

Expanding Leadership and Substantive Skills within The Federal Statistical System

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Development of the Field

- Survey statistics and methodology really just emerged as a separate discipline in the last few decades
- First major sample survey programs created in the late 1930s
 - Monthly Report on the Labor Force (became the CPS) started in 1940
 - National Health Interview Survey in 1957
- Journals for the field also relatively new
 - Survey Methodology started in 1975
 - JOS started in 1985
 - Survey Methods Research in 2006
 - JSSAM just in last two years

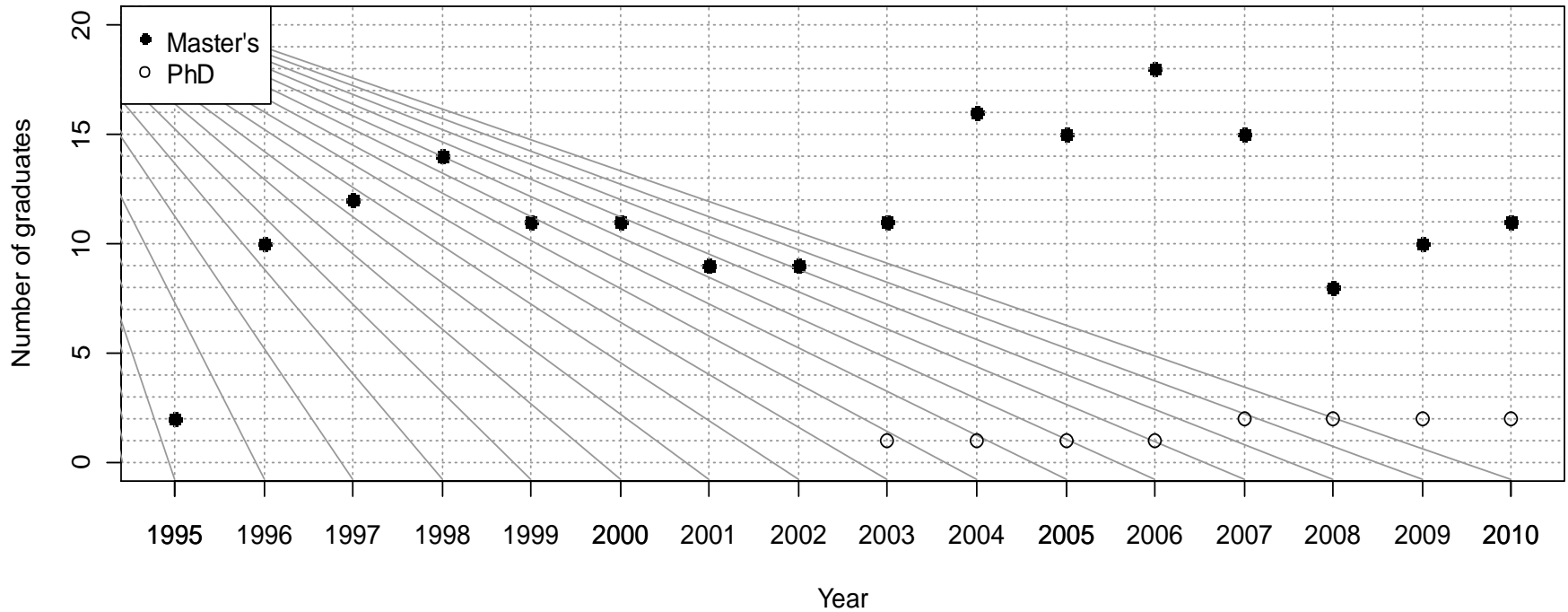
Educational Infrastructure

- Educational infrastructure is also recent
- JSPM founded in 1993, with faculty from University of Maryland, University of Michigan, Westat
- Sponsored by the ICSP (15 agencies, chaired by Chief Statistician from OMB)
- Created to offer graduate training in survey methodology
 - To upgrade skills of current employees of the Federal statistical system
 - To add to pool of talent, recruit new members

JPSM Educational Programs

- Graduate programs (MS, PhD)—200 + MS grads (60% Social Science, 40% Statistical Science), ~ 20 PhD graduates
- Short courses on specific topics—600 to 700 attendees per year
- Most graduate classes open to non-degree-seeking students
- Junior Fellow program: summer internship program for college students; 32 per year
- Template for Michigan and UNL programs

Distribution of JPSM Graduates over Time



Other Programs

- Michigan Program in Survey Methodology
 - First graduates in 2004
 - At total of 46 MS grads, 8 Ph.D.'s as of 2010
 - Across the two programs, 18 Master's grads and 4 Ph.D.'s per year
- UNL Program also producing Master's and Ph.D.'s—87 Master's, 4

Other Resources

- UNC, GW, York College/CUNY, University of Cincinnati, OSU have Certificate Programs
- Southampton and Essex in UK
- Barcelona in Catalonia
- Waterloo in Canada

The Result?

- Most survey organizations populated by people with little or no formal training in survey methods
- Often these people who are *very* specialized—work on one aspect of one study (e.g., interviewer training, cognitive testing, weighting)
- “Stovepiping” may lead to further insularity; particularly a problem in organizations with long-standing, large projects

A Related Issue

- The multiple cultures issue; different specialty groups within any statistical/survey organization:
 - Substantive experts (criminologists at BJS; economists at Federal Reserve, BLS; health researchers at NCHS)
 - Statisticians/methodologists
 - Computer programmers
 - Managers
- Tend to different priorities and different values

The Result?

- People often seem to think that there is no science involved in surveys
- Experience and common sense trump survey methodology; generally, leaders of the organization are substantive experts or managers not survey researchers
- Thus, a key skill for technical people is the ability to communicate clearly (and tactfully) what they know
- Particularly a problem in our field since many people with the strongest technical skills are not native English speakers

One Final Thought

- A peculiar feature of the American educational system is that people are not trained to do their jobs
- E.g., law school doesn't prepare people to practice law
- Graduate schools don't teach people to teach; it teaches them to do research
- Absence of management training often evident in survey organizations; senior people may have little or no exposure to such training (and may denigrate importance of management skills)