

Author(s): Krosnick, Jon and Matt Berent

Title: 1989 Pilot Study Results regarding Policy Attitude Measurement

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Dataset(s): 1989 Pilot Study

Abstract

Krosnick and Berent assess experimental 1989 Pilot Study measures designed to improve the reliability of survey attitude items measuring party identification and policy attitudes. Using data from the 1989 Pilot Study and three additional studies which explore the same issues using slightly different methodology, they find that attitude measures employing a branching format yield dramatically more reliable attitude reports than questions offering seven-point scales with labeled points. In addition, fully-labeled branching questions yield more reliable results than partially labeled questions in some experiments. Krosnick and Berent argue that these reliability differences are at least partially responsible for the conclusion that party identification is considerably more stable and psychologically consequential than policy attitudes. Party identification, they note, is measured using a branching format, while policy attitudes are measured on seven-point scale. The authors, however, concede that controlling for question format within the context of the Pilot Study data does not completely eliminate the difference in reliability between measures of policy attitudes and measures of party identification. The authors conclude by recommending that the seven-point scales be replaced by branching questions in all future survey efforts. Krosnick and Berent also attach an addendum to their report, in which they find that: (1) Alternate measures of reliability do not change the author's conclusions relating to the branching question format and (2) the branching/fully-labeled items show stronger associations with political attitudes than do other question types.