

Pretesting of the 2009 School Crime Supplement: Final Results and Recommendations

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This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed in this report are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Educational Statistics, in conjunction with Demographic Surveys Division (DSD) of the U.S. Census Bureau requested that staff in the Census Bureau's Statistical Research Division (SRD) pretest proposed changes to the 2009 School Crime Supplement (SCS) of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The sponsors requested a series of changes to some of questions, and SRD staff tested those suggested changes across two different rounds of cognitive interviews. This report contains the results of both rounds of cognitive interviews. Our main findings include:

- ◆ Overall, the changes to the questions were not problematic.

The sponsors made changes to the questions about participation in school activities, the presence of friends and teachers with whom students can talk, the availability of drugs, avoiding certain school locations, and weapons at school. The sponsors also added a question about anonymously reporting of school threats and expanded the question on internet bullying. Overall, the changes and the additional question were not problematic. Respondents had little difficulty with the altered questions.

- ◆ Respondents had some trouble with questions that did not undergo any revisions.

Respondents had some difficulty with the questions about getting to and from school, classroom disruptions, involvement in physicals fighting, and bullying. We recommended changes to these questions and the respondents accepted most of the suggested changes.

- ◆ Some questions continue to be problematic across multiple waves of the survey.

In particular, the question about the availability of certain drugs yielded pretesting results that were inconsistent across both of the current rounds of interviews. These pretesting results were also inconsistent with previous pretesting research and the actual survey data. Respondents had some trouble with the different drug categories and were unfamiliar with some of the examples in the question. We encouraged the sponsors to consider this question in subsequent pretesting research.

Pretesting of the 2009 School Crime Supplement: Final Results and Recommendations

The Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Educational Statistics, in conjunction with Demographic Surveys Division (DSD) of the U.S. Census Bureau requested that staff in the Census Bureau's Statistical Research Division (SRD) conduct pretesting research on the proposed changes to the 2009 School Crime Supplement (SCS) of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).

The purpose of SCS is to provide detailed statistical information about the types and prevalence of crime found in schools. The survey collects information on topics such as bullying, drug use, and violence. As part of the NCVS, the supplement is administered to all household members between the ages of 12 and 18 years old.

The sponsors requested a series of changes to some of the SCS questions, and SRD staff tested those suggested changes across two different rounds of cognitive interviews. This report contains the results of both rounds of cognitive interviews. In the following sections we will present our pretesting methodology, the overall pretesting results and the detailed question-by-question results.

Method

To pretest the changes to the 2009 SCS we conducted two rounds of cognitive interviews. The first round took place in July of 2008. The second round of interviews took place in August of 2008.

Round 1 Participants

For the first round of pretesting, we interviewed five children between the ages of 13 and 18, who lived and attended school in Washington, D.C., Montgomery County, Maryland, and Prince Georges County, Maryland. All five respondents attended public school. Table 1 provides the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Round 1 Cognitive Interview Respondents

Grade		Sex		Race and Ethnicity	
<u>7-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>White</u>
2	3	1	4	2	3

Recruiting respondents for both rounds of interviews proved to be a difficult task. For the second round of interviews it was difficult to find children in the target age-group who were available. These interviews coincided with the start of the new school year, and therefore, some kids were unavailable. As a result of these recruiting difficulties, we were unable to recruit any male respondents for the second round of cognitive interviews.

Round 2 Participants

For the second round of interviews we interviewed five children between the ages of 12 and 16, who lived and attended school in Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Four respondents attended public schools and one respondent attended a private Catholic school. Table 2 provides the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the second round of interviews.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Round 2 Cognitive Interview Respondents

Grade		Sex		Race and Ethnicity		
<u>7-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Hispanic/Latino</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Asian</u>
4	1	0	5	2	2	1

Cognitive Interviews

Both rounds of cognitive pretesting used a paper-based version of the SCS. Before the first round of interviews, the sponsors submitted the requested changes to DSD. We reviewed these proposed changes, and after consultation with the sponsors, determined the changes that would be a part of the first round of interviews. After this first round, we present the results to the sponsors and recommended additional changes to the questions. The sponsors accepted most of the changes and we implemented them for the second round of interviews. We then conducted a second round of cognitive interviews.

The cognitive interviews followed a standard think-aloud procedure in which researchers ask respondents to think out loud while answering the survey questions and to talk about how they came up with their answers. After some of the questions, we asked concurrent probes to make sure we understood respondents' answers and to gauge their understanding of the question and key terms in it. At the end of the questionnaire, we asked respondents a series of retrospective probes about their overall thoughts and impressions of the questions.

Overall Results

Overall, the changes to the questions seemed to working well across both rounds. For the most part, respondents were able to understand and answer the survey questions. There were a few issues with some of the revised questions that we present in the question-by-question results. We also uncovered a few issues with some of the other supplement questions, which we also document in the following section.

In the next section of the report, we discuss the question-by-question results. Because we did not find problems with every question, we only include the questions for which we observed problems. Appendix A contains the final version of the SCS supplement.

Question-by-Question Results

Question Q7a-7c

We included these questions in the probing as a “warm-up” to the cognitive interview probing. In the first round of interviews, all of the respondents attended public schools. In the second round of cognitive interviews one respondent attended private school, and the remaining four students attended public school. Because of the skip pattern for these questions, the respondent who attended private school did not answer the probes for this question.

7a. Is your school public or private?

If 7a = Public, then ask:

7b. Is this the regular school that most of the students in your neighborhood attend?

If 7a = Private, then ask:

7c. Is your school church-related?

Round 1 Results

- Four respondents reported that their public school was the “regular school” for kids in their neighborhood. One respondent indicated that her school was not the regular school in her neighborhood. This latter respondent attended a public charter school outside of her neighborhood.
- Respondents didn’t have any problems understanding or answering these questions.
- Respondents understood the concept of “regular school.”

Although respondents gave slightly different definitions of the term, they all understood that the term referred to their neighborhood school. One respondent mentioned that his school was the “regular school” for his neighborhood, but that parents in the school district are able to choose a different school for their children.

We made no changes to this question for the next round of interviews.

Round 2 Results

- Three respondents reported that they attended public school. All three of these respondents indicated that this was the “regular school” for their neighborhood. These respondents understood that this term was referring to the school to which they were assigned based on districting.
- Two respondents indicated that they attended private school. One of these respondents correctly identified her school as a private school. She also indicated that her school was church-related (Q7c = “yes”). The other respondent incorrectly reported her school as a

private school. When the interviewer initially asked this question, the respondent immediately asked for clarification on the definitions of “public school” and “private school.” She ultimately decided that her current school was a public school, and gave “public” as her answer.

When the interviewer asked her the follow-up Q7b about her school being the “regular school” in her neighborhood, she indicated that her school was not the regular school. Hearing the term “regular school” and providing her definition prompted her to go back and incorrectly change her answer to Q7a, reporting her school as “private.” Question 7b seemed to solidify her definition of “regular school” and led her to the interpretation that public schools were “regular schools” for the kids in the neighborhood, and private schools were any schools outside of the neighborhood. In actuality, the respondent’s school is a public charter school. The respondent’s family exercised the option to send her to another school other than the one to which she would be assigned. This response error seems largely due to the respondent’s misconception of public charter schools. Her misunderstanding of the difference between public school and private schools also seemed to contribute to this error.

Although we did not observe this type of error with any other respondents, this error may not become increasingly more common. Some children, particularly younger children, may not understand the concept of charter schools, leading to confusion when answering Q7a. However, because the survey does collect information about the name and location of the school, we recommended that the data be edited to correct for this type of response error. The sponsors indicated that they currently do have such data edits in place.

Final Recommendation: We did not have any recommendations for changes to these questions.

Question 9 and Question 11

This question was not revised for the 2009 SCS. However, in the first round some respondents had difficulties with this question.

9. How do you get to school most of the time?

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *If multiple modes are used, code the mode in which the student spends the most time.*

- Walk
- School bus
- Public bus, subway, train
- Car
- Bicycle, motorbike, or motorcycle
- Some other way - *Specify*

11. How do you get home from school most of the time?

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *If multiple modes are used, code the mode in which the student spends the most time.*

If the student volunteers that he or she does not go directly home after school, record the mode that the student uses to get to his or her first destination after school.

- Walk
- School bus
- Public bus, subway, train
- Car
- Bicycle, motorbike, or motorcycle
- Some other way - *Specify*

Round 1 Results**Q9:**

- Three respondents indicated that they took the school bus, one respondent indicated that she took both a public bus and the subway, and one respondent indicated that she drove herself to school in a car.

The respondent who drove herself to school during the previous school year initially reported that she rode the school bus. She was answering this question in terms of all four years of high school. She rode the bus to school most often, because she rode it for three years. For the purposes of the interview, the interviewer asked the respondent to limit her focus to the previous school year. She changed her answer to “car.”

- For both Q9 and Q11, three respondents gave complicated answers that may lead to errors. They tended to report all of the ways in which they get to and from school. For example, one respondent reported that his Mom picks him up from baseball practice after school. According to the interviewer instructions, because he walks to baseball practice on school ground, he should report that he walks from school to his first destination. However, that mode is not an accurate description of how he gets home from school most of the time.

- Respondents sometimes gave inconsistent answers to Q9 and Q11 that did not seem related to differences in how the respondents get to and from school.

One respondent reported that she took a public bus to school in the morning, but that she took both a bus and train home from school. In discussing how she got home from school, she initially indicated that she took a train, and then added that she also took the bus. Probing revealed that she was actually on the bus for the longest period of time. She took the bus to the train in the afternoon. Her reports of her school commute seemed inconsistent. This respondent may have been basing her answers on the final mode of transportation that took her to the destination, rather than all modes of transportation. The interviewer did not probe the inconsistencies in her responses.

Because this question did not specify a reference period, it was unclear whether the respondents should limit their report to the current school year or if they should be using a wider reference period (i.e. all of high school, all of junior high, etc.). Feedback from the sponsors indicated that the intent of this question was for respondents to report on the current school year. Based on this intent, we recommended revising the question to specifically refer to the current school year. We recommended this change for both Q9 and the related Q11. The sponsors agreed to adopt this change. We tested the following version of the question for the second round of interviews:

9. How [did you/do you] get to school most of the time this school year?

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *If multiple modes are used, code the mode in which the student spends the most time.*

- Walk
- School bus
- Public bus, subway, train
- Car
- Bicycle, motorbike, or motorcycle
- Some other way - *Specify*

11. How [did you/do you] get home from school most of the time this school year?

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *If multiple modes are used, code the mode in which the student spends the most time.*

If the student volunteers that he or she does not go directly home after school, record the mode that the student uses to get to his or her first destination after school.

- Walk
- School bus
- Public bus, subway, train
- Car
- Bicycle, motorbike, or motorcycle
- Some other way - *Specify*

Round 2 Results

- Three respondents reported getting to school in a car. One of these respondents reported getting home on the school bus rather than in a car.

- Two respondents reported taking public transportation (bus and subway) to get to and from school.

- One respondent provided answers to these two questions that were inconsistent.

Similar to the respondent in the first round of pretesting, this respondent also reported taking both a public bus and subway to school. The public bus took her to the train station and she rode the train to school. However, she indicated that she took the subway home. She did not mention taking the bus to the subway.

In the case of this respondents and the respondent from the first round, their potential response errors do not make a difference in their final answers to the question, as both modes of transportation are in the same response category. However, other respondents who have mixed mode commutes to and from school may not only take public transportation. If those respondents only report the mode that takes them to their final destination, then there will be response errors. Because we do not know how common this type of error might be in the larger respondent population, we are not recommending any additional changes to the question. We make a note of this potential error as something to look for in future rounds of testing, and as caveat to interpretations of the data for these questions.

Final recommendation: We did not have any additional recommendations for changes to these questions.

Question 13

For the 2009 SCS the sponsors requested changes to one of response categories. They requested that “sponsored by your school” be added to both versions of category f. We tested the following version of the question:

13. During this school year, have you participated in any of the following activities sponsored by your school:

- a. Athletic teams at school?
- b. Spirit groups, for example, Cheerleading, Dance Team, or Pep Club?
- c. Performing arts, for example, Band, Choir, Orchestra, or Drama?
- d. Academic clubs, for example, Debate Team, Honor Society, Spanish Club, or Math Club?
- e. Student government?
- f. [IF GRADES 6, 7, or 8] Community service or volunteer clubs sponsored by your school, for example, Peer Mediators, Ecology Club, or Recycling Club?
[IF GRADES 9, 10, 11, or 12] Community service or volunteer clubs sponsored by your school, for example, Peer Mediators, Ecology Club, Key Club, or Interact?
- g. Other school clubs or school activities?

Round 1 Results

- Four respondents reported participating in at least one of the school clubs or activities in this question. One respondent did not report participating in any of these clubs or activities.
- Respondents understood that this question was asking about involvement in school activities.

One respondent added that because this was a survey on crime, this question might also be used to figure out how vulnerable students may be to school crime.

- Respondents also understood most of the terms in the question.

More specifically, respondents understood the term “spirit groups.” The examples in the response category were helpful to figuring out the definition of the term. It is worth noting that four respondents were not familiar with the term “pep club.” However, this lack of familiarity with this one term did not lead to any misunderstanding of the response category.

- Two respondents had a different interpretation of “community service clubs.”

These two respondents thought of these clubs as something related to “getting hours.” Both respondents attend school systems that require students to complete a number of community service hours in order to receive a diploma. Although neither of these respondents committed a response error when answering the question, as noted in previous pretesting of this question (Jocuns & DeMaio, 2006), there is the potential that some respondents will include community service activities that are not directly school-sponsored, but are part of a graduation requirement.

- There also were some potential response errors:

1. A respondent said “yes” to spirit groups. She reported that she and her friends attempted to start a cheerleading squad at her school. The plans to start the squad eventually floundered and the group never came into fruition.
2. A respondent included her participation in creative writing. She asked if creative writing counted as an “academic club.” She ultimately decided that creative writing did belong in the category and answered in the affirmative to the “academic clubs” category.
3. A respondent did not include her participation in an after-school tutoring program. Kids from the local high school come to her school and tutor kids who need extra help. The respondent got help in math. Both the respondent’s school and the high school sponsor the program. The respondent ultimately decided this tutoring was an out-of-scope activity. It was unclear if this exclusion was correct.

It was unclear if the respondents should have included the cheerleading team and the creative writing. It was also unclear if respondents should be excluding participation in after-school tutoring. Feedback from the sponsors indicated that all three of these responses were correct. We made no changes to the question for the second round of interviews.

Round 2 Results

- All five respondents reported participating in at least one school club or activity in these questions.
- All five respondents also understood these questions.

They understood that these questions were asking about involvement in school and extra-curricular activities.

- Respondents also understood the terms in the question.
- There were two response errors:
 1. One respondent included her participation in non-school sponsored community youth organization. She played soccer with a youth sports organization. She included this activity in the “other school clubs or school activities” category. When the interviewer probed this inclusion the respondent realized her error. She had failed to attend to the “school” references in the question.
 2. One respondent reported that she participated in “spirit groups” (dance) and “performing arts” (plays). She was attending a performing arts school and participation in plays and dance performances were a requirement. It is unclear if including these required activities is part of the intent of this question.

The first response error was simply a failure on the respondent’s part to fully attend to the question. She appeared to be trying to remember all of her activities and reported one that was not in-scope. This type of error is difficult to prevent, as it is dependent on the respondent carefully listening to the question.

The second error is only a potential error, as it is not clear that including activities that are part of the school curriculum is not appropriate. The spirit of this question seems to imply that any participation in activities, required or not, is of interest. Discussion with the sponsors confirmed that this question intends to collect information on any group activity, even if it is part of the required curriculum.

Final Recommendation: We did not have any recommendations for changes to this question.

Question 14b

This question was added to the 2009 SCS.

14b. If you hear about a threat to school or student safety, do you have a way to report it to someone in authority without giving your name?

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *The term ‘authority’ includes the police, teachers, principals, security guards, or other school staff. It does not include the student’s parents, guardians, or peers.*

Round 1 Results

- Four respondents reported that there was a way to anonymously report threats. One respondent said there was not a way to anonymously report threats.

The respondent who reported that there was not a way to anonymously report threats answered this way because she did not know for certain if it was possible to make an anonymous report. She indicated, “not

that I know of.” She said her school did not have a drop box where student could write down and deposit concerns that school administrators would read and address.

- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering this question.
- None of the respondents asked for clarification on the term “authority figure.”

However, we asked respondents about whom they were thinking when answering this question. Respondents included security guards, school administrators and teachers in their definition of an “authority figure.” One respondent specifically excluded teachers in his definition of an authority figure because he did not feel teachers had enough power to act on the types of threats that might be involved.

Because this question was not problematic for respondents, we had no recommendations to change the question for the second round of interviews.

Round 2 Results

- All five respondents reported that it was possible to anonymously report threats.

One respondent hesitated before giving her answer. As with the first round respondent, this respondent knew that her school did not have a formal “drop box” for writing down concerns. However, she did feel that some students might feel comfortable directly approaching school staff and administrators if they had a concern and those people would honor the request to keep the respondent’s name anonymous. Incidentally, one respondent indicated that her school actually had a “drop box” where students could communicate their concerns.

- None of the respondents in this round asked for clarification on the term “authority figure.”

When the interviewer probed whom their definition of authority figure would include, respondents included teachers, security guard, school administrators, and the school psychologist.

Final Recommendations: We did not have any recommendations for changes to this question.

Questions 15a and 15b

This question was not part of the 2009 changes to the SCS. We did not observe any problems with this question in the first round of cognitive interviews. However, one respondent in the second round had some difficulties with this question.

15a. In your classes, how often are you distracted from doing your schoolwork because other students are misbehaving, for example, talking or fighting?

(READ CATEGORIES.)

Never
Almost never
Sometimes
Most of the time

15b. How often do teachers punish students during your classes?

(READ CATEGORIES.)

Never
Almost never
Sometimes
Most of the time

Round 2 Results

- Only one respondent had problems with this question. R had some difficulties answering Q15b. She wasn't sure how she should interpret the question. She answered that there are distractions in her classes **sometimes** in Q15a. In Q15b she answered that teachers punished student **most of the time**. Her interpretation was that this question was a follow-up to Q15a. In other words, she thought she was indicating *how* teachers responded when the kids were disruptive during class. When kids were disruptive in class, as she reported in the previous question, the teachers would punish that misbehaving behavior *most of the time*.

Final recommendation: Given the way both questions are structured, it appeared that the desired interpretation is what the majority of respondents seemed to adopt: these two questions are orthogonal. Feedback from the sponsors indicated that this interpretation is correct. To clarify this interpretation we recommend the following minor change in wording:

15b. In general, how often do teachers punish students during your classes?

Sponsor Feedback: The sponsors accepted this recommendation and adopted the changes.

Questions 16c and 16d

The statements in both of these questions were originally worded in the first person. However, for the 2009 SCS the sponsors changed the wording to directly speak to the respondents. The sponsors also revised the wording of Q16c to make it less grammatically awkward.

16c. Thinking about all of the ADULTS at your school, including teachers, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following ...

a. At school, there is an ADULT you can talk to, who cares about your feelings and what happens to you.

b. At school, there is an ADULT who helps you with practical problems, who gives good suggestions and advice about your problems.

16d. Thinking about FRIENDS at your school, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following...

a. At school, you have a FRIEND you can talk to, who cares about your feelings and what happens to you.

b. At school, you have a FRIEND who helps you with practical problems, who gives good suggestions and advice about your problems.

Round 1 Results

- Respondents had some problems with the terms in this question.

Two respondents asked for clarification of the term “practical problems” because they were not sure of its meaning were not sure of the intended meaning. When asked to define the term in their own words, both respondents thought that practical problems referred to worries or concern not related to school or school work. They indicated that family problems or feeling overwhelmed with school work would qualify as “practical problems.”

We left it up to the sponsors to decide if the difficulty in understanding “practical problems” and the effects it may have on respondents’ answers were problematic for their data. We recommended that, if it was important to keep the term in the question, then the sponsors should included examples of “practical problems” within the question text or provide an interviewer instruction that would include a definition of practical problems, should the respondent ask for clarification. The sponsors felt that the difficulty in understanding this term would be problematic for their data and ultimately decided to revise the wording to the statement in 16c and the parallel statement in 16d as follows:

16c. Thinking about all of the ADULTS at your school, including teachers, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following ...

a. At school, there is an ADULT you can talk to, who cares about your feelings and what happens to you.

b. At school, there is an ADULT who gives good suggestions and advice about your problems.

16d. Thinking about FRIENDS at your school, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following...

a. At school, you have a FRIEND you can talk to, who cares about your feelings and what happens to you.

b. At school, you have a FRIEND who gives you good suggestions and advice about your problems.

Round 2 Results

- Respondents in this round did not have any problems answering these two questions.

Respondents were able to understand what these questions were asking.

- When answering these questions, respondents were thinking about teachers at their school, along with school counselors, school administrators, and a school psychologist. One respondent even included a security guard as someone to whom she could talk.
- Removing “practical problems” from the second statement and rephrasing it seemed to eliminate confusion without creating additional problems.

To assess what respondents might be thinking about when answering these two statements, we asked respondents to give examples of the kinds of problems about which they were thinking. Respondents included problems with friends, problems with family members, problems in romantic relationships, and problems with certain classes or grades as the types of things they were thinking about when they heard that statement. Respondents also indicated that they were thinking about the same types of problems for both adults at school and friends. Qualitatively, there don’t appear to be any differences between the types of problems respondents were thinking of in the first round and the types of problems of which respondents in the second round were thinking.

Final recommendation: We had no additional recommendations for changes to these questions. However, the sponsors were concerned that the two statements in both Q16c and Q16d were too closely correlated to be of analytical value. In other words, the sponsors were concerned that respondents were not interpreting the two statements in both questions as qualitatively different. After looking at the agreement between respondents answers for the two statements within each question, the sponsors confirmed that there is a high degree of consistency. There is little variability in the degree to which respondents agree with statement a and the degree to which they also agree with statement b. As a result

of this correlation, respondents requested that statement b be deleted from both Q16c and Q16d. The revised version of these questions will read as follows:

16c. Thinking about all of the ADULTS at your school, including teachers, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following ...

a. At school, there is an ADULT you can talk to, who cares about your feelings and what happens to you.

16d. Thinking about FRIENDS at your school, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following...

a. At school, you have a FRIEND you can talk to, who cares about your feelings and what happens to you.

Question 17a

For the 2009 SCS the sponsors added “steroids” as an additional example in the drug category prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription.

17a. The following question refers to the availability of drugs and alcohol at your school.

Tell me if you don't know what any of these items are.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - For “Don't Know” responses, probe if necessary to determine if respondent means they do not know if the drug is available or if they do not know the drug.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *For each item ask,*

Is it possible to get _____ at your school?

- a. Alcoholic beverages**
- b. Marijuana**
- c. Crack**
- d. Other forms of cocaine**
- e. Uppers such as ecstasy, crystal meth or other illegal stimulants**
- f. Downers such as GHB or sleeping pills**
- g. LSD or acid**
- h. PCP or angel dust**
- i. Heroin or smack**
- j. Prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription, such as Ritalin, Oxycontin, or Steroids**
- k. Other illegal drugs**

*If “Yes” is marked, ASK - What drugs?
(Exclude tobacco products.)*

Round 1 Results

- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering this question.

It is worth noting that two respondents provided “no” responses to most of the drugs in this question. Both of these respondents indicated that kids at their respective schools “don’t do drugs.” However, we think these “no” responses may have been “don’t know” responses. The respondents seemed to be basing their answers on their perceptions about the kids at school. Both of these respondents were not yet in high school. They may have a relatively “naïve” perception about drug activity. However, a third respondent, who had just finished high school, seemed very uncomfortable with her “don’t know” responses, although she did use it to indicate her uncertainty in the availability of the drugs.

The question text does not specifically indicate that a “don’t know” response is acceptable for the availability of a drug. If respondents have a default “no” response because they are uncertain or unaware of the availability of certain drugs, then drug activity will go underreported. However, discussions with the sponsor indicated that encouraging a “don’t know” response was not desirable. As a result, we recommended no changes to the question for addressing this issue.

- Respondents were not familiar with some of the drugs in the response categories. When respondents were unfamiliar with a drug, they successfully provided the “don’t know drug” response.
- Respondents understood the term “prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription.” They understood that this term referred to using someone else’s prescription drugs or having a way to get drugs that require a prescription. However, not all respondents were familiar with all of the examples. All of the respondents had heard of Steroids. Three respondents had heard of Ritalin. Only one respondent had heard of Oxycontin.
- One respondent reported drugs in the “other illegal drugs” category. One of her reports was a response error. She reported kids using “Black and Milds,” which are actually a tobacco product, and hence, not an illegal drug. However, the respondent was not certain that they were only a tobacco product.

The other example the respondent provided also was a potential response error. The respondent indicated that birth control was available in her school, and that kids “pass it around like water.” Including this drug in the “other illegal drugs” category is either a response error because respondents should limit their report to drugs that create an altered state (i.e., stimulants or depressants), or it is a response error because the respondent should have included it in the “prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription” category. Discussions with the sponsor indicated that they did not intend for respondents to include birth control in either response category. We recommended no changes to the question to reflect the inclusion of birth control.

However, the sponsors also decided to make a change to the question because few respondents had heard of Oxycontin, which could result in an under-reporting of this type of illegal prescription drug abuse. There was also some evidence that the examples of the drugs could constrain respondents’ interpretation of this category, limiting their reports to only these three drugs. It also was unclear from the first round of testing if having steroid in category “j” was necessary to prompt reports of steroid use or if it should be its own category. For the second round of testing, the sponsors requested the following changes to category “j”:

j. Prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription, such as Ritalin or prescription pain killers?

We tested this change in the second round of interviews.

17a. The following question refers to the availability of drugs and alcohol at your school.

Tell me if you don't know what any of these items are.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - For "Don't Know" responses, probe if necessary to determine if respondent means they do not know if the drug is available or if they do not know the drug.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE - *For each item ask,*

Is it possible to get _____ at your school?

- a. Alcoholic beverages**
- b. Marijuana**
- c. Crack**
- d. Other forms of cocaine**
- e. Uppers such as ecstasy, crystal meth or other illegal stimulants**
- f. Downers such as GHB or sleeping pills**
- g. LSD or acid**
- h. PCP or angel dust**
- i. Heroin or smack**
- j. Prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription, such as Ritalin or prescription pain killers**
- k. Other illegal drugs**

*If "Yes" is marked, ASK - What drugs?
(Exclude tobacco products.)*

Round 2 Results:

- Respondents in this round of pretesting did not have any problems understanding or answering this question.

We again observed what appeared to be a default "no" response to the illegal drugs in this question. Four of the five respondents indicated that none of these drugs were available at their schools. Two of these respondents seemed quite surprised and uncomfortable at answering these questions. They both indicated that it was highly unlikely that any kids at their school would be involved in drugs. The interviewer probed these "no" responses to determine if the respondents actually knew that kids did not do any drugs or that they had simply never heard of it happening. The respondents never specifically heard about drug activity but could not say for certain that it was not present in the school.

In contrast one respondent had a default "yes" response to the drugs in this question. She knew for certain that certain drugs were available at her school. However, for other drugs, she was guessing that they were available based on rumors about student drug use. She has heard students talk about using most of these drugs, and therefore, assumed that they were available at her school. The only drug she knew of that probably wasn't available was "prescription drugs illegally obtained with a prescription." She hadn't heard of kids using those kinds of drugs.

- Respondents did not have any problems understanding the phrase “prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription.”

Respondents understood that the phrase referred to acquiring prescription-restricted drugs, either through purchasing them illegally, or stealing a prescription.

- We still observed problems with the examples in the “prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription” question.

In this round only one respondent had heard of Ritalin. Also, the prescription pain killers did not seem to work for all of the respondents. When indicating what they thought “prescription pain killers” meant, most respondents focused on prescriptions for drugs like Tylenol. They were not focusing on the fact that these types of drugs are opiates that will also result in a high. However, across both rounds of pretesting, only three respondents had heard of Oxycontin.

The category of illegal drug use does not seem to be a problematic concept. Respondents understand the concept of prescription abuse. However, the examples seem to muddy the concept and could potentially constrain respondents’ reports of drugs in this category. One possibility would be to change the drug categories in the question as follows:

i. Opiates, such as heroin, smack or Oxycontin

j. Prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription such as...

Drugs like Oxycontin also require a prescription and having respondents report usage in a previous category may prompt double reporting. However, other drugs referenced in previous categories, such as sleeping pills, also require a prescription, but the results from the current pretesting do not suggest that such double-reporting is a problem.

Discussions with the sponsors indicated that they would like to keep the different forms of opiates in separate categories because they view heroin use as something qualitatively different from opiates that come in pill form. The sponsors also indicated that the examples in this category were originally pulled from the drugs respondents specified in the “other illegal drugs” category. They looked at the frequency with which respondents provided these other drugs to determine if the frequency warranted mention in this category. The sponsors found that Oxycontin, Vicodin, and Xanax were the most frequently reported drugs. Therefore, the sponsors requested that these drugs be added to category j. The new response category will read:

j. Prescription drugs illegally obtained without a prescription such as Oxycontin, Vicodin, and Xanax.

However we would like to note that this part of the question may continue to be problematic. The concept of illegally obtained prescriptions, while not overly difficult for respondents to comprehend, is difficult to communicate in question format. Also complicating this question is the fact that this category is not necessarily mutually exclusive with other response categories (i.e., sleeping pills, which are mentioned in another category, are also sometimes prescription drugs that could be illegally obtained).

Current and previous rounds the cognitive pretesting of this question have yielded contradictory results. Pretesting for the last wave of the SCS indicated that respondents were familiar with Oxycontin (Jocuns & DeMaio, 2006). In the current rounds of pretesting, only three respondents had heard of Oxycontin. The existing survey data also suggest the opposite of what the respondents in the current interviews reported knowing. Oxycontin was one of the most frequently reported drugs in the “other” category, hence, its inclusion in the current “prescription drug” category. We note these inconsistencies regarding this particular category of drugs and encourage the sponsors consider this question for future pretesting.

Question 18a and Q18b

This question was not part of the changes for the 2009 SCS. Respondents in the first round of interviews did not have any problems with this question. However, this question was problematic for one respondent in the second round.

18a. During this school year, have you been in one or more physical fights at school?

If Q18a = yes:

18b. During this school year, how many times have you been in a physical fight at school?

Round 2 Results

- Four respondents were able to correctly interpret these questions.

These four respondents indicated that they were not involved in any fights during the school year. Accordingly, they were not asked the follow-up question, Q18b.

- One respondent misinterpreted Q18a and therefore provided an incorrect answer to it and to the Q18b follow-up question. The R reported that she had been involved in five physical fights during the school year.

This respondent thought Q18a was asking about the number of fights she *witnessed*. This respondent had seen several physical fights in the hallways at school. She was never involved in any of those fights. However she thought this question was asking about being “in the crowd” when a fight was going on in the hallways.

Final Recommendation: Only one respondent committed a response error when answering this question. We do not think that other respondents are likely to share this respondent’s misinterpretation of the question. Therefore, we did not recommend any changes to this question.

Question 19 series

This question series was not part of the changes to the 2009 SCS. However, respondents had some trouble answering these questions.

19a. Now I have some questions about what students do at school that make you feel bad or are hurtful to you. We often refer to this as being bullied. You may include events you told me about already. During this school year, has any student bullied you?

That is, has another student...

(Read each category a-g.)

- a. Made fun of you, called you names, or insulted you?**
- b. Spread rumors about you?**
- c. Threatened you with harm?**
- d. Pushed you, shoved you, tripped you, or spit on you?**
- e. Tried to make you do things you did not want to do, for example, give them money or other things?**
- f. Excluded you from activities on purpose?**
- g. Destroyed your property on purpose?**

19b. During this school year, how often did (this/these things) happen to you?

- Once or twice this school year
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week, or
- Almost every day
- Don't know

19c. Did (this event/these events) occur

- In the school building (for example in a classroom, hallway, or gymnasium)?**
- Outside on school grounds?**
- On a school bus?**
- Somewhere else? - *Specify***

19d. Was a teacher or some other adult at school notified about (this event/any of these events)?

19e. What were the injuries you suffered as a result of being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on?

- None
- Bruises or swelling
- Cuts, scratches, or scrapes
- Black eye/bloody nose
- Teeth chipped or knocked out
- Broken bones/internal injuries
- Knocked unconscious
- Other - *Specify*

Round 1 Results

- All five respondents reported experiencing bullying.

- Respondents had some difficulty with this series of questions.

Although respondents understood the intent of these questions, there were some response errors related to the structure and wording of the questions.

Q19a:

1. One respondent misreported a friend accidentally tripping her, which resulted in the respondent falling down a flight of stairs at school. The respondent, who understood that this incident was an accident and not the result of bullying, most likely “lost” the description in the stem of the question that prefaced these types of events as intentionally hurtful.
2. One respondent excluded fights on the football field during football practice. He had been involved in tussles on the football field with other students who were upset about a missed play. He thought that this question was only asking about fights at school and not fights that happen during school-sponsored athletics and involve things that happen “on the field.”

Discussions with the sponsor indicated that the exclusion of fights on the football field was not an error. Because only one respondent included “accidental” injuries while playing around with friends, we did not recommend any changes to the questionnaire for the next round of interviews. However, the sponsors did agree to add instructions to the interviewer training that asked interviewers to exclude any accidental pushing, shoving, or tripping, or any other “bullying” that is done in a joking manner.

Q19b:

- Because Q19b does not reference each specific experience the respondent reported in Q19a, respondents had to ask for clarification on the events for which they should be answering.

Respondents did not pick up on the fact that this question was asking respondents to report on the totality of all of the bullying experiences they reported in Q19a. They wanted to answer for each type of incident separately. Further compounding this difficulty was the fact that for one respondent, some of these events happened with differing frequency. She had a hard time deciding on an answer category that captured how often she had experienced all of the bullying.

One respondent also interpreted this question as asking about *all* of the events in Q19a, not just the bullying she experienced. Before she realized that this question was asking only about the events she experienced, she was having trouble coming up with her frequency estimate because she had not experienced all of the events.

Q19c:

- This question was awkward to administer.

The structure of the question is inconsistent with how respondents answer. The question stem implies an open-ended response. Respondents tended to interrupt the interviewer, answering “yes” or “no” for each option. They also appeared confused at how they should indicate their answers. Given the wordy response options, it would be difficult for respondents to remember all of the places indicated in the question and then report them after the interviewer finished reading the question.

To avoid confusion and inaccurate estimates about the frequency of bullying in Q19b, we had two different recommendations:

1. When the respondent reports only one category of bullying, we recommended an autofill of Q19a response category that the respondent reports.
2. When the respondent reports more than one type of incident we recommended a more generic reference to all of the bullying. The question would read:

You just indicated that someone had bullied you during this school year. Thinking about all the ways in which you were bullied, how often did all of those things happen to you?

To address the awkwardness of Q19c, we recommended changing the structure of the question to allow respondents to report the location of the bullying in a “yes/no” format. We also recommended the incorporating the references we recommend adding to Q19b. The question would read:

<i>19c. Where did the bullying occur? Did (autofill Q19a category/any of those things) occur...</i>		
<i>In the school building (for example in a classroom, hallway, or gymnasium)?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Outside on school grounds?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>On a school bus?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Somewhere else? - Specify</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>

A series of discussions with the sponsors brought about a different set of changes than the changes we initially recommended. The sponsors agreed that Q19b, Q19c, and Q19d needed to reference the bullying events that respondents had reported in Q19a. However, rather than use an autofill option to insert the respondents' responses, the sponsors opted for adopting the generic reference category for both questions. Also, the sponsors chose to make a different change to the wording of Q19c. Rather than asking the respondents to report *all* of the places where they were bullied, they wanted respondents to report the place where *most* of the bullying took place.

We tested the following revised version of these questions series for the second round:

19a. Now I have some questions about what students do at school that make you feel bad or are hurtful to you. We often refer to this as being bullied. You may include events you told me about already. During this school year, has any student bullied you?

That is, has another student...

(Read each category a-g.)

- a. Made fun of you, called you names, or insulted you?
- b. Spread rumors about you?
- c. Threatened you with harm?
- d. Pushed you, shoved you, tripped you, or spit on you?
- e. Tried to make you do things you did not want to do, for example, give them money or other things?
- f. Excluded you from activities on purpose?
- g. Destroyed your property on purpose?

19b. You just indicated that someone had bullied you during this school year. Thinking about all the ways in which you were bullied, how often did all of those things happen to you?

- Once or twice this school year
- Once or twice a month
- Once or twice a week, or
- Almost every day
- Don't know

19c. Where did the bullying mostly occur? Did it mostly occur...

- In a classroom at school?
- In a hallway or stairwell at school?
- In a bathroom or locker room at school?
- Somewhere else inside the school building? - *Specify* _____
- Outside on school grounds?
- On a school bus?

19d. Was a teacher or some other adult at school notified about this bullying?

If Q19a.d. = yes:

19e. What were the injuries you suffered as a result of being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on?

- None
- Bruises or swelling
- Cuts, scratches, or scrapes
- Black eye/bloody nose
- Teeth chipped or knocked out
- Broken bones/internal injuries
- Knocked unconscious
- Other - *Specify*

Round 2 Results

- Two respondents reported that they did not experience any of these kinds of bullying in Q19a.

- Three respondents reported some bullying in Q19a.

Two respondents indicated that someone had made fun of them (a), and one respondent reported that someone excluded her from a classroom group (f). The two respondents who reported someone making fun of them indicated that other students had made fun of them in the hallways between classes or while in class. The third respondent reported that another girl in one of her classes did not want her to be in the same work group.

- The structure of Q19c led to a response error.

Because Q19c requires that respondents choose the location where most of the bullying occurred, it does not allow for respondents to report bullying that occurs an equal number of times in different school locations. One respondent, who reported that someone had made fun of her, said that these instances happened equally as often in both the classrooms (1) and the hallways (2). She paused when trying to answer this question because she had to decide between these two places. She ultimately settled on the hallway location, but still indicated that these bullying events happened equally in both places. Because this question requires respondents to make this kind of choice, it generated a response error. The respondent was clear about where these events occurred but was not afforded answer categories that would allow her to accurately report her knowledge of the experience.

- The changes to Q19b and Q19d worked well.

We did not observe any of the difficulty that respondent in the first round encountered while attempting to report bullying experiences. These respondents were focused on the bullying events that they had actually experienced, and not all of the possible experiences in Q19a.

- Respondents understood the terms and phrases in the question,

Two respondents had a broader definition of “property”. Their definitions were broader than immediate personal property or property at school (i.e., lockers, or text books). The definition encompassed the “real estate” definition of property, including their house or yard.

Final Recommendation: Because the structure of Q19c led to a response error, we again recommended revising the question to allow respondents to report all of the locations where the bullying occurred. The revised question would read:

19c. Where did the bullying mostly occur? Did it ever occur...

<i>In a classroom at school?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>In a hallway or stairwell at school?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>In a bathroom or locker room at school?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Somewhere else inside the school building?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>- Specify _____</i>		
<i>Outside on school grounds?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>On a school bus?</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>

Sponsor Feedback: The sponsors did accept the recommendation to return this question to “mark all that apply” format. However, they requested a slightly different wording to the question. They requested the following changes to the question:

19c. Still thinking about all of the times you were bullied, where did the bullying occur? Did it occur...

(Read categories) Mark (X) all that apply

In a classroom at school?

In a hallway or stairwell at school?

In a bathroom or locker room at school?

Somewhere else inside the school building?

- Specify _____

Outside on school grounds?

On a school bus?

Question 20 series

For the 2009 SCS the sponsors expanded this series of questions to collect more detailed information about internet bullying. They added questions about social networking sites and gaming, as well as rewording some of the other response options.

20a. Now I have some questions about what students do that could occur *anywhere* and that make you feel bad or are hurtful to you. You may include events you told me about already.

During this school year, has another student....

(Read each category a-f.)

a. Posted hurtful information about you on the Internet, for example, on a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook?

b. Threatened or insulted you through email?

c. Threatened or insulted you through instant messaging?

d. Threatened or insulted you through text messaging?

e. Threatened or insulted you through online gaming, for example, while playing a game, through Second Life, or through XBOX Live?

f. Purposefully excluded you from an online community, for example, a buddy list or friends list?

20b. During this school year, how often did (this/these things) happen to you?

Once or twice this school year

Once or twice a month

Once or twice a week, or

Almost every day

Don't know

20c. Was a teacher or some other adult at school notified about (this event/any of these events)?

Round 1 Results

- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering Q20a. All of the respondents understood that this question was asking about “online” bullying.

- Respondents did not have any problems with the question sub-items.

Despite the concern that respondents might confuse instant messaging and text messaging, the one respondent who indicated that she was bullied through text messaging did not make that response error. The order of the items does not seem to be problematic.

- Respondents did not struggle with the follow-up questions in this series.

The lack of a reference to the bullying events and the mapping of all of those events onto the frequency categories were not problematic for respondents. This lack of difficulty could be due to the fact that respondents had already answered the Q19a series, and therefore, had the appropriate context for interpreting these two questions.

Although we did not observe respondents having the same difficulty with these questions as they did with the preceding parallel questions in Q19, for consistency, we recommend the same changes in wording that we recommended for the Q20 questions. The sponsors agreed to these revisions and we tested them in the second round of interviews.

20a. Now I have some questions about what students do that could occur *anywhere* and that make you feel bad or are hurtful to you. You may include events you told me about already.

During this school year, has another student...

(Read each category a-f.)

- a. Posted hurtful information about you on the Internet, for example, on a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook?**
- b. Threatened or insulted you through email?**
- c. Threatened or insulted you through instant messaging?**
- d. Threatened or insulted you through text messaging?**
- e. Threatened or insulted you through online gaming, for example, while playing a game, through Second Life, or through XBOX Live?**
- f. Purposefully excluded you from an online community, for example, a buddy list or friends list?**

20b. You just indicated that someone had bullied you during this school year. Thinking about all the ways in which you were bullied, how often did all of those happen to you?

- Once or twice this school year**
- Once or twice a month**
- Once or twice a week, or**
- Almost every day**
- Don't know**

20c. Was a teacher or some other adult at school notified about this bullying?

Round 2 Results

- Four respondents did not report experiencing any online bullying. One respondent reported receiving a threatening email from another student during the previous school year (b). She only received one of those emails and she did inform a teacher about receiving it.

- Respondents did not have any problems answer Q19a.

Only one respondent answered the follow-up questions. She did not have any difficulty understanding the questions or coming up with her answers.

- Respondent were not familiar with some of the terms in Q20a.

None of the respondents in the round had heard of *Second Life*. Also, none of the respondents had heard of *Xbox Live*. However, all five respondents were familiar with Xbox. They were also familiar with the online interactive capabilities of this gaming system. They knew it was possible to interact to communicate with other people.

Final Recommendation: Although the terms in this question did not cause any response errors, not knowing what some of these terms mean may constrain some respondents' thinking. For example, if the respondent is aware of Xbox, but does not know the specific game, *Xbox Live*, he or she may interpret this question as only asking about *Xbox Live*. Therefore, we recommend eliminating the specific reference to *Xbox Live*. The new response option would read:

e. Threatened or insulted you through online gaming, for example, while playing a game, through Second Life, or through XBOX?

Sponsor Feedback: The sponsors accepted this recommendation and adopted the change.

Question 21a through 22

Before the first round of interviews, the sponsors indicated that these questions may be subject to deletion from the supplement. We included these questions in our protocol to assess any problems that might support the decision to remove these questions. However, after the first round of interviews, the sponsors indicated that these questions would not be deleted from the supplement. We continued to evaluate them for the second round of interviews.

21a. During this school year, has anyone called you an insulting or bad name at school having to do with your race, religion, ethnic background or national origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation? We call these hate-related words.

21b. Were any of the hate-related words related to ...

- Your race?
- Your religion?
- Your ethnic background or national origin (for example, people of Hispanic origin)?
- Any disability (by this I mean physical, mental, or developmental disabilities) you may have?
- Your gender?
- Your sexual orientation?

If "Yes," SAY - (by this we mean homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual)

22. During this school year, have you seen any hate-related words or symbols written in school classrooms, school bathrooms, school hallways, or on the outside of your school building?

Round 1 Results

- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering these questions.
- There may have been one response error.

One respondent indicated that she had heard derogatory words about her race, but did not answer in the affirmative to Q21a. She said she was not particularly offended by such a word and therefore did not think it was in-scope for this question. Other respondents also echoed this sentiment. They felt that, depending on the severity of the derogatory comment, they would not report the event. There is the potential for some respondents to under-report these types of experiences.

However, in contrast, two respondents also indicated that they have heard hate-related words, but that friends had made these comments in a joking manner. While neither one of these respondents reported these joking comments when answering this series of questions, there is the potential for respondents to include these “joking” comments when answering this question. The result of these inclusions would be an overreport of these types of encounters.

We did not have any recommendations for changes to this question after the first round of interviews.

Round 2 Results

Q21a:

- Two respondents reported someone using hate-related words toward them.

One respondent indicated that it was based on her race. The other respondents had someone use hate-related words about her weight. She was slightly overweight during the previous school year and some kids would make fun of her.

- There was one response error.

The respondent who included the comments about her weight when answering Q21 may have made a response error. This question does not include comments about weight as part of the hate-related words. Therefore, she was unable to give an answer to the follow-up Q22. Discussion with the sponsors indicated that in a small number of cases across previous waves of data collection did report experiencing hate-related words, but did not provide an answer for Q21b. Given the small number of cases in which respondents did not report one of the categories in the question, the sponsors did not feel that it was necessary to include an additional category that would allow respondents to specify these other hate-related words.

Q22:

- Two respondents reported that they had seen hate-related words at their school.

One respondent saw words written on the bathroom walls. The other respondent related a story of how a student broke into the school after-hours and wrote something about a teacher at the school on the classroom chalkboard.

- Respondents also had no problems understanding or answering Q 22.

Final Recommendation: We do not have any recommendations for changes to these two questions.

Questions 23a

For the 2009 SCS the sponsors made a minor change to the wording of this question. The previous wording of this question was as follows:

During this school year, did you STAY AWAY from any of the following places because you thought someone might attack or harm you there?

We tested the following change in the first round of cognitive interviews:

23a. During this school year, did you ever STAY AWAY from any of the following places because you thought someone might attack or harm you there?

(READ CATEGORIES.)

- a. The shortest route to school?**
- b. The entrance into the school?**
- c. Any hallways or stairs in school?**
- d. Parts of the school cafeteria?**
- e. Any school restrooms?**
- f. Other places inside the school building?**
- g. School parking lot?**
- h. Other places on school grounds?**

Round 1 Results

- Four respondents indicated that they had not ever stayed away from any of the places in Q23a. One respondent indicated that she had stayed away from the school cafeteria (d) because she thought someone might harm her.
- Most respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering this question. Respondents understood that we were asking about avoiding a place because of a feared attack.
- Respondents also understood the concept of “ever stay away.” Respondents knew that they should report staying away from any of those places, even if they had only done so once.
- There may have been one response error. One respondent indicated that she had stayed away from places not because of a physical attack, but because she feared a verbal attack. She had stayed away from school bathrooms because she feared someone would verbally attack her. She answered “no” to all parts of this question because she thought it was only about physical attack or harm. Is this the correct interpretation?

It was unclear if fear of verbal attack or harm was something respondents should include when answering the avoidance questions. Discussion with the sponsor indicated that they did not wish to specify which types of attack or harm respondents should consider when answering. They indicated that it was acceptable for respondents to make their individual interpretation of this question and answer accordingly.

Round 2 Results

- Three respondents did not report avoiding any of the places in Q28a. Two respondents reported avoiding certain places on school grounds.
- There were two potential response errors:
 1. One respondent, who reported staying away from a stairs at school (c) may have misreported this avoidance. She stayed away from what she called the “Senior Stairs” at school. The Senior Class had one stairwell where they all hang out in between classes. The respondent indicated that underclassmen rarely use the stairwell, not because of fear of attack, but because they feel self-conscious. She said the Seniors would often stare at the students and sometimes would “boo” the underclassmen. While this experience is a form of social intimidation, it is relatively mild and is not based on fear of safety. The respondent seemed to have forgotten the stem of the question, which indicated a fear of attack or harm. She did not have any of those feelings when she avoided the stairwell.
 2. One respondent reported that she stayed away from parts of the school parking lot (g). She did not stay away from these areas because she feared attacks from other students. She stayed away from parts of the parking lot because her school is not in the safest neighborhood. She is aware of both crime and gang activity outside the school grounds and sometimes has feared becoming a victim.

Based on discussions with the sponsor, the first situation, in which the respondent reported a form of social discomfort, was an actual response error. However, because the situation the respondent described seemed rather unique, we did not recommend any changes to the questionnaire to address this type of misreport. This discussion with the sponsors also revealed that that second potential error was not a response error. This question is intended to collect information on the general feelings of safety in and around school property. Reports that include reactions to the school neighborhood are acceptable.

Final Recommendation: We do not have any recommendations for changes to this question.

Questions 28

For the 2009 SCS, the sponsors made a minor grammatical change to this question. The previous version of the question had the following wording:

Do you know any (other) students who have brought a gun to your school during this school year?

We tested the following version of the question in the first round of interviews:

28a. Do you know of any (other) students who have brought a gun to your school during this school year?

Round 1 Results

- Only one respondent answered in the affirmative. She knew of a classmate who had brought a gun to school. The other four respondents said they have never known of another student bringing a gun to school.
- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering this question.

Because this question was not problematic, we did not recommend any changes to this question. However, the sponsors decided that the parenthetical mention of “other” in the question seemed unnecessary. The parentheses seem to suggest that “other” is either optional or a fill for interviewers to read. It was unclear why the question was structured this way. As a result, the sponsors decided to remove the parentheses around “other” and make it an explicit part of the question. We tested this revised version of the question in the second round of interviews.

28a. Do you know of any other students who have brought a gun to your school during this school year?

Round 2 Results

- None of the respondents in the second round of interview knew of anyone who had brought a gun to school.
- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering this question.

They understood that this question was asking if they had knowledge of other students with guns. The explicit addition of “other” to the question did not create any problems.

Final recommendation: We do not have any recommendations for changes to this question.

Question 29

The sponsors made a slight change in the wording of this question for the 2009 SCS. In previous waves of data collection, the question asked about obtaining a gun “without adult supervision.” The sponsors did not think this phrase accurately captured the intent of the question, and therefore, changed the phrase to “without adult permission.” We tested this change across both rounds of cognitive interviews.

29. During this school year, could you have gotten a loaded gun without adult permission, either at school or away from school?

Round 1 Results

- Respondents did not have any problems understanding or answering this question. They knew this question was asking if they had “connections” that would enable them to get a gun.

- Respondents understood the term “adult permission.” Respondents thought that adult permission referred to parents or other adults. Two respondents included teachers, security guards, and other school administrators in their definition.

Because this question was not problematic we made no changes to it for the second round of interviews.

Round 2 Results

- Four respondents reported that they could not have gotten a loaded gun without adult permission. One respondent indicated that it was possible for her to get a gun without adult permission. The latter respondent was basing her response on the fact that several years ago, a student was able to bring a gun to school. This respondent was assuming that, if she really wanted to get a gun, she would be able to get one and would also be able to bring it onto her school.

- Respondents understood the term “adult permission.” They were including parents, guardians, teachers, and school security guards. It is worth noting that the people respondents included in their concept of adult permission indicate that they are thinking of both their “connections” for getting a gun and their ability to successfully bring it into the school building.

Final recommendation: We do not have any recommendations for changes to this question.

Respondent Reactions to the Questions

Overall respondents in both rounds did not have any significant reactions to the questions. Some respondents found some of the questions to be difficult to answer. The most common question respondents found to be somewhat difficult was Q13, because some respondents were not familiar with all of the drugs in the question. One respondent found the questions about gang activity to be difficult simply because she did not know about specific gang activity in her school. Because the question does not have a skip pattern for the DK response, she answered the subsequent detailed questions about gang activity.

Respondent also thought that some of the questions might be sensitive for other respondents. The most common questions respondents mentioned were the questions dealing with drugs and bullying. In terms of drug activity, some respondents may be unwilling to admit to engaging in these illegal activities. Respondents also felt that other kids might not want to talk about their painful bullying experiences.

Conclusions

Overall, the changes to the 2009 SCS questions were not problematic. Throughout both rounds of pretesting, we also pointed out some on-going problems with one of the questions that we encourage to sponsors to consider addressing in future rounds of pretesting.

References

Jocuns, A. & DeMaio, T. (2006) Cognitive interview research report: Findings and recommendations resulting from pretesting the 2007 National Crime Victimization Survey's School Crime Supplement. Study Series (Survey methodology # 2006-08), Statistical Research Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C.