Two Different Sets of Questions

- Older
- Emphasizes group characteristics – age, religion, occupation, residence, gender, region, class, income, and education, etc.
- How groups vote, which party they support, which issues are important to them
- Underlying assumption: social status and social characteristics influence vote choice
- More recent
- Psychological characteristics rather than social
- Attitudes, perceptions, feelings
- Underlying assumption: perceptions people have of parties, strength of attachment to party, impressions of candidates, issue positions influence vote choice

The Nature of the Electorate

– Individual voting decisions
  - The voting behavior studies – research has been systematic and cumulative
    – Turnout
    – Vote choice
  - The level-of-analysis problem
    – Individual – micro
    – Aggregate (society, collectively) – macro

Three Models of the Vote
(this is the micro part)

- Classic Models of the Vote
  - Normative – how people should behave
  - Decisions are based on issues – based on the voter's own good and the collective good
  - The first systematic empirical inquiry in the 1940s and 1950s revealed that actual voters fell far short of these ideals
    - Information costs are too great
    - Candidates deliberately obscure issues
    - Voters vote on candidate image and personality
    - Satisficing takes place

- The Sociological Model
  - The Columbia School (remember this from the reasoning voter model?) – 1940s
  - Stratification system – society exists in strata, socioeconomic class and group identification is one of the major explanatory variables for a political act
    - Class – includes occupation, income, and social status
    - Group – includes religion, race, and ethnic background
    - Place of Residence – region of the country and urban versus rural

Conclusions about participation based on the Sociological Model

- Social Groups with Low Voter Turnout
  - Minorities
  - The young
  - Unemployed
  - Less educated

- Social Groups with Higher Voter Turnout
  - Non-minorities
  - Middle-aged and older
  - Employed
  - Better-educated

- ## Social Groups and the Campaign
    A form of demographic analysis that many campaign managers favor is to bundle, or categorize, groups in terms of their distinctive and most politically relevant social characteristics and then target the winnable groups for special attention.
    Examples: Farmers, Nascar Dads, Generation Xers, e-dot.comers

The Problem with the Sociological Model:
While it can explain much in given elections, it does not go far enough in explaining why these social characteristics matter.

- ## The Social-Psychological Model
  - The Michigan School – 1950s, 1960s
  - New sophisticated survey research methodology – random samples
  - A person's behavior is a result of cognitions and attitudes – psychological orientation is linked to voting choice
    - To Explain Turnout
      - Political Efficacy – Belief that your actions influence outcomes
      - Civic Duty
      - Partisanship

  - To Explain Direction of the Vote
    - Party Identification
    - Issue and Ideology Voting
      - Low levels of "constraint" (in other words, coherent ideology)
        - Real ideologues
        - Group associations
        - Nature of the times
        - Other
      - Revisionist School – Issues and Ideology do matter
        - Issue Voting – The Dependent Voter, The Responsive Voter
    - Candidate Image