Social Basis of American voting: adult presentation

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Michigan State University
The 1920s

- GOP domination of gov’t
- “The Business of America is Business”
  – Coolidge
Voting Alignments in the 1920s

Republican Party Support from Northern White Protestants (esp those were
• rich
• in rural areas and small towns.
Why did they vote Repub?
  – They were more affluent and GOP supported business
  – Culturally conservative (e.g. often opposed to drinking alcohol) AND
  – Resented other groups who had recently immigrated
This gave GOP a solid majority
Democratic Party support from disparate groups

- Catholics
- Jews (who also gave support to Socialists)
- Southern Whites

These groups were all poorer and felt excluded from status.

Southern whites were also committed to white supremacy (and Democrats accepted that policy).
Racial Minorities

Black Americans: voted Republican
  • GOP had ended slavery and was more favorable to Blacks than Dems were
    – W Wilson and Race
  • but most Blacks lived in South and were not allowed to vote
Other minorities were minuscule
Major Political Issues Dividing Parties: 1920s

Immigration:

• GOP passes 1924 law, imposing national quotas and favoring people from NW Europe (primarily Protestant)

• Prohibition
  – GOP favors it
  – Dems Oppose
The Depression

• By 1932, output was 2/3 of 1929 and 25% unemployment.
• Repub Pres Hoover’s response: “Things will fix themselves”
• FD Roosevelt wins by landslide in 1932 and brings in Dem Congress
Major policies of FD Roosevelt’s New Deal

- public spending to create jobs and for infrastructure: roadsparks, airports
- Social Security Act
  - old age insurance
  - unemployment insurance
  - federally subsidized programs of public assistance for elderly poor, blind, dependent children (AFDC) (“Welfare”)
- Wagner act (guaranteeing labor the right to collective bargaining)
- Insured bank deposits and regulation of securities exchange
Political Consequences of New Deal

• Blacks become majority Dem
  – because many were helped by policies aiding poor-
  – but most were in South and not allowed to vote

• Many working class northern White Protestants became Dems (esp. those in Labor Unions)
% Dem by SES (socio-econ status) and Religion: 1936 Pres Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>North White Prot</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (profess &amp; Mgr)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (skilled worker and lower white collar)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (semi &amp; unskilled &amp; farm)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elections of 1940-1960

• Decreased Polarization- as GOP Pres candidates accepted the new Deal
  – Ike quote on New Deal
1940-1960

• Alignment stayed mostly the same as in 1930s

• **Dems**: Catholics, Jews, Unionized Working Class, Blacks, Southern Whites
• **GOP**: Non-Unionized Northern Protestants
• But change is about to come
Krugman’s explanation for political change

• Southern Whites Started Voting Republican

• why Southern Whites changed their voting
  – Racial Politics but also rise of other issues
    • Social Cultural and Environment
  – also see changes in behavior of other groups
Race and Realignment

LBJ and Dem Party supported laws to

- outlaw discrimination in employment and public accommodations (passed 1964)
- Guarantee vote to Blacks in South (passed 1965)
  - Both of above received substantial GOP support in Congress
• LBJ and Dems provide more aid (including Welfare) to the poor
Republicans move to the Right

Republicans nominate Goldwater who is on the Right Wing of Party –
• opposing Civil Rights Act,
• favoring the end of Social Security and opposing Medicare.
LBJ (Dem) wins by landslide

• In part because of fear that Goldwater would get us into a war
• Dems received over 90% of Black vote
• BUT Southern Whites start shifting to Republicans
  – Goldwater won 5 deep South states overwhelmingly, while LBJ won rest of south
The Southern White shift gets stronger later
Racial Conflict

- Parts of Black movement moved toward violence in late 1960s
- Urban Ghetto riots (e.g., Detroit in 1967) from

  - Problems with police
  - Housing discrimination
  - segregated schools with poor facilities
Liberal Dem response to racial problems

- affirmative action for minorities (and women)
- school bussing for racial balance
Other major conflicts and problems

- Viet Nam War (increasing frustration on both Left and Right)

- Increase of crime and use of welfare
Growth of Counter culture that

- advocates drugs
- Opposes conventional jobs and sexual monogamy
- “Turn on Tune in Drop Out”
Response of Nixon and most of GOP

Appeal to White resentment over

- Racial issues
- Urban Riots,
- Affirmative Action
- increasing crime,
GOP also appealed to

Resentment over

- counter-culture,
- anti-war movement
Response of White Voters

• By the late 1970s
  – Large majority of Southern Whites support Repubs esp. in Pres elections
  – Many working class and middle class whites in North desert Dems on issues of welfare and crime
• Feel that their taxes are paying for programs for undeserving poor
Election of Reagan (Repub)

who promised

– Lower taxes (esp for rich)
– Less regulation of business
– Less government spending esp on programs for poor
Social Cultural Issues starting late 1960’s

• (1) Women’s Rights
• (2) Right to Abortion
• (3) LGBT Rights
• (1) and (2) were initially not highly partisan
  – Reagan was pro-choice as Calif Governor
  – Initially Nixon supported Equal Rights Amendment
Bill Clinton

Wins back Reagan Dems in part by Neutralizing GOP advantages on crime and welfare

- favoring death penalty and
- opposing “welfare as we know it”
American religious exceptionalism

US much higher % of people believe in God and attend worship regularly than in most advanced nations
– in US, 86% believe in heaven and 43% attend religious services weekly,
– corresp numbers in Britain are 54% and 14%).

In US unlike W Europe, rate of religious beliefs are higher than in 19th century.
Conservative Evangelical Protestants (Literal Interpr of Bible) grown in number, and polit activity strongly

- anti-abortion
- Anti gay
- For abstinence only sex education
- Favor tradition gender roles
- Anti teaching evolution
- Disproportionately Southern
- Allied with Repub Party since 1980
The new religious divide in US

• In the past, primarily by religious affiliation (Protestant, vs Catholic & Jew).
• There are still some such differences
  – but much less than in past
## Religious Affiliation & Pres Vote 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>% Dem (NY Times poll)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The current religious divide

• Religiously conservative Protestants, Catholics and Jews vote Repub

• Religiously liberal and secular Protestants, Catholics and Jews vote Dem
Religious Involvement and 2016 Pres Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attend Religious Services</th>
<th>% Dem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Religious Conservativism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Dem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Born Again or Evangelical</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Race/ Ethnicity and Voting in recent elections

- **Whites:** mostly Repub, Less than 43% D in all recent elections
- **Blacks:** usually 90% Dem, although many are very religious and cultural conservative
- **Latinos:** Mostly Dem, despite cultural conservatism, but divided by income and country of origin
- **Asians:** similar to Latinos
## Race and 2016 Pres Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% of Voters</th>
<th>% Dem of 2 party vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender & Voting

• Prior to 1980: gender had virtually no effect on voting behavior.
• In 1980 Pres Election, women were 8% more Dem than men.
• This gender gap was between 4% and 8% in 1984-2012 Pres Elections
Gender contin

– Abortion *not* the main reason: M and F divided similarly on that issue.

– **Biggest** reasons: parties disagreed on
  
  • equal pay
  
  • family leave,
  
  • sexual assault

– M-F voting difference much bigger among single people than married
• In 2016 Pres Vote, Women were 13% more likely to vote Dem than Men
  Women 54% D vs Men 41% D
Income and other Economic Factors Affecting Voting

– From 1932-1964, income was one of the most important influences on vote.

– Now holding constant Race, Gender and Education,
  
  • There is very little relationship between Income and vote.

– But education has become a more important predictor
Environment Issue from 1970

- Environment not initially partisan:
  - Nixon signed Clean Air & Water Acts and act creating EPA
  - In 1990s, many in GOP accepted need to reduce CO2 emissions,
Environmental Polarization

- But by 1980’s GOP leadership was against environmental movement and
  - in 2000s, climate change denial became standard GOP policy.
Environmental Politics and Voting

• Many blue collar workers fear that environmental regulations will destroy their jobs
  – Many of them vote GOP

• Many educated affluent people value environment and have jobs that are not threatened by environmental regulations
  – Most vote Dem.
Effect of Education among Whites’ Pres Vote - 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Dem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With College Education</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without college Education</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NY Times Poll
Trumps support vs Romney’s

• Over 90% of those who voted for Trump had also voted for Romney in 2012
• But:
  – Romney did a little better among Whites with college education
  – Trump did a little better among Whites without college education
Why many low income Whites vote Repub

• Some have jobs threatened by Dem environ. regulation (coal & oil workers)
• Some don’t understand the econ policies of the two parties:
  – Fox News and GOP candidates often mislead people (e.g. taxes and pre-existing conditions).
  – Many fewer receive political education from labor union, because of great decline in union members. (From 35% in 1960s to 11 % now)
Why many low income Whites vote Repub

• Conservative religious and social values
  – Including belief that each person is responsible for success of self and family

• Seeing minorities and immigrants as taking what should go to people like them
Voting turnout

• Low income people are often low in education
• and often don’t vote at all
Why many affluent people support Democrats

Liberal (Humane) Values

• Take care of the less fortunate
• Accept Differences
• “Do not oppress the stranger”

Protect Environment
How do Educated White People Vote?

• Occupations involving business profits (owning a business or being a highly paid employee of one) tend to vote Repub

• Occupations in public service (teachers, social workers, nurses, journalists, gov’t employees) tend to vote Dem
  – Actors and musicians tend to vote Dem

Q. Which kinds of jobs tend to pay more?
Republicans and Racial Resentment

- Since 1964, GOP has been supported by Whites who resent Blacks and other people of color
  - Hence, Blacks are overwhelmingly Dem

- But until Trump, no GOP Pres candidate had explicitly appealed to racial resentment/ White Nationalism