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Political science as a no-risk policy: The American voter and contemporary voting research

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waarden tussen 1 (geen vertrouwen) en 4 (zeer veel vertrouwen).

Geloof in de openheid van het politiek systeem – Deze index is geconstrueerd door middel van een middeling van de antwoorden op de volgende uitspraken (1 = geheel eens; 2 = eens; 3 = oneens; 4 = geheel oneens): (1) Ik geloof niet dat overheidsfunctionarissen veel geven om wat mensen als ik denken; (2) Als ze eenmaal gekozen zijn, verliezen Kamerleden meestal vrij gauw het contact met de bevolking; (3) Politieke partijen zijn alleen maar geïnteresseerd in de stemmen van de mensen, en niet in hun meningen. De scores op de index lopen van 1 (geen geloof in openheid van het politiek systeem) tot 4 (groot geloof in de openheid van het politiek systeem).

Ontevredenheid over het overheidsoptreden in het algemeen – Deze index is geconstrueerd door sommering van de antwoorden op de vraag hoe goed de regering een aantal problemen had behandeld. Deze problemen waren: werkgelegenheid, onderwijs, medische voorzieningen, huisvesting en inflatiebestrijding (1 = zeer goed gedaan; 2 = goed gedaan; 3 = slecht gedaan; 4 = erg slecht gedaan). De scores op de index variëren van 5 (zeer tevreden) tot 20 (zeer ontevreden).

Commentaar en discussie

Political science as a no-risk policy: *The American voter* and contemporary voting research*

J. W. van Deth

I

A quarter of a century ago, Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes published one of the most influential books in the history of empirical political science. Their description of *The American voter* implied the supersedence of the sociological approaches of voting behavior by more psychologically oriented interpretations. Since that time, the analysis of elections is restricted mainly to voting research.

Should we celebrate the golden jubilee of this landmark with some exuberant festivities? Are there, in the twenty-five years that passed since the publication of the book, important advances to be noted and is it worthwhile to go on in this direction? Or is *The American voter* only a remarkable but intermediate station in the search for understanding voting behavior, and do we have, by now, much more promising perspectives available? According to some leading overviews of the recent developments in this field, consensus is still far away. For instance Asher (1983, 377) speaks of '... a subfield in which important work remains to be done'. Niemi en Weisberg (1984, 14) introduce their new collection of articles on voting behavior with the rather astonishing statement that 'One might expect that the combination of sophisticated methodology, high quality data, and effective theories would yield a commonly accepted understanding of voting and election. This has not been the case'. Is there much reason for a celebration if this is the result of the efforts in the last twenty-five years?

In this article, an evaluation is presented of the developments of psychologically oriented voting research. It will be argued that the theoretical perspective outlined in *The American voter* has been diluted. Instead of presenting 'chains' of explanation linking distinct levels of interpretation, modern research in this tradition is concerned with the constraints between perceptual and motivational constructs only. The focus is on rather trivial statements, and epistemological and ontological objections are not taken into consideration. The present high level of technical sophistication ser-

ves as a mask for this theoretical impoverishment. A plea for a 'back to basics' in voting research.

2

Voting research is primarily concerned with questions like: whether or not people cast a vote; and, if so, which candidate or party they will select. Researchers of voting behavior, in other words, concern themselves with the analysis of individual choices. Usually, interview techniques with structured questionnaires are employed, while sometimes quasi-experimental designs are used too. Advances in sampling theory and the availability of statistical inference procedures provide the opportunity to draw conclusions for the total population of a town, region or nation, or for specific categories of people¹.

Originally, in the 1930's, researchers tried to interpret voting behavior by using the official electoral statistics and information about the demographic, ethnic, religious, and social characteristics of the electorate (see, for instance, Gosnell, 1930 or Tingsten, 1937). These aggregate data, however, are not very well suited to explore individual choices and the danger of the ecological fallacy is always present. Although the direct approach of voters had been undertaken in the 1920's (Meriam and Gosnell, 1924), research on voting behavior got the main push with the introduction of large scale surveys as a method of data collection. The study of political preferences of the voters in Erie County in 1940, can be seen as the first piece of modern voting research. In *The people's choice*, the report of this work, Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet opted for a sociologically oriented interpretation of voting behavior. Their main independent variable is a so called 'index of political predisposition', constructed with the scores of the respondents on religion, social economic status, and residence. The famous adage of this approach is that 'a person thinks, politically, as he is, socially. Social characteristics determine political preference' (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948, 27).

Lazarsfeld and his colleagues continued their work with a study of the elections in Elmira in 1948. An important difference between *The people's choice* and their new book *Voting* published in 1954, is the reduction of the influence ascribed to the mass media. Instead, attention is paid to the social context of voting behavior and the relevance of issues and institutional arrangements. But in spite of this shift in emphasis, the interpretations remain predominantly sociological. In the same year, a different approach to voting behavior is outlined by Campbell, Gurin and Miller. Their book

The voter decides is based on the hypothesis that the direct determinants of individual choices are more likely to be found among the attitudes and perceptions of people than in their social positions or 'objective' circumstances. In this view, the most important motivational aspects of voting behavior are 'party identification', 'issue orientation', and 'candidate orientation'. Empirical data are from the 1948-election, but now a representative sample of the total electorate is used instead of the population of a particular town or region.

Just as *Voting* is depicted as a continuation of *The people's choice* for convenience sake, *The American voter* usually is placed in the tradition of *The voter decides*². Like this last study, *The American voter* stresses the importance of psychological factors for the interpretation of individual choices and, again, samples from the total electorate are used for the construction of a data base. Furthermore, the most important motivational aspects of voting behavior are still concerned with parties, issues, and candidates. But the notion that *The American voter* is based on a psychological *instead of a* sociological scheme of explanation, however, is nothing but a caricature of the careful and skilful analysis of individual choices presented by Campbell and his colleagues. It can be granted that they pay much, perhaps too much, attention to the empirical relevance of psychological variables, but they made perfectly clear that these factors should be seen as intervening variables and not as independent determinants³. Voting behavior is the terminus of a so called 'funnel of causality': from the unlimited set of social, geographical, demographical, political, personal, and historical factors, successive elements can be eliminated as to form chains of relevant explanatory factors. The last link in these chains from situational factors to individual choices consists of the relationships between attitudes and perceptions of people and their behavior. In other words: 'We assume that most events or conditions that bear directly upon behavior are perceived in some form or other by the individual prior to the determined behavior, and much of behavior consists of reactions to these perceptions' (Campbell et al., 1960, 27).

The strength of the metaphor of a 'funnel' lies in the fact that it nicely suggests the way we should build our interpretations of individual choices. On the broad side of the funnel are the many divergent factors that might be relevant for the ultimate behavior without being directly related to it. Guided by theoretical considerations, a scheme of explanations can be constructed consisting of several chains linking the elements at distinct levels of interpretation in the funnel to each other. The final link of this chain is the relationship between attitudes and perceptions on the one hand, and the actual voting behavior on the other. This way of reasoning urges

us, first, to make an explicit choice of relevant factors at several levels and, second, to present plausible interpretations of the mechanisms underlying the links between these levels. At the psychological level, several chains might lead to conflicting attitudes and perceptions, and the resulting behavior can be seen as the resultant of these conflicts⁴.

Instead of depicting *The American voter* as a specimen of the psychological approach, I prefer to see it as the synthesis of many lines traceable in earlier research on voting behavior. Both sociological and psychological variables have their place in the 'funnel of causality'. The questionnaires contain structured as well as open-ended questions, the analysis is partly quantitative, and representative samples provide the opportunity to generalize about the total electorate and nation-wide elections. The potential of this approach is underlined by the fact that Campbell and his colleagues were able to predict voting behavior even more accurately than the people themselves could! (Campbell et al., 1960, 74).

3

Since 1960, voting research seems to be, at first sight, predominantly based on the scheme of explanation presented in *The American voter*. Several books in the field have been explicitly dedicated to Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes. Does this imply that there are no important substantive and/or methodological differences between *The American voter* and more recent research in this tradition?

Let us take the trouble to compare *The American voter* with a recently published book like *Controversies in voting behavior*. The latter is edited by Niemi and Weisberg (1984) and consists of a collection of 23 articles written by a total of 36 researchers. The contributions have been published before in the period from 1976 up to and including 1984. They are taken from leading journals like the *American Political Science Review* (9 articles), the *British Journal of Political Research* (2 articles), the *European Journal of Political Research* (2 articles) and some other sources. According to Niemi and Weisberg, these studies can be classified with the help of six basic questions. The first three are concerned with the 'determinants of election outcomes': What determines turnout?; What determines the vote?; What determines the congressional vote?

The next three questions refer to the 'long term factors in elections': Do voters think ideologically?; Is party identification meaningful?; Whither partisan change?

With the exception of question 3 – the congressional vote – every

question on this list is discussed at length in *The American voter*⁵. From a more closer look, it follows that there are no important substantive differences between modern voting research and that undertaken more than twentyfive years ago in Michigan. Accumulation of knowledge and theoretical evaluations are rare. That is not a very cheerful conclusion, but one that, alas, is hardly to be avoided. Moreover, both Niemi and Weisberg's classification and the treatment of these problems in the recent literature, still show an almost pathological fixation on the analysis of attitudes and perceptions as determinants of voting behavior *per se*. Even the much praised study of Butler and Stokes (1969) about the *Political change in Britain*, pointing out explicitly to social class as a relevant independent variable, does not appear to have had a lasting impact on mainstream voting research. The same holds for Crewe's penetrating critique of the use of the Michigan-approach by Butler and Stokes, and his plea for a 'sociological and historical supplementation' of this work by returning to the Columbia-tradition (Crewe, 1974, 78-9).

Twenty-five years after the introduction of the 'funnel of causality', the practice of voting research seems to have been reduced to the interpretation of individual choices in terms of pure psychological variables only. I will return to this point in paragraph 5 below. At the moment, it is sufficient to emphasize that much of the more recent research on voting behavior does not show an evolution of the Michigan-approach but that, on the contrary, the scheme of explanation presented in *The American voter* has been de facto severely diluted.

4

Running parallel to this substantive impoverishment, an almost astonishing development of techniques has taken place. A quarter of a century ago, Campbell and his colleagues used elementary elaboration techniques and linear correlation coefficients, and they needed only straightforward bar-diagrams and line-graphics to visualize their material. The replacement of recursive by nonrecursive models, the use of panel data, and the application of econometric estimation techniques, have made large areas of modern voting research virtually unaccessible for nonspecialists. The specification of time-lagged or nonrecursive relationships between variables in sets of simultaneous equations requires the use of such estimation techniques as two-stage or three-stage least squares. PROBIT and LOGIT are popular tools while a sophisticated analyst of crosstables relies on loglinear techniques. These technical developments are far ahead of the

state of theorizing in this field and have hardly contributed to our understanding of voting behavior⁶. The only gain seems to be that today, nonrecursive and time-lagged models can be tested more directly than in the past. However, the bottleneck in theoretically relevant research has never been the lack of adequate estimation techniques but the scarcity of insightful ideas. So, the introduction of nonrecursive and time-lagged models has provided us with a sharper, but not different picture of the relationship between party identification, orientations on issues and candidates, and voting behavior. Technical sophistication can be used to mask theoretical dilution; it is not a substitute for attempts to explain electoral choices.

Two examples of recent Dutch voting research will illustrate the irrelevance of technical developments for gaining insight into voting behavior. In *Dutch voters adrift*, Andeweg (1982) presents several interpretations of electoral change in the Netherlands in the last decades. These interpretations are adopted from the existing literature and provide a good overview of the state of the discipline. *None of these reflections resulted into statements that could not be tested with fairly simple techniques*. That is precisely what Andeweg has done. From the fact that none of the interpretations can stand his empirical tests, it does not follow that we need more advanced or sophisticated techniques. What is lacking are other, better, newer theoretical approaches of the problem. It is significant that only in his last chapter Andeweg does touch upon this alternative.

Van der Eijk and Niemöller (1983) have been working on the same topic in their study *Electoral change in the Netherlands*. Although their report is filled with lengthy technical digressions and descriptions of the Dutch 'party space', their contribution to the understanding of voting behavior is confined to the introduction of the concept 'ideological orientation'. This notion should provide a solution for the fact that the validity of party identification is questionable in a multi-party system. Instead, many voters are assumed to see political parties not as clearly disjunct entities but as manifestations of ideological positions that coincide more or less with their own ideas. In other words: the concept 'multiple party identification' does not have to be rejected as a *contradictio in terminis* at forehand. This seems to be an attractive and promising redefinition of the original concept party identification. However, *neither the introduction of this idea nor the empirical testing of its implications require the availability of advanced or sophisticated techniques*. The gain obtained in theoretical respect in no way depends on the amount of technical skill so overtly demonstrated by the authors.

These two approaches of the same problem illustrate the superfluity of technical developments for understanding voting behavior. The use of

panels, which some authors seem to regard as a 'recent' improvement of voting research, is at least as old as the work of Lazarsfeld in Erie County while most of the methodological pitfalls involved are familiar since the early 1950's⁷.

Maybe this view of the contributions of advanced research techniques to the understanding of voting behavior is too pessimistic and should we look in completely different directions for some benefits. Since identification of nonrecursive and time-lagged models requires the labelling of exogeneous and endogeneous variables and the unambiguous specification of all relationships, some pleasant side effects can be noted. Without the slightest trace of irony Asher (1983, 375) remarks: 'Since specification is a theoretical and substantive matter, it behooves us to devote more thought and care to model construction and not to jump too quickly to data analysis'. It will be difficult to find an other indication of the irrelevance of advanced research techniques for understanding voting behavior that is just as frank as this one.

5

The interpretation of voting behavior in strictly psychological terms, has been made possible by the authors of *The American voter* themselves. First, they equated statements about individual choices with actual behavior. Second, notwithstanding their broad approach, in their empirical work the emphasis lies on psychological variables. These two characteristics of *The American voter* make it possible for naive epigones to reduce the chains of explanation in the 'funnel' to a single 'link' between variables all located at the same level.

It can be taken for granted that, in a democracy, verbal expressions of political preferences constitute a mode of voting behavior. But from this it does not follow that voting behavior is identical to the set of verbal expressions about voting behavior. That might seem to be a rather trivial and superfluous statement for people who have the idea that titles like 'Controversies in voting behavior', 'Voting behavior in the 1980's', or 'Public opinion and behavior' are used to label a heterogenous set of research strategies among which the analysis of verbal expressions is but one specimen. That simply is not true. Almost without exception and without much ado, voting research is limited to verbal expressions by equating actual behavior with statements about behavior.

The dispute about the consequences of limiting behavior to statements about behavior is a classical theme in each and every attack on the survey

method⁸. It is not necessary to replay that record at this place. Nor do I wish to question the relevance of studying political culture or public opinion with some old-fashioned plea for a revival of pure behaviorism. What I do want to emphasize, however, is the fact that the dependent variable in voting research has been reduced to individual attitudes and perceptions. Since the direct independent variables are located at the motivational level according to the Michigan-approach, the result is that the analysis of voting behavior is restricted to the search of constraint between individual perceptions and attitudes only. This seems to be a particularly serious problem if one realizes that concepts like party identification usually are defined in predispositional terms, while functionalist definitions of 'belief systems', 'ideologies', or 'values' are quite easy to trace in the literature. Just before the publication of *The American voter*, Rossi (1959, 41) put his finger on this problem in his famous overview of early voting research: 'It helps us little to know that voters tend to select candidates of whom they have high opinions. Voting for a candidate and holding a favorable opinion of him may be regarded as alternative definitions of the same variable. The more interesting problems start where the author's analysis ends'⁹.

As mentioned before, Campbell and his colleagues used the metaphor of the 'funnel' to include elements at several levels of interpretation in the analysis of voting research. The motivational aspects of voting behavior are presented as intervening variables, and so Rossi's 'more interesting problems' are part of the scheme of explanation. However, by stressing strongly the direct link between the motivational aspects of individual choices and the statements about these choices, it will be hard to avoid presenting platitudes as serious research findings. To this category belong predictions of the kind that people who depict themselves as 'left' will vote for a party they consider to be 'left', that people who are attracted most by the liberal party will vote liberal, that 'Postmaterialists' assign higher priority to women liberation than to reorganizing the police, and that people who regard themselves to be very interested in politics report higher levels of exposure to political news than others do. Certainly, these platitudes are not tautologies because the dependent and the independent variables are defined in terms of analytically distinct concepts. While, furthermore, the relationships stated are not deterministic: people who place themselves on the left side of the political spectrum can vote for a right-wing party if, for instance, the position of that party is more congruent with the religious ideas of these voters and religion is considered to be of more importance than political ideology. Nevertheless, I have used the word *trivialization* for this kind of statements in order to convey the idea that the 'psychological distance' between the dependent and independent

variables is too small to make it worthwhile to spend much time evaluating the results of empirical tests (Van Deth, 1984, 185). However, that is *not* to say that this type of testing is superfluous. The many well-known deviations of seemingly trivial relationships provide sufficient justification for this kind of work. But the fact that, for instance, 'Republicans' do not always vote for the Republican Party, by no means refutes Rossi's objections and doubts, as Daudt (1961, 128) suggested. The question is not whether the study of relationships between variables all at the same level is worthwhile. What is really important in voting research is that we should not accept that our schemes of explanation and empirical testings dilute in such a way that only the most trivial links remain. Therefore, testing platitudes should be a matter of routine; a side-line in a much broader research programme¹⁰.

The dilution of the 'funnel of causality' up to the exclusive use of the motivational aspects of voting behavior and the neglect of the dangers to the application of predispositional concepts in empirical research, make it difficult to avoid trivializations. Even today, researchers of voting behavior can learn of the perspective outlined in *The American voter*. That means that interpretations of voting behavior in terms like party identification, attitudes towards candidates and issues, and ideological orientations are only acceptable if, at the same time, a solution is presented for the 'more interesting problems' that bothered Rossi such a long time ago. In the 1950's, these problems could be neglected as being merely 'interesting'; by now they are the most fundamental questions opposing the further development of voting research.

6

In the last few years, a revival can be observed of two approaches of voting behavior that are based on a somewhat different scheme than the one presented in *The American voter*. Both lines of reasoning have a long tradition in political science and the basic ideas go back at least as far as political science and the basic ideas go back at least as far as Anthony Downs and the late V.O. Key. Instead of predispositions, the central concept in these approaches of individual choice is the 'rational' citizen casting a vote to influence government performance. Voting behavior is not depicted as a terminus of some 'funnel', but as a reflection of the attributes of the alternatives available. So the emphasis is not on the explanation of preferences, but on the way people make a selection from a given set of objects.

In the first variant of this approach, casting a vote is seen as an analogue of

participating in a referendum on the qualities and achievements of the party or candidate in power. Voters will use their ballot to indicate their (dis)content with the actual government policy in the last term. Especially the state of the economy will be relevant for these evaluations. It is not hard to find digression about the impact of changing economic conditions in *The American voter* or in the more recent literature. What is new, however, is the consistent way especially Morris Fiorina (1981) has worked out this idea in his book *Retrospective voting in American national elections* and several other publications. In this view voting behavior is the resultant of three factors: evaluation of government performance, expectations about future policies, and party identification in the last elections. From Fiorina's empirical work it can be concluded that the evaluation of government performance is a major determinant of party choice if party identification is statistically kept constant. This result is in line with the picture of a rational voter who assigns more value to perceptible achievements of parties and candidates, than to pretty election slogans whose realization is always doubtful.

The rational citizen also is a central figure in the second variant, but this time he acts as an arbiter between distinct parties or candidates competing for power. The scenery of this play has been designed by Joseph Schumpeter and the first complete script was written by Anthony Downs. Instead of government performances in the last term, it is assumed that a voter opts for the party that offers him, in his eyes, the platform that is most congruent with his own position. A vote like that is considered to be a 'rational' vote. Well-known empirical work in this tradition has been published by Budge and Farlie (1977) and, more recently, by Van der Eijk and Niemöller (1983)¹¹. In connection with the strong development of the so called 'public choice' approach in the borderland of economics and political science, many expositions of these models are characterized by a high degree of formalization¹². As an example, the recent study of Enelow and Hinich (1984) called *A spatial theory of voting* can be used. After having explained the differences between the Michigan-approach of voting behavior and their own ideas, several variants of their 'spatial theory of voting' are presented as possible interpretations of the constraint between voting behavior and the perceived positions of candidates. The final empirical test leads the authors to the conclusions that their model has 'strong empirical support', and that voting behavior can be interpreted in terms of an economic as well as a social left-right dimension (Enelow and Hinich, 1984, 206).

Retrospective and prospective theories of voting have the advantage that statements about voters and about candidates or parties can be reached at the same time¹³. Especially in case of the second variant, attention is

focused on the interpretation of election results and the preferences of voters for some type of policy are taken for granted. This means nothing more or less than 'solving' the problems attached to the interpretation of individual choices by simply introducing an assumption. Furthermore, both variants seem to be even more vulnerable to the dangers of trivialization than the diluted version of the Michigan-approach discussed above. Rossi (1959, 41) seriously doubted whether 'voting for a candidate and holding a favorite opinion of him' can be seen as expressions of two distinct concepts. The same objection can be raised if 'favorite opinion' is replaced by the positive evaluation of government performance or some nearby party platform. It would seem that, once again, the result of the researcher's efforts will be hardly more sensational than the observations that voters are less inclined to vote for a party in power that has not met their expectations, or more willing to vote for a party that presents a platform that, in their eyes, is most congruent with their own position. Fiorina and Enelow and Hinich, have indicated that both statements have at least some empirical validity. Neither the prospective nor the retrospective theories of voting behavior seem to be preferable alternatives to the 'funnel of causality' underlying the Michigan-approach. The first variant evades the central problems of individual choice behavior by simply introducing assumptions; the second is not an alternative but a modification of the model presented by Campbell and his colleagues. Besides, both variants suffer from the same superfluous restrictions as can be noted in much of the work based on the diluted Michigan-approach outlined above: i.e. the analyses end where the more interesting questions start. Which elements determine the evaluation of a party in power? Is that really influenced by government performance and not by, say, the value change observed in advanced industrial societies? How do we count for the rise and fall of particular policy preferences among the electorate? Which mechanisms underly the perceptions of party platforms by voters and how are they related to the social and historical constellation in a society? What makes some people clearly more interested in politics than others? And so on. As long as these kinds of questions are not dealt with in schemes of explanation linking distinct levels of interpretation, the results of voting research will be, at most, starting points for further research and fund raising instead of the basis of more serious approaches of the problems how and why people cast a vote in mass elections.

If political scientists were to celebrate the golden jubilee of the publication of *The American voter*, then their celebration should be explicitly dedicated to Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes. After twenty-five years, their broad approach to voting behavior still appears to be more promising than the diluted models found in the more recent literature. It will be clear that this development hardly gives rise to any exuberance, let alone the need for some festivities. Instead, we might use our time to reflect upon some regrettable characteristics of modern voting research. First, it is not self-evident that the analysis of voting behavior has to be reduced to a search for constraints among individual perceptions and attitudes. The metaphor of the 'funnel', including several chains of explanation and linking distinct levels of interpretation, still can render excellent services. Second, the use of predispositional concepts and/or functionalist definitions in empirical research is much more troublesome than many analysts of perceptions and attitudes seem to be aware of. The epistemological and ontological status of independent, dependent, and intervening variables seldom enters discussions about voting behavior. A third and rather worrisome feature concerns the success of the coup d'état by the technicians. The rise of a simple-minded kind of inductivism can be observed, based on the notions that conjuring with a large number of variables and complicated estimation techniques automatically contributes to our understanding of voting behavior, and that every answer found will generate its own problem. Methodology has to be subordinated to theory construction. The fact that this sounds like a stereotype does not make it less relevant.

The American voter is a classic that deserves much more esteem than uncritical jubilation or slavish imitation of its most alluring aspects. The modern *no-risk political science*, typified by intellectual laziness and the exchange of substance for technique, obstructs the further development of voting research. What about returning to the pretentious starting-point of *The American voter* instead of building a party for unimagitve epigones?

Notes

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1. See, for instance, Dreyer and Rosenbaum (1976) for an overview of the basic scope, methods, and models of voting research. The work of Eldersveld (1951) still can be seen as a good classification of different approaches to political and voting behavior.

2. More detailed information about this classification and early voting research is presented by, among others, Rossi (1959), Daudt (1961), Sears (1969), Converse (1975), Dreyer and Rosenbaum (1976), and Hill and Luttbeg (1983).

3. The use of the term 'intervening variable' by Campbell and his colleagues raises crucial epistemological and ontological questions. It is regrettable that the authors of *The American voter* do not present a digression on this point. Using the classical distinction of MacCorquodale and Meehl (1948) between 'intervening variables' and 'hypothetical constructs' might had lead to a much better understanding of their scheme of explanation.

4. For instance Inglehart (1977) and Van Deth (1984) have presented models linking macro-phenomena to individual perceptions and attitudes and, consecutively, to individual behavior.

5. However, the importance of studying 'non-presidential elections' has been clearly admitted by Campbell et al. (1960, 7).

6. This is no privilege of voting research. For example, Wippler (1984) points out to a similar distinction between the 'empirical poverty' of sociological work aimed at explanation on the one hand, and the 'theoretical poverty' of data oriented work on the other. Bridging this gap is the first point in Wippler's program for sociology.

7. See Hagenars (1985, 248) for references on this point.

8. As early as 1934 LaPiere presented a convincing defense of the use of the interview to obtain politically relevant information.

9. Prewitt and Nie (1971, 487) nicely parodied this point by remarking: 'We would not be surprised to learn that persons who call themselves Catholic are more likely to be found on Sunday in Catholic than in Protestant churches'. See also Daudt (1961, 126 and further) for a discussion of Rossi's objection.

10. Budge et al. (1976, 10-1) seem to mean something similar with their defense of nearly tautological phrases at the individual level as long as this leads to testable statements about electoral shifts at the macro-level.

11. See Himmelweit et al. (1981) for empirical work in this tradition that comes close to the metaphor of a 'funnel', and a comparison of the Michigan-approach with a 'consumer model' of voting behavior.

12. See, among others, the overview presented by Mueller (1979).

13. This is certainly not a prerogative of these approaches as Enelow and Hinich (1984, 6) seem to suggest. See Luttbeg (1981) for a classification of the different ways to model the 'linkage' between the positions of voters and government activities.

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