SOCIOMETRICS PROJECT NO. 45

SOFTWARE TO DESIGN, DOCUMENT, AND PREPARE SOCIAL SCIENCE INSTRUMENTS AND DATA SETS
PHASE I

The development and documentation of social science research instruments is time consuming and expensive. Much of this work could be facilitated by software that automates such tasks as formatting, file mapping, codebook generation, error checking, and analysis file preparation, leaving the investigator's time for substantive work. Moreover, investigators who collect original data are increasingly being asked by their sponsors and by other researchers to share their data sets with other researchers. Data sharing requires a standard of documentation that is not often adhered to by researchers who develop their data sets for their own use only. Again, software can aid the investigator by developing appropriate documentation according to public-use standards as the data set is being developed.

This Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase I project investigated the feasibility of developing software that would enable a researcher to simultaneously develop and document a data set. The software would ease development by automating tasks that could best be done by computer; it would improve instrumentation and documentation by providing a structure and format that was complete and of high quality; and it would eliminate much of the post data-collection effort of documenting a data set for public use. The software program would be a significant resource for social scientists. It would provide a tool to assist the researcher with several steps in the research process, including data set development, documentation, cleaning, and analysis file creation. Furthermore, it would integrate all these steps in one program, and provide a link to the archiving task for those data sets that are to be placed in the public domain.

Subsequent projects building on the work of this Phase I project include Project Nos. 67 and 88.

Sponsor:	The National Science Foundation 4201 Wilson Boulevard Arlington, Virginia 22230 (703) 306-1391

Grant No:	DMI-9360093	Project Officer: Sara B. Nerlove
Duration:	05/1/94—11/31/94	Budget: $64,880
Staff:	J.L. Peterson, D. Kim, E.L. Lang, E.A. McKean	