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Title: Evaluation of New Equality Items

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Abstract

This paper describes the 1987 Pilot Study items designed to improve upon the measure of equality that appeared in the 1984 and 1986 National Election Studies. Feldman first evaluates the equality questions from the 1986 National Election Study and the questions contained in the Pilot Study. He relates these items to various criterion variables (feeling thermometers and policy/spending questions) and calculates inter-item correlations, in order to rank item performance. Based on these results, Feldman constructs three equality scales, one using the questions from the 1986 Election Study and two which replace suspect items with Pilot Study equality variables. Feldman evaluates these scales against the criterion variables used in the initial analysis and finds that the differences in results for the three scale variants are minimal. Feldman, however, argues that the scale which contains both experimental items is a somewhat improved measure. All the questions comprising that scale have good distributions and consistent item characteristics. Feldman concludes by cautioning that the new scale is primarily a measure of equality of outcomes and may, therefore, represent a substantial change from the existing scale, which measures equality of opportunity.