

To: ANES User Community

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Date: December 8, 2009

Re: Clarification of “apolitical” codes in the party identification summary variable on ANES datasets

Party identification has been a key variable of interest on ANES datasets for decades. As part of the ANES Time Series, party identification is regularly used as an indicator of changes in the electorate over time. As such, any changes in the measurement of party identification on ANES datasets should be of great interest to the user community and should be scrutinized carefully.

Our review of prior study documentation reveals that the operational measure of party ID has been computed using methods that have changed over time and that have involved questions other than the items explicitly asking about party identification. This memo describes the party identification measurement in detail so that users can be aware of the inconsistency and can make more informed decisions about how they prefer to code party identification in the future.

The inconsistency affects a very small proportion of respondents who are in the “apolitical” category. This is about 1 to 2 percent of respondents in most years. The remaining 98 to 99 percent of respondents are unaffected.

Inconsistent ANES practices, documentation, or both indicate that the coding method for the party ID summary variable has changed many times since the origin of the project. In 1956 and 1958, the “apolitical” code was assigned using criteria that are imprecisely documented. In 1960 and 1964, the documentation does not indicate how the codes were assigned at all. In 1968 and 1970, the documentation changed again, but remains ambiguous. In 1972 through 1986, a different coding regime was in place. In 1988, a multi-question index was adopted that changed with each biennial study through 1998. In 2000, 2002, and 2004, a consistent set of indicators was specified that follows the general approach established in 1988 but does not use the same question wording.

This memo details these changes and describes steps ANES will take to improve its practices and documentation.

### **How the Party ID Questions Have Been Worded**

From the inception of the ANES Time Series studies in 1952, party identification has been measured using a two-part branching question. The first part of that question has always been asked the same way since 1952 (except for the omission of the first comma in 1968):

“Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, independent, or what?”

The follow-up question for respondents who identified themselves as Republicans or Democrats has also been unchanged since 1952:

“Would you call yourself a strong [Republican/Democrat] or a not very strong [Republican/Democrat]?”

A different follow-up question was asked of respondents who identified themselves as independent or something else:<sup>1</sup>

“Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?”

### **How the Summary Variable Has Been Computed**

Since 1952, ANES has coded responses to this series of questions into one 7-point summary variable that ranges from strong Democrat to strong Republican, with independents in the middle. The numeric codes have ranged from 0 to 6. Codes of 7 and higher have been assigned for responses such as “other,” “apolitical,” and nonresponse. The codebook entry for the 1952 summary is as follows:

VAR 520237 NAME-PARTY ID AND STRENGTH  
COLUMNS 555 - 555  
NUMERIC  
MD=GE 7

PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND STRENGTH  
.....

SEE APPENDIX NOTE

392	0. STRONG DEMOCRAT
449	1. NOT VERY STRONG DEMOCRAT
173	2. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO DEMOCRATS ("YES, DEMOCRAT" TO REF.NO.58)
103	3. INDEPENDENT ("NO, NEITHER" OR "DK" TO REF.NO.58)
126	4. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO REPUBLICANS ("YES, REPUBLICAN" TO REF.NO.58)
245	5. NOT VERY STRONG REPUBLICAN
241	6. STRONG REPUBLICAN

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<sup>1</sup> In a few years, including 1952 and 1974, this follow-up was also asked of people whose response to the initial party ID question was “don’t know.”

- 9 7. OTHER, MINOR PARTY AND REFUSED TO SAY
- 55 8. APOLITICAL (DK IN REF.NO.58, "I'M NOTHING", "I DON'T MESS IN POLITICS", "I NEVER VOTE",ETC.)
- 106 9. NA

The numbers to the left of each answer (such as 392, 449, 173, etc.) are unweighted counts of the number of respondents who gave each answer. The referenced appendix note only explains why this is the last variable on the file. It does not add information about how the summary was constructed.

People who were considered “apolitical” were coded 8, described as “DK IN REF. NO. 58, 'I'M NOTHING', 'I DON'T MESS IN POLITICS', 'I NEVER VOTE', ETC.” “DK” means “don’t know.” Variable 520058 is the item, “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and independent, or what?” This item shows 55 respondents coded apolitical, matching the 55 apolitical respondents indicated for variable 520237. However, the coding information for “apolitical” in the variable 520237 also says “DK IN REF. NO. 58,” indicating that responses of “don’t know” at variable 520058 are coded apolitical in variable 520237. Eleven cases were coded “DK” at 520237, implying that 66 cases would be coded apolitical in the summary instead of the 55 shown. It therefore appears the documentation is incorrect in 1952.

The codebook entry for the 1956 summary is as follows:

VAR 560088 NAME-YOU A DEM,REP-OR WHAT  
 COLUMNS 257 - 257  
 NUMERIC  
 MD=GE 7

Q. 22, Q. 22A AND Q. 22E. GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU USUALLY THINK OF YOURSELF AS A REPUBLICAN, A DEMOCRAT, AN INDEPENDENT, OR WHAT. (IF REP OR DEM) WOULD YOU CALL YOURSELF A STRONG (R) (D) OR A NOT VERY STRONG (R) (D). (IF INDEPENDENT OR OTHER) DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS CLOSER TO THE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

- 364 0. STRONG DEMOCRAT
- 402 1. NOT VERY STRONG DEMOCRAT
- 111 2. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO DEMOCRATS ('YES, DEMOCRAT' TO Q. 22E)
- 155 3. INDEPENDENT ('NO, NEITHER' OR 'DK' TO Q. 22E)
- 146 4. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO REPS ('YES, REPUBLICAN' TO Q. 22E)
- 250 5. NOT VERY STRONG REPUBLICAN
- 262 6. STRONG REPUBLICAN
- 5 7. OTHER, MINOR PARTY AND REFUSED TO SAY
- 67 8. APOLITICAL (DK TO Q. 22, 'I'M NOTHING', 'I DON'T MESS IN POLITICS', 'I NEVER VOTE', ETC.)
- 0 9. NA

People who were considered to be “apolitical” were coded 8, described as “DK TO Q. 22, 'I'M NOTHING', 'I DON'T MESS IN POLITICS', 'I NEVER VOTE', ETC.”

Only the summary data are on the file in 1956; the raw responses to the branching questions are not recorded. It is therefore impossible to check the coding of the summary or to construct the summary differently.

In 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, and 1966, the same coding categories were used, but the documentation does not indicate how the apolitical code was assigned. As in 1956, the source data for the branching questions are not included.

VAR 580062 POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP  
COLUMNS 165 - 165  
NUMERIC  
MD=GE 7

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE  
POLITICAL PARTIES.

Q.28 GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU USUALLY THINK OF YOURSELF  
AS A REPUBLICAN, A DEMOCRAT, AN INDEPENDENT, OR WHAT.

Q. 28A. (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) WOULD YOU CALL YOUR-  
SELF A STRONG (R) (D) OR A NOT VERY STRONG (R) (D).

Q. 28H. (IF INDEPENDENT OR OTHER) DO YOU THINK OF YOUR-  
SELF AS CLOSER TO THE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

- 
- 480 0. STRONG DEMOCRAT
  - 405 1. NOT VERY STRONG DEMOCRAT
  - 125 2. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO DEMOCRATS
  - 131 3. INDEPENDENT
  - 94 4. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO REPUBLICANS
  - 298 5. NOT VERY STRONG REPUBLICAN
  - 204 6. STRONG REPUBLICAN
  
  - 8 7. OTHER, MINOR PARTY, OR REFUSED TO SAY
  - 71 8. APOLITICAL
  - 6 9. NA

In 1968, the coding approach was different from 1958. This is the first year since 1952 that the original branching variables were included. In the first question, there are new categories of “no preference,” “liberal party,” and “conservative party.” The codes in use for the first question in 1968 are summarized as follows:

VAR 680119 NAME-PARTY IDENTIFICATION  
COLUMNS 324 - 324  
NUMERIC  
MD=GE 7

Q. 46. GENERALLY SPEAKING DO YOU USUALLY THINK OF YOURSELF  
AS A REPUBLICAN, DEMOCRAT, INDEPENDENT, OR WHAT?

- 
- 375 1. REPUBLICAN
  - 705 2. DEMOCRAT
  - 412 3. INDEPENDENT
  - 52 4. NO PREFERENCE; AGAINST BOTH PARTIES; ETC.
  - 5. LIBERAL PARTY
  - 1 6. CONSERVATIVE PARTY
  - 3 7. REFUSED TO SAY

- 7 8. DK, NO INTEREST (R IS APOLITICAL)
- 2 9. NA
- 0. OTHER MINOR PARTY

Respondents who said they don't know what party they think of themselves were coded "apolitical." This is a questionable coding practice. Such respondents could be politically oriented but uncertain about whether they identify with either party. This practice also differs from that in 1952, when respondents who said they don't know what party they think of themselves as were asked the follow-up question for independents. That 1952 practice was repeated in 1974, but it is not documented in any other year.

The codes for the 1968 summary variable are summarized as follows:

VAR 680120 NAME-R STRONG REP/DEM  
 COLUMNS 325 - 325  
 NUMERIC  
 MD=GE 7

Q. 46A, 46D, 46G. (IF REP OR DEM) WOULD YOU CALL YOURSELF A STRONG (R)(D) OR NOT A VERY STRONG (R)(D)? (IF INDEPENDENT OR OTHER) DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS CLOSER TO THE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRATIC PARTY?  
 .....

THE R WHO SAYS HE HAS "NO PREFERENCE" AND IS CLOSER TO NEITHER PARTY IS CODED 3 (INDEPENDENT) IF HE SEEMS TO HAVE SOME INTEREST IN POLITICS. HE IS CODED 8 (APOLITICAL) IF HE SEEMS TO HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN POLITICS. THE "MINOR PARTY" IDENTIFIER WHO IS CLOSER TO NEITHER PARTY IS CODED 7 (MINOR PARTY)

- 311 0. STRONG DEMOCRAT
- 394 1. NOT VERY STRONG DEMOCRAT (INCLUDING 'DEMOCRAT' AND NA ON Q.46D)
- 153 2. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO DEMOCRATS ("YES, DEMOCRAT" TO Q. 46G)
- 163 3. INDEPENDENT ("NO, NEITHER" TO Q. 46G)
- 135 4. INDEPENDENT CLOSER TO REPUBLICANS ("YES, REPUBLICAN" TO Q. 46G)
- 226 5. NOT VERY STRONG REPUBLICAN (INCLUDING 'REPUBLICAN' AND NA ON Q. 46A)
- 149 6. STRONG REPUBLICAN
- 3 7. OTHER, MINOR PARTY AND REFUSED TO SAY
- 22 8. APOLITICAL
- 1 9. NA

Note the code 8, "apolitical." The criteria for this assignment are "if he seems to have little interest in politics." The documentation does not contain precise criteria for assignment to this category. However, using the criteria from 1958, this code would have been assigned if the respondent's answer to the first part of the party ID series indicated he or she was apolitical. The codes for variable

680119 indicate 7 people in that category, yet variable 680120 indicates 22 people who are “apolitical,” with no indication of how they were identified.

Documentation in 1970 was substantially the same.

In 1972, documentation was as follows:

VAR 720140 NAME-SUMMARY-R'S PARTY ID  
 COLUMNS 287 - 287  
 NUMERIC  
 MD=GE 7

\*\*FORMS 1 AND 2\*\* PRE-ELECTION QUESTION

SUMMARY CODE OF RESPONDENT'S PARTY IDENTIFICATION

.....

THIS VARIABLE REPRESENTS A SUMMARY OF ALL RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS E1, E1A, E1E AND E1J. THE CODE 8 (APOLITICAL) WAS USED ONLY IF THE RESPONDENT HAD A CODE OF 3 IN Q.E1 AND A CODE OF 3, 8 OR 9 IN Q.E1J AND ALSO SEEMED TO HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN POLITICS.

SUMMARY PARTY ID		CODED IN REF. NOS.:		
		141	142	147
397	0. STRONG DEMOCRAT	5	1	0
692	1. WEAK DEMOCRAT	5	5	0
		5	8	0
		5	9	0
299	2. INDEPENDENT-DEMOCRAT	2	0	5
		3	0	5
		4	0	5
354	3. INDEPENDENT-INDEPENDENT	2	0	3
		2	0	9
		3	0	3
		3	0	9
282	4. INDEPENDENT-REPUBLICAN	2	0	1
		3	0	1
		4	0	1
354	5. WEAK REPUBLICAN	1	5	0
		1	8	0
		1	9	0
278	6. STRONG REPUBLICAN	1	1	0
8	7. OTHER, MINOR PARTY,	4	0	3
38	8. APOLITICAL	3	0	3
		3	0	9
3	9. NA, DK	8	0	0
		9	0	0

Here it is explained that “THE CODE 8 (APOLITICAL) WAS USED ONLY IF THE RESPONDENT HAD A CODE OF 3 IN Q.E1 AND A CODE OF 3, 8 OR 9 IN Q.E1J AND ALSO SEEMED TO HAVE LITTLE INTEREST IN POLITICS.” A code of 3 in Q.E1 means a response of “no preference” to the opening question (“Generally speaking, do you ...”), and codes of 3, 8, and 9 for Q.E1J (“Do you think of yourself as closer...”) mean “neither,” “don’t know,” and no answer,

respectively. (The referenced code 8 for Q.E1J does not exist in the documentation for that variable in 1972, but 8 is traditionally a code for “don't know” in ANES files and it is used as such in the corresponding variable in later years.)

Thus, by 1972, the criteria for the apolitical category changed from being based upon the response to the first question in the party ID series to also depending on the answer to the follow-up question. The question still depends on whether the respondent “seemed to have little interest in politics.” We do not know how this was determined. Indeed, the criteria for little interest in politics are unknown for the span 1958-1980.

Documentation in 1974, 1976, 1978, and 1980, indicates the same approach to apolitical cods as 1972.

In 1982 the documentation is different:

VAR 820291 NAME-SUMMARY: R'S PARTY ID  
COLUMNS 557 - 557  
NUMERIC  
MD=9

Q.F1X. SUMMARY: R'S PARTY ID  
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THIS VARIABLE IS A SUMMARY OF R'S RESPONSES TO Q.F1, Q.F1A/B AND Q.F1C. THE NUMBERS IN PARENTHESES INDICATE THE PATTERN OF CODES ON THE COMPONENT VARIABLES WHICH RESULTS IN THE CODING OF THE PRESENT VALUE IN THIS SUMMARY VARIABLE. CODE OF APOLITICAL (8) WAS USED ONLY IF THE RESPONDENT HAD A CODE OF 3 (NO PREFERENCE) IN Q.F1, AND A CODE OF 3, 8 OR 9 (NEITHER, DK, NA) IN Q.F1C AND ALSO SHOWED LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN POLITICS IN RESPONSE TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING VARIABLES: Q.A1(REF.NO.58), Q.C1(REF.NO.97), Q.F3(REF.NO.294), Q.L1(REF.NO.501).

284 0. STRONG DEMOCRAT (5,1,0)  
339 1. WEAK DEMOCRAT (5,5,0; 5,8,0; 5,9,0)  
155 2. INDEPENDENT--DEMOCRAT (2,0,5; 3,0,5; 4,0,5)  
156 3. INDEPENDENT--INDEPENDENT (2,0,3; 2,0,8; 2,0,9; 3,0, 3; 3,0,8; 3,0,9)  
112 4. INDEPENDENT--REPUBLICAN (2,0,1; 3,0,1; 4,0,1)  
202 5. WEAK REPUBLICAN (1,5,0; 1,8,0; 1,9,0)  
135 6. STRONG REPUBLICAN (1,1,0)  
1 7. OTHER--MINOR PARTY, REFUSED TO SAY (4,0,3; 4,0,8; 4,0,9)  
28 8. APOLITICAL (3,0,3; 3,0,8; 3,0,9 AND LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN POLITICS)  
6 9. NA (8,0,0; 9,0,0)

In 1982, in place of the respondent “seem[ing] to have little interest in politics,” the apolitical criteria were specified that the respondent “showed little or no interest in politics in response to each” of four other survey questions. This transforms the party ID variable from a summary of a 3-question branching sequence to *an index based on responses to 7 questions.*

The four additional questions were these:

VAR 820058 NAME-R INTEREST-POL CAMPGN  
COLUMNS 154 - 154  
NUMERIC  
MD=8 OR GE 9

Q.A1. IN THIS INTERVIEW I WILL BE TALKING WITH YOU ABOUT THE RECENT ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF OTHER THINGS. FIRST, I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS WHICH TOOK PLACE THIS ELECTION YEAR. SOME PEOPLE DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO CAMPAIGNS. HOW ABOUT YOU? WOULD YOU SAY YOU WERE VERY MUCH INTERESTED, SOMEWHAT INTERESTED, OR NOT MUCH INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS THIS YEAR?

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367 1. VERY MUCH INTERESTED  
626 3. SOMEWHAT INTERESTED  
422 5. NOT MUCH INTERESTED  
8. DK  
3 9. NA

VAR 820097 NAME-R'S INTEREST-CONGR ELCTN  
COLUMNS 253 - 253  
NUMERIC  
MD=8 OR GE 9

CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN

Q.C1. AS YOU KNOW, REPRESENTATIVES TO CONGRESS IN WASHINGTON WERE CHOSEN IN THIS ELECTION FROM CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY. HOW MUCH WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU PERSONALLY CARE ABOUT THE WAY THE ELECTION TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CAME OUT: DID YOU CARE VERY MUCH, PRETTY MUCH, NOT VERY MUCH, OR NOT AT ALL?

-----

292 1. VERY MUCH  
499 2. PRETTY MUCH  
415 4. NOT VERY MUCH  
160 5. NOT AT ALL  
40 8. DK  
12 9. NA

VAR 820294 NAME-R FOLLOW GVT/PUB AFFAIRS  
COLUMNS 560 - 560  
NUMERIC  
MD=8 OR GE 9

Q.F3. SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO FOLLOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS MOST OF THE TIME, WHETHER THERE'S AN ELECTION GOING ON OR NOT. OTHERS AREN'T THAT INTERESTED. WOULD YOU SAY YOU FOLLOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS MOST OF THE TIME, SOME OF THE TIME, ONLY NOW AND THEN, OR HARDLY AT ALL?

-----

403 1. MOST OF THE TIME  
500 2. SOME OF THE TIME



- 299 3. ONLY NOW AND THEN
- 208 4. HARDLY AT ALL
- 3 8. DK
- 5 9. NA

VAR 820501 NAME-DID R VOTE IN 82 ELCTION  
 COLUMNS 784 - 784  
 NUMERIC  
 MD=6 OR GE 7

Q.L1. IN TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT ELECTIONS, WE OFTEN FIND THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE NOT ABLE TO VOTE BECAUSE (THEY WEREN'T OLD ENOUGH) THEY WEREN'T REGISTERED, THEY WERE SICK, OR THEY JUST DIDN'T HAVE TIME. HOW ABOUT YOU -- DID YOU VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS THIS NOVEMBER?

Q.L1A. <FOR GEORGIA 04 AND 05> HOW ABOUT THE SPECIAL U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION HELD NOVEMBER 30TH -- DID YOU VOTE IN THAT ELECTION?

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CODE 1 INCLUDES RESPONDENTS IN GA04 AND GA05 WHO VOTED IN EITHER OR BOTH THE NOVEMBER 2 GENERAL ELECTION OR THE NOVEMBER 30 SPECIAL ELECTION. SEE "SPECIAL INFORMATION: GEORGIA 04 AND 05" IN INTRODUCTION FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION.

- 849 1. YES, DID VOTE
- 557 5. NO, DID NOT VOTE
- 3 6. R REFUSES TO SAY WHETHER VOTED
- 7. NOT OLD ENOUGH
- 2 8. DK
- 7 9. NA

The operational measure of showing “little or no interest in politics” on these four questions is not specified, making it unclear, for instance, whether following what’s going on in government “only now and then” qualifies a respondent as apolitical, or whether they must follow politics “hardly at all.”

In 1984, the documentation reverts to the statement from prior years that the apolitical code is based on showing little or no interest in politics. The four additional items are not specified.

The studies from 1986 through 2004 used the same general approach as 1982, but not exactly the same questions to indicate little or no interest in politics. In presidential years, one of the items for interest in politics was on the post-election survey, so in those years the party ID summary was an index based on responses to questions on two different surveys.

In the studies in 1982-1998, the documentation shows several changes in the measurement of “little or no interest in politics.” As in 1982, each later survey (except perhaps 1984, as that documentation does omits details) built the apolitical party ID category using questions about attention to campaigns, caring about the election outcome, attention to public affairs, and voter turnout.

However, the wording of questions on three of these topics – attention to campaigns, caring about the election outcome, and voter turnout – varied across these years.

The question about attention to campaigns had slight wording changes in the 1980s and 1990s. Compared to 1982, the question in 1984 added the word “that” and removed the word “very,” as shown below.

#### 1982

Some people don't pay much attention to campaigns. How about you? Would you say you were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not **very** much interested in following the political campaigns this year?

#### 1984

Some people don't pay much attention to campaigns. How about you? Would you say **that** you were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in following the political campaigns this year?

In 1986, both words (“that” and “very”) were included.

In 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998, there were other minor differences from the 1982 version. The differences are shown below in bold.

#### 1982

Some people don't pay much attention to campaigns. How about you? Would you say you were very much interested, somewhat interested, or not **very** much interested in **following** the political campaigns this year?

#### 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998

Some people don't pay much attention to **political** campaigns. How about you? Would you say **that** you **have been** very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in the political campaigns **so far** this year?

Compared to the 1988 phrasing, the words “have been” were changed to “were” and the words “so far” were dropped in 1990 and 1994, but kept in 1992, 1996, and later years. These differences reflect the placement of the question on the post-election survey instead of the pre-election survey in 1990 and 1994, since there was no pre-election survey in those years.

#### 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2002, and 2004

Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you **have been** very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in the political campaigns **so far** this year?

#### 1990 and 1994

Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you **were** very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in the political campaigns this year?

In 1998, the question was a hybrid of these:

Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you **were** very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in the political campaigns **so far** this year?

The question about caring about the election outcome had two significant kinds of changes. The 1988 version shown above (var 880102 on page 6) asked if the respondent cared “which party wins” the presidential election. In 1990, a

different question was used that asked about the outcome of elections for the House of Representatives:

VAR 900106 R'S INTEREST-CONG ELCTN

Q.B9. AS YOU KNOW, REPRESENTATIVES TO CONGRESS IN WASHINGTON WERE CHOSEN IN THIS ELECTION FROM CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS ALL AROUND THE COUNTRY. HOW MUCH WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU PERSONALLY CARE ABOUT THE WAY THE ELECTION TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CAME OUT: DID YOU CARE VERY MUCH, PRETTY MUCH, NOT VERY MUCH, OR NOT AT ALL?

In 1992, the question again concerned the presidential election but asked if the respondent cared “who wins,” rather than “which party.” In 1994, 1996, and 1998, the 1990 version about House elections was repeated.

The voter turnout question used to build the “apolitical” party ID category also changed in the 1990s. As noted above, the 1988 party ID variable conditioned the “apolitical” classification, in part, on expected turnout. The same question was used in the presidential-year survey in 1992. In the off-year surveys in 1990, 1994, and 1998, and in the presidential survey in 1996, the actual post-election turnout report was substituted in the party ID algorithm. The 1990 codebook recorded the item as follows:

VAR 900279 DID R VOTE IN 90 ELECTN

Q.D1. IN TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT ELECTIONS, WE OFTEN FIND THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE NOT ABLE TO VOTE BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T REGISTERED, THEY WERE SICK, OR THEY JUST DIDN'T HAVE TIME. HOW ABOUT YOU--DID YOU VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS THIS NOVEMBER?

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1. YES, DID VOTE...(0 IN Q.D1A, Q.D15-Q.D15X)
5. NO, DID NOT VOTE...(0 IN Q.D3, Q.D6-Q.D11X/D14X)
6. REFUSED TO SAY WHETHER VOTED...(0 IN Q.D1A-Q.D2, Q.D2-Q.D3, Q.D6-Q.D15X; INAP IN Q.D2A, Q.D4/D5)
7. NOT OLD ENOUGH TO VOTE (SEE SUPERVISOR BEFORE USING)...(0 IN Q.D1A-Q.D2, Q.D2B-Q.D3, Q.D6-Q.D15X; INAP IN Q.D2A, Q.D4/D5)
8. DK...(0 IN Q.D1A, Q.D15-Q.D15X)
9. NA...(0 IN Q.D1A-Q.D2, Q.D2B-Q.D3, Q.D6-Q.D15X; INAP IN Q.D2A, Q.D4/D5)

In 2000, 2002, and 2004, the wording for all four questions indicating “little or no interest in politics” stayed consistent. As shown in the 2004 codebook:

A1 pre. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns.  
How about you? Would you say that you have been VERY MUCH interested, SOMEWHAT interested or NOT MUCH interested in the political campaigns so far this year?

A12 pre. As you know, representatives to Congress in Washington are being chosen in this election from congressional districts all around the country. How much would you say that you personally care about the way the election to the U.S. House of Representatives comes out: do you care VERY MUCH, PRETTY MUCH, NOT VERY MUCH or NOT AT ALL?

C1a post. In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you--did you vote in the elections this November? [Or experimental version of the same question, C1b]

E4 post. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs MOST OF THE TIME, SOME OF THE TIME, ONLY NOW AND THEN, or HARDLY AT ALL?

**Consequences to be Aware Of**

There are two reasons to be concerned about the handling of “apolitical” codes as documented above. One is that the documentation is not precise enough. In early years, the documentation says that a respondent was coded apolitical “if he seems to have little interest in politics.” This is inadequate documentation, because users cannot tell how this was determined, and study staff cannot replicate the procedures to make current data comparable to prior data. In recent years the documentation says that a respondent was coded apolitical if he or she “showed little or no interest in politics” in response to four questions that changed from study to study, and for which the coding algorithm has not been publicly documented.

Another reason for concern about the “apolitical” codes is that the changes in documentation indicate that the criteria used to identify apolitical respondents changed repeatedly over time. Consequently, there are discontinuities in the meaning of party ID categories over time that may diminish the validity of time trend analyses.

Fortunately only a small proportion of respondents are coded apolitical each year, amounting to about 1 to 3 percent of respondents in most years. This limits the effects of changes in coding. The unweighted number (and proportion) of apolitical respondents in each year is shown below.

1952: 55 (2.9%)	1968: 22 (1.4%)	1982: 28 (2.0%)
1956: 67 (3.8%)	1970: 11 (0.7%)	1984: 28 (1.7%)
1958: 71 (3.9%)	1972: 38 (1.4%)	1986: 46 (2.6%)
1960: 47 (2.4%)	1974: 72 (2.9%)	1988: 33 (1.6%)
1962: 50 (3.9%)	1976: 26 (0.9%)	1990: 16 (1.2%)
1964: 14 (0.9%)	1978: 59 (2.6%)	1992: 6 (0.8%)
1966: 15 (1.2%)	1980: 35 (2.2%)	1994: 15 (0.8%)

1996: 14 (0.8%)  
1998: 19 (1.5%)

2000: 17 (0.9%)  
2002: 9 (0.6%)

2004: 4 (0.3%)

It could be tempting to interpret time trends in the proportion of responses that are apolitical. However, based on the methodological inconsistencies detailed in this memo, we urge against drawing any substantive conclusions from fluctuations in the proportion of respondents in this category over time.

### **ANES Approach to Party ID Codes in the Future**

To improve these codes on ANES datasets, the ANES will take several steps:

- Implement precise, consistently defined procedures for a new party ID summary variable.
  - Limit the sources for the new summary variable to the 3-part branched question.
  - Eliminate the apolitical category in the new summary variable.
  - Publish the exact algorithm, including programming code, used to compute every derived or summary variable on the ANES data files, including the party ID summary variable. All code available for prior studies is in the appendix to this memo.
- Write an erratum notice for each prior study with a link to this memo.

### **Recommended Party ID Summary Algorithm**

We recommend that users who desire a 7-point party identification summary variable consider the following coding approach.

0. Strong Democrat: if the respondent said he or she was a strong Democrat.
1. Not strong Democrat: if the respondent said he or she was a not strong Democrat.
2. Independent, leans Democrat: if the respondent said he or she was independent or had no preference or belonged to another party and was closer to the Democratic party.
3. Independent: if the respondent said he or she was independent or had no preference or belonged to another party and was not closer to the Democratic or Republican party.
4. Independent, leans Republican: if the respondent said he or she was independent or had no preference or belonged to another party and was closer to the Republican party.
5. Not strong Republican: if the respondent said he or she was a not strong Republican.
6. Strong Republican: if the respondent said he or she was a strong Republican.

Any respondent not fitting one of the above categories would be coded missing for the party ID summary.

This approach differs from prior approaches in that 1) the apolitical category is eliminated, 2) respondents who fail or refuse to say whether they are a “strong” partisan are not imputed to be a “weak” partisan, as has been done in the past, 3) respondents who identify as members of other parties are coded as missing from the Democrat-independent-Republican scale.

SPSS code is shown below that accomplishes this coding for the 2004 data. Users can edit the code to change the variable names as necessary to apply the same logic to any ANES dataset.

```
compute PID7=-9.
do if v043114 = 1 and v043114a=1 .
    compute pid7=6.
    else if v043114=1 and v043114a=5.
        compute pid7=5.
    else if v043114=2 and v043114a=1 .
        compute pid7=0.
    else if v043114=2 and v043114a=5 .
        compute pid7=1.
    else if v043115=1.
        compute pid7=4.
    else if v043115=3 or v043115=8 or v043115=9.
        compute pid7=3.
    else if v043115=5 .
        compute pid7=2.
End if.
```

```
Value labels pid7
0 'strong Democrat'
1 'not strong Democrat'
2 'independent Democrat'
3 'independent'
4 'independent Republican'
5 'not strong Republican'
6 'strong Republican'
-9 'missing'.
Missing values pid7 (-9).
```

The differences between using this approach (PID7) and the approach taken previously (V043116) in preparing ANES datasets are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Frequencies of V043116 and PID7.

Value	V043116		PID7	
	Label	Count	Label	Count
-9		0	missing	13
0	Strong Democrat	203	strong Democrat	203
1	Weak Democrat	179	not strong Democrat	178
2	Independent-Democrat	210	independent Democrat	210
3	Independent-Independent	118	independent	125
4	Independent-Republican	138	independent Republican	138
5	Weak Republican	154	not strong Republican	152
6	Strong Republican	193	strong Republican	193
7	Other; minor party; refuses to say	5		0
8	Apolitical	4		0
9	DK	8		0

For reference, codebook entries for the 2004 source variables are shown below.

V043114

J1. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a REPUBLICAN, a DEMOCRAT, an INDEPENDENT, or what?

VALID CODES:

-----

1. Republican
2. Democrat
3. Independent
4. Other party {SPECIFY}
5. No preference

MISSING CODES:

-----

8. Don't know
9. Refused

V043114a

J1a. Would you call yourself a STRONG [Democrat/Republican] or a NOT VERY STRONG [Democrat/Republican]?

VALID CODES:

-----

1. Strong
5. Not very strong

MISSING CODES:

-----

8. Don't know
  9. Refused
- INAP. 3,4,5,8,9 in J1

IF R'S PARTY PREFERENCE IS INDEPENDENT, NO PREFERENCE, OTHER:

QUESTION:

-----

V043115

J1b. Do you think of yourself as CLOSER to the Republican Party or to the Democratic party?

VALID CODES:

-----

- 1. Closer to Republican
- 3. Neither {VOL}
- 5. Closer to Democratic

MISSING CODES:

-----

- 8. Don't know
  - 9. Refused
- INAP. 1,2,8,9 in J1



*Appendix. All available programming code for ANES party ID summary variables, 1952-2004.*

Prior to 1996, no code for the Party ID summary variables is available.

```
* 1996 ;
if V960417 in(8,9,.R) then V960420=9;
if V960417=1 and V960418=1 then V960420=0;
if V960417=1 and V960418 in(5,8,9,.R) then V960420=1;
if V960417 in(3,4,5) and V960419=5 then V960420=2;
if V960417=3 and V960419 in(3,8,9,.R) then V960420=3;
if V960417 in(3,4,5) and V960419=1 then V960420=4;
if V960417=2 and V960418 in(5,8,9,.R) then V960420=5;
if V960417=2 and V960418=1 then V960420=6;
if V960417=4 and V960419 in(3,8,9,.R) then V960420=7;
if V960417=5 and V960419 in(3,8,9,.R) then V960420=3;
if V960420=3 and V960417=5 then do;
  if V960201 =3 and V960256 =4 and V961074 eq 5 and V961134 eq 4 then V960420=8;
end;

*1998;
V980339=.;
if V980336 in(8,9,.R) then V980339=9;
if V980336=1 and V980337=1 then V980339=0;
if V980336=1 and V980337 in(5,8,9,.R) then V980339=1;
if V980336=2 and V980337=1 then V980339=6;
if V980336=2 and V980337 in(5,8,9,.R) then V980339=5;
if V980336 in(3,4,5) and V980338=5 then V980339=2;
if V980336 in(3,4,5) and V980338=1 then V980339=4;
if V980336=4 and V980338 in(3,8,9,.R) then V980339=7;
if V980336 in(3,5) and V980338 in(3,8,9,.R) then V980339=3;
if V980339=3 and V980336 =5 and V980201=5 and V980303=5 and V980222=4 and V980340=4 then
V980339=8;

*2000;
V000523=.;
if V000519 in(8,9,.R) then V000523=9;
if V000519=1 and V000520=1 then V000523=0;
if V000519=1 and V000520 in(5,8,9,.R) then V000523=1;
if V000519=2 and V000520=1 then V000523=6;
if V000519=2 and V000520 in(5,8,9,.R) then V000523=5;
if V000519 in(3,4,5) and V000522=5 then V000523=2;
if V000519 in(3,4,5) and V000522=1 then V000523=4;
if V000519=4 and V000522 in(3,8,9,.R) then V000523=7;
if V000519 in(3,5) and V000522 in(3,8,9,.R) then V000523=3;
if V000523=3 and V001367=5 and V000301=5 and V001241=4 and v000342=4 and V001367=4 then
V000523=8;

*2002;
if V023036 eq 1          and V023037 eq 1          then V023038x=0;
if V023036 eq 1          and V023037 in(5,8,9,0)   then V023038x=1;
if V023036 in(3,4,5,8)  and V023038 eq 5          then V023038x=2;
if V023036 eq 3         and V023038 in(3,8,9,0)   then V023038x=3;
if V023036 in(3,4,5,8)  and V023038 eq 1          then V023038x=4;
if V023036 eq 2         and V023037 in(5,8,9,0)   then V023038x=5;
if V023036 eq 2         and V023037 eq 1          then V023038x=6;
if V023036 eq 4         and V023038 in(3,8,9,0)   then V023038x=7;
if V023036 in(5,8)     and V023038 eq 3          then V023038x=3;
if V023036 in(5,8)     and V023038 in(8,9,0)      then V023038x=3;
if V023036 eq 9         and V023038 in(8,9,0)      then V023038x=7;
```

if V023036 eq 0 then V023038x=9;  
if V023038x eq 3 and V023036 eq 5 and V023001=5 and V023007=4 and  
V025084=4 and V025016=5 then V023038x=8;

\*2004;

if V043114 in(8,9) then V043116=9 ;  
if V043114 eq 2 and V043114a eq 1 and V043115 eq . then V043116 =0 ;  
if V043114 eq 2 and V043114a in(5,8,9) and V043115 eq . then V043116 =1 ;  
if V043114 in(3,4,5) and V043114a eq . and V043115 eq 5 then V043116 =2 ;  
if V043114 eq 3 and V043114a eq . and V043115 in(3,8,9) then V043116 =3 ;  
if V043114 eq 5 and V043114a eq . and V043115 in(3,8,9) then V043116 =3 ;  
if V043114 in(3,4,5) and V043114a eq . and V043115 eq 1 then V043116 =4 ;  
if V043114 eq 1 and V043114a in(5,8,9) and V043115 eq . then V043116 =5 ;  
if V043114 eq 1 and V043114a eq 1 and V043115 eq . then V043116 =6 ;  
if V043114 eq 4 and V043114a eq . and V043115 in(3,8,9) then V043116 =7 ;  
if V043116=3 and V043114=5 and V043001=5 and V043035 eq 4 and  
(V045017a=5 or V045017b in(1,2,3)) and V045095=4 then V043116=8 ;