



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

# Uses of Administrative Data *with* Survey Research

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# My Purpose Today

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- *My own journey from administrative data to surveys and back*
- *Uses of administrative data in conducting survey research*
- *Paying more attention to the strengths and limitations of both sources of data*

# Identifying and Contacting Populations to Study

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- Can often, prior to sampling, confirm (or not) hypotheses about the size, spatial distribution, and other characteristics of a population that should inform sampling decisions
- Can often obtain information about the location of study subjects and gatekeepers and their contact information
- Can identify in a timely manner changes in subject status that affect study eligibility

# Examples of Use of Administrative Data for Sampling

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- *Youth likely to “age out” of foster care*
  - Midwest Study (2002-2011; n = 732)
    - Youth in three states (Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin); reached age 17 in care; in care at least one year; total population in two states but two-thirds random sample in the third state
  - CalYOUTH (2012-2017; n = 727)
    - Youth in care ages 16.75-17.75; in care at least six months; stratified by county to oversample smaller counties; not DD

# Examples of Use of Administrative Data for Sampling

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- *Parents of Families Receiving Child Welfare Services*
  - Evaluation of the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (2000-2004)
    - Parents whose families were receiving in-home services (n = 480) and their caseworkers
    - Parents who had at least one child in care for at least 30 days (n = 494) and their caseworkers

# Examples of Use of Administrative Data for Sampling

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- *Caseworkers Serving Distinct Populations*
  - Placement Stability in Illinois (2006)
    - Web-based survey of 1,192 workers with at least one child whose care they had supervised for at least six weeks
  - CalYOUTH Caseworker Survey (2013)
    - Web-based survey of 235 workers who had at least one youth reach age 18 on their caseload in past six months; statewide representative sample, stratified by county

# Contacting and Tracking Study Populations

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- Ethics committees generally require subjects' permission to link administrative data to survey data (don't forget to ask!)
- A variety of data can be helpful in tracking (e.g., public assistance; motor vehicle department; credit bureau; criminal justice system records; National Student Clearinghouse)
- Subjects will often allow researchers to use administrative data for tracking and research purposes (over 90% of foster youth, TANF applicants, and parents involved with child welfare services)

*Administrative data are an economical means of collecting long-term follow-up data on a variety of important outcomes!!!*

# Biased and/or Missing Data

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## *Social Desirability:*

- Child maltreatment reports
  - Milwaukee TANF Applicants Study (1999-2004)
- Arrests
  - Midwest Study

## *Recall:*

- Welfare program participation
  - Milwaukee TANF Applicants Study (TANF receipt and sanctions)



# Biased and/or Missing Data

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## *Assessing the Potential Magnitude and Consequences of Missing Administrative Data*

- Poor matching in linking administrative data sources
- Missing administrative data due to population mobility
- Poor data entry

## Closing Observations

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- Administrative data should *always* be considered a potentially economical way to collect data on key outcomes, program participation, and benefit/service receipt when conducting survey research
- Administrative data, even when linked across systems, still fall short of being able to answer many of the questions asked by practitioners and policymakers

# Studies Referenced

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