Designing Survey Items for Youth

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As you enter the room ...

Share your name, organization, and your favorite Fall food.

Asking questions & participating in polls

- **Ask questions any time using the chat by toggling the chat button at the bottom of your WebEx window**

- **Indicate you want to share verbally using the hand raise feature**

- **We will use Slido during today's session for polls and activities**
  - Slido should automatically appear in your righthand panel on WebEx when the poll is launched. If it does not, toggle it by clicking the "apps" button at the bottom of the screen and select Slido.

- **We will also use Slido to collect feedback at the end**
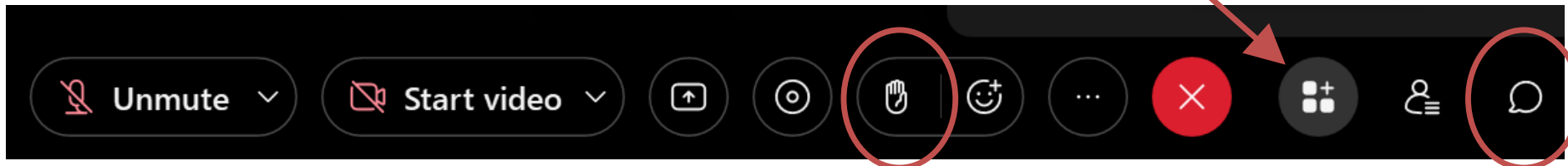
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Session 2 recap

- **Session 2 covered developing a data collection plan**

- **Your data collection plan will be informed by:**
    - ✓ Your research questions
    - ✓ The type of data you want to collect
    - ✓ If you need to collect sensitive information
    - ✓ Whose perspective you need
    - ✓ The schedule for data collection
    - ✓ The data collection method you will use

Today's learning objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will be familiar with:

- **How to build survey items to answer your research questions and collect the type of data you want to collect from youth**

All activities associated with today's presentation are optional

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Considerations when using survey items from other resources

Is the item appropriate for your study?

- What populations was the item used with?
  - Age, race/ethnicity, location
- What data collection method was used?
- Do the researchers discuss how the items performed?
- How did the researchers define the topics they were trying to measure in this study?

Is the item part of a larger assessment?

- In some cases, the full assessment may be relevant.
- In other cases, a subscale or individual items might be sufficient.

Do you need permission to use the item?

- Items accessed in the public domain are generally permissible to use
- Some items may be copyrighted and require permission or a fee to use

Suggested existing resources

- **The Repository for Survey Items for Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Evaluations**
  - Designed for use in evaluations of TPP programs and includes items in the following domains: Healthy Relationships, Sexual Behavior, Caregivers, Maternal and Child Health, Attitudes and Beliefs, Related Factors.

- **The Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Recommended Outcome Measures for Adolescents**
  - Source for items related to adolescent relationships

- **Previous studies of SRAE/TPP programs**
  - Evaluation reports, such as those found in the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review

- **Youth engagement and facilitator quality SRAENE Toolkit**
  - Includes resources for surveys, and other data collection methods

- **CDC Q-Bank**
  - Online resource developed by CDC on a range of health-related topics such as health behaviors, mental health, school and education, and social activities and relationships

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Slido discussion

What are your go-to sources of existing survey items?

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Using your phone?
- Go to Slido.com and type code 2961425
- Or scan the QR code below

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Slido discussion

What are your go-to sources of existing survey items?

Publications

FL Health Charts

Haven't used any

nFORM

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey

I've not used any before.

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Developing and refining survey items: Writing your own survey questions

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Avoid leading questions

Leading questions prompt respondents to answer one way or another.

- **They are often based on assumptions and can skew the accuracy of results**
  - Such as: "How wonderful is…?" or "What difficulties did you have with….?"

How much did you enjoy [curriculum activity]?

On a scale from 1-5, how would you rate [curriculum activity]?

Ask questions one at a time

Avoid questions that ask about more than one topic but allow only a single answer.

- **They can be difficult to answer, lead to hard to interpret results, and are better suited as two separate questions.**

Is the classroom environment welcoming and accessible?

Is the classroom environment welcoming?
Is the classroom environment accessible?

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Write questions that are specific

- **Avoid**
  - Ambiguous/vague words, such as usually or many
  - Long and/or wordy questions
  - Double negatives

- **Do**
  - Specify the relevant time period
  - Ask about short periods of time

Do you usually talk to your parents about school?

How often have you talked to your parents about school in the last month?

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Review response formats to make sure...

- **The response formats align with the type of question you're asking**
  - Questions about events and behaviors often use occurrence and frequency response options or relative frequencies
  - Questions about attitudes and opinions often use Likert scales, such as agree/disagree statements

- **The response options are mutually exclusive or don't overlap**

Red box:
- 1-2 times
- 2-3 times
- 3-4 times
- 4-5 times
- 5 or more times

Green box:
- 1-2 times
- 3-4 times
- 5 or more times

Label all response options

Partially labeled

- 1 = Never

- 2

- 3

- 4

- 5 = Very often

Completely labeled

- 1 = Never

- 2 = Rarely

- 3 = Sometimes

- 4 = Often

- 5 = Very often

Provide all instructions before asking the question

Respondents are more likely to overlook instructions when placed after a question.

How many days did you smoke cigarettes or use electronic vapor products in the past 30 days? This includes e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods.

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Provide any instructions before asking the question

Respondents are more likely to overlook instructions when placed after a question.

Now we want to know the number of times you smoked cigarettes or used electronic vapor products in the past 30 days. Electronic vapor products include e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookahs, hookah pens, and mods.

How many days did you smoke cigarettes or use electronic vapor products in the past 30 days?

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Additional tips

- **Make sure your questions don't convey judgement**
  - For example: "How much do you agree that it is good to wait until marriage to have sex?"
    - In this question, the word "good" conveys a value judgement

- **Consider that trauma or past experiences might affect respondents' ability to answer questions**
  - Allow youth to skip items they are uncomfortable with
  - Consider what resources/supports are available

- **Ensure that items are culturally and developmentally appropriate**
  - Pretest with youth
  - Aim for a high readability index

The Flesch-Kincaid Grade test, built into Microsoft Word, is a great tool to use for drafting easy-to-read survey questions.

Survey writing resources

- **For general tips on writing survey items, check out [Advances in the Science of Asking Questions | Annual Reviews](#)**

- **For specifics related to surveying youth, check out [Microsoft Word - Surveying Children & adolescents.doc (aka.fi)](#)**

Slido discussion

What have you found to be most helpful when developing survey items for youth?

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Slido discussion

What have you found to be most helpful when developing survey items for youth?

Reading level

Clear directions with simple language

Making sure to not create a feeling of shame for participants while answering the questions, so how the questions are worded is important.

Explaining jargon/slang and time taken for explanation.

cultural relevancy

These are all good tips. Definitely reading level and clarity

length of survey

Readability, make sure to avoid survey fatigue and to reduce cognitive load on students

Evergreen language, things that won't change over time

Length and reading comprehension level

Primary Language

Comprehension is the most important thing.

Slido discussion

Our team wrote the following question as an example for a survey of a high school audience.

What issues do you see with the question?

Do you agree that its generally better to wait until you are married or, at least, in a long-term relationship to have sexual relations with your boyfriend or girlfriend?

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Slido discussion

What issues do you see with the question?

Do you agree that its generally better to wait until you are married or, at least, in a long-term relationship to have sexual relations with your boyfriend or girlfriend?

Should we keep it nonbinary and use partner instead?

The question is long

vague language, not specific

Long question, could be simplified.

Leading - "do you agree" indicating a "right" answer

Asking them to agree is leading

need to be simplified

long term relationship is relative

Not clear

It's a leading question.

"generally better" is subjective

"Generally better" is a judgment

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Q & A

Feedback survey

Contact information

- **Send questions, comments, concerns to the SRAE mailbox:**

  SRAETA@mathematica-mpr.com