

Author(s): Knight, Kathleen

Title: Measurement of Liberal/Conservative Identification

Date: September 23, 1987

Dataset(s): 1987 Pilot Study

Abstract

This paper evaluates the performance of the four measures in the 1987 Pilot Study which tap general liberal/conservative orientations: the liberal/conservative feeling thermometer difference score, the seven-point liberal/conservative scale, the liberal/conservative branching scale, and an experimental filtered version of the branching scale. Knight finds that the first three measures are highly -- and roughly equally -- reliable single indicators of the underlying attitude of interest. Nonetheless, Knight argues that all three items should be retained in ongoing survey efforts, because each item has particular methodological and research advantages. Knight also describes the performance of the fourth experimental measure, the filtered version of the branching scale. She finds that the filtered question -- which allows respondents to opt out of ideological self-identification -- is more reliable than the traditional branching-method question or any existing measure of ideology.