

**Exploratory Study of
Low-Income Couples'
Decision Making
Processes:**

**OMB Supporting
Statement for Data
Collection**

Section A

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Submitted by

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The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is undertaking an Exploratory Study of Low-Income Couples' Decision-Making Processes and is requesting clearance for the following data collection efforts as part of this project: a structured telephone survey with both partners of 40 low-income couples (i.e. 80 individuals) followed by an in-home direct observation of each couple engaging in three decision-making interaction tasks.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Necessitating the Data Collection

a. Background on the Low Income Couples' Decision Making Project

ACF is responsible for many federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities. Most social service programs that are designed to promote the economic and social well-being of families and children work only with a single individual who meets the program eligibility criteria (e.g., the unemployed adult, the pregnant female, the custodial parent of a pre-school child).

The goal of the Low-Income Couples' Decision-Making project is to explore how low-income couples make decisions, specifically what predicts their decision-making processes and whether and how these processes are systematically related to the outcomes of their decisions, especially decisions related to social services funded by ACF. It is possible that targeting services to couples (as opposed to individuals), or taking the role and influence of partners into consideration, may be more effective.

Little is known about how low-income couples make decisions, especially how they make decisions related to social services and whether or how their decision-making processes affect outcomes in systematic ways. For example, little is known about how a couple's relationship and decision-making process might affect the propensity to enroll and participate fully in services aimed at increasing employment success. ACF would like to inform service providers of the potential value of serving couples as a family unit, rather than individuals, or considering the influence of partners and couple decision-making processes in working with the individual. Ultimately, ACF wishes to learn whether recognizing the influence of clients' partners or involving them in services will improve their clients' programmatic outcomes.

This study is an exploratory first step which is expected to reveal potential implications for policy and programming. It will draw on multiple disciplinary perspectives and research methods to conduct an in-depth assessment of decision making in a small number of low-income couples. ACF has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) and its subcontractor, the Relationship Research Institute (RRI), to support the development and implementation of this project.

Our conceptual model draws on three fields of research that have produced the most relevant work: economics, sociology, and psychology. We intend to collect data on the (1) *context*, (2) *processes*, and (3) *outcomes* related to low-income couples' decision-making, in order to form hypotheses about how low-income couples make decisions (details of the conceptual model are provided in Appendix A).

b. Data Collection Activities Requiring OMB Clearance

Clearance is requested for the following data collection components:

1. **Telephone Survey.** To gather information on the context of couples' lives (e.g. factors such as education level and beliefs in gendered stereotypes that are hypothesized to relate to decision making), Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) will conduct a 20 minute structured telephone interview with each member of the couple individually. Appendix A contains a table of the measures by broad constructs, justification, and source. The survey focuses primarily on contextual factors that research has shown may be associated with couple decision making, including relationship power (as measured by the material and psychological resources controlled by each partner and perceptions of alternatives to the relationship) and relationship quality (with items such as commitment, trust, fidelity, happiness, conflict management skill, communication and supportiveness). Other contextual factors include family structure such as marital and cohabitation status and the extent to which the couple has children from prior relationships. Expectations for roles within relationships and certain personality traits, such as agreeableness, have also been found to predict couple functioning and are included to assess decision making. Appendix B contains the full survey instrument.
2. **In-Home Observation.** Couples will also be asked to participate in an in-home observation, which will be used to collect data on couples' processes and outcomes. Under the leadership of Dr. John Gottman, the Relationship Research Institute (RRI) will conduct the in-home observations; his staff will also later code the videotaped exercises. The following components, put together, comprise the in-home assessment. A more detailed description of the in-home observation tasks can be found in Appendix A.
 - *Pre-task Procedures.* We will begin the home visit by administering the Relationship Research Institute's (RRI's) Oral History Interview. This interview asks the couple about how they met and is a gentle way to begin discussing the couple's relationship and to build rapport. Its purpose is to begin laying the foundation for the observation of partners' interaction. Couples will then be separated and asked to rate their preferences for a hypothetical set of behavioral choices about relationships and decisions. Each member of the couple will answer some questions about substance abuse—a factor that can affect decision making. While separated, the female partner will be asked some questions about domestic violence while the male partner will be asked about fatherhood and his relationship with his partner. The purpose of the questions about domestic violence are to identify couples for whom certain later activities would be inappropriate.
 - *Interaction Task 1: Paper Tower Exercise.* The exercise requires that the couple construct a free-standing tower. To construct the tower, the couple is provided with a box that contains such items as newspaper, construction paper, tape, magic markers, ribbon, string, stapler, cardboard, and straws. The couple has 30 minutes to complete this task, which is recorded, and afterward each partner is asked to rate their satisfaction with the process and product of their efforts. This task gauges the couple's ability to work collaboratively on a creative challenge.

- *Interaction Task 2: Economic Decision/Revealed Differences Exercise.* In this exercise, the couple begins by imagining that the family has won \$5,000 in a lottery. Each individual then indicates separately how she or he would prefer to spend that money across 30 different categories, by completing a form. After completing the forms, the couple engages in a joint discussion about how they will spend the money. At the end of the discussion, the couple completes another form together, indicating the outcome of their decision about how to allocate the winnings. This task provides clear measures of individual preferences and joint decisions, permitting a quantitative assessment of the relative influence of each partner in a decision outcome.
- *Interaction Task 3: Interpersonal Conflict Exercise.* In this exercise, the partners are asked to discuss an actual topic of disagreement in their relationship. Prior to the conflict discussion, RRI staff ask each partner to complete a “problem inventory” to identify major conflict areas in the couple’s relationship. Following the completion of the problem inventory, a trained RRI professional uses the results to help the couple select a conflict that is real, current, and concrete, and one that both partners feel comfortable discussing; this discussion also allows the interviewer to clarify the objectives of the task. As with the paper tower exercise, the interaction will be recorded and later coded using the SPAFF¹ system to code affective quality and behavior during the conflict discussion.
- *Psycho-Physiological Measurement.* During the conflict exercise, RRI staff will collect continuous indicators of heart rate, ear pulse transit time, and skin conductance. Vagal tone will be computed from EKG readings. The purpose is to assess each partner’s autonomic reactivity during the conflict exercise and their ability to regulate their physiology and activation of the fight or flight system.
- *Video Recall Procedure.* The video recall procedure occurs after completion of the conflict discussion. Each partner simultaneously views a play-back recording of their interaction and separately uses a rating dial to provide a continuous self-report of how they felt from moment to moment during the interaction.

Each of the activities described above provides a unique and complementary perspective on the dynamics involved in couples’ decision making. The paper tower exercise provides an opportunity to observe how couples make many small decisions during a neutral activity. It also permits an assessment of the overall positive vs. negative tone of the relationship, hypothesized to be associated with effective couple decision making. The hypothetical lottery exercise permits us to quantify how much an individual is influenced by their partner’s wishes, since we can compare the “distance traveled” between their individual preferences and the choices they make in conjunction with their partner. The conflict discussion and psycho-physiological measurements lets us directly observe how each partner’s behavior and emotional expression affects the other’s behavior and affect during a real decision making discussion. The video recall procedure provides a way to compare the independent coder’s assessments of interaction against

¹ Recordings of couple interactions will be coded for positivity and negativity of partners’ behavior by trained coders using the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF). The system draws on facial expression (based on Ekman and Friesen’s Facial Action Coding System), vocal tone, and speech content to characterize the emotions displayed. Behaviors may be coded as positive, negative or neutral—with neutral representing the absence of positive or negative affect.

each respondent's own ratings, and provides data on how well each partner understands the other. Specific protocols for the in-home observation and instruments are presented in Appendix C.

The dual approach of a telephone survey and an in-home observation provides the best opportunity to collect quality data with the least burden. Quality *context* data may be collected via telephone with little burden placed on couples. Meanwhile, *process* and *outcome* data of couples making decisions are much higher in quality when the observations can be directed by highly trained researchers in a natural setting.

2. How, by Whom, and for What Purpose Information is to be Used

ACF will use the information from this exploratory study to assess whether there is potential for service delivery to families to be improved by understanding the decision-making processes of low-income couples. The study will identify factors, mechanisms, and decision points that influence couples and the decisions they make individually and jointly. These insights will then be applied to practical questions about whether and how couples might become appropriate "service targets."

If the findings from this exploratory study suggest that low income couples make decisions in predictable ways, future work to confirm the results with a larger and more representative sample would be warranted. Ultimately, it might be possible to identify, develop, or enhance (a) interventions or (b) service delivery approaches to potentially influence couples' decision making processes and outcomes in ways that are beneficial for the family and consistent with their desires.

3. Use of Automated, Electronic, Mechanical or Other Technological Collection Techniques

Due to the small sample size, it is not practical or cost effective to program an automated computer-assisted version of the telephone interview for this study.

However, the observation component will utilize video technology to tape the couples' interactions associated with each task. Use of this technology eliminates the need to code data during the home visit, since observations may be coded later in a lab by trained observers. Use of trained observers in a lab improves the quality of the data (e.g. interrater-reliability) and reduces the number of trained observers that must go to participants' homes.

Also during the home observation, psycho-physiological indicators of heart rate, skin conductance, vagal tone (calculated from EKG), and ear pulse transit time are taken throughout. These measures provide a comprehensive assessment of each partner's autonomic reactivity during the conflict/decision making task. These measurements are particularly important because the outward signs of internal experience and emotion (such as facial expression, body language, and verbalizations) do not always reflect the individual's true experience. For example, a person may appear very calm during a conflict, but be experiencing high physiological arousal in reaction to their partner's behavior. Without the ability to correlate observational with physiological data, results might be misleading.

Lastly, couples will review their video-taped discussion of the topic of disagreement and record how they felt during the exercise. This information will be considered in light of both the observational and physiological data, and will be correlated with their partner's ratings of emotional response during the discussion, providing a way to assess how individuals influence and affect one another during decision making.

4. Efforts to Avoid Duplication of Effort

The primary purpose of the data collection is to understand the impact of an individual's partner on decision making. An extensive literature review conducted as part of this project reveals that, to date, there is little systematic research on low-income couple decision-making processes. We are not aware of any similar work currently underway.

5. Sensitivity to Burden on Small Entities

No information is being sought from small businesses or other entities. The primary entities for this study are low-income couples (married and unmarried) who will be interviewed and observed in their homes.

6. Consequences to Federal Programs or Policies if Data Collection is Not Conducted

If this information is not collected, ACF will not gain well-founded insights into how couples make decisions about issues related to family economic and social well-being such as finding employment, fulfilling parenting roles, and choosing among child care alternatives, as well as decisions about taking advantage of services that might help them achieve positive outcomes related to these issues. It is possible that programs that now focus on individuals are not as effective since they do not consider the role of the partner in the intervention. If this project does not proceed, ACF will not be able to apply what is learned in this study to future demonstrations of programs targeting couples rather than individuals. This is expected to be a one-time study.

7. Special Circumstances

None of the issues listed as inconsistent with usual policy for this section are relevant in the current study.

8. Solicitation

a. Federal Register Announcement

A 60-day notice to solicit public comments was published in the Federal Register on February 21, 2008, vol. 73, No. 35, p. 9570 (see Appendix D). No comments were received during the comment period.

b. Consultations Outside the Agency

Consultations on the research design and data collection instruments have occurred during the study's design phase and will continue to take place throughout the study. The purpose of such consultations is to ensure the technical soundness of the study and the relevance of its findings, and to verify the importance, relevance, and accessibility of the information sought in the study.

MPR, RRI, and a study consultant, Shelly Lundberg (Castro Professor of Economics at the University of Washington) have provided substantial input to ACF for the study. M. Robin Dion from MPR is the project director, John M. Gottman from RRI is a principal investigator, and Shelly Lundberg acts as a senior project consultant. Julia Babcock, an nationally recognized domestic violence researcher, reviewed measures that will be used to screen out couples showing signs of domestic violence and our protocols for providing feedback to female partners of these couples. Senior technical staff from these organizations conducting the study are listed below:

TABLE 1
CONSULTATIONS OUTSIDE THE AGENCY

Organization	Name	Position	E-mail	Phone
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.	M. Robin Dion	Senior Researcher	rdion@mathematica-mpr.com	(202) 484-5262
	Andrew Clarkwest	Researcher	aclarkwest@mathematica-mpr.com	(202) 250-3501
	Debra Wright	Senior Survey Researcher	dwright@mathematica-mpr.com	(202) 554-7576
Relationship Research Institute	John Gottman	RRI Executive Director	johng@gottmanresearch.com	(206) 832-0305
	Dan Yoshimoto	RRI Research Director	dany@gottmanresearch.com	(206) 973-3455
University of Washington	Shelly Lundberg	Castor Professor of Economics	lundberg@u.washington.edu	(206) 543-6149
University of Houston	Julia Babcock	Associate Professor	JBabcock@uh.edu	(713) 743-8621

9. Respondent Payments

To secure sufficiently high response rates for the telephone survey and in-home assessment, we will use a tiered post-paid payment (\$10 per individual member of the couple to participate in the structured interview and \$40 per individual for the observation) to offset the burden to the participants and to increase the likelihood of response to both components (i.e. the telephone interview and the in-home observation); therefore couples will receive a total of \$100 for completing both components of the data collection. Payments will be administered at the time of the home visit for couples who participate in both components. Payments will be mailed to those who participate in the telephone survey only. All participants will be clearly informed during both components that participation is completely voluntary.

Such payments are especially important for data collections that place unusual demands on participants (for example participating in an in-home observation component). Research shows that payments increase response rates without compromising data quality (Singer et al. 1999) and that they are effective at increasing response rates for people with lower educational levels (Berlin et al. 1992) and low-income and nonwhite populations (James and Bolstein 1990).

10. Confidentiality Assurances

MPR will follow procedures for ensuring and maintaining privacy. Data collected will not be released with individual identifiers. Information will be presented in aggregate statistical form only. A statement to this effect will be read to participants prior to the telephone interview and will be included in the informed consent form that all individuals will sign at the time of the in-home observation (see Appendix E). Respondents will be assured that all information identifying them will be kept private, unless otherwise compelled by law.

The following safeguards are routinely employed by MPR and RRI to carry out privacy assurances:

- Access to sample selection data is limited to those who have direct responsibility for providing the sample and maintaining sample locating information. At the conclusion of the research these data are destroyed.
- Identifying information is maintained on separate forms and files, which are linked only by sample identification number.
- Access to the file linking sample identification numbers with the respondents' identification and contact information is limited to a small number of individuals who have a need to know this information.
- Access to the hard copy documents and video tapes is strictly limited. Documents and tapes are labeled with a subject identification number and stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked data storage room. No identifying information is included on the videotape or the videotaped images. Discarded material is shredded. Participant information is accessible to research study staff (including coders) that have successfully completed human subjects certification training in the protection of human subjects.

- Digital recordings are downloaded onto an external hard drive that is secured in a locked data storage room and erased from recording devices.
- Computer data files are stored on a secure network protected with passwords and access is limited to specific users.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research, MPR will submit this project to an Institutional Review Board for review and approval and will obtain a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to protect the privacy of participants' responses to this study. As part of other couples-related studies, MPR obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality for the Building Strong Families Demonstration and Evaluation, and the Process Evaluation of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. RRI has likewise obtained Certificates of Confidentiality for couples-related projects.

11. Additional Justification for Sensitive Questions

It is necessary to include some questions that may be of a sensitive nature in a study designed to assess decision-making in the context of personal relationships. Table 2 describes the justification for the sensitive questions included on the telephone survey and in the in-home observation. Although these questions are somewhat sensitive, they have been used in several other surveys approved by OMB with populations similar to those in this study and have been successful in achieving high rates of response. All sensitive questions will be pretested. All respondents will be informed of the privacy of their responses and that they do not have to answer questions they feel uncomfortable answering. All data will be presented in aggregate form; no information about an individual will be reported.

A two-step procedure will be used to screen out couples showing signs of domestic violence. Two questions related to domestic violence (assessing fear of partner) will be asked of the woman during the telephone survey; an affirmative answer to either question will mean the couple is ineligible for the study. A full screening for domestic violence will also occur near the beginning of the home visit. Those who screen positive during the private interview will not be asked to engage in the conflict discussion.

TABLE 2
JUSTIFICATION FOR SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

Question Topic	Justification
Income	Earnings and assets are direct measures of individual resources which can be associated with relative decision making power. This information is needed to measure each individual’s material resources. We will ask about income received from jobs as well as assets (such as cars, homes, and bank accounts). Since for this population, a significant portion of income may not be received from earnings, we will ask about income received from a variety of other sources including public assistance, other government assistance, and child support. These items have been successfully used on the TANF Caseload Survey (conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and the Fragile Families survey (conducted by MPR for Princeton University).
Depression	Individuals with better mental health are likely to perceive their relationship alternatives more positively, resulting in a resource advantage over a potentially less healthy partner. Individuals with better mental health may also be better prepared to withstand crisis and build and maintain more supportive relationships with others. Because depressive disorders are more prevalent than anxiety disorders, and because these two sets of conditions often co-occur, we focus on measures of depression for this survey. To measure depressive symptoms we will use the Centers for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) (Radloff 1977). We will use the 12-item version of the CES-D (Ross et al. 1983) which has been used in many research studies, including Building Strong Families, and is considered to have good psychometric properties.
Substance abuse	Substance abuse is also likely to be linked to dissatisfaction with the relationship and relationship interactions such as decision making. We propose including three questions on this topic to assess binge drinking and functional impairment related to drinking or using drugs. These items were included on the Building Strong Families survey and provide an abbreviated means to assess substance abuse. The question we include concerning binge drinking was developed by Henry Wechsler and is recommended as a screening tool by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (Wechsler et al. 1995; Wechsler 1998). It has been used in several large national surveys, including the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. The two questions concerning functional impairment resulting from substance use come from Fragile Families surveys. These items will be administered during the home visit.
Partner fidelity and fidelity to partner	An issue closely related to commitment and trust in a relationship is sexual fidelity, which is typically linked to relationship interaction. To examine the impact of fidelity on decision making processes and outcomes, we will ask survey respondents about both their own fidelity and the perceived fidelity of their partner. In particular, we will ask whether it is likely that their partner has cheated on them, and whether they have cheated on their partner. We will also ask about respondents’ perceptions of the likelihood of their own and their partner’s infidelity in the future. Several large surveys have included similar questions concerning infidelity, such as the Building Strong Families Study, the Study of Marital Instability Over the Life Course, the Fragile Families Study, and the Baseline Survey of Family Experiences and Attitudes in Florida.

Table 2 (continued)

Question Topic	Justification
Domestic Violence	Violence and threats of violence are the most extreme methods of inducing partner behavior and influencing outcomes. Due to concerns that the conflict discussion could exacerbate existing domestic violence, these questions will be used to determine eligibility for the home visit. We will administer two items to the female partner as part of the telephone survey; a positive response to either question will mean the couple is ineligible for the study. We will also administer a full screener to the female during the home visit. If the home visit screener suggests that there is domestic violence in the relationship, the conflict discussion will not be administered. This screener is used in ACF's Building Strong Families Demonstration and Evaluation to identify severe physical and emotional violence. Developed in 2004, it includes items from the Conflict Tactics Scale--the most widely used tool for measuring domestic violence in research studies (Strauss and Douglas 2004)--and additional items developed by a group of domestic violence experts at diverse institutions: John Gottman, Julia Babcock, Sandra Stith, and Eric McCollum.

12. Estimates of Hour Burden

The total reporting burden associated with this data collection is 240 hours. Table 3 presents a summary of the sample sizes, number of responses per respondent, average burden hours per response and estimated annual burden hours. Hour estimates for the survey and observation tasks are based on prior experience administering similar questionnaire items and in-home observation protocols for other studies.

TABLE 3
ANNUAL BURDEN ESTIMATES

Instrument	Annual Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden Hours per Response	Estimated Annual Burden Hours
Telephone Survey	80	1	.333333	27
In-Home Observation	80	1	2.666666	213
Grand Total – Burden for Couples' Decision-Making Project				
Grand Total for All	80	1	3	240

The estimate of total burden for the structured telephone interviews is 27 hours. We expect to conduct 80 interviews (a separate interview with each member of 40 couples). These interviews are expected to take 20 minutes to complete. Thus, the annual burden for the telephone interview will be 80 (respondents) x 20 minutes = 27 hours.

The in-home observation is made up of several components (see Section B, Question 2, for more information). We expect to conduct 40 in-home observations (one for each couple). The total burden for the in-home observation is expected to be about 2 2/3 hours.

Estimates of annualized costs to respondents for the hour burdens associated with data collection are included in Table 4.

TABLE 4
ANNUAL COST ESTIMATES

	Annual Number of Respondents	Number of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden Hours per Response	Average Hourly Wages of Low-Income Worker	Annual Cost Estimates for Respondent Time
Grand Total for All	80	1	3	\$9.00	\$2,160

13. Estimate of Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record-Keepers

There are no direct monetary costs to participants other than their time to participate in the study.

14. Estimates of Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

The estimated cost to the federal government for the Low-Income Couples’ Decision Making Study—including designing the study, designing and administering the data collection, processing and analyzing the data, and preparing reports summarizing the results—is \$726,125. The development activities, collection and analysis of data, and report writing activities will be carried out over a two-year period. Thus, the average annual costs is \$363,063. These estimates are based on MPR and RRI’s previous experience managing other research and data collection efforts of this type.

15. Reasons for Program Changes or Adjustments

This is a new information collection.

16. Plan for Tabulation and Publication and Schedule for Project

a. Tabulation Plans

To address the research hypotheses, our tabulation plans include describing observed patterns using bivariate correlations, and using multivariate models to test the hypotheses. We plan to: (a) describe couples and their decision making processes and outcomes; (b) analyze predictors of their decision-making processes and outcomes; and (c) evaluate whether any processes moderate the relationship between context and outcomes.

Descriptions of Couples and Their Decision Making Processes and Outcomes. One fundamental question of interest is what the dynamics of couple interaction and decision making look like in our sample of low income couples. To address that issue we will first compute descriptive statistics (e.g., means and standard deviations) for all of the measures described,

survey and observational. We will employ mathematical modeling of the SPAFF codes² to yield parameters for whether and to what extent each partner influences the other.

Procedures for Analyzing Predictors of Decision Making Processes and Outcomes. The central analytic task of this study is to determine whether low-income individuals are influenced by their partners, and what predicts their decision making processes and outcomes. The research questions involve a range of associations among context, process, and outcome variables. After performing data reduction, we will calculate Pearson correlations between the context, process, and outcome variables, which will be presented in a correlation matrix. These correlations will demonstrate, at a bivariate level, which variables are associated with others. We will also divide the sample into two groups based on their predictor variables (e.g., marital status) and examine how the average outcomes (e.g., satisfaction with joint decision) compare between the two groups. T-tests will be used to demonstrate statistically significant differences in outcomes across groups.

Moderation. Based on prior research, several hypotheses ask whether an effect on an outcome is found only under specific circumstances. For instance, we may hypothesize that in better quality relationships, partners will be less likely to take advantage of their relative power positions to force a decision outcome that is not preferred by their partner. This hypothesis would lead us to predict that the person with the least control of material resources (M_c) will demonstrate least influence in spending decisions in the lottery task (S_c) only when the couple's relationship quality (Q_c) is low. To test for this moderating effect we would estimate a model using the formula below, which includes an interaction term between control over material resources and relationship quality:

$$S_c = a + \theta_1 M_c + \theta_2 Q_c + \theta_3 M_c Q_c + u$$

A non-zero value of θ_3 would indicate that the association of control over resources with spending decisions varies across couples depending on the quality of their relationships.

b. Publication Plans

We will prepare the following reports:

- **Research Briefs.** To make our findings accessible in a timely way, we will prepare two concise briefs for social service practitioners, researchers, and others interested in

² Recordings of couple interactions will be coded for positivity and negativity of partners' behavior by trained coders using the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF). Behaviors may be coded as positive, negative, or neutral. SPAFF treats the stream of behavior as continuous, rather than segmenting it into time blocks or turns at speech. Mathematical modeling of SPAFF codes estimates each individual's behavior as a function of their partner's immediately preceding behavior, their own preceding behavior, and their steady state during an uninfluenced period, yielding parameters of the extent of each partner's influence on the other. In this way, every second is coded and a different code may be given at any time. The reliability of SPAFF coding will be based on the second-by-second concordance of observers throughout the interaction period. We will follow procedures used in Carstensen, Gottman, and Levenson (1995), where Cohen's kappa was used to calculate reliability for the entire coding system. The overall mean kappa in that study was 0.64.

how couples make decisions. These papers and research briefs will describe special topics of interest. The papers and briefs will be produced as requested by ACF.

- **Final Project Report and Brief.** The final report will present the findings from this study and comment on their implications. It will be a comprehensive record that could be used by policymakers and researchers to understand the decision-making process and apply the knowledge to improving social service programs. This report will be produced in 2010.

c. Time Schedule

The full timeline for the evaluation is shown in Table 5. The timeline calls for major design activities and preparation of materials between October 2007 and March 2007, sample recruitment and data collection activities to begin in September 2008, and data analysis and report writing to begin in February 2009.

TABLE 5
SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Activity	Time Period
Study design and preparation of materials	10/07-3/08
Sample recruitment and data collection activities	9/08-1/09
Data analysis and report writing	2/09-7/09

17. Approval Not to Display the Expiration Date for OMB Approval

Approval not to display the expiration date for OMB approval is not requested.

18. Exception to the Certification Statement

No exceptions to the certification statement are being sought.

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