

Chapter 8: Understanding Presidential Elections

- I. Introduction
- II. Predicting presidential elections
 - A. Variables
 - 1. Economic: measures of prosperity
 - 2. Social: measures of peace
 - 3. Political: measures of in-party and presidential leadership
 - B. Public opinion polls
 - 1. Straw polls
 - a. Definition
 - b. Examples
 - (1) *Literary Digest*
 - (2) Telepolls
 - 2. Scientific polls
 - a. Definition
 - b. Examples
 - (1) Commercial
 - (a) Pioneers
 - (b) Contemporary
 - (2) Academic
 - (a) GSS - NORC
 - (b) NES - CPS/SRC/ICPSR
 - c. Problems
 - (1) Drawing the sample: 1948 – quota-sample problems
 - (a) Longitudinal samples
 - (b) Panel samples
 - (c) Rolling or tracking samples
 - (d) Focus groups
 - (2) Constructing the questionnaire
 - (3) Collecting the data
 - (a) Methods
 - i) In-person
 - ii) Telephone
 - iii) Mail-return
 - (b) Timing: 1948 – the problem in predicting uncommitted
 - (4) Analyzing and interpreting the results
 - (a) Turnout - screening for likely voters
 - (b) Vote choice - allocating undecided voters
 - (c) Coat-tails and national tides - measuring split-ticket voting
 - d. Performance Table 8-1, p. 274 & Table 8-2, p. 275
 - (1) 1936
 - (2) 1948
 - (3) 1980
 - (4) 1996
 - (5) 2000
 - 3. Television forecasts
 - a. Exit-polling: Voter News Service (VNS)
 - b. Influencing the outcome
 - (1) Boost predicted winner

- (a) Wasted-vote effect
- (b) Bandwagon effect
- (2) Upset predicted winner
 - (a) False security effect
 - (b) Underdog effect

III. Interpreting the election Table 8-3, pp. 286-87

A. Models of voting behavior

- 1. Perspective
 - a. *Prospective* voting
 - b. *Retrospective* voting
- 2. Forces
 - a. Long-term
 - (1) Ideology
 - (2) Partisan identification
 - b. Short-term
 - (1) Issues
 - (2) Candidates
 - (a) Personality
 - (b) Performance

B. Eras

- 1. 1930s: class voting
- 2. 1950s: party/candidate voting
- 3. 1960s to present: issue/candidate voting

IV. Converting electoral choice into public policy Pp. 291-96

A. The president's imprecise mandate

- 1. Margin of victory
 - a. Close
 - b. Landslide
- 2. Long-term shift in partisan balance
 - a. Realigning elections: 1824, 1860, 1896, 1932
 - b. Maintaining elections
 - c. Deviating elections
 - d. Dealigning elections: 1968

B. Party platforms, campaign pledges, and the new agenda

- 1. Sources of incongruence
- 2. Importance

C. Expectations and performance

- 1. Inflated expectations: the role of media, crises, and ego
- 2. Crippled performances: the role of checks and balances

D. The electoral coalition and governing

- 1. Decline of urban, state, and congressional party bosses
- 2. Ascendance of autonomous presidential, gubernatorial, and congressional campaign organizations

E. Personality politics and presidential leadership

- 1. Define and limit priorities
- 2. Build own issue coalition
- 3. Balance flexibility with consistency
- 4. Balance reactive and proactive relationship to public opinion
- 5. Counter increasingly adversarial relationship to media by
 - a. Managing through news conferences: FDR, JFK, LBJ
 - b. Going around them through presidential addresses: Reagan, G. Bush, & G.W. Bush

V. Summary