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## **Abstract**

Marcus and MacKuen discuss the 1995 Pilot Study items designed to measure emotional reaction to political figures. The candidate affect items currently in use by NES are based on the "discrete" approach, which holds that individuals may possess a number of distinct emotional states. Scholars working in the "arousal" tradition -- which argues that individuals hold just two distinct arousal states, namely anxiety and enthusiasm -- have used the existing NES affect items in their research, but these items are not well suited to their purposes. The 1995 Pilot Study, therefore, contained four "mood" items, developed under the arousal approach, to measure positive and negative mood state. Marcus and MacKuen perform an exploratory factor analysis of these four items and find that, contrary to their expectations, only one dimension underlies the items. At the same time, a similar analysis using the traditional discrete items shows the multi-dimensionality of mood quite clearly. Upon further analysis the authors conclude that the arousal items failed to perform as expected because of problems in measurement. Specifically, the authors find that when items juxtapose explicitly distinct affect terms, subjects tend to "harmonize" their verbalized feelings to a single like-dislike dimension. The authors conclude that reliable measures of positive and negative mood states can be obtained either using the standard NES items, or though modifying the Pilot Study affect questions to make less explicit the bipolar frame of reference. In either event, the authors recommend expanding the questions to employ multiple response categories, as opposed to dichotomous categories, because dichotomies provide less reliable scales.