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Title: Pilot Study Questions on Welfare/Poverty
Date: Undated
Dataset(s): 1987 Pilot Study

Abstract

This report describes the performance of the 1987 Pilot Study items pertaining to welfare and poverty. The Pilot Study included two separate forms. One-half the sample was asked questions concerning poor people, while the other half responded to a form containing items pertaining to people on welfare. Conover and Lowery find statistically significant differences in the aggregate distribution of the responses to the two frames. In particular, people are more sympathetic toward the poor than they are toward welfare recipients. Moreover, Conover and Feldman find that the two issue frames have different political effects. Preferences on welfare spending tend to have a more partisan and political (in the sense of focusing on government management) connection. The question frame concerning attitudes toward the "poor," on the other hand, seems to tap a more social and interpersonal interpretation of politics. Still, the two frames are not completely distinct. An analysis of the background correlates for the Pilot Study items indicates that race and education tend to have the most consistent patterns of effect across policy position items and frames. The remaining background variables -- age, sex, and income -- have a more sporadic effect on the items.