Chapman University Digital Commons

Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters

Center for Undergraduate Excellence

Spring 5-14-2015

Economic Voting: Election Outcomes at the Toss of a Coin?

Damaris Bangean
Chapman University, bange102@mail.chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts

Part of the American Politics Commons, and the Economics Commons

Recommended Citation

Bangean, Damaris, "Economic Voting: Election Outcomes at the Toss of a Coin?" (2015). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 122.
https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts/122

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Undergraduate Excellence at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

Economic Voting: Election Outcomes at the Toss of a Coin?

Damaris Bangean

Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California

Introduction to Research

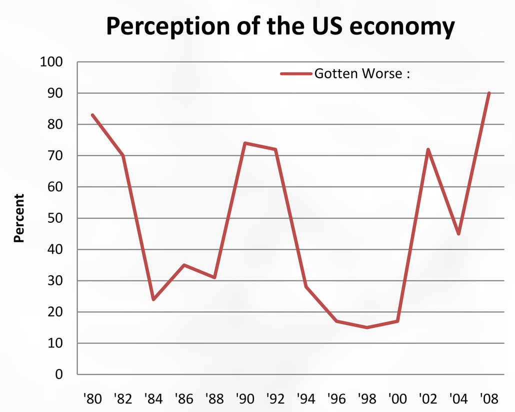
• This study explores how economic evaluations shape presidential approval and election outcomes within the United States.

• A large body of research reveals that economic evaluations have a significant impact on voter behavior.

• During any given year, the economic cycle can be in any stage – upswing or downswing, making economic downturns prior to election years particularly pivotal.

•In 2008, 90% of all voters perceived that the economy got worse. If such economic changes can be volatile and unpredictable, are Presidential election results then mostly the result of chance?

• By examining the relationships between economic evaluations and presidential approval, this research intends to determine the role of economic perception in voter behavior.



Economic Voting Theory

▪ Economic voting theory suggests that economic conditions shape electoral outcomes. Good economic performance keeps parties in office; bad economic performance casts them out.

▪ Retrospective vs. Prospective

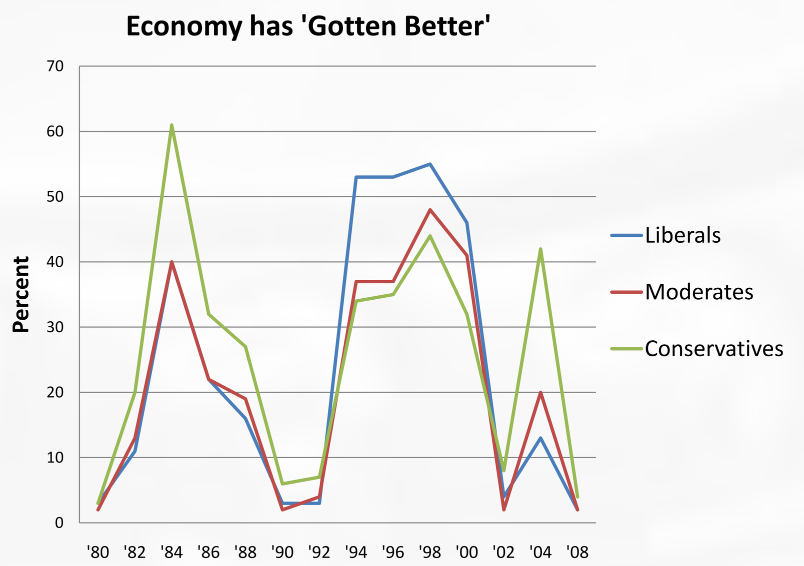
 ▪ Voters are largely retrospective rather than prospective: they rely on past economic evaluations rather than future economic evaluations.

▪ Sociotropic vs. Pocketbook

 ▪ Voters are sociotropic. They use aggregate economic evaluations rather than individual economic evaluations when deciding how to vote.

 ▪ Further studies revealed that voters rely not broadly on economic growth throughout terms, but narrowly on conditions in the six months or year before Election Day.

 ▪ Furthermore, voters typically view the economy as "getting better" when their party is in the White House. This indicates that perhaps it is not merely the state of the economy, but voter perception of the economy through the lenses of their ideology, that matters.



Hypotheses:

H 1: Individuals who approve of the President's handling of the economy are likely to approve the President's handling of job.

H 2: Between retrospective, current, and prospective evaluation of the economy, current economic evaluation is strongest indicator of Presidential approval.

H 3: Voters who blame the former President for poor economic conditions are more likely to approve of the current President.

Data

H 1: Presidential accountability for the economy

Correlations

		Approval of President handling of job	Current economy good or bad
Approval of President handling of job	Pearson Correlation	1	.526
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	5777	5754
Current economy good or bad	Pearson Correlation	.526	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	5754	5880

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation of .526 indicates a moderate relationship between perception of the economy and Presidential approval.

Correlations

		Approval of President handling economy	Approval of President handling of job
Approval of President handling economy	Pearson Correlation	1	.890**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	5759	5703
Approval of President handling of job	Pearson Correlation	.890**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	5703	5777

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation of .890 indicates a very strong relationship between approval of President handling economy and approval of President handling of job.

H 2: Factors Affecting Presidential Approval

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
U.S. economy better or worse than 1 year ago	.539	.020	.345	000
Current economy good or bad	.500	.024	.256	.000
U.S. economy better or worse 1 year from now	.335	.021	.190	.000

R Square for the model is. 424

Significance at <.05

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
Party ID	.467	.013	.426	.000
U.S. economy better or worse than 1 year ago	.306	.022	.174	.000
Current economy good or bad	.310	.033	.119	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Approval of President handling of job

b. Significance at <.05

c. R Square for the model is .344

H 3: The blame game

Correlation

		Approval of President handling economy	How much former President to blame for poor economic conditions
Approval of President handling economy	Pearson Correlation	1	.518**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	5759	5711
How much former President to blame for poor econ conditions	Pearson Correlation	.518**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	5711	5834

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table Interpretations

• There is a strong positive correlation between blaming the former President for poor economic conditions and approval of the current President's handling of the economy.

• The economic crisis of 2008 was a result of the burst of the market bubble, not federal policy action.

• Party identification plays a significant role in both of these perceptions, which indicates that party ideology, rather than knowledge of economic conditions, may shape how voters perceive both approval of Presidential handling of the economy and economic conditions themselves.

Findings

H 1: Presidential accountability for the economy

There is a moderate positive correlation between the perception of the economy and the president's handling of the economy. Furthermore, there is a strong positive correlation between approval of the president's handling of the economy and the president's handling of job, demonstrating election-induced accountability for the economy.

H 2: Factors affecting Presidential approval: retrospective, current, and prospective economic evaluation.

Interestingly, the perception of the economy *in comparison to one year ago* has a greater significance to presidential approval than the perception of the current state of the economy. This demonstrates the strength of retrospective voting and the pivotal importance of the election year economy with respect to the previous year.

H 3: The Blame Game

These findings indicate that voter dissatisfaction with the previous administration's economic handling is significantly related to approval of the current administration. However, this can also be attributed to party identification, and thus the blame game can played by simply throwing the blame for poor economic conditions on former administrations.

Conclusions

▪ Approval of the president's handling of the economy and approval of the president's handling of job are strongly related, suggesting election-induced responsibility for the economy.

▪Though retrospective economic evaluations have a strong effect on presidential approval, party identification plays a greater role in presidential approval than economic evaluations. This proves that voters have a greater allegiance to ideology and party identification than economic fluctuations.

▪ If economic fluctuations directly determined election outcomes, it would largely discredit democratic accountability or the idea that campaigns could change the outcomes of elections. These findings demonstrate that the currency of ideology is more important than currency itself in shaping voter behavior.

▪ It's not just "the economy": it's how you look at it, because the economy itself is an issue. Ideology is the framework through which one perceives the issue.

References

Bartels, Larry M., and John Zaller. 2001. "Presidential Vote Models: A Recount" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34 (March): 8-20.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy." *The Journal of Political Economy* (1957): 135-150.

Healy, Andrew, and Gabriel S. Lenz. "Substituting the End for the Whole: Why Voters Respond Primarily to the Election-Year Economy." American Journal of Political Science 58.1 (2014): 31-47.

Kramer, Gerald H. 1983. "The Ecological Fallacy Revisited: Aggregate- versus Individual-level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting." *American Political Science Review* 11 (March): 92-111.

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Mary Stegmaier. 2000. "Economic determinants of electoral outcomes." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3.1: 183-219.

Lewis-Beck, Michael S. 2006. "Does Economics Still Matter? Econometrics and the Vote." *Journal of Politics* 68.1 (2006): 208-212.

Stigler, George G. 1973. "General Economic Conditions and National Elections." *American Economic Review* 63 (May): 160-67.