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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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)


- 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.
• 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>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 18,130</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screener phase</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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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</tbody>
</table>

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

After initial mailing

After 1st follow-up mailing

After 2nd follow-up mailing

$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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