ANES Survey Proposal
Self-Prediction, Voting Norms, and Voting Attitude
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Background

Considerable evidence exists suggesting that merely asking people to predict their future behavior can impact their actual behavior, often months after the initial prediction request (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999; Sprott et al. 2006). This phenomenon, (most recently termed the q*uestion-behavior effect* [Sprott et al. 2006], but has previously been labeled s*elf-prophecy* when used in socially normative contexts [e.g., Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999] and *mere-measurement* in other contexts [e.g., Morwitz, Johnson, and Schmittlein 1993]), has been successfully demonstrated to increase the performance of socially desirable behaviors such as volunteering for a charity (Sherman 1980), voting (Greenwald et al. 1987), exercising (Spangenberg 1997), and recycling (Spangenberg et al. 2003), while decreasing the performance of socially undesirable behaviors such as gender stereotyping (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999). Under the broad umbrella of the question-behavior effect, extant research suggests that self-prophecy, when compared to mere-measurement, is most effective on behaviors with a normative prescription, which more closely aligns with voting.

The most convincing experimental evidence demonstrating the underpinnings of self-prophecy effects has supported a cognitive dissonance explanation (Spangenberg and Sprott 2006; Spangenberg et al. 2003). Inline with a self-concept view of cognitive dissonance (Aronson 1992), a self-prediction makes salient normative beliefs about performing the behavior.

Inconsistent knowledge of how others behave and how the person has behaved in the past can lead to disharmony in the person's self-concept as a good person, which evokes cognitive dissonance. One's desire to bring actions into consistency with normative beliefs results in behavior change motivated by the self-prediction. Research findings supportive of a dissonance explanation suggest that self-prediction may spur a person's behavior toward social norms and away from past behavior, thus reducing behavior repetition. In related research, a study found that self-prediction decreased voting turnout (from 63.2% to 55.9%) among people who had voted in all five prior elections but increased voting turnout (from 33.5% to 38.1%) among people who had voted in zero to four of the five prior elections (Smith, Gerber, and Orlich 2003). This suggests that self-prediction requests may make some people less likely to repeat their past voting participation (cf., Greenwald et al. 1988; reproduced in Figure 1 in Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999).

Currently, the ANES panel survey includes a question, which is very similar, in set-up, to the prediction requests in self-prophecy research (e.g., "So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in November or not? Yes, will vote. *Or* No, will not vote."). Of relevance to ANES, with regard to the mandate of explaining voter turnout, and an impetus for this proposal, is that such a prediction request may have a differential impact on individual voting behavior depending on people's normative beliefs, attitudes toward voting, and their past voting behavior.

Additionally, since the core ANES survey questions (e.g., "So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in November or not? Yes, will vote. *Or* No, will not vote.") are asked of all respondents, it is difficult to determine if the prediction request is having an effect on voter turnout. Traditional research in this area has always included a control condition to test the impact of a prediction request on actual behavior. In order to access this question on actual

behavior, it is necessary that at least a portion of the sample not receive the core "expect to vote" question. Self-prophecy prediction requests have been used in prior research that has studied the impact of prediction requests on voting behavior. In an experiment by Greenwald and colleagues (1987), respondents were called to answer a voting survey and were ultimately asked, "Do you expect that you will vote or not?" There was a strong self-prophecy prediction request main effect, such that 87.5% of the respondents in the self-prophecy condition voted verses 64.3% of the respondents in a control condition ($x = 4.5$, $p < .05$). In a follow-up study, Greenwald and colleagues (1988) found that the frequency with which people voted in the past moderated the effect of a self-prophecy voting request. Again, they found a main effect of self-prophecy, such that respondents in the self-prophecy condition ("Do you predict that you will vote or not vote in the primary election the day after tomorrow?") had a higher voting rate than respondents in a control condition ($F_{(1, 439)} = 4.69$, $p < .05$), but also significantly varied based on prior voting record, ($F_{(2, 439)} = 2.98$, $p = .05$). Contrast tests of the self-prophecy effect separately for each of the three levels of prior voting record (low, moderate, high), indicated that the self-prophecy effect was statistically significant only for the moderate prior voting group, ($F_{(1, 121)} = 7.69$, $p < .01$). In research regarding another socially normative behavior (exercise), Chandon et al. (2007) show that a self-prophecy prediction request can increase overall attendance to a health club ($F_{(2, 1755)} = 3.9$, $p < .05$). Comparing only the self-prophecy condition to a control condition, a contrast test further revealed that mean daily attendance was higher in the self-prediction condition ($M = 18.8\%$) than in a control condition ($M = 16.1\%$, $t = 2.1$, $p < .05$). In conclusion, the addition of a control condition, which is not asked the core question, "So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in November or not? Yes, will vote. *Or* No, will not vote," may yield insightful information that speaks to possible voter turnout explanations.

One of the implications of our research design is that it will provide an assessment as to how the current "expect to vote" question influences voter behavior in the development and interpretation of the results of the ANES survey. If all respondents complete the "expect to vote" question, it is very likely that their actual voting behavior is altered in unknown ways because there is no control condition against which to compare it. Emerging research in psychology suggests that in addition to changing behavior, prediction questions (e.g., "expect to vote") are also likely to influence the relationship between sets of variables – an influence known as *self-generated validity* (Feldman and Lynch 1988; Chandon, Morwitz, and Reinartz 2005). Thus, the "expect to vote" question on the ANES survey is quite likely to influence how variables included on the survey (e.g., candidate preferences and vote choices) are related to outcome voter behavior variables. By providing a control condition for comparison purposes it is possible to empirically assess an estimate of the self-generated validity bias in ANES survey data using procedures we have published in our respective fields (Chandon, Morwitz, and Reinartz 2005).

Exact wording of proposed questions.

Q1. What do you think the chances are that you will vote on Election Day?
    1. Certain, practically certain (99 in 100)
    2. Almost sure (9 in 10)
    3. Very probable (8 in 10)
    4. Probable (7 in 10)
    5. Good possibility (6 in 10)
    6. Fairly good possibility (5 in 10)
    7. Fair possibility (4 in 10)
    8. Some possibility (3 in 10)
    9. Slight possibility (2 in 10)
    10. Very slight possibility (1 in 10)
    11. No chance, almost no chance (1 in 100)
    99. [Don't Know/Refusal]

Q2. People I know vote.
Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   Strongly Agree

Q3. People I know think it is important to vote.
Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   Strongly Agree

Q4. In general, voting is:
Unfavorable   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   Favorable
Negative   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   Positive

An explicit argument as to why the proposed questions merit inclusion in the ANES survey.

Question 1 (Q1). This question would follow the question, "So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in November or not? Yes, will vote. *Or* No, will not vote." in order to assess a probability estimate of the prediction request. The current prediction request provides a bimodal response and adding this question would provide variance and interval data that speaks to the likelihood a person will or will not vote. Overall, the current "expect to vote" question asked in the ANES panel survey and the proposed Q*uestion 1* would aid researchers in determining whether prediction requests for voting are useful in increasing voter turnout. Note: The only way to test if the current ANES panel survey "expect to vote" question has a differential effect on actual voting behavior is if a control group within the panel survey is NOT asked the "expect to vote" question, as well as the corresponding probability estimate question (proposed *Question 1*).

Questions 2 and 3 (Q2 & Q3). These two questions comprise a 2-item assessment of a person's normative views towards voting. Prior self-prophecy research has demonstrated that one's normative beliefs can moderate behavior related to those beliefs (Chandon et al. 2007; Sprott, Spangenberg, and Fisher 2003).

Question 4 (Q4). This question is a collapsed two-item assessment of a person's global attitude towards voting. It provides valence and strength of one's attitude toward voting, which will indicate whether voting is viewed as a generally good or bad activity. This question is relevant to the question-behavior effect because one of the most established explanations for mere-measurement is attitude accessibility (Morwitz and Fitzsimons 2004). An attitude

accessibility explanation suggests that measurement increases accessibility of cognitions about the focal behavior, which results in an increased chance that people will act consistently with these cognitions.

An explicit argument about the kinds and range of statistical analyses allowed.

The proposed questions allow statistical analyses ranging from basic descriptive statistics to multivariate analyses. For example, ANOVA and regression can be utilized to analyze the main effect of self-prophecy and the moderating effect of norms.

An explicit argument about the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the questions.

The proposed questions have been used extensively in question-behavior research for a variety of behaviors, including voting. (for reviews see Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999; Sprott et al. 2006). Given the primary ANES mandate to better explain voter turnout, one must consider the impact of the prediction request (e.g., "expect to vote" question) used in past ANES panel surveys. Research has shown that asking people to predict their future behavior can impact their actual behavior (Spangenberg and Greenwald 1999; Sprott et al. 2006). Recent research has demonstrated that based on the norms held by respondents, a prediction request regarding a normative behavior, such as voting, can increase, as well as decrease actual behavior (Smith, Gerber, and Orlich 2003). For example, empirical evidence suggests that self-prediction, in the socially normative context of exercising, raises the salience of exercising norms. Therefore, low frequency exercisers exercise more (move up toward the norm), whereas high-frequency exercisers exercise less (regress down toward the norm; Chandon et al. 2007). In other words, the current ANES "expect to vote" question has the potential make those people, who have not voted a lot in the past, more likely to vote and make others, who have voted a lot in the past, less likely to vote.

Evidence about the empirical performance of such questions.

The current self-prediction question used in ANES panel surveys is, "So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in November or not? Yes, will vote. *Or* No, will not vote." Research using self-prediction in a variety of contexts has demonstrated that self-prophecy effects are robust enough to be of practical significance. A meta-analysis included in a review of self-prophecy research shows that associated effect sizes are homogeneous, ranging from $r = .08$ to $r = .40$ (small-to-moderate effect sizes [Cohen, 1988]), with an average of $r = .19$ (Spangenberg and Greenwald 2001). Despite the moderate-sized effects, a technique producing an effect of this size can be of great practical significance when applied on a large scale (Spangenberg et al. 2003).

The eleven-point probability scale (Question 1) was developed and tested in Juster (1966) and found to contain more predictive information than a five-point likelihood of purchase scale.

The nine-point, two-item (Questions 2 and 3) normative scale (Cronbach's alpha = .78) is adapted from a scale used to measure norms for other socially desirable behaviors, such as exercise (Chandon, et al. 2007).

The nine-point, two-item (Question 4) attitude scale (Cronbach's alpha = .97) is adapted from a scale used to measure global attitude toward various social objects, including products, brands, and activities (Miniard et al. 1990).

If the proposal advocates asking a question that ANES has asked in the past, the proposal will be more persuasive if it includes explicit evidence about the breadth and depth of the question's previous usage…

This proposal depends upon the question, "So far as you know now, do you expect to vote in November or not? Yes, will vote. *Or* No, will not vote," being included in future ANES surveys. This question has been collected in past ANES surveys. One caveat to the fact that this

question has been asked in prior ANES surveys is the way the question has been asked in the past. In prior ANES surveys, this question has been asked of each element of the sample. To test the impact of a prediction request on actual voting behavior, it is imperative that the ANES core question, "expect to vote," not be asked of the entire panel, thereby creating a control group.

Keywords

mere-measurement, normative behavior, question-behavior, self-prediction, self-prophecy

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