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REVISITED

Michael S. Lewis-Beck, William G. Jacoby,
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With a Foreword by Philip E. Converse

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To Angus, Phil, Warren, and Don

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Foreword

When I was first informed that a quartet of political scientists was laying out plans for a detailed replication of our 1960 volume entitled *The American Voter*, I was willing to lend a blessing to the enterprise not only on my own behalf, but for my three coauthors, now departed. I was willing to do so chiefly because of the known quality of the new foursome as scholars, although, frankly, I was less than clear just how the operation would be carried out. One colleague, mindful of the substantial number of new books over the past 45 years that have woven the phrase “the American voter” into their titles, was of the mischievous opinion that the new authors might be hard pressed to find a suitably descriptive title not already in use.

With the final manuscript in hand, I find that our authors here have cleared this hurdle and many more serious ones very handsomely. Of course, the core idea of an exact replication of our data tabulations for the 1952 and 1956 national presidential election surveys at the University of Michigan, using the parallel surveys for the 2000 and 2004 elections, has an obvious scientific merit of its own, addressing questions that have lingered for nearly half a century as to how many and which of the 1950s findings were shaped by oddities of the immediate political period, as opposed to being reliable reflections of more lasting features of electoral politics in the United States. But the authors’ handling of this replication has artfully achieved much more “value added” as well. For example, the text in which the comparative tabulations are embedded, while mirroring the original in high degree, manages to modernize the language while most often saying the same thing in fewer words. More importantly, each substantive chapter ends with a section entitled “Commentary and Controversy,” devoted to a review of the intervening decades of debate over diverse issues of methods and findings. These are invaluable source materials in and of themselves, and combined with the comparisons of raw findings, produce a sort of double prism in the

time dimension that is at the very least novel, and to me thoroughly intriguing. I think that students of electoral behavior will find this volume both stimulating and useful.

Philip E. Converse
Ann Arbor, Michigan
July 22, 2007

Preface

The American Voter, by Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, was published in 1960 as a report on the 1952 and especially the 1956 U.S. presidential elections. Researchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research had published an earlier book on the 1952 election, a report on the 1954 congressional election, and a few journal articles, but *The American Voter* was the definitive work, establishing a paradigm for scholarly research on voting. It was followed by a collection entitled *Elections and the Political Order* plus further journal articles and then several studies of elections in other countries collaboratively with scholars from those countries, but the only book-length treatment of American elections that any of them subsequently produced was Warren Miller and Merrill Shanks's *The New American Voter*, which employed a very different analysis strategy than the original book.

The surveys that *The American Voter* analyzed have become the gold standard in the field. They have been conducted virtually every two years since 1952, leading to an invaluable time series. They are now known as the National Election Studies and are sponsored by the National Science Foundation. While there are differences in detail, their basic design is the same as in the 1950s, with preelection and postelection face-to-face interviews with the same respondents. There are now other major election surveys that take telephone interviews throughout the election year, and those surveys are more suitable for examining the development of attitudes and changes in vote intention. However, the original study design used in *The American Voter* remains powerful for analyzing the correlates of individual voting decisions.

Revisiting *The American Voter* is valuable for several reasons. One is to see what it actually said. Within a few years of publication a stereotype developed according to which the authors viewed voting as based on immutable party identification and superficial characteristics of the candidates, because voters were too unsophisticated to consider ideology and

the issues. That is a more apt characterization of the abridged version (1964) than of the original, which was much more subtle than the conventional view credits. The effect of issues on changes in people's party identification is emphasized in many chapters, as is the possibility that different results might be obtained in different elections. Contrary to V. O. Key's (1966) implication, *The American Voter* did not suggest that voters are fools, though its view of voters is compatible with the "cognitive miser" notion that social psychologists were to develop later. Second, revisiting *The American Voter* leaves one with an admiration of the authors' methodological skill despite a primitive computing technology, a recognition of the complexity of some of their statistical analyses, and a respect for their ability to present results with simple cross-tabulations. Third, encountering *The American Voter* may spur research on voting behavior, as we see which topics could benefit from more modern social-psychological perspectives or more modern techniques of analysis.

In revisiting *The American Voter*, we have stayed fairly close to its approach. Our chapters follow the original in theme and style of analysis. Thousands of journal articles and conference papers have been published and presented on the subject of voting behavior in the decades since 1960, pieces that have reconsidered the original work of Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes with more modern statistical analysis techniques. Yet the original work remains elegant in its very simplicity. Indeed, it is humbling to realize that the authors produced their classic book without the use of computers as we know them today. At the same time, it is important to move to more advanced analysis of topics and to take notice of controversies in the field, so we have added sections at the end of each chapter updating the topic both methodologically and substantively. We have dropped some topics, either because the needed questions have not been included in recent election studies or because the topic has lost its urgency over the years (such as their treatment of agrarian political behavior). We have expanded a few topics, such as the voting behavior of blacks and of women, which have increased in importance in ways that the original authors could not have foreseen. We have, however, resisted the temptation to switch to new theoretical approaches (either modern political psychology or formal theory) or to expand greatly the set of topics (such as the primary season, the media, or the campaign), since other books cover them so ably.

The chapters of *The American Voter Revisited* correspond to those of the original as follows:

CHAPTER TITLE	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-style: italic;"> The American Voter Revisited The American Voter </div>	
	CHAPTER NUMBER	
Setting	1	1
Theoretical Orientation	2	2
Perceptions of the Parties and Candidates	3	3
Partisan Choice	4	4
Voting Turnout	5	5
The Impact of Party Identification	6	6
The Development of Party Identification	7	7
Public Policy and Political Preference	8	8
Attitude Structure and the Problem of Ideology	9	9
The Formation of Issue Concepts and Partisan Change	10	10
Membership in Social Groupings	11	12
Class and Other Social Characteristics	12	13 & 17
Economic Antecedents of Political Behavior	13	14
The Electoral Decision	14	19
Electoral Behavior and the Political System	15	20

We have retained the original authors' focus on major party voting, leaving out the "little details" that were important aspects of the 2000 and 2004 elections, including minor party candidacies, legal skirmishes about recounts, the mathematics of the Electoral College, and the role of the Supreme Court in deciding an outcome. We understand that these decisions will be controversial, just as so many chapters of *The American Voter* have proved controversial. We have tried to provide a report on the 2000 and especially the 2004 U.S. presidential elections that is close to what the original "four horsemen" would have produced if they were describing voting in these elections; we leave it to the reader to judge the relative value of the model in *The American Voter* and of subsequent efforts to understand voting behavior. In any case, we hope that drawing attention back to *The American Voter* will help revitalize the study of electoral behavior, now that more than half a century of NES surveys have been conducted.

We want to acknowledge our debts to several people. Discussants at

the Midwest, American, and Southern Political Science Association annual meetings, as well as colleagues on other occasions, gave us helpful suggestions, particularly Paul Abramson, John Aldrich, Paul Beck, Jack Citrin, Aage Clausen, Russ Dalton, Bob Erikson, James Garand, John Geer, Mark Hetherington, Sunshine Hillygus, Patricia Hurley, M. Kent Jennings, Mike Kagay, Rick Lau, Milt Lodge, Diana Mutz, Andrew Perrin, David Sears, J. Merrill Shanks, Paul Sniderman, Jim Stimson, and Laura Stoker, as did students in our classes at the Ohio State University and Stony Brook University. We received excellent research assistance from Erin McAdams, Dino Christenson, Jeremy Duff, Robert Moore, Kurt Pyle, Hoon Lee, Nadia Khatib, Mary-Kate Lizotte, Andrew Sidman, and Sung-jin Yoo. Like all researchers on voting behavior, we are deeply indebted to the National Election Studies for their continuing series of election surveys and to the National Science Foundation for its support of these surveys. We thank the people with the University of Michigan Press for their excellent work on this volume, including our anonymous reviewers. A special appreciation goes to the director, Phil Pochoda, for encouragement of this project. And, we thank the University of Chicago Press for permitting us to base this volume on the original *American Voter*. Appropriately, our greatest debt is to Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes for their intellectual contributions, for how much they taught us directly and indirectly, and for their friendships, and we also thank their families for their kind words about our work on this project.

How to Read This Book

Most books in political science can be read in linear fashion, the chapters in their given sequence developing the theme announced by the title. *The American Voter Revisited* can certainly be read that way, but it goes better with a twist. The twist involves knowing the context. Each chapter parallels a chapter from the original *The American Voter*, published in 1960. (For more on this, flip back to the Preface). The titles, order, and topics evoke the earlier work. (Of course, the data sets analyzed are entirely different.) We have attempted to preserve the theory, methods, and—most importantly—the spirit of Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes. While we cannot hope to do these pioneers full justice, we have tried. Any errors or missteps, of course, remain entirely our own.

Although much can be said within this adopted framework, not everything can be. Hence, we devote the closing portion of each chapter to discussion of contemporary issues and controversies. These “Commentary and Controversy” (C&C) sections complement the findings that begin each chapter, enabling the reader to see where American voter studies have traveled, and where they might go in the future. We have eschewed adding our own “new” angle on the material, but we have not been shy about referring to our own contributions in the C&C sections. What makes *The American Voter Revisited* original, we believe, is that it offers a replication of *The American Voter*, demonstrating that this classic still, after 50 years, provides a sound lens through which to study U.S. political behavior.