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Title: Personal Impact, Government Performance, and Policy Attitudes: A Preliminary Analysis of the 1979 CPS Pilot Study

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Abstract

Sears and Lau assess the 1979 Pilot Study policy preference and personal impact questions relating to taxation, inflation, unemployment, and national health insurance. Sears and Lau also compare the seven point question method to the branching format and find that in some areas -- such as questions relating to inflation -- the seven point method performs better, while in other areas -- such as taxation -- the branching method is superior. Finally, the authors test whether survey question order affects the relative importance voters give to perceptions of the personal impact of government policies, when they form their political preferences. Sears and Lau find that increasing the salience of the personal impact of policy issues has little effect on the formation of policy preferences. Question order, however, can make a difference under certain circumstances. For example, the effect of personal financial situation on evaluations of Carter is much greater when a more subtle sequence of questions concerning economic well being is used.