

Author(s): Sanchez, Maria and Giovanna Morchio

Title: Probing Don't Know Answers -- Do We Always Want to Do This?

Technical Report Number: nes010134

Date: undated

Dataset(s): 1984 National Elections Study

Abstract

This technical report outlines some of the dangers posed by the practice of having interviewers probe "don't know" responses. Using data from the 1984 National Election Study, Sanchez and Morchio find that responses of questionable validity are elicited from survey respondents when interviewers probe "don't know" responses systematically. The authors, therefore, conclude that interviewer training practices with regard to probing have a clear and direct bearing on the nature of estimates obtained from surveys. They suggest that the interviewing protocols be altered to account for the potential effect of question probing on the quality of Election Study data.