Values Voters in America: The Future of Evangelical Politics in the South

Abstract:
The South was once a bastion of support for the Democratic Party. Through the New Deal and the Civil Rights movements that support was dramatically eroded. Today, the Dixiecrats have been replaced by a new breed of conservative Republicans who are able to capitalize on the South's Evangelical voters. My thesis will examine how Evangelicals in the South make their voter decisions. This will include the various opinions leaders they consult as well as various media channels. My data was collected by surveying Southern Evangelicals in four different congressional districts in Southern Virginia and North Carolina. My findings are contextualized where possible with national survey data. The findings reported in this thesis have offered substantial support to my hypotheses. First, I asserted that pastors, national religious figures and religious media sources would be the most predominant amongst Southern Evangelicals. The influence of pastors, national religious figures, and, I would add, fellow Christians generally, were found to be the most influential. The only group that it could be said is more influential were the candidates themselves. Religious media and interest groups did assert themselves as frequently consulted. Southern Evangelicals are clearly utilizing a wide range of media channels. Furthermore, I found that the frequent consultation of secular media has had a diversifying influence on vote choice. What is most interesting, though, is that the ideological influence of religious media and the conservative FOX News does diminish the likelihood of users to have voted for another party's candidates for political office federally. The second component of my hypothesis asserted that the strength of pastors, religious media and figures would cause Southern Evangelicals to remain strongly Republican in the near future at least. This hypothesis is entirely supported. Values Voters are not simply partisan robots, however. My study has shown that it is the personal views of Evangelicals that dictate their vote choice, which are then in turn confirmed by national religious figures.

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The future is being built before our eyes, with far-reaching consequences for every facet of American politics. The 2016 race is a sign that American politics is changing in profound and lasting ways; by the 2020s and 2030s, partisan platforms will have changed drastically. You may find yourself voting for a party you could never imagine supporting right now. And in both parties, that gap between voters and policies is being closed in favor of the voters — a slight transition in the case of Hillary Clinton, but a dramatic one in the case of Donald Trump. During the Democratic primary, pundits who focused on the clash between Clinton and Sanders missed a story that illuminated this shift: The failure of Jim Webb’s brief campaign for the presidential nomination. The final push for votes follows America’s worst ever week for new coronavirus cases, with more than 1,000 people dying each day. Today we’ll be spotlighting Covid-19 as a major election issue, and looking at how it might affect the result. Live Reporting. There are Trump yard signs aplenty as you drive across upstate South Carolina. Voters I’ve spoken to in the heavily conservative city of Greenville remain excited about president Trump and his chances for a second term. “He believes in what I believe in,” a high-school government affairs teacher told me at a Trump parade on Sunday. She and her husband, also a teacher, did not even consider voting for Joe Biden. The working-class white voters who are not evangelical Christians, especially the women in that group, loom as a potentially decisive swing block between the evangelicals who have rallied around Trump and the non-evangelical college-educated whites who have recoiled from him. On a wide array of cultural and political questions, these non-evangelical blue-collar whites express views that place them between those two antithetical voting blocks. As in the national numbers, Trump retains very high approval ratings among white evangelicals in Wisconsin, though with some signs of erosion among those holding college degrees, according to cumulative results from the four most recent Marquette surveys that Franklin provided.