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Title: 1987 Pilot Study "Force Choice" Party Identification Question Experiment

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Abstract

This paper compares the traditional party identification question to a forced-choice version of that item. Niemi and Weisberg find that most people give the same answers to both question formats. However, the authors also find that if the "independent" category is not suggested to respondents, fewer people will say they are independents. This experimental wording depresses the proportion of independents by forcing more people to designate a party identification -- the percentage of respondents indicating a partisanship increases by 14 percent -- and allowing respondents to reject all standard partisanship categories by answering "neither" to the party identification question. Finally, the authors compare the associations between the party identification questions and evaluations of Reagan. They find that Republican and Democratic identifiers behave fairly similarly across the two question types, but "independents" evaluate Reagan differently depending on both the question wording used and the manner in which "leaners" are coded.