

# Introduction

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So far in this book, qualitative methods have been considered in a complementary manner in which they are used to; gain a better understanding of how respondents discuss and conceptualize the goods and services valued; gain a better awareness of respondents' thought processes during the transaction and motivations for their responses; and explore the public acceptability of the valuation exercise. Chapters 5 and 6 have shown the results not only lead to better survey design, but also a wealth of information that has greatly enhanced our understanding of the meaning and acceptability of stated preferences, helping within analysis and finding an appropriate role for valuations within policy decision making.

Despite the complementary role of qualitative methods, it has been demonstrated that conventional stated preference may still make insufficient allowance for the cognitive limitations of the respondents; provide insufficient incentive for respondents to put in the required effort; and make insufficient allowance for the communal nature of the scenarios and payment vehicles. Although the use of group methods can do little to correct for the hypothetical nature of stated preference, it has been suggested that cognitive and communal issues can be better dealt with by further extending the role of the group-based approach (Sagoff, 1988; Gregory *et al.*, 1993; Fischhoff, 1997; Ward, 1999; Macmillan *et al.*, 2002; McDaniels *et al.*, 2003; Philip and Macmillan, 2005; Howarth and Wilson, 2006), but the approach taken will depend on the researchers' attitude towards the ability of respondents to give meaningful answers and the relative importance of the private/social aspects of the decisions being made.

Chapter 7 considers the view that stated preference methods produce responses that are highly sensitive to changes in presentation and elicitation methods used. Faced with these difficulties, respondents should be given sufficient opportunity to construct more considered preferences. Chapter 7 explores the extent to which this can be achieved by providing a permissive and non-threatening environment for value construction as well as the opportunity to discuss the issues with friends/family and to further research any aspects where more information is required. The implications of such efforts in terms of the valuations elicited and the consequences of violating conventional survey norms are also explored. In a similar vein, where the complexities of the situation considered make it inevitable that unstable values will be elicited, the possibility

of using alternative approaches, which adjust existing valuations made in more favourable circumstances, are considered.

The issues associated with the communal nature of the scenarios and payment vehicles used within stated preference are largely ignored within Chapter 7. Instead, they provide the focus of Chapter 8, where, learning from the experiences of citizens' juries, the extent to which group approaches can be used to deal with communal issues are explored.