

Strategy: | Anchoring Vignettes: A strategy to facilitate intercultural comparisons

How it works: | The following section in italics is taken verbatim from: <http://gking.harvard.edu/vign>. Anchoring vignettes are meant to:

help in addressing two long-standing questions:

- *How can we do survey research if different respondents (perhaps from different cultures, countries, or ethnic groups) understand questions in completely different ways, or if investigators mean one thing and respondents think they mean something else?*
- *How can we develop accurate measures of complicated concepts which we can define only by example ("you know it when you see it"), and when attempts to produce more concrete questions tend to be more concrete but no more valid?*

To at least partially ameliorate these problems, we introduce the idea of anchoring vignettes. These are (usually brief) descriptions of hypothetical people or situations that survey researchers can use to correct otherwise inter-personally incomparable survey responses. Survey questions are a function of the actual quantity being measured along with a dose of interpersonal in-comparability (i.e., different for each respondent). The survey literature has focused for decades on asking more concrete questions intended to reduce the incomparable portion, but with only mixed success. The new idea underlying anchoring vignettes is to measure directly, and then subtract off, the incomparable portion. To do this, we ask respondents for self-assessments of the concept being measured along with assessments, on the same scale, of each of several hypothetical individuals described in anchoring vignettes. Since the actual (but not necessarily reported) levels for the people in the vignettes are, by the design of the survey, invariant over respondents, the only reason answers to the vignettes will differ over respondents is interpersonal in-comparability. This provides sufficient information for the statistical models we have designed to correct the self-assessments

Figure 1 (from King et al 2004) illustrates the use of the technique to rescale respondent reports of political efficacy:

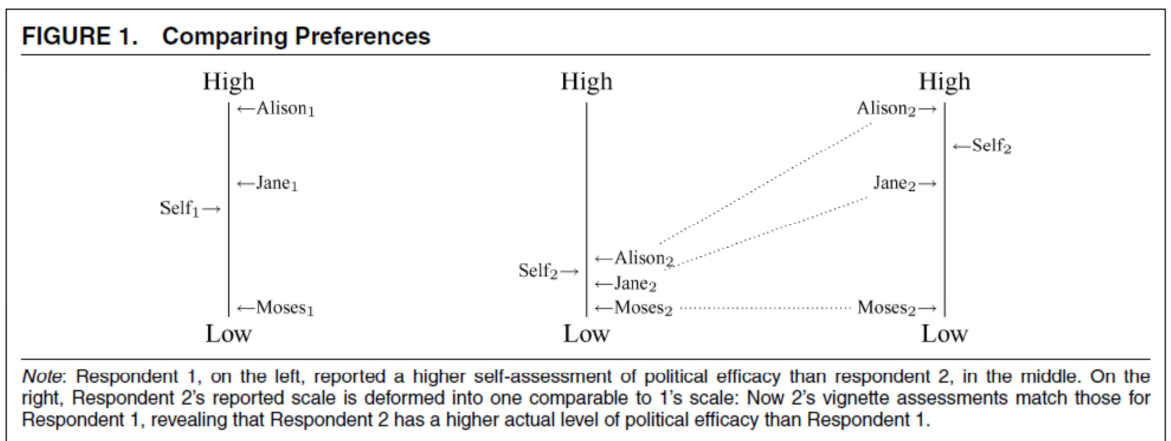
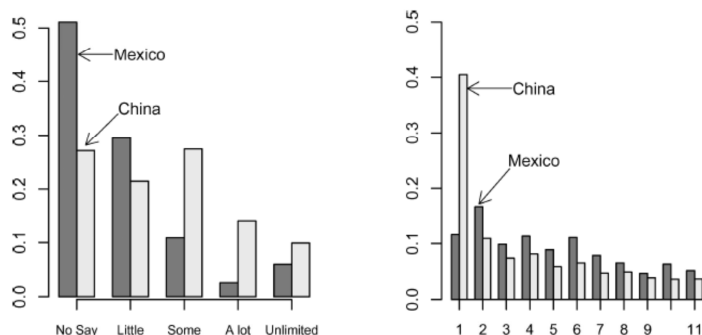


Figure 2 (from King et al 2004) shows how comparisons of reports of political efficacy can change dramatically when cultural interpretations are taken into account.

FIGURE 2. Nonparametric Estimates of an Electoral Dimension of Political Efficacy



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

Data gathering strategy:

Public opinion surveys

SDG goals this could be used for:

Could be used to measure items that are interpreted differently in different concepts, including ideas such as corruption, representation, accountable.

Advantages:

Can be used to adjust for cross cultural differences in interpretation

Disadvantages:

Requires the collection of survey data

References:

King, Gary, Christopher JL Murray, Joshua A Salomon, and Ajay Tandon. 2004. "[Enhancing the Validity and Cross-cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research](#)," American Political Science Review, 98: 191–207.