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Title: Evaluation of the New Religious Items on the ANES 1997 Pilot Study: A Report to the ANES Board

Date: February 1, 1998

Dataset: NES 1997 Pilot Study

Abstract:

The current NES interview schedule does not provide measures on mediating factors by which respondents connect or separate their religious commitment and their political attitudes and behavior. The closest approximation, a measure of general religious salience (V960571-2), asks respondents about the importance of religion in their lives and, for those who indicate some significance, inquires further about the degree of daily guidance they derive from religion. While helpful in separating respondents by levels of religious commitment, these items do not gauge directly whether citizens perceive the political relevance of religion. Three new religious batteries, conceived as translation mechanisms that convert and intensify the impact of religion on a range of political dependent variables, were piloted in 1997. This report describes the items in the new question sets, reports on their distribution and measurement properties, and considers what each contributes to understanding of religious impact on political behavior. The value of the new items are assessed in terms of (a) ability to discriminate among respondents across diverse religious traditions and (b) predictive power above and beyond the existing set of religious items in the NES core. Given the findings, the church-state battery (V970327-V970329) warrants inclusion while the political salience of religion battery (V970325-V970326) and the congregational priority battery (V970330-V970331) are not recommended.