

August 25, 2009

NOTE TO THE REVIEWER OMB No. 1220-0141

OF: Cognitive and Psychological Research

FROM: Jennifer Edgar

Research Psychologist

Office of Survey Methods Research (OSMR)

SUBJECT: Submission of Materials for an CEQ Respondent  
Burden Study

Please accept the enclosed materials for approval under the OMB clearance package “Cognitive and Psychological Research.” In accordance with our agreement with OMB, we are submitting a brief description of the research, and the materials to be used in the research.

Participants will be recruited from the OSMR participant database (i.e., general public). The estimated number of burden hours is estimated to be 128.

If there are any questions regarding this project, please contact Jennifer Edgar at (202) 691-7528.

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to test three hypotheses:

1. Shorter interview length leads to lower perceived burden
2. Shorter interview length leads to higher performance
3. If an interview is longer than a respondent expects based on a previous interview, their perceived burden will be higher than if it is equal or shorter.

## 2. Research Design

There are three treatment groups in this study (Table 1). Each group will be interviewed twice, with the second interview occurring three months after the first. Group 1 will receive the full Consumer Expenditure Quarterly Interview Survey (CEQ), Group 2 will receive half of the CEQ and Group 3 will receive the other half of the CEQ. The interview will be divided to ensure that both halves take approximately the same time to complete. Three months later, each participant will be interviewed again, receiving the interview (full CEQ, Half A, or Half B) assigned to their group. The CEQ sections in each half are specified in Appendix 1.

To control the expected significant variation in completion time of the complete and half survey, we will impose time constraints for each group. When completing the full CEQ, participants will complete as much of the full CEQ as they can in 90 minutes. When completing selected sections (Half A or Half B), participants will complete as much of the selected sections as they can in 45 minutes.

Table 1. Study Design

	Group 1			Group 2			Group 3		
First Interview (with self-administered debriefing)	Full CEQ			Half A			Half B		
Second Interview (with interviewer-administered debriefing)	Full CEQ	Half A	Half B	Full CEQ	Half A	Half B	Full CEQ	Half A	Half B

Following the first interview, participants will be asked to complete a short paper questionnaire (Appendix II). Following the second interview, participants will be asked to complete a similar questionnaire (Appendix III) and then will be asked a series of debriefing questions by the interviewer (Appendix IV).

The interviews will be conducted by staff from the BLS Office of Survey Methods Research (OSMR), who will read the CEQ questions as worded (wording available at [www.bls.gov/cex/capi/2009/cecapihome.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/capi/2009/cecapihome.htm)). An observer, another OSMR staff member, will observe the interview and debriefing, taking notes on an observation form (Appendix V). Prior to the first interview, each participant will be sent the a modified version of the production CEQ wave 1 advance letter (Appendix VI), which will note the estimated length of the interview based on their group assignment. They will be sent a modified version of the production CEQ wave 2 advance letter (Appendix VII) before their second interview.

The first phase of analysis for this study will be qualitative, with a focus on summarizing themes in the data collected during the debriefing. Additionally, we will look at some quantitative data, including the expenditure data collected during each interview and the scale questions included on the debriefing questionnaires. We will look to support, or refute, our hypotheses by examining the data for evidence of the stated relationships.

For this study, perceived burden will be measured by several debriefing questions, including those asking about:

- Estimated length of survey
- Reasonableness of length
- Recommendation for an appropriate length
- Survey difficulty
- Topic sensitivity

We'll also evaluate respondent expectation using questions from the debriefing, including those asking about:

- how long participants thought the survey would take
- how different second interview was from what they expected it to be
- was second interview easier, shorter, more interesting, than first

Finally, performance will be assessed using several measures collected during the interview, including

- Number of expenditure reports
- Number of don't know or refused responses
- Number of interview sections with a report

### 3. Participants

Up to forty-five participants will be recruited from the OSMR participant database. Efforts will be made to select participants with varying levels of household size, education, and age based on self-reported information provided during the initial recruitment process. Assignment to treatment group will be done systematically to ensure an even distribution of these key demographic variables across condition.

### 4. Burden Hours

Depending on the treatment group, each interviewing session is expected to last either 90 or 45 minutes, with a 5 minute debriefing questionnaire following the first interview and a 45 minute debriefing interview following the second interview (Table 2). Across all groups, we estimate that this study will use 128 burden hours.

Table 2. Burden Hours

	Group 1			Group 2			Group 3		
First Interview (with 5 minute debriefing)	Full CEQ (90 minutes)			Half A (45 minutes)			Half B (45 minutes)		
Second Interview (with 45 minute debriefing)	Full CEQ	Half A	Half B	Full CEQ	Half A	Half B	Full CEQ	Half A	Half B
Burden Hours per Participant	3.83	3.08	3.08	3.08	2.33	2.33	3.08	2.33	2.33
Number of Participants	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total Burden Hours per Group	19.17	15.42	15.42	15.42	11.67	11.67	15.42	11.67	11.67

### 5. Data Confidentiality

Participants will be informed as to the voluntary nature of the study. Participants will also be informed that the study will be used for internal purposes to improve the design of a national consumer expenditure interview survey. Participants will be given a consent form to read and sign (Attachment VIII). Information related to this study will not be released to the public in any way that would allow identification of individuals except as prescribed under the conditions of the Privacy Act Notice.

### 6. Attachments

Appendix I: CEQ Section Assignment

<u>Appendix II:</u>	First Interview Debriefing Questionnaire
<u>Appendix III:</u>	Second Interview Debriefing Questionnaire
<u>Appendix IV:</u>	Second Interview Interviewer-Administered Debriefing Questions
<u>Appendix V:</u>	Observation Form
<u>Appendix VI:</u>	Wave 1 Advance letter
<u>Appendix VII:</u>	Wave 2 Advance letter
<u>Appendix VIII:</u>	Consent Agreement Form and Privacy Act Statement

Appendix I: CEQ Section Assignment

Half A

Sect\_06 Appliances  
Sect\_09 Clothing  
Sect\_10 Rented and leased vehicles  
Sect\_11 Owned vehicles  
Sect\_14 Hospital and health insurance  
Sect\_16 Educational expenses  
Sect\_18 Trips  
Sect\_19 Miscellaneous

Half B

Sect\_07 Household repairs  
Sect\_08 Furniture  
Sect\_12 Vehicle operating expenses  
Sect\_13 Non-health insurance  
Sect\_15 Medical expenditures  
Sect\_17 Entertainment expenses  
Sect\_20 Expense patterns

Appendix II: First Interview Debriefing Questionnaire

1. Please evaluate this survey by indicating where on the scale you think it falls. For example if you think it was very silly, you would mark it as noted in the first row

Silly	<b>X</b>						Serious
Easy							Difficult
Interesting							Boring
Simple							Complicated
Worthwhile							Waste of time
Energizing							Tiring

2. How long do you think the survey took? \_\_\_\_ minutes

3. How long do you think we should try to make this interview last? \_\_\_\_ minutes

**Please rate the survey by circling the appropriate number for each of the below questions.**

4. How reasonable do you think the length of the survey was?

1	2	3	4	5
Unreasonably Short	Somewhat too short	Neither too short nor too long	Somewhat too long	Unreasonably Long

5. How hard was this survey?

1	2	3	4	5
Very easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult

6. How personal were the questions?

1	2	3
Much too personal	A little too personal	Not at all personal

7. How much effort would you say you put into answering the questions?

1	2	3	4	5
Most effort possible	Considerable effort	Moderate effort	Very little effort	No effort

8. Over the course of the survey, do you think your answers became more/less accurate?

1	2	3	4	5
Much more accurate as survey proceeded	Somewhat more accurate as survey proceeded	Neither more or less accurate as survey proceeded	Somewhat less accurate as survey proceeded	Much less accurate as survey proceeded

9. How exact would you say your answers were in the second half of the interview?

1	2	3	4	5
Very exact	Somewhat exact	Neither exact nor inexact	Somewhat inexact	Very inexact

10. How interesting was this interview topic to you?

1	2	3	4	5
Very interesting	Somewhat interesting	Neither interesting nor uninteresting	Somewhat uninteresting	Very uninteresting

11. How do you feel about the federal government?

1	2	3	4	5
Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative





1	2	3	4	5
Most effort possible	Considerable effort	Moderate effort	Very little effort	No effort

8. Over the course of the survey, do you think your answers became more/less accurate?

1	2	3	4	5
Much more accurate as survey proceeded	Somewhat more accurate as survey proceeded	Neither more or less accurate as survey proceeded	Somewhat less accurate as survey proceeded	Much less accurate as survey proceeded

9. How exact would you say your answers were in the second half of the interview?

1	2	3	4	5
Very exact	Somewhat exact	Neither exact nor inexact	Somewhat inexact	Very inexact

10. How interesting was this interview topic to you?

1	2	3	4	5
Very interesting	Somewhat interesting	Neither interesting nor uninteresting	Somewhat uninteresting	Very uninteresting

11. How do you feel about the federal government?

1	2	3	4	5
Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative

12. Now, compared to the interview you completed three months ago, was this interview:

a. Easier/harder

1	2	3	4	5
Much easier than first survey	Somewhat easier than first survey	Neither easier nor more difficult than first survey	Somewhat more difficult than first survey	Much more difficult than first survey

b. Shorter/longer

1	2	3	4	5
Much shorter than first survey	Somewhat shorter than first survey	Neither shorter nor longer than first survey	Somewhat longer than first survey	Much longer than first survey

c. More interesting/less interesting

1	2	3	4	5
Much more interesting than first survey	Somewhat more interesting than first survey	Neither more nor less interesting than first survey	Somewhat less interesting than first survey	Much less interesting than first survey

13. Did you put in more effort/less effort in preparing for this survey

1	2	3	4	5
Much more effort preparing for this survey than first survey	Somewhat more effort preparing for this survey than first survey	Neither more nor less effort preparing for this survey than first survey	Somewhat less effort preparing for this survey than first survey	Much less effort preparing for this survey than first survey

14. Did you put in more effort/less effort in answering these survey questions

1	2	3	4	5
Much more effort answering the questions on this survey than first survey	Somewhat more effort answering the questions on this survey than first survey	Neither more nor less effort answering the questions on this survey than first survey	Somewhat less effort answering the questions on this survey than first survey	Much less effort answering the questions on this survey than first survey

#### Appendix IV: Second Interview Interviewer-Administered Debriefing Questions

Reviewer Note: The debriefing will be done in a conversational interviewing style, these questions are written to be reminders of topics to cover.

##### *Burden*

1. how burdensome was this survey to you?
2. when you answered that question, about burden, what were you thinking of?
3. was there any point in the survey that you felt it was especially burdensome?

##### *Time*

4. was this survey longer or shorter than the first one, the one we did 3 months ago
5. how long did you expect the interview to last?
  - a. what was that expectation based on?
6. Other than time, were there any other ways this interview differed from what you expected?
7. was there any point in the survey when you felt the survey was taking a long time?

##### *Difficulty*

8. were any of the types of questions or topics easier to answer than others?
  - a. Which? What about these questions/topics was easy?
  - b. Why do you think these questions/topics were easier than others?
9. were any of the types of questions or topics more difficult to answer than others?
  - c. Which? What about these questions/topics was difficult?
  - d. Was it difficult to remember the expense itself or the amount?
10. *if had records*: was it easy or difficult to gather your records for the interview?

##### *Sensitivity*

11. did you think any of the questions were too personal or sensitive?
12. do you think any of the questions might be too personal or sensitive for someone else?

##### *Precision*

13. how exact do you feel your answers needed to be? For example, do you think were looking for exact figures or approximations?
  - a. What gave you that impression?
14. how exact do you think your answers were?
  - a. Were there any topics or questions that your answers were more exact?
  - b. Were there any topics or questions that your answers were less exact?

##### *Topic saliency*

15. how interested are you in the survey topic?
16. how involved are you in your family's finances?
17. do you get many chances to participate in surveys?
  - a. Of those, how often do you take part?

##### *Survey sponsors*

18. how important do you think the data collected by the survey is?
19. have you heard about the Consumer Price Index, or CPI?

*Frequency of contact*

20. how much 'free time' do you generally have to participate in studies like this?
21. In the 'real life' setting of the survey, respondents are not paid to participate, nor are they asked these follow up questions. Instead they are visited by an interviewer who just asks the original interview questions about their expenditures.
  - a. If such an interviewer came to your house, would you answer the survey questions?
  - b. Over the course of a year how many times would you be willing to participate in a survey such as this?
22. If I were to ask you to participate in the expenditure survey portion again in 3 months, would you?

*Mode*

23. if given the option to answer these interview questions over the telephone, would you have?
24. How do you think the interview would be different over the telephone?

## Appendix V: Observation Form

### **Observational Code Sheet Overview**

#### Record Use:

- Y/N/DK – Respondent consulted records (**Y**) or did not (**N**); DK if cannot determine
- Type? – type of record consulted:
  - Statements (bank or credit card) (**S**)
  - Receipts (**R**)
  - Bill (**B**)
  - Combination of records (**C**)
  - Other (**O**)
- Exact?
  - (**Ex**) – respondent pulled exact amount from records, no calculation
  - (**C**) – respondent calculated amount from records
  - (**Est**) – respondent provided some records’-based estimate (e.g., anchor-and-adjust)
  - (**U**) – unknown how R arrived at answer
- Follow-up? – should Interviewer follow-up during debriefing (**Y**) or not (**N**)

#### Information Booklet Use:

- Y/N? – Respondent consulted info book (**Y**) or did not (**N**)
- Confusion – respondent evidenced some confusion stemming from Info Book (**Y**) or did not (**N**).
- Follow-up? – should Interviewer follow-up during debriefing (**Y**) or not (**N**)

#### Self/Proxy?

- Is the report made by the respondent about him/herself (self) or about another HH member (proxy)?

#### Amount?

- Reported expenditure amount

#### Indicators of Boredom, Fatigue, or Restlessness

- Direct expressions by respondent (e.g., “This is taking FOREVER.” “How much longer is this going to take?” etc.)
- Indirect expressions: excessive yawning or sighing; furrowed brow; rubbing eyes or nose; tapping pen/fingers/feet; closing records/moving materials; slumping in chair

#### Level of Effort:

- **High** – always consults records and Information Booklet; evidence (verbal or nonverbal) of Rs’ systematic memory searches; answers consistently based on precise calculations or reasoned estimates; requests for clarification when needed; R seems attentive and responsive throughout.
- **Medium** – consults records and Information Booklet most but not all of the time; some signs of satisficing or lack of involvement/commitment, but generally stays focused and gives reasonable answers to majority of items.
- **Low** – infrequent/insufficient use of records; infrequent/insufficient use of Information Booklet; R does not seem to approach questions seriously; evidence of serious satisficing (e.g., presence of several DK or “no” responses that FR suspects are designed to avoid disclosure and/or shorten survey; extremely quick responses to questions; imprecise responses or answers that do not match required format.

## Interview Checklist

Respondent _____	Mode: _____	Observer: _____
Date: _____		
Time: _____	Condition: _____	Interviewer: _____

	Y/N	Notes
R's surroundings		
Other HH member present?		
Other non-HH member present?		
External Distractions?		
Change in Respondent?		
Arguments?		
Interview Not Completed?		
Did R have records prepared?		If so, what?

	Family Size	Own or Rent	R Educ. Level	R Emp. Status	R Age	
CU Description						
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Bored</b> _____						<b>Interested</b> _____
<b>Cooperative</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Uncooperative</b>
<b>Rushed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Relaxed</b>
<b>Attentive</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distracted</b>
<b>Engaged</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Unengaged</b>
<b>Friendly</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Unfriendly</b>
<b>Organized</b>						<b>Disorganized</b>

Notes/Comments	
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Section \_\_\_\_  
 Start Time:  
 End Time:

Report	Record Use				Info Book Use			Self/Proxy?	Amount?
	Y/N/DK (a)	Type (b)	Exact? (c)	Follow up? (d)	Y/N (e)	Confusion? (f)	Follow up? (g)		
Section 3	1.								
	2.								
	3.								
	4.								
	5.								
	6.								
	7.								
	8.								

Comments	



**FROM THE US BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS**

We are contacting you to request your help with an important survey—the Consumer Expenditure Survey. Your responses help update the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI is the most important tool used to measure how fast prices are rising or declining. It directly affects wages, pensions, and the cost of goods and services. Your response is a service to your community and the country.

Your participation in this survey is essential; however, you may choose to decline to answer any particular question. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent

Soon an interviewer will contact you for an interview and show you an official identification card. Please welcome him or her.

On the back of this letter are answers to questions you may have about this survey. If you would like more information, please contact:

JENNIFER EDGAR  
202-691-7528  
EDGAR.JENNIFER@BLS.GOV

Thank you for your cooperation in this important survey. We appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Jennifer A. Edgar, PhD

Enclosures

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is this survey about?**

The Consumer Expenditure Survey measures how people in the United States spend their money on items such as housing, food, education, transportation, and healthcare.

### **Why is this survey important?**

The information you provide will affect wages, pensions, and the cost of goods and services. In addition, people in your community and throughout the country use the survey results for planning public services and addressing consumer needs. Your voluntary response is essential for ensuring that this survey's results are complete and accurate.

### **What kinds of questions will I be asked?**

We will ask you to recall information about recent purchases you have made. We will also ask you questions about the people who live in your household, such as their ages, and questions about things you already own like cars or property. A partial list includes:

- How much money do you spend on clothing?
- How much money do you spend on housing?
- What are your out-of-pocket costs for medical care for consumers?
- Do you spend more money on electricity or natural gas?

### **Why me? Why not interview someone else?**

Through a scientific sampling process, we selected your address, not you personally. Your household represents hundreds of other households in your region, so it is important that we talk to you. Only you can accurately report how you spent your money.

### **What if I am retired, ill, unemployed, or just don't spend much money?**

We are interested in how all Americans spend their money. We can only have a complete picture if we talk to people with different situations.

It is very important to know the purchasing habits of people of all ages and of all levels of spending. This is especially true for medical spending and spending on entertainment.

### **How long will the interview take?**

The average interview takes about XX minutes.

### **Where can I find out more about the survey?**

The Consumer Expenditure Survey Web site has information about the survey. The address is <<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>>.

Appendix VII: Wave 2 Advance letter

FROM THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

About three months ago, you completed an interview for the Consumer Expenditure Survey. We are contacting you again to request your ongoing help with this very important survey. Soon an interviewer with official identification will contact you again for an interview.

Your responses help update the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI is the most important tool used to measure how fast prices are rising or declining and directly affects wages and pensions. Your response is a service to your community and the country.

To help shorten the interview, you may want to have some records of expenses available for reference. On the back of this letter are examples of records that may reduce the interview time and improve the quality of survey results.

Your participation in this survey is essential; however, you may choose to decline to answer any particular question. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent

Thank you for your cooperation in this important survey. We appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Edgar, PhD

The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting this voluntary survey for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**Collecting bills, receipts, or bank statements before the field representative arrives may help reduce the interview time. Examples of useful documents are shown below.**

**Billing statements (paper or on-line) for:**

- Utilities, such as electricity or natural gas
- Residential and cellular telephone service
- Insurance payments
- Medical expenses
- Education expenses
- Home repair and improvement expenses
- Cable or satellite television or satellite radio
- Internet services

**Receipts, bill of sales, or contracts for:**

- Vehicle purchases
- Vehicle leases
- Furniture purchases
- Appliance purchases
- Service contracts, such as for pest control or appliance maintenance

**Pay stubs showing:**

- Insurance premiums
- Retirement deductions including 401Ks
- Social Security deductions
- Federal taxes deducted
- State and local taxes deducted
- Other deductions, such as union dues or charitable contributions

**Credit card statements for:**

- Expenses charged automatically to your credit card
- Credit card membership fees
- Any expenditures with no receipt or statement

**Bank statements or check books for:**

- Expenses automatically deducted from your bank account
- ATM fees and other banking fees
- Any expenditures with no receipt or statement

Appendix VIII: Consent Agreement Form and Privacy Act Statement

Consent Form

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is conducting research to increase the quality of BLS surveys. This study is intended to suggest ways to improve the procedures the BLS uses to collect survey data.

The BLS, its employees, agents, and partner statistical agencies, will use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and will hold the information in confidence to the full extent permitted by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent. The Privacy Act notice on the back of this form describes the conditions under which information related to this study will be used by BLS employees and agents.

During this research you may be audio and/or videotaped, or you may be observed. If you do not wish to be taped, you still may participate in this research.

We estimate it will take you an average of [enter #] minutes to participate in this research (ranging from [enter #] minutes to [enter #] minutes).

Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time. If you agree to participate, please sign below.

Persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB control number is 1220-0141 and expires February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

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I have read and understand the statements above. I consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

OMB Control Number: 1220-0141

Expiration Date: [02/29/12]

## **PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT**

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a), you are hereby notified that this study is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), under authority of 29 U.S.C. 2. Your voluntary participation is important to the success of this study and will enable the BLS to better understand the behavioral and psychological processes of individuals, as they reflect on the accuracy of BLS information collections. The BLS, its employees, agents, and partner statistical agencies, will use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and will hold the information in confidence to the full extent permitted by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent.