Comments on Presentation by Amy O’hara

Paul Biemer
RTI International and
University of North Carolina
Realistic goals for using admin records to reduce respondent burden in the ACS

Minimize (respondent burden)
subject to
data quality ≥ current ACS data quality
→ Maintains current data quality while minimizing the burden on respondents

Maximize (data quality)
subject to
Respondent burden ≤ target level of respondent burden
→ Achieves a desired level of respondent burden while maximizing data quality
How is respondent burden defined and how is it measured?

- Bradburn’s (1978) definition includes
  - Interview length and frequency
  - Level of effort and/or perceived difficulty
  - Psychological impacts

- Indicators may be
  - Unit response rates
  - Item response rates
  - Respondent feedback on cognitive/physical effort, sensitivity
  - Time to complete, frequency, number of questions, etc
How is data quality defined?

- Total survey error approach – data quality is improved when *total survey error* is reduced
- Some error sources that are relevant for use of admin records are:
  - Specification error: does the record measure the same concept as the survey
  - Measurement error: how does reliability compare between record and survey measurements
  - Coverage error: particularly within hh’s (e.g. residency rules)
  - Missing data: is missing data increased by using admin records
  - Modeling error: how much error is added by indirect uses of missing data
Some questions to consider

- What definition of respondent burden should be used?
  - What are its key indicators?
- How should data quality be measured?
- What is ACS respondent burden today? Has it changed over the years?
- What is the goal?
  - Max (data quality) s.t. respondent burden ≤ some target value
  - Min (respondent burden) s.t. quality ≥ current quality
- Other methods for reducing burden being considered?
  - E.g., survey harmonization and integration