

Editorial: “Conflict Deaths in Iraq: A Methodological Critique of the ORB Survey Estimate”

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In a new departure for *Survey Research Methods* the following article, “Conflict Deaths in Iraq: A Methodological Critique of the ORB Survey Estimate” by Spagat and Dougherty, is accompanied by a reply from the polling firm whose work is discussed in the article and a reaction to that reply from Spagat and Dougherty.

We are publishing this exchange between the two parties as we believe it will be of interest to our readers and that it provides additional insight on the issues discussed in the article. We would be happy to consider publication of similar exchanges on other topics in future. Authors of accepted articles who would like us to invite response or discussion are welcome to indicate this to us.

The Spagat and Dougherty article discusses a high profile use of survey methods, to estimate the number of Iraqi deaths over a period of around four years since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This is an important application but there is no well-established or standardised survey methodology for estima-

tion of mortality. The challenges are particularly considerable when the period under consideration is as long as four years and the context in which the survey is being carried out is as difficult as the situation in Iraq in 2007. Given that, there are considerable potential benefits from discussion and evaluation of the methodology used. We hope that lessons might be learned about the strengths and weaknesses of aspects of survey methods. It should be the task of all survey researchers to seek to better understand when and how survey methods should be used.

All views expressed in the article, reply and rejoinder are entirely those of the respective authors. In publishing these, we do not endorse any particular viewpoint but seek only to offer a neutral platform for the authors to express their views. Our interest is solely in the objective advancement of survey methods. We hope that readers will enjoy the exchange and we would welcome feedback.