers on the staff of the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan—visited 2,344 randomly selected sample addresses and secured interviews at 1,881 of them, for a response rate of 80 percent. The several base-line studies had response rates varying between 82 percent and 87 percent, but the sample sizes were considerably smaller. Moreover, some of the earlier studies were limited to designated subpopulations. In this report we compare results on our full sample of 1,881 with results from an earlier survey when that survey covered a complete cross-section of the adult population as did the 1971 survey. When the base-line survey pertained to a subpopulation, we constructed a comparable subsample from the 1971 study by eliminating those respondents who would not have been eligible under the rules of the earlier survey. In addition to the interviews with 1,881 respondents in 1971, we used data from the following sources:

568 mothers of children under 19 years, 1953
764 adults (cross-section), 1954
731 wives living with their husbands, 1955

797 adults (cross-section), 1956
596 adults (cross-section) living in Wayne County, 1957
656 adults (cross-section), 1958
767 adults (cross-section), 1959
600 black adults (household heads and wives) living in the city of Detroit, 1968
631 white adults (household heads and wives), 1969.

Except in 1957 and 1968, these surveys, like the 1971 survey, covered all of Wayne County (which contains the city of Detroit) and the contiguous, heavily urbanized sections of Macomb and Oakland counties.

Our tables usually are based upon somewhat smaller numbers than those just given, for several reasons. In some of the surveys (1953, 1959, 1971) certain questions were asked only of a randomly selected half of the respondents. In all of the studies each question was left unanswered by a few respondents; and a few others gave answers that could not be classified. The subject matter of certain questions limits their applicability to particular segments of the population. These limits will be explicit in the tables given in this study, but we have not otherwise called attention to the variations in numbers of cases arising from the other sources. As previously stated, we carried out statistical tests of the significance of change which are intended to make allowance for the increased sampling variation that goes with small samples.

Almost all the figures shown in this report, other than those attributed to published sources, derive from our own tabulations from the 1971 and the base-line studies. Minor discrepancies from the results reported in the studies by the original investigators were encountered, as was to be expected on the basis of previous experience in working with complex data files. We did not find serious discrepancies of the kind requiring substantial modifications in our statements of findings. All interpretations of the base-line data are, however, our own and are not the responsibility of the original research workers.

The reader who would like to have additional technical details about the study, or who is interested in the few particular topics that we have analyzed more fully elsewhere, is referred to the following:

Elizabeth M. Fischer, *Sampling Report for the 1971 Detroit Area Study* (Detroit Area Study, University of Michigan, 1972).

Beverly Duncan and Mark Evers, "Measuring Change in Attitudes toward Women's Work," Conference on Social Indicator Models, Russell Sage Foundation, July 1972.

Otis Dudley Duncan, "Measuring Social Change via Replication of Surveys," Conference on Social Indicator Models, Russell Sage Foundation, July 1972.

Howard Schuman, "Two Sources of Antiwar Sentiment in America," *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (November 1972): 513–536.

Howard Schuman, *Trends and Complexities in Black Racial Attitudes*, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan (forthcoming).