

### 4.3 Changes in Ideology

#### **Explain how cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization.**

Zip code may in fact determine your destiny, but remember, zip codes can change. Likewise, many of the demographics that influence our political socialization too can change. Your political ideology today, may not be your political ideology tomorrow. Machiavelli's prince argued, "[you] should have a flexible disposition, varying as fortune and circumstance dictate." In science, entropy is one law that governs the natural world. It would appear that it may also characterize our political eco-system. We are constantly changing, failing and regenerating. Cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization, and it is constantly changing.

Take gender, for instance. Men tend to be more conservative and therefore supporters of the Republican Party. Women, on the other hand, are more liberal and side with Democrats. Yet both men and women tend to grow more conservative as they get older. Age influences our politics. Although prevailing research suggests that we are most malleable when we are young, factors like job, income, family and region still move the political needle.

Think about how the New Deal coalition was formed, and now changed. During one of our history's darkest economic hours, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic Party formed an alliance with various groups that assured political victory for a long time. The New Deal coalition was made up of labor unions, blue-collar workers, minorities, farmers, white Southerners and intellectuals. This coalition remained strong well into the 1960s. Democrats consistently controlled Congress and the Presidency on the backs of this formidable partnership. But like all things, the New Deal coalition changed.

Think about white Southerners. It is hard to imagine they once were solid Democrats. As Paul Krugman of the New York Times wrote:

And if you look at the political successes of the G.O.P. [Republicans] since it was taken over by movement conservatives, they had little to do with public opposition to taxes, moral values, perceived strength on national security, or any of the other explanations usually offered. To an almost embarrassing extent, they all come down to just five words: southern whites starting voting Republican.

Once considered devoted to the Democratic party, white Southerners give Republicans their quadrennial advantage in the Electoral College. The roots of this change run deep, but President Lyndon B. Johnson did predict it. When LBJ signed the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, he was reportedly to have said, "I think we just delivered the South to the Republican party for a long time to come." Democrats had ruled the South since regaining power after the American Civil War. When a faction began to call themselves the Dixiecrats, the monolithic alliance between Democrats and Southern politicians began to weaken. It was not until the Republicans waged a "Southern strategy" in the late 1960s that this seemingly unbreakable coalition, broke. Ideologies and partisan loyalties change.

Think about blue collar workers. While American labor union leaders continue to show affinity to the Democratic party, spending millions of dollars of workers' dues to advance progressive policies, the grassroots workers have voted in recent years for Republicans. President Trump and the Republican party have built a bridge toward American labor. Ironically, Trump's rhetoric

appeals to a blue-collar identity. Love of country, hard work and traditional values appeal to urban white blue-collar voters who often feel left out of Democratic party priorities. It goes back to Ronald Reagan who often spoke to working class Americans by stressing Republican commitments to “family, work and neighborhood.” It resonated. Today the New Deal coalition no longer includes blue collar workers. Ideologies and partisan loyalties change.

Political party platforms change, too. Defining Democrat and Republican certainly is not static either. Democrats, for instance according to the most recent Gallup polls, have grown more liberal, less white, more educated and less religious. Their ideological commitments, therefore, have changed accordingly. Democrats now, more than ever, favor higher taxes for corporations, stricter gun laws, laws that address global warming and policies that are more sympathetic with Palestinians in the Middle East. Republican platforms have also changed accordingly. Ideologies and partisan loyalties change. They always have, and they always will. It is in our democratic DNA.

“Practical politics,” Henry Adams once wrote, “is ignoring facts.” But one fact that cannot be ignored is that cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization, and it is constantly changing.