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Title: A Report on Measures of American Identity and New "Ethnic" Issues in the 1991 NES Pilot Study
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Abstract

Citrin, Green, Reingold, and Sears examine the 1991 Pilot Study items which measure American identity and attitudes concerning race and ethnic issues. The Pilot Study contained a series of items designed to measure a "sense of American identity," that is, the emotional attachment to the symbols and values that constitute rival conceptions of the American identity, such as liberalism and nativism. Though few demographic-based divisions exist, different groups of people clearly have distinct conceptions of the American identity. Specifically, respondents seem to fall into three categories, "liberals," "civic republicans," and "nativists." The experimental hispanic items also showed few demographic-based divisions, but these items had distinct effects on racial attitudes. Opposition to immigration was associated with cooler feeling thermometer ratings for "immigrants from other countries" and a lack of positive affect for Hispanics, African-Americans, Cuban-Americans, and Puerto Ricans. The authors conclude that opinions about immigration policy, and Hispanic immigration in particular, are governed to a considerable degree by egalitarian norms, rather than personal circumstance. Finally, the authors examined the policy correlates of the experimental Pilot Study items. They find that conceptions of national identity and preferences on the "new" ethnic issues may be tied into a broader cultural conflict. Specifically, there is a clear connection between conceptions of American identity and the "new ethnic agenda." Nativists are more likely than liberals to take an anti-immigrant/pro-English language stance, while civic-republicans tend to fall in-between the two groups. Nativists also hold the least favorable feeling thermometer ratings of minority ethnic groups, though differences among the three groups are not large. The three groups also differed in their preferences on racial policies. Although these differences are often quite modest, nativists were most opposed to government programs targeted at assisting blacks. The familiar pattern of greater conservatism among the nativism and conservative republicans emerged most clearly in the area of social issues. These groups were more supportive of school prayer and the death penalty and were more opposed to government funding of abortion than their liberal counterparts. These same patterns emerged in the authors' examination of the Pilot Study ethnic questions. A negative assessment of the impact of Hispanic groups was related to lower affect towards all minority groups, to conservatism on racial and social issues, and to approval of President Bush. In sum, the authors find that public opinion on immigration and language policy is divided along cleavages associated with ideological conflicts that have helped reshape the post-New Deal party system.