EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SURVEY TROLLING AND GENDER IDENTITY QUESTIONS

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SPECIAL THANKS

 Coauthors D. Sunshine Hillygus and Jesse Lopez at Duke University

• Lopez, Jesse and Hillygus, D. Sunshine, Why So Serious?: Survey Trolls and Misinformation (March 14, 2018).

BACKGROUND: WHAT IS HUMOROUS RESPONDING OR "TROLLING"?

Adolescents

Scrutiny of adolescent survey results finds evidence of humorous responding.

• False reports of artificial limbs, adoption & LGBTQ identity (Fan et al. 2007, Robinson-Cimpian 2014, Fish & Russell 2017)

Adults

10-18% of respondents in adult samples flagged for humorous responding. (Lopez & Hillygus 2018; Clifford et al. 2018)

- More likely to report belief in political rumors/conspiracies.
- Make-up 30-60% of self-reported believers in these conspiracies.



DESIGN DECISIONS: GENDER MEASURES

Justifiable calls for more inclusive & nuanced measures of gender.

(Bittner & Goodyear 2017; Magliozzi et al. 2016)

While many have proposed measures, few have looked at whether they alter respondent behavior.

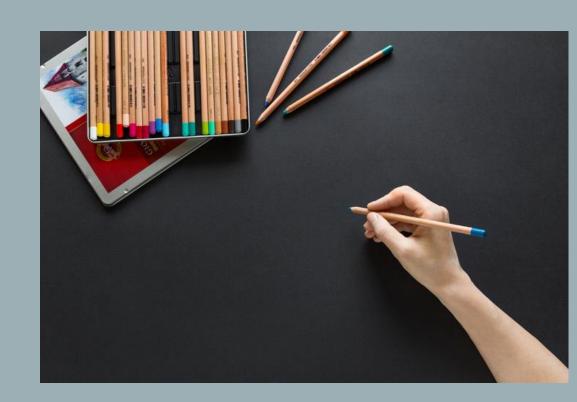
Some responses found in the "Other" field:

- "apache helicopter"
- "I'm a buick skylark somtimes i feel like a prius"
- "I list myself as a kool-aid packet"



DESIGN DECISIONS MATTER

"I only respond in a humorous manner when a question is stupidly worded or fails to give a NA/DK option. Ridiculous...they asked for it themselves."
—Open-Ended Feedback



GOALS OF THIS RESEARCH:

 How do different measures of gender influence self-reported humorous responding later in the survey?

 Do more inclusive, nuanced measures unintentionally prompt greater rates of humorous responding or "trolling"?

SURVEY I: DATA & METHODS

Sample Recruited Using SurveyMonkey

Audience Panel

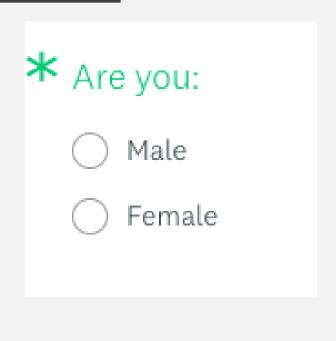
- 1,000 U.S. Adults
- Conducted August 2018
- Quotas for age and gender

Survey Experiment:

Randomly assigned to receive one of three gender measures.

- 2-Option Binary Gender Measure
- 3-Option (M/F/Other) Measure
- I 6-Item Check-All

*	Which of the following best describes
	you? (Select all that apply).
	Agender
	Androgynous
	Bigender
	Female
	Gender Fluid
	Gender Nonconforming
	Gender Questioning
	Gender-Queer
	Intersex
	Male
	Neutrois
	Non-binary
	Pangender
	Polygender
	Transgender
	Other (please specify)



* Which of the following best describes

you?

Female

Male

Other (please specify)

SURVEY I: GENDER DISTRIBUTIONS

Table 1: Gender Distributions Across Conditions

	16-Item	3-Item	2-Item Binary
Female Only	49%	53%	54%
	(n=176)	(n=170)	(n=202)
Male Only	40%	46%	46%
	(n=142)	(n=149)	(n=172)
Marked Non-Binary	11%	1%	
	(n=40)	(n=4)	N/A
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=358)	(n=323)	(n=374)

SURVEY I: OUTCOME MEASURE

Humorous Responding

Self-Reported Tendency to Respond Humorously
On Surveys

• Flagged as "Troll" if report "Always", "Most of the Time" or "Some of the time"

(Lopez & Hillygus 2018; Clifford et al. 2018)

Sometimes people don't take surveys seriously and instead provide humorous, or insincere responses to questions. How often do you do this?







Rarely

Never

SURVEY I: FINDINGS

Self-Reported Humorous Responding

- 16-item, check all option highest reports of humorous responders
- 2-item standard
- 3-item "other"

SURVEY I	l 6-item (n=355)	3-item (n=321)	2-item (n=371)
Total trolls	16%	12%	14%
Total not trolls	84%	88%	86%
Always	3%	3%	2%
Most of the time	4%	5%	5%
Some of the time	9%	4%	7%
Rarely	20%	20%	18%
Never	64%	68%	68%



TROLLS VS. NOT TROLLS

Self-Reported Humorous Responders are more likely to be...

- Younger age groups
- Lower educational attainment
- Lower income groups
- Non-white
- Male

Table 7: Non-Trolls vs. Tro	Non-Trolls vs. Trolls Demographic Profile-Survey 1		
	Not A Troll	Self-Reported Troll	
Demographic Breakdowns	(n=900)	(n=147)	
Below \$30,000	20%	38%	
Between \$30,000 & \$74,999	36%	42%	
\$75,000 or above	45%	21%	
18 to 24	14%	30%	
25 to 44	31%	48%	
45 or above	55%	21%	
Below High School	17%	37%	
Some College	34%	34%	
4 Year Degree or more	49%	28%	
Non-White	23%	54%	
White	77%	46%	
Male (Profile)	46%	53%	
Female (Profile)	54%	47%	

SURVEY 2: DATA & METHODS

Sample Recruited Using SurveyMonkey Audience Panel

- 2,000 U.S. Adults
- Conducted November 2018
- Quotas for age and gender

Survey Experiment:

Randomly assigned to receive one of three gender measures.

- Changes made: not required, add 2-step, replace "other" with "a gender not listed here"
- 3-Option (M/F/Not listed) Measure
- 2-part gender at birth and current
- I6-Item Check-All

Which of the following best describes
you? (Select all that apply).
Agender
Androgynous
Bigender
Female
Gender Fluid
Gender Nonconforming
Gender Questioning
Gender-Queer
Intersex
Male
Neutrois
Non-binary
Pangender
Polygender
Transgender
Other (please specify)

SURVEY 2: OUTCOME MEASURE

Humorous Responding

Self-Reported Tendency to Respond Humorously On Surveys

• Flagged as "Troll" if report "Always", "Most of the Time" or "Some of the time"

(Lopez & Hillygus 2018; Clifford et al. 2018)

Sometimes people don't take surveys seriously and instead provide humorous, or insincere responses to questions. How often do you do this? Most of the time Some of the time Rarely

SURVEY 2: FINDINGS

Self-Reported Humorous Responding

This time, I 6-item, check all = lowest reports of humorous responders

3-item with open-ended option

2-step question most

SURVEY 2	l 6-item (n=706)	3-item (n=678)	2-step (n=655)
Total trolls	11%	14%	15%
Total not trolls	88%	86%	83%
Always	2%	2%	3%
Most of the time	3%	4%	4%
Some of the time	6%	8%	8%
Rarely	18%	18%	16%
Never	70%	68%	67%

CONSISTENCY IN GENDER SELECTION

Across the two surveys, very few mismatch between their profile listed gender and reported gender.

Survey I

	2-Option Binary	3-Option	16-Item List
Marked Gender Reported	99%	97%	94%
Prior To Survey	(n=372)	(n=313)	(n=337)
Did Not Mark Gender Reported	1%	3%	6%
Prior To Survey	(n=2)	(n=10)	(n=21)
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(n=374)	(n=323)	(n=358)

Survey 2

		3-Option	Gender/Sex 2-Item	16-Item List
	Marked Gender Reported	97%	95%	95%
2	Prior To Survey	(n=652)	(n=615)	(n=667)
	Did Not Mark Gender Reported	3%	5%	5%
	Prior To Survey	(n=21)	(n=31)	(n=38)
	Total	100%	100%	100%
		(n=673)	(n=646)	(n=705)

PRELIMINARY TAKEAWAYS

Non-negligible percent of self-reported trolling exists in our surveys and in the lower to mid range found in previous research (10-18%, see Lopez & Hillygus, 2018).

Evidence so far is inconclusive about the impact of asking a more inclusive gender question on self-reported trolling but worth exploring further.

Possible implications for longitudinal studies: when asking gender more than once and in different ways over time, more chance for inconsistency.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Redefine "troll" flags: changing the self-report criteria, adding other flags for trolls

Remove the trolls: if/how the picture changes when we remove those flagged as trolls

Explore gender question's impact on other outcomes: dropoff and skip rates, likelihood to take surveys, motivation for taking surveys, etc.

QUESTIONS?

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