

My interest in issue voting stems from my intention to prepare a monograph on the electoral process beginning approximately January, 1978. I am concerned that the term "issue voting" be clearly defined. The memo asks the question, "To what extent are policy-related preferences translated into votes?" Much of the research on issue voting has not been clear as to how one defines a policy-related preference. On the one hand, there is the coding of respondents' open-ended questions, done largely by Phil Converse at the University of Michigan, which tries to develop a sophisticated measure of ideological voting. Basically, this measure of ideological voting is more demanding than the notion of issue voting, as employed by Verba and Nie. Ideological voting requires that the voter express a preference for an ideology that is liberal or conservative, translate this ideology into explicit policy preferences, and identify a party or candidate which most clearly matches these preferences. Issue voting simply requires that the voter indicate issues of concern unrelated to ideology, and identify a candidate which the voter believes will be most supportive of the positions taken by the voter. Issue voting, as measured by Verba and Nie, also excludes information about the information possessed by the voter, at the time of the interview. For example, people who indicate that they are vitally concerned about inflation may be quite uninformed about the complexities of the issue, and therefore may be responding largely to stimuli offered by the candidates. Ideological voters, on the other hand, are much more systematically informed about the issues, and therefore, are more stable in their attitudes. A clarification of what is meant would, I believe, go a long way toward resolving the apparent differences in the conclusions suggested by the Survey Research Center at U. of Michigan, and the authors of The Changing American Voter.

An additional concern of mine is that all of the research about issue

or ideological voting is done within the context of Presidential or Congressional elections. However, there are vast numbers of state and local elections which are ignored and which may shed valuable light upon the extent to which voters rely upon their assessment of issues as opposed to other factors. Consider the problem of rationalization, as discussed in the memo. Rationalization normally occurs when a voter is strongly attracted to a candidate, and therefore reduces dissonance by modifying the perceived position of the candidate on the issues of importance. However, in many state and local elections, the candidates are a good deal less visible than our presidential candidates, and this opportunity for rationalization may therefore be less. State and local elections also include referenda on explicit policies which the individual has a chance to evaluate without the confounding effect of candidates. It may be that in such elections, issue voting reaches its highest point, or it may be that other factors are more important. An expansion of research to include a variety of elections would also give us the opportunity to explore the extent to which perceived immediate impact upon the voter is important. For example, it may be difficult for a voter to imagine any personal impact dependent upon the election of a Democrat or a Republican President. On the other hand, a bond issue to build a mass-transit system or a referenda on open housing may have a higher perceived personal impact, and, therefore, may heighten issue voting. Therefore, I strongly suggest that future research not be limited to national elections. This suggestion is given additional support by the conclusion that issue voting seems to be more dependent upon the information produced and distributed by candidates than is ideological voting. Hence, issue voting apparently began to taper off in national elections in the years after 1972 because the candidates chose to emphasize other matters.

To the extent that issue voting is dependent upon the ability and willingness of elites to sharpen the issues for the voters, then we would expect that it would vary from year to year. If this is so, does it also vary from year to year when the candidates are not highly visible presidential ones, but are relatively obscure state and local ones? Ideological voting, on the other hand, seems to be much more linked to education, and presumably, as the educational level of the electorate continues to increase, the proportions of votes cast by ideological voters would also increase. Is this true across all levels of government, or is it largely confined to presidential elections? The answer to this question is not readily apparent. To illustrate the sorts of problems I am concerned with, Verba and Nie suggest that issue voting increased during the 1960's and early 1970's among all classes of voters. Therefore, the most educated voters were still the voters most inclined to rely upon issues, but the increase in issue voting among lower class voters was a strong part of their conclusions. They spent so much time discussing this problem, because most political scientists assume that issue voting is linked to social status. Their conclusion that it is not linked to social status was one of the most startling findings of their book. On the other hand, unpublished data compiled at the Survey Research Center at my request, indicates that ideological voting, the more stringent measure, increased only slightly among the less educated voters, and much more so among the more educated voters during the same time period. There does, therefore, appear to be a clear difference between the two measures and this should be resolved, again, by using a variety of electoral situations. Using a variety of elections would also give us the advantage of more clearly delineating the traditional division of variance in voting outcome between issues, parties and candidates. This classification of independent variables may vary with the

structure of the election. Suppose, for example, that we are setting elections in which the political parties play a minor role, such as referenda, or non-partisan local elections. How, then, would one assess the impact of the traditionally defined independent variables?