Redesigning Contact Materials for the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

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This presentation is sponsored by RTI International’s Survey Research Division.
Expert Reviewers:
- Dr. Don Dillman, Social and Economic Science Research Center at Washington State University
- 8 NSDUH field interviewers – Cheryl Ahrens, Daphne Balick, Terri Clark, Carolyn Kelley, Matthew Linit, Mark Loewe, Clarissa Schnitzer, and Edward Statham

Focus Group Moderators:
- Jim Leiman (English), Morpace, Inc.
- Arturo Obscura (Spanish), Morpace, Inc.
The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provides national, state and substate data on substance use and mental health in the civilian, noninstitutionalized population age 12 and older.

- Conducted by RTI under contract with SAMHSA.
- Data are collected on a quarterly basis each year.
- Approximately 700 Field Interviewers (FIs) staffed.
- Approximately 140,000 household screenings and 67,500 interviews completed annually.
To identify ways to improve the NSDUH contact materials to maximize cooperation among sample members:

1. Developed draft versions of the lead letter envelope, lead letter, and question and answer (Q&A) brochure
2. Submitted draft versions of the letter and Q&A brochure for review by a prominent expert on survey materials, as well as 8 NSDUH field interviewers
3. Conducted focus groups with participants from five regions of the U.S. to evaluate how members of the target population would react to different versions of the materials
Lead Letter Envelopes

1. Compared 9x12 envelope with standard number 10 envelope.
2. Moved return address away from the envelope window.
4. Used Rockville, Maryland return address instead of RTI’s main North Carolina address.

Except for the size, the two lead letter envelopes developed for the focus groups were the same.
Three versions of the lead letter text were developed for the focus groups:

1. Version currently used for NSDUH data collection
2. Alternative version primarily inspired by a version written by Don Dillman
3. Alternative version primarily modeled after the National Survey of Family Growth letter (cycle 7)

Each version of the letter was presented in two ways:

1. Text only
2. Graphics only
Lead Letter 2 Text vs. Letters 1 and 3

1. Addressed to “household members at” vs. “resident”
2. Opening sentence focused on field interviewer visiting the household vs. study sponsorship
3. Noted the survey is required by Congress, which was not mentioned in other letters
4. Mentioned NSDUH is “only study that provides much-needed national statistics on health and health-related behaviors of people throughout the U.S.”
5. Indicated a return address of Rockville, Maryland, which was not included in version 1
1. Used language directed personally from study sponsor to letter recipients (“I,” “my,” and “we”)
2. Provided more detailed description of the health behaviors measured in the survey vs. “health issues”
3. Did not provide URL address for the study website
4. Signed only by the contact person at SAMHSA vs. both SAMHSA and RTI representatives
5. Indicated return address of Rockville, Maryland and zip code
Lead Letter Graphics – Logo

- On letter 1, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services logo was moved to right margin
- DHHS logo was preceded by the phrase:
  AN IMPORTANT REQUEST FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
- DHHD logo was significantly enlarged compared to the other letters
On letters 1 and 3, the field interviewer identification badge showed a silhouette of the person’s head.

On letter 2, the field interviewer identification badge showed a sample picture of a person.
Developed one alternative version to the current brochure, which included a number of text changes:

1. Reduced the number of questions about the study from 10 to 6
2. Used simplified language and avoided technical terms and survey jargon
3. Eliminated language that could potentially raise concerns among recipients (privacy concerns)
4. Revised language to current answers to clarify survey procedures
The alternative version to the current brochure included the following **graphical** changes:

1. Presented response to the question “What is the National Survey on Drug Use and Health?” across two panels
2. Used multiple colors across panels, on borders, and in images vs. current two-color brochure
3. Retained only the graphics most relevant to NSDUH
Q & A Brochure Version 1

Why Should I Participate?

- NSDUH is the primary source of national data on the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit substances. By volunteering in this study, you are helping us gather this important information that is needed to make accurate policy decisions.

- Individual residents of selected households, who are randomly chosen and agree to participate, are given a cash payment of $40 at the end of the interview.

- If selected to participate, you will represent over 4,500 other United States residents. Since our sample is selected based on scientific random sampling, no other household or person can be substituted.

- By participating in this study, you will be assisting with the formation of public policy.

For more information on NSDUH or SAMHSA, contact:
NSDUH National Study Director
SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies
1 Choke Cherry Road
Room 7-1009
Rockville, MD 20857

For more information on NSDUH or RTI, contact:
NSDUH National Field Director
Research Triangle Institute
3040 Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
1-800-846-4079

Internet Users: You may access more information about SAMHSA on the World Wide Web at:
http://www.samhsa.gov

Additional information about RTI is available at:
http://www.rti.org

Additional information about the National Survey on Drug Use and Health is available at:
http://nsduhweb.rti.org

What is the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)?

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is the Federal Government’s primary source of national data on the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit substances. The survey also contains questions on health, illegal behaviors, and other topics associated with substance use. The study was initiated in 1971 and currently is conducted on an annual basis. This year approximately 70,000 individuals, 12 years old and older, will be randomly selected and asked to voluntarily participate.

The primary objectives of NSDUH are:

- to collect timely data on the magnitude and patterns of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal substance use and abuse;
- to assess the consequences of substance use and abuse; and
- to identify those groups at high risk for substance use and abuse.

Conducted by
Research Triangle Institute
3040 Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Sponsored by
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
If you have more questions about NSDUH, please call 1-800-848-4079 or visit our Web site at http://nsduhweb.rti.org

The 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

The 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

What is the National Survey on Drug Use and Health?

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provides up-to-date information on alcohol, tobacco, substance use and other health-related issues in the United States. NSDUH is directed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

NSDUH began in 1971 and is conducted every year. This year almost 70,000 people from across the United States will be scientifically selected to be interviewed for this important study.

Information from NSDUH is used to support prevention and treatment programs, monitor substance use trends, estimate the need for treatment facilities and assist with the creation of government policy.

SAMHSA has selected Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to complete the interviews. RTI, a nonprofit research organization, has been under contract with SAMHSA to conduct NSDUH since 1988.
Focus Group Overview

- Included members of the target population to represent:
  1. different regions of the country and
  2. both survey languages (English and Spanish)
- Organized 17 focus groups across five metropolitan areas – Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Raleigh-Durham, and Washington, D.C.
- Offered 11 focus groups in English and six in Spanish
- Most focus group sessions included 7 to 9 people
- Professional focus group moderators conducted the focus groups
Focus Group Procedures

- Order of discussion was (1) the lead letter envelopes, (2) lead letter text, (3) lead letter graphics, (4) Q&A brochure
- Participants mostly provided responses to structured questions and probes
- Moderators expanded the discussion to build on participants’ comments and prompt others to talk
- Participants were asked to mark the version of the material they preferred
- Participants received $75 in cash at the end of each session
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Location</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Non-white Race (%)</th>
<th>Less than High School / GED (%)</th>
<th>Income less than $100,000 (%)</th>
<th>Resides in Urban Area (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raleigh, NC (n=26)</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC (n=19)</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addison, TX (n=23)</td>
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<td>20.8%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irvine, CA (n=28)</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All locations (n=96)</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
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# Focus Group Participants - Spanish

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<tr>
<th>Focus Group Location</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Country of Origin not Mexico</th>
<th>Less than High School / GED</th>
<th>Income less than $100,000</th>
<th>Resides in Urban Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raleigh, NC (n=20)</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL (n=29)</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both locations (n=49)</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
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## Lead Letter Envelope Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Envelope Type</th>
<th>English Participants (n = 96)</th>
<th>Spanish Participants (n = 49)</th>
<th>All Participants (n = 145)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular number 10</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large 9 X 12</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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# Lead Letter Text Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Text</th>
<th>English Participants (n = 96)</th>
<th>Spanish Participants (n = 49)</th>
<th>All Participants (n = 145)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version 1 (current letter)</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Version 2 (Dillman-inspired)</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Version 3 (NSFG-inspired)</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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# Lead Letter Graphics Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Graphics</th>
<th>English Participants (n = 96)</th>
<th>Spanish Participants (n=49)</th>
<th>All Participants (n=145)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version 1 (large logo, silhouette badge)</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version 2 (small logo, picture badge)</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version 3 (small logo, silhouette badge)</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
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# Q&A Brochure Preferences

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<th>Q&amp;A Brochure Version</th>
<th>English Participants (n = 96)</th>
<th>Spanish Participants (n=49)</th>
<th>All Participants (n=145)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current version (two-color)</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New version (multi-color)</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lead Letter Envelope - Conclusions

- Majority of focus group participants preferred 9x12 envelope (more important looking?)
- Preference was more pronounced in Spanish focus groups
- Some participants expressed concern about only including the letter in a 9x12 envelope
- Use of “OFFICIAL BUSINESS. PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE $300” confused many participants
- Majority of participants indicated they would open either envelope
- Using larger 9x12 envelopes would significantly increase costs of lead letter mailing
Lead Letter Text - Conclusions

- A majority of English participants preferred version 1, but a plurality of Spanish participants preferred version 3.
- Version 2 was generally viewed as too lengthy and complicated.
- In most groups, participants made compelling arguments for either version 1 or 3.
- A hybrid of versions 1 and 3, combining the preferred text from each, seems to be a justifiable approach.
- One element of version 2 that could be used is addressing the letter to “Resident of _____________ County.”
Lead Letter Graphics - Conclusions

- No one version of the graphics garnered a clear preference.
- Plurality of English group participants preferred version 1, but plurality of Spanish group participants preferred 2.
- Results suggest the graphics should incorporate best elements used across the versions:
  1. Larger DHHS logo used in version 1.
  2. Sample picture on the ID badge used in version 2.
  3. Watermark indicating the badge is just a sample.
  4. Line for the interviewers’ name under the badge.
Q & A Brochure - Implications

- Majority of focus group participants preferred the new version 2
- Preferences for version 2 differed between the English (51%) and Spanish (84%) groups
- English participants were also more likely than Spanish participants to not indicate a preference
- Main appeals of version 2 appeared to be use of colors and pictures, layout, and amount of text
- Strongest features of version 1 could be incorporated into version 2 (organization of the topics)
Redesigned Materials – Next Steps

- Create a final version for each type of contact material based on focus groups and expert review

- Consider whether differences in preferences between English and Spanish group participants might influence how the materials are presented in each language

- Use the redesigned contact materials in a field test, to see what impact the new materials might have on data collection results
Contact Information

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http://www.rti.org/aapor