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Abstract

Aldrich, Niemi, Rabinowitz, and Rohde propose a number of modifications to ongoing survey efforts based on the results of the 1979 Pilot Study. The authors find that almost one-half of respondents will place themselves on a range of points when responding to seven-point scale questions if given the opportunity to do so. The authors speculate that permitting "range" answers will allow for the study of ambiguity in the public's positions over the course of the 1980 campaign. Aldrich et. al. also suggest using a series of specific "branching" questions to divide respondents into categories. They find that this method is superior to the traditional seven point scale method in a number of ways. For example, the predictability of a surrogate vote based on issue positions is higher for the branching format. The authors also find that the salience measures in the 1979 Pilot Study are effective and remain stable across interviewing waves. Finally, the authors' analysis of the 1979 Pilot Study reveals that certain experimental measures did not perform as expected. For example, the proposed change to the seven point format which fixed the middle point as "support for the status quo" shifted the response distribution toward greater support for government intervention, but did not yield greater predictability or higher relationships with background variables.