

Memory Effects in Online Panel Surveys

Investigating Respondents' Ability to Recall Responses from a Previous Panel Wave

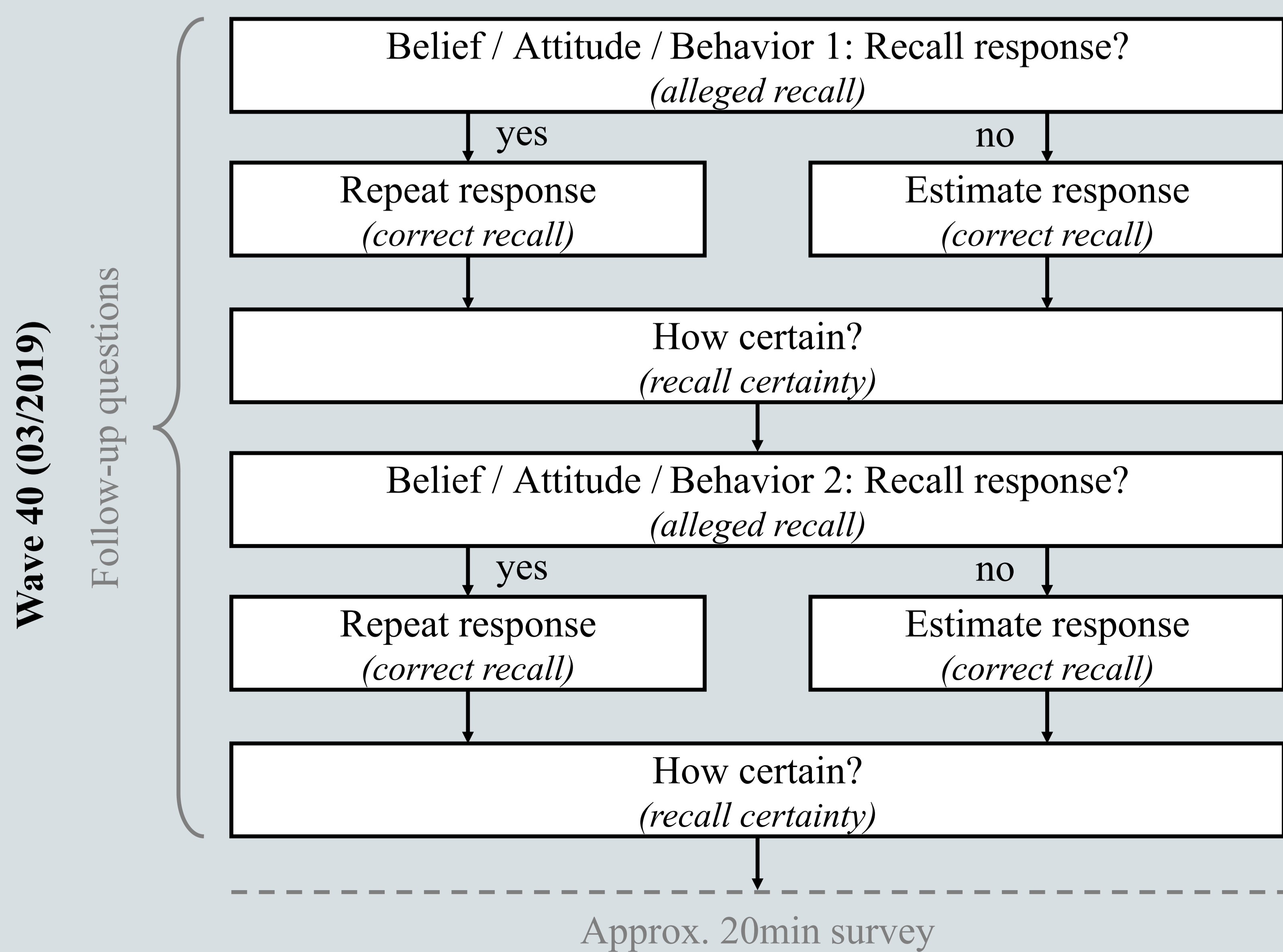
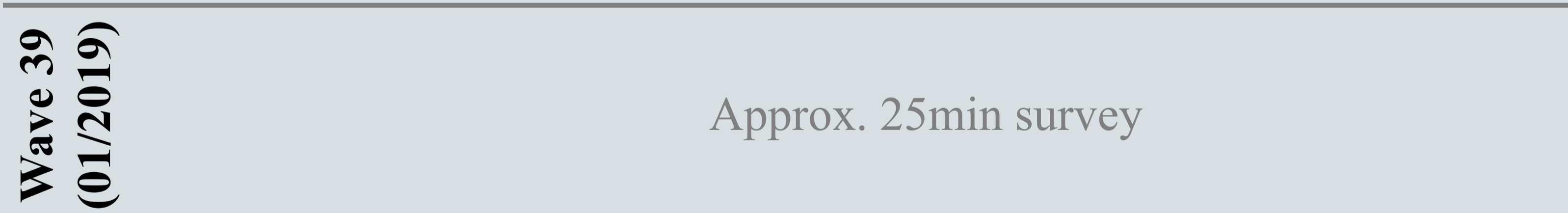
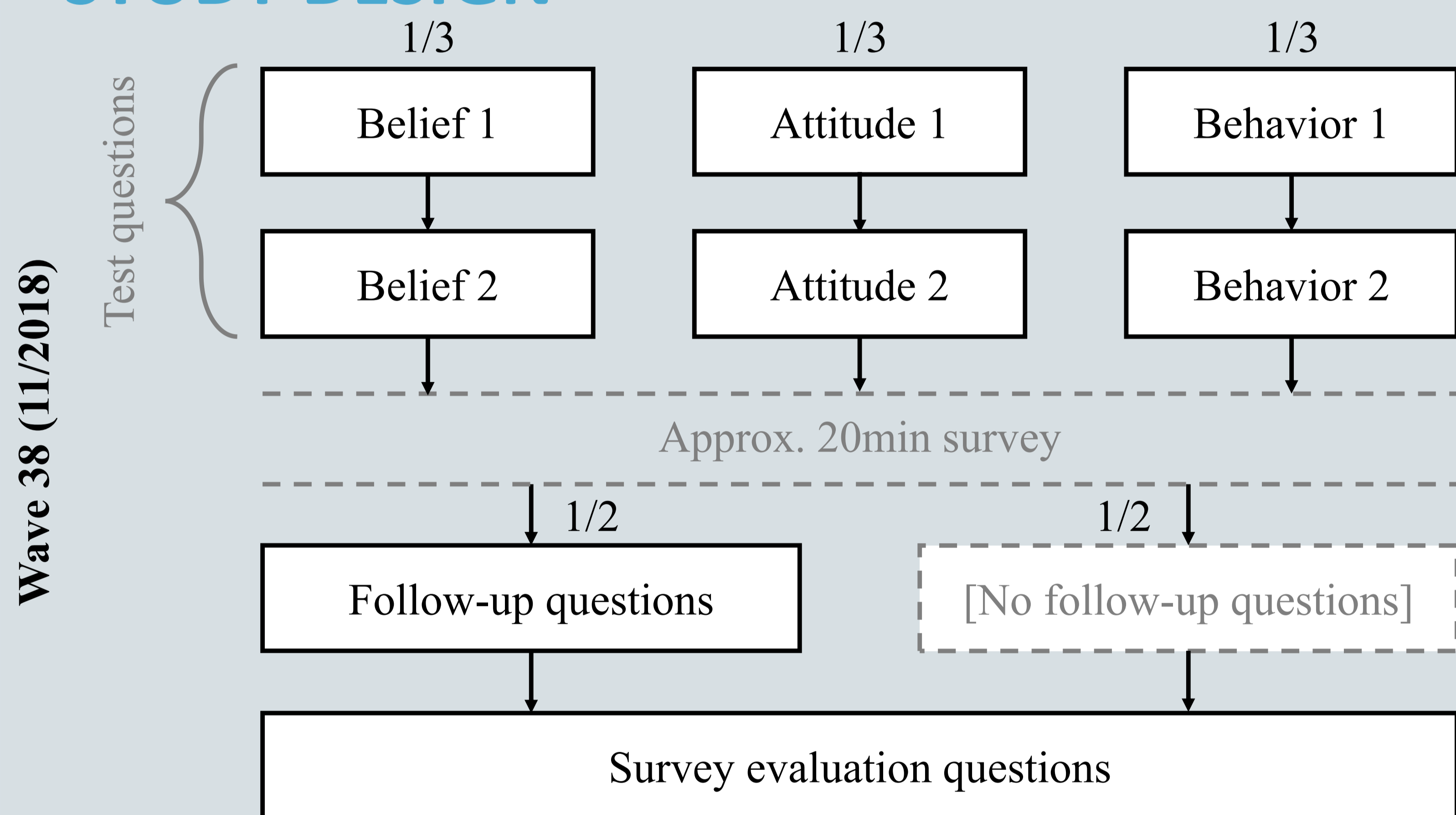
INTRODUCTION

- Repeated measurements of the same questions common in longitudinal surveys
- Assumption: Respondents undergo full cognitive response process independently each time
- Potential measurement error if respondents instead recall previous response
- Previous studies: Evaluate memory mostly within one survey (MTMM, Pretest-posttest), not longitudinal
- This study: How well can respondents recall responses after 4 months (2 panel waves)?
 - Differences across question types?
 - Differences across groups of respondents? (socio-demographics, panel experience, devices...)

DATA

- German Internet Panel (GIP): Probability online panel of German population
- Experiment in waves 38 & 40 (November 2018, March 2019)
- 2 test questions & follow-ups per respondent
- 3 question types: Beliefs, Attitudes, Behaviors
- Alleged recall (self-report: recall yes/no?)
- Correct recall (repeat previous response: correct/incorrect?)
- Recall certainty
- N = 7,535 obs. of 3,772 respondents

STUDY DESIGN



RESULTS

- Correct recall: 34.3% if alleged recall, 26.8% if not
- Alleged + correct recall in 10.6% of cases
- Multiple logistic regression:
 - Responses to attitude & behavior questions more likely correctly recalled than beliefs
 - Extreme responses (scale endpoint) more likely correctly recalled
 - No difference in correct recall for:
 - Socio-demographics (gender, age, education)
 - Response burden, survey enjoyment
 - Panel experience
 - Devices / device switches
 - Time between panel waves
 - In-between panel wave participation

CONCLUSION

- Evidence of recalling previous responses even after 4 months (2 panel waves)
- Variation across question types, stronger for extreme responses
- No evidence for systematic variation across sociodemographic groups, panel experience, devices

CONTACT

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