Improving the Measurement of Sexual Victimization among Children through a Redesign of the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence

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The views presented in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official views of any Federal Government agency/department or Westat.
Outline

• The need to consider redesign of survey
  – Previous data collection mode was by telephone
  – Issues related to asking vulnerable populations (youth) sensitive information

• Core questionnaire design issues

• Challenges of collecting data
  – Modes
  – Incentives
  – Testing
Background on NatSCEV

• National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV)

• Administered in 2008, 2011, 2014

• First comprehensive attempt to measure children’s exposure to violence in their daily lives.
  – Across settings (home, school, community)
  – National estimates of direct victimization and indirect exposure to violence

• Data from prior NatSCEVs greatly contributed to an understanding of childhood victimization and informed policy development.
Population of Interest

• Children under the age of 18 in the U.S.

• Two major developmental groups in past iterations:
  – Children ages 0 to 9 whose parents/guardians reported for them.
  – Children ages 10 to 17 who responded for themselves after parental consent.
Previous Modes of Data Collection

• 2008 and 2011 surveys used random digit dial telephone methods to sample households and sample persons within household.

• Declining response rates led to a multiple frame approach - all telephone - in 2014.

• Despite these efforts, response rates to the telephone data collection were lower than desired and showed a consistent decline in response over time.
Need for Redesign - Content

• The main component of the survey is the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ).

• JVQ was designed to collect data on a broad spectrum of violence exposure in 5 domains:
  – Conventional Crime
  – Child Maltreatment
  – Peer and sibling victimization
  – Sexual assault
  – Witnessing and indirect victimization

• JVQ includes screening questions and follow-ups on incidents.
Need for Redesign - Content (Cont’d)

• The JVQ is comprehensive but lengthy. It is important to balance its ability to be comprehensive while also minimizing respondent burden.

• Reassessment of the content
  – Some screener items have low endorsement rates and/or poor construct validity.

• Some content will be eliminated.

• Other content will be simplified.

• Need to consider data collection with self-administration in mind.
Redesign - Content Review Process

• Extensive literature review of domestic and international surveys on children’s exposure to violence, crime and trauma.

• Concept mapping of the JVQ questions to key indicators.

• External review by a panel of subject matter experts.
  – Conference calls to discuss topical modules (i.e. sexual violence).
  – In-person/WebEx meeting to discuss the overall content.
Need for Redesign - Mode

• Telephone response rates have plummeted over time.

• Collecting NatSCEV data through in-person interviews is not ideal.
  – Face-to-face interviews are expensive and cost prohibitive for large studies.
  – Research shows they depress responses to sensitive items.

• Need to consider self-administration.
  – Web
  – Mail
Need for Redesign - Mode (Cont’d)

• An alternative is an address-based sample (ABS) in which households are pushed to the Web to respond.

• Multiple-phase design
  – Household screener (push to web, followed by mail)
  – Parent main interview
  – Youth main interview (for older youth)

• Concerns with this approach include:
  – Ability of young children, as young as 10, to comprehend written text.
  – Obtaining parental consent for youth to complete a survey on sensitive content.
  – Contacting and encouraging consented youth to respond.
Surveying Young Adolescents

- Parents reported for children ages 0 to 9 in previous administrations.

- Analysis of some key outcomes showed that the prevalence of incidents and exposures reported by parent respondents of 9-year-olds were similar to the incidents self-reported by 10 and 11-year olds.

- Proposed revision of age boundaries in next survey:
  - Parents will report for children ages 2 to 11.
  - Self-reporting only among youth ages 12 and older.
  - This helps to reduce concerns about younger adolescents’ ability to comprehend self-administered questions.
• Studies have shown that parents of older adolescents are less aware of their victimizations and exposure.

• However, the relationship between the youth’s age and the parents’ knowledge of what occurs in all areas of the adolescent’s life is unknown.
  – Certain types of victimizations may be less likely to be known by parents.

• We are considering a test of the relationship between the reporting of a parent and their 12-17 year old.
  – GfK Knowledge Panel to provide the respondents for this evaluation.
  – The parent will report for their youth (12-17 years old) and the youth will self-report. Then, we will compare the answers.
Surveying Young Adolescents (Cont’d)

- Few existing surveys have explored using self-administered Web/mail modes to obtain responses from parents of younger children and to gain parental consent to allow older children to complete the survey.

- We are proposing to test methods that explore response patterns to both parent reporting and consent for adolescent participation.

- We are considering an ABS sample of 2,000 households, ideally with a concentration of households with persons under age 18.
Methods to Increase Response

• Incentives have proven to be very effective methods to increase response rates in ABS surveys of households.
  – Meta-analysis by Mercer et al (2015) shows prepaid incentives in mail surveys increase response rates (over no incentive) on average by 10 percentage points for $2 and 16 percentage points for $5.
  – Research in the National Household Education Survey (NHES), a two-phase survey of children, showed these results hold for this age group.
  – However, the use of prepaid incentives is not widely encouraged in government surveys.
### NHES 2011 Screener Results (Han et al. 2013)

*Table 1. Screener incentive treatment effects*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screener incentive treatment</th>
<th>$2</th>
<th>$5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 18,130</td>
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<tr>
<th>Screener phase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final response rate*</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial response rate*</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topical phase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditional response rate*a</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NHES 2\textsuperscript{nd} Phase Incentive Effects on Response Rates

![Graph showing response rates after initial mailing, 1st follow-up mailing, and 2nd follow-up mailing for different incentive amounts. Different line colors represent different incentive amounts: $0, First-Class Mail (n=860), $5, First-Class Mail (n=840), $10, First-Class Mail (n=820), $15, First-Class Mail (n=810), $20, First-Class Mail (n=870).]
Methods to Increase Response (Cont’d)

• Recent experiments in the American National Election Survey (ANES) of 2016 found that, for a Web-only survey, escalating incentives (after initial prepaid incentive, offering post-paid incentives of higher amounts close to the end of data collection) could result in good response rates (over 40 percent) without using mail.

• We are considering a post-paid incentive, about $20, for completion of the main survey instrument on Web.

• Follow-up via mail with households that do not complete the Web screener.

• Test Web response for youth 12 and older.
Plans

- Multiple development and pre-test activities.

- Cognitive testing of revised questionnaire content.

- Design and implement the pilot test to evaluate an ABS with Web push methodology and the use of postpaid incentives.

- Design and implement a test to evaluate the ability of parents to report for youth ages 12 to 17.

- Design and implement a test to compare ABS estimates and response rates to those from a Gfk panel.
Thanks
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