A Study of Non-Response and Negative Values on the Factorial Vignettes on Welfare

Tom W. Smith

November, 1986

GSS Methodological Report No. 44

This research was done for the GSS project directed by James A. Davis and Tom W. Smith. This project is funded by the National Science Foundation, Grant No. SES-8119731.

The factorial vignette approach brings the power of controlled experimentation to the investigation of human choices. In the factorial vignette approach respondents read a series of (usually) hypothetical situations that are presented in brief descriptive passages or vignettes. Respondents evaluate the vignettes according to some process under investigation. The vignettes consist of various dimensions which each specify several levels or conditions. These conditions are varied across vignettes so respondents are presented with various storylines all which contain the same dimensions (including the null cases were no reference or information on a particular dimension is presented). In the simplest case the vignettes are constructed according to factorial experimental procedures to insure that all dimensions are orthogonal. In other situations, the assignment of conditions is constrained to eliminate intersections that are logically impossible or extremely improbable. Once the array of possible vignette combinations is determined respondents are presented with a sample of these combinations. The analysis can then examine how the various levels on the different dimensions influence choices and thereby develop a choice or evaluation model to explain the process under study.

The factorial vignette approach has several advantages. The experimental variation of levels along the specified dimensions allows the systematic evaluation of how differing levels on these dimensions influence choice. Since these levels are being randomly varied (except when constraints are placed on certain combinations) it is possible to avoid problems of multicolinearity that often severely complicate comparisons in real-world situations. Second, by specifying in some detail the relevant facts before the respondent, the researcher is better able than usual in surveys to gain a degree of uniformity and to control the stimuli affecting the respondent's

judgment. Third, since many dimensions are being employed and varied across vignettes and since the individual dimensions are not singled out as explicit criteria for evaluation, comparisons are not explicit and strategic responding such as a social desirability effect is less likely to occur (Ross and Nock, 1982 and Alexander and Becker, 1978).

As a result of these properties factorial vignettes have gain increasing use in the social sciences over the last 15 years and have been employed in student, local, and national studies of such diverse topics as social standing, distributive justice and inequality, sexual harassment, rape, criminal punishments, and child abuse (Rossi, Simpson, and Bose, 1974; Shepelak and Alwin, 1986; Jasso, 1978; Rossi and Anderson, 1982; Jones and Aronson, 1973; Alexander and Becker, 1978; Berk and Rossi, 1982; Garrett, 1982).

Factorial Vignettes on the GSS

At the behest of Peter Rossi (1983; 1984), the GSS decided to develop a set of factorial vignettes to measure public evaluation of welfare needs. As part of the 1986 topical module on the feminization of poverty a sub-committee of the GSS Board of Overseers consisting of Richard Berk, Greg Duncan, and Karen Mason developed a proposal that included both standard survey questions and factorial vignettes on welfare (Berk, Duncan, and Mason, 1985). An initial pretest of the welfare vignettes was conducted in July, 1985 with the vignettes being produced for the sub-committee by the Social and Demographic Research Institute (SADRI), University of Massachusetts, Amherst and the field work conducted by NORC. Evaluation of the initial pretest by Tom W. Smith (Smith, 1985a) and the analysis of the performance of the vignette dimensions by Richard Berk led the sub-committee to revise the welfare vignettes. A second pretest was generated by SADRI and carried out by

NORC in October, 1985. Further evaluation by Smith (1985b) and Berk (1986) led to the adoption in December, 1985 of the final form of the welfare vignettes.

The welfare vignettes consist of two separate parts. Each respondent was given seven young family and three old woman vignettes. Each of the ten vignettes describe the circumstances of the families and ask whether the current family should be augmented by government assistance.

First of all, respondents are given the following introduction:

> In this booklet we describe various kinds of families with incomes near or below the poverty line and ask your opinion about how much public assistance each family described should be given.
>
> Remember that changes in the overall amounts spent on public assistance programs could lead to changes in the taxes we pay.
>
> Mark on each page how much <u>total income per week</u> you think each family should receive.

Respondents then work through seven young family vignettes followed by three old woman vignettes. The young family vignettes contained 10 dimensions[1]: 1) number/age of child(ren), 2) marital status of parents, 3) labor force status/situation of father, 4) mother's education, 5) mother's employment status, 6) marital status of father (if not currently married to children's mother), 7) financial prospects, 8) help from mother's parents, 9) savings, and 10) current family income. The specific levels used for each of these dimensions are given in Table 1 and Figure 1 gives a sample vignette. The old

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[1]While mechanically ten dimensions are being manipulated, several of the dimensions consist of levels that clearly tap conceptually different matters. The first (number/age of child(ren)) for example varies both number of children and age of youngest child. In all 15 conceptual dimensions are present in one form or another among the 10 dimensions (See Table 1).

woman vignettes had five dimensions[2]: 1) age of woman, 2) situation of child, 3) housing tenure, 4) savings, and 5) current income (see respectively Table 1 and Figure 2 for details and an example).

The dimensions for the young family vignettes were all designed to be orthogonal to one another with three exceptions: 1) if the mother worked full or part time, the family income was greater than $50, 2) if the father was employed full time, the family income was greater than $50, and 3) if the parents are currently married to each other, there is no separate marital status for father given. With these constraints there are 270,000 possible unique combinations among the 10 dimensions. No constraints are applied to the old woman vignettes so there was a total of 1,296 possible combinations.

After having read each vignette respondents were asked:

> What should this family's weekly income be? Include both the money already available from sources other than government and any public assistance support you think this family should get.

Respondents indicated their preference by marking a line chart that ran in $50 increments from $0 to $600. This line chart included two markers. For each vignette there was a marker at $400 labeled "AVERAGE U.S. FAMILY INCOME" and there was a second marker that ranged from $50 to $300 labeled "AMOUNT ALREADY RECEIVED BY THIS FAMILY" (See Figures 1 and 2).

Administering the Welfare Vignettes

While numerous changes and distinct improvements in the welfare vignettes were made as the result of the two waves of pretest, these instruments had some inherent difficulties that could not be totally eliminated. First, the task was found to be difficult by many respondents

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[2]As with the young family vignettes several distinctions are nested within the five dimensions so a total of eight conceptual matters are actually being varied.

either because of difficulty in reading the vignettes, unfamiliarity with the judgment task, or uncertainty over how to complete the task (Smith, 1985a; 1985b). Probably the single largest problem that the pretest revealed was troubles relating to how respondents filled-out the line chart indicating what the family income should be after public assistance was added to current income. Many respondents on the pretest gave "negative" amounts (i.e. they circled an amount that was lower than the family currently received without any government funds). The pretests indicated that this resulted from three causes 1) careless execution by respondents, 2) a wish to punish underserving families, especially those with higher incomes from unspecified sources, and, most frequently, 3) respondent's failure to understand the marking task. In particular respondents often indicated how much assistance the family should get from the government instead of what their total family income should be after the addition of any governmental assistance. Second, respondents raised specific questions about what various terms in the vignettes meant. Among the queries raised were: 1) who was in the family (i.e. was the father part of the family being referred to), 2) were the income figures net or gross, 3) where was the family income coming from if the parents were either absent or both unemployed, and 4) what does "average U.S. family income" mean?

Several steps were taken to deal with these general and specific problems: 1) a special training exercise was designed for interviewers, 2) detailed Q-by-Qs (question by question specifications) were inserted for interviewers, and 3) a task completion exercise was developed to teach respondents how to complete the booklet. To train interviewers a special challenge exercise was employed to make sure interviewers understood the task and knew how to handle typical respondent queries (See Figure 3). This

exercise included having interviewers master the fairly detailed Q-by-Qs that went with the vignettes (Figure 4). Finally, to deal with the problem of negative amounts a detailed example was devised to walk respondents through a sample vignette and explicitly teach them how to add whatever public assistance they thought the family should receive to the family's current income and thereby come up with the total family income that should be marked on the line chart (See Figure 5).

Non-Response and Questionable Response on the 1986 GSS Welfare Vignettes

Three problems in administration of the vignettes were encountered: 1) failure to complete the vignettes booklet, 2) partial non-response to the vignette booklet, and 3) negative values on the vignettes. Overall some problem (total non-response, partial non-response, or negative values) occured on 28.9% of the cases. Since most problems affected only some of the 10 vignettes per case (respondent) only 13.3% of vignettes were affected (Table 2).

Table 2

Problems on the Welfare Vignettes

	A. Cases	B. Vignettes
Did not do vignettes	83	830
Partial Non-response	76	235
Negative	283	891
No problems	1,045	12,744
	1,487[a]	14,700

[a]Adds to 1487 instead of 1470 because 17 cases had both negative values and partial non-response.

In terms of cases negatives values are the most prevalent problem but in terms of vignettes there is almost as many complete refusals as negative values (although we will discuss later whether the problem of negative vignettes might be greater than this indicated level). In neither case do the partial non-response amount to an important share of the problems.

In order to study these problems we conducted two types of analyses: 1) we examined the questionnaires and booklets for the problem cases and recorded all verbatim comments. We also drew a 10% sample of cases with no problems and examined them for comments as a control group. 2) We developed a number of explanations for each of the types of problems and conducted appropriate analyses to test each of these explanations.

Table 3

Verbatim Comments Regard Welfare Vignettes

	(% making comments)
Complete Non-response	80.7%
Partial Non-response	28.9%
Negative	1.4%
No problems (10% sample)	6.0%

Surveys questions that are unproblematic tend to attract few comments. Similarly if a respondent has no difficulty with a question usually no comment is offered to and recorded by interviewers. Among the very few comments from cases without apparent problems (Table 3), half noted that the vignettes had to be read to respondents because they were illiterate, blind, or both and the other half mentioned some normative comment about the families trying harder. Other than inability to read the booklet none cited any problems with the vignettes or any complaints.

Complete and Partial Non-response

In contrast, at least some comment appeared on 81% of the complete non-response cases. Of those which explained why the vignettes had not been completed, most were respondent refusals (68%), 3% were respondents unable to do the task because of inability to read and who could not do the task when the vignettes were read to them, and 29% did not do the task because either the interview was done over the phone or the interviewer was out of vignettes at the time of the interview. Among the refusers the most commonly cited reasons were that they did not understand the task, unspecified refusals, they knew nothing about the topic, they did not have enough time, they objected to the topic, and they were too tired.

The 5.6% who did not do the vignettes is appreciably higher than the 2.9% who did not do the international supplement on social support. This would seem to indicate that respondents found the vignettes more burdensome than the other self-completion task. Another apt comparison might be to the vocabulary test on the GSS which is certainly difficult for many respondents and also generates a notable amount of verbatim complaints. In 1984 (the latest administration) 4.8% did not do this part of the questionnaire although the average across all years is for just under 4% not doing the test.

The partial non-response level for vignettes (5.5% of cases with at least one missing value or 1.7% of vignettes) is typical for both standard GSS questions and for other vignette studies (e.g. see rates of 0.3%, 0.6%, 0.9%, 2.0%, 2.3% and 5.4.% in Rossi and Nock, 1982 and Shepelak and Alwin, 1986). Most appear to represent either inadverent skips or difficulties in coming to a decision on a particular combination of attributes. Among the 29% that made comments there was a strong indication of problems with doing the task: 10 gave-up or broke off saying the vigettes were too difficult, 3 wanted more

information about the families, 2 objected to the task, one interviewer forgot to read a vignette, and two made unclear comments. In addition 4 respondents made substantive anti-welfare comments without making any reference to the vignette task itself. Thus a minority of the partial non-response cases seem to resemble the complete non-response cases although most partial non-response seems to be either transitory or in response to a particular vignette.

To further examine the reasons for complete and partial non-response we formulated several hypotheses for these patterns.

Hypotheses:

Non-response would occur more frequently for

1. Those with lower cognitive skills as measured by years of education and interviewer's rating of comprehension level.

2. Non-attitude holders as measured by people who tended to not response to other attitudinal items and by people who did not express opinions on the welfare repercussion scale.

3. Uncooperative respondents as measured by their refusals to do the international supplement, by their giving refusals to income and voting questions and by the interviewer's rating of respondent's cooperation.

4. Those not used to handling money as measured by those with limited participation in the labor force, those who did not know the family income, and those who did not know what a family of four needed to get by on in their community.

We also examined how complete and partial non-response were related to general political/ideological orientation, support for social welfare programs by the government, and belief that public assistance has positive or negative consequences, as well as age, sex, and race.

As Table 4 indicates, there is a general similarity between the pattern shown by complete and partial non-response.[3] The cognitive ability hypothesis

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[3]In this and all subsequent analysis the respondent is the unit of analysis.

Table 4

Associates of Non-Response and Negative Values

(probability/gamma)

	Complete Non-Response	Partial Non-Response	Negative Values
1. Cognitive Ability			
EDUC (Years of Schooling)	.002/.064	.709/---	.028/-.216
COMPREND (Rating of Comprehension)	.000/.509	.000/.316	.000/ .139
2. Non-attitudes			
DK Scale[a]	.000/.543	.000/.249	.000/-.132
Welfare DK Scale[b]	.000/.490	.393/---	1.000/---
3. Cooperation			
Completed ISSP	.000/.922	.000/.640	.556/---
Refusals[c]	.000/.663	.000/.393	.995/---
COOP (Rating of Cooperation)	.000/.546	.011/-.132	.000/.110
4. Financial Familiarity			
Labor force participation[d]	.068/---	.306/---	.030/.082
DK family Income (INCOME)	.014/.482	.000/.373	.607/---
DK minimum income (MININC)	.000/.759	.027/.311	.795/---
5. Political Attitudes			
PARTYID (political preference)	.172/---	.889/---	.947/---
POLVIEWS (ideological orientation)	.672/---	.030/-.040	.363/---
Help scale[e]	.393/---	.803/---	.935/---
Welfare scale[f]	.792/---	.983/---	.009/.024
Welfare spending[g]	.750/---	.200/---	.263/---
6. Demographics			
SEX (Male, Female)	.297/---	.945/---	.644/---
RACE (Non-black, black)	.970/---	.091/---	.008/.279
AGE	.035/.195	.035/.195	.726/---

Notes:

[a]Number of DK responses to wide range of attitude items (COURTS, CAPPUN, CONBUS, CONLABOR,CONTV,CONJUDGE,DIVLAW,NATSPAC,NATSPACY,NATPARK,NATROADS,FEHOME,FEPOL, SEXEDUC,PORNLAW).

[b]Number of DKs to welfare scale items (WELFARE1,2,3,4,5,6).

[c]Number of refusals to voting (VOTE84,PRES84) and income (INCOME).

[d]Four categories from 1) currently working full-time, 2) currently working parttime, 3) not currently working but worked in past, 4) never worked.

[e]Sum of responses to HELPNOT,HELPBLK,HELPSICK, and HELPPOOR.

[f]Sum of WELFARE1-6 with WELFARE1,3,6 reverse coded.

[g]Combines NATFARE and NATFAREY.

found support in that both types of non-response were related to low comprehension ratings by the interviewer, but years of schooling had no relation to partial non-response and complete, non-response was actually slightly higher among the better educated. Second, partial and/or complete non-response was associated with giving DK responses to the general or welfare questions. Third, cooperation was also found to be related to non-response. Complete non-response was related to not completing the international supplement, refusing information on voting and income, and low cooperation ratings by the interviewer. Of course in the last instance the association may be artificial since failure to do the vignettes may well have led to lower cooperation ratings. The pattern for partial non-response was similar except for a weak reversal of the cooperation association. Fourth, financial familiarity showed some evidence of being related to non-response. While our measures of this dimension are both crude and indirect, we found that failure to know family income and not giving an estimate of minimum family income standards were related to non-response. Of course since these could also be interpretated as indicators of either uncooperativeness (if we see family income DKs as really "polite" refusals) or of non-attitudes. We will address these possibilities below. Fifth, we found no substantial evidence that non-response was associated with either general political orientation or attitudes on social welfare issues. Finally, non-response was unrelated to either sex or race, but was higher for older age groups.

Next, we carried out multivariate regression analysis of complete and partial non-response. As Table 5 indicates, complete non-response was related to 1) uncooperativeness (not doing international supplement and lower interviewer ratings), 2) non-attitudes on welfare issues, 3) not knowing what a family needs as a minimum income, and 4) perhaps low cognitive ability (low

interviewer ratings of comprehension, but still weakly related to more years of schooling). Since knowing family income was no longer significantly related, it is difficult to say whether the remaining indicator of our financial familiarity concept (DK what minimum income should be) really taps this dimension or is rather another measure of non-attitudes on welfare issues.

Partial non-response is explained by fewer variables and the relationships are weaker than for complete non-response. Partial non-response is related to 1) low cooperativeness (not doing the international supplement), 2) non-attitudes on welfare issues, 3) not knowing what the minimum income for a family should be, and 4) old age. We believe that the variables explain less because there is a larger element of random and inadvertent non-response among partial non-response. These variables probably explain the share of partial non-response that consisted of break-offs and other reactions to the vignettes similar to complete non-response and probably fail to explain the partial non-response that resulted from inadvertent skips or ambivalence over a particular vignette.

Based on the analysis of the verbatims and the examination of associates on non-response, it appears that non-response was concentrated among people who found the survey as a whole less engaging and perhaps more demanding, who found the vignette task difficult and uninteresting, and who had either little interest in or little knowledge about welfare matters. The non-responders however differed little from responders in their basic demographics, their general political leanings, or in their substantive attitudes towards welfare issues.

Table 5

Multivarite Regressions of Non-Response and Negative Values

(beta/prob.)

Variables in Equation		Variables Excluded	
A. Complete Non-Response			
Did ISSP Supplement	.313/.000	Age	.034/.210
Comprehension Rating	.157/.000	Refused Vote/Income	.041/.138
DK Minimum Income	.116/.000	General DKs	.048/.097
DK on Welfare Scale	.104/.000	DK Family Income	.048/.061
Cooperation Rating	.066/.012		
Years of Schooling	.058/.032		
B. Partial Non-Response			
Did ISSP Supplement	.180/.000	Years of Schooling	.004/.902
Age	.099/.000	Comprehension Rating	.037/.188
DK Minimum Income	.086/.002	Refused Vote/Income	-.011/.695
DKs on Welfare Scale	.068/.014	Cooperation Rating	.002/.932
		General DKs	.028/.348
		DK Family Income	.036/.190
C. Negative Values			
Years of Schooling	-.105/.000	Work History/Status	.004/.897
		Race (Nonblack/black)	.045/.101
		General DKs	-.038/.172
		Cooperation Rating	-.002/.936
		Comprehension Rating	-.005/.865

Negative Values

From the pretest three reasons were detected for giving negative amounts 1) sheer inattention to the task, 2) punitiveness, and most commonly, 3) misunderstanding of the task. To deal particularly with the later (and hopefully to reduce the first as well) all respondents were walked through a vignette and shown how to mark the amounts (See discussion above). This exercise may well have helped since about 22% of the pretest vignettes were negative compared to only 6.4% of the vignettes on the 1986 GSS. That however still left negative as the most common readily observable problems on the vignettes.

Just over 20% of respondents marked for one or more vignette an amount that was lower than the family currently earned, thereby giving a negative increment to the family's income. We examined all cases in which a negative amount was given to the first vignette. Of these 72 cases only two comments appeared: one a side comment about care of the disabled and the other an interviewer note that the respondent had marked the amount of public assistance the family should get instead of the total amount. The fact that there were so few comments (even lower than among the no problem cases) clearly indicates that respondents who gave negative amounts did not realize that they were doing the task wrong and had little or no doubt that they knew what they were doing.

Explanations for negative vignettes depend on what one believes was their cause. The verbatims are so sparce that they shed little light on the problem. There is no evidence from the comments that respondents were trying to be punitive. One comment among the negative cases we systematically examined and a second comment we came across among the no problem cases did indicate that some respondents failed to indicate the total income and instead marked what public assisitance should be given.

We would expect inattention would be indicated by low cooperation (at least to the interviewer's rating, but probably not to the other indicators). Punitiveness would be related to conservative sentiments in general and on welfare in particular. Task misunderstanding would be related to low cognitive ability and perhaps to low familiarity with financial (and by extention numerical) matters. Table 4 provides some support for the inattention hypothesis since negative values were more common among people with low cooperation ratings, but the association is rather modest. Second, there is no indication that negative values were related to low support for

social welfare. The only significant relationship runs modestly in the opposite direction with more negative values given by people thinking that welfare has positive consequences. Finally, giving negative values was related to low cognitive ability. Both people with fewer years of schooling and those with low comprehension ratings gave more negative values.

In the multivariate analysis (Table 5) only the cognitive ability explanation was significantly related to giving negative values with only years of schooling had an independent effect. Based on this pattern we lean towards the explanation that misapplication of the scaling task was the source of negative values and that many of these negative values may not represent the total amount that families should receive, but rather the public assistance supplement that they are due.

We next compared how giving a negative amount compared with attributes of the vignettes themselves. Giving a negative amount was strongly related to the amount the families were currently getting from non-governmental sources. This could be interpretated as occurring simply because people were marking the amount that should be given as an increment and not the total amount and when the base income was higher people both gave less and it was less likely that the increment would exceed the base income. On the other hand it could also be argued that the higher the base income the more likely that respondents would judge the family's income as "excessive" (not so much in absolute terms, since even the top income of $300 per week is not extremely high, but at least excessive in terms of the deservedness of the family) and thus favor a punitive negative increment. The prior analysis by social welfare attitudes failed to find support for the punitive explanation, but we subjected it to further examination by comparing whether negative amounts were given more frequently when the family was showing "reprehensible" attributes

such as not looking for work, not marrying or divorcing. We found no significant association between giving a negative amount and these behaviors, although the weak and insignificant associations did run in this direction. This suggests that punitiveness was probably not a major contributor to negative values. In fact, we found that except for base income giving negative amounts was unrelated to vignette values.

That leaves misunderstanding of the scale and the marking of increments instead of adjusted totals as the most likely explanation of the negative values. Now if we believe that respondents who gave negative values were consistently indicating the increment rather than the total, then even for vignettes on which no negative value occurred, the amount indicated would be the increment rather than the total. Thus the marking of an increment of $100 would show up as a negative value (of $100) when the base income was $200, but would not show up when the base was only $100. However, if we assume that the respondent was actually marking the increment both times then the amount that should have been circled in these instances would be $300 ($200 + $100) and $200 ($100 + $100). And of course it is possible that even if no negative values showed up that the amounts marked are either all or partly increments, but that in no cases was the respondent "caught" because the increments always equalled or exceeded the base income. While this pattern is entirely possible, we believe that it probably occurred rarely and have not tried to test for such disguised incremental respondents.

The problem becomes trying to assess what values respondents with negative values really intended. We developed five basic variants. The first simply takes the amounts as recorded. The second assumes that the negative amounts are actually increments and for each negative amount we added the marked amount to the base income to create a correct total amount. The third

approach assumes that a minimum of one negative value indicated that the respondent was consistency marking the increment and therefore if a respondent gave a negative amount to one vignette the marked amount was added to the base for all vignettes (whether negative or not) to create a revised total. The fourth approach was a compromise between the previous two and adjusted individual vignettes that were negative and all vignettes of a respondent if three or more of the vignettes were negative. The fifth approach considered all negative values as missing data. Table 6 shows how each approaches changes the total income for each of the ten vignettes. All of the adjustment increase the mean amounts. In addition the number of cases drops for the final missing data variant.

Table 6

Mean Amounts for Vignettes
(dollars)

Vignette	Raw	Negatives Only Adjusted	All Adjusted if Negative GT 0	Negative Adjusted and ALL Others Adjusted if Number of Negatives GT 2	Negatives are Missing Data
1	251.0	263.4	286.0	271.2	260.9
2	256.7	273.8	295.2	281.4	268.0
3	255.8	270.1	293.2	278.3	266.7
4	257.7	273.6	294.6	280.0	269.0
5	256.9	274.9	295.7	281.1	269.5
6	257.9	273.7	296.0	281.3	269.2
7	255.3	269.0	291.7	276.0	265.5
8	288.1	243.3	262.8	249.9	238.5
9	222.3	240.3	257.6	244.8	234.7
10	220.1	236.6	253.7	241.3	232.0
N	(1355-1377)				(1256-1304)

The basic test we applied was to compare the association between both welfare-related regular survey items and vignettes dimensions and the amounts given by respondents under the five variants described above. Lower associations should be present when more random measurement error was present and the variant that more nearly represented the respondents true intentions should show the highest associations.

In Table 7 we compare correlations between the net (or incremental) amount given with various dimensional and non-vignette variables for each of the five variants of net amounts. For the base income dimension the correlations are highest for the raw (unadjusted) condition. However for this comparison the higher correlation does not reflect less random error, but rather more correlated error. High base income leads to the granting of low incremental awards and therefore among people who are marking the increment rather than the total amount it increases the likelihood that an increment will appear as a negative net amount. (This assumes that marking in increments rather than total amounts is independent of the base income.) Thus, this first example is not actually an appropriate application of our correlational comparison test since error is correlated rather than random.

The comparison with number of children (for the young families) and amount of savings (for the old woman) both show only moderate differences between the correlations under the five variants. In both instances however the raw correlations are lowest. The comparison with the four non-vignette variables (the help scale from HELPPOOR,HELPSICK,HELPNOT,HELPBLK; the welfare scale from WELFARE1-6; welfare spending from NATFARE and NATFAREY; and social security spending from NATSOC) show a similar pattern with the raw figures lowest in six instances and next to the lowest in four cases. It is not clear that any of the adjustments routinely produces the highest correlations, but the most extreme adjustment in which all amounts are assumed to be expressions of increments

Table 7

Correlates of Net Amounts by Five Variants of Amount

(r)

	Raw	Variants of Amount[a] Only Negative Adjusted	If Negative All Adjusted	If two+ all Adjusted	Missing
A. Vignette Dimension Variables					
Net1-7[b] x Base Income1-7(av.)	.487	.427	.318	.403	.468
Net8-10 x Base Income8-10(av.)	.509	.431	.330	.423	.485
Net1-7 x of Children1-7(av.)	.130	.136	.137	.144	.140
Net8-10 x $ Savings8-10(av.)	.149	.168	.179	.173	.159
B. Non-Vignette Variables					
Total Net[c] x Help Scale	-.208	-.281	-.241	-.281	-.288
Total Net x Welfare Scale	-.179	-.190	-.149	-.177	-.240
Total Net x Welfare Spending	-.109	-.132	-.096	-.134	-.184
Total Net x Social Security Spending	-.105	-.174	-.165	-.185	-.185
Young Net x Help Scale	-.236	-.299	-.261	-.298	-.306
Young Net x Welfare Scale	-.182	-.194	-.131	-.182	-.227
Young Net x Welfare Spending	-.113	-.135	-.102	-.137	-.168
Young Net x Social Security Spending	-.101	-.155	-.157	-.166	-.176
Old Net x Help Scale	-.094	-.161	-.145	-.162	-.172
Old Net x welfare Scale	-.113	-.114	-.094	-.107	-.137
Old Net x Welfare Spending	-.052	-.075	-.049	-.073	-.107
Old Net x Social Security Spending	-.094	-.168	-.160	-.177	-.171

[a]See text for fuller description of these variants.

[b]The total given by respondent for first through seventh vignettes minus the base income for first through seventh by the corresponding base income.

[c]Total net is the sum of all net amounts for the 10 vignettes.

rather than totals if at least one negative amount occurs does not perform much better than the raw numbers. The negative only adjustment and the adjust all if negatives are greater than two adjustment perform about equally well. Simply removing the negative cases from analysis does the best for the non-vignette variables, but shows only middling results on the dimensional variables. Overall, the correlational comparisons suggest that some adjustment of the net scores to eliminate negative values will reduce measurement error. Adjusting all net values for a case with only a single negative value is probably too extreme and a more moderate adjustment of actual negative values or of all values when the respondent repeatedly employs negative values seems more appropriate. Dropping negative amounts also seems to reduce measurement error, but it also reduces the case base.

Conclusion

Many respondents found the factorial vignettes on welfare an unattractive task to complete. The main reasons for dislike were

1) disinterest in the topic of welfare

2) inability and/or reluctance to read and vignettes

3) difficulty in making an evaluation and of expressing their judgment in dollars

4) problems in understanding the task and how to complete it.

These factors led to a moderate amount of non-response, mostly in the form of complete non-response due to refusals and partial non-response due to break-offs as well as some random omissions. The amount of bias introduced by this non-response seems to be very small and largely contained to variables directly associated with non-response such as cooperation, comprehension, and non-attitudes.

The second readily apparent problem was misunderstanding the marking task. Despite a detailed example on how to mark the total income the family

should receive, a number of people gave negative amount. This largely results from people marking the increment rather than the sum. It appears possible to adjust cases to reduce the error that was introduced by this misunderstanding of the marking task.

While non-response and negative values indicate the presence of error in the data, the factorial vignettes on welfare seemed to have worked well and the amount of error introduced (and the nature of the error) does not appear to seriously compromise analysis of the data.

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Table 1

Dimensions for Young Family and
Old Woman Vignettes

A. YOUNG FAMILY

Dimension	Code	Label
1. Number of Children	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	1 six month old child
	2	1 four year old child
	3	1 eight year old child
	4	2 children, youngest is 6 months old
	5	2 children, youngest is 4 years old
	6	2 children, youngest is 8 years old
	7	4 children, youngest is 6 months old
	8	4 children, youngest is 4 years old
	9	4 children, youngest is 8 years old
2. Marital status	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	The parents are married
	2	The mother is divorced
	3	The mother never married
3. Situation of Child's Father	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	Employed Full time
	2	Unemployed but looking for work
	3	Unemployed, not looking for work
	4	In Prison
	5	Permanently Disabled
4. Child's Mother's Education	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	Grade school education
	2	Some high school education
	3	High school diploma
	4	Some college education
	5	Has a college degree
5. Mother's Employment Status	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	Working Full time
	2	Working Part time
	3	Looking for work
	4	Unemployed and not looking for work
	5	Unemployed, not looking because can not find affordable child care
	6	Unemployed, not looking because of lack of transportation
	7	Unemployed, not looking because available jobs only pay minimum wage

Table 1 (continued)

Dimensions for Young Family and
Old Woman Vignettes

A. YOUNG FAMILY

Dimension	Code	Label
6. Marital Status of Father	0	NA (Older Woman)
	0	NA (Parents married)
	1	Father has remarried (or is married)
	2	Blank
7. Financial Prospects	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	Financial difficulties next 6 months
	2	Financial difficulties next couple years
	3	Financial difficulties continually in the future
8. Parent's Help	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	Her parents help out financially
	2	Her parents cannot help out financially
	3	Her parents could help, but she won't ask
	4	Her parents could help, but refuse
9. Family Savings	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1,2,3	No savings
	4	$1,000 in savings
10. Total Family Income	0	NA (Older Woman)
	1	$50 per week
	2	$100 per week
	3	$200 per week
	4	$300 per week

Table 1 (Continued)

Dimensions for Young Family and
Old Woman Vignettes

B. OLD WOMAN

Dimension	Code	Label
1. Age of Older Woman	0	NA (Younger Woman)
	1	67 years old, lives alone, good health
	2	77 years old, lives alone, good health
2. Children's Situation	0	NA (Younger Woman)
	1	No living children
	2	Married son, financially well off
	3	Married son, not financially well off
	4	Unmarried son, fiancially well off
	5	Unmarried son, not financially well off
	6	Married daughter, financially well off
	7	Married daughter, not financially well off
	8	Unmarried daughter, financially well off
	9	Unmarried daughter, not financially well off
3. Housing Tenure	0	NA (Younger Woman)
	1	Rents her housing
	2	Owns housing with $75 per week mortgage
	3	Owns housing with no mortgage
4. Savings	0	NA (Younger Woman)
	1,2,3	No savings
	4,5	$1,000 in savings
	6	$5,000 in savings
	7	$10,000 in savings
	8	$25,000 in savings
	9	$50,000 in savings
5. Older woman's income	0	NA (Younger Woman)
	1	Private pension of $50 per week
	2	Private pension of $100 per week
	3	Private pension of $200 per week
	4	Private pension of $300 per week

Figure 1

Example of Young Family Vignette

This family has one eight year old child living with his/her mother. The mother is divorced. The mother has some high school education and is unemployed and not looking for work because she has no ready means of transportation. The father has remarried and is currently in prison. This family is likely to face financial difficulties continually in the future.

Her parents could help out financially but she won't ask. The family has no savings. All in all, the family's total income from sources other than the government is $300 per week.

What should this family's weekly income be? Include both the money already available from sources other than government and any public assistance support you think this family should get.

AMOUNT ALREADY RECEIVED BY THIS FAMILY: X

AVERAGE U.S. FAMILY INCOME: X

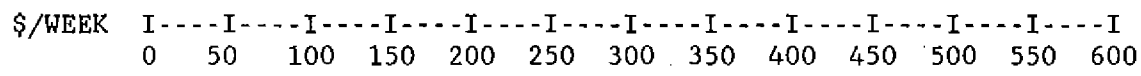

Figure 2

Example of Old Woman Vignette

A 77 year old woman lives alone and is in good health. She has a married son who is not financially well off.

She rents her housing. She has $5000 in savings. Her total income from social security, interest earned on her savings, and a private pension amounts to $300 per week.

What should this woman's weekly income be? Include both the money already available and any public assistance you think this woman should get.

AMOUNT ALREADY RECEIVED BY THIS FAMILY: X

AVERAGE U.S. FAMILY INCOME: X

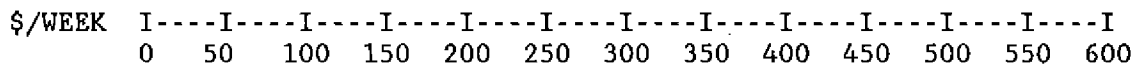

Figure 3

Vignette Challenge Exercise

Challenge Exercise 4 

The Challenge

The vignettes, which should be answered after Q. 120 of the main questionnaire. The point is to give the respondent a clear understanding of what is expected of him or her, and to get the respondent to circle the number that best describes what that person thinks the family in the vignette should receive.

The Reasons

The vignettes are challenging for both respondents and interviewers.

* Respondents may have problems completing the vignettes because:

-they do not understand what they are supposed to do;

-they do not understand a particular word or phrase;

-they focus on an aspect of a family's situation rather than taking the vignette at face value;

-they have problems using the scale, and may be confused by the presence of the "average U. S. family income" indicator.

* Interviewers have problems with the vignettes because:

-the respondent may become confused, annoyed, and threaten breakoff;

-they require transitions from interviewer-administered to a self-administered format, and back again.

What to Do

1. Read the Q x Q's, pages 62 and 91.
2. Work through the questions in this challenge exercise.
3. If you have questions or problems, note them for discussion with your field manager.
4. Go through the flashcards that discuss the vignettes.

Figure 3

(Continued)

4-1. What change in interviewing procedures takes place at this point in the questionnaire?

4-2. Explain briefly your plan for easing the respondent into this part of the questionnaire.

4-3. As an interviewer, how can you help to ease the transition from an interviewer-administered questionnaire to a self-administered questionnaire?

4-4. Under what three circumstances may the vignette booklet be administered by the interviewer?

4-5. Once the booklet has been started by the respondent, may questions be answered by the interviewer?

Figure 3

(Continued)

4-6. The following questions may arise as the respondent reads through the vignettes. Briefly describe your answer to each of them.

a. What does "this family" mean?

b. "Is this father part of this family?"

c. "Where is this family's income currently coming from when no one is employed?"

d. "What do you mean by average U.S. family income?" (or, "What is an average family?")

e. "Can I look back to see what I wrote down for one of the other stories?"

Figure 4

Question-by-Question Specifications

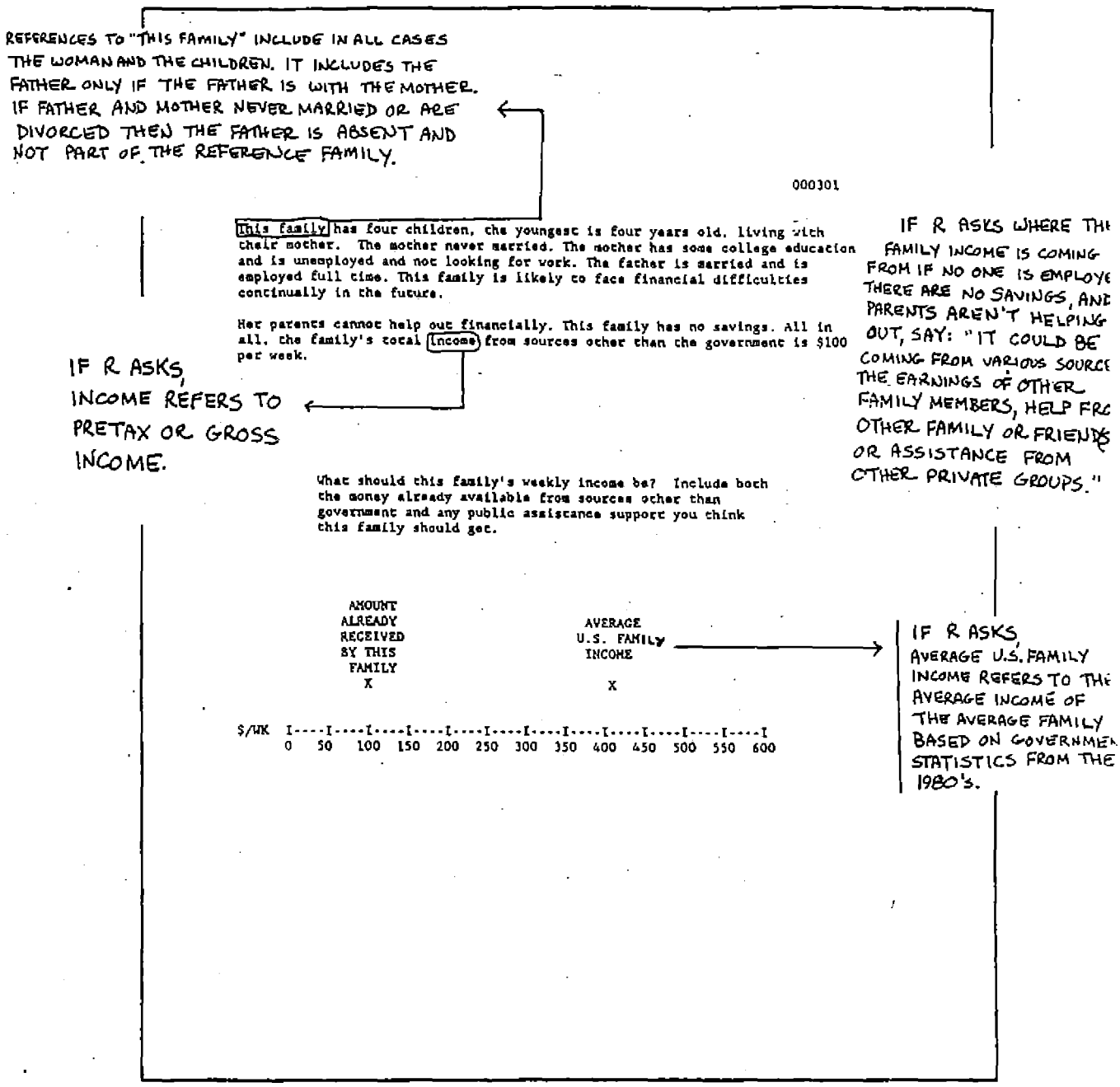

Figure 5

Vignette Instructions for Interviewers

FIRST HAVE RESPONDENT READ INTRODUCTION ON COVER OF VIGNETTE BOOKLET.

USING THE FIRST VIGNETTE IN THE BOOKLET AS AN EXAMPLE, READ THE FOLLOWING TO THE RESPONDENT:

The first case in your booklet is an example. I'd like to go through it with you.

1). As you can see, first there's a description of the family and their financial situation.

2) At the bottom, you see a scale showing a range of weekly incomes, from zero to $600. Already marked on the scale is the family's weekly income right now, without government assistance (POINT TO AMOUNT).

3) If you thought they should get $150 from the government you would circle $250 (that's the $100 they get now, plus $150). If you thought they should get no public assistance from the government you would circle $100 (what they get now). If you thought they should get $300 from the government, you would circle $400 (the $100 they get now, plus $300)

4) OK, ready to begin? Go through each family description, circling the total weekly income you think each family should get. Be sure to ask me if the have any questions.