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Title: Reducing Over-Reporting of Voter Turnout: An Experiment using a 'Source Monitoring' Framework

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Dataset(s): Special Fall 1994 Telephone Survey

Abstract

An experiment designed to explore over-reporting of vote turnout utilized a 'source monitoring' approach. In a telephone survey of registered voters, respondents were experimentally assigned to receive one of two versions of questions about turnout and church attendance. The literature on 'source monitoring' suggests that real events have different kinds and quantities of information associated with them in memory compared with events that occur internally as a result of thinking or imagining. Applied to the issue of over-report of vote, this research used the 'source monitoring' framework to create alternative vote report/church attendance questions which, it was hypothesized, would help respondents detect and resolve source confusion in their memories of having engaged in the activity or having thought about engaging in it. The experiment found no evidence that inducing 'source monitoring' related cognitions reduced confusion and thus overreport with respect to either having voted or having attended church. Analysis of the sample's validated voting pattern indicated that respondents who participated in the study were more likely to have voted than those who did not.