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Title: The Perot Constituency: A report to the Board of Overseers of the National Election Study

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Abstract

Dennis uses data from the 1992 NES and the 1993 Pilot Study to discern the character of the Perot constituency. Specifically, Dennis examines five clusters of explanatory variables which could explain Perot's appeal as a political outsider -- political alienation, ideology and values, political engagement, policy issue positions, and socio-demographic variables -- against various measures of support or affect towards Perot. Dennis finds that the populist posture of Perot evokes an anti-establishment sentiment that is discernable from the various aspects of ideology. This distinction between alienation and ideology holds whether ideology is measured in terms of partisan ideology, pro or anti-ethnicism, or pro- or anti- traditional values. Dennis finds that different general and specific measures of both partisan and political alienation figure strongly into determining levels of support for Perot. Turning to political ideology, Dennis finds that certain latent ideological/value themes have relevance to Perotism. The strongest effects are those concerned with party ideology, but there are some significant relationships with other "cultural war" and "ethnicism" themes. For example, Perot supporters are somewhat hostile to recent immigrants, such as Hispanics and Asians. Surprisingly, Dennis finds that attitudes concerning the federal deficit -- as measured in the Pilot Study -- do not play a significant role in determining support for Perot. Finally, Dennis finds that younger, white, less educated males are most likely to support Perot. These conclusions are supported by a full multivariate analysis, using all groups of explanatory variables simultaneously. Dennis concludes that the current NES battery contains many explanatory variables that have promise in accounting for the Perot phenomenon.