

Voting behaviour

Individual

Why vote for which party and why party identification

Sociological framework

Which party?

A party represents certain cleavages, class, religion, ethnicity, and region determine who you vote for (Campbell et al. Michigan school) (Butler & Stokes apply to Britain)

Party identification

Socialization causes party identification. Communication with other in your cleavage, social psychology.

Perceptual screen (Clarke et al.) from newspapers etc. from a party.

Leads to stable election outcomes, 'frozen' (Lipset & Rokkan)

Voter change the result of generation replacement.

Individual rationality framework

Costs & benefits

$$U = pb - c$$

B: benefit of preferred party winning

P: chance of being deciding vote

C: costs of voting

(Downs)

However, p is very small, so paradox of voting.

Incentives of voting (S)

Duty (D)

Criticism:

- People are not so rational
- Weak empirical support
- Non-rational elements (duty) weaken the theoretical framework

Valence

When everyone has the same opinion on an issue, you vote for the party who can handle it better. For instance, economy, everyone wants economic growth. (Stokes)

Party identification

It is a heuristic and a running tally of all your votes, decreases cost of voting as you don't need to think about it (Fiorina)

Aggregate

Dealignment: since the 60s the ties between parties and voters have weakened

Evidence

- Reduction in party ID (Dalton, 2000; Holmberg, 2007)
- Membership has fallen. This is more important in Europe than in the US.
- Voter turnout has fallen
- Voters are more volatile (Mair & Bartolini 1991)
- Decline in traditional class voting (Knutsen, 2007). No longer middle class conservatives and working class labour. Maybe people still identify with a class but the ties between the class and the parties have weakened (Evans): working class increasingly votes for RW parties.

Changes in voters

- Postmaterialism since 60s. From survival to self-expression (Inglehart, 2007). Increasing importance of environmentalism, gender equality and autonomy. Leads to green party & RW parties. Mainly through generational change, young people.
- So, new issue-based divides (Deegan-Krause, 2007): globalization, postmaterialism vs traditionalism, immigration. Evidence for this is that issue positions increasingly predict vote choice, especially in young and educated voters (Franklin et al. 1992)
- Deindustrialization and the decline of the manual working class (Knutsen, 2007)
- Cognitive mobilization. People have become more educated, information has become more available. So people have started acting more in line with the individual rationality framework (Dalton, 2013). Party ID is lower in more educated people.

Changes in parties

- Convergence to the centre (Mair, 2007): New labour in 2001. Leads to the increased importance of valence and creates room for RW parties.
- Professionalization, the loss of grassroots and parties turning into catch-all parties (Katz & Mair).
- Personalization. Is a heuristic (also for valence), also possibly a result of changed media landscape.

Causality

Probably an interactive process that started with a change in voters, which was then reinforced by changes in parties.

Increased rationality leads parties to converge and professionalize (Downs predicts in a two party system that both parties move to the centre, game theory). This might have

also caused the increased importance of valence and heuristics causing the rise of personalization (media also important there).

Or maybe because of the loss of the working class, social democratic parties have had to move towards the center to get some middle class votes. And instead of relying on grassroots organizations such as unions they have become more professionalised catch-all parties to maximize their vote share.

This reinforces the changing relationships between parties and voters as parties no longer have a coherent long-term ideology, instead they have become more fluid depending on who is in charge of the party.

One argument for a purely top-down approach, which would be very far-fetched, would be. What about elites and economic elites, lobbying and donations. Cartel party so the party does not need the connections anymore. Mass parties needed the connections, but cartel parties might be more needed to move.
Media changes.

Realignment

Polarization in the US, though this is probably not increased ties but just that the other party is so awful.

Parties can definitely try to realign. For instance, Jeremy Corbyn because caused a spike in labour party membership. However, this clearly did not work so parties are probably fully professionalised now.

Clientelism

Uhhhhh, I cba. Never comes up anyway.

Eastern Europe (kitschelt)

Questions

When do voters have stable attachments to political parties? (2024)

Are the changing relationships between parties and voters a function of changing parties or of changing voters? (2024)

Account for why voter attachment to political parties has eroded in some contexts, but not in others. (2023)

What theory best explains variations in voter attachment to political parties across countries and over time? (2022)

Discuss the ways in which dealignment shapes party competition. (2021)