

Southern *Discomfort*: Ideological Cross-Pressures in Presidential Voting

D. Sunshine Hillygus  
Assistant Professor of Government  
Harvard University  
[hillygus@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:hillygus@fas.harvard.edu)

Todd Shields  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
University of Arkansas  
[tshield@uark.edu](mailto:tshield@uark.edu)

Abstract:

The South has undergone dramatic changes in population, economics, and partisanship in recent decades, leading scholars to conclude that the 'new South' has lost many of its unique patterns of voting behavior. Using an extensive data set that contains sufficient sample sizes for regional comparisons, we estimate an interactive model of vote choice in the 2000 presidential election to compare the decision-making of Southern and Non-Southern respondents. We find that the voting calculus of Southern voters remains distinct, particularly for those struggling with cross-pressures between ideology and party identification. These findings have theoretical implications for general models of presidential voting behavior and practical relevance for understanding election outcomes and the future of party politics in the South.

In recent decades, the American South has experienced dramatic changes in population, economics, and partisanship that continue to alter not only the political landscape of the region, but the entire nation. The wide-ranging effects of these developments on electoral behavior are not entirely understood, but it is unquestionable that the New South remains as important in American politics—particularly presidential elections—as the Old South. With nearly two-thirds of the Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency, the South is a considerable electoral prize. The 2004 presidential hopefuls have already demonstrated substantial efforts aimed at reaching Southern voters, not the least of which is Howard Dean’s reference to pick-up trucks and the Confederate flag, his recent emphasis on personal religion, and General Wesley Clark’s renewed Southern twang (Schweitzer 2003, Weiss, 2003). The epic battles fought over votes in Florida, Tennessee, and across the entire South during the 2000 presidential election similarly attest to the importance of this geographic voting block for winning the White House. More than a decade ago, Black and Black (1992, 344) concluded that ‘as the united South goes: so goes the nation.’ Yet, despite the political importance of the region, social scientists have yet to fully explore, at least empirically, the individual-level underpinnings of Southern voting behavior—not only how Southern voters compare to the rest of the electorate, but also how they match up to our general theories of political behavior. In this investigation, we rely on a unique data set with a large sample of Southern voters casting ballots in the 2000 presidential race. Despite arguments that regional differences may be in decline, particularly as the South becomes more like the rest of the nation, we find that Southern voters remain unique in many respects – especially when they face cross-pressures between ideology and partisan affiliation. Further, we

find substantial evidence that retrospective evaluations of the Clinton Presidency played an important role in the calculus of all voters. Finally, our findings suggest that general models of voting behavior should more carefully consider the importance of individual-level differences in decision-making if we are to gain a full understanding of presidential voting behavior.

### The South and Presidential Voting: Do Regions Remain Distinct?

Since W.W.II, the South has been a catalyst for Republican control of the nation's highest office, except when supporting Southern Democrats—Lyndon Johnson from Texas, Jimmy Carter from Georgia, and Bill Clinton from Arkansas. The South has historically exhibited unique patterns of voting behavior, ranging from higher levels of split ticket voting, higher levels of cross-over voting, and generally lower levels of voter turnout (Frymer, 1994, 1997; Burden and Kimball 2002; Wattenberg 2002). Given the South's importance in presidential elections and its unique voting patterns, it is surprising that Southern voting behavior remains an understudied area of political behavior. To be sure, there is a rich descriptive literature detailing the trends of voting behavior in the contemporary South (Heard 1952, Black and Black 1992, 2003). Missing, however, are comprehensive empirical studies of the individual-level factors producing these unique voting patterns.<sup>1</sup>

Many empirical models of political behavior regularly include a “South” dummy variable, recognizing that Southern residents act in unique ways (e.g., Alvarez and Nagler 1998). Ultimately, however, these indicator variables tell us nothing about *why* Southern voters are unique or even what factors influence their singular patterns of political behavior. Moreover, given the recent partisan realignment in the South (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, Black and Black 2003), we might expect the distinctive patterns of voting behavior to disappear with time.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Shafer and Johnston (2001, 2003) for an exception.

As Cowden (2001) suggests, perhaps we have witnessed the ‘Southernization of the Nation and the Nationalization of the South?’ Similarly, Shafer and Johnston (2001, 623) argue that their findings indicate ‘a huge instance of the nationalization of partisan politics’ and the ‘closing of North/South comparisons.’<sup>2</sup> Is the ‘South’ dummy variable still necessary in our general models of presidential vote choice? Alternatively, if significant regional differences in presidential voting remain, are these patterns attributable to simple differences in the distribution of fundamentals, such as demographics, ideological perspectives, and partisan affiliation, or are the decision making processes of Southern voters actually distinct from the rest of the electorate? While extant research is surprisingly silent in regard to these important questions, the answers speak directly to our understanding of recent political transformations in the South, our theoretical understanding of voter decision making, and our expectations regarding the future of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Using survey data from Knowledge Networks in the 2000 election, we estimate an interactive model of presidential vote choice, thereby allowing the covariates of vote choice to differ by region. We find that the voting calculus of Southern voters does in fact differ from the rest of the electorate, with ideology weighed more heavily in the vote choice decision. This effect is particularly pronounced among individuals cross-pressured between their party identification and ideological considerations. These findings suggest that future research in presidential voting behavior must more carefully consider the relevance of individual differences in voter decision making – particularly when those individual differences have been central to massive historical and political power struggles.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> In fact, Abramowitz (1994, 21) predicted presidential vote choice in the 1988 presidential election and found an insignificant Southern indicator variable -- even in an election when the Republicans swept the South.

<sup>3</sup> Leighley (2001) makes similar arguments with respect to understanding political participation.

## The New South

The Southern region of the United States, defined here as the eleven states of the Old Confederacy, has changed dramatically in recent decades (Lamis 1984, Petrocik 1987, Stanley 1988, Shafer and Johnston 2001). According to the 2000 Census report, the South was the second fastest growing region in the country (closely following the West) with a 17% increase in population from 1990 to 2000, adding an additional 14.8 million people.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, metropolitan growth increased dramatically in the South – as did the influx of Hispanic residents. Increases in education, income, and the median age have also contributed to the changes across the South (Cobb 1993). Most notably, however, has been the transformation of the South from the heart of Democratic strength during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the foundation of the contemporary Republican resurgence (Black and Black 2003).

As shown by the now-familiar pattern in Figure 1, increases in Republican Party identification expanded rapidly in the South during the final decades of the previous century.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, the ranks of Democratic faithful declined. In the rest of the country, changes in party identification were much less dramatic. As shown in Figure 2, party identification in Non-Southern states remained comparatively stable, albeit with some growth in Republican identification during the 1980s and the latter part of the 1990s. It is clear that the once solidly Democratic South has now shifted to a competitive two-party region (Black and Black 2003). Somewhat less clear, however, is how and why this dramatic transformation in party fortunes occurred and what implications it has had for contemporary voting behavior in the South.

---

<sup>4</sup> United States 2000 Census Bureau Report (2001, 10-11).

<sup>5</sup> Self-identified Independents who lean toward the Democratic or Republican parties are classified as Independents throughout our analysis. The results are largely unchanged if we collapse leaners with party identifiers.

Figure 1: Party Identification in the South: 1952-2002

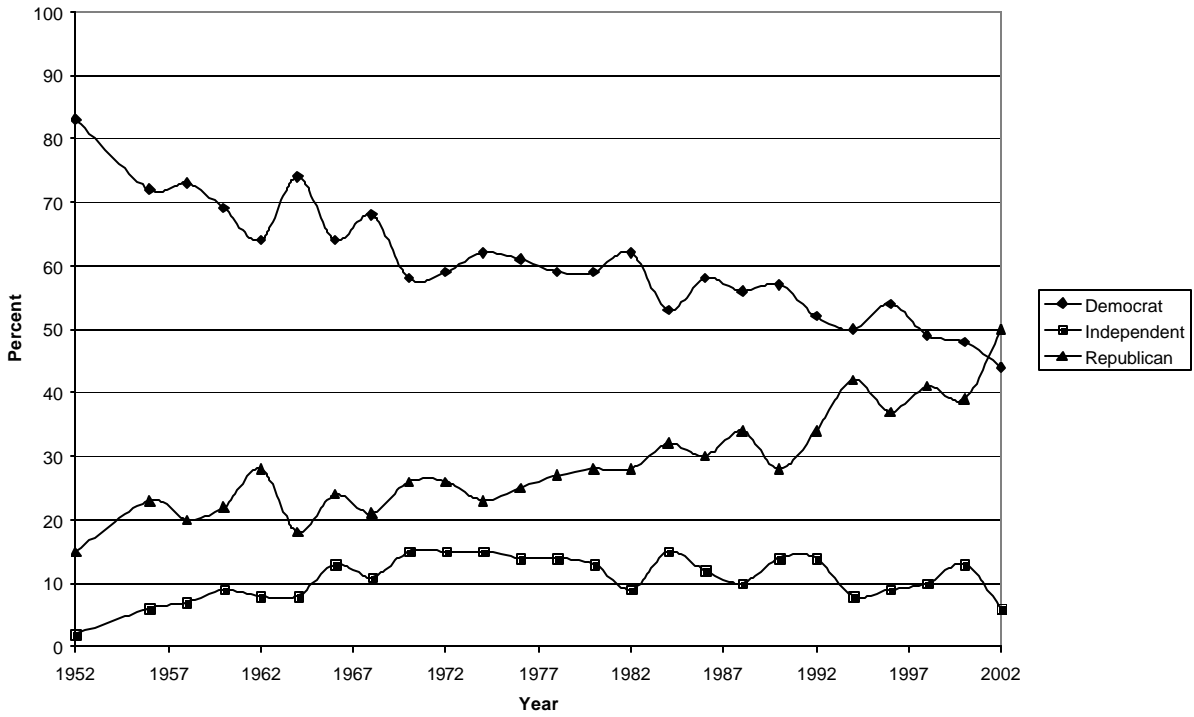
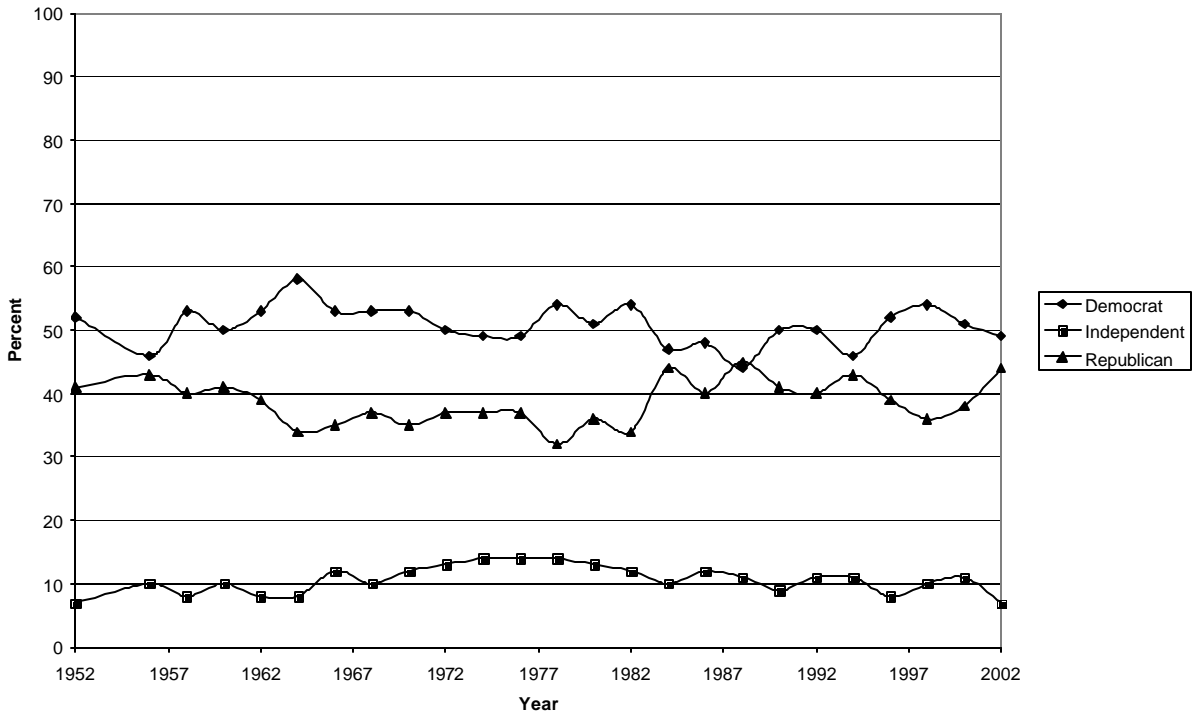


Figure 2: Party Identification in the Non-South: 1952-2002



Source: American National Elections Cumulative File 1952-2002.

A great deal of research has investigated the rise of the Republican Party across the South, and many scholars have examined the role of race, the influx of new voters, the parental transmission of partisanship to children, and other important political issues and ideological dimensions (see Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002 and Cowden 2001 for excellent reviews). In ground breaking work, Abramowitz and Saunders (1998) demonstrate that during the late 1980s and 1990s Americans became more willing and able to distinguish between the political parties' ideological positions, and thus, were better able to select a party that approximated their own political ideology. Ultimately, their findings suggest that the dramatic change in party fortunes across the South are the result of increased ideological polarization among elites and political parties at the national level, which in turn has made it easier for voters to perceive correctly ideological distinctions between the two political parties. In other words, conservative voters have realigned themselves to the G.O.P. while liberal voters have found their way to the Democratic Party.<sup>6</sup>

Although recent research on the South has focused largely on explaining 'over-time' changes in party identification, the literature clearly has implications for contemporary Southern voting behavior. With the partisan realignment across the South, the distinctiveness of Southern political behavior may be diminishing. Historically, Southern voters often found their issue positions or ideologies at odds with those of their political party, most markedly among conservative Southern Democrats.<sup>7</sup> These ideological-partisan cross-pressures were often

---

<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, new voters have simply entered the voting population aligned with the ideologically correct party. In fact, a good deal of evidence suggests that much of the aggregate change in party identification reflects the entrance of new voting cohorts (Beck 1976; Carmines and Stimson 1989, Black and Black 2003).

<sup>7</sup> These conflicts had at one time been based primarily on racial issues (Carmines and Stimson 1989) but in recent years have included a diverse set of policies ranging from gun control to national defense and the welfare state (Abramowitz 1994).

thought to contribute to the higher levels of split ticket voting (typically casting ballots for a Republican presidential candidate and Democratic congressional candidate) and cross-over voting (especially Democrats voting for Republican candidates) in the South (Frymer 1994, 1997), but these voting patterns have been on the decline in recent years. Burden and Kimball (2002), for instance, find that the effect of region on split ticket voting declined precipitously in recent decades. Ticket splitting was consistently 15-20 percent higher in the South than in other areas of the country from 1952 until 1960, but regional differences nearly vanished in the 1980s and 1990s (Burden and Kimball 2002, 91). Recent work by Bartels (2000) also has direct implications for the impact of party realignment on presidential voting behavior. Using the NES cumulative file from 1952-1996, Bartels regresses presidential vote choice on a series of indicator variables denoting ‘strong [party] identifiers,’ ‘weak identifiers,’ and ‘independent leaners.’ With only these indicators of party identification as independent variables, Bartels finds that partisanship continues to be an incredibly strong predictor of presidential vote choice – despite claims by many that the impact of partisanship had declined dramatically since the 1960s. More importantly for our purposes, Bartels finds that partisanship continues to be a strong predictor of presidential vote choice across the entire nation – and he finds little evidence of any consistent differences between the contemporary South and Non-South (2000, 41). In fact, his analyses suggest that the impact of partisanship on presidential vote choice in the South began to grow during the early 1970s and by 1996 there were almost no differences in the impact of partisanship on presidential vote choice between the South and Non-South.

Overall, existing research suggests that the South may no longer be the distinctive region it once was – at least in terms of political behavior. As party identification and ideology have converged in the South, party identification should act as the single strongest predictor of

presidential vote choice (Miller 1991, Bartels 1992, 2000). In other words, party affiliation translates into vote choice, and party affiliation should now enter the presidential voting calculus of Southern voters in the same way it does for voters across the nation. We argue, however, that this research may paint an incomplete picture of voting behavior in the South. There is little doubt that the South has changed partisan allegiance and that partisans are more ideologically polarized than half a century ago.<sup>8</sup> We contend, however, that Southern voters are still characterized by ideological cross-pressures that continue to play a role in their voting calculus. We expect that there remains, across the South, a significant portion of voters for whom critical policy preferences may be at odds with their national party; even if an individual identifies with the party that more closely matches their preferences on *most* issues. For instance, a poor Southern voter who opposes gun control may identify with the Republican Party, but may more closely identify with the Democratic Party on many economic issues.<sup>9</sup> In a limited check of these cross-pressures, we compare the percentage of Southern and Non-Southern respondents who exhibit cross-pressures between party identification and a variety of issue positions.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Abramowitz and Saunders provide evidence that Southern voters have become better able to distinguish correctly the ideological positions of the Democratic and Republican national parties and candidates. For similar arguments see Schreckhise and Shields (2003).

<sup>9</sup> See Black and Black (1992, 2003) and Shafer and Johnston (2001, 2003) for excellent discussions of the many competing policy and ideological dimensions confronting Southern voters – as well as how the Democratic and Republican Parties have attempted to use these cross-pressures to their advantage.

<sup>10</sup> Because the Knowledge Networks data include limited issue questions, we rely on the 2000 year General Social Survey because they have an adequate sample size and issue questions for a brief comparison. Respondents are coded as cross-pressured if they expressed an issue position “inconsistent” with their party identification (in other words, Republicans expressing a liberal issue position or Democrats expressing a conservative issue position). For example, a Democrat (Republican) who indicated that they opposed (supported) additional governmental spending on welfare was coded one, while a Democrat (Republican) who indicated that they supported (opposed) additional governmental spending on welfare was coded zero. The GSS has a larger sample of southern respondents in part because they, like the NES, use a definition of South that includes KY, OK, WV, MD, DE, and DC in addition to the eleven states of the old confederacy. Unfortunately, the GSS includes only a respondent’s region and not their specific state (at least in the GSS cumulative file used in this analysis).

Table 1: Percent Cross Pressured between Party Identification and Issue Positions

Issue	South	Non-South
Support for Government Spending on Education	<b>34.6%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>
Support for Abortion in Situations with Strong Possibility of Birth Defects	<b>45.0</b>	<b>36.6</b>
Support for Abortion in Situations where a Married Couple Does not Want Children	<b>48.8</b>	<b>42.3</b>
Support for Abortion in Situations where a Family is too Poor for Children	<b>46.6</b>	<b>40.5</b>
Support for Abortion in Situations where a Mother is Single and Does Not want Children	<b>52.9</b>	<b>42.5</b>
Support for Abortion for any reason	<b>51.2</b>	<b>43.1</b>
Support for Permits before Gun Purchases	39.3	36.8
Support for Affirmative Action	28.4	28.7
Support for Increased Spending on Defense	19.8	16.3
Support Legalization of Marijuana?	<b>55.5</b>	<b>46</b>
Support for Prayer in School	<b>54.3</b>	<b>46.1</b>

Source: 2000 General Social Survey. Bolded values represent items finding statistically significant differences between the South and Non-South ( $p < .05$ ).

As shown in Table 1, there are large percentages of respondents in both the South and Non-South who face cross-pressures between their party identification and their issue positions.<sup>11</sup> More central to our concerns, however, is that there are a greater percentage of Southern respondents facing inconsistencies between their expressed party identification and their preferred issue positions across a wide range of social issues. Further, these cross-pressures are particularly pronounced in attitudes toward abortion, prayer in school, and legalization of

<sup>11</sup> Such large percentages of cross pressured respondents are the result of the questions used in the General Social Survey that do not allow participants a 'middle' or 'unsure' category. See the appendix for the questions and possible answers used in the General Social Survey.

marijuana.<sup>12</sup> While this is only a preliminary analysis of regional differences in cross-pressures, and we make no attempt here to explain or examine all possible dimensions of cross-pressures, it seems clear that for many policy positions, particularly in regard to social policy, there are substantial differences among Southern and Non-Southern respondents who reported a party identification inconsistent with their reported positions on various issues. At minimum these patterns suggest that cross-pressures remain a potential factor in the voting decisions of Southern voters.

Research in presidential voting behavior has clearly established that cross-pressured individuals are less likely to vote,<sup>13</sup> and are more likely to have difficulty making up their minds, often delaying their vote decisions to the end of the presidential campaign. Campbell et al. (1960) found that a cross-pressured individual was more likely to ‘cast his [or her] vote for President with substantially less enthusiasm, ... [was] much more prone to split his [or her] ticket in voting for other offices, and ... [was] somewhat less likely to vote at all than [was] the person whose partisan feelings [were] entirely consistent’ (1960, 83).<sup>14</sup> If Southern voters continue to face more ideological cross-pressures than voters outside the South, then we also expect that the role of party identification may be somewhat less important in their voting calculus than predicted by previous research.

Thoroughly testing the many specific policy cross-pressures that face Southern voters is beyond the scope of the current project -- and most existing data for that matter. Regardless, our

---

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the dimensions presented in Table 1, we examined differences across a wide variety of political issue questions included in the GSS. Perhaps surprisingly, we found no evidence of significant differences across a wide variety of racial dimensions including support for affirmative action, support for increased spending to improve the conditions of blacks, and various questions probing support for reducing crime or helping the poor.

<sup>13</sup> This may help explain the continuing discrepancy in turnout rates between the South and Non-South, and is something we are addressing in a separate paper.

<sup>14</sup> Remarkably similar conclusions were reached regarding cross-pressured voters across a dramatic range of elections studies and countries (e.g., Lazarsfeld et. al., 1944, 1954, and Daudt 1961). More recently, James Campbell (2000, 97) argues that cross-pressures are an important factor in understanding contemporary presidential vote choice and election outcomes.

theoretical expectations, combined with a larger-scale data set, provide important and testable hypotheses that challenge current understandings of voter decision making in the South and the Nation. As Southern voters have more accurately placed the ideological position of the national political parties, and have subsequently revised their partisanship based on these ideological comparisons (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998), ideology may actually weigh *more* heavily than party identification in the vote decisions of Southern voters compared to those outside the South. We hypothesize that the voting calculus of Southern voters remains distinct from the rest of the electorate and unlike recent work suggesting that the impact of party identification on presidential vote is similar in the South and Non-South, we expect ideological considerations to weigh more heavily in the voting calculus of Southern voters, especially for individuals facing cross-pressures between ideology and partisanship. We believe that both modeling and data limitations used in prior research has masked these important differences between Southern and Non-Southern voters.

#### Data, Model, Method

Unfortunately, data limitations have previously limited rigorous examination of voting behavior in the South vs. Non-South, as most national surveys include ‘fewer than 300 Southern white voters in each election’ (Bartels 2000, 41). Further, many the Southern respondents reside in more populous Southern rim states like Florida and Texas – the 2000 NES contains just 123 respondents from the Deep South. A sample size of 300 respondents has an imprecise margin of error of  $\pm 5.7\%$  at the 95% level of confidence. While the NES is an invaluable data set for national level analyses of political behavior and attitudes, sub-sample regional analyses must be

conducted carefully and with a good deal of caution given the potential for error with such small regional samples (Hadley 1981).<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps in part because of data limitations, previous research has typically included a simple dummy variable to control, or test, for the distinctiveness of Southern voters relative to Non-Southern voters (Burden and Kimball 2002). Although this approach estimates the mean vote in the South relative to the Non-South, it assumes that the population parameters of the theoretically relevant covariates are equal for the two regions. Such an approach assumes, for instance, that the effect of being a Democrat in the South is the same as the effect of being a Democrat in the non-South – perhaps a dubious assumption given the dramatic political and historical forces facing Southern partisans (Black and Black 2003, Shafer and Johnston 2003).<sup>16</sup> In order to test for statistically significant differences in the effects of independent variables among Southern and Non-Southern voters, we estimate an interactive model of presidential vote choice in the 2000 presidential election. This model allows us to examine the potentially unique decision making patterns of Southern voters and provides a greater understanding of the role of partisanship on presidential vote choice and a greater understanding of the tumultuous 2000 presidential election.

Before we test our expectations, we must first define the “standard” vote choice model. Presidential voting models abound and include all number of predictor variables, ranging from candidate attractiveness to the integrity and trustworthiness of presidential candidates. For the sake of parsimony, we include only variables for which there is a general and unquestionable consensus regarding their theoretical importance in vote choice models. In general, there are two

---

<sup>15</sup> As Prysby (1982, 423) correctly argues, “One can use regional subgroups with confidence only when the number of respondents and sampling points is large enough to bring the sampling error within tolerable bounds.”

<sup>16</sup> Another approach is to estimate separate regressions for the two regions. This approach, however, does not allow statistical tests of the potentially different impacts of the independent variables (Jacard and Turisi 2003).

influential schools of thought in American political behavior that have contributed to our standard empirical analyses of individual-level voting behavior. The first, based on the seminal work of Campbell et al (1960), contends that vote choice is the product of long-term political predispositions and personal background characteristics. The second, the retrospective voting model (Fiorina 1981), suggests that elections are a referendum on the performance of the incumbent presidential party. As with previous research (Holbrook 1996), we define the “standard” vote choice equation as the integration of these two models.

The dependent variable in our model is a dichotomous variable scored 1 for those supporting Bush and 0 for those supporting Gore in the 2000 election.<sup>17</sup> Included as independent variables are typical demographic/group controls, including gender, age, and race. The political predisposition variables include party identification (Democrat and Republican indicator variables) and ideology (self-reported liberal to conservative scale). Also included in the model is an interaction of party identification and ideology to capture the effects of individual-level cross-pressures. Again, we hypothesize that the interplay of ideology and party affiliation in the voting calculus of Southern voters is somewhat different from that in the rest of the electorate.<sup>18</sup>

Retrospective evaluations of the incumbent administration are captured with two variables. The retrospective variable often included in forecasting models and models of vote choice is presidential approval – the degree to which the respondent approves of the job the president is doing.<sup>19</sup> We expect, however, that presidential approval is not sufficient to capture

---

<sup>17</sup> Minor party supporters and nonvoting respondents are omitted from the analysis, but account for a small percentage of respondents. Nader supporters accounted for 3.4% of original sample (2.0% among Southern respondents) and Buchanan supporters accounted for less than 1% of respondents in both the South and Non-South.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that our current focus is on the importance of party identification and ideology in Southern presidential voting behavior. At least in this analysis, we do not enter the debate regarding which particular issues (e.g., race, economic class, defense, etc.) lie behind the partisan and ideological orientations of Southern and Non-Southern voters.

<sup>19</sup> Although a measure of respondents’ evaluation of the state of the economy is not available, research has found that presidential approval is a more consistent measure of retrospective evaluations (Holbrook 1996).

retrospective evaluations in the 2000 election. Given the complexity of opinions towards the Clinton administration—a White House characterized by a strong economic record but a number of embarrassing personal improprieties—Clinton scored reasonably well in job approval ratings (55% approved), but much worse in favorability marks (only 39% were “somewhat” or “highly” favorable). This disconnect between personal and professional evaluations was unmistakably evident in the 2000 campaign as pundits and journalists debated the role that Clinton should have played in Gore’s campaign, particularly in the South. As reported in the New York Times (October 15, 2000 page 28),

Many residents in Arkansas and Louisiana were quite specific in their criticism of Mr. Gore, repeatedly voicing three themes that are leading them to think seriously about voting for Mr. Bush. Most often cited is the vice president’s failure to separate himself from Mr. Clinton’s scandals, which remain an open wound for many ... and there is also widespread if tentatively voiced sense that Mr. Gore’s personality is simply not as ‘Southern’ as Mr. Bush, that he lacks the easy backslapping boyishness that is the lubricant of the regions politics.

Yet, others condemned the Gore campaign for not relying more heavily on Presidential Clinton during the campaign. As New York Times reporter, Rick Perry summarized (October 31, 2000, page 1),

What no Democratic strategist will admit is that there might be a simple, if humiliating, way to galvanize these should-be Democratic states. If anyone can rally the troops across the South, it is Mr. Clinton, but the Gore team remains divided over whether to enlist the President’s help.

Recent investigations of the 2000 presidential election have similarly found that presidential approval ratings were an insufficient measure of retrospective evaluations of the Clinton administration (Fiorina et al. 2003; Hillygus and Jackman 2003). Consequently, we include not only a measure of Clinton job approval, but also a measure of personal unfavorability toward President Clinton. Our model will allow us to evaluate the relative role of retrospective

evaluations in support of Bush or Gore in the 2000 election, but will also determine if these retrospective considerations were more or less important for Southern voters. The standard model of voting behavior in the 2000 presidential election can thus be expressed as follows.

$$PR(Bush)_i = \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}_{1i}(Gender) + \mathbf{b}_{2i}(Black) + \mathbf{b}_{3i}(Age) + \mathbf{b}_{4i}(Party\_Identification) + \mathbf{b}_{5i}(Ideology) + \mathbf{b}_{6i}(Ideology * Party\_Identification)$$

Because we are interested in any differences in the effects of these covariates for Southern voters, we estimate an interactive model in which each of these theoretically relevant variables are interacted with an indicator variable for the South, thereby allowing us to statistically compare the effects of the independent variables for each region. We test this model with a large-scale survey data set by Knowledge Networks during the 2000 campaign. Knowledge Networks is a survey research firm created by political scientists Norman Nie and Doug Rivers. Respondents in the Knowledge Networks panel are randomly selected through Random Digit Dial (RDD) sampling techniques on a quarterly updated sample frame consisting of the entire U.S. telephone population who fall within the MicrosoftWeb TV network.<sup>20</sup> While KN panelists are recruited by phone, the actual mode of interviewing is self-completion, via the Internet and a WebTV unit. Panelists are provided with a WebTV unit and an Internet connection in exchange for their survey participation. Thus, although surveys are conducted over the Internet, respondents are a random probability sample of the United States population. By using a methodology that produces a representative sample of the U.S. population, KN overcomes the most common shortfall of previous Internet surveys. The viability of the KN methodology was recently demonstrated in an objective comparison test. Krosnick and Chang (2001) commissioned a set of side-by-side surveys using a single questionnaire to gauge public opinion

---

<sup>20</sup> Eighty-seven percent of the U.S. population falls within this network, so the sample is very close to a national RDD sample. Telephone numbers have an equal probability of selection, and sampling is done without replacement. Detailed information on the Knowledge Networks methodology can be found on their website [www.knowledgenetworks.com](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com)

and voting preferences regarding the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election from national samples of American adults. The researchers find that the Knowledge Networks survey is comparable to the RDD telephone survey and is representative of the U.S. population with respect to respondent demographics, attitudes, and behaviors. We restrict our analysis to individuals interviewed after Election Day, leaving us a final sample size of roughly 10,000 respondents; including some 2,500 respondents living in one of the former states of the Old Confederacy. Another benefit of the KN data is that many of the key exogenous variables—party identification, ideology, demographics—were collected before the beginning of the fall campaign, so that they were not influenced by the campaign itself.<sup>21</sup>

We offer a brief descriptive look at these respondents before turning to the results for the multivariate model. In comparing the percentage of respondents showing cross-pressures between ideology and party identification, we find very little evidence to challenge existing research. There are marginally more conservative Democrats in the South (10%) than in the Non-South (8%), but there is almost no difference in the distribution of liberal Republicans in the Non-South (6%) and South (5%). In comparing the bivariate relationship between party identification and vote choice in the 2000 election, we find that 83% of Democrats supported Gore compared to 87% in the Non-South, and 91% of Republicans in the South supported Bush compared to 88% in the Non-south. Thus, our bivariate findings are very much in line with previous research finding that party identification is an excellent predictor of vote choice (although Southern Democrats do appear somewhat less loyal), and that party identification and ideology are quite well matched. Our expectation, however, is that the interplay of ideology and party identification on vote choice are quite different in the South than in the Non-South.

---

<sup>21</sup> Existing research on KN data has found minimal panel effects or selection bias (Dennis 2001).

## Findings:

Comparing the decision-making process of Southern and Non-Southern voters, the model indicates significant differences in the weight of the various factors on the vote decision. The interactive model of vote choice estimated here is superior to a standard model with a South dummy variable as indicated by the reduction in log-likelihood between the restricted and unrestricted model and the significant chi-square statistic. The coefficients and standard errors for the interactive model (as well as model fit) can be found in Table 2. Highlighted covariates are those for which there is a statistically significant difference in effect on presidential vote choice between the South and Non-South. The coefficients themselves, however, are not directly interpretable without taking into account both the main and interactive effects (and their standard errors) as well as the values of all other variables in the model. Thus, to evaluate the effect of each of the variables, we calculate the change in predicted probability across each variable's range of values, with the confidence intervals on these predictions calculated using the delta method.<sup>22</sup> These results are presented in Table 3.

Looking first at the demographic variables, we find some interesting comparisons between the South and Non-South. As expected, gender has a significant impact on the decision to support Bush or Gore, with women predicted to be 10% points (12% points in South) less likely to support Bush, controlling for all else. More notably, the difference in the predicted probability of supporting Bush between blacks and nonblacks between the South and Non-South was substantial, in part because of the non-black baseline prediction in the South. Outside the South, the predicted probability of supporting Bush for blacks is .25 compared to .53 for nonblacks. In the South, the predicted probability of supporting Bush is .15 for blacks compared

---

<sup>22</sup> All other variables are held at their means (except in the case of interaction effects) and indicator variables are set to zero. The standard errors for these effects are calculated using the delta method. Given the sample size, most effects, unsurprisingly, are statistically significant.

to .63 for nonblacks. In other words, the model predicts that 25% of Independent Blacks in the Non-South supported Bush, compared to 53% of Independent Non-Blacks in the Non-South. In contrast, only 15% of Independent Blacks in the South are predicted to support Bush, compared to 63% of Non-Blacks. Comparing the relative effects of all predictors, the Black indicator variable is the second largest predictor of the 2000 vote in the South.

Table 2: Vote Choice in the 2000 Presidential Election

	Non-South		South	
	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	-1.16	1.19	-0.31	0.35
<b>Age</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>0.004</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>-0.41</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>-0.51</b>	<b>0.14</b>
<b>Black</b>	<b>-1.24</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>-2.25</b>	<b>0.35</b>
Ideology	1.60	0.18	1.55	0.32
Republican	1.58	0.20	1.30	0.39
<b>Democrat</b>	<b>-0.83</b>	<b>0.16</b>	<b>-1.33</b>	<b>0.30</b>
<b>Ideology*Democrat</b>	<b>-0.46</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.52</b>
<b>Ideology*Republican</b>	<b>-0.22</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.61</b>
Unfavorability	2.60	0.15	2.72	0.26
Approval	-1.00	0.11	-0.83	0.20
N		10152		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.52		
% Correctly Predicted		0.86		
Chi-square (df=10)		18.64*		

Note: Coefficients and Standard Errors for Interactive Logit Model predicting Bush vote in 2000 Election. Chi-square statistic calculated for change between interactive model and restricted model with only South dummy and no interactions between South and other covariates (\* p<.05). The bolded covariates are those for which there is a statistically significant (p<.05) difference between the Non-South and South.

Table 3: Predicted Change in Probabilities: 2000 Vote Choice

	NonSouth	South
Age	-0.14 (0.0003)	-0.30 (0.01)
Female	-0.10 (0.001)	-0.12 (0.006)
Black	-0.28 (0.01)	-0.48 (0.04)
Ideology (Independent)	0.38 (0.003)	0.35 (0.04)
Republican (moderate)	0.30 (0.02)	0.27 (0.06)
Democrat (moderate)	-0.25 (0.01)	-0.27 (0.001)
Conservative Democrat	0.22 (0.05)	0.41 (0.1)
Liberal Republican	-0.20 (0.04)	-0.24 (0.09)
Clinton Unfavorability	0.57 (0.002)	0.57 (0.02)
Clinton Approval	-0.24 (0.0001)	-0.19 (0.01)

Note: Change in Predicted Probability of Supporting Bush between Minimum and Maximum Values (all other variables set to means; dummy variables set to zero). Standard errors in parentheses computed using the delta method.

Among one of the more interesting findings is the difference in the total effect of age in the South and Non-South. Young voters relative to older voters were more than twice as likely to support Bush in the South compared to the Non-South (although the difference is also statistically significant in the Non-South). Comparing even the bivariate results illustrates the dramatic difference in support among young people in the South v. Non-South—in the South, 53% of 18-34 year olds reported voting for Bush compared to just 44% in the Non-South. That these effects hold up even controlling for ideology, party identification, and assessments of the previous administration is an interesting finding that deserves further exploration in future research and are certainly consistent with recent research arguing that the partisan realignment in the South can be attributed (at least in part) to more Republican entering cohorts (Carmines and Stimson 1989, Cowden 2001, Abramowitz and Saunders 1998).

Turning to the effects of ideology and party identification, we find support for our key hypothesis. Although there is little difference between the total effects of ideology among Independents in the South and Non-South (difference is not statistically significant), ideology has a considerably larger effect on the voting calculus of partisans in the South than among partisans in the Non-South. Liberal Republicans in the South are predicted to be 24% points less likely to support Bush than are conservative Republicans, compared to a predicted difference of 20% points in the Non-South. More notably, conservative Democrats in the Non-South are 22% points more likely to support Bush over Gore than are liberal Democrats. In contrast, conservative Democrats in the South are 41% points more likely to support Bush than are liberal Southern Democrats! Figure 3 and Figure 4 graph the predicted probabilities of supporting Bush for Democrats and Republicans across the range of ideology. The role of ideology among Democrats is particularly pronounced. The predicted probability of Southern conservative Democrats supporting Bush is .58 compared to just .40 for a non-Southern conservative Democrats. So, all else held equal, we would predict that a conservative Democrat in the South supported Bush, while a conservative Democrat in the Non-South supported Gore.

Figure 3: Predicted Probability of Bush Vote among Democrats by Ideology

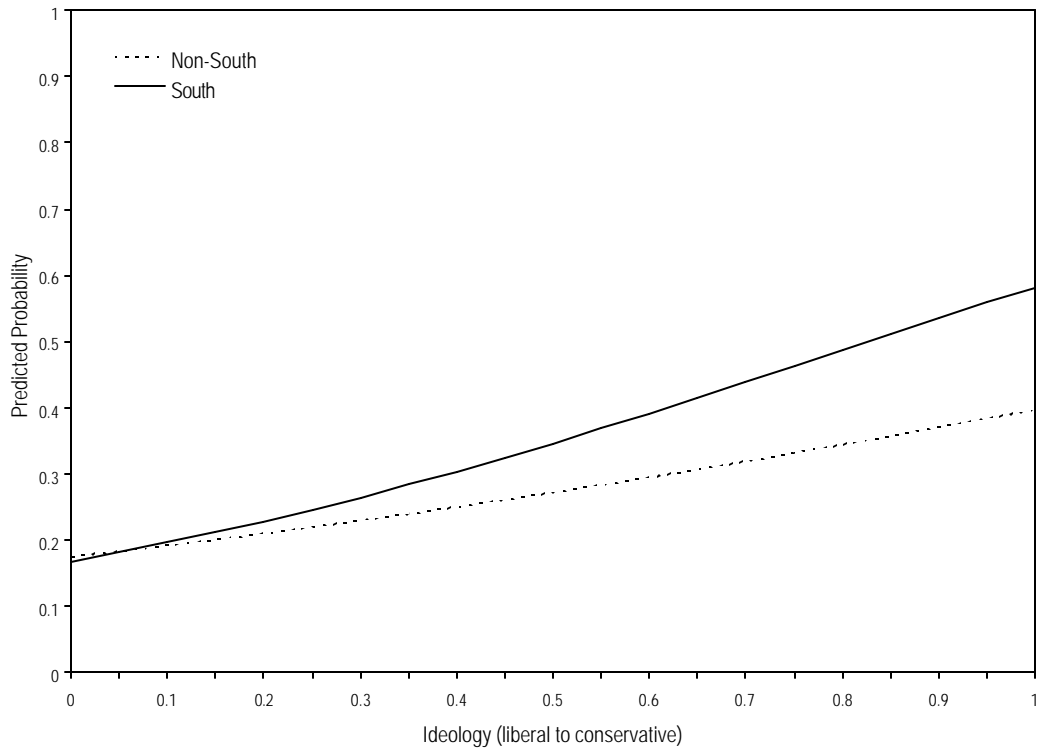
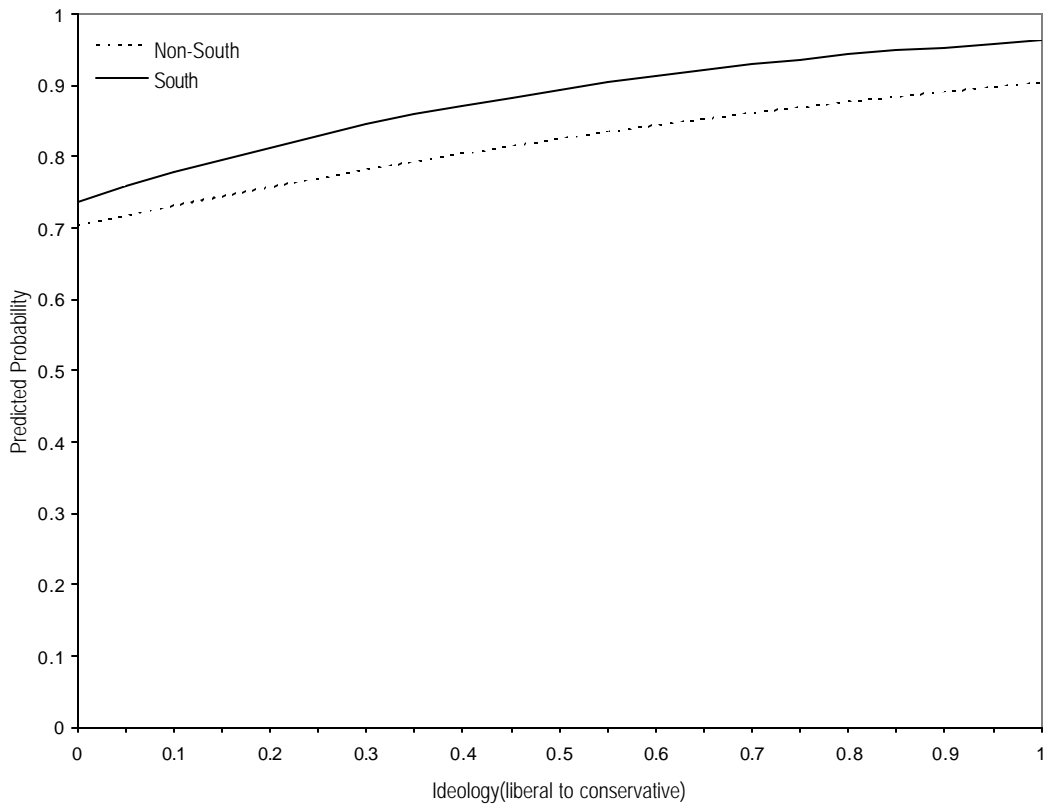


Figure 4: Predicted Probability of Bush Vote among Republicans by Ideology



Finally, we look at the impact of retrospective evaluations of the incumbent administration on vote choice. Perhaps surprisingly, there was not a statistically significant difference in the regional effects of these variables on vote choice in the 2000 election. Rather, retrospective considerations played an enormous, but equal, role in the decision making of both Southerners and Non-Southerners. As other analyses of the 2000 election have found, the effect of Clinton unfavorability far exceeded the effect of Clinton job approval in both the South and Non-South. In other words, Gore was hurt more by feelings of unfavorability towards Clinton than he benefited from positive evaluations of Clinton's job approval. Southerners approving of Clinton were 19% points less likely to support Bush compared to those disapproving of his job performance (difference was 24% points in Non-South). In contrast, those unfavorable towards Clinton were a whopping 55% more likely to support Bush than those most favorable towards Clinton (also 57% points in Non-South). These findings are particularly interesting since Gore could have presumably played a much greater role in Clinton's job performance than in his personal affairs (no pun intended). Moreover, the Clinton unfavorability measure had a greater substantive effect on the vote decision in the 2000 election than any other variable in the model, including party identification and ideology. Clearly, retrospective evaluations were prominent enough to make the difference between a Bush and Gore vote among partisans and nonpartisans alike. These findings may also offer one explanation as to why political science forecasting models were so far off mark in the 2000 election.

As expected, the standard theoretical model of vote choice was an excellent predictor of Bush support in the 2000 election for both Southerners and Non-Southerners. The model correctly predicts 86% of votes, including 87% of voters in the South and 85% of voters in the Non-South. The interactive model is also a statistical improvement over the typical model

including a simple dummy variable for the South instead of the series of interactions. In assessing the difference in model fit, we find that the Chi-square statistic (18.6) is statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

Overall, this analysis suggests that the voting calculus of Southern voters in the 2000 presidential election was distinct from the rest of the electorate. We have long known that the South was more conservative than the Non-South, but these results suggest that this conservatism also plays a larger role in the decision-making of these voters. In contrast, voters outside the South weighed these cross-pressures less in their decision-making than did Southerners. Further, although our model does not offer a theoretical reason for the difference, young people in the South were particularly likely to support Bush, controlling for all else.

## Discussion

In this paper, we estimate an interactive model of presidential vote choice in the 2000 election to compare decision making in the South and Non-South. We find that the voting calculus of Southern voters is quite different from the rest of the electorate, with ideological cross-pressures in particular a more prominent consideration in their vote decision. The results suggest that the ubiquitous Southern dummy variable—while still justifiable—is not actually sufficient to account for the differences in voting behavior between the two regions.

Moreover, these findings challenge the suggestion of recent research that the partisan realignment of the South has eliminated the political distinctiveness of the region. Once other fundamental variables are included in a model of vote choice, the finding of Bartels (2000) and Miller (1991) that partisanship has a similar impact in the South and Non-South no longer appears to hold true – at least in the 2000 election. Although the transformation of the South

from a one-party system to a two-party competitive region has had a number of dramatic political implications, this realignment has not entirely resolved the individual-level ideological cross-pressures among voters in the South. There remains a considerable gap in political behavior research as to the nature and dynamics of these policy cross-pressures in the South and across the country. The long held belief that racial issues trump all other issues appears to be increasingly dubious (Abramowitz 1994), reflected in even the rhetoric of the political candidates in the South (President Bush's self-described compassionate conservatism was intended to give at very least the image, if not the substance, of a less racially-based appeal). Unfortunately, the NES (as well as most other standard political surveys), simply do not contain either the battery of questions or sufficient Southern respondents to adequately explore the conflicts between party identification and policy preferences. It seems increasingly possible that the single liberal-conservative dimension used to characterize voters for the last 40 years in most analyses of presidential vote choice is simply insufficient. Research at the congressional-level has long argued that Congressional voting patterns follow more than a single dimension, with the role of Southern Representatives and Senators central to the transformation of party voting in Congress (Poole and Rosenthal 1994).

What are the implications of our findings for the future of the political parties in the South? The fact that Southern voters give less weight to their party identification relative to their ideology than the rest of the electorate suggests that the outlook for the Democratic Party in the South is not as bleak as predicted by some pundits and scholars. Moderate Democratic presidential candidates will no doubt continue to find stronger support in the South than more socially liberal candidates. Further, as long as the growing population of the South includes

many who remain divided over ideology and partisan affiliation (e.g., retirees and Latinos) we expect that the preferences in the South are unlikely to change dramatically in coming years.

Finally, we should acknowledge that in comparing the voting calculus of the South and Non-South, the similarities between the two models are perhaps more striking than are the differences. The effects of party identification, ideological considerations, and retrospective evaluations (especially unfavorability in 2000) on vote choice indicate that these remain the fundamental predictors of voting behavior. Regardless, the distinctions are certainly notable enough to remind us that there are important differences in the decision-making processes of voters that should be explored more carefully. At minimum, this investigation begins a long term research agenda designed to offer a better understanding of the 'black box' of Southern voting behavior.

## Appendix

Questions used from the 2000 General Social Survey and accompanying responses used in Table 1 follow:

### Abortion

Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if ...[yes, no, don't know]

If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby?

If she is married and does not want any more children?

If the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy?

If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children?

The woman wants it for any reason?

### Gun Control

Would you favor or oppose a law which would require a person to obtain a police permit before he or she could buy a gun? [favor, oppose, don't know]

### Marijuana

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal or not? [should, should not, don't know]

### School Prayer

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may require the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this--do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling [approve, disapprove, don't know]

## Works Cited

- Abramowitz, Alan. 1994. Issue Evolution Reconsidered: Racial Attitudes and Partisanship in the United States Electorate. *American Journal of Political Science*. 38:1-24.
- Abramowitz, Alan, and Kyle L. Saunders. 1998. Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate. *Journal of Politics*. 57:176-86.
- Alvarez, Michael R. and Jonathan Nagler. 1998. Economics, Entitlements, and Social Issues: Voter Choice in the 1996 Presidential Election. *American Journal of Political Science*. 42:1349-1363.
- Bartels, Larry. 1992. The Impact of Electioneering in the United States. In *Electioneering: A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change*. David Butler and Austin Ranney (eds.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bartels, Larry. 2000. Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996. *American Journal of Political Science*. 44: 35-50.
- Beck, Paul A. 1976. "Youth and the Politics of Realignment." In *Political Opinion and Behavior*, E.C. Dreyer & W.A. Rosenbaum, eds. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Bernard Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, William N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Black, Earl and Merle Black. 1992. *The Vital South: How Presidents are Elected*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Black, Earl and Merle Black. 2003. *The Rise of the Southern Republicans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Black, Earl. 1998. The Newest Southern Politics. *Journal of Politics* 60:519-612.
- Burden, Barry, and David Kimball. 2002. *Why Americans Split their Tickets: Campaigns, Competition, and Divided Government*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley.
- Carmines, Edward G. and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cobb, James C. 1993. *The selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development 1936-1990*. Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Cowden, Jonathan. 2001. Southernization of the Nation and the Nationalization of the South: Racial Conservatism, Social Welfare, and White Partisans in the United States, 1956-1992. *British Journal of Political Science*. 31: 277-301.
- Daudt, H. 1961. *Floating Voters and the Floating Voter: A Critical Analysis of American and English Election Studies*. H.E. Stenfert Kroese N.C. Leiden.
- Dennis, Michael J. 2001. Are Internet Panels Creating Professional Respondents? *Marketing Research*. 13:34-38.

- Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fiorina, Morris, Jeremy Pope, and Sam Adams. 2003. "The 2000 US Presidential Election: Can Retrospective Voting Be Saved?", *British Journal of Political Science* 33, 163-87.
- Frymer, Paul. 1994. Ideological Consensus within Divided Party Government. *Political Science Quarterly*. 109:287-315.
- Frymer, Paul, Thomas P. Kim, and Terri Bimes. 1997. Party Elites, Ideological Voters and Divided Party Government. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 11:195-216.
- Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hadley, Charles. 1981. Survey Research and Southern Politics: The Implications of Data Management. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 45:393-401.
- Heard, Alexander. 1952. *A Two-Party South?* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Hillygus, Sunshine and Simon Jackman. 2003. Voter Decision-Making in Election 2000: Campaign Effects, Partisan Activation, and the Clinton Legacy. *American Journal of Political Science*. 47: 583-596.
- Holbrook, Thomas M. 1996. *Do Campaigns Matter?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Jaccard, James and Robert Turrissi. 2003. *Interaction Effects in Multiple Regression*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Key, V.O. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Krosnick, Jon A. and Lin Chiat Chang. 2001. *A Comparison of the Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey Methodology with Internet Survey Methodology as Implemented by Knowledge Networks and Harris Interactive*. Ohio State University.
- Lamis, Alexander P. 1984. *The Two-Party South*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Leighley, Jan. 2001. *Strength in Numbers? The Political Mobilization of Racial and Ethnic Minorities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Macintyre, Ben. Gore Struggles to Shake off Clinton Spectre. *The New York Times*. October 31, 2000. Overseas News.
- Miller, Warren. 1991. Party Identification, Realignment, and Party Voting: Back to the Basics. *American Political Science Review*. 85:557-568.
- Petrocik, John R. 1987. Realignment: New Party Coalitions and the Nationalization of the South. *Journal of Politics*. 49:347-75.
- Poole, Keith and Howard Rosenthal. 1994. *Congress: a Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Prysby, Charles L. 1982. A Note on Regional Subsamples from National Sample Surveys. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 46:422-424.
- Schreckhise, William D. and Todd Shields. 2003. Ideological Realignment in the Contemporary United States Electorate Revisited. *Social Science Quarterly*. 84:596-613.

- Shafer, Byron E. and Richard G. Johnston. 2001. The Transformation of Southern Politics Revisited: The House of Representatives as a Window. *British Journal of Political Science*. 31:601-625.
- Shafer, Byron E. and Richard G. Johnston. 2003. Economic Development, Legal Desegregation, and Partisan Change in the Post War South. Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia.
- Schweitzer, Sarah. 2003. "Dean starts to talk religion," *Boston Globe*. December 30, 2003  
[http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/12/28/dean\\_starts\\_to\\_talk\\_religion?mode=PF](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/12/28/dean_starts_to_talk_religion?mode=PF)
- Stanley, Harold. 1988. Southern Partisan Changes: Dealignment, Realignment, or Both? *Journal of Politics*. 50:64-88.
- Wattenberg, Martin. 2002. *Where Have all the Voters Gone?* Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.
- Weiss, Joanna. 2003. "Clark shifts gear, courts South votes," *Boston Globe*. December 30, 2003.  
[www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/12/30/clark\\_shifts\\_gear\\_courts\\_South\\_votes/](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/12/30/clark_shifts_gear_courts_South_votes/)