

BOOK REVIEW

Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics. Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1989, 217 pages, ISBN 0 691 07802 5 (Cloth).

The standard Downsian model of political competition is a demand-side model. In that model, vote-maximizing parties react to voter preferences by seeking to locate themselves at a 'winning' location. The Downsian model is voter driven in that changes in voter preferences on issues lead to victory by the party that best anticipated the views of the new majority. In contrast, Carmines and Stimson have what we may call a 'supply-side' model of politics, although the term is mine, not theirs. In their model, changes in the behaviour of party leaders and activists (perhaps mediated by exogenous events such as a recession) lead to replacement of old cadres by voters who punish the 'in-party' and in turn lead to changes in the issue positions of the political parties. The party issue positions define the *options* open to the voters, and voter choices between the options made available to them determine which party will be victorious.

Of course, in the story Carmines and Stimson tell, party activists may still be seeking to behave as expected vote-maximizers, but there are three critical differences between the way Carmines and Stimson explain events of the last several decades and the way in which those same events are portrayed by most political scientists.

First and foremost, Carmines and Stimson emphasize the importance of racial cleavages. In particular, they show how the racial attitudes of white voters became important for voter choices as the Democrats replaced the Republicans as the party (at the national level) that took the strongest pro-civil rights stance.

Second, they emphasize the critical role of leadership, rather than treating political parties as passive responders to changing currents of public opinion. In particular, while they portray the role of race as a part of dynamic multi-causal model, preferring to speak of 'issue evolution' rather than realignment, they show the critical importance of a three-year period (1963-5) during which decisions by national party leaders (most notably Johnson, but also Kennedy) and the success of Goldwater activists in capturing control of the Republican party led to a reversal in racial stance of the two political parties. Moreover, they show that the party differences in race-related policies persisted in succeeding decades, and that the gap between the parties continued to widen.

Third, Carmines and Stimson skillfully combine information from mass

public opinion, congressional roll calls, surveys of party elites and activists, and a broad historical overview to present a convincing longitudinal model of the evolution of party cleavages. Few authors make use of such a wide range of data and fewer still are able to interweave such multiple sources into a true synthesis.

While many of the chapters of this book have previously appeared in article form over the past ten years, this is truly a book whose whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. Indeed, in my view, this is one of the most important books in political science to have been published in the post-World War II era. It is a book indispensable for anyone who wishes to understand contemporary American politics and public opinion. Below we briefly outline the Carmines and Stimson argument.

Carmines and Stimson emphasize that there is competition among issues for public attention, with some issues remarkably long lasting, but others leading only relatively brief lives, while other issues disappear only to resurface again years or decades later (perhaps in slightly different guise).¹ Old issues can fade as old problems are solved or muted in importance. New issues can split old (winning) coalitions. New issues can arise exogenously due to external disruptions to the political order, but also may be given prominence because of manipulations by politicians.²

Carmines and Stimson emphasize that, in the early part of this century, neither political party had an incentive to cater to the black vote. The Compromise of 1877 had put white Democrats in firm control of the South and left Republicans in power in much of the rest of the nation. However, once millions of blacks became Roosevelt Democrats at the national level, it made sense for Northern Democrats to seek black enfranchisement, especially as post-World War II black migration into the cities of the North began to change the nature of the urban landscape. Democratic politicians outside the South began to see blacks as a potential source of Democratic strength, and this brought to the fore a long suppressed source of conflict between Northern and Southern Democrats, although there would be a number of zigs and zags before the break became irrevocable.

Although Eleanor Roosevelt was associated strongly with the cause of Negro equality, Franklin Roosevelt's own appeal to blacks was largely symbolic; he

¹ The idea of issue evolution is linked by Carmines and Stimson to the work of William Riker (1982) on the US party system in the 19th century, but I find even greater similarities to the earlier work of E. E. Schattschneider (1968) on the role of cleavages (and other cleavage inducing factors, such as class and region) in determining/defining which set of voters will become the winning majority. Schattschneider, like Riker, sees the competition among political parties as in part a struggle to control which issues will structure political conflict.

² Carmines and Stimson also distinguish between 'easy' issues and 'hard' issues; the former are 'gut' issues that can lead to realignments at the mass level, the latter are issues that require a level of conceptual sophistication that makes them unsuitable as vehicles for dramatic electoral change.

himself had done nothing to end segregation in the District of Columbia, and World War II was fought with a segregated Army and a Navy in which blacks served only as stewards. In 1948, however, a strong civil rights plank was put into the national Democratic platform over Southern objections, triggering a partial walkout. In the 1948 presidential election Dixiecrats won Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina. Subsequently, Truman desegregated the Armed Forces by executive order and was associated with support of a 'fair housing' policy, but then Stevenson sought reconciliation with the South and did not take a strong pro-civil rights stance in either of his campaigns. Indeed, in the 1950s, it was a Republican Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who declared an end to the 'separate but equal' doctrine in *Brown v. Board of Education* and a Republican president (albeit a reluctant one) who federalized the National Guard to enforce court-ordered desegregation in the deep South. Not surprisingly, black support for Stevenson was considerably less than black support had been for Roosevelt.

The sit-ins and black protests of the late 1950s and early 1960s made race a focus of national attention. Kennedy's famous call to the wife of the imprisoned Martin Luther King, Jr. prior to the 1960 election helped attract black voters to the Democrats. Although Kennedy did not live to turn his major civil rights promises into reality, Lyndon Johnson used Kennedy's 'martyrdom' as a propaganda tool to support enactment of what became the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the most important piece of civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Although Republicans gave even greater support to this bill than did Democrats, Johnson was able to get over 60 per cent support from Democrats for its final passage in each house. 1964 was a watershed year for both political parties with respect to racial issues. As Carmines and Stimson (p. 43) put it:

Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 signified two major and interrelated developments in American politics. First, it demonstrated that the national government could play a major role in bringing about equal rights. The mild and largely ineffective 1957 and 1960 civil rights laws had led many to believe that opponents of civil rights were too powerful to allow the national government to exert significant influence in this area. The 1964 Civil Rights Act proved that this was no longer the case. Passage of this legislation also revealed just how far the Democratic party had come on civil rights.

In 1964, for the first time, the racial stance of the Republican presidential nominee, Barry Goldwater, was clearly far more conservative than that of his Democratic rival. Barry Goldwater chose to 'go where the ducks were', i.e. to seek to break the Democratic near-stranglehold on the South by appealing to Southern white voters with a non-overtly-racist but forthrightly states' rights position. He succeeded, in that, of the six states he carried, five were in the deep South, even though he was running against a Democrat from Texas. Republican

presidential candidates had not carried these states since Reconstruction.³ In 1964, blacks went from being predominantly Democratic in casting their presidential ballots to a support level for Johnson that was over 90 percent, a level of support for Democratic nominees that has continued in subsequent elections. 1964, moreover, was the last election in which a majority of whites supported a Democratic presidential nominee. Thus, after Goldwater redefined the position of the Republican party on racial matters, in subsequent presidential elections we have had a racially polarized electorate.

Up to this point, the story told by Carmines and Stimson is a familiar one to most political scientists. Johnson's eye to his place in history made him choose a leadership role on civil rights; Goldwater sought to find a 'new Republican majority'—and failed. But this is only a part of the story of the mid-sixties. During this period both the Democratic and Republican parties underwent a 'sea change' that has lasted decades and remains in place even now. Where Carmines and Stimson make their major contribution is to tell the story of this 'sea change' in terms of what was happening within each party and what happened as a consequence to each party's support base in the electorate.

The 'triggering'⁴ events of the mid 1960s broke the attachment of the South to the Democratic national ticket and also put blacks overwhelmingly in the Democratic camp—thus irrevocably ending the 'Civil War realignment' (Brady and Grofman, 1988).⁵ In 1964, as Goldwater supporters take control of the Republican party at the local level, Republican party activists for the first time have racial attitudes that are more conservative than those of their Democratic counterparts. Carmines and Stimson show the role of such 'citizen activists' in structuring party images. Voter perceptions of the racial stances of the parties come to track the positions expressed by party activists (see esp. pp. 111–14). Over time, the racial positions of each party's elected officials also come to reverse with respect to party differences on racial issues. In the 1950s, for example, the few Republican Southern Congressmen were far more liberal than Democrats from the same region, and indeed, were even more liberal than their fellow Republicans from outside the South. Even as late as 1965, it was Republican leadership in the Senate that was critical to the passage of the Voting Rights Act

³ In my view, Goldwater's southern successes came about as a result of white unhappiness with Democratic policies toward race. Indeed, it is hard for me to see how this can be in dispute.

⁴ The 'triggering' metaphor is a variant of the 'jump-starter' metaphor suggested to me by Thomas Cavanagh (personal communication, 1988). Carmines and Stimson (p. 145) talk of a 'critical moment'. Their model of 'dynamic evolution' posits a combination of replacement and conversion, along with mobilization to start the process. 'Long term dynamic growth occurs when that 'visible' shift is reinforced by recruitment (and derecruitment) that continues to emphasize the new cleavage in following years; and partial decay occurs when the issue loses its capacity to shape the partisan orientations of the newest members of the electorate' (p. 145).

⁵ Most commentators take too short-sighted an historical perspective, by neglecting the fact that one central component of the alignment that structured the New Deal coalition is simply a continuation of the sectional cleavage that dates to the Civil War, and not really a product of the New Deal itself.

of 1965. Yet, now, Democratic senators and representatives are far more liberal on civil rights issues than Republicans.

Carmines and Stimson trace over the course of several decades the racial attitudes and voting behaviour of party activists, mass electorate, and elected officials, and provide a plausible mechanism (based on changes in party images) to account for the interrelationships among these time series. From my perspective, the single key point about the Carmines and Stimson analysis is their views about the importance of racial issues. Their data suggests that 'racial issues shape the political beliefs of blacks and whites and southerners and non-southerners alike' (p. 131). Indeed, they find that, by 1972, 'race had become 'nationalized' as a central issue in American politics, giving shape and form to many voters' belief systems' (p. 131) and serving as the principal source for ideological 'issue constraint'. The Carmines and Stimson theory of issue evolution is able to accommodate a key puzzle of contemporary American politics, the pervasiveness of racial divisions in a world characterized largely by politicians who disclaim any racial animus. As they point out, 'by the 1980s, . . . race . . . was incorporated into elections by the views of activist supporters on both sides of the issue: by that time a Ronald Reagan could be known to be a full-fledged racial conservative without even addressing the issue' (p. 137).

Issue Evolution is also important for the methodological lessons it teaches about how the relationship between public opinion and party competition is to be analyzed. In particular, Carmines and Stimson emphasize that profoundly significant changes that stretch out over a long period of time can be completely missed if one looks at reality in terms of a sequence of cross-sectional slices. As they note, if the same evidence they analyze were decomposed so that the question would be subtly changed from 'How much change does this process produce?' to 'How much of the observed change in a particular variable in a given year is attributable to the process in question?'—then 'inferences drawn by a reasonable analyst would have a strikingly different character. In few cases would the effects in any given year be notable. Only a few would be statistically significant' (p. 196).

No single book could possibly provide a complete picture of political competition in the US.⁶ But, read together with complementary works such as Huckfeldt and Kohfeld (1989), and Black and Black (1987), Carmines and Stimson provides us the background we need to make sense of the post-World War II transformation of American national politics in terms of the growing significance of racial divisions and the declining significance of class-based politics (except

⁶ An important piece of the story that they do not tell would focus on the dramatic gains in black registration in the South in the 1960s and the continuing even more dramatic gains in minority representation (much of it tied to implementation of the Voting Rights Act: Davidson, 1984). These gains are, in my view, critical in understanding the reaction of white voters to Democratic presidential aspirants.

insofar as class overlaps with race). Moreover, their model of dynamic issue evolution provides a useful framework within which to investigate the significance for party conflict and political change of new issues, e.g. abortion. This book was well over a decade in the making. It was worth waiting for.

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RECENT BOOKS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Robert M. Groves: *Survey Errors and Survey Costs*. New York, Chichester, Brisbane, Toronto, and Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, 1989, 590 pp. ISBN 0-471-61171-9.

This book consolidates information from the literature on survey errors from both social science and statistics, drawing on the statistical sciences for insights into measuring survey errors, and on the social sciences to explain why they exist. Survey methodologists will learn about statistical approaches concerning errors they have tried to eliminate in surveys. Social scientists will learn how to use formal cost and error models to aid design decisions in surveys. Groves hopes that this book will act to reduce the barriers between researchers who now work together on different aspects of survey research.

Jonathan Kelley and Clive Bean, (eds.): *Australian Attitudes: Social and Political Analyses From the National Social Science Survey*. Sydney, Wellington, London, and Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988, 206 pp. ISBN 0-04-350072-2.

This book presents a dozen new analyses of Australian society and politics based on data from the National Social Science Survey (NSSS)—the most comprehensive national sample survey of social and political attitudes ever undertaken in Australia. The topics covered in this volume include attitudes on moral issues such as abortion, views of economic policy, political ideology and party choice, and female participation in the workforce. One noteworthy feature of the NSSS is the development of extensive issue attitude scales based on thorough pretesting and factor analysis. Another innovation, unfortunately not available in time to be analyzed for this volume, is the collection of extensive information from the spouse and adult children of the primary respondents.

Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon and Lindsay Brook, (eds.): *British Social Attitudes, the 5th report*. Hampshire, England and Bookfield, Vermont: Gower, 1988, 274 pp. ISBN 0-566-05771-9 (pbk).

As Walter Bagehot wrote over a century ago, Britain is a nation in which appearances, social perceptions and traditional values count for a great deal. The task of this series is to monitor long-term changes in values in Britain. As a number of the contributors to this fifth volume in the series point out, the movements in public attitudes have been more numerous and rapid than they would have expected. Among the topics covered in this edition are attitudes toward education reform, trends in permissiveness, the public's response to AIDS, trust in the governmental and business establishment, North/South differences, and divisions of labor between men and women.

Richard G. Niemi, John Mueller, and Tom W. Smith: *Trends in Public Opinion: A Com-*

pendium of Survey Data. New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1989, 325 pp. ISBN 0-313-25426-5.

The data reported in this book represent as much as fifty years worth of polling in the United States. The authors provide easy access to a large collection of survey questions that have been repeated in exactly or nearly exactly the same wording over an extended period of time. The centerpiece of the collection is the data from the General Social Survey (GSS), begun in 1972. Because the GSS adopted many previously used questions, the authors have extended the time series back much further in many cases. Furthermore, they have added time series data from 25 other sources, such as Gallup and the National Election Studies. In some cases, one can see that valuable survey questions have not been asked in some time. Perhaps this book will stimulate survey researchers to incorporate some of these questions in their future work.

Frank J. R. van de Pol: *Issues of Design and Analysis of Panels*. Amsterdam: Sociometric Research Foundation, 1989, 132 pp. ISBN 90-70947-10-2.

With the increased popularity of panel research it is important to have methodological guides for the design and analysis of panel studies. The first part of this book is mainly concerned with specific problems such as nonresponse, attrition, and rotation. The second part discusses structural equation models as a means to analyze continuous variables, and latent Markov models to analyze categorical response variables. The author provides new models and algorithms for estimation and testing.

Gerald H. Gamm: *The Making of New Deal Democrats: Voting Behavior and Realignment in Boston, 1920-1940*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 277 pp. ISBN 0-226-28961-6.

This study examines the voting behavior and party registration of Jews, Italians, Blacks, Irish, and Yankees in Boston during one of the most dramatic eras of change in American political history. One of its unique features is that Gamm examines the behavior of clusters of precincts, small areas which were ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous. Another special feature is that the author regularly separates registration data for men from that of women, finding that women in various ethnic groups became Democrats only after men had initiated the realignment. At many points Gamm is also able to shed light on the controversy over whether the realignment resulted from the conversion of voters already in the electorate, or rather the mobilization of new voters.

C. Anthony Broh: *A Horse of a Different Color: Television's Treatment of Jesse Jackson's 1984 Presidential Campaign*. Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1987, 91 pp. ISBN 0-941410-54-4.

In this short monograph Broh analyzes more than 2,000 network news programs that were broadcast about the Democratic presidential hopefuls during the nine months before the Democratic National Convention in July 1984. Although the focus is on Jesse Jackson, the data are presented in such a way as to shed light on many aspects of how the mass media covers an American nomination campaign. Broh concludes that television coverage both helped and hurt Jesse Jackson in 1984. According to his analysis, it helped