

Author(s): Conover, Pamela Johnston and Virginia Sapiro

Title: Gender Consciousness and Gender Politics in the 1991 Pilot Study: A Report to the ANES Board of Overseers

Date: January 1992

Dataset(s): 1991 Pilot Study

Abstract

The 1991 Pilot Study included a series of questions tapping evaluations of normative and empirical gender equality in three domains -- the government, the family, and business and industry. To induce greater variance in responses, the survey focused on equality of outcomes, rather than the less controversial equality of opportunity frame. Conover and Sapiro find: (1) There is a strong commitment on the part of Americans to the general idea of gender equality. Nonetheless, domain specific measures do reveal differences in normative preferences across social arenas. (2) An overall measure of normative gender equality constructed from the Pilot Study items correlates strongly with the traditional NES equal roles question and moderately well with relevant feeling thermometers. The Pilot Study measure, however, is likely a more valid measure because it places stronger emphasis on notions of equality in government and the family. (3) The distribution of responses on the empirical equality items is much more sensitive to domain-specific differences than responses to normative equality items. (4) A scale constructed from Pilot Study items, which gauges difference between respondent preferences concerning gender equality and perceptions of reality, underscores the distinctiveness of the family dimension from the government and business/ industry dimensions. (5) American women vary considerably in their sense of emotional interdependence with other women. (6) The cognitive and emotional components of gender consciousness, although related, are clearly distinct. Only those individuals who rate strong on both dimensions can be said to have a sense of gender consciousness. (7) Differing patterns of effect in regression analyses illustrate that the new and old measures of gender-related attitudes are clearly tapping different concepts. (8) While no gender-based differences exist on attitude positions concerning gender-related policy issues, the background and political variable correlates of these positions differ between the sexes.