



Place Questions on the 2008 Edition of Face-to-Face Time Series Study.

September 1, 2007

On September 17, 2007, the American National Election Studies will begin accepting proposals for questions to include on the face-to-face survey we will conduct before and after the 2008 election (we refer to this as the “Time Series” survey, because it continues 50 years of ANES face-to-face interviewing).

This year, for the very first time, anyone can submit a proposal of items to be included in this study through the ANES *Online Commons*. This letter describes that new opportunity.

About the ANES Time Series Study

The ANES’s core mission is to promote cutting-edge and broadly-collaborative research on American national elections. To honor and expand the existing literature on voting and elections, we must continue to pursue the traditions of excellence established by past ANES studies and, at the same time, take ANES in new directions, so as to empower scholars to enhance the depth and breadth of our collective understanding of electorates. For us, what matters most is the credibility of the study design and its ability to provide data for the many scholars who seek to evaluate an ever-expanding range of important hypotheses.

The heart of the ANES is its presidential year time series surveys. The time series legacy is well known, having generated thousands of publications and serving as a model for election studies around the world. Every four years, a large representative sample of American adults has been interviewed face-to-face on two occasions, first between Labor Day and Election Day, and again between Election Day and the onset of the winter holidays. The two interviews will last no less than one hour each in 2008. Pre-election interviews focus on candidate preferences and anticipated vote choice, plus an array of possible predictors of candidate preferences, turnout, citizen engagement, and an array of indicators of cognitive and behavioral engagement in the information flow of the campaign. Post-election interviews measures a variety of behavioral experiences people might have had throughout the campaign (e.g., turnout, mobilization efforts), plus additional posited predictors of candidate preferences, turnout, and citizen engagement.

Some of the questions asked during these interviews are categorized as “Core” items, meaning that they have been asked regularly over the years, are scheduled to appear on subsequent editions of the ANES Time Series, and permit comparisons across elections. A purpose of categorizing items as Core is to assure scholars who conduct longitudinal analyses that they can continue to depend on ANES to include variables that have been shown to perform well in the past. The Core questions are an important reason for the continuation of ANES Time Series maintaining its traditional methodology. They are its “roots.”

At the same time, ANES has sought to evolve the time series in innovative ways. The non-Core component of each questionnaire has routinely focused on matters of interest to the current election cycle. These items are often selected from the “ANES Inventory,” which includes questions that have been asked in past ANES surveys but are not part of the Core.

The non-Core content of questionnaires has varied over the years. For example, candidate positions on issues of government policy are recognized as predictors of candidate preferences, but two one-hour interviews do not permit measuring positions on all of the many issues enjoying government attention at any one time in history. So from year to year, different choices have been made about which issues to address.

To enhance the credibility of the study design and its ability to provide data infrastructure for the many scholars who seek to evaluate an ever-expanding range of important hypotheses, ANES in 2008 will attempt to balance demands for continuity and innovation in a more inclusive and transparent manner than ever before.

About the Online Commons

Content for the 2008 ANES Time Series Study will evolve from two sources:

- Previous ANES Time Series questionnaires
- New proposals received via the ANES Online Commons (OC).

The ANES Online Commons promotes communication among scholars and yields rigorously reasoned proposals about the most effective ways to measure electorally-relevant concepts and relationships. The OC uses open source software, tailored to accommodate ANES needs. It improves the quality and scientific value of ANES data collections. In the first two uses of the ANES Online Commons (for the 2006 ANES Pilot Study and for the 2008-2009 Panel Study, respectively), more than 500 scholars participated, and more than 2200 questions were proposed.

The ANES Online Commons will begin accepting proposals for the 2008 Time Series Study on September 17, 2007, and will continue to do so until 3:00 pm Eastern Time on January 15, 2008. The Online Commons will remain open for two additional weeks thereafter to allow commentary and revision of the proposals. This opportunity is open to anyone who wants to make a constructive contribution to the development of ANES surveys.

About the 2008 Edition of the ANES Time Series Study

We will conduct the presidential year study via face-to-face interviewing of a nationally representative sample of Americans and with a high response rate, as has been done in past studies. The spirit of this instruction is to maintain continuity in the data collection methodology, so as to maximize comparability of results. We expect to conduct 1,810 hour-long pre-election interviews and 1,629 seventy-minute post-election reinterviews.

Moreover, we believe, as a result of a cooperative grant awarded to Gary Segura and Matthew Barreto at the University of Washington, that we will interview an additional 350 Latino voters as a targeted oversample. Therefore, the total number of interviews should top 2100. Subsequent collaborations with entrepreneurial scholars under our recently announced *Complementary Cases* program may push the total number of interviews even higher (see http://www.electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_BMCC_Announcement_20070813.pdf>)

As in the past, ANES will continue to emphasize best practices in sample design, respondent recruitment, and interviewing. As always, we aim to provide top-quality service in many respects, including: (1) the careful and extensive planning that must be done before the field work begins, (2) the hard work that will be done by interviewers, supervisors, and study managers during data collection to monitor productivity and make adjustments in strategy to maximize the quality of the final product, and (3) the extensive data processing efforts (including integration of an extensive contextual data file) that will be required to assemble and document the final data set.

Moreover, the 2008 edition of the ANES Time Series will include an exciting new feature. We can offer researchers the opportunity to present visual stimuli to respondents during the interview. For up to ten minutes of the post-election interviews, interviewers will position their laptops so that respondents can see the screen, put headphones on to hear sounds, and view still pictures or video presentations (such as campaign ads or news stories). We will be particularly interested in proposals that can leverage this technology. Because so much of contemporary politics revolves around visual images, the potential value of this presentation medium is high.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The new version of the Online Commons will accept two categories of proposal:

- Category 1: Proposals to add questions to the 2008 ANES that are not included in the ANES Core.
- Category 2: Proposals to change the ANES Core.

To have a question included on the 2008 ANES, Category 1 proposals are sufficient. To have a question included in the 2008 and future editions of the ANES Time Series, a Category 2 Proposal is required.

When the ANES Online Commons reopens on September 17, it will contain a full listing of questions that constitute the current “Core,” as well as a comprehensive list of questions in the ANES Inventory. Some questions that have appeared on the ANES repeatedly are not currently part of the Core. Their repeated appearance has been the result of previous ANES Boards of Overseers and PIs deciding to run the questions. Arguments for their inclusion in 2008 will help to bolster their case for inclusion.

In what follows, we first describe the criteria by which all proposals will be evaluated. Then, we describe a number of additional requirements for Category 2 proposals. We

strongly encourage anyone who is considering making a proposal to read the following section carefully.

These nine criteria will be focal in the evaluation of each proposal:

1. *Demonstrated Validity and Effectiveness of Questions.* Questions may be taken from the inventory of questions that have been asked in prior ANES surveys (for lists of these questions, see <http://www.electionstudies.org/resources/questions/questions.htm>). Questions may also be those that have been asked in other empirical studies and have been shown to yield valid and reliable measurements of the constructs of interest. Rigorous demonstrations that are directly applicable to the electoral context will have an advantage. For questions new to the ANES, it is critical that the proposer provide evidence of effective item functioning. Due to the broad demand for questions and high expectations for questionnaire quality, untested questions cannot be considered in this competition.
2. *Building on a Solid Empirical Foundation.* Have the ideas advocated in the proposal been empirically tested and supported by past research? For many proposals, demonstrating the effect of the variables in previous election-oriented research will provide valuable evidence in this regard. For other proposals, it can be helpful to see that focal concepts have also been evaluated in a laboratory setting, in addition to past performance on sample surveys.
3. *Building on Solid Theoretical Footing.* Do the ideas in this proposal follow from strong, convincing theory about how people are likely to think and/or act? Given ANES's mandate to serve a broad user community, it is important that users be able to understand, and explain to others, the theoretical rationale for including particular concepts and questions on the ANES survey. Concepts should be defended as part of a set of cause-and-effect relationships that ultimately have the potential (alone or with other factors) to have a significant impact on vote choice or turnout. Regarding the questions that represent the concepts, it is important to think about the quality of the data that questions will provide. Quality, in turn, is a function of wording. If we ask a question that a nationally representative set of respondents understand in the same way, then the data has greater value in analyses that depend on comparing responses. Many questions, however, either confuse respondents or are asked in ways that should undermine an analysts confidence in the comparability of responses. Much of the feedback that we offer to OC proposers is in the spirit of working with them to arrive at more effective theoretical arguments about the relevance and role of particular concepts and questions.
4. *Breadth of Relevance and Generalizability.* Will the ideas being advocated be interesting, and/or provocative, and/or counter-intuitive to many scholars?
 - Given the broad usage of the ANES Time Series, are unable to accommodate requests to include questions that are relevant for one – or only a few – hypothesis tests. Questions that can be used in a wide range of analyses will be advantaged.¹
5. *Suitability to ANES.* What kinds of statistical analyses would be required to make the most of the proposed questions, and can these analyses be conducted with the array of measures that will be available to analysts? This criterion is critically important as most ANES users draw inferences from the data using statistics. This criterion may lead us not

¹ The ANES Bonus Minutes program offers limited opportunities for scholars who have more specifically tailored interests. Please see http://www.electionstudies.org/announce/newsltr/ANES_BMCC_Announcement_20070813.pdf for details.

to act on some very good ideas, if the ideas are likely to produce very unusable data (e.g., proposals featuring questions for which it is likely that only a few respondents will say "yes"). While such frequencies can be valuable to know, they can limit the usefulness of such variables to most ANES users.

6. *Bridge-Building*. Can the ideas proposed build intellectual bridges from one or more research traditions to others? There is no single approach to explaining turnout or vote choice. Where possible, however, we would like to challenge researchers within certain paradigms to explore the consequences of interacting with other scientific communities. In the past, we have received proposals that brought ideas from outside traditional ways of looking at elections into the context in exciting and potentially path-breaking ways. Subject to such proposals meeting the other stated criteria, we'd like to see more of this.
7. *Controversy-Relevant*. Are the ideas proposed relevant to ongoing controversies among researchers, such that our including particular questions can advance the debate?

Special Rules for Proposals Pertaining to Category 2 Proposals (Changing the ANES Core)

When the 2008 questionnaires are designed, the status of the Core will be central considerations. Core questions need not have an infinite shelf life. Science advances, and new insights can reveal more effective ways of asking important questions or can show that some questions do not in fact meet the requirements of staying in the core.

But the core should be changed only very rarely, recognizing the value of continuity over time. *Our default intent for the 2008 study is to include all questions that are were in the Core as of the last Time Series study in 2004.*

We will welcome proposals to change the Core, but the burden of proof required for making such changes will be high. We will take most seriously arguments that are backed by concrete evidence and strong theory.

To balance the scholarly benefits of continuity and innovation, we are committed to holding the size of the ANES Core constant. The Core will constitute a majority of the 120 minutes of interviewing time.²

Since the size of the Core will remain constant, proposals to elevate to Core status questions must include not only a full explanation as to why the ANES user community will benefit by such a change, it must also name specific questions now in the Core that will be removed from the Core to make room for the new content. This requirement reflects the hard choices that ANES would have to make with respect to such proposals and we feel that it is beneficial to the user community to require scholars who wish to change the Core to offer rigorous and public arguments about the tradeoffs involved.

² The result of separate calls for proposals will increase the total length of the interview. A joint call for proposals by ANES and the Department of Homeland Security will be made later this fall and will add 17 minutes to the post-election wave. An existing call for scholars to contribute to the study by purchasing "ANES Bonus Minutes" may increase the total amount of interviewing time even further. All of these additional questions will be available for everyone in the ANES user community to use.

If changes are made to an existing question in the Core, they will be made with a “splice.” In many cases, the splice will result in a randomly-selected subset of survey respondents (usually numbering about half of the sample) receiving the traditional version of the question and all other respondents receiving the new version. Scholars can then use a comparison of responses to the old and new to construct a means of continuing inference.

We are excited about the opportunity to build the 2008 edition of the ANES Time Series study with you. Please feel free to pass this invitation along to anyone (e.g., your students) who you think might be interested. For additional information about how to submit a proposal and the proposal evaluation process, please visit <http://www.electionstudies.org>. We hope to hear from you.

Jon A. Krosnick and Arthur Lupia
Principal Investigators
American National Election Studies

ANES is funded by the

