Using Hash Tables for Case-Control Matching
Efficient Way for Control Selection from Large Administrative Data

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1. Control Selection in Comparative Studies

2. SAS Tools for Control Selection

3. Introduction to Hash Table in SAS

4. SAS Codes Used
Case Control Study Design

- Case-Control study is an observational study design, often used in epidemiology, population based public health studies.

- Case-Control study can eliminate the effects of confounders (age, gender, social economic status, etc) by matching controls to a case based on the same confounders, and focus on the main factors.

- The process of this design is relatively simple: For each study case, randomly select one or more control from the non-case population with matching characteristics.

- A case may have more than one matching controls, but a control can only be matched to one case.
What are the difficulties?

- Need to keep track of the matching situation of both cases and control:
  - Once a control is matched to a case, the control can not be used any more
  - Once a case has enough controls, the case will not be matched to other controls any more
- There may have multiple records for a unique control with varying characteristic values (for example, different ages at different years)
- You may need to find out all possible matches: If 1000 cases all can be matched with 1 million controls, the number of all possible matches will be 1 billion - problems with storage, sorting, etc.
What SAS Tools to Use?

There are a few conventional SAS tools can be used to solve the above problems:

- **Proc SurveySelect**: Can only handle categorical characteristics, but not for fussy matching, such as difference of age within 5 years.
- **Data Step**: Difficult to keep track of which control has been matched or which case has enough controls, due to its sequential processing of records.
- **Proc SQL**: Would generate huge intermediate data set, and need more sorting process.
- **Hash Table object**: This maybe the ONLY efficient solution in SAS!!
What is Hash Table Object?

- It is a Data Step Component Object. Meaning:
  - It only exists in a data step - once the data step finishes running, it will no longer exist
  - It is an object - as in Object Oriented Programming (OOP): with a constructor (declaration), attributes, and methods (the dot notation)
  - It is not a SAS data set, and does not exist in external storage - it is in memory, so there is a size limit for the table, but the searching and updating are fast
- It is a special tree structure with 2 components: Key and Data
  - The Key component is mandatory, and usually it must be unique
  - The data component is for the storage of the actual data values. You may have none or multiple data fields (variables) for the data component
Define a Hash Table

The following statements are required to define a hash table, usually at the very beginning at a data step (_n_=1):

SAS Code: Define a Hash Table

```sas
declare hash cases (dataset:'AllCases');
cases.DefineKey('case_id');
cases.DefineData('Gender','Age');
cases.DefineDone();
```

- **Use `Declare` to define a hash table.**
  - `cases` is the table name (object name), which will be used in the dot notation with methods.
  - The attribute `dataset:'AllCases'` is used to fill in the table with records from the SAS data set `AllCases`.
- **Use `DefineKey()` and `DefineData()` methods to define the key and data components.**
- **Finish the declaration by using the `DefineDone()` method.**
Hash Table Methods

Here are some of the methods with Hash Table:

- **Add method**: Adds a record to the hash table.
- **Replace method**: Replaces the data component with a given key value.
- **Find method**: Locate the record in the hash table based on a given key value.
- **Remove method**: Removes the records in the hash table with a given key value.
- **Output method**: Creates a SAS data set, and dump the records in the hash table to the data set.
- **Delete method**: Delete the hash table. Same effect as exiting the SAS data step.

All methods have a return value: A 0 return value indicates success, any non-zero values indicate failure or error.
Hash Iterator Object

Hash Iterator object is defined on a hash table object.

- It can be used to retrieve records in hash table in either forward or reverse order.
- The Find method with hash table is based on the Key value, while case-control matching is mostly based on the Data value.
- 3 Hash Iterator methods can be used to scan for matching case and controls:
  - First method: Go to the first record of underlying hash table
  - Next method: Go to the next record in the hash table
  - Prev method: Go to the previous record in the hash table

Define a Hash Iterator: use declare hiter

SAS Code: Define a Hash Iterator object

```
declare hiter h_cases('cases');
```

where cases is the underlying hash table defined before.
Communication between PDV and Hash Table

Both Program Data Vector (PDV) and Hash Table are in the memory

- PDV stores data values from the input data set, processes the data values, and outputs to resulting data set, one observation at a time.
- The communication is basically through common variable name, but in different directions

  - When the current record in hash table changes, the variables in PDV with the same names in Hash table will be updated automatically
  - But when the values in PDV variables change, they will not be updated automatically in hash table
  - To update the values for the current record in hash table, use the Replace() method
  - To locate a record in the hash table, assign the key variable in PDV with a value, then use Find() method

- To avoid getting missing values, you will have to explicitly define variables used in Hash table to be used in PDV
Communication between PDV and Hash Table

**PDV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID(Key)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hash Table**

Updated Automatically

Use Replace method

Use Find method

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Hash Table for Control Selection
### SAS Code: Generate cases and controls data sets

```sas
%let nCase=1000;
%let nControl=1000000;
%let ratio=5;

* Generate the Cases data set;
data cases(drop=i);
  retain id age gender;
  length gender $1;
  do i=1 to &nCase.;
    id=i;
    age=floor(ranuni(0)*100);
    gender=ifc(ranuni(0)>0.5,"F","M");
    output;
  end;
run;

* Generate the Controls data set;
data controls(drop=i);
  retain id age gender;
  length gender $1;
  do i=1 to &nControl.;
    id=i;
    age=floor(ranuni(0)*100);
    gender=ifc(ranuni(0)>0.5,"F","M");
    output;
  end;
run;
```

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Hash Table for Control Selection
SAS Code: Hash Tables for Case-Control Matching

data Controls_H;
  set Controls;
  control_rand=ranuni(0);
  rename age=control_age gender=control_gender id=control_id;
run;
proc sort data=controls_H; *scramble the control list for randomness;
  by control_rand;
run;
data Cases_H;
  set Cases;
  case_rand=ranuni(0); *for scramble the order of cases;
  rename age=case_age gender=case_gender id=case_id;
  count=0; *for recording number of controls matched;
run;

* the main data step;
data _null_; if _n_=1 then do;
set cases_h(obs=1); *make the variables in Cases data set available in the PDV;
  *put the cases in a hash table;
  declare hash cases(dataset:'cases_H',hashexp:8,ordered:'y');
  cases.definekey("case_rand","case_id");
  cases.definedata("case_rand","case_id","count","case_age","case_gender");
  cases.definedone();
  declare hiter hi_cases('cases'); * declare a hash table iterator object;
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  Hash Table for Control Selection
SAS Code: Hash Tables for Case-Control Matching

```
declare hash matches(); *declare a hash table for matched cases and controls;
matches.definekey("case_id","control_id");
matches.definedata("case_id","control_id");
matches.definedone();

*declare a hash table for recording matched controls;
control_id_hash=case_id;
declare hash m_control();
m_control.definekey("control_id_hash");
m_control.definedone();
m_control.clear();
end;

set controls_h end=eof;
control_id_hash=control_id; *get current control_id for searching;
if (m_control.find() ne 0) then do; *not matched to a case yet;
rc=hi_cases.first(); *search cases table using hash iterator object;
do while(rc=0);
   if (count<&ratio. and
       case_gender=control_gender and abs(case_age-control_age)<=5) then do;
      count+1;
      cases.replace();
      matches.add();
      m_control.add();
      leave;
   end;
rc=hi_cases.next();
end;
end;
```
SAS Code: Hash Tables for Case-Control Matching

*check if all the cases have matches (ie, count=&ratio.);
  done=1;
  rc=hi_cases.first();
  do while(rc=0);
    if count<&ratio. then do;
      done=0;
      leave;
    end;

    rc=hi_cases.next();
  end;

*if all the cases are matched or run out of controls, output the resulting data sets;
if (done or eof) then do;
  matches.output(dataset:"matches");
  cases.output(dataset:"matched_cases");
  m_control.output(dataset:"matched_controls");
  stop;
end;
run;
Alternative Method: Use Proc SQL and data step

SAS Code: Using Proc SQL and Data Step

data controls_S;
    set controls;
    rand_num=ranuni(0); *for scramble the order of controls;
run;
data cases_S;
    set cases;
    rand_num=ranuni(0); *for scramble the order of cases;
run;

proc sql;
    create table all_matches_S as
        select a.id as case_id, a.age as case_age, a.gender as case_gender,
        b.id as control_id, b.age as control_age, b.gender as control_gender,
        a.rand_num as case_rand,b.rand_num as control_rand
        from cases_S a, controls_S b
        where a.gender=b.gender and abs(a.age-b.age)<=5; *matching condition;
quit;

data all_matches_S;
    set all_matches_S;
    match_rand=ranuni(0); *for scrambling the order cases;
run;

proc sort data=all_matches_S;
    by control_rand match_rand;
run;
Alternative Method: Use Proc SQL and data step

SAS Code: Using Proc SQL and Data Step

```sas
data all_matches_S;
  set all_matches_S;
  by control_rand;
  if first.control_rand then output;
run;

proc sort data=all_matches_S;
  by case_rand;
run;

data all_matches_S(drop=count);
  set all_matches_S;
  retain count;
  by case_rand;
  if first.case_rand then count=0;
  count=count+1;
  if count<=&ratio. then output;
run;
```
## Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Real Time (seconds)</th>
<th>User Time (seconds)</th>
<th>System Time (seconds)</th>
<th>Max Used Memory</th>
<th>Max OS Memory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000000</td>
<td>Proc SQL</td>
<td>709.2</td>
<td>101.4</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>66983</td>
<td>74616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hash Table</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>64828</td>
<td>72560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1000000</td>
<td>Proc SQL</td>
<td>1566.7</td>
<td>207.3</td>
<td>122.8</td>
<td>66985</td>
<td>76920</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>64830</td>
<td>74864</td>
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<tr>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1000000</td>
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<td>3111.2</td>
<td>316.1</td>
<td>207.7</td>
<td>66983</td>
<td>78448</td>
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<td>8.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>64828</td>
<td>75888</td>
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<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2000000</td>
<td>Proc SQL</td>
<td>1740.3</td>
<td>208.0</td>
<td>119.4</td>
<td>66983</td>
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<td>14.5</td>
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<td>77944</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>67007</td>
<td>77944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Comments & Questions?