



ANES Announces a New Opportunity: Place Questions on its 2007-2009 Panel Study. The Action Begins Today

October 23, 2006

As of October 23, 2006, the American National Election Studies is accepting proposals for questions to include in the 2007-2009 ANES Panel Study. Proposals may be submitted through the ANES *Online Commons*. This letter describes the new opportunity.

About the 2007-2009 Panel Study

Some people believe that political science understands pretty much everything there is to know about the causes of election outcomes. But a careful look at the accumulated evidence makes it clear that what we really know a lot about is what correlates with candidate preferences and vote choices and turnout. Correlations do not document causality. An interest in documenting causality has been growing in the minds of many investigators using the ANES.

Panel data are appealing for studying elections, because one of the major interests of election analysts is change over time in individuals. Whose candidate preferences crystallized before the campaign began? Which voters changed their minds in which directions throughout the primaries? Did the parties' national conventions pull any from one camp to the other – and, if so, who? Whose likelihood to turnout was enhanced by grass-roots mobilization efforts by interest groups or parties? Who was persuaded to change his or her position on a controversial issue as the result of an advertising blitz? These questions are all about change over time, and they are at the core of studying elections. To study such change requires panel data, to document which people's opinions or preferences changed and what caused that change.

The ANES 2007-2009 Panel Study will involve six ANES-based waves of interviewing with the same respondents, plus 15 additional secondary waves of data collection. The first ANES wave of data will be collected in September 2007, before the 2008 primaries begin. Subsequent ANES waves of data collection will be in June 2008 (before the parties' conventions), September 2008, and October 2008. Two post-election ANES waves will be conducted in November 2008 and in May 2009.

During the 15 secondary data collection months, questions put to our respondents will not be directly about politics. These secondary data collections are intended to minimize panel attrition, in two ways. First, each month will bring a new questionnaire to complete, so respondents will feel as if they are part of a continuing monitoring enterprise. Second, the content of the questions will vary considerably from month to month, which will minimize the likelihood that respondents uninterested in politics will choose to leave the panel for that reason. The secondary months' questionnaires will be especially enjoyable for respondents to complete and will collect supplementary data on

respondents to enrich our analyses of political behavior.

The final wave of interviewing in May 2009 will equip analysts to investigate an interesting set of empirical questions that have yet to be explorable using ANES data. The 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 interviews 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.

About the Respondents

Our panel respondents will be part of a *brand new* national probability sample. The sample will be recruited by random digit dialing over the telephone or via face-to-face interviewing (yet to be determined), and then they will answer all survey questions via the Internet. We are aiming for an initial sample size of approximately 1800 cases. In addition, mid-way through the panel's life, we will recruit a fresh cross-sectional sample of respondents using the same high quality recruiting procedure used to recruit the initial panel. We will administer a set of key measures to the new cross-section respondents at the same time that panel members are interviewed with the same measures, allowing a direct comparison. If we see differences, we can again use the benchmarks to offer analysts a tool for weighting the data during analysis.

About the Online Commons

Design of the questionnaires for the 2007-2009 ANES Panel Study will evolve from proposals and comments submitted to the Online Commons (OC). The OC is an on-line system designed to promote communication among scholars and to yield innovative proposals about the most effective ways to measure electorally-relevant concepts and relationships. It conforms to best practice principles in "open source" software development and is tailored to accommodate ANES needs. The goal of the OC is to improve the quality and scientific value of ANES data collections, to encourage the submission of new ideas, and to make such experiences more beneficial to and enjoyable for investigators. In the first use of the ANES Online Commons for the 2006 ANES Pilot Study, more than 300 scholars participated, and more than 1100 questions were proposed.

Proposals for Panel Study questions must include clear theoretical and empirical rationales for question inclusion. All proposals must also clearly state how the questions

will increase the value of the panel study. In particular, proposed questions must have the potential to help scholars understand the causes and/or consequences of turnout or candidate choice. These 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>). Or the questions may be ones not asked previously in ANES surveys but that have been asked in other sample surveys and have been shown to yield valid and reliable measurements of the constructs of interest. For questions new to the ANES, it is important that the proposer provide evidence of effective item functioning. For all questions, it is important that the proposer provide a theory-driven rationale for why the measures might help for understanding the causes and/or consequences of turnout or candidate choice.

The panel study will be more useful to social scientists if it includes a common set of questions in all of the 6 core waves. This would permit tracking change over time in factors such as candidate preferences, turnout likelihood, citizen engagement, and the principal causes and consequences of them (using some traditional measurement approaches to allow comparability across data collections). In addition, each ANES wave will include some measures assessing exposure to particular recent events to allow for gauging the impact of them. And since three of the ANES waves will be run at the same time as the 2008 time series survey, running some of its questions will permit interesting mode comparisons. In many respects, therefore, this project offers wonderful new opportunities for innovation in measurement and theory-building for the ANES.

The ANES Online Commons will begin accepting Panel Study proposals on October 23, 2006, and it will stop accepting new proposals on January 31, 2007. The Online Commons will remain open for one additional month thereafter to allow commentary and revision of the proposals. For additional information about how to submit a proposal and the proposal evaluation process, please visit: <http://www.electionstudies.org>

This opportunity is open to anyone who wants to make a constructive contribution to the development of ANES surveys. Feel free to pass this invitation along to anyone (e.g., your students) who you think might be interested. We hope to hear from you.

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