Date: 15 January 1996

To: NES Board

From: Larry M. Bartels

Re: Humanitarianism items on 1995 Pilot Study

        Here is a cursory analysis of our new items on humanitarianism (E3 through E10 on Form A and E11 through E13 on Form B).

        Marginals. Not surprisingly, all of these items are strongly biased in a pro- humanitarian direction. Of the eight agree/disagree items, the five with positive valences have mean values ranging from .75 to .89 on a zero-to-one scale, while the three with negative valences have mean values ranging from .29 to .40. For the three forced-choice items, the one with a negative valence has a mean of .21 and the two with positive valences have mean values of .80 and .84.

        Reliability. The average correlation between the agree/disagree items with similar valences is .37; for those with opposite valences the average is .14. Since the former are inflated and the latter attenuated by the response set we talked about at the Values and Predispositions conference last February, a fair summary correlation might be .25. (The corresponding average correlation from Feldman and Steenbergen's original study is .33.) Items E9 ("best not to get too involved"), E7 ("always be concerned"), and E3 ("always find ways to help others") seem to be somewhat more reliable than the other items, with average intercorrelations of .28, .31, and .30. The correlations among the forced-choice items are even lower (averaging about .14 in absolute value), presumably because these were framed as dichotomous choices rather than 5-point ordinal scales.

        Dimensional Structure. An exploratory factor analysis of the eight agree/disagree items produces a strong first dimension (with an eigenvalue of 2.1) tapping humanitarianism; all the factor loadings have the appropriate signs, and they range in magnitude from .33 to .64, averaging .50 (with items E7, E3, and E9 averaging .60). There is a weaker second dimension (with an eigenvalue of 0.9) reflecting the response set: the factor loadings are all positive and range in magnitude from .17 to .50, averaging .32. An exploratory factor analysis of the three forced-choice items produces one very weak dimension (with an eigenvalue of 0.3) appropriately tapping humanitarianism, with factor loadings of .24 for the negatively valenced items and .39 and .31 for the positively valenced items.

        Correlates. The correlations between humanitarianism in either form and age, education, race, gender, ideology, and party identification range from .03 to .16, reflecting in part the unreliability of even the eight-item humanitarianism scale. In analyses with relevant issue preferences as dependent variables and age, education, race, gender, ideology, and party identification as control variables, the t-statistics for humanitarianism are 3.2 for crime, 1.5 for welfare, and 1.5 for government jobs using the eight-item Form A scale, 2.2, 1.0, and 1.2 using an abbreviated three-item Form A scale (consisting of items E3, E7, and E9), and 0.7 for crime,

1.9 for welfare, and 0.3 for government jobs using the three-item Form B scale.

Recommendations. As we expected, the agree/disagree items have very skewed marginals and seem to induce a fairly potent response set. However, the alternative forced-choice format is too unreliable to be an attractive solution to these problems (though it might work better if the responses were not dichotomous). Thus, it seems to me that we are still in the market for a better format for these and other "values and predispositions" scales. As for the substance of humanitarianism, it does seem to be related to policy preferences in sensible ways. Opinions about whether the effects are large enough and interesting enough to be worth significant investment of resources in either the full eight-item scale or an abbreviated version will, I suspect, depend primarily upon one's general taste for values and predispositions.

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