

Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: Juveniles Testing Efforts: Webinar Transcript

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DARYL FOX: Afternoon everyone, and welcome to today's webinar, "Update on the NCVS Instrument Redesign: Juveniles Testing Effort," hosted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce Grace Kena, Statistician with the Bureau of Justice Statistics, for some welcome remarks and to begin the presentation. Grace?

GRACE KENA: Thank you, Daryl. Thank you, everyone, for joining today's webinar, "Updates on the National Crime Victimization Survey Instrument Redesign: Juveniles Testing Efforts." I'm Grace, as Daryl mentioned, a Statistician in the Victimization Statistics Unit at the Bureau of Justice Statistics, or BJS. I will be speaking to you today about efforts to improve the measurement of juvenile victimization in BJS's National Crime Victimization Survey. I lead the National Victimization Statistical Support Program, or NVSSP, the award that funded this work.

Going over the agenda for today, I'll give a brief overview of the NCVS and the instrument redesign and will describe the motivation for conducting this testing for juveniles. Two of my colleagues from RTI International, who I'll introduce in a moment, will discuss the components of the testing efforts in greater detail. I will then go over the next steps with this work, share some resources, and moderate the discussion. As Daryl mentioned at the beginning, please place any questions or comments in the Q&A portion of the chat and we'll take them later. Now, I'd like to introduce Dr. Christine Lindquist and Dr. Christopher Krebs from RTI International, the current grantee for the NVSSP award. Christine Lindquist directs the Corrections and Reentry Research Program in the Division for Applied Justice Research. Dr. Lindquist's research interests and areas of expertise include victimization and offending, prisoner reentry, families and incarceration, and the use of technology in the criminal justice system, with particular focus on evaluating the effectiveness of interventions in these areas. She has substantial methodological expertise, including multi-site evaluation design and qualitative and quantitative methods, along with a focus on translating research to improve policy and practice. Christopher Krebs is a Principal Scientist in the Division for Applied Justice Research. He has extensive research experience in the areas of corrections, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, criminal justice systems, and program evaluation. He also has extensive experience designing studies, developing survey instruments, analyzing data, and disseminating findings. Dr. Krebs has worked on and led several projects for the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Chris is the Principal Investigator for the NVSSP.

The NCVS is the nation's primary source of information on criminal victimization, including crimes reported to and not reported to the police. The survey was designed to complement the FBI's UCR program, which captures crimes reported to and recorded by police. The NCVS is administered by the U.S. Census Bureau to persons ages 12 or older from a nationally representative sample of households in the U.S. BJS is in the process of conducting a major, multi-year redesign of the NCVS survey instruments, working with Westat and the U.S. Census Bureau. The redesign includes the survey household roster, where information about who lives

in the sampled household is collected; the victimization screener, the part of the instrument where respondents' experiences are evaluated for further follow-up; and the crime incident report, where detailed information about respondents' victimization experiences is collected. The key goal of this instrument redesign is to modernize the content and organization of the survey, which was last done in 1992. The instrument testing has been made up of several parts, including a pilot test, a national field test, and multiple rounds of cognitive and usability testing. More information about the larger redesign of the NCVS survey instrument was shared in another webinar this past Tuesday. That webinar, along with this one, will be posted at BJS' website. As part of the instrument redesign, BJS also conducted additional testing with RTI for specific topics, including measuring juvenile victimization, our subject for today, and hate crime.

So, why were we interested in focusing on this population of persons ages 12 to 17? For one, the NCVS collects data from persons age 12 or older in U.S. households, and youth make up a notable portion of this target population. Crimes involving youth are also of great interest to various groups. Additionally, interviewing youth in a crime context involves a unique set of issues important for ensuring data quality. While interviewing adults is certainly not easy, interviewing youth can be even more complex. It requires gaining consent from parents or guardians, gaining the youth's approval to participate, and then working through logistics of scheduling an interview. Unless the youth is available after the responding parent or other household member's interview, scheduling a subsequent time becomes even more complicated, because parents of younger children, especially, want to be involved in communicating with the census field representative. In addition, given many schedules, it's often difficult to find workable times to conduct an interview.

Other challenges with interviewing youth involve making sure that certain questions are relevant to the youth population. Christine and Chris will delve into more of these details, but for example, a question on whether a crime was reported to someone other than police should include school personnel as a response option as that is something that is especially relevant for children. Language used and examples given also need to be accessible for the youth population.

As part of the instrument redesign, BJS worked to assess core issues related to interviewing youth for the NCVS and measuring youth victimization. We were especially mindful of declining response rates for youth, which reflects some of these issues that we've just covered. Another important area that we wanted to take a closer look at is the data that we collect from proxy respondents to determine whether we could do more with this data. Proxy reporting is when a parent or guardian responds to the survey on behalf of the youth, and currently this occurs for youth ages 12 to 13 whose parents either do not allow them to take the survey or who are unable to respond to the survey.

To define the scope of our work, BJS worked with RTI to develop a set of analyses using data from the current NCVS survey instrument to examine several issues, both for youth but also for all respondents. We looked at survey response rates; coverage rates, which refer to how well different population groups are represented in the NCVS sample; proxy interview rates; rates of missing data; and victimization rates. We used these results, along with a literature review and a

scan of other large-scale surveys of children and adolescents, to inform the planning for this testing work.

What were the goals of these efforts? To give a few examples, we wanted to have a chance to talk to youth and see how well they understood the redesigned survey questionnaire content and to make sure that the wording was relevant and understandable for the youth population. We also wanted to engage parents and youth directly to hear more about some of the factors that would both encourage them or discourage them from participating in the survey, and then use that information to help identify strategies that might be helpful for addressing these issues.

So, I will turn it over to Christine to begin discussing the testing efforts in more detail. As a reminder, please place any questions or comments that you have in the chat and we will get to them at the end of the formal presentations.

CHRISTINE LINDQUIST: Thank you, Grace, and thanks so much to everyone for joining today's webinar. I'm just going to wait once—oh, I can go ahead and pull up RTI slides.

My colleague Chris Krebs and I will be sharing findings from three components of our study, which was undertaken to help inform decisions about juvenile participation in the NCVS, and we'd like to acknowledge the contributions of our co-author Sarah Cook, who compiled a lot of this information but who couldn't be here to present today.

We'll be focusing on three study components, all of which involved interviews with youth and parents, with an eye toward informing BJS' efforts to improve youth participation in the NCVS as well as improve the quality of data collected from youth. The first component is cognitive interviewing with 12- to 17-year-olds. This involved testing the redesigned field test, NCVS questions with youth, in a first phase, and then making some modifications to question wording based on what we learned in that phase, and then testing those modifications with the new cohort of youth in a second phase. The second component of our study was parent interviews, and this also involved two rounds of interviews. These interviews focused on parents' and guardians' decision-making process regarding their child's participation in the NCVS. And then the third component was proxy interviews. This involved interviewing parent-child dyads using the redesigned field test version of the NCVS to learn about how closely parents' reports of their child's victimization experiences align with their child's own reports of their experiences with victimization. In total, these components entailed 353 virtual interviews.

All three components involve the same recruitment and general interviewing procedures, so I'm going to share some of our methods first and then we'll go into the findings from the three components. We recruited families for all three components using a single recruitment strategy, which was primarily placing social media ads on Facebook, and an example of one of our ads is shown here. These ads were targeted to parents of youth between the ages of 12 to 17. When parents saw this ad, if they clicked on it, it took them to an online eligibility form, and on that form, they provided basic details for all youth in our target age range in their household. So, they included demographic characteristics, and they also reported on—based on their understanding, whether the child had experienced victimization for major crime types, because we wanted to be able to oversample crime victims. We then reviewed the forms and we

selected families and specific youth within the families, and we selected families and youth with an eye for demographic and socio-economic diversity as well as potential crime victimization, at least based on parent reports. Parents were then contacted via email and had very detailed phone calls with an RTI recruiter because we wanted to make sure they fully understood the study and, in particular, the sensitive nature of the survey topics that would be covered with their child. So, we described the specific study component that we were recruiting them for, we described what would be involved in us doing an interview with their child, and then, in some cases, parents were asked if they were also interested in participating in a separate parent interview. This was optional except when we were recruiting for the proxy study, because for that component, both the parent and the child had to participate for the family to be eligible. During this conversation, if the parent agreed for their family to participate, we then scheduled video interview appointments with youth and, in some cases, with parents. As you can imagine, this involved a lot of logistics and confirming technological requirements. It involved a lot of emailing of documents back and forth, including the parental permission form, which parents completed electronically before the child's interview. And then we obtained assent directly from the youth at the beginning of their interview appointment, which was our first contact with the youth because we'd been in communication with the parent prior to then. And during these youth appointments, the interviewers screen-shared the youth assent form, including a list of interview topics that would be covered; answered any questions the youth had; and then obtained their verbal assent prior to proceeding.

This slide shows the interviewing procedures for all three components. For the youth cognitive interviews, interviewers asked the youth NCVS questions, again using the redesigned NCVS instrument, and they followed a protocol with scripted probes. These probes were designed to help us understand youth cognitive processes as they answered the questions, and we also used spontaneous probing during the interview based on how youth reacted to the question. Because of our time constraints, we kept all of these interviews to 45 minutes. We only focused on the most serious incident for youth who experienced a crime in the screener. For the parent interviews, we asked parents about their decision-making process regarding youth participation in a study like the NCVS, and then in the second phase, we had them review a recruitment brochure that our team drafted, and they provided feedback on this. And we also discussed other aspects of the decision-making process. Finally, for the proxy interviews, we conducted simultaneous interviews with the youth and the parent using separate interviewers. Both were asked the full NCVS questions, again following the redesign instrument, and we followed standard NCVS procedures with parents reporting as proxies, just like in the actual NCVS. We did have to truncate all interviews at 45 minutes, and we included some debriefing questions at the end.

For all three components, interviews were conducted by RTI staff with experience conducting interviews on sensitive topics. All interviewers were trained on the specific interview protocol for whichever study we were fielding at the time, handling emotional distress on the part of the respondent, the logistics of virtual interviewing, and also general interview practices to ensure a standardized process. All of the interviews were done via video interviewing through Zoom. This was not our original plan. We actually had the whole study designed to be an in-person data collection study, but this needed to be completely modified when COVID hit, which happened

right before we were about to start data collection. And this ended up actually working out quite well and it allowed us to involve families from all over the country.

To maintain privacy, we required both the interviewer and the participant to be in a private setting wherever they were doing the interview and to keep their video on. The interviews lasted about 45 minutes and participants were given a gift card to help offset the cost of data usage from participating in the interview. For the proxy interviews, to avoid any kind of indirect indication of how respondents answered the victimization screening questions, which can lead to much longer interviews, we informed respondents that their counterpart in the proxy might receive different questions from them.

We gave a lot of attention to the potential for emotional distress. In particular, since we had to do all this remotely and we weren't in the room to monitor or support the respondent, we developed a protocol to make sure interviewers were monitoring for very early signs of participant distress. So, we had periodic check-ins built into the instrument, especially during the victimization questions. We trained the interviewers on verbal and non-verbal signs of emotional distress, including signs that might be manifested by youth. And our protocol covered different ways to respond, like offering to take a break, inserting small talk to change the subject, suggesting that we skip over certain sections or topics, or automatically making the decision to skip over certain questions. And then finally, we, in some cases, ended the interview early, but in a natural way so that respondents didn't think that they did anything wrong. We logged all of our cases of emotional distress, and this was reviewed daily by project leadership. We did encounter a total of eight instances of emotional distress, which are listed here, and most of these were sexual assault victims, and several of the instances happened when the victim was providing the open-ended narrative at the end of the interview. Interviewers were also affected by these situations and were encouraged to practice self-care and debrief with the team after difficult interviews.

Moving on to our findings, we will start with the cognitive testing component, which I will go over. As background, cognitive testing is a method to study how respondents think about and respond to questions. The emphasis is on examining potential problems or difficulties with the questions or the response options. It explores the four stages involved in answering a question, which include comprehension of the question—what the question is basically asking; how we retrieve information needed to answer the question; the judgment process of deciding what our answer to the question is going to be; and then finally, the response process, where we map our response to the options or the space provided to us. So, it involves reading the survey questions to individuals who are similar to the target population for the real survey, and then you ask follow-up questions or probes to understand the cognitive process in answering the question. Learning how people think about and respond to questions allows us to identify where the breakdown is in the cognitive process so that we can hopefully revise the question to reduce survey error.

Our overall goal for the cognitive testing component was to test the current field test version of the NCVS, specifically with 12- to 17-year-olds, to see whether question adaptations were needed. And specifically, we wanted to identify difficult questions, understand the reasons why

they were difficult, and understand reasons for measurement error in specific items for 12- to 17-year-olds. This can include the respondent not comprehending the question as intended, given juveniles' cognitive and psychosocial development. It could be not understanding specific terms. It could be lacking the knowledge or frame of reference to answer the question. For example, not understanding what out-of-pocket costs are for medical care. Or topic sensitivity, given that some topics may be too uncomfortable for youth to engage. And then finally, we wanted to use this information to identify revisions to the NCVS that could reduce measurement error in respondents of this age group.

This slide shows what we learned from the cognitive testing at a very high level. What isn't shown here is that youth in general were able to answer the majority of the NCVS interview questions without difficulty, and youth generally did not find the survey questions overly sensitive or invasive. So, that was a really positive high-level finding. When we asked in the debriefing which questions were the most sensitive to answer, the sexual assault questions were certainly perceived to be the most sensitive, and this was true both for sexual assault victims as well as non-victims. But we did want to point out that in round two of our cognitive interviews, which took place only a few months after the murder of George Floyd and at the height of racial justice protests, questions about the police were actually identified by some respondents as the most sensitive.

The second high-level finding is that youth had difficulty answering questions related to timelines. We learned this in round one and then we adjusted our methods in round two to see if probing for a general time frame and using national holidays, seasons, and school years as reference points could help to overcome this challenge, which indeed was the case.

Third, and this is fairly specific to the theft items, we found that when asking juveniles around thefts, they tended to include thefts of other household members' possessions or items that were considered the family's instead of just thinking about their own possessions, which is the intention of the questions. So, we had some suggestions for modifications based on this in our detailed final report.

And then finally, some youth had difficulty answering questions related to working and employment. These questions are only asked in the NCVS of 16- and 17-year-olds. And we found that some youth weren't sure whether they should count volunteer work or work around the house as a job. They also had a hard time with questions asking about whether they had had the same job for the past 12 months. And they really struggled with the unemployment questions because many 16- to 17-year-olds who aren't working don't necessarily consider themselves unemployed. So, again, we have quite a few recommendations for adaptations based on these high-level takeaways.

And then we wanted to show a few examples of item-specific findings that are discussed in the full report. Basically, the structure is we go through each question that we tested, we show the original question, we describe the issues that we found with that, and then if relevant, we provide a recommendation for a modification to that question. This slide here shows the attack screener that's being used in the current NCVS field test version. During our first phase of interviews, we learned that when answering these screener questions, especially the last one

about hitting, slapping, grabbing, etc., some youth were answering “yes” for threats or incidents that were accidents or “play fighting” with siblings or friends. So, based on this finding, we developed a modification to include the statement that you see at the very bottom, which may be difficult to read. It says, “Do not include threats and do not include incidents that were accidental or when you knew someone was playing.” And this was tested in the second phase of cognitive testing and did appear to help most participants not answer “yes” to those types of items. In the “what happened” module, which is a follow-up module asked for individuals who answered “yes” to any of the unwanted sexual contact screener questions, we learned that some youth did not know what the term “penetration” meant. This is the first question where that term appears. And then it does appear in a few other questions but without any definition. So, we recommended adding a definition that could be read if needed, and this is a definition that we have included here at the bottom.

In the follow-up questions that are asked of individuals who received injuries, and specifically for those who got medical care for injuries, one thing we learned is that some youth were treated in the nurse’s office at school, but this doesn’t fall into any of the existing response options. So, one of the recommendations we made is adding in a response option for respondents under 18 that would be at school or on school property.

In the location series, which asks where the incident took place, it does include a question, “Was it at school?”, but we learned that youth had difficulty with this because they didn’t understand if we were talking about their current school or the school they were attending at the time of the incident. And this could certainly be an issue in the NCVS with any interviews taking place in the summer or for incidents that happened in the previous school year. So, we recommended clarifying the question to ask, “Was it your school at the time of the incident?”

In the questions asking about the victim-offender relationship, many of the offenders we learned about in the first phase of cognitive testing were friends or classmates, but the response options shown here only pertain to romantic or familial relationships, so youth had a hard time figuring out where to put those friends and classmates. We tested a revision in phase two and got feedback on that iteration and ultimately recommended modifying the fifth response option to read “someone else, such as a friend, acquaintance, classmate, co-worker, neighbor, or other non-relative,” with some skip patterns based on where the incident took place or the age of the respondent.

And then a final example that we wanted to show is from the police ask-all items, which are asked of all respondents. We learned that some youth had difficulty answering these questions because they had had limited or no interaction with the police personally, and there’s no perfect solution to this, but we proposed and tested in the second phase, based on what we learned in the first phase, simply adding “in your opinion” to the beginning of these questions—this is done with some other questions in the NCVS—and it helped to clarify that the respondents should draw from their beliefs or opinions, even if they don’t have first-hand experience.

So, all of our recommendations are included in the final report, and there’s a link in the chat that can take you to that, for those who are interested.

In terms of overall conclusions, it was very encouraging that the youth in our sample, and this is 106 youth who were included in this, did very well at answering the redesigned NCVS questions that are currently being field-tested, and the cognitive interview process was very helpful in learning where and why accommodations for juveniles participating in the NCVS might be needed, which was our key study objective.

With that, I will turn this over to my colleague Chris, who's going to talk about the proxy component.

CHRISTOPHER KREBS: Thank you, Christine. Hi, everybody. Thank you for joining us today. I see a lot of familiar names out there. It's great to be able to talk about this work. All of this work we're talking about today was completed under one task that's under the NVSSP, which is the project that Grace runs and that she mentioned early on. I'm going to be talking to you about our efforts under this task related to assessing the impact of proxy interviewing on victimization estimates within the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Proxy interviewing is when you purposely interview someone other than the subject you initially set out to interview, for a variety of reasons. And the National Crime Victimization Survey certainly uses proxy interviewing when juvenile respondents in the household cannot be interviewed, and we're going to talk about why that happens. But in most cases, it involves interviewing a parent who can report essentially, or be a proxy for, report essentially on behalf of the juvenile. And the reasons within the NCVS that this typically happens are that the youth is not allowed to participate by the parent, and this is most common and typical with 12- and 13-year-old household respondents. In the NCVS, as was mentioned, everyone in the household who is 12 and older is eligible for the survey. Sometimes, parents simply decide to not allow their youth, who's 12 or 13, to participate. In some cases, a potential respondent is deemed physically or mentally unable to answer, in which case a proxy interview is possible. And in many cases, the respondent, often a juvenile, is temporarily absent or unavailable and will not be available before the interview needs to be closed out. So, in some cases, a Census Bureau interviewer will interview a parent instead.

Here is a link at the bottom to some technical documentation related to how proxy interviewing is handled in the NCVS, for those of you who are more interested in the topic.

The goal with this part of the task had to do with assessing the efficacy of proxy interviewing. We wanted to essentially compare the victimization rates that we get when we interview parents who are serving as a proxy for their youth and compare it to the victimization estimates that we get from interviewing the children directly. And the reason that this was important and worth doing is really twofold. One, the rate of proxy interviewing has gone up over time. So, we know that this is a more and more common scenario. At the same time, we see that in proxy interviews when they're conducted, the rates of victimization tend to be lower than when children are interviewed directly. So, is—as proxy interviewing is becoming more prevalent, and we know that proxy interviewing yields lower victimization rates, concerns about the potential validity or accuracy of victimization estimates get compounded. So, we wanted to assess the role that proxy interviewing is playing in creating victimization estimates and see if we can understand the extent to which there could be any issues associated with that. Going into this

work, we did hold an assumption that the child's report is the gold standard. They're the respondents with the direct experience. And we wanted to consider their experience that they reported to us kind of the gold standard against which the accuracy of the parent reporting or the proxy reporting of victimization could be evaluated. So, that's the mindset we went into this research with.

Quickly, I wanted to show you some data on the prevalence of proxy interviewing. If you look at the black line at the very bottom, that's the prevalence of proxy interviewing for all age groups, you can see that since 2009, it's gone from about 4 percent to 6 percent. Really not much of a change. But for some of the individual age groups, especially younger age groups, that rate has gone up considerably over time. So, for 12- and 13-year-olds, you see it's the highest, and in almost all cases, about 87 percent of those proxy interviews are due to parents not allowing the 12- or 13-year-old to participate in the interview. But also for 14- to 17-year-olds, we see an increase in the rate of proxy interviewing, and in most cases, that's because the 14- to 17-year-old simply isn't available or isn't around, and if any of you are parents of teenagers, you can imagine that that's probably true.

Christine already covered the methodology we used to recruit parents and their children to participate in these various aspects of research. For the proxy study, we thought it was very important that parents and youth were interviewed simultaneously. So, these also were done via Zoom. And in different Zoom rooms, we had different interviewers, one interviewing the parent and one interviewing the child at the same time. And that helped us ensure data integrity and interview independence. So, it wasn't the case that the parent heard the youth interview and then had to report on the same things. It wasn't a situation where there would be cross-contamination. So, we did the interviews simultaneously. Obviously, children were asked to report about their own victimization experiences, and parents were asked to report about their child's victimization experiences to the best of their knowledge.

The three types of victimization that we focused on in the proxy study were theft, physical attack, and sexual assault, and we completed a total of 182 proxy interviews. So, that's with 91 parent-child pairs or dyads over a 5 ½-week period in the fall of 2020.

Here's some basic data on the children who participated. So, these are the 91 youth. The majority of them were males, about 56 percent, but we had a sizable female population as well. Had a good distribution in terms of age. Twelve was the most common age but we had a good number of youth in the other ages as well.

The majority of our respondents, 70 percent, were white, but we did have sizable populations of black respondents, as well as Hispanic respondents and youth who reported being of more than one race. In terms of household income, almost 70 percent reported being in a household with income above \$30,000, and we also asked about most serious victimization type, and so they can—

DARYL FOX: Oh, we seem to have lost Christopher's feed at this time. Just a couple of minutes and we'll try to get him back for everybody. Do apologize.

GRACE KENA: Christine just placed that in the chat, but apparently Chris lost power at home, so he's looking to get that back up. And yes, I agree. Christine, let's go ahead and switch slides and go to the next section and then come back to Chris' section when he's able to rejoin.

CHRISTINE LINDQUIST: OK. Thank you. I think that's a good solution because I probably would not be able to do the proxy interview component justice, but if need be, I can try to present that. But I'm going to skip ahead to our third component, which is the parent interviews that focused on recruitment-related communications regarding youth participation in the NCVS. Its background – and Grace covered this really well in her introduction—but it can be very challenging to recruit juveniles for a crime survey because you have parents as gatekeepers, and they may not provide permission to contact the child. And even if parents do provide permission, the youth may refuse themselves, and even if you don't have a direct refusal, it can be very difficult to even get the chance to talk to youth about their participation because they may not be available at the time the parents or the rest of the household is recruited. So, just to understand the context, in terms of the NCVS and how it approaches recruiting juveniles, first a lead letter is sent to the sampled household, and that is followed up by contact from the assigned field representative, and then, during an in-person visit from the field representative, the primary household respondent lists all household members who are age 12 and older. Each person who is home is then interviewed privately. If necessary, some household members are interviewed over the phone, and certainly, for subsequent interviews, some interviews are done over the phone. And, as Chris mentioned, proxy interviewing is allowed for 12- and 13-year-olds. I see that Chris is back, but I feel like I should go ahead and proceed with this component so we don't lose time. This is actually quite short. I'll probably only be another seven minutes or so.

So part of the impetus for this study component is that, as Grace mentioned, response rates have been declining in the NCVS, especially for youth between the ages of 15 to 17. This group has the lowest response rate across all years from 2009 to 2018, and declining response rates has certainly been a trend for all age groups, as shown in the chart here. And low response rates for youth are a problem because they can create nonresponse bias and measurement error.

The goal of this study component, which we're calling "recruitment communications," was to identify potential improvements to NCVS methods and materials for recruitment. Specifically, we wanted to understand parent concerns regarding youth participation in the NCVS based on current procedures, given the critical gatekeeping role of parents, and then we sought to use this feedback to design a new recruitment brochure targeted specifically at parents of youth, and our final objective was then to seek parent feedback on this brochure and understand any additional concerns about their child's participation.

This component involved two rounds of interviews that were done with separate cohorts of parents. In the first, we interviewed 34 parents about their thought process in allowing their child to participate in the NCVS, any concerns they might have, and what materials might assist in their decision-making process if they were recruited for the NCVS. And the second interview, which was done with 39 parents focused on sharing actual recruitment materials to solicit

feedback on specific aspects of the materials that might make them more or less likely to allow their own child to participate if they were selected for the NCVS. And in this interview, we screen-shared the actual NCVS recruitment materials used in the redesign field effort, which included a lead letter, a Q&A document, and an existing brochure, which is not specific to youth participation. And we then screen-shared a new brochure that our team developed that included additional information about youth participation based on what we learned in Phase 1, and we sought their feedback about various aspects of the brochure, as well as additional questions about recruitment and scheduling youth interviews for the NCVS. And before I get into the findings, I just want to show you what the brochure looks like, and this is a little bit awkward because it's folded as if it's a real brochure, but if you start with the far right, that's the cover, and I'm just going to skip to the inside. So it has sections on what is the NCVS, what is the purpose, who conducts it, what will my child be asked to do, how will my child's data be used, and this covers confidentiality and privacy of their data. And then I'm just going to skip back, and then what they see is "Why is my child's participation important?" And then there's a final section shown in the middle that shows recent NCVS publications, and it has a QR code and some social media icons and websites to go to various social media sites or other websites for more information.

So that's the brochure that was tested. And then, in terms of what we learned from the Phase-1 interviews, parents did feel that a brochure highlighting the importance of youth participation could be helpful and increase the likelihood that they would agree to let their child be interviewed. Some, but not all, parents indicated that they and their children would actually read this type of brochure if it were given to them, so certainly not everyone would actually read it. Parents provided some very helpful recommendations about the type of content they would like to see to make a decision about their child's participation in the NCVS, such as the purpose of the study, the funding agency, how the data would be used, and here they were interested in how their child's data would be protected, as well as what types of estimates or information would be reported, and they also recommended highlighting the impact of the NCVS data collection.

So then, in Phase 2, when we did the interviews and showed a different set of parents the brochure and got their feedback on it, the reactions were quite positive. Some parents did note that it wasn't quite clear whether the audience was parents or youth, and they recommended that separate brochures targeting each audience be produced, or if there was only going to be one brochure, that it have a focused subsection that was just intended for youth. They provided some design ideas for improving the brochure, such as using brighter colors, using more graphics, using more casual fonts, and they thought the text was too dense for youth and recommended using bullets and icons. They also suggested some improvements to the content, which are listed here, including more detail about the study importance, the confidentiality of the data that their child was providing, more about how their child's information would be used, and they were interested in including a statement about the Census field representative having undergone background checks. They also thought the brochure should make it clear where potential participants could go online to get more information, and they thought it would be helpful for one of these sites to include example questions from the real NCVS interview or at least more detail about the topics that are covered in the interview.

Finally, in addition to discussing the brochure in detail, we also got parents' feedback in Phase 2 about other strategies that could potentially increase participation rates among youth. Parents felt that social media platforms could help with recruitment, but that this would need to be customized for parents and guardians and then for youth, given that the two audiences prefer different platforms. When we asked about field representatives contacting youth household members directly, given that – as both Chris and Grace mentioned – one of the challenges to youth participation in the NCVS is this age group not being at home. Parents said that the parent would need to be included on any communication between the field representative and the child, such as a text message that was sent, and that this could really only happen after the parent had developed a rapport with the interviewer and provided permission for their child to be contacted directly. We discussed alternative modes to in-person and telephone interviews, which are the current NCVS modalities, and parents felt that these would be acceptable to parents for their child to participate, and they actually thought it would be more appealing to youth than the current modalities of in-person or phone. They thought that web-based surveys would be effective for older youth and that video-conferencing – which is what we did with our cognitive interviews and proxy tests – would work well for all age groups.

To summarize what we learned from this component, we concluded that a well-designed brochure could increase youth participation in the NCVS, and some of the specific recommendations provided by parents and guardians on the look and content of the brochure should be incorporated to maximize its effectiveness. Also, BJS should explore the role of social media in conveying additional information about the NCVS, but that would need to be customized for parents and youth in terms of the specific platforms and the content, and finally, offering the NCVS in alternative data collection modes might help to increase youth participation and potentially adult participation as well, given difficulties in finding people at home or interviewing them even over the telephone. So I am going to put myself back on mute and turn this back over to Chris to pick up with the proxy study.

CHRISTOPHER KREBS: Hi, everybody. I apologize. Had a whole-house power outage on a perfectly sunny, calm day here, and I don't know why that happened, but here we are. Thanks for your patience. So I wanted to talk to you about what we did for the proxy study analytically. We used something called a McNemar's test, and it essentially involves—when you have an outcome that's reported by two different parties, it allows you to assess the corroboration or the congruence between those outcomes. So you can see here in this table, we've got children reporting experiencing victimization; yes, no on the left; and at the top, you've got parents reporting that their child experienced victimization – yes, no on the top. And so, obviously, when the child and the parent both report victimization, you have congruence; when you've got them both not reporting victimization, you have congruence; and then you have the yellow boxes as possibilities as well. So the parent reporting victimization, the child not reporting victimization, that's a false positive because, again, we're using the child's report as the gold standard. Alternatively, if the child reports experiencing a type of victimization and the parent doesn't, that's a false negative. But what you're really doing here is represented by the gray boxes, so cumulatively, across parents and youth, what percentage of youth reported experiencing a victimization type and comparing that to the percentage of parents who reported that their youth experienced a victimization type, and then you're assessing any observed differences in those

percentages for statistical significance. So this is just kind of an overview of what that analysis looks like.

Here's this table filled in for theft as the victimization outcome, and this is all ages combined. So, again, there's lots of numbers in this table, but essentially what we're looking at is comparing the two gray boxes. So 42.9 percent of parents reported that children experience the theft victimization, and 41.8 percent of youth reported experiencing a theft victimization. And you can see in the lower right corner, the p-value is highly insignificant in terms of that being a statistically significant difference, so we would conclude that in this case, theft for all ages, proxy reporting was perfectly accurate for reporting theft victimization for youth. But looking at these tables isn't all that easy or fun, so what I'm presenting here in these histograms are some of these same comparisons for those gray boxes. So, this is for theft as the outcome. On the far left, you can compare the percentages for all age groups, and then you can see them for the different breakdowns of the juveniles 12- to 13-, 14- to 15-, and 16- to 17-year-olds. None of these comparisons are statistically significant, although you can see, for 14- to 15-year-olds, you start to see some real difference between parent-reporting and youth-reporting.

Here is where you compare those percentages for physical attack, and in this case, you start to see some larger differences, and we have our only statistically significant difference that pops up for 14- to 15-year-olds, where 53 percent of parents reported their youth experiencing a physical attack, and only 32 percent of youth reporting experiencing a physical attack, sexual assault being the least prevalent of the crime types or victimization types we asked about. The prevalence rates are quite low, and these differences are rather small.

The other thing we did at the end of the proxy interviews is we asked both youth and their parents basically how confident they were. Well, we asked two different questions. For youth, we asked them whether their parents knew about the victimization experiences they told us about in the interview, and these are counts, not percentages, but here you can see that most youths said that their parents knew about all of the experiences they talked about in the interviews, so 46 of the 91 youth. About 25 youths said that their parents knew about some of the experiences they talked about in the interview. Nine said the parents knew very little about their experiences with victimization, and two youths said that the parents did not know anything.

We did ask parents how confident they were in their answers about their children's victimization experiences. Fifty-eight of the 91 parents said they were very confident, 29 said somewhat confident, and relatively few said they were either not very confident or not at all confident.

Some notes and caveats about what we did here. I mean, these are relatively small sample sizes. It was a fairly intensive effort over only five weeks to do that many interviews over Zoom, but it's still a pretty small sample size, especially within each age group, and for, obviously, some of the victimization types, we have low prevalence estimates, which limits statistical power. So, some of those differences look pretty sizable or substantively meaningful, but don't necessarily get detected as statistically significant. One thing that's worth pointing out is that the analytic approach does not test for congruence within parent-child pairs, and that's mostly because, for the NCVS, that's not how they, obviously, look at victimization. They aggregate data across respondents, so we wanted to do that here as well. It is worth mentioning, however,

that when we do look within child pairs, there's—about two-thirds of the parents and youth corroborate within their pairs, in terms of reporting victimization. So again, proxy reporting is not a one-to-one match, but it's certainly a majority of interviews, even within pairs, seem to hold up to at least some standard of quality.

We also looked at agreement. Here I just presented prevalence estimates, but we also looked for agreement between children and parents in terms of the number of incidents, the most serious victimization type experienced, as well as characteristics of the incidents. And while I didn't get into those details here, the findings were rather similar. Again, pretty good corroboration between parents and youth, but certainly not perfect. I will say that one of the things we expected to find is that parents would under-report victimization. We thought we would see a lot of false negative reporting. We didn't necessarily expect to find false-positive reporting or over-reporting, in which case the parent reports their child experienced a victimization, and the youth does not corroborate that or report the same type of victimization. There are a couple explanations for that. One is that—and this was referenced earlier by Christine in her presentation, but sometimes the youth would not report, it seems, a physical attack if they deemed it to be very minor or kind of playing around, whereas the parent might still deem it as something that was relatively serious or worthy of reporting as a physical-attack victimization. So we know—we uncovered some situations there where parents were reporting something that they thought was an attack, and youth simply said, “No, that wasn't. That wasn't a big deal. I'm not reporting that.” That seemed to be the thought process. The other problem, or the other reason for this, and it's somewhat of a problem with the design, is, as you know, we were trying to recruit families where victimization had occurred. Knowing that some victimization occurring is an indication that they're worth interviewing for this process or for this project, and then we might learn about other types of victimization as well. And certainly, parents went into this knowing that they responded to a screener and were eligible because there had been victimization that they are going to be talking about in these interviews. Youth didn't necessarily have that same knowledge or expectation, so we would acknowledge here that there's a possibility that some parents are reporting victimization or including victimization because they know that's part of being part of this project, whereas some youth necessarily didn't feel that pressure, so to speak.

Overall, though, we felt like the comparisons between parents and children generally revealed aggregate estimates of children victimization status are similar to those generated by proxy reports. The only exception from a statistical significance perspective really seemed to be for physical attacks for 14- and 15-year-olds. We think that interviewing youth directly should always be the goal, should always be the priority, and that every effort should be made to do that, but we certainly acknowledge the challenges associated with interviewing this population, and then, if the alternative to proxy reporting is a nonresponse, then we should definitely allow for and facilitate proxy reporting. As we say, it's better than nothing. I think that, in a roundabout way, gets us to the end of our presentation, and I think, Grace, you were going to take it back over and see about questions?

GRACE KENA: Yes. Thank you, Chris and Christine, so much. So, as we shift gears here with our slides, I just wanted to just talk about how there was so much discussion and planning with

this work, just a lot of collaboration between us and RTI, and we feel it was a quick turnaround process, and the pandemic started, and so we were all trying to figure that out. We do feel that we learned a lot in this process.

In terms of next steps, after the testing work was complete, the next step for us at BJS was to prepare a final version of the redesigned instrument to deliver to the Census Bureau, our data collection agent, to begin programming into their systems. So, to do this, we discussed all of the proposed changes to the instrument, also considering other discussions with Westat, who was doing the main instrument-testing about potential changes, based on findings from the field test and other inputs. So an interesting thing is that though youth were the subject of the cognitive testing, we found that some changes would actually be helpful for all respondents and ended up incorporating those globally. One recommendation, for instance, had to do with expanding examples of occupations to include jobs that teenagers would be more likely to have, such as a cashier or a server, but including these was also more encompassing for all respondents.

In terms of communication, we are working with the feedback that we received from parents and youth, along with other inputs to develop additional materials and resources focused on a youth audience. Given the somewhat mixed results of the proxy test, we are not presently considering any changes to the current process there. We are evaluating whether it would be possible to make changes to facilitate scheduling interviews with youth and their parents and the Census field representative so as not to miss out on interviewing any youth whose parents have given consent and children who are willing to be interviewed. So, we're happy to share this work today, which we think has general application for interviewing youth in other contexts.

Turning here to a few resources, you can find more information about the NCVS redesign, including the report that details this work on juveniles, as well as reports on the larger redesign and the work that was done on hate crime. There are also links here to learn more about the NCVS and about BJS more broadly. As we enter the discussion portion today, we're happy to take questions. Please go ahead and place any questions or comments you have in the chat.

So, I see a couple here. A few from Alicia: "For the cognitive testing, were monolingual and bilingual participants identified for potential implications for comprehension and user reliability?" Chris or Christine, do you want to take that one?

CHRISTINE LINDQUIST: Sure. This is Christine. Sorry. I can try to take this. I know that our interviews were only done in English, and Chris may remember some of the context behind why that decision was made. I think some of our participants were bilingual, but the parent had to be able to speak English because we needed to make sure they fully understood the consent form and the interview topics. So that was a requirement to participate in our study, and I do think that—I mean, that limits, obviously, the generalizability of the findings to individuals who don't speak English as their primary language. Chris, I don't remember if you have any more context on this decision.

CHRISTOPHER KREBS: I don't recall. I think we wanted to start with English and then, certainly, if BJS wants to test this in other languages, that can be done.

GRACE KENA: Thanks to you both. Yes, the decision was to focus on English at the time. OK. Second question: “Based on the changes made, in your opinion, do you believe NCVS will be more accessible to juveniles with disabilities disclosing victimization?” That’s a great question, and Chris and Christine, please feel free to weigh in as well. Looking at the larger changes to the instrument redesign, which are detailed in the reports that you can find on our website, there are a lot of changes outside of what we did here for youth that should improve—our goal at least is to improve—measurement of different populations, including those with disabilities and youth with disabilities though that wasn’t a specific focal point of this work.

Next question from Susannah: “Are interviewers ever required to report the victimization of a minor to Child Protective Services or another agency?” So we have a—and I don’t have the formal details on the requirements here, but we are not. Our interviewers are not required to do that at this point, and that’s part of the agreement that we have in doing these interviews. It is a sensitive issue.

A question here from Jenna: “When will the changes to the instrument be implemented?” So there is a very nice figure that details the timeline for this entire redesign effort that you can find on our redesign website that details where we are in the process and where we’re going, so please feel free to check that out. But the next steps at this point are, as I mentioned... Census is incorporating all of the changes to the redesign instrument into their internal systems, and there will be a few additional steps of testing to make sure that everything is working properly, and then some more kind of pilot tests to test the instrument fully with respondents before rolling it out in the next couple of years. So more information from BJS will be forthcoming on these next steps.

All right, there’s a question here: “Is there a way to adjust the under-reporting and proxy interviews through weighting?” There is a way, and that was one of the things that we were considering in undertaking this proxy testing, but given that the findings were not neat and tidy, there wasn’t a clear way then to figure out what such an adjustment would look like, and so that’s part of why we decided to not do anything further in pursuing that sort of adjustment.

CHRISTOPHER KREBS: Yeah, we went into the research thinking that if everything was in one direction, this would start to give us a sense of the magnitude of that difference, and then that starts to lend itself to potentially talking about an adjustment. But as Grace said, it wasn’t necessarily clear-cut.

GRACE KENA: Right. Another question: “Are there any questions on the NCVS that are exclusively asked to youth subjects such as bullying?” So there is a school crime supplement to the NCVS. That is the target audience for that questionnaire. It’s youth specifically, so topics such as bullying are not covered in the core instrument but are covered in more detail there. However, there is a lot of information in the course survey that can be used to understand youth victimization.

OK, next question: “What types of training do you give proxy interviewers to make sure more trauma is not caused?” That’s an excellent question. So there isn’t a formal process for training, so usually, a proxy interviewer is a parent or guardian, and so it just boils down to asking the

parent or guardian the questions for them to answer as though they were answering for their child.

OK, next question: “Will the emotional distress protocols be incorporated into NCVS training in the future?” That is part of the plan, given what we learned here and in some of the Westat testing as well, to improve some of those features into training for field representatives.

Question from Melissa: “Does NCVS include self-identification of, um... and I’m so sorry that I don’t know what that acronym stands for, so if you could please... explain that to me. Forgive my ignorance on that.

CHRISTOPHER KREBS: I think she clarified in the follow-up. She’s talking about SOGI, so she’s talking about Sexual Orientation Gender Identity.

GRACE KENA: SOGI, ok. Yeah. Yeah. The—C {in SOCIE} it threw me, so OK. Yes it does, and it does currently, and that’s a great question. So the proxy interview responses would be based on what whoever is giving the response is aware of, which—a parent or guardian may or may not be aware of SOGI status.

OK. Another question: “What percentage of those reporting an incident exhibited emotional distress?” So Christine or Chris, do you want to take that one?

CHRISTINE LINDQUIST: Well, we know, from what we did with our cognitive interviews—[voice repeating in background]. Sorry. I think there’s a little bit of feedback. Chris, would you mind putting yourself on mute? I think it may be because there’s more than one person speaking. We had eight instances of emotional distress, total, and I’m not even positive that those were all individuals who reported any kind of criminal victimization. I don’t think we maintain statistics in that manner, but we only had eight instances out of 353 interviews. And I did mention earlier most of those were sexual assault victims, and it was typically in the context of answering that open-ended narrative question that asks the victim to describe what happened in their own words.

GRACE KENA: Another question here, and as we wind down, if there are any other questions, please go ahead and place them in the chat. So there’s a question on whether there is going to be an online or a text-messaging option for youth in the future. So, those are some of the things that we’re looking into to facilitate that scheduling process. As I think each of us noted, there is some concern from a lot of parents about allowing a stranger to be texting with their child, and so, if the parents that we spoke to would like to be involved in such a text communication or use something like an online portal for scheduling, but we’re evaluating what options we might be able to pursue with that.

OK, those are all of the questions I have, so I’m going to give a final call. Otherwise, I would like to really thank everyone for taking time to join us today. Thanks so much to Christine and Chris for presenting with me, and thanks again. Look out for the webinars once they’re posted on the website.

DARYL FOX: Great. Thanks. On behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and our panelists, thank you for joining today's webinar. This will end today's presentation.