An Examination of Cohort Retention Efforts on the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being

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Introduction

- Longitudinal studies are designed to capture change over time

- Effective tracking of cohort members between waves of data collection is critical to maintaining participation and interest in the study

- Researchers often employ various strategies to maintain contact with sample members between waves of a longitudinal study to maximize retention and reduce nonresponse

Source: Couper and Ofstedal, 2006
Objectives

- Describe a comprehensive tracking plan used on a large nationally representative longitudinal study

- Summarize the results of the tracking effort
  - Examine whether child and family characteristics impacted the success of retention efforts
  - Measure the success of retention by examining interview outcomes

- Present plans for additional analyses
Census 2010

- In 2010, 37.5 million people (12.5%) changed residences in the U.S. within the past year

- Mover rates vary by characteristics such as age, race, marital status, income, or whether the housing unit is rented or owned

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Geographic Mobility: 2010
### Factors Influencing Moving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
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<td>Crime Rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Events</td>
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<td>Stage of Life</td>
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<td>Natural Disasters</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Factors Influencing Locating Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Changes (e.g., marriage, adoption)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period between interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount of information collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of information collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact between waves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Budget</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5,872 children ranging from birth to 17.5 years old at the time of sampling

Children were sampled from child welfare investigations closed between February 2008 to April 2009

In person interviews are conducted with children, their caregivers, and caseworkers

90 field interviewers and 6 supervisors in the field

### NSCAW Data Collection Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave 1 (Baseline Study)</th>
<th>March 2008-September 2009</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wave 2</td>
<td>October 2009-January 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 3</td>
<td>June 2011-August 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each family receives a panel maintenance package 9 months after the completion of their last interview

Package contains:
- Letter thanking the family for their participation in the previous wave
- Postage-paid address update postcard
- Business Reply Envelope
- Toll-free number included
- Forwarding and Address Correction Requested
NSCAW Tracking Plan

- Families are asked to return the postcard or call the toll-free number to update or confirm their address information.

- Packages returned as undeliverable are sent to an in-house tracing unit for locating assistance.

- As updated information was received from postcards or the tracing unit, the best contact information was entered into a database.
Results of Panel Maintenance Mailing

Panel Maintenance Mailings
100%
(n = 2353)

No Response 63%
(n = 1492)

Undeliverable Packages 10%
(n = 230)

Respondent Updates 27%
(n = 631)

Postcards 64%
Post Office Updates 32%
Call-Ins 4%
Caregiver Age

- 29 and younger
- 30 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 and older

Categories:
- No Response to Mailing
- Call-in/Post Card
- Post Office Update
- Undeliverable
Marital Status

- Marital Status: Married, Separated, Divorced, Widowed, Never Married

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Separated</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>Never Married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Response to Mailing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call-in/Post Card Update</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office Update</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeliverable</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Federal Poverty Level

- No Response to Mailing
- Call-in/Postcard
- Post Office Update
- Undeliverable

Categories:
- < 50%
- 50% - 99.9%
- 100% - 200%
- > 200%
Panel Maintenance Disposition by Interview Outcome

- **No Response to Mailing**
- **Call-in/Post Card**
- **Post Office Update**
- **Undeliverable**

Legend:
- Other Non-Resp
- Locating Problem
- Refusal
- Complete
Preliminary results for an at risk population indicate that biological caregivers, lower income households, younger caregivers, and those reporting the likelihood of a move may require more locating efforts during data collection.

Tracking results can help researchers anticipate which cases may need more resources during data collection:
- Modify schedule of mailings
- Send new package to any Post Office Updates received
Next Steps

- Rerun analysis on full cohort when Wave 3 is complete
- Incorporate experiments in future panel maintenance efforts
- Investigate respondent characteristics further to identify predictors of a move between waves
- Conduct a cost analysis to determine if panel maintenance efforts reduced the need for more expensive in-house tracing
Thank You!

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