WHO OVERREPORTS VOTING?

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The effects of respondent characteristics with regard to the propensity of nonvoters to report that they voted are examined by analyzing the vote validation studies conducted by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center in 1964, 1976, and 1980. Previous research has suggested that vote overreporting derives from the respondent's wish to appear to engage in socially desirable behavior. This earlier research suggests that the only respondent characteristic that is strongly related to overreporting is race; measures of socioeconomic status and of general political attitudes are said to be at most weakly related to the tendency to exaggerate voting. These earlier conclusions are incorrect. We measure the extent of overreporting for the population "at risk" of overreporting voting: those who did not actually vote. Respondents most inclined to overreport their voting are those who are highly educated, those most supportive of the regime norm of voting, and those to whom the norm of voting is most salient—the same characteristics that are related to the probability that a person actually votes. Blacks are only slightly more likely to overreport voting than whites. The pattern of relations between education and vote overreporting is opposite what would be found if those who falsely reported voting fit the typical image of the uneducated, uninvolved, "acquiescent" respondent who is concerned primarily with pleasing the interviewer.

Many American nonvoters report to survey organizations that they voted. In the four vote validation studies conducted by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center (SRC) and Center for Political Studies, a large proportion of respondents who did not vote, according to checks of local registration and voting records, claimed that they voted: 27.4% in 1964, 31.4% in 1976, 22.6% in 1978, and 27.4% in 1980.

The generally accepted explanation for vote overreporting is that it is an artifact of the interview. Overreporting is seen to result from the respondent's desire to please the interviewer and to appear to engage in socially desirable behavior. According to Sudman and Bradburn (1974; see also Bradburn and Sudman, 1979), altering the "characteristics of the interview task" by using telephone or mail surveys or random response techniques does not markedly reduce the tendency to give socially desirable responses. Eliminating third parties from the interview also has no consistent effect on vote overreporting (Silver, Abramson, and Anderson, 1986).

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Earlier research also claims that the propensity to overreport voting is not related to respondent characteristics such as socioeconomic status, age, and sex, or to political attitudes such as feelings of political efficacy or political trust, strength of partisanship, or sense of citizen duty. Only race, it is argued, is related to the propensity to overreport voting; blacks are more likely to overstate voting than whites (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, 1983; Abramson and Claggett, 1984; Katosh and Traugott, 1981; Sigelman, 1982; Traugott and Katosh, 1979).

Voting is positively associated with respondent characteristics such as education, income, interest in politics, feelings of political efficacy, sense of citizen duty, concern with the election outcome, and strength of partisan identification. In short, Americans who feel more strongly attached to the established political order are more likely to vote. Some popular texts on American political behavior have accepted the conclusion that Americans whose stake in society ought to make them want to appear to be in conformity with social norms are not more likely to overreport voting than those who are less motivated to appear to conform (Flanigan and Zingale, 1983, p. 185; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980, p. 118).

Our research challenges this conclusion. We find that Americans who are more highly educated and more politically efficacious, who have a stronger sense of citizen duty and stronger partisan attachments, and who are more concerned about the outcome of the election, are also more likely to overreport voting.

Data and Measures

We use election and vote validation data from the National Election Studies (NES) of the University of Michigan Center for Political Studies for 1964, 1976, and 1980.[1] A small proportion of validated nonvoters are actual voters (Abramson and Claggett, 1984). Errors arise primarily when the field staff does not find an actual voter's name on a list of registered voters. To the extent that such errors result from poor maintenance of local registration records, errors in validation will tend to underestimate the participation of voters who live in poor communities, such as blacks and whites with low levels of education and income. This possible bias in the validated vote measure runs against our main thesis —that higher-status respondents are more likely to overreport voting.

Dependent Variable

Previous research has concluded that it makes little difference in the pattern of relations whether the reported or the validated vote is used as the dependent variable. This is not surprising in light of the high correlation between the self-reported and the actual, validated vote.[2] However, most of this earlier research does not address the question of what the relation is between respondent characteristics and the tendency to overreport voting.

Most researchers have not used an indicator of vote overreporting that is appropriate for understanding what causes an individual to overreport. Only about 1% of respondents who actually voted (according to official records) mistakenly reported that they did not vote. Between 90% and 96% of all vote misreports are by people who did not actually vote. Even so, some researchers analyzing the vote validation data have used as their main measure of vote misreporting the proportion of all respondents whose self-report does not correspond with the official voting records (e.g., Katosh and Traugott, 1981; Traugott and Katosh, 1979; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980, p. 118). Others have looked at the proportion of those who claimed to have voted but did not actually vote (Abramson and

Claggett, 1984, p. 721; Cahalan, 1968–69; Sigelman, 1982, p. 49).[3]

At issue in the choice of a measure of overreporting is not the actual distribution of voters and nonvoters, but rather the choice of the appropriate denominator for calculating the proportion misreporting: (1) all respondents, (2) respondents who claimed they voted, or (3) respondents who did not actually vote. Since virtually all misreporting is by actual nonvoters who claim they voted, the third denominator is the most appropriate for representing the population that is "at risk" of misreporting: those who did not actually vote.[4]

The other two approaches reflect the aggregate amount of misreporting of voting, but are not good indicators of the individual behavioral propensity to misreport, since they do not use the appropriate population at risk. Also, they are sensitive to the marginal distribution of actual voters and nonvoters. The larger the proportion of nonvoters among the respondents or in any subset of respondents, the greater the proportion of respondents who are available to misreport that they voted. Other things being equal, the larger the proportion of nonvoters, the higher the total proportion of misreporters will be. This elementary fact was pointed out by Parry and Crossley (1950, p. 75) 35 years ago. If one analyzes misreporting among actual nonvoters, no such sensitivity to the marginal distribution of voters and nonvoters exists. Accordingly, in crosstabulations we use as the dependent variable the *percentage of those who did not actually vote who reported that they voted.*

Independent Variables

We focus on factors related to the normative commitment to voting. We use respondent's education as an indicator of socioeconomic status. We also examine the relation between the tendency to overreport voting and other measures of the respondent's "motivation to vote": external political efficacy, sense of citizen duty, strength of partisanship, concern about the outcome of the election, and political interest.[5] Earlier research based on the 1980 NES (Silver, Abramson, and Anderson, 1986) showed that whether nonvoters stated in the pre-election survey that they expected to vote was an extremely strong predictor of whether they claimed that they voted. Thus, we also examine pre-election expectation to vote.

Results

Education and Vote Overreporting

In contrast to previous research, we find that education is positively related to vote overreporting (see Table 1). The relation is weak in 1964, a high-stimulus election which mobilized low-status Americans. Nonetheless, in all three surveys respondents who were college graduates were the most likely to overreport voting, and those who had not finished high school were the least likely to overreport voting. Over time, the relation between vote overreporting and education has become stronger.

Thus, nonvoters who are most likely to overreport voting come from the same educational groups as those who are most likely to vote. Low-status respondents, who are said to be especially inclined to give socially desirable responses to interviewers, particularly when the issue addressed is not very salient (Schuman and Presser, 1981, ch. 8), are not more inclined to overreport voting.

Support for Civic Norms and Vote Overreporting

Since education is related to political attitudes that have been linked with political participation, such as political

Table 1. Validated Nonvoters Who Said They Voted, by Level of Education, 1964, 1976, and 1980

Year	Level of Education: Some High School or Less[a] (%)	Completed High School (%)	Some College (%)	Completed College (%)	tau_c
1964	22.3	34.3	28.6	34.8	
	(184)	(102)	(28)	(23)	.106*
1976	23.5	28.3	45.5	53.1	
	(356)	(329)	(132)	(89)	.200**
1980	16.7	27.2	34.8	56.1	
	(174)	(191)	(89)	(41)	.220**

Note: Figures in parentheses are base *N*s for the percentages immediately above.

[a]"Some High School or Less" includes respondents with up to 12 years of schooling but no high school diploma.

*Statistically significant at or below $p = .05$.
**Statistically significant at or below $p = .01$.

efficacy and level of political interest, these attitudes are likely to be positively related to vote overreporting. Also, if vote overreporters come disproportionately from people who have a strong motivation to vote, then attitudes such as strength of party identification, which are related to the motivation to vote but are not strongly related to education, should also be related to overreporting.

An important indicator of the saliency of voting is whether the respondent stated in the pre-election survey that he or she expected to vote in the forthcoming election. The responses should be closely related to whether the respondent actually voted. In fact, this is so. For the three elections, the Kendall's tau_b coefficients between stated expectation and actual, validated voting range from .55 to .60. However, pre-election expectation is even more strongly related to the self-reported vote; the tau_b coefficients range from .70 to .73. In 1964, 49.1% of validated nonvoters who had stated that they expected to vote falsely reported that they had voted; the corresponding figures in 1976 and 1980 were 57.0% and 51.2%. In contrast, only between 1.5% and 3.5% of nonvoters who had stated that they did not expect to vote claimed later that they voted.

The consistency between pre- and post-election reports about voting (pre-election declaration of intention; post-election self-report of actual behavior) does not seem to be an artifact of the interview-reinterview survey method, for two reasons. First, substantial vote overreporting has been found in numerous other studies in which only a single interview was conducted (e.g., Bradburn and Sudman, 1980; Katosh and Traugott, 1981; Parry and Crossley, 1950; Weiss, 1968–69). Second, in the 1964, 1976, and 1980 SRC election studies there is no relation between whether the respondents gave consistent responses and whether the same interviewer administered both the pre- and post-election surveys (see Silver, Anderson, and Abramson, 1985).

Table 2 shows that in all three elections, the tendency to overreport voting is positively and significantly related to the

Table 2. Validated Nonvoters Who Said They Voted, by Measures of Respondents' Political Attitudes, 1964, 1976 and 1980

	1964			1976			1980		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
	(in percentages)			(in percentages)			(in percentages)		
External Efficacy	24.3	24.7	36.6	24.9	31.4	43.0	19.0	26.4	41.7
	(107)	(150)	(82)	(408)	(234)	(253)	(205)	(148)	(132)
Tau_c		.091*			.158**			.193**	
Partisan Strength	11.8	28.0	34.3	21.2	30.8	49.8	11.9	26.2	50.5
	(51)	(182)	(102)	(194)	(557)	(146)	(109)	(294)	(91)
Tau_c		.137**			.169**			.245**	
Citizen Duty[a]	—	—	—	14.2	29.9	48.4	15.6	24.1	39.1
				(247)	(349)	(299)	(109)	(191)	(179)
Tau_c					.290**			.200*	
Concern for Outcome	18.6		33.5	23.8		41.0	22.4		34.9
	(140)		(182)	(454)		(419)	(241)		(218)
Kendall's tau_b		.158**			.170**			.132**	
Interest in Campaign	18.2	30.2	35.2	15.6	31.4	48.1	11.1	32.9	51.8
	(121)	(126)	(91)	(266)	(392)	(249)	(190)	(207)	(83)
Tau_c		.150**			.264**			.317**	

Note: Cell entries are the percentages of validated nonvoters who falsely reported after the election that they had voted. Figures in parentheses are base *N*s for the percentages immediately above. The wording of the items and definitions of the categories used for each measure are given in Silver, Anderson, Abramson (1985).

[a]The citizen duty items were not included in the 1964 SRC National Election Study.

*Statistically significant at or below $p = .05$.
**Statistically significant at or below $p = .01$.

respondent's sense of political efficacy, strength of partisan attachment, concern with the electoral outcome, and interest in the campaign; it is also positively and significantly related to the respondent's sense of citizen duty in both years (1976 and 1980) in which this attitude can be measured. The relation between overreporting and these political attitudes is not as strong as the relation between overreporting and the respondent's expectation of voting, but the evidence refutes the argument that overreporting of voting is unrelated to the respondent's support for civic norms. Further evidence that respondents who are strongly motivated to vote are even more strongly motivated to *say* they voted is that the relation between the attitude measures and the respondent's self-reported vote is stronger than the relation between these attitudes and the respondent's actual vote.[6]

Table 3 tests whether the relation between these political attitudes and vote overreporting is completely filtered through the "expectation of voting" variable. Panel A shows the relations between vote overreporting and the measures of political attitudes among respondents who stated in the pre-election survey that they expected to vote in the November election. Panel B shows the relations among respondents who stated that they did not expect to vote.

Vote expectation is a powerful filter for the effects of general political attitudes on vote overreporting. The relations in Panel B are all very weak, and only two of the 14 tau_c coefficients are statistically significant at the .05 level. Equally striking are

Table 3. Validated Nonvoters Who Said They Voted, by Measures of Respondents' Motivation to Vote and Whether Respondents Said They Expected to Vote, 1964, 1976, and 1980

Voting Expectations and Attitude Measures	1964 Low	1964 Medium	1964 High	1976 Low	1976 Medium	1976 High	1980 Low	1980 Medium	1980 High
	(in percentages)			(in percentages)			(in percentages)		
A. *Nonvoters Who Said That They Expected to Vote*									
External Efficacy	43.5	47.4	56.9	49.7	57.8	65.3	41.6	48.6	65.0
	(46)	(78)	(51)	(165)	(116)	(185)	(89)	(72)	(80)
Tau_c		.109			.146**			.211**	
Partisan Strength	33.3	51.7	49.3	52.9	54.4	68.0	30.6	50.0	66.7
	(15)	(87)	(71)	(70)	(298)	(102)	(36)	(148)	(63)
Tau_c		.035			.100*			.224**	
Citizen Duty	—	—	—	39.6	52.8	66.6	40.0	47.3	58.3
				(75)	(188)	(208)	(40)	(93)	(115)
Tau_c					.206**			.148*	
Concern for Outcome	42.6		51.8	54.2		59.8	51.5		51.4
	(54)		(112)	(183)		(274)	(97)		(144)
Kendall's tau_b		.072			.061**			−.002	
Interest in Campaign	46.3	47.3	53.4	42.3	57.5	63.9	29.0	51.6	72.9
	(41)	(74)	(58)	(91)	(204)	(175)	(62)	(126)	(59)
Tau_c		.062			.155**			.324**	
B. *Nonvoters Who Said That They Did Not Expect to Vote*									
External Efficacy	7.8	0.0	3.4	3.5	3.9	1.3	1.1	1.7	2.3
	(51)	(63)	(29)	(200)	(103)	(78)	(94)	(58)	(44)
Tau_c		−.050			−.013			.010	
Partisan Strength	0.0	6.0	0.0	0.9	3.7	6.4	1.6	0.8	5.9
	(32)	(83)	(26)	(110)	(232)	(39)	(62)	(119)	(17)
Tau_c		.006			.033*			.009	
Citizen Duty	—	—	—	2.6	2.1	6.0	0.0	1.2	3.6
				(155)	(141)	(84)	(55)	(85)	(55)
Tau_c					.022			.029	
Concern for Outcome	2.7		3.2	3.4		3.1	1.6		1.7
	(74)		(63)	(239)		(131)	(127)		(59)
Kendall's tau_b		.013			−.012			.001	
Interest in Campaign	2.9	4.4	3.4	1.0	3.4	7.6	0.9	3.1	0.0
	(70)	(45)	(29)	(155)	(174)	(60)	(114)	(64)	(19)
Tau_c		.009			.045**			.011	

Note: Figures in parentheses are base *N*s for the percentages immediately above.

*Statistically significant at or below $p = .05$.
**Statistically significant at or below $p = .01$.

the extraordinarily low levels of vote overreporting among those who did not expect to vote. In contrast, in Panel A, not only are the levels of vote overreporting much higher than those in Panel B, but most of the political attitude measures have moderate and statistically significant relations with vote overreporting. Prior attitudes appear to be partially filtered through the vote expectation measure: 11

of the 14 tau coefficients in Panel A are weaker than the bivariate relations between attitudes and overreporting (Table 2). Analogous results obtain when we examine the relation between vote overreporting and education while controlling for vote expectation.

Race, Sex, Age and Vote Overreporting

Given the conclusions of previous research, it is important to examine whether our measure of vote overreporting shows large differences in race. Although a higher proportion of black nonvoters than white reported that they voted, only in 1976 is the racial difference in overreporting statistically significant. Even for 1976, these differences should not be overinterpreted. Differences in overreporting related to race may be partly an artifact of error in the vote validation process (Abramson and Claggett, 1984), of differences in the quality of interviewing, or of sampling error or differential response rates of blacks and whites.[7] Earlier conclusions that blacks are much more inclined than whites to report falsely that they voted (see especially Hill and Hurley, 1984; Sigelman, 1982) are not supported when the appropriate population at risk is analyzed.

In 1964, men were more likely to overreport voting than women, but this difference was eliminated by 1980, probably because of the virtual elimination of sex differences in reported voter turnout. The pattern of vote overreporting by age follows the trajectory of actual voting by age. The youngest and oldest nonvoters are the least likely to overreport voting.

Multivariate Logit Regression

We use logit regression analysis to summarize the effects of education and support for civic norms on the probability that nonvoters will falsely claim that they voted, and to determine whether these effects remain after the respondent's age, sex, and race are taken into account. To define the dependent variable (false reporting), actual nonvoters who say they voted are coded 1, and those who say they did not vote are coded 0. The analysis estimates the probability that an actual nonvoter will claim to have voted.

Interpreting the effect of differences in individual logit regression coefficients is not straightforward. However, as in ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression, larger logit regression coefficients imply larger effects on the dependent variable than smaller logit regression coefficients. Also, the test of significance of individual logit regression coefficients is analogous to that used in OLS regression (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984, pp. 54–55).

The test for the goodness of fit of the model as a whole is a test of the significance of the difference between the chi-square for the specified model and the chi-square for the model that includes only the grand mean. Since there is no direct analogue to the R^2 statistic of OLS regression, we report a pseudo-R^2 approximation proposed by Aldrich and Nelson (1984, p. 57).

Model Specification

For each National Election Study, we first specify a "base model" in which the dependent variable, false reporting (*FR*), is a function of whether the respondent declared that he or she *expected* to vote (*EXPECT*, coded 1 or 0) and of the respondent's *education*, expressed by the following dummy variables: "Completed High School" (*HSED*), "Some College" (*SCED*), and "Completed College" (*CCED*).[8] Since education only affects the propensity to overreport voting among respondents who declared before the election that they expected to vote, we specify the joint effects of education and expectation as interaction terms. The base model is:

$$\text{logit}(FR) = b_0 + b_1 EXPECT$$

$$+ b_2(EXPECT \times HSED) + b_3(EXPECT \times SCED) + b_4(EXPECT \times CCED) + e. \quad (1)$$

All variables in the base model are included in each regression equation. As with education, all other independent variables are expressed as interactions with vote expectation. Recall that we interpret the expectation variable as an indicator of the saliency of voting to the respondent.

The results of the logit regression are shown in Table 4. Three models are specified for each election year. In each year, the base model as a whole is statistically significant at $p < .001$. In each year also, the main effect of the *EXPECT* variable is significant, as is the interaction between *EXPECT* and at least one of the education categories.

The second model for each year adds to the base model terms reflecting race, sex, and age, labelled collectively as "covariates." Based on preliminary analysis, the effect of age is expressed as an interaction term between *EXPECT* and a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent was between age 18 and age 30, and the value of 0 if the respondent was older. The 18–30 year-olds stand out because of their low propensity to overreport voting, despite their high level of education.

Three measures of political attitudes are included in the third equation for each year: (1) high political interest (*EXPECT* × *HIGH INTEREST*), (2) high external political efficacy (*EXPECT* × *HIGH EFFICACY*), (3) high citizen duty (*EXPECT* × *HIGH DUTY*). When all of the political attitude variables examined in the crosstabulations are entered simultaneously in the regression equation, none of them is statistically significant in the logit regression. This is because of multicollinearity, and because there is a large penalty in degrees of freedom from including nonsignificant variables in logit regression. Although some alternative combinations of variables might have worked nearly as well, the three variables that were included were the ones that showed the strongest effects of the political attitude variables in combination with the base model and covariates.

Discussion

In 1964, neither the three covariates nor the additional political attitude variables improves the goodness of fit of the model. In 1976 and in 1980, however, both the covariates and the political attitude variables add significantly to the goodness of fit. Judging from the pseudo-R^2, the base model variables and the base model plus covariates do better in accounting for overreporting in 1976 and 1980 than in 1964. Even more importantly, additional motivating factors come into play in later elections. Although the best individual predictor differs between 1976 and 1980, in each succeeding election the effects of the political attitude variables become stronger. This is consistent with the increasing importance of political efficacy and strength of partisanship in accounting for voter turnout in recent presidential elections (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982).

Conclusion

We have shown that the tendency to overreport voting is related to respondent characteristics. Thus, measures of the relation between respondent characteristics and self-reported voting will overestimate the strength of the relation between the dependent and independent variables.[9] Therefore, Sigelman's (1982) and Katosh and Traugott's (1981) conclusions about the comparability of analyses of the social and political correlates of voting using the validated and self-reported voting data are not sound for all types of analyses. Wolfinger and Rosen-

Table 4. Logit Regression for Base Model, Base Model with Covariates, and Model with Political Attitude Variables, 1964, 1976, and 1980

Variables	1964			1976			1980		
	Base Model[a]	Base Plus Covariates	Base Plus Covariates and Political Motiv.	Base Model	Base Plus Covariates	Base Plus Covariates and Political Motiv.	Base Model	Base Plus Covariates	Base Plus Covariates and Political Motiv.
Constant	-3.273* (7.30)	-3.273* (7.30)	-3.273* (7.30)	-3.403* (11.60)	-3.401* (11.88)	-3.401* (11.88)	-4.179* (7.31)	-4.179* (7.31)	-4.179* (7.31)
Base Model Variables									
Expected to Vote	2.810* (5.16)	2.689* (4.50)	2.695* (4.23)	3.494* (9.82)	3.125* (8.03)	2.380* (5.37)	3.594* (5.51)	4.015* (5.72)	3.158* (4.06)
Expected to Vote × Completed College	1.715* (2.00)	1.838* (2.10)	1.845 (1.93)	.678 (1.54)	.962* (1.98)	.414 (.77)	2.541* (2.28)	3.649* (2.93)	2.857* (2.09)
Expected to Vote × Some College Education	.057 (.09)	.188 (.30)	.192 (.28)	.508 (1.31)	.975* (2.26)	.547 (1.19)	1.231* (2.38)	2.271* (3.31)	1.977* (2.65)
Expected to Vote × High School Education	.955 (1.94)	.996 (1.96)	.997 (1.90)	.114 (.38)	.541 (1.59)	.390 (1.09)	.652 (1.42)	1.075* (2.04)	1.034 (1.82)
Covariates									
Expected to Vote × Black	—	1.038 (1.67)	1.044 (1.61)	—	.995* (2.56)	.974* (2.38)	—	-.351 (.64)	-.462 (.73)
Expected to Vote × Male	—	-.125 (.29)	-.126 (.29)	—	.495 (1.77)	.506 (1.72)	—	-.195 (.45)	-.558 (1.14)
Expected to Vote × Age 18–30	—	-.106 (.21)	-.107 (.20)	—	-.721* (2.39)	-.556 (1.76)	—	-2.034* (3.57)	-1.958* (3.16)
Political Attitude Variables									
Expected to Vote × High Interest in Politics	—	—	-.016 (.03)	—	—	.547 (1.84)	—	—	1.393* (2.87)
Expected to Vote × High External Political Efficacy	—	—	.003 (.01)	—	—	.434 (1.34)	—	—	1.126* (1.98)
Expected to Vote × High Citizen Duty[b]	—	—	—	—	—	.942* (3.25)	—	—	.414 (.87)

Table 4 (continued)

Variables	1964			1976			1980		
	Base Model[a]	Base Plus Covariates	Base Plus Covariates and Political Motiv.	Base Model	Base Plus Covariates	Base Plus Covariates and Political Motiv.	Base Model	Base Plus Covariates	Base Plus Covariates and Political Motiv.
Statistical Significance of Specified Models									
Comparison with Constant (grand mean)									
Chi-square	80.6	83.7	83.7	252.4	267.6	285.0	131.0	148.2	165.2
d.f.	4	7	9	4	7	10	4	7	10
p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Comparison with Base Model									
Chi-square	—	3.1	3.1	—	15.2	32.6	—	17.2	34.2
d.f.	—	3	5	—	3	6	—	3	6
p-value	—	.39	.69	—	< .001	< .001	—	< .001	< .001
Comparison with Base Model Plus Covariates									
Chi-square	—	—	0	—	—	17.4	—	—	17.0
d.f.	—	—	2	—	—	3	—	—	3
p-value	—	—	1.00	—	—	< .001	—	—	< .001
Total N[c]	234	234	234	470	470	470	313	313	313
Residual N	229	226	224	465	462	459	308	305	302
Aldrich-Nelson[d] Pseudo-R^2	.256	.263	.263	.349	.363	.377	.295	.321	.345

[a]The *t*-ratios are given in parentheses. The tests are based on a two-tailed test of the *t*-ratio (ratio between the regression coefficient and its standard error).

[b]The citizen duty items were not included in the 1964 National Election Study of the University of Michigan Survey Research Center.

[c]Like the crosstabular analysis, the LOGIT regression analysis for 1976 is based on weighted data. For the sake of comparability, the logit regression is performed only on cases for which there are no missing data on any of the variables in the three equations shown for the given year.

[d]The pseudo-R^2 statistic used here is defined by Aldrich and Nelson (1984, p. 57).

*Significant at the .05 level.

stone's (1980, p. 118) declaration that "misreporting is not strongly related to demographic characteristics, although it is a bit more common among the very young and the very poor" is incorrect.

Our results have theoretical implications for the study of American political attitudes. By measuring overreporting of voting as individual rather than aggregate political behavior, the pattern of overreporting is shown to be consistent with our understanding of the individual motivational bases of political participation. This approach also gives a more accurate picture of the social bases of support for regime norms.

There is an analogy between our results and studies of such values as support for civil liberties and tolerance of minorities, nonconformists, and political extremists. Several scholars have pointed out that since respondents who are more highly educated are more likely to be aware of the "correct" or socially approved responses, their responses may stem from the desire to provide socially approved answers. Jackman and Muha (1984) argue, however, that higher-status respondents are not giving superficial answers that do not reflect a behavioral commitment; instead, higher-status respondents give answers to questions dealing with social issues that are consistent with their class interests and that express their satisfaction with the status quo. Both interpretations fit our results, which show that more highly-educated respondents are more likely than less-educated respondents to try to appear to be in conformity with the regime norm of voting, even when their actual behavior is inconsistent with this norm.

Notes

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1. We recode the vote validation data in the SRC studies following the procedures reported in Abramson and Claggett (1984). We do not include the 1978 SRC post-election survey, since it provides no measure of vote expectation.

2. The Kendall's tau_b coefficients between whether or not respondents said they voted and whether or not they actually voted is .784 in the 1964 SRC election study, .725 in the 1976 study, and .778 in the 1980 study.

3. Abramson and Claggett (1984) refer to racial differences in the percentage of nonvoters who acknowledged they did not vote, but this is not the main dependent variable in their analysis.

4. For further discussion of the importance of defining the population at risk of misreporting voting, see Anderson and Silver (1986) and Silver, Anderson, and Abramson (1985).

5. The recoding and construction of these measures from the SRC survey results follow standard procedures in previous research, and are described in detail elsewhere (Silver, Anderson, and Abramson, 1985).

6. We compared all pairs of tau coefficients between the two measures of whether the respondent voted and each of the political attitude measures. In 13 of the 14 paired comparisons the coefficient between the attitude and self-reported vote is larger than the coefficient between the attitude and the validated vote.

7. This argument is consistent with Weiss's (1968–69) study of welfare mothers, which showed that those who were more involved in the community were more likely to overreport voting. There is also evidence that response rates in SRC surveys have declined in recent years, particularly in large cities (Steeh, 1981). For further discussion of differences regarding race, see Silver, Anderson, and Abramson (1985).

8. "Some High School or Less" is the omitted category.

9. This point was made by Weiss (1968–69, pp. 627–28), but seems to have been overlooked by later researchers.

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