



**An ANES Special Competition:
Gauging the Public's Attitudes on Terrorism and
Homeland Security
November 21, 2007**

Today, the American National Election Studies will begin accepting proposals for questions about terrorism, natural disasters, risk perception, and preparedness, to be asked in our upcoming surveys. These questions can be included in the 2008 ANES Time Series Study (a national face-to-face survey that has been conducted before and after presidential elections since 1948) *and/or* the 2008-2009 ANES Panel Study (a new study to be conducted via the Internet). These questions will be paid for by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The funds will pay for 17 additional minutes of questions on the post-election wave of the 2008 ANES Time Series Study, 15 additional minutes of questions on the June 2008 wave of the 2008-2009 ANES Panel Study and 15 additional minutes of questions on the May 2009 wave of the 2008-2009 ANES Panel Study.

Topics that can be addressed include:

- 1) What do Americans think about terrorism and of terrorists? Do some Americans sympathize with some such efforts and, if so, why?
- 2) What do Americans think that the U.S. should do to deal with terrorist threats and natural disasters? Which policy approaches appeal most and least to Americans?
- 3) How do Americans evaluate the level of effort devoted to counterterrorism and natural disasters to date? How do Americans evaluate the performance of governments in managing these issues?
- 4) How often does the general public think about anti-American activities? What do they think of them? To what extent does the location of the source (foreign/domestic) affect their perceptions?
- 5) What security- and disaster-related threats do Americans worry most about? How do these threats rank amongst other all other threats?
- 6) How do issues of terrorism or related to natural disasters influence how Americans vote and otherwise interact with their government?
- 7) To what extent do Americans perceive themselves as being at risk of becoming victims of terrorism or natural disasters? How do such perceptions affect their trust in government institutions and in each other?

8) How well do Americans understand current and past government counterterrorism efforts?

Persons who wish to add questions on these topics to ANES surveys should submit proposals to the ANES Online Commons. Our goal is to get proposals from many scholars. The first proposal listed on this segment of the Online Commons is by Clark McCauley, who played a central role in our discussions with DHS. Professor McCauley's proposal describes questions that are of special interest to DHS. We hope you will take this opportunity to review his proposal, post your own proposals, and offer comments on proposals that others have written.

The ANES Online Commons will begin accepting proposals on this topic on November 21, 2007 and will continue to do so until 3:00pm Eastern Time (noon Pacific Time) on January 15, 2008. The Online Commons will remain open for two additional weeks thereafter to allow commentary and revision of the proposals. This opportunity is open to anyone who wants to make a constructive contribution to the development of ANES surveys.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals may be made for questions to appear on the 2008 ANES Time Series Study, the June 2008 wave of the ANES Panel Study, the May 2009 wave of the ANES Panel Study or any combination of the three. Proposals must explicitly state the study or studies on which questions are requested to appear and provide a rationale for why inclusion on multiple waves or studies is necessary to facilitate the social and scientific goals of this competition.

The proposals for this special competition will be evaluated by criteria previously established for the 2008 ANES Time Series Study and 2009-09 ANES Panel Study. The criteria are as follows.

1. *Demonstrated Validity and Effectiveness of Questions.* Questions may be taken from the inventory of questions that have been asked in prior ANES surveys (for lists of these questions, see "<http://www.electionstudies.org/resources/questions/questions.htm>"). Questions may also be those that have been asked in other empirical studies and have been shown to yield valid and reliable measurements of the constructs of interest. Rigorous demonstrations that are directly applicable to the electoral context will have an advantage. For questions new to the ANES, it is critical that the proposer provide evidence of effective item functioning. Due to the broad demand for questions and high expectations for questionnaire quality, untested questions cannot be considered in this competition.
2. *Building on a Solid Empirical Foundation.* Have the ideas advocated in the proposal been empirically tested and supported by past research? For many proposals, demonstrating the effect of the variables in previous election-oriented research will provide valuable evidence in this regard. For other proposals, it can be helpful to see that focal concepts have also been evaluated in a laboratory setting, in addition to past performance on sample surveys.
3. *Building on Solid Theoretical Footing.* Do the ideas in this proposal follow from strong, convincing theory about how people are likely to think and/or act? Given ANES's mandate to serve a broad user community, it is important that users be able to understand, and explain to

others, the theoretical rationale for including particular concepts and questions on the ANES survey. Concepts should be defended as part of a set of cause-and-effect relationships that ultimately have the potential (alone or with other factors) to have a significant impact on DHS topical priorities and the ANES priorities of explaining vote choice and turnout. Regarding the questions that represent the concepts, it is important to think about the quality of the data that questions will provide. Quality, in turn, is a function of wording. If we ask a question that a nationally representative set of respondents understand in the same way, then the data has greater value in analyses that depend on comparing responses. Many questions, however, either confuse respondents or are asked in ways that should undermine an analysts confidence in the comparability of responses. Much of the feedback that we offer to OC proposers is in the spirit of working with them to arrive at more effective theoretical arguments about the relevance and role of particular concepts and questions.

4. *Breadth of Relevance and Generalizability.* Will the ideas being advocated be interesting, and/or provocative, and/or counter-intuitive to many scholars? Given the broad usage of the ANES Time Series, are unable to accommodate requests to include questions that are relevant for one – or only a few – hypothesis tests. Questions that can be used in a wide range of analyses will be advantaged.¹

5. *Suitability to the Special Competition* What kinds of statistical analyses would be required to make the most of the proposed questions, and can these analyses be conducted with the array of measures that will be available to analysts? This criterion is critically important as most ANES users draw inferences from the data using statistics. This criterion may lead us not to act on some very good ideas, if the ideas are likely to produce very unusable data (e.g., proposals featuring questions for which it is likely that only a few respondents will say "yes"). While such frequencies can be valuable to know, they can limit the usefulness of such variables to most ANES users.

6. *Bridge-Building.* Can the ideas proposed build intellectual bridges from one or more research traditions to others? There is no single approach to explaining turnout or vote choice. Where possible, however, we would like to challenge researchers within certain paradigms to explore the consequences of interacting with other scientific communities. In the past, we have received proposals that brought ideas from outside traditional ways of looking at elections into the context in exciting and potentially path-breaking ways. Subject to such proposals meeting the other stated criteria, wed like to see more of this.

7. *Controversy-Relevant.* Are the ideas proposed relevant to ongoing controversies among researchers, such that our including particular questions can advance the debate?

About the American National Election Studies

The mission of the American National Election Studies (ANES) is to inform explanations of election outcomes by providing data that support rich hypothesis testing, maximize methodological excellence, measure many variables, and promote comparisons across people, contexts, and time. The ANES serves this mission by providing researchers with a view of the political world through the eyes of ordinary citizens. Such data are critical, because these citizens' actions determine election outcomes.

¹ The ANES Bonus Minutes program offers limited opportunities for scholars who have more specifically tailored interests. Please see http://www.electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_BMCC_Announcement_20070813.pdf for details.

ANES datasets are used by thousands of researchers worldwide, including scholars, students, government officials, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and journalists. ANES datasets are available for download at no cost and without embargo from the ANES website (www.electionstudies.org).

About the 2008 ANES Time Series Study

We will conduct the presidential year study via face-to-face interviewing of a nationally representative sample of Americans and with a high response rate, as has been done in past studies. The spirit of this instruction is to maintain continuity in the data collection methodology, so as to maximize comparability of results. We expect to conduct about 1,800 hour-long pre-election interviews and 1,600 seventy-minute post-election reinterviews. As a result of a cooperative grant with Gary Segura and Matthew Barreto from the University of Washington, we expect to interview an oversample of about 350 Latino voters. Therefore, the total number of interviews should exceed 2100. Subsequent collaborations with entrepreneurial scholars under our recently announced *Complementary Cases* program may push the total number of interviews even higher (see [“http://www.electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_BMCC_Announcement_20070813.pdf”](http://www.electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_BMCC_Announcement_20070813.pdf))

As in the past, ANES will continue to emphasize best practices in sample design, respondent recruitment, and interviewing. As always, we aim to provide top-quality service in many respects, including: (1) the careful and extensive planning that must be done before the field work begins, (2) the hard work that will be done by interviewers, supervisors, and study managers during data collection to monitor productivity and make adjustments in strategy to maximize the quality of the final product, and (3) the extensive data processing efforts (including integration of an extensive contextual data file) that will be required to assemble and document the final data set.

The DHS portion of the 2008 ANES Time Series Study will appear on the post election wave, after all questions necessary to permit long-standing time series data are asked. This portion of the survey will be allocated 17 minutes of survey time. For more information about this study, please visit

“http://electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_2008OC_20070901.pdf.”

To find out about another way to propose questions for this survey visit

“http://electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_BMCC_Announcement_20070813.pdf.”

About the 2008-2009 Panel Study

The ANES 2008-2009 Panel Study will involve six ANES-based waves of interviewing with the same respondents, two additional half-waves devoted to content from this Special Competition, plus multiple secondary waves of data collection. In 2008, the ANES-based waves of data are scheduled to be collected in January, February, June, and September through November (though this schedule may change). Questions about terrorism will appear on the June 2008 and May 2009 waves. During the other months, questions put to our respondents will not be directly about politics. These secondary data

collections are intended to minimize panel attrition.

The final wave of interviewing in the summer of 2009 will equip analysts to investigate an interesting set of empirical questions that have yet to be explorable using ANES data. One question of interest here is how Americans make sense of an election outcome just after it happens, whether it is viewed differently by the supporters of the winning candidates and those of the losing candidates, and whether the outcome of an election influences Americans' confidence in the democratic process, their support for democratic institutions, their worries about the future, and many other consequential beliefs and attitudes.

Each wave of interviewing will involve a random spreading of respondents across its month. That is, respondents will be randomly assigned to a week in the month on which they will be invited to complete that month's questionnaire. This random assignment will be done independently for each month, so there will be no relation between when a person is interviewed within one wave and when he or she is interviewed within the following wave. As a result, many campaign events will occur between two consecutive interviews for some respondents and not between those same waves' interviews for other respondents. Thus, analysts will be able to include dates of interviews in their analyses to explore the impact of particular events on individuals.

The ANES-DHS portion of the 2008-2009 Panel study will appear on the June 2008 and May 2009 waves of that study. This portion of the Panel Study is scheduled to be allocated approximately 15 minutes of survey time on each of the two waves. For more information about the ANES Panel Study, visit <http://electionstudies.org/onlinecommons/paneldescription.htm>.

Please feel free to pass this invitation along to anyone (e.g., your students) who you think might be interested. For additional information about how to submit a proposal and the proposal evaluation process, please visit <http://www.electionstudies.org>. We hope to hear from you.

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National Science Foundation

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