

A quarterly report on activities and events at the National Opinion Research Center.

## New Initiatives

### National Survey of Algebra Teachers

On behalf of the National Math Panel of the U.S. Department of Education, the NORC/University of Chicago Joint Center for Education Research will design and conduct the National Survey of Algebra Teachers. The panel is a Presidentially-appointed group charged with developing recommendations for reform of K-12 math education, and is focusing on beginning-level algebra courses as a top priority for improvements.

This mail survey will capture teachers' observations on student preparation, motivation, work habits, and skills as well as their insights on how math is taught, how earlier math education could be improved to better prepare children to succeed at algebra, and what would help all math teachers do a better job. The survey will also explore the degree to which algebra teachers nationwide share concerns motivating many in national leadership, including a broad dissatisfaction with the math skills of American students overall and a deep unease about achievement gaps between low-income, minority students and more affluent students. NORC's report on the findings will inform the National Math Panel's final report to the President due in early 2008. Contact Tom Hoffer at 773-256-6097 or by email at [hoffer-tom@norc.org](mailto:hoffer-tom@norc.org).

### National Survey of Adoptive Parents

Administered as part of the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health, the National Survey of Adoptive Parents will focus on the characteristics and needs of adopted children and their adoptive families. This project continues work begun in 2005 to develop and field a survey on the experiences of families who have adopted children from foster care and other sources. It examines the factors that facilitate or hinder the success of adoptions. It will also look at the post-adoption support needed to assure the well-being of adopted children, and how the well-being and service needs of children adopted from foster care compare with other types of adoption. The survey, pretested in

2006 by NORC, is sponsored by the following agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services: Administration of Children and Families, the National Center for Health Statistics, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Contact Heather Morrison at [morrison-heather@norc.org](mailto:morrison-heather@norc.org) or 312-759-5087.

## Ongoing Projects

### NORC's Data Enclave

The Data Enclave Initiative began in 2006 with awards from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS). It has recently expanded to include a grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. A data enclave allows the sharing of sensitive data with a closed community of users.

For NIST, NORC created a data enclave that allows researchers to access the closely-held data from surveys of grantees of the NIST Advanced Technology Program, which focused on innovation. These data are a key resource for researchers studying innovation in a business setting. The Kauffman Foundation, which focuses on entrepreneurial endeavor, will support outreach to researchers to encourage use of these data that would include presentations at professional conferences, visits to university departments with research in this area, and a conference to be held at the Foundation's headquarters in Kansas City. Tim Mulcahy is the project director of the NIST Data Enclave and of related work for USDA and the Kauffmann Foundation outreach efforts. Contact Julia Lane at [lane-julia@uchicago.norc.org](mailto:lane-julia@uchicago.norc.org) or 202- 887-2337.

### Risk, Insurance and the Family in Thailand

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has made a grant to NORC's Academic Research Center to support the continuation of the research program *Risk, Insurance, and the Family* in rural Thailand. The project is investigating the role of the family, inclusive of the extended family

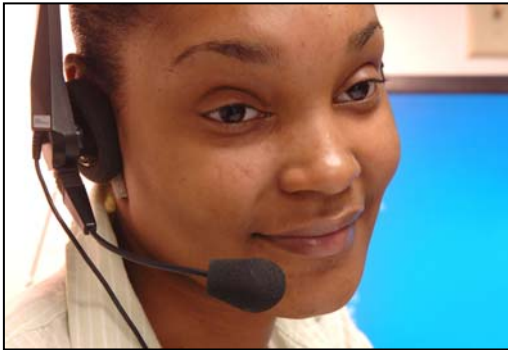
and networks of friends and relatives, in providing insurance and credit to its members and to also understand and quantify that role in the larger village, regional, and national context while understanding that role relative to that of more formal institutions, such as village-level funds and national level banks. Professor Robert Townsend of the University of Chicago is the Principal Investigator. Contact Kathleen Parks at [parks-kathleen@norc.org](mailto:parks-kathleen@norc.org) or 773-256-6302.

## Chicago-Area Panel Survey of Public Housing Residents

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation have made a planning grant to NORC to design a Chicago-area panel survey of public housing residents. The process will include designing focus group and one-on-one protocols; conducting focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders in the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation; reporting findings; hosting advisory panel meetings; and making recommendations for a panel survey. The MacArthur Foundation has a longstanding interest in public housing and is the sponsor of NORC's ongoing Resident Relocation surveys in Chicago. Contact Cathy Haggerty at 312-759-4065 or [haggerty-cathy@norc.org](mailto:haggerty-cathy@norc.org).

# Innovation

## 'Hybrid' Dialing Improves Results for Some Large Surveys



NORC's recently-upgraded telephony system has resulted in gains of at least 20 percent in interviewer efficiency on large, random digit dialed (RDD) telephone surveys.

"It is not often that we are able to realize gains of this magnitude in our industry," said John H. Thompson, NORC executive vice president for survey operations and former director of the 2000 U.S. Census, of the

two-year effort to upgrade the infrastructure of its Chicago call center.

The system uses Voiceover Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology and 'hybrid' automated dialing to screen out non-working, unanswered, and machine-answered telephone numbers—fully 40 percent of the American telephone system bank of numbers—before handing off the call to a live telephone interviewer, who administers the survey. All of this screening happens in the background and is invisible to the potential survey participant.

Hybrid dialing, invented by NORC, goes a step beyond 'predictive' dialing, which connects a call to an interviewer only *after* the household has answered. This results in an annoying pause before the interviewer begins speaking, and may cause a household to hang up or refuse to participate in the survey. Hybrid dialing sends known household numbers to an interviewer *before* the call is placed, reserving for predictive dialing only those numbers where the probability of finding a live person is low or unknown.

Jenny Kelly, vice president for telephone survey and support operations, also praised the new system for its effect on telephone interviewers. "They now spend less time wading through unproductive calls and more time actually using their skills to persuade people to take part in the survey," said Kelly, who runs the call center for the scientific surveys that the organization administers on behalf of its clients. "It's a better job."



Jennifer A. Kelly

The effect of the new technology has been to reduce the average hours per completed case, a standard measure of efficiency for telephone surveys. This in turn produces cost savings for NORC clients, primarily federal government agencies who use the data collected to monitor societal indicators and to make public policy decisions. "The implementation of hybrid dialing has resulted in a significant reduction in the cost-per-hour of time spent dialing," said Kelly.

*"...hybrid dialing has resulted in a significant reduction in the cost per hour..."*

The first project to benefit from the new technology is the National Immunization Survey (NIS), conducted on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The NIS monitors U.S. vaccination rates. RDD surveys account for about half of all NORC telephone surveys.

Other features of the new system include the ability of staff in several locations to conduct interviews and receive training and monitoring remotely and to operate as part of a seamless 'virtual' call center. "This improves the organization's ability to expand to meet clients' needs," Thompson said.

## People

### Upcoming Staff Presentations at AAPOR

Thirty-eight papers by NORC professional staff members have been accepted for presentation at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Conference in Anaheim, California from May 17-20. To see all of the papers and presenters, go to [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org) and use the site search to find "AAPOR 2007".

## Publications

### Books


Wolter, K.M. 2007. "Introduction to Variance Estimation, 2nd Edition." New York: Springer-Verlag.

### Reports



Gabel, J., Fahlman, C. and Gochenour, Z. 2007.

["Consumer-Directed Health Plans: Current Practice, Future Upgrades."](#) Report to The Conference Board.

Volberg, R.A., Nysse-Carris, K.L. and Gerstein D.R. 2006. "2006 California Problem Gambling Prevalence Survey." Final Report. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Office of Problem and Pathological Gambling.  [\(1.4MB\)](#)

## NORC in the News

Selected coverage of NORC projects and staff in the popular press. To subscribe to the weekly news email, contact: [savage-cathleen@norc.org](mailto:savage-cathleen@norc.org)

### New Way to Rank PhD Programs

The education website [highered.com](http://highered.com) published a March 30, 2007 story about a new ranking system developed by [PhDs.org](http://PhDs.org) for ranking graduate departments. The new system allows users to do their own weighting of various factors, such as prestige of professors and time to complete degree. The article notes that the [Survey of Earned Doctorates](#), which NORC conducts annually on behalf of the National Science Foundation and other funders, is one of several sources of data used in the new system. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is one of the funders of PhDs.org's new system.

### Who Do You Think We Are?

The *New York Times* featured a February 25, 2007 Op-Ed piece by contributor Ben Schott entitled ["Who Do You Think We Are?"](#) (p.15) in which data from the recently released 2006 General Social Survey were used to paint a picture of Americans and their opinions over time. Topics such as the percentage of Americans who think men are better qualified to hold political office, the percentage afraid to walk in their neighborhoods at night, the percentage of those who favor abortion and under what circumstances, and the percentage of Americans who have faith in various institutions such as the military and the Congress.

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