

Interpersonal and Cross-Cultural Incomparability in Survey Research

Gary King

<http://GKing.Harvard.Edu>

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This is not about Barry Bloom



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(Only because he made me promise!)



- Gary King and Jonathan Wand. “Comparing Incomparable Survey Responses: Evaluating and Selecting Anchoring Vignettes,” *Political Analysis*, 15, 1 (Winter, 2007): 46–66.

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- Gary King; Christopher J.L. Murray; Joshua A. Salomon; and Ajay Tandon. “Enhancing the Validity and Cross-cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 1 (February, 2004): 191–207.

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- More information: <http://GKing.Harvard.edu/vign>

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- The next day — which the president spent in hiding — 90% approved.
- Was this massive opinion change, or was the same question interpreted differently?

Anchoring Vignettes & Self-Assessments: Political Efficacy (about voting)

How much say [does 'name' / do you] have in getting the government to address issues that interest [him / her / you]?

(a) Unlimited say, (b) A lot of say, (c) Some say, (d) Little say, (e) No say at all

Anchoring Vignettes & Self-Assessments: Political Efficacy (about voting)

- “[Alison] lacks clean drinking water. She and her neighbors are supporting an opposition candidate in the forthcoming elections that has promised to address the issue. It appears that so many people in her area feel the same way that the opposition candidate will defeat the incumbent representative.”

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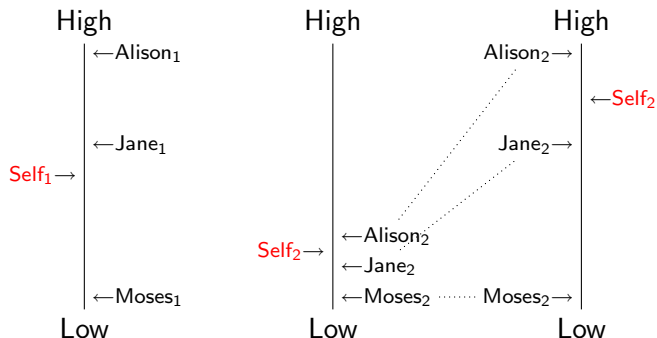
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- “[Moses] lacks clean drinking water. He would like to change this, but he can't vote, and feels that no one in the government cares about this issue. So he suffers in silence, hoping something will be done in the future.”

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Does R_1 or R_2 have More Political Efficacy?

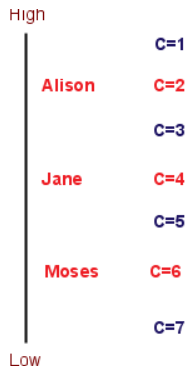


- The only reason different respondents do not agree on vignette positions: Different standards
- Why assumptions hold: investigator creates Alison, Jane & Moses

A Simple, Nonparametric Method

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Define self-assessments *relative* to vignettes:



Comparing China and Mexico

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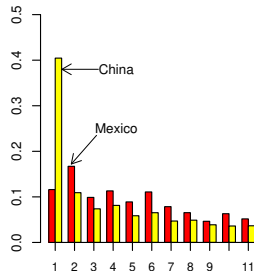
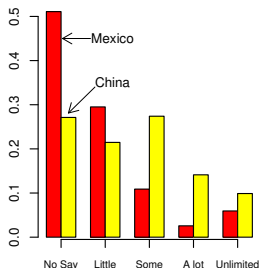
Opposition leader Vicente Fox elected President.
71-year rule of PRI party ends.
Peaceful transition of power begins.

Plenty of political efficacy

China: How much say do you have in getting the government to address issues that interest you?



Nonparametric Estimates of Political Efficacy



- The left graph is a histogram of the observed categorical self-assessments.
- The right graph is a histogram of C , our nonparametric DIF-corrected estimate of the same distribution.

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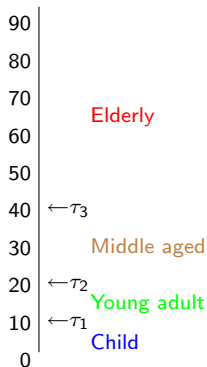
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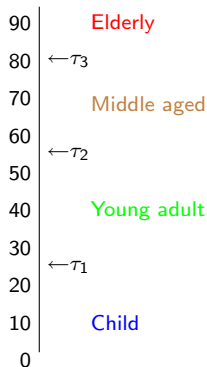
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- A second method allows: vignettes asked of a small subset of respondents, or in a different survey

Categorizing Years of Age

Respondent 1



Respondent 2



- If thresholds vary, categorical answers are meaningless.
- Our parametric model works by estimating the thresholds.
- Vignettes provide identifying information for the τ 's.

Self-Assessments v. Medical Tests

Self-Assessment:

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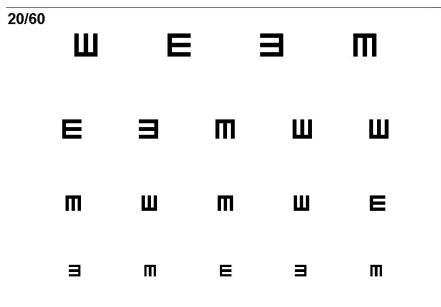
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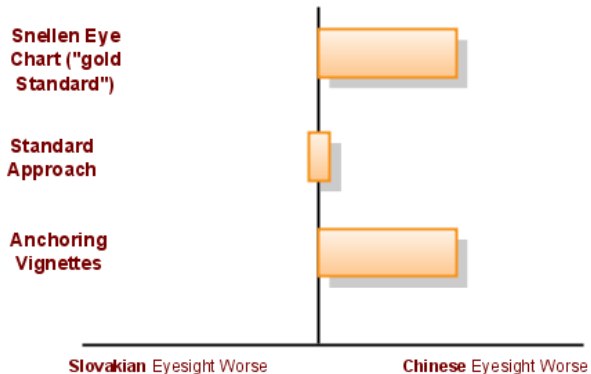
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The Snellen Eye Chart Test:





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 - Formalizing Philosophy

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Includes:

- Academic papers
- Anchoring vignette examples by researchers in many fields,
- Frequently asked questions,
- Videos
- Conferences
- Statistical software

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3. In other words: we allow response-category DIF but assume stem question equivalence.

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