



# The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post-New Deal Period

*David C. Leege, Kenneth D. Wald, Brian S. Krueger, Paul D. Mueller*

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How did Republicans manage to hold the White House through much of the past half century even as the Democratic Party held the hearts of most American voters? The authors of this groundbreaking study argue that they did so by doing what Democrats have also excelled at: triggering psychological mechanisms that deepen cultural divisions in the other party's coalition, thereby leading many of its voters either to choose the opposing ticket or to stay home.

*The Politics of Cultural Differences* is the first book to develop and carefully test a general theory of cultural politics in the United States, one that offers a compelling new perspective on America's changing political order and political conflict in the post-New Deal period (1960-1996). David Leege, Kenneth Wald, Brian Krueger, and Paul Mueller move beyond existing scholarship by formulating a theory of campaign strategies that emphasizes cultural conflict regarding patriotism, race, gender, and religion. Drawing on National Election Studies data, they find that Republican politicians deployed powerful symbols (e.g., "tax and spend liberals") to channel targeted voters toward the minority party. And as partisanship approached parity in the 1990s, Democratic leaders proved as adept at deploying their own symbols, such as "a woman's right to choose," to disassemble the Republican coalition. A blend of sophisticated theory and advanced empirical tools, this book lays bare the cultural dimensions of American political life.

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