

Disagreement About More Than Party: Policy-related Foundations of Vote Choice

Initial Results from 2008 Public Agendas and Civic Engagement Survey (PACES)

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I. Primary Focus: Policy-related Conflicts

- Emphasis on 2008 and 2004, and Future of Electoral Analysis after New American Voter (NAV) and American Voter Revisited (AVR)
- Working hypothesis: all candidate evaluations (and choices) are powerfully shaped by policy-related conflicts *as well as* Party ID
- Goal: comprehensive description of voters' own views concerning such conflicts and their electoral role – at three levels of aggregation (all-policy, domain and topic)
- Cambridge book w/ Strand, Brady, Carmines

II. Types of Explanatory Variables or Themes and Stages (in NAV)

Factual social or economic characteristics

Partisan identification

Policy-related predispositions

Preferences on current policy issues

Perceptions of current conditions

Retrospective performance evaluations

Evaluations of personal qualities

Prospective evaluations

Alternative PACES Framework for Explanatory Themes and Stages

Factual social or economic characteristics

Partisan identification

Several different types of policy-related views, as well as Liberal/Conservative self-designation

Perceptions of current conditions

Retrospective performance evaluations

Other evaluations, including personal qualities

III. Before Policy-related Questions: Are There Changes from 2004 in Role of Non-political Characteristics?

Group Differences in % Voting for Democratic Candidate

	2004	2008
Race: Black - Nonblack	+42	+45
Gender: Female - Male	+13	+6
Age: Under 30 – Over 60	+8	+22
Income: Over100K – Under 30K	-11	+6
Education: Coll Deg – NoHSDeg	+9	+10
Union household: U – NonU	+8	+15
Religion: Comm'd Evang'l – None	-48	-50

Also Before Policy-related Results: Suggestive Evidence About Change

Average Vote = Spread (Obama% - McCain%)/100

	Dem	Ind/Othr	Rep	Total
Early Sept	.93	-.22	-.89	-.11
Late Sept	.84	.10	-.92	.14
Early October	.85	.02	-.92	.10
Late October	.92	.43	-.78	.33
Total	.88	.10	-.88	.13
(N)	(281)	(292)	(200)	(773)

IV. Continuing Role of Party ID

- After years of challenges, PID now accepted as most important single explanatory variable
- But other conclusions about importance depend on level of *conceptual aggregation*
- Primary emphasis of this paper/project: role of other disagreements – about “more than party”
- Or the apparent influence of policy-related conflicts among voters with the same PID
- Still unresolved: explanation of relationships between PID and policy-related conflicts

V. Complementary Methods: Reasons vs. Potential Causes

- AVR provides ambiguous conclusions about the overall importance of policy-related views – unlike NAV and this paper
- AVR also provides no comparisons of results based on direct policy-related measures (from structured questions) vs. respondent-provided reasons for choice (from open-ended questions) – as in NAV
- More such comparisons are needed, given prominence of reasons as explanations

VI. Major Goals Concerning Policy-related Conflicts (PACES)

Clarify substantive *content* of voters' *policy-related* views, and their *impact on evaluations and behavior*

Assess apparent influence of multiple conflicts at *four levels* of conceptual aggregation:

- Combination of *all* such *conflicts* – “all policy”
- Combinations of topics within broad *domains*
- Combinations of issues within those *topics*
- Different *specific* issues about the same topic

Report to Pew Trusts (2003), Papers in '05,'06,'07

VII. PACES Measurement Strategy: Batteries and Specific Questions

- Goals: multiple-item measures for particular policy-related (PR) topics and very broad substantive domains
- Central problem: the *number* of different PR topics where one or more conflicts *may* play a visible role in shaping choices (next screen lists 28 considered for 2008)
- Problems in “covering” all relevant PR conflicts in every election since the first ANES: examples from 1984 (taxes), 1996 (Medicare \$\$), and 2004 (env’t, civ lib’s) – based on single item measurement as well as omissions
- PACES measurement strategy based on five general batteries of questions – (on screen after next)

Potential Policy-related Topics for '08

Economic	Culture	Mil/FP	Other
Taxes	Abortion	Iraq	Environment
Health care	Gay rights	Other force/Iran	Civil Liberties
Poverty	Religion	UN/unilateral	Race
Income gap	Gender	Military \$\$	Crime
Deficit	Other moral	Israel/Palestine	Immigration
Social Security		Cuba	Gun control
Education			Judges
Unions vs. Corp's			
Job loss			
Free trade			

What *Topics* Must We Cover in '08 – To Avoid Incorrect Conclusions?

Domain	Must Cover?	Maybe Cover?	Safe to Ignore?
Economic Inequality	Health care Taxes, deficit Poverty, unemp't Other inequality Size/cost of gov't	Unions, corporation Education Free trade, global'n Social Security	Tort reform Agriculture Child care
Cultural or Family Values	Abortion Homosexuality	Religion, church-state Gender equality	Other morality

What *Topics* MUST We Cover in '08 -- To Avoid Incorrect Conclusions?

Domain	Must Cover?	Maybe Cover?	Safe to Ignore?
Foreign or Military	Iraq Afghanistan Other use of force (Iran, Pakistan?)	Military spending Israel/Palestinians Uni- vs. Multilateral Cuba	Foreign aid Latin America China
Other or Combined	Environment Civil liberties Race	Energy (not env't) Immigration Crime, punishment Gun control	Devolution to states Multicultural Space program Transportation AIDS

Multiple-item Measurement Based on 5 Batteries of Questions

PACES 2008 pre-election questionnaire covered over 25 topics by using five standard batteries of questions, each of which asks questions about several different issues in terms of a common frame of reference

current conditions (5),
suggested problems (27),
governmental objectives or actions (24),
levels of governmental “effort” (9), and
levels of governmental spending (9)

Multiple-item Measurement at 3 Levels of Conceptual Aggregation

- Summary scores for general *topics*: average of multiple responses across batteries based on problems, objectives, effort, or spending)
- Summary scores for broader substantive *domains*: average of major topics in domain
- Overall summary score for *all policy*-related conflicts: average of three major domains (economic, cultural, and international) and one residual “other” domain

VIII. Combined Influence of All Policy-related (PR) Conflicts

- *Combined* influence of all PR conflicts appears to be very large (if not dominant) for Presidential Approval and Vote Choice – with and without controlling for Party ID (next 2 slides)
- Consistent or increasing apparent influence of combined PR views in ANES, PACES and CES -- since 1992 (3rd slide)

Apparent Impact of Combined Policy on Vote Choice, by Party ID (PACES 2004)

Cell Entries are Average Scores on Vote Choice: +1 for Bush, -1 for Kerry

	Democrat	Indep/Other	Republican	Totals
Clearly Liberal	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Somewhat Liberal	-.96	-.66	.20	-.71
Balanced/Neutral	-.73	.00	.69	-.03
Somewhat Conservative	-.04	.84	.99	.85
Clearly Conservative	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Totals (N)	-.80 (270)	-.07 (309)	.85 (316)	.03 (895)

Similar Results for 2008: Apparent Impact of Combined Policy, by Party ID

Cell Entries are Average Scores on Vote: +1 for Obama, -1 for McCain

	Democrat	Indep/Other	Republican	Totals
Clearly Liberal	1.00	.89	1.00	.97
Somewhat Liberal	.92	.60	-.60	.65
Balanced/Neutral	.46	-.45	-.83	-.38
Somewhat Conservative	.20	-.94	-.96	-.90
Clearly Conservative	--	-.93	-1.00	-.98
Totals (N)	-.80 (281)	-.07 (292)	.85 (200)	.13 (773)

Comparing Standardized OLS Coefficients for Combined Policy and Party ID (2004 PACES)

Vote Choice Pres Approval

Upper Bound for Effect:

Control for Only SEC's

Combined Policy	.66	.75
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Party Identification	.58	.57
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Omits Indirect Effects:

Control for other + SEC's

Combined Policy	.45	.59
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Party Identification	.37	.30
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Increasing Role of Combined Policy for Presidential Approval?

	2008	2006	2004	2002	2001	2000	1996	1992
All Policy	.54	.48	.59	.45	.41	.27	.41	.31
Party ID	.23	.29	.30	.17	.26	.33	.28	.30

Entries are standardized regression coefficients from analyses that control for non-political socio and economic characteristics as well as Party ID and Combined Policy

2008, 2006, 2004 and 2001 results based on PACES, 2002 results based on the Indiana University Congressional Election Survey (CES), others from ANES (1992 from TNAV)

IX. Comparing Apparent Impact of Major Domains: 2004 Vote Choice

(All Entries Are Standardized Coefficients)

	Economic/ Equality	War/ Military	Cultural / Fam Val's	Other Conflicts
Bivariate	.58	.61	.49	.57
With Controls for Social, Econ Char's	.47	.50	.45	.46
Additional Control For Party ID	.27	.31	.28	.28
Additional Controls for Other Domains and Lib/Con Self-designation	.12	.19	.13	.09

IX. Similar Results for 2008: Apparent Impact of Major Domains

(All Entries Are Standardized Coefficients)

	Economic/ Equality	War/ Military	Cultural / Fam Val's	Other Conflicts
Bivariate	.59	.64	.58	.67
With Controls for Social, Econ Char's	.51	.55	.53	.59
Additional Control For Party ID	.31	.36	.32	.38
Additional Controls for Other Domains and Lib/Con Self-designation	.15	.20	.11	.11

Military/Foreign Policy Domain: Iraq -- and What Else?

- Continuing dominance of a single item, whether U.S. should – or should not – have invaded Iraq
- Relationship with vote choice is as strong as for party identification (w/ or w/out controls)
- Some additional apparent influence for current Iraq choices, none for use of force in other countries, defense spending, UN/unilateral actions
- Apparent influence of war/foreign policy reduced by civil liberties vs. terrorism in “other” domain

Economic Domain: Conflicts Concerning Inequality

- Multiple-item measures concerning taxes, health care, explicit inequality/poverty, and other topics
- Apparent independent influence for health care and a combination of taxes and deficit
- No signs of independent influence for other topic-level measures, including education, Social Security, conflicts between unions & corporations
- Detailed results for specific issues as well as general topics saved for another presentation

Cultural Domain: Traditional Family Values

- Multiple-item measures for abortion, gay rights, and role of religion in government -- based on batteries for problem seriousness, appropriateness of goals or objectives, and priority (level of effort or spending)
- Visible independent apparent effects for abortion and gay rights
- Fewer items and no visible independent role for conflicts about gender equality and sexual morality

Topics Not “In” Major Domains

- Six additional topic-level measures for policy-related conflicts that do not seem appropriate to include in any of our three major domains:
 - environmental protection (and energy),
 - civil liberties (vs. terrorism),
 - race (including affirmative action),
 - crime (and gun control),
 - immigration (legal as well as illegal) and
 - Liberal vs. conservative judges
- Clear independent apparent effects for environmental protection – but not the others

Does Measurement Matter?

Domain-level Comparisons with ANES

- Parallel analyses of PACES and ANES suggest very similar conclusions concerning the apparent combined influence of all policy-related conflicts (as shown above)
- Domain-level results are also similar concerning economic inequality and foreign or military policy -- although differences in question wording and emphasis suggest somewhat different roles for topics within those domains
- PACES results for 2004 suggest that traditional family values or cultural conflicts were **twice** as important as ANES
- ANES 2004 did not include questions that permit this kind of topic-level comparison (with PACES) concerning environmental protection, civil liberties vs. terrorism, the role of religion in public affairs, and immigration
- Parallel comparisons with ANES also needed for 2008

Causal Issues: Evaluations as Dependent and Independent Variables

- Above results suggest similar conclusions about the impact of policy-related views on voters' evaluations of President Bush and their eventual choices in both 2004 and 2008 – and results are similar for several other kinds of evaluations
- Such conclusions, of course, rest on key assumptions about the underlying causal processes involved
- In general, we suspect that voters' policy-related views are largely determined before the current campaign begins, so that their apparent impact on evaluations and vote choice are only modestly confounded by “persuasion”
- PACES design for 2008 includes re-interviews with voters first interviewed in 2006 -- to test that assumption directly
- More definitive tests for these and other ideas about causation depend on longer-term panels -- in future ANES?

Ideology, Levels of Information, and Cross-cutting Cleavages

- Overwhelming majority have clear views for at least 1 domain, but are not “ideological”
- Policy-related conflicts are multi-dimensional and cross-cutting at elite and mass levels: mixed views are the norm, not exception
- Neutral, balanced, very weak, non-existent views for a given topic should all be scored 0
- Differential apparent effects by political information (not presented today)

Importance of Mixed or Moderate Views

- Relatively few voters in 2008 had policy-related views that were consistently liberal or conservative
- Illustration: construct three 3-category measures to summarize policy-related views concerning cultural issues (traditional family values), economic inequality (or benefits), and Iraq
- Based on those three major domains (and particular trichotomous measures), we note that: (next slide)

Importance of Mixed Views (Cont'd)

- Only 13% of voters held at least moderately *liberal* views about *all 3* of those topics (and 98% of them are for Obama)
- Only 8% were at least slightly *conservative* concerning *all 3* of those domains (and 100% of them are for McCain)
- Only 10% are moderate or neutral or *in the middle* on *all 3* domains (and appear to have chosen Obama by 62 to 38)
- As in 2004, the overwhelming majority of voters in 2008 had “mixed” views about different topics

XII. Questions and Initial Results Based on Unique Aspects of 2008

- How large a role was played by race-related attitudes? Which candidate chosen by white voters with mixed or neutral policy-related views? Initial answer: Slightly for Obama?
- How did apparent policy-related influences (by domain) shift after the financial crisis?
- What changed over time for voters whose policy-related views are “in the middle”? Not clear yet
- As the campaign developed, what role was played by voters’ assessments of Gov. Palin?
- Is US “still a center-right country”? (mixed results)

XIII. Why did Obama Win?

Contributions to Aggregate Results

- Turnout: unresolved questions about partisan composition of actual voters in 2008, and extent of Democratic and Republican mobilization efforts
- Policy-related Contributions: Apparent contributions of major policy-related domains to the Bush's victory in 2004 changed by "two-sided" analyses that provide separate estimates for the "left" and "right" sides of each major domain:

inequality conflicts mattered more on the left

cultural issues mattered more on the right

(Not done yet for 2008; waiting for the POST)

XIII. Summary: Initial Conclusions, Next Steps, Measurement After 2008

- Clarify content and apparent electoral role of policy-related conflicts, by topic and domain
- Core challenge: Comprehensive measurement (multiple-item measures for 20 to 30 topics)
- Need for prior measures of policy-related views, for questions about causal sequence
- Future design: All in ANES or separate study?
- Comparison of results with ANES (for 2008)
- Future data collection? No plans until book

Related Papers and Publications

- Carmines, Edward G., J. Merrill Shanks, Douglas A. Strand, and Henry E. Brady, "Vote Choice, Presidential Approval, and Inequality: The Role of Economic Conflicts in the 2004 Election," Presented at the 2006 Meetings of the American Political Science Association
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- Shanks, J. Merrill, with Douglas A. Strand, 1994. "Unresolved Issues in Electoral Decisions: Alternative Perspectives on the Explanation of Individual Choice." In *Elections at Home and Abroad*, ed. M. Kent Jennings and Thomas E. Mann. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press..