

July 4, 2012

NOTE TO THE  
REVIEWER OF:

OMB CLEARANCE 1220-0141  
“Cognitive and Psychological Research”

FROM:

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Office of Survey Methods Research  
Submission of Materials for the *Classifying  
Employment Situations Study*

SUBJECT:

Please accept the enclosed materials for approval under the OMB clearance package 1220-0141 “Cognitive and Psychological Research.” In accordance with our agreement with OMB, we are submitting a brief description of the study.

The total estimated respondent burden hours for this study is a maximum of 90 hours.

If there are any questions regarding this project, please contact Scott Fricker at 202-691-7390.

## 1. Introduction and Purpose

Survey designers attempt to provide respondents with response options that are mutually exclusive and unambiguous. In some instances, however, the concepts underlying the set of response options reflect the survey designers' technical viewpoint rather than the kinds of conceptual distinctions that respondents are likely (or even able) to make. This disconnect undermines the effectiveness of category labels and can reduce the accuracy of survey responses (Schober and Conrad, 1997; Tourangeau et al., 2006). Ambiguity also can arise from the nature of the concept itself; concepts differ in their complexity and specificity. Some concepts are unidimensional (i.e., membership is determined by a single factor, like concepts of 'height' or 'weight') and others are multidimensional (i.e., membership is determined by a set of factors, as with concepts like 'healthy' or 'clothing'). Some have relatively dense representation (i.e., they have multiple intercorrelated features relevant for category membership, with only a few features being irrelevant), while others have sparse representation. Empirical work in the field of cognition has shown that people often have difficulty making categorical decisions about cognitively complex concepts (e.g., sparse concepts, or multidimensional concepts when *some* features fit the concept but others do not) (e.g., Rosch and Mervis, 1975; Kurtz and Gentner, 2001). These findings are mirrored in numerous survey methods studies that have demonstrated increases in respondent comprehension problems for questions asking about vague or broad concepts (see, e.g., Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski, 2000, for a review).

Moreover, we know that survey respondents presented with cognitively complex or ambiguous concepts often do not make the effort required to understand them as intended (e.g., Krosnick et al., 1996; Schober and Conrad, 1997). This finding has particular import for close-ended questions. Given a set of response options that vary in their conceptual complexity, respondents may avoid thoughtful consideration of the more complex options and instead select a response choice from among the remaining items (provided that it offers an acceptable – but not optimal – answer).

To explore this issue, Bosley, Fricker, and Gillman (2012) examined the impact of conceptual variability and question formatting on response distributions in the Classification of Worker (COW) question, a close-ended item taken from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Noting discrepancies between COW-based estimates of self-employment and those published from other sources, and drawing on theories of categorization, the authors argue that the concept of *self-employment* is more complex than concepts for the other three employment categories included in the response options (i.e., *employed by government*, *employed by a private company*, *employed by a non-profit organization*). They hypothesized that this differential conceptual complexity among the COW categories may induce respondent satisficing, resulting in the underutilization of the 'self-employment' category.

Participants in their study were administered a series of narrative vignettes describing the employment situation for fictional individuals, and then asked to classify those individuals using two different groupings of the COW classification. Half of the sample made choices from among the entire set of four response options (as in the existing COW item), while the other half were presented with only the “self-employed” option as a “yes-or-no” choice. The vignettes were presented a second time, and everyone classified the same jobs into just three employment categories —government, private or non-profit. The main study result showed that respondents were significantly less likely to categorize the person depicted in the vignette as ‘self employed’ when they responded to the 4-option item than when they answered the 2-option item. Respondent debriefings also revealed systematic differences in respondents’ ability to generate examples and definitions of *self-employment* vs. the other three work categories. Together these findings suggest that there may be something conceptually distinct about *self employment*, and that respondents’ ability and/or willingness to answer a class of worker item accurately will depend in part on the nature of the concepts being asked about and the form the question takes.

The purpose of the present study is to extend the results of Bosley, Fricker and Gillman (2012) in three ways. First, we will examine the effects of question wording (i.e., 4-option vs. 2-option item) on response distributions for all four COW categories: *employed by government*, *employed by a private company*, *employed by a non-profit organization*, and *self employed*. This will help us to validate earlier results and to evaluate whether there is something unique about the concept of self employment, or if all of the COW categories are equally influenced by question format. Second, we will examine potential response order effects, given that the ‘self employment’ option always appeared as the last response option (as is the case in the production COW question). Finally, we will further explore how the four COW concepts are cognitively represented in respondents’ memory using a feature-generation task that has been used in the categorization literature to differentiate different concept types (e.g., Goldwater, Markman, & Stillwell, 2010).

## **2. Research Design**

The design of this study will largely follow that of Bosley, Fricker, and Gillman (2012). Participants will be given a series of narrative vignettes that briefly describe the work situations of different fictional characters (Attachment I). Test participants will be asked to indicate which COW category they believe best fits the characters’ work situations based on the information provided in each vignette (Attachment II). At the end of the test session, participants will be administered a set of debriefing questions to

explore their reasoning for their vignette-based responses and their understanding of COW-related concepts (Attachment III).

As in the prior study, one of our key experimental manipulations will be the way in which the classification request is presented. Study participants will be asked to go through a set of 12 vignettes twice during the test session. In the first round, half of the study participants will be shown the vignettes and asked to classify the character based on the current COW question (*Standard* condition); the other half of the participants only will be asked to make a dichotomous decision about the character's employment status (*Split* condition). Unlike in the previous study where respondents only were administered the 2-option item about *self employment*, respondents in this study will be asked a 2-option question about one of the four COS categories (i.e., *Is person X employed by government or not employed by government?*). Participants in both conditions then will be asked to go back through each of the 12 vignettes again and decide "the nature of the employment:" private, for profit; government; or non-profit. This design will enable us to capture the full set of possible class of worker responses for the *split* treatment participants, assess reliability between rounds of administration for the *standard* group respondents, and examine differences in response distributions under the *standard* and *split* conditions.

In addition to varying the number of response options across participants, this study also will examine potential response order effects. Half of the respondents in the *standard* condition will be shown *self employed* as the first response option and the other half will be shown it as the last option. We focused only on this one response option and these two positions to address one possible explanation for the results of the prior study and because it would have been prohibitively difficult to examine every combination and permutation of response option-by-position.

This study also will ask participants to list characteristics of 'typical' examples of each of the four COW employment situations. For this task, we adopt procedures and instructions used by Rosch (1973) (see Attachment III). These responses will be coded using a coding scheme developed by Barr and Caplan (1987) to distinguish between different concept types based on the kinds of properties respondents generate.

To address the research questions, two methods will be used: an in-person cognitive interview and a web-based questionnaire. In the in-person interview, participants will come into the Office of Survey Methods Research (OSMR) lab and begin by completing a self-administered questionnaire that contains the vignette-based items. They then will be asked as series of interviewer-administered questions aimed at

assessing their comprehension of COW concepts, their response strategies and recall effort. Responses will be audio recorded and captured by the interviewer. Web participants will be given the same self-administered, vignette-based items as the lab participants, but the debriefing questions used to evaluate their comprehension of the COW concepts, recall strategies, and effort will be scripted into the web instrument. The time it takes to complete the study protocol will be recorded, and the verbal responses to the response strategy question will be transcribed.

### TryMyUI

TryMyUI ([www.TryMyUI.com](http://www.TryMyUI.com)) is an online usability testing company which allows participants to participate in usability studies from their homes. Once they have joined the TryMyUI participant group, they are screened based on various demographic characteristics and sent links to usability tests they qualify for. Each usability test is limited to twenty minutes and one URL. During the testing session, participants follow online instructions and use a think-aloud approach to complete the task described. A video showing the participant completing the task is then provided.

For this study, this usability testing site is being used as a way to collect a large amount of data in an efficient (both in terms of financial and staff resources) way. TryMyUI is responsible for recruitment, screening, administration of the survey, and data collection. The company has been found to be able to provide high quality, qualitative data within hours of receiving the study from the sponsor. The same data would take weeks for OSMR to collect in the usability lab. Participants are used to providing qualitative feedback as they work on online tasks, and have been found to make very insightful, in-depth comments about their response process as they work on the self-administered survey. This allows for both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected in a very time efficient manner.

Participants will receive a link to an online survey (hosted by Qualtrics). For most of the tasks, they will be instructed to simply answer the questions, typing or clicking their response as on a standard web survey. To take advantage of the video and talk aloud capabilities of TryMyUI, participants will be asked to describe their thought processes as they answered (retrospective) or answer (concurrent) the questions.

### Vignettes

We selected 12 vignettes that were used in the earlier study. The vignettes described work being done in one of three employment sectors (i.e., government, private-for profit, and non-profit), and varied the amount of information that suggested self-employment (i.e., by making no direct reference to self-employment dimensions, referencing positive evidence of one or the other self-employment dimensions,

or referencing negative evidence of one or the other self-employment dimensions). The following example illustrates these manipulations. In the first vignette below, the intent was to *suggest* that the job holder works for a governmental agency absent any mention of self-employment dimensions. (We refer to this as the “baseline” version of the vignette.)

“Marvin works full time collecting water samples and measuring air quality for his state’s environmental agency. He gathers environmental data at sampling locations in the northwest part of the state where he lives. He works mostly outdoors in the field in his car and on foot. He does occasionally attend meetings at agency headquarters in the state capital.”

This vignette is crafted deliberately to leave open the possibility that Marvin is *in his own eyes* self-employed even though it also clearly indicates the governmental nature of his work. That is, any holder of this job as described above could well respond to the CPS by selecting “self-employed” when the COW question is asked. As it stands, then, it is likely that some fraction of our study participants will classify Marvin as “self-employed” in the “Standard” condition<sup>1</sup>. If this occurs, these responses would be “errors.” As we understand it, the model of employment on which the CPS’s work classification scheme rests treats a “government-related self-employed” response as impossible. Thus the proportion of this kind of “misclassification” provides an estimate of one type of potential response error in the CPS data.

We reproduced this vignette with information added that was intended to increase Marvin’s (or our study participants’) likelihood of judging him to be self-employed.

“Marvin works full time collecting water samples and measuring air quality for his state environmental agency. He gathers environmental data at certain locations in the northwest part of the state where he lives. He’s mostly outdoors in the field in his car and on foot. He occasionally attends meetings at agency headquarters in the state capital, *but he does his work free from any day-to-day supervision or direction.*”

This variation uses information about the critical indicator of supervision. Another variation involving the financial independence indicator but designed to *lessen* the appearance that Marvin is self-employed would replace the italicized addition above with the following information. “*Marvin has to record his hours worked each day on a time-sheet that he submits bi-weekly in order to collect his pay.*” (See Attachment I for the full set of baseline vignettes.)

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<sup>1</sup> Clearly our study participants are only role-playing as actual CPS interviewees. Ideally, this study would be performed on a carefully-selected, complex sample of actual workers whose jobs resemble those in our fictional vignettes. This would require an unjustifiable commitment of time and money. Instead, we chose to do what was feasible. We regard our study respondents as “proxy respondents” in the CPS framework.

Each test participant will receive a total of 12 vignettes (6 describing work done in a private company, 3 describing work in the government sector, and 3 describing work in the non-profit sector). In addition, four of the twelve vignettes given to participants will contain only the baseline information (i.e., no mention of self-employment dimensions), four will contain positive evidence of self-employment (i.e., two suggesting greater *supervisory* autonomy, and two suggesting greater *financial* autonomy), and four will contain negative evidence of self-employment (again, varying along the two self-employment dimensions). Individual participants will be randomly assigned only one version of each vignette, and the order of presentation will be randomized within each test session as well.

### **3. Participants**

Participants for the in-person interviews will be recruited from the OSMR participant database. Efforts will be made to select participants with varying levels of age, gender, and education based on self-reported information provided during the initial recruitment process. Web participants will be recruited by TryMyUI. TryMyUI qualifies candidate users based on their ability to stay on task and to clearly voice everything they, see, read, think, or do as they are interacting with a website. They are volunteers who respond to a recruitment ad on their website. Participants will be selected with varying levels of age, gender, and education.

### **4. Payment**

Lab-based participants will receive \$40. For the web survey, participants are paid \$10 per completed survey. This is a fixed amount set by TryMyUi.

### **5. Burden Hours**

The web survey is limited to 20 minutes, with up to 150 participants completing it (i.e., 50 burden hours). The interviewer-administered interview is expected to take up to 60 minutes, with up to 40 participants completing it (i.e., 40 burden hours). Thus, there is a maximum total of 90 burden hours for this study.

### **5. Data Confidentiality**

Lab participants will be informed as to the voluntary nature of the study, and that the study will be used for internal purposes to improve the design of a labor force survey. 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. OMB Control Number: 1220-0141. Prior to the interview, participants will be given a consent form to read and sign (Attachment IV).

Participants obtained through TryMyUI sign separate agreements with TryMyUI; no pledge of confidentiality is provided to these respondents. The following notice will be placed on the first page of the survey: “Note: This survey is being administered by Qualtrics.com and resides on a server outside of the BLS Domain. The BLS cannot guarantee the protection of survey responses and advises against the inclusion of sensitive personal information in any response.”



## References

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Attachment I: Study Vignettes (Both In-Person and Web Respondents)

Vignette Type	Vignette Number	Baseline Vignettes
Private – For Profit (P)	1	Jacqueline is an organic gardener who sells her produce through a local food co-operative store. In the winter she sells dried flowers, and kitchen as well as medicinal herbs from the garden. Jackie’s husband and two teenagers help her tend the garden and prepare the dried plants for sale or shipment.
P	2	Joe is a digital imaging specialist for a large group medical practice. He set up and now runs the Picture-Archiving and Communications System (PACS) to store and display X-ray, CAT, and MRI scans of the group practice’s patients. Joe works under a renewable contract with the practice. This is the fifth medical group that Joe has worked for since PACS began to be used to manage electronic medical images.
P	3	Marcella has done graphic design work since she graduated from college. She is currently working on a long-term contract with an advertising agency in a city near her home. She works from her home as well as on-site at the client’s offices. Marcella gets new business by word-of-mouth and by putting ads in the local paper.
P	4	Randall is a PhD chemist who operates an independent testing laboratory. He has special training in methods for detecting and identifying toxic chemicals. This lab is licensed and accredited to analyze chemical samples for a range of clients from law enforcement agencies to agricultural chemical producers. Randall has six full-time lab workers and occasionally pays outside experts for help with difficult or unusual tests.
P	5	Sam is an energy expert who advises restaurant owners about how to become more energy-efficient and “green.” He owns an organic food restaurant himself that has energy-saving kitchen equipment. Sam has also taken some business courses on how to use less energy, create less waste and still be profitable. He works along with a building company that upgrades restaurants with more eco-friendly equipment and energy-saving structural upgrades.

Vignette Type	Vignette Number	Baseline Vignettes
P	6	William is a realtor associated with Modern Family Realtors, a local firm. He meets clients at the Modern Family office where he has a cubicle, a phone and conference room privileges. The company keeps \$500 a month for the space and support services, plus 2% of William’s commissions for the month.
Non-Profit (NP)	7	Arnold is an experienced carpenter who trains low-income and unemployed workers in how to “weatherize” buildings. His work is paid for by a foundation that gets its funding from the local utility company and grants from the state department of workforce development. The Town Council turned over an unused building to the foundation to give Arnold a realistic place to teach by assigning “hands-on” projects. He temporarily hires master craftsmen whose names he keeps on file to teach advanced and specialized skills.
NP	8	Nicholas does the maintenance and repair work at three inner-city schools for “at-risk” youth. These students have dropped out of the regular school system but want to get more education or career training. A community-based foundation that is funded by corporate contributions operates these schools. Nicholas is skilled in plumbing, wiring, repairing HVAC equipment and other maintenance tasks.
NP	9	Philip is a trained nurse and a lay missionary for his church. He operates a small mission clinic on a Native American reservation. The clinic provides basic nursing care to reservation people on weekday mornings. In the afternoons, Philip visits homes to check on the health of older residents and other homebound persons and also to perform missionary work. He leads a religious service every Sunday in the tribal hall.

Vignette Type	Vignette Number	Baseline Vignettes
Gov't (G)	10	Chizuko is a Japanese statistician who now lives in America. She developed a new, powerful computerized method for analyzing economic data from airline companies while she was at a Japanese university. A US government agency wants to use this new statistical method to calculate how competitive US airlines are with foreign airlines in the global travel market. This agency is paying Chizuko for the time she works with its staff to adapt her statistical software, and it provides her with an office at its headquarters and a secretary to help with administrative tasks while she's working on this project.
G	11	Lawrence is an experienced automotive technician who maintains and repairs the vehicles (police, fire, ambulance, etc.) owned by his town. Lawrence works on the vehicles in a town garage, using his own tools. The city transportation department buys needed parts and supplies from its approved vendors, based on the work orders that Lawrence prepares and submits to the Town Clerk's office.
G	12	Marvin works full time collecting environmental data (like water samples and air quality measurements). He does this for his state environmental agency and for the federal EPA. He covers a range of locations in the northwest part of the state where he lives. He's mostly outdoors in the field in his car and on foot. He occasionally attends meetings at both agencies' offices in the state capital.

## **Attachment II: Vignette-based Materials**

### **WEB INTRODUCTION**

The following survey is being conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This voluntary study is being collected under OMB No. 1220-0141 and it is estimated it will take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

Note: This survey is being administered by Qualtrics.com and resides on a server outside of the BLS Domain. The BLS cannot guarantee the protection of survey responses and advises against the inclusion of sensitive personal information in any response.

### **IN-PERSON INTRODUCTION**

Hi! Thank you for coming in today. My name is ( ). I work for ( ) in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. [This is my colleague ( ) from the ( ) office]

I [we] look forward to working with you today.

With your permission, I will be taping this session. This allows me to ensure the accuracy of your answers, and also allows me to focus on you and your responses instead of taking notes. Do you mind if I audiotape?

Before we get started, please read over the consent form. If you agree to participate in the study, print and sign your name as indicated on the bottom of the form. If you do not agree, please let me know now.

Let me explain a bit about what we'll be doing today. We are going to be discussing an issue that has particular relevance for the Bureau's labor force survey – the Current Population Survey – namely, how people describe their jobs and those of their household members. The CPS is an ongoing survey that produces the nation's monthly unemployment rate as well as a wide variety of other demographic statistics, so your input here today will be used to help us improve the quality of those data.

To get us started we're going to have you read through a set of fictional stories about peoples' work situations and then ask you to classify the person described in the story into one of several work categories. After you're done with the stories, you and I will talk a bit about the different types of job categories that the BLS uses and if you had any reactions to the questions we asked.

The purpose of today's session is to help us find out more about how people, like you, think about these issues. We are not here to evaluate you; we are looking to improve the questions we ask, so there are no right or wrong answers. And, of course, anything you share with us today will be kept completely confidential.

Do you have any questions so far?

Great, let's get started. [Hand participant the packet of vignette/questions]

### **WEB VIGNETTE ITEM INSTRUCTIONS**

Welcome. Today we will be asking you to think about different kinds of work and workplaces where people can be employed.

On the pages that follow, you will read a brief story that describes some features of work a person might do to earn a living, and then you'll be asked to classify the person described in the story into one of several work categories. You will see twelve different stories and answer just one question for each one. Then we will present these same twelve stories again and you will be asked a slightly different work classification question about each one. In some cases, your answers may be the same as before, and in some instances you may want to change your answer.

Please read each story carefully and completely before you pick an answer so that you have all the information it contains in your mind. We'd like you to pick your answer pretty quickly, even if you're not 100% sure. We want to learn more about how people like you might answer questions like these on a real survey and so your own personal answer is the one we want, just based on what each story tells you. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of the questions.

At the end of the session, we will ask you a few follow-up questions about work-related concepts and about your own work experiences.

Please think out loud to the extent possible, so we can tell what you are thinking about when you answer the questions.

### **IN-PERSON VIGNETTE PACKET INSTRUCTIONS**

Welcome. Today we will be asking you to think about different kinds of work and workplaces where people can be employed.

On the pages that follow, you will read a brief story that describes some features of work a person might do to earn a living, and then you'll be asked to classify the person described in the story into one of several work categories. You will see twelve different stories and answer just one question for each one. Then we will present these same twelve stories again and you will be asked a slightly different work classification question about each one. In some cases, your answers may be the same as before, and in some instances you may want to change your answer. Please don't look back the second time through to see how you answered the first time—choose your answers independent from each other.

Please read each story carefully and completely before you pick an answer so that you have all the information it contains in your mind. We'd like you to pick your answer pretty quickly, even if you're not 100% sure. We want to learn more about how people like you might answer questions like these on a real survey and so your own personal answer is the one we want, just based on what each story tells you. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any of the questions.

If you have any questions about what we're asking you to do with the stories, please ask them now before we begin. Our study rules don't allow us to answer any questions about the actual stories, etc. after you start with the booklet.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

[Vignette/question protocol identical for web and in-person respondents]

**COW-related Items for Standard Condition:**

Based on this description, would you say [Name] is: (Select only one):

- Employed by the government (any level).....
- Employed by a private company.....
- Employed by a non-profit organization.....
- Self-employed.....

**COW-related Items for Split Condition:**

Based on this description, would you say [Name] is: (Select only one):

- Self-employed.....
- Not self-employed.....

OR

Based on this description, would you say [Name] is: (Select only one):

- Employed by government (any level).....
- Not employed by government.....

OR

Based on this description, would you say [Name] is: (Select only one):

- Employed by a private company.....
- Not employed by a private company.....

OR

Based on this description, would you say [Name] is: (Select only one):

Employed by a non-profit organization .....

Not employed by a non-profit organization .....

**3-Option COW-related Items for Both Conditions:**

Based on this description, would you say [Name] is: (Select only one):

Employed by the government (any level).....

Employed by a private company.....

Employed by a non-profit organization.....

**WEB BUFFER ITEMS:**

Thank you for answering the questions about the stories. Please tell us a bit about your own work experiences.

***Are you currently employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or are you self employed?***

Government.....

Private company.....

Non-profit organization.....

Self-employed.....

*Not applicable (e.g., in school, unemployed, etc.)*.....

***How easy or difficult was it to classify yourself into one of these employment categories? Would you say that it was...***

Very easy.....

Somewhat easy.....

Neither easy nor difficult.....

Somewhat difficult.....

Very difficult.....



***Please tell us more about that – what is it about your job that made this choice [fill]?***

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***Current Marital Status***

- Single.....
- Married.....
- Living with married partner.....
- Divorced.....
- Separated.....
- Widowed.....

[If Respondent reports being married]

***Is your spouse/partner currently employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or is he/she self employed?***

- Government.....
- Private company.....
- Non-profit organization.....
- Self-employed.....
- Not applicable (e.g., in school, unemployed, etc.)*.....

***How easy or difficult was it to classify your spouse/partner into one of these employment categories? Would you say that it was...***

- Very easy.....
- Somewhat easy.....
- Neither easy nor difficult.....
- Somewhat difficult.....
- Very difficult.....

*Please tell us more about that – what made classifying your spouse/s/partner’s work [fill]?*

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**IN-PERSON ‘BUFFER’ QUESTIONS**

Now I’d like to take a moment to talk about your own work experiences.

*Are you currently employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or are you self employed?*

- Government.....
- Private company.....
- Non-profit organization.....
- Self-employed.....
- Not applicable (e.g., in school, unemployed, etc.).....

*How easy or difficult was it to classify yourself into one of these employment categories? Would you say that it was...*

- Very easy.....
- Somewhat easy.....
- Neither easy nor difficult.....
- Somewhat difficult.....
- Very difficult.....

*Can you tell me more about that – what is it about your job that made this choice [fill]?*

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- *Anything else...?*
  
- *Tell me more about that...*

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[If R is married (based on database or screener question)]

In the Current Population Survey, respondents are asked this question about everyone in the household over the age of 15. So, I'd like to focus on your spouse/husband/wife/unmarried partner for a moment:

***Is your [fill] currently employed by government, by a private company, a non-profit organization, or is [he/she] self employed?***

- Government.....
- Private company.....
- Non-profit organization.....
- Self-employed.....
- Not applicable (e.g., in school, unemployed, etc.).....

***How easy or difficult was it to classify [fill] into one of these employment categories? Would you say that it was...***

- Very easy.....
- Somewhat easy.....
- Neither easy nor difficult.....
- Somewhat difficult.....
- Very difficult.....

***Can you tell me more about that – what made this choice [fill]?***

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Ask probes as necessary to distinguish whether question difficulty is affected by Rs' understanding of the concepts being asked about and/or their understanding of their spouse's/partner's job situation. Possible probes include:

- Do you think that your spouse/partner would have answered this question for him/herself the same way that you did? Why/why not?
- What information would you need to make this question easier for you to answer about your spouse/partner?

## Attachment III: Debriefing Materials

### **WEB FEATURE-GENERATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Thank you. We are interested in what you think are characteristics or features of typical examples of the different employment situations.

To illustrate what we want you to do on this task, think about concept of a **vacation**. Characteristics of a typical vacation might include travel out of town, staying in a hotel, taking paid leave from work, spending money on tourist activities, etc.

We would like you to generate a list like that, but for characteristics of typical examples of 4 employment situations (i.e., someone who is employed by government; employed by a private company; employed by a non-profit; or self-employed).

It is important that you do not just free associate. For example, if your first job was with a non-profit organization, do not list 'first job.' Please enter each characteristic on a separate line, and think aloud as you go through the items.

[The following item-pairs will be randomized. Scripted 'anything else' probes will appear on web]

***Think of typical examples of 'being employed by government' – what characteristics or features come to mind?***

- Please give some examples of employers that are “government offices or agencies”

***Think of typical examples of 'being employed by a private company – what characteristics or features come to mind?***

- Please give some examples of employers that are “private companies”

***Think of typical examples of 'being employed by a non-profit organization – what characteristics or features come to mind?***

- Please give some examples of employers that are “non-profit organizations”

***Think of typical examples of 'being self employed' – what characteristics or features come to mind?***

- Please give some examples where the type of employment is “self employed”

## IN-PERSON FEATURE-GENERATION INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you. I'd like to switch gears a bit and get into more specifics about what each of these different work-related concepts mean to you. What I'd like you to do is to think about what you think are typical examples of the 4 employment situations – for example, a typical example of someone who is employed by government or a typical example of someone who is self-employed – and then sort of list out characteristics or features of those examples.

So, to give you a sense of what I'd like you to do on this task, think about the concept of a **vacation**. Characteristics of a typical vacation might include *travel out of town, staying in a hotel, taking paid leave from work, spending money on tourist activities*, etc. I'd like you to generate a similar list, but for the different work concepts.

It is important that you do not just free associate. For example, if your first job was with a non-profit organization, please do not say 'first job.' Let's begin:

Think of typical examples of 'being employed by government' – what characteristics or features come to mind?

- Anything else?
- Are there any other words that you could use to describe 'being employed by government?'
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of characteristics or features?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of 'typical' examples?
- Please give some examples of employers that are "government offices or agencies"

[Additional probes as needed for in-person participants]

Think of typical examples of 'being employed by a private company – what characteristics or features come to mind?

- Anything else?
- Are there any other words that you could use to describe 'being employed by a private company?'
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of characteristics or features?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of 'typical' examples?

- Please give some examples of employers that are “private companies”

[Additional probes as needed for in-person participants]

Think of typical examples of ‘being employed by a non-profit organization – what characteristics or features come to mind?

- Anything else?
- Are there any other words that you could use to describe ‘non-profit organizations?’
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of characteristics or features?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of ‘typical’ examples?
- Please give some examples of employers that are “non-profit organizations”

[Additional probes as needed for in-person participants]

Think of typical examples of ‘being self employed’ – what characteristics or features come to mind?

- Anything else?
- Are there any other words that you could use to describe ‘being self employed?’
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of characteristics or features?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to think of ‘typical’ examples?
- Please give some examples where the type of employment is “self-employed”

[Additional probes as needed for in-person participants]

**WEB ‘INCORPORATED’ FOLLOW-UP:**

[This question should be asked of anyone who reported that they are self-employed.]

***Previously you said that you were self-employed. Is your business incorporated?***

Yes.....

No.....

[This item should be asked of everyone who received the previous item, regardless of whether or not they indicated their business was incorporated. Present item on a separate page.]

***We’d like to know more about how people interpret the previous question. What does it mean to you when someone says that their business is ‘incorporated?’***

**IN-PERSON ‘INCORPORATED’ FOLLOW-UP:**

[This question should be asked of anyone who reported that they are self-employed.]

***Previously you said that you were self-employed. Is your business incorporated?***

Yes.....

No.....

[This item should be asked of everyone who received the previous item, regardless of whether or not they indicated their business was incorporated. Present item on a separate page.]

***We’d like to know more about how people interpret the previous question. What does it mean to you when someone says that their business is ‘incorporated?’***

- Are there any other words that you could use to describe ‘being incorporated?’

- How easy or difficult was it for you to come up with a description of what it means to be ‘incorporated?’

**DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS (BOTH WEB AND IN-PERSON):**

***Gender***

- Female.....
- Male.....

***Age***

- 18 - 25.....
- 26 - 35.....
- 36 - 45.....
- 46 - 65.....
- 66+.....

***Education***

- Less than High School.....
- High School Grad (or equivalent).....
- Some college but no degree.....
- College degree (BA, BS, AB).....
- Graduate degree (MA, MS, PhD, MD, JD, etc.).....



### Attachment IV: In-person 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 60 minutes to participate in this research (ranging from 45 minutes to 70 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. The OMB control number is 1220-0141, and expires February 28, 2015.

-----  
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: 02-28-2015

**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.