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CANDIDATES, PARTIES, AND ISSUES IN THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE

Two Decades of Change

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The last two decades of electoral history have been characterized by a variety of complex forces tugging at the electoral system and the individual voter. Scholars of party politics and electoral behavior appear to agree on a general assessment of the period as one characterized by increasing instability, issue voting, vote switching, ticket-splitting, partisan defection, deviating elections, an influx of new voters, the rise of independents, and some important realigning tendencies. In addition, the real world of electoral politics removed from the conceptual trappings of academe presents a varied and confus-

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ing picture to bewilder sufficiently the casual observer: a flirting with third party forces; the conflict parties of a new generation; the occurrence of landslide victories for both political parties; the rise of emotional social issues; and the appearance of presidential candidates whose personal style varies from the fatherly heroic Eisenhower, the sophisticated Kennedy, the impulsive, conservative Goldwater, the impatient liberal McGovern, to the calculated Nixon. The period has also seen war, prosperity, recession, violence, assassination, and a variety of social crises.

Can there be any electoral continuity to such a period of rapid change? Is each presidential contest as unique as the surface characteristics suggest? We think not; yet research efforts over this period, while plentiful, are nearly as fragmented as the real world sometimes appears. The only way that "continuity in change" can be adequately investigated is through the application of common methodologies across valid sets of comparable data for the entire period.[1] Our more specific intent involves an examination of party and candidate images and their attitudinal components from an analytical-voting model perspective for the last six presidential elections. Before proceeding to that analysis, we briefly clarify the recent themes evident in studies of electoral politics.

Several bodies of literature are relevant to this task, and while they are not mutually exclusive, they tend to focus on long- and short-term electoral forces, the normal vote paradigm, the role of partisan identification, the emerging independent, and the relative impact of candidate, party, and issue orientations in an explanation of voter choice. While this is a massive body of research, we hope to highlight those elements with more direct bearing on the trends of the period and the contending explanations for electoral behavior.

The primary organizing device for comprehending changes in electoral behavior and contests has been the long- and short-term forces paradigm. As developed by Survey Research Center authors within the framework of a more general and less operationalizable "funnel of causality" (Campbell et al., 1960),

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the analysis of forces came to rely heavily on the construct of the normal vote as first elaborated by Converse (1966). The concept of the normal vote is inextricably related to notions of defection from partisan identification, long- and short-term forces, and election classification systems (Campbell, 1966a, 1966b). It establishes a base line of normal vote divisions based on the distribution of partisan identification which facilitates an analysis of short-term forces as they sway the electorate from normalcy. The concept is based on the well-documented stability of partisan loyalties during the last twenty years and the relatively increasing role of short-term forces during a period characterized by deviating elections (Stokes, 1966a). But much of the early application of the normal vote construct merely attempted to assess the magnitude of short-term forces, rather than their quality. There are many factors which are potentially influential in any single contest, including events, issues, aspects of the parties, and more unique candidate forces. Yet the specification of the character of short-term forces in the context of the normal vote has heavily relied on issues to the exclusion of other factors. Nevertheless, important refinements have occurred which point to the increasing power of an issue component and to the possibility of more long-term issue forces (Boyd, 1972; Brody and Page, 1972; Miller et al., 1973). Unfortunately, the specification of those forces by definition is tied closely to partisan identification, and normal vote analysis cannot provide information about the determinants of voter choice (Boyd, 1972). One of the pressing needs in electoral analysis is therefore a specification of short-term forces applied in a manner which facilitates an assessment of the relative impact of various factors on the vote.

One of the difficulties in the analysis of short-term factors reflects two different ways of understanding the normal vote: (1) the conceptual differences between long- and short-term forces; and (2) the operational use of party identification to represent long-term forces (Kessel, 1972). As Kessel (1972: 464) contends, if we want to choose the best long-term force it is obviously partisan identification, "but the temporal distinc-

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tion then implies that all other attitudes may be considered as short term stimuli," and "this inference is dubious." Some short-term forces obviously (conceptually) have more enduring qualities than do others—some basic issues may last a generation, and some attitudes toward renominated candidates may be more enduring than are attitudes toward candidates who run in only one election. Therefore, a blend of "short," "medium," and "long term" influences is left to operate on the vote after partisan attachment is taken into account. For purposes of our analysis, this set of forces conceptually includes the most short-term candidate personality factor, policy attitudes linked to momentary candidates, and the more long-term policy factors tied to images of the parties[2] —which are more short-term than fundamental partisan loyalties.

A second framework for analyzing short-term factors is implicit in the SRC six components model which has been used to test the utility of an attitudinal model of the vote. But the treatment of these forces in the context of an attitudinal model has avoided the role of partisan identification, which is the heart of normal vote analysis (see the critique by Pomper, 1972b). This apparent divergence between normal vote analysis and components analysis may reflect the different perspectives of SRC authors (see Natchez, 1970)—Converse for the normal vote and Stokes (1966b; Stokes et al., 1958) for the voter choice attitudinal construct. The model, as originally explicated by Stokes, establishes six categories of attitudinal components derived from SRC open-ended questions on the likes and dislikes about the parties and candidates in a single election. The components include attitudes toward both the Republican and Democratic candidate, the political parties as managers of government, the domestic and foreign policy component of candidate and party images, and attitudes about the parties and candidates which relate to various groups. This basic model, or parts thereof, has been employed by a variety of researchers (without alterations) in attempts to explain voter choice and to describe electoral shifts. These include the following: (1) the original SRC formulation and extension through 1964 (Stokes

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et al., 1958; Stokes, 1966b; also see Stokes, 1966c); (2) Boyd's (1969) analysis of voting defection where incompatibility between candidate images and partisan identification explains most of the variance in the vote defection from 1956 to 1964; (3) Goldberg's (1966) causal model of the vote showing a direct independent effect of total party and candidate attitudes (RPA-respondent's partisan attitudes) on the 1956 vote under controls for party identification; (4) Matthews and Prothro's (1966) analysis of changing party images in the South; (5) RePass's (1971) utilization of candidate images to capture most of the vote variance in 1964; (6) Shaffer's (1972) detailed simulation analysis of the components model for 1964; (7) Kirkpatrick's (1970a) assessment of consistency between various component dimensions for 1964; (8) the plotting of total Republican and Democratic candidate affect scores by Miller et al. (1973) for the period beginning in 1952; and (9) an examination of a simple decision rule for 1952 to 1968 by Kelley and Mirer (1974).

Candidate and party images have been used, therefore, in a variety of ways either to describe attitudes or to explain the vote, yet none of the categories of analysis employed in the aforementioned research depart from the subjective categorization originally suggested by Stokes. The only exceptions involve (1) a few descriptive attempts to organize candidate attitudes into separate personality and policy components in 1964 (Converse et al., 1965), to examine a larger number of more specific components with tabular controls for party identification in 1964 (Kessel, 1968), and to organize responses to political parties on the basis of representation conceptions in 1968 (Neuman, 1971); and (2) the development of a candidate evaluation component employed in a model similar to that of Goldberg (Schulman and Pomper, 1975).

Within the context of long- and short-term forces, we have seen substantial bodies of research treating (1) the role of partisan attachment; (2) the impact of candidate images; and (3) the role of issues in voting choice. Yet these analyses are not free from basic, underlying conflicts and contradictions about

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the impact of these factors, nor are they free from important methodological differences which may lead to contradictory conclusions. The emphasis on partisan identification has been paramount in electoral research–it is viewed as a long-term stabilizing force, as the most important single factor in explaining the vote (Campbell et al., 1960; Campbell and Stokes, 1959; Converse et al., 1969; Converse, 1972), and as the central force around which individuals arrange their political beliefs (Converse, 1964). Yet at the same time, an emphasis has been placed on greater instability in the electoral system, an increase in independents (Merelman, 1970), an increased tendency toward defection in the 1960s (Miller et al., 1973), a long-term decline in party-oriented voting evidence through aggregate analyses of split-ticket voting and partisan swings (Burnham, 1965; DeVries and Tarrance, 1972), and the withering of the party system during a potential realigning period characterized by a breakdown of New Deal forces and increases in issue polarization (Burnham, 1970; also see Sundquist, 1973; Dutton, 1971).

Although the above forces are evident in recent years, even those most critical of the SRC emphasis on partisan identification admit to its overwhelming influence and to its relatively stable predictive power through the less controversial elections of the 1950s and the more turbulent ones of the 1960s (see Natchez, 1970: 571). Even as late as 1969, SRC authors (Converse et al.) themselves suggested (without clear empirical evidence on the basis of coefficients) that the typical weights for a vote model would be sixty for party and forty split between candidate and issues. On the other hand, research emphasizing the role of candidate images continues to hold water–from the early Stokes analyses (1966b; Stokes et al., 1958) where party identification was not a focus for research, through more recent and elaborate models for single years incorporating issue and party identification factors where candidate images were still found to be paramount (RePass, 1971; Miller et al., 1973; also see Boyd, 1969). However, these more recent studies incorporating complex models have been

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most distinguished by their emphasis on the increasing importance of issue voting. This emphasis, of course, matches a variety of other research attempts to recapture the meaning of a policy component during the more issue-oriented period of the 1960s (Kirkpatrick and Jones, 1974; Kirkpatrick and Jones, 1970; Kirkpatrick, 1970a, 1970b; Bennett, 1973; and lengthy list in Kessel, 1972: 459).

RESEARCH DESIGN

Although the aforementioned research touches on a wide variety of interests and issues in electoral behavior, any longitudinal analysis over a twenty-year period could not ignore the underlying themes and research contradictions. While it is doubtful that any analysis or model can be complete, our attempt involves a blend of research considerations in need of more systematic, longitudinal treatment. As Kessel contends (1972: 460-462), if we are to unravel the issue impact controversy (or any other impact for that matter), our research must compare issue attitudes with other sets of attitudes. Furthermore, since a portion of the contradictory conclusions about the relative influences on the vote appear to be tied to unique methodological considerations, the demonstration of impact must use the same analytical technique with similar data over time. Kessel also suggests that a critical assessment of findings from the *American Voter* tradition must involve the use of data and various analysis techniques not uncommon to the early research. With these factors in mind, plus the tendency for research to focus on one electoral contest at a time, we saw a need for assessing longitudinal changes in the electorate utilizing comparable data containing a variety of attitudes and employing a common set of analytical techniques over time which were not alien to the earliest period under study. Furthermore, if long- and short-term factors have any enduring meaning in electoral analysis, it is necessary to include as wide a range of these factors as possible. It is inadequate, for example,

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to claim that issue voting is on the increase unless that component is judged on a comparative basis with other forces on the vote (for example, Pomper, 1972a).

The most adequate longitudinal data for this task are the SRC/CPS open-ended questions about the political parties and candidates. These have been used in a variety of studies documented earlier, with a primary focus on candidate images. Although we find the scoring procedures developed originally by Stokes to be quite adequate,[3] we feel that the well-established classification of responses into six components does not facilitate an understanding of medium- and short-term forces, nor does it permit an adequate assessment of policy issues. In a departure from this classification system, we have developed a components model which makes a distinction between foreign and domestic policy aspects of both (separately) candidate and party images—reflecting the conceptualization of some issues as more enduring (party) and more momentary (candidate). In addition, the domestic policy components include references to domestic groups who will/will not be benefited by the policies (at least implicitly) of a particular party or candidate. While the "parties as managers of government" component is retained, attitudes toward the candidates are further decomposed into those reflecting personal character, attraction, and personality (e.g., "above politics," "his own man," "sincere," "healthy," "a man of humility") and those reflecting experience and administrative management abilities (e.g., "good administrator," "will clean up corruption in government"). The latter is a rough analogy to the party-in-government idea.

Although the use of these data with separate components focusing on issues may be less likely to stimulate policy responses without a specific mention of issues, and therefore less likely to point to issue impact than are some structured or proximity issue questions, they do provide comparable data over time (which the proximity and structured questions do not), and they enable crucial comparisons with other components. Furthermore, the open-ended "problems facing the country" questions usually asked in SRC/CPS studies may

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provide more detailed issue data, but as Kessel contends, they limit comparisons between issue components and attitudes on other topics. In addition, he summarizes the argument in favor of unstructured candidate and party responses by claiming that they provide a "certain amount of material about issues, allow analysis along several cognitive dimensions, and certainly provide our most comprehensive longitudinal data set" (1972: 461).

In order to obtain a long-term picture of the American electorate's attitudes toward political parties and candidates, the analysis first proceeds to a brief descriptive treatment of net partisan advantages for the entire population in terms of total candidate and party images and their components. These advantage scores are means of individual scores which may vary from +10 to −10 on a partisan attitude continuum. The remainder of the analysis utilizes individual voter's partisan advantage scores (for total party and total candidate images, as well as the various components of each) in an attitudinal model of the vote employing multiple regression analysis. Regression equations are developed for all voters for each year,[4] and partisan identification is subsequently added to the equation to facilitate judgments about relative component weights under statistical controls.[5]

LONGITUDINAL PARTY AND CANDIDATE IMAGES IN THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE

Given the discontinuities in previous research on party and candidate images and the apparent variation in electoral politics over the last twenty years, our first task is to offer a broad picture of American population's perception of political parties and candidates since 1952. The relative shifts in images and the partisan advantage of the shifts form the core of our basic knowledge of surface characteristics for six presidential elections and the changing moods of the American population. When the net partisan advantage scores for all party and

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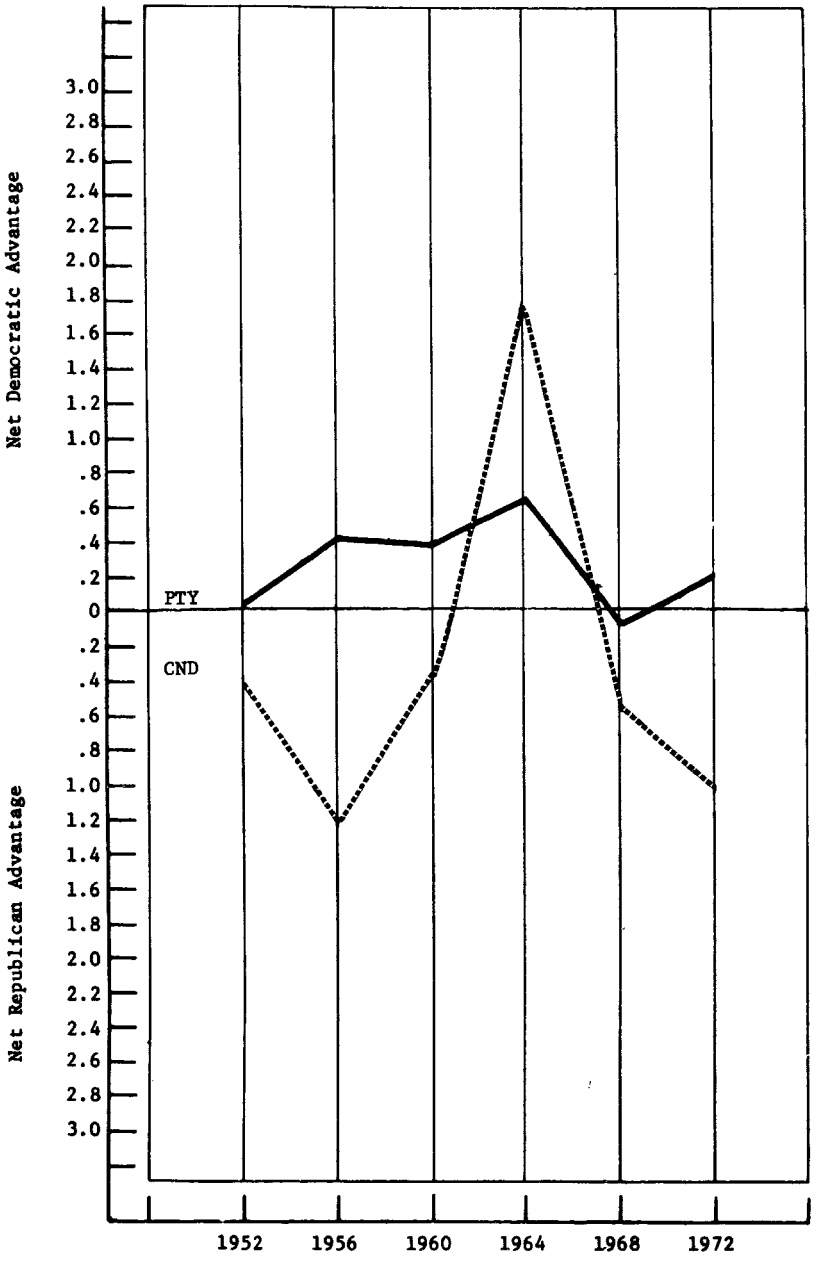

Figure 1: Mean Partisan Advantage Of Total Party And Total Candidate Attitudes For All Respondents: 1952-1972

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candidate images are plotted over time (Figure 1), there is evidence of substantial fluctuation in party, and especially candidate images for the entire period. The population's attitudes toward parties and candidates are obviously much more dynamic in character than are their relatively enduring and stable partisan loyalties.[6] Despite some rather telling changes since 1952, there is an underlying continuity exhibited in Figure 1: with the exception of a slight Republican flavor to party images associated with Nixon's victory in 1968, the balance of partisan attitudes have been supportive of the Democratic Party. This plot of party images reaches its peak in the landslide Democratic contest of 1964, yet in 1972, regardless of the McGovern fiasco, the American electorate as a whole continued to give an advantage to the Democratic Party. While there is greater fluctuation in candidate images over time, on the whole, the population has been more attracted to Republican candidates with the dramatic exception of Barry Goldwater. Indeed, by 1972, the electorate's favorable attitudes toward Nixon (and most appropriately, negative attitudes toward McGovern; Miller et al., 1973, report the relative positive and negative scores for 1972) nearly match the high point for Eisenhower's popularity in 1956. It is also noteworthy that 1964 was the only year when both candidate and party forces were supportive of the same political party and its candidate, and that the Democrats maintained some partisan advantage in 1972 despite McGovern's unpopularity as a candidate (which was not quite as severe as Goldwater's unattractiveness).

Although total party and candidate images provide general descriptive information for this political period, there are important attitudinal components within those more general party and candidate images which provide greater detail on the characteristics of particular electoral contests and long-term trends. In order to capture the quality of these components, as mentioned earlier, we have obtained the underlying partisan advantage distributions over time for domestic and foreign policy components rooted in party and candidate images, as

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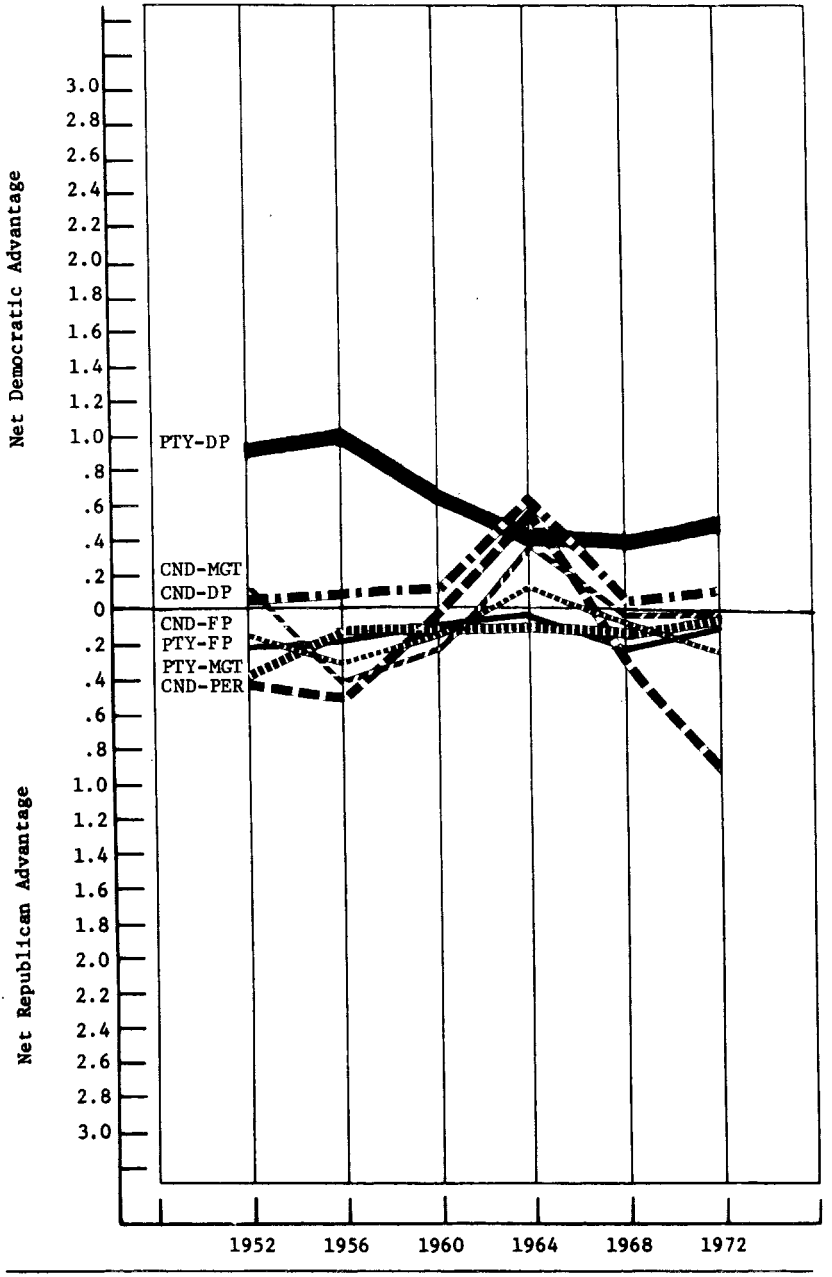

Figure 2: Mean Partisan Advantage Of Party And Candidate Attitude Components For All Respondents: 1952-1972

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well as governing and administrative capabilities of the candidates and parties, and the personality or personal characteristics of each major presidential aspirant. These various components for the entire electorate are plotted in Figure 2.

The salient features of Figure 2 point to the historic advantage given to the Democratic Party on domestic policy throughout the entire period. Indeed, it is the most distinguishing advantage given to either party or sets of candidates among all attitudinal components. But even more important is the rather steady erosion of this advantage from high points in the 1950s to low points in the 1960s (with the exception of a slight upward thrust in 1972). This trend even holds for 1964 when all other component forces (except the parties as managers of government) have an upward swing to the Democrats' and Lyndon Johnson's advantage. The domestic policy advantage of the Democratic *candidates* is also clear, but it is much closer to the neutral point than are attitudes about domestic policy linked to party images, and it is moved only during the 1964 campaign when it appears to be the most advantageous Democratic force. For other years, this trace line is rather uniform, at least in comparison to the steady erosion of Democratic Party advantages in domestic policy. Furthermore, the foreign policy component of both party and candidate images remains relatively stable over the years and to the Republicans' advantage; at least, there has been no significant erosion of the Republican partisan advantage in foreign affairs in the electorate's mind.

The governmental management aspect of party attitudes is uniformly Republican over the twenty-year period, and it exhibits few shifts as it remains relatively close to the neutral point. On the other hand, the administrative management aspect of candidate perceptions varies more widely from year to year—a theme consistent with greater temporal variation in candidate images (although it is usually to the Republican's advantage). Indeed, the greatest variation of all is predictably found in candidate personality images where swings and advantages are of comparable magnitude to the swings and

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direction of the popular vote in any single year. That is, these candidate personality images are advantageous to the Democrats only during the landslide election of 1964; they remain close to the neutral point for closer elections, and move toward distinct Republican advantages for contests where their predominance was clear in the final vote tally. While this analysis is primarily descriptive and therefore offers no explicit information to explain the vote, the tendency is not inconsistent with findings about candidate images and personality reported previously (Stokes, 1966b) or with data on the relative vote impact of candidate personality reported below.

PARTY AND CANDIDATE IMAGES AND THE VOTE

The above information only permits a rather casual inference about the impact of various attitudinal components in the context of electoral victory and defeat, and only limited information about the roles of various party, candidate, and policy forces in voter choice. As we work our way toward more complex models of voter choice, we first begin with an analysis of the relative impact of total party and candidate images on the vote, for the entire universe of voters as well as various partisan subgroups, followed by a formal incorporation of partisan identification into those models, and by subsequent treatment of the various attitudinal subcomponents with partisan identification taken into account.

In utilizing total party and total candidate attitudes in regression equations for the vote in each of six years, some rather parsimonious measures are presented which do not take the various subcomponents into account, but which provide us with some broader generalizations about voting behavior. The standardized partial regression coefficients (beta weights) for each equation containing the total RPA score for both party and candidate are presented in Figures 3 and 4 for all voters, as well as various partisan subgroupings. The equation for all voters is obviously the most generalizable equation for the

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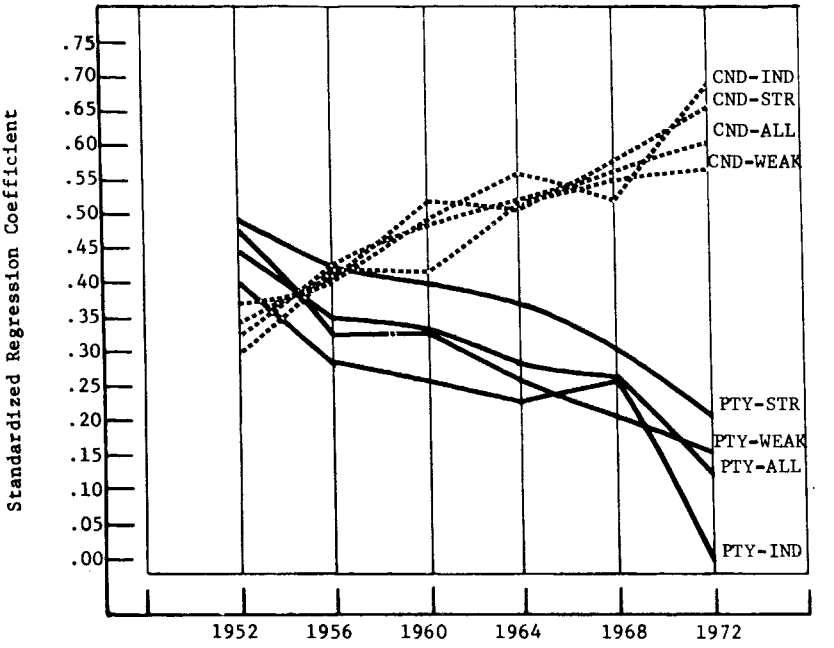

Figure 3: Vote Regression Equations (Beta Weights) Incorporating Total Party And Total Candidate Attitudes For All Voters And Partisan Identification Subgroups By Strength Of Attachment (Strong, Weak, Independent): 1952-1972

active component of the American electorate. The beta weights exhibit a most distinguishing and important trend for the past six electoral contests regardless of any unique characteristics affiliated with each of those contests in a single year, and regardless of whether a particular election is classified as deviating or reestablishing. Indeed, the plots for the betas exhibit handsome trace lines for the entire electorate (as well as its subgroups). They show a consistent linear decrease over the twenty-year period in the relative influence of total party images on the vote in only the first election of this period (1952), and the linear decrease in party accompanied by the linear increase in candidate image holds during a period in which there is relative stability in overall predictive power for

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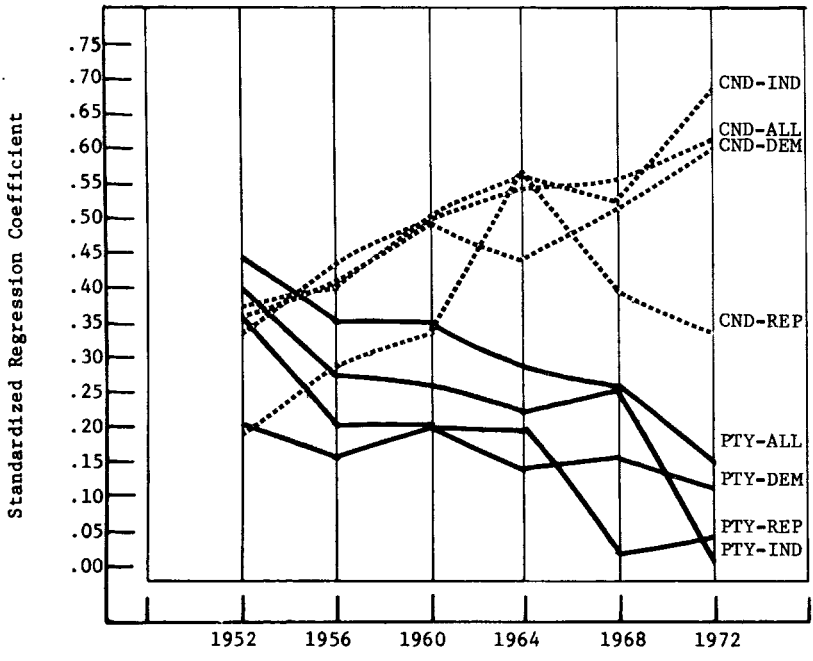

Figure 4: Vote Regression Equations (Beta Weights) Incorporating Total Party And Total Candidate Attitudes For All Voters And Partisan Identification Subgroups By Direction Of Attachment (Republican, Democrat, Independent): 1952-1972

the vote.[7] This finding suggests that attitudes grounded in candidate images, irrespective of various candidate differences from year to year, have nearly doubled in their explanatory power as measured by the standardized regression coefficient and that attitudes oriented toward the political parties have been cut by more than one-half over six electoral contests. In addition, the greatest decrease in the predictive power of party images is from 1968 to 1972, which is also the period characterized by the next highest increase in the predictive capability of candidate images. While this broad incorporation of total party and candidate attitudes enables us to say little about policy at this point, it is obviously a striking finding in

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support of what others have said about the power of candidate images and, incidently, their increasing short-term character.

The data reported in Figure 3 for strong partisan identifiers and the respective multiple correlation coefficients suggest that these individuals who exhibit stronger attachment to party through their identification are also more likely to vote in accordance with the attitudinal model. This is reflected in the slightly higher percentage of explained variance in the vote for strong partisans over the period. On the whole, however, strong partisan identifiers follow the trend established for all voters (or in fact, lead it), a finding which is especially important for our consideration of the role of party images. Although these strong identifiers have higher party image weights in comparison to the other partisan subgroupings for each year, the drop in the role of those images is equally precipitous for partisans. These high party regression coefficients also do not imply the existence of low candidate beta weights. Indeed, the power of candidate image is not low in comparison with other groups each year, and there is a similar linear increase in the power of candidate images, with a slight drop in 1964. In general, strong partisan identifiers, but the power of that party image has eroded as an explanation for the vote and by 1960 candidate images are relatively more important.

The regression patterns exhibited for weak partisan identifiers closely resemble those established for the electorate as a whole. While the attitudinal model applied to them explains less of the variation in the vote than it does for strong partisans, there is a steady decrease in the impact of party images (except for a slight upswing in 1960) and a linear increase in the role of candidate attitudes. Furthermore, the party image coefficients for weak partisans are closest to those of strong partisans from year to year, and the decrease in the party factor is greater than it is for strong partisans whereas the increase for candidate images is less. In other words, weak partisans are more susceptible to the overall trend in party images and less susceptible to the candidate trend.

While it would be reasonable for us to expect the regression differences between weak partisans and independents to re-

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semble the correspondent differences between weak partisans and strong identifiers, the general picture of the independent is somewhat more complex. First of all, the self-identified independent maintains a set of attitudes that can explain his vote as well as weak partisans' attitudes; and the attitudinal model even explains slightly more of the variance in independents' voting patterns during the 1960s. As we would expect, the party image beta weight for independents is lower than for other partisan identifiers in each year (except for weak identifiers in 1968), yet the independents' candidate beta weight is not uniformly the highest throughout each electoral contest. Nevertheless, the all-voter trend indicating a decrease in party images and an increase in the power of the candidate attitudes holds for the independents in our population. These individuals are also characterized by a more rapid decrease in the power of party images than for any other partisan grouping, and by 1972, we find that independents' party attitudes are irrelevant with regard to the vote, whereas their candidate attitudes reach a higher beta than that exhibited anywhere throughout the period. Yet it should be noted that the increase in the candidate force for independents is nearly as high overall as the increase in the predictive power of candidate attitudes among strong partisans. Independents are clearly and increasingly responding to short-term candidate factors during a period in which any remaining party cues vanish in their relevance. This picture of the independent fits the classical model suggested by *The American Voter* in the sense that short-term forces are important, but it refines this commonly accepted perspective in two general ways: (1) an attitudinal model *does* explain the vote for independents (and sometimes better than for weak identifiers): they are apparently not so confused, and their attitude distinctions clearly influence their voting behavior (at least among voting independents); and (2) they are not hidden partisans. Although in the aggregate they may swing toward the victorious partisan force (Converse, 1966), their evaluation of the parties is increasingly irrelevant. While this rate of decrease in party force is more rapid than for other levels of identifica-

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tion, we must keep the independent in perspective by remembering that monotonic decreases in party and monotonic increases in candidate forces are appearing throughout various partisan identification strata.

Figure 4 displays a plotting of the standardized regression coefficients for both the total party and total candidate items for Republican and Democratic partisan identifiers. While there are trends in Figure 4 consistent with others mentioned above, judgment about Republicans and Democrats must be restrained since the analysis of these directional partisan subgroupings increases the error in the attitudinal model as the dependent variable (vote) becomes skewed. While this is not as serious for Democrats since they are less loyal, Republicans face more serious skewness problems since they tend to defect less.[8] In addition, we would expect that, if the role of directional partisan identification has anywhere near its usual power in voting models, the explanatory power of an additional model would decrease for both Republicans and Democrats. This tendency is especially true for the variance explained among Republicans ($x = .43$). Similarly, the multiple correlation coefficients for Democrats are lower than they are for other partisans grouped by strength of attachment, with the exception of 1972 ($x = .59$). Deviating high multiple correlation coefficients for Republicans in 1964 (.68) and Democrats in 1972 (.66) reflect the massive defections in those years. That is, the attitudinal model is a better predictor of the vote for a contest in which voters defect from party loyalty. The tendency for the explanatory power of the attitudinal model to descrease is especially evident as partisan attachment reduces the beta weight for party images for both Democrats and Republicans. (For correlations between partisan identification and party images, see Table 3.) Indeed, for all years (except independents in 1972), the Republicans' and Democrats' party image betas are lower than for any other subsets of identifiers, and of course, the party regression coefficients are uniformly lower than those for candidate attitudes for both Republicans and Democrats (even though they began at equal points in 1952).

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Although we must caution against highly specific findings, the Republicans are characterized by the most mixed trends in their party and candidate beta weights. In other words, the role of party and candidate attitudes in explaining the vote for Republicans is not as linear as we noted for other subgroups of identifiers, and it tends to vary slightly by electoral contest—with a substantial decrease in 1968 and 1972, and a high point in 1952. In addition, the candidate betas increase through 1964 and subsequently decline in the last two electoral contests. This, of course, is congruent with high Republican multiple correlation coefficients during victorious Republican years, especially 1964.

The pattern for Democrats displays a more consistent linear trend in the role of party images from a high of .352 in 1952 to a low of .118 in 1972 (with the exception of a slight increase in 1968). That is, irrespective of the electoral contest and the victorious party, party images are playing a decreasing role for Democrats while candidate images are also monotonically increasing from .353 in 1952 to .590 in the last electoral contest.

In summary, the explanatory power of regression coefficients affiliated with various candidate images has tended to increase rather consistently over the twenty-year period, to be accompanied by an equally rapid weakening of party images in influencing voting behavior in presidential contests. This finding generally holds for all partisan subgroupings in the electorate, whether by strength or by direction of partisan attachment. The only notable exception is the recent tendency for candidate attitude factors to weaken in importance among Republicans. The latter may indeed be an artifact reflecting loyalty among Republicans and a subsequent skewness in the dependent variable, but most important is the fact that the amount of variance explained for Republicans is not very high and that the attitudinal model is general is kept from operating within the subset of partisans which are highly loyal to their party.

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THE RELATIVE IMPACT OF PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION ON THE VOTE

In the above section we discussed the regression equations incorporating total party and candidate attitudes for various partisan subgroupings in the electorate. This procedure facilitated more precise comments about how these various types of partisans fit an attitudinal model of the vote. Yet several reasons make it paramount to incorporate the partisan identification variable into regression equations. As noted earlier, it was sometimes difficult to make inferences for Republican partisan identifiers in particular; therefore we have included the identification continuum (strong Democrat through strong Republican) as a variable to be controlled statistically rather than tabularly. Since party identification has frequently been cited as the prime predictor of the vote, its inclusion statistically offers a more parsimonious expression of its relative impact in comparison to short-term party images and even shorter term candidate images. To this point, we know that the direction of partisan attachment appears to reduce the power of party image, that partisan identification relates most to total party images (rather than total candidate images), and that without a control for the level of identification (for all voters) there is a linear decrease in the role of party and a linear increase in the impact of candidate factors. We would therefore expect partisan identification as a variable to have power in the equations, especially given its emphasis in electoral research; we would expect it to increase subsequently the total variance explained in the vote; and for the partialling effect to have the greatest impact on party attitudes.

The above expectations are generally supported by the data in Figure 5. When partisan identification is built into the equation as a variable, it increases the variance explained in the vote each year,[9] yet these increases are not overwhelming and by no means do they suggest a lack of power in the attitudinal model. Secondly, party identification has no substantial reducing effect on the candidate image component, and with the

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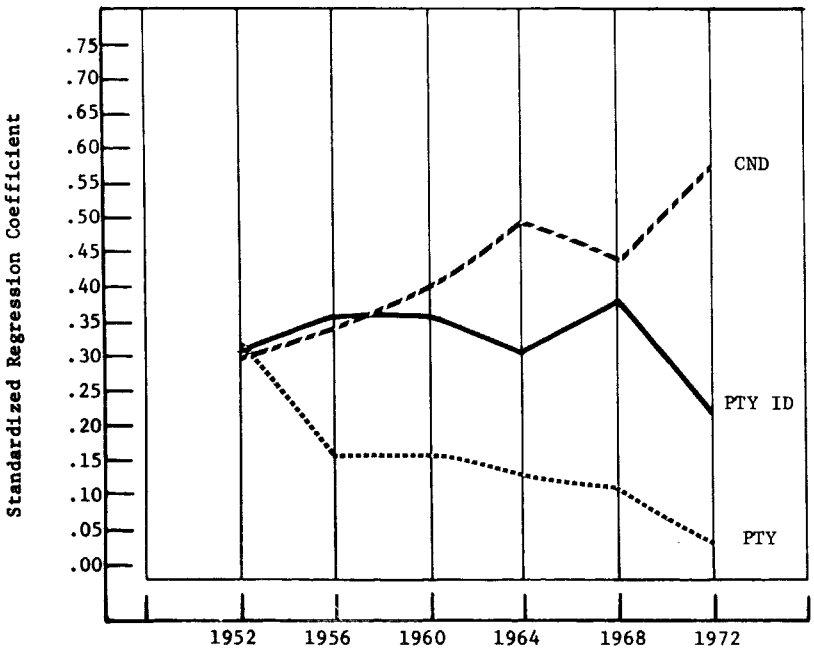

Figure 5: Vote Regression Equations (Beta Weights) Incorporating Partisan Identification, And Total Party And Candidate Attitudes: 1952-1972

exception of 1968 when the beta for the candidate factor dips slightly,[10] there is a steady increase in the role of attitudes toward candidates as a vote predictor from .294 in 1952 to .568 in 1972. Thirdly, although the inclusion of party identification has greater impact on party images, the linear decrease in standardized regression coefficients for party is preserved once we partial out the variance explained by partisan identification. This party image factor vanishes with a beta weight of .04 in 1972.

The regression coefficients for party identification vary in a more unstable fashion in relationship to the vote than do those for candidate and party images—and they do so through a period when partisan identification is relatively stable, at least insofar as it affects Democrats and Republicans (both of whom

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have lost to independents in recent years). That is, any particular upward or downward trend is less evident in the trace lines for partisan identification. But it is important to note that by 1972 the most short-term candidate force has the greatest impact on voting choice and that this is accompanied by a decrease in both partisan identification and party images (to a point of vanishing). Partisan identification, then, appears to be most important during close electoral contests (1960 and 1968) which are not necessarily wildly deviating elections, i.e., when people vote more in accord with their partisan attachment and when the underlying distribution of the vote becomes "normal." More short-term forces obviously draw from the power of partisan identification during landslide victories (deviating or not) in 1964 and 1972, and the most increasing of these short-term forces is candidate image.

ATTITUDINAL COMPONENTS OF THE VOTE

In order to assess the underlying dimensions or attitudinal components of party and candidate images and their impact on voting behavior, we employ a regression procedure similar to that above with each of the party and candidate factors decomposed into respective components relating to the party in government, foreign policy, domestic policy, candidate personality, and the stylistic management-administrative component of candidate images. There are several more specific purposes for the analysis. With a knowledge of overall trends in the total candidate and party images, it is essential: (1) to examine the extent to which those trends hold differentially for various components; (2) to specify more effectively the characteristics of some short- and long-term forces; (3) to pay particular attention to the candidate components which are important for the vote since we have already seen that the general candidate image factor has radically increased in power over the years; and (4) to approach the issue voting aspect of electoral behavior in presidential contests. The latter is particularly important given

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TABLE 1
Regression Equations (Beta Weights) For Party And Candidate Attitude Components Of The Vote: All Voters

Year	(Y) Vote		(X1) PTY-FP		(X2) PTY-MGT		(X3) PTY-DP		(X4) CND-FP		(X5) CND-MGT		(X6) CND-DP		(X7) CND-PER	R	R^2(%)
1952	Y	=	$.056X_1$	+	$.150X_2$	+	$.309X_3$	+	$.130X_4$	+	$.130X_5$	+	$.088X_6$	+	$.232X_7$	.71	50.7
1956	Y	=	$.069X_1$	+	$.074X_2$	+	$.254X_3$	+	$.076X_4$	+	$.019X_5$	+	$.132X_6$	+	$.317X_7$	.71	50.3
1960	Y	=	$.052X_1$	+	$.067X_2$	+	$.236X_3$	+	$.125X_4$	+	$.241X_5$	+	$.096X_6$	+	$.332X_7$	.76	57.5
1964	Y	=	$.058X_1$	+	$.096X_2$	+	$.166X_3$	+	$.087X_4$	+	$.106X_5$	+	$.249X_6$	+	$.383X_7$	.74	54.5
1968	Y	=	$-.030X_1$	+	$.093X_2$	+	$.193X_3$	+	$.110X_4$	+	$.174X_5$	+	$.205X_6$	+	$.351X_7$	.76	55.5
1972	Y	=	$.004X_1$	+	$.003X_2$	+	$.108X_3$	+	$.213X_4$	+	$.118X_5$	+	$.194X_6$	+	$.462X_7$	.70	49.2

the recent emphasis on issue orientation in American electoral studies, and in this regard, the decomposition of total party and candidate images into policy subcomponents is essential since we might otherwise be led to believe that the policy content of those images is irrelevant for the vote. In other words, the party and candidate focus of the analysis does not necessarily imply a nonissue focus since the issue components of either sets of orientations can increase over the years. We expect the greatest policy-oriented increases to occur within the realm of candidate images–such an expectation fits the short-term theme, and our previous findings about the erosion of party images and the breakup of New Deal issue publics tied to the Democratic Party.

Table 1 presents the component regression equations for all voters in the American electorate from year to year.[11] The equation for the voting electorate in 1952 suggests a predominance of domestic policy tied to party images (Democrats and New Deal), and to a lesser extent, candidate personality (Eisenhower). Unlike later years, 1952 is characterized by a "spreading out" of predictive power among a larger variety of attitudinal components so that there is less clustering of larger betas in only one or two underlying dimensions. This tendency is evident in a number of components: the party management dimension is more influential in 1952 than later, and this holds for party domestic policy and foreign policies tied to candidate images (Eisenhower), with the exception of candidate foreign policy images in 1972. Four years later in the electoral contest of 1956 we begin to see a clustering of higher coefficients in a few attitudinal components, an increase in the influence of the candidate personality dimension, a decrease in the party domestic policy component, and a slight increase in the role of candidate domestic policy tied to the vote. In 1960, there is a continued increase in the candidate personality component and a commensurate increase (to the highest of the period) in the administrative-management images of candidates (in favor of Nixon), a subsequent drop in domestic policy rooted in party images, and a relatively low and stable impact for candidate domestic policy attitudes. In sum, the period from 1952

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through 1960 is characterized by a decreasing influence of the domestic issue component of partisan attitudes and a relatively weak role for domestic policy attitudes affiliated with presidential candidates. This general finding is clearly supportive of the nonideological and nonissue themes of electoral research focusing on the 1950s and in line with more popular concern about the erosion of a New Deal coalition base for the Democratic Party (for example, Phillips, 1969).

To a certain extent, the electoral contests of the 1960s and early 1970s take on a different flavor than those of the earlier period. As expected, the domestic policies related to candidate images (in favor of Lyndon Johnson) take on added importance in 1964 with a beta coefficient at its maximum point for the entire period. This is accompanied by an increase in the predictive power of candidate personality and a decrease in the impact of party domestic attitudes. In 1968, the candidate domestic policy component drops slightly (but it remained high relative to other years), and the candidate personality component decreases in power slightly for the first time during the whole period—but this tends to be offset by an increase in the administrative-management aspect of candidate images in 1968. Furthermore, the issue component is not absent from party images as it increases slightly (domestic policy for 1968)—its only deviation from a downward trend. Although this shift is not a substantial deviation from the trend, it is most likely linked to the increased relevance of the Democratic Party-New Deal base as represented in the Humphrey candidacy. By 1972, the role of candidate personality reaches an all-time high, and party domestic policy reaches an all-time low. Furthermore, the foreign policy base of candidate attitudes, while somewhat erratic over the period, reaches its highest point in 1972 at a time when others have cited the salience of the Vietnam war issue (Miller et al., 1973). The candidate domestic policy measure also remains relatively high in 1972, and in fact, all of the various candidate components are consistently more powerful than any of the party components in this last presidential electoral contest.

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There are a number of basic trends which emerge from the above analysis. The attitudinal model of the vote remains relatively stable in its explanatory power, yet there are important forces of change occurring within various candidate and party components. With the exception of a slight decrease in 1968, there is a linear increase in the power of the candidate personality component in explaining the vote; and with the exception of a slight increase in 1968, there is a linear decline in the domestic policy component of party images.[12] There is also a general increase in domestic policy relevance attached to periodic presidential candidates during the 1960s and a general weakness of management and foreign policy attitudes tied to the political parties during the entire period. This general weakness also holds for the foreign policy and administrative components of candidate images over the years with the exception of foreign policy in 1972 and candidate management attitudes in 1960. In sum, the entire period is characterized by relatively rapid decreases in the issue relevance of the two major political parties, a rapid increase in the predictive power of attitudes about candidate personality, and a relatively high domestic policy component linked to candidates during the 1960s.

THE ROLE OF PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION AND CANDIDATE AND PARTY ATTITUDINAL COMPONENTS OF THE VOTE

In order to depict parsimoniously the impact of partisan identification in conjunction with the various candidate and party attitude components, it was entered into the regression equation explaining the vote in each electoral contest.[13] The beta coefficients for these equations are presented in Table 2. Since so much of the party image factor is actually a domestic policy component, and since the candidate personality component, and to a lesser extent the candidate domestic policy component, form the most important sources of candidate

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images, we would expect those factors to be influenced in a manner similar to the way partisan identification influenced the total party and candidate RPA scores in an earlier section of the paper. In fact, the effect is generally similar to the model utilized earlier without components broken out, i.e., partisan identification as a variable has the greatest impact on the party image components of the vote. The bivariate ordering of this impact is also evident in Table 3. As noted earlier, the inclusion of partisan identification as a variable adds some explained variance to the attitudinal model such that the coefficient of determination reaches at least 65% in 1960 and 1968. But the basic question has to do with the impact of partisan attachment on personality and policy components, and the relative weight of certain candidate or party components which was possibly hidden in earlier analysis before statistical controls for partisan attachment. With party foreign policy and party management components remaining relatively weak through the period (as seen earlier), there is a familiar linear decrease in party images within the domestic policy component. Although party identification erodes the contribution of party images, it tends to do so rather uniformly throughout the period so that the linear decrease in beta coefficients for party domestic attitudes is still evident. In addition, the linear increase noted earlier in total candidate attitude impact holds under a statistical control for partisan identification within the candidate personality dimension. On the other hand, the domestic policy component of attitudes toward candidates tends to be somewhat affected by the inclusion of a statistical control for party identification. While the beta weights for the candidate domestic policy component remain high for 1964 and subsequent elections, there is some decrease in explanatory power. This slight drop-off since 1964, however, tends to be "recaptured" by the unique impact of partisan identification as it increases in 1968. This, of course, makes perfect sense during a close electoral contest. But what about 1972? The role of candidate domestic policy decreases, and it is accompanied by a substantial decrease in the role of partisan identification to its lowest point

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throughout the entire period. In effect, the variance in the vote tends to be recaptured by an increase (to a peak) in the impact of foreign policy attitudes attached to the presidential candidates and a substantial rise in the power of the personality component. The 1972 model does not necessarily picture the electorate as less policy-oriented, but instead it tends to exhibit a shift in strength from short-term candidate domestic policy to short-term candidate foreign policy largely associated with the war issue. In 1972 both the foreign policy and the domestic policy attitudinal components of candidate images are powerful enough to be within range of the explanatory power of partisan identification. Therefore, an increase in the role of total candidate images does not necessarily mean only an increase in the personality component, for it can be accompanied by shifts within the foreign and domestic policy arena.

CONTINUITY IN CHANGE

The rapid social and political changes over a twenty-year period in American electoral history tend to camouflage the underlying continuity in those changes associated with electoral behavior. While short-term candidate advantages, and to a lesser extent, party advantages, fluctuate from one quadrennial period to another, there is remarkable continuity in the *impact* of those forces throughout various segments of the electorate over time. Within the set of possible short-term forces, the influence of candidate images on the vote has steadily increased and has been accompanied by a precipitous erosion in the relevance of party images. This has occurred in the context of relative stability in the underlying distribution of partisan loyalties and in the impact that partisan identification has on the vote, although that impact varies somewhat by the size of electoral victories.

Trends are also evident within more specific components of attitudes toward political parties and candidates. The personality dimension of candidate evaluations is most dynamic and

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TABLE 2
Regression Equations (Beta Weights) For The Vote: Partisan Identification And Party And Candidate Attitude Components, 1952-1972

Year	(Y) Vote		(X1) PTY-ID		(X2) PTY-FP		(X3) PTY-MGT		(X4) PTY-DP		(X5) CND-FP		(X6) CND-MGT		(X7) CND-DP		(X8) CND-PER	R	R^2(%)
1952	Y	=	.319X_1	+	.039X_2	+	.107X_3	+	.216X_4	+	.102X_5	+	.131X_6	+	.081X_7	+	.170X_8	.76	57.8
1956	Y	=	.378X_1	+	.033X_2	+	.029X_3	+	.130X_4	+	.057X_5	+	.154X_6	+	.108X_7	+	.207X_8	.76	58.0
1960	Y	=	.370X_1	+	.026X_2	+	.023X_3	+	.132X_4	+	.087X_5	+	.194X_6	+	.065X_7	+	.250X_8	.81	65.4
1964	Y	=	.308X_1	+	.027X_2	+	.048X_3	+	.066X_4	+	.072X_5	+	.093X_6	+	.226X_7	+	.315X_8	.78	60.0
1968	Y	=	.372X_1	-	.049X_2	+	.043X_3	+	.093X_4	+	.084X_5	+	.122X_6	+	.179X_7	+	.264X_8	.81	64.9
1972	Y	=	.224X_1	-	.012X_2	-	.013X_3	+	.042X_4	+	.201X_5	+	.120X_6	+	.172X_7	+	.400X_8	.73	52.7

TABLE 3
Correlation Coefficients (r) Between Party And Candidate Attitude Components, Partisan Identification, And The Vote: 1952-1972

	1952		1956		1960		1964		1968		1972	
	ID	VOTE	ID	VOTE	ID	VOTE	ID	VOTE	ID	VOTE	ID	VOTE
ID vs. VOTE	.61		.68		.70		.62		.69		.51	
TOTAL PTY	.56	.68	.68	.64	.66	.67	.63	.62	.60	.62	.56	.50
PTY-FP	.22	.27	.26	.26	.25	.28	.27	.28	.19	.15	.18	.17
PTY-MGT	.32	.40	.27	.25	.33	.33	.30	.29	.31	.32	.13	.10
PTY-DP	.46	.58	.56	.55	.52	.56	.50	.49	.49	.53	.44	.38
TOTAL CND	.46	.65	.60	.67	.59	.71	.52	.71	.57	.72	.47	.69
CND-FP	.22	.31	.21	.24	.31	.35	.21	.28	.25	.32	.20	.38
CND-MGT	.22	.39	.34	.43	.38	.51	.22	.33	.39	.47	.05	.20
CND-DP	.25	.37	.32	.37	.34	.39	.36	.51	.37	.50	.29	.38
CND-PER	.43	.55	.50	.57	.49	.61	.45	.61	.50	.62	.42	.59

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salient, yet that variation is characterized by continuity in its increasing predictive power for the vote since 1952. The more medium-term domestic policy component of party images is characterized by a linear decrease in statistical power and by a substantial erosion in traditional advantages for Democratic Party policy emerging from the New Deal coalition. On the other hand, the impact of issues on the vote has increased during the 1960s and early 1970s—yet those issues are linked and responsive to *candidate* images.

The impact of these forces on the role of political parties may be profound. While coalitions of partisan loyalists remain, there are signs that attachment to party may be weakening in recent years and that short-term images of party have become practically irrelevant as the monetary appeal of candidates and their policies emerge as prime attitudinal predictors of presidential voting behavior. The political parties are undoubtedly providing fewer voting cues, they tend to be candidate centered, their leaders came of age in another era, and they have been characterized as tardy in their response to system change (Ladd, 1970). This erosion of relevance has been accompanied by recent gains in the ranks of independents, yet these individuals share many of the same characteristics as partisans, but only in lesser degrees of magnitude, salience, and impact.

The increasing relevance of candidate personality cannot hide a heightened role of issue components tied to those candidates. But most important, those links to candidates may preclude any hope for the responsible party system concept which has been seen as more viable in recent years as the electorate votes more on the basis of issues (Pomper, 1971). Indeed, an increased level of issue orientation within the electorate does not necessarily imply that party images and the policies that come to mind with party images have any particular motivating power for voter choice. This decreased role for party also suggests that presidents may have a freer reign on public policy, especially when that low relevance is accompanied by a healthy victory for one candidate.

These changes do not necessarily imply a realignment of the political parties, and we have reported no direct evidence of the

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reorganization of mass coalition bases. Nevertheless, realigning tendencies are paramount as scholars point to third party movements, socioeconomic stresses, and ideological polarizations. The process of "party decomposition" (Trilling, 1974), coupled with "realigning discontents" (Converse, 1972), and heightened voter disenchantment (Miller, 1974) have potentially formidable impacts on electoral politics and the role of party as a linkage between the electorate and government. Our evidence suggests that realignment of party forces may be somewhat irrelevant unless the electorate is truly in a transition stage of momentary divergence between the impact of party and candidate images. The linear trend pointing to this divergence of predictive power is firm, and we have seen that it takes substantial shocks to divert it (the party domestic policy slump continued despite the Goldwater-Johnson disturbance)—yet it is unthinkable statistically for it to continue unabated, and our substantive grasp of equilibrium forces raises doubts about its endurance. If the post-Watergate 1976 election places continued importance on the integrity of candidates, the trend is likely to continue unless management and policy failures (e.g., economics) are sufficiently linked to *party* so as to recover its relevance as a medium-term force on the vote.

NOTES

1. The data utilized in this study were made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research. They include the major presidential election studies for 1952 through 1972 originally collected by the Survey Research Center and the Center for Political Studies of the University of Michigan. Neither the centers nor the consortium bears any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

2. For a similar view of party images, see Matthews and Prothro (1966: 150) and their claim that "party image . . . is likely to be less ephemeral than voter attitudes toward issues and candidates of specific campaigns"; also see Trilling (1974).

3. Individual scores range from a maximum Republican advantage of −10 to a maximum Democratic advantage of +10 (−6 to +6 in 1972) based on pro-Democratic and anti-Republican responses minus pro-Republican and anti-Democratic responses.

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The total party image scores utilize the questions about likes/dislikes for the political parties, and the total candidate image scores use questions about the two major party candidates (5 possible responses for each like or dislike question, 3 in 1972). These total scores include all possible categories of responses, and the total party score includes responses about the candidates in each party elicited by the party questions. However this category is excluded from the various component scores for political party images, as discussed below, since it duplicates references to candidates and comprises only a small portion of responses. Similar scoring procedures, with the same theoretical limits, are used for each component.

4. Space does not permit a detailed presentation of the descriptive measures of partisan advantage and the relevant regression equations for various partisan subgroupings by direction and strength of partisan identification. For an extensive analysis, plus measures of salience for the various components, see Kirkpatrick et al. (1974).

5. Multiple correlation regression is the most appropriate procedure for analyzing relative weights in a vote model (with vote as a dummy variable, excluding Wallace voters in 1968). It has been used by others, e.g., RePass (1971) and Miller et al. (1973), and was employed (with a detailed technical description) in Stokes's original analyses of components (Stokes et al., 1958; Stokes, 1966b). It should be noted, however, that Stokes et al. only reported standardized regression coefficients in their analyses of 1952 and 1956 SRC data (1958), and that Stokes's subsequent analysis of 1952-1964 data (1966b) employed regression coefficients only "partially" standardized (in terms of the standard deviations of the independent variables) and multiplied by national means for each component. Although this procedure provides valuable information about each electoral contest, it is less useful for a treatment of individual voter choice models. Our use of multiple regression and its partial coefficients, however, cannot be totally free from some error disturbance associated with the analysis of components unrecognized in previous research. Although it is difficult to assess, there is some logical interdependence between scores on components *within* party responses and *within* candidate responses, since respondents may give a majority of responses in one component and thereby theoretically limit the responses in other categories. This cannot occur when total party and total candidate responses are used and the consistency of findings throughout the paper suggests that it is not a problem in components analysis and that any peculiarities are evenly distributed in the aggregate.

6. Because of differences in components, this is the only part of our analysis which is at all comparable to Stokes (1966b); i.e., he plots these total images for early years, but on the basis of modified regression coefficients as seen above.

7. The ranges and means for multiple correlation coefficients from 1952-1972 are as follows: all voters (.70–.76, .73); strong partisans (.79–.86, .82); weak partisans (.64–.71, .68); independents (.59–.70, .67); Republicans (.34–.68, .43); Democrats (.51–.66, .59).

8. Over this period, Democrats vote from a low of 58% for the Democratic candidate in 1972 to a high of 89% Democratic in 1964. The Republican range is from 73% in 1964 to a high of 96% in 1956.

9. From a low of 3% increase in 1972 to a high of 8% in 1968. The multiple correlation coefficients (R) for each year, beginning with 1952, are as follows: .76, .76, .80, .77, .80, and .72.

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10. This, and other noted deviations for 1968, may be linked to the absence of Wallace voters in the analysis.

11. More detail on each contest can be found in the respective quadrennial studies by SRC/CPS authors.

12. Again, the exclusion of Wallace voters probably had some effect, e.g., heightening the coefficients for party policy.

13. In addition, separate regression analyses were performed for the various partisan subgroupings. The basic trends in Table 1 holds for strong and weak partisans, and to a lesser extent for independents. The behavior of independents, however, is not without policy overtones (see Kirkpatrick et al., 1974).

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