

UNITED STATES NEWS REVIEW

## **Democrats and Republicans – Rhetoric and Reality**

Friday March 28, 2008 7:02pm

OHIO, USA - Joe Fried began research for Democrats and Republicans – Rhetoric and Reality in 2004. His goal was to focus on the actual conduct and achievements of the two constituencies:

We have all heard lots of platitudes from Democrats and Republicans and from pollsters and pundits. For example, Republicans are supposed to favor “family values” and Democrats are supposed to advocate “free speech.” But are these generalities manifested in their every day lives? I wanted to find out.

Fried sifted through the results of hundreds of major social surveys, looking for questions that relate to specific achievements and conduct. For example, who has a college degree, who gave more to charity during the last year, who worked longer hours in the prior week, and who is more likely to object to controversial speech in his or her neighborhood? The responses to these questions were then cross-tabulated by partisan identification.

These are some of the findings that Fried found most significant:

Democrats appear to be much less trusting than Republicans. For 30 years the General Social Survey has asked, “Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance....” In each case, Democrats were far more likely to respond “Yes.” Other surveys with similar questions show the same tendency.

We know that Republicans tend to be happier than Democrats, but the reasons for this disparity have not been clear. In his book, Fried theorizes that the Democratic gloom is attributable to a peculiar “cynicism” comprising 3 elements: a lack of trust (see above), a belief that the good fortunes of life are beyond one’s control, and a view that capitalism is inherently unjust. Citing survey evidence and the opinions of psychologists, Fried makes a strong case for his theory.

Even though Social Security is supposed to have a “progressive” benefit structure, many affluent Republicans do relatively well in the system. In fact, they may get net benefits

that are far greater than relatively poorer Democrats. What is the problem? The regressive nature of Social Security seems to be related to archaic spousal and survivor benefits. Any meaningful solution to the Social Security funding problem will have to address this problem, which is clearly illustrated and quantified in the book.

Political scientists make generalizations about “conservatives” but they fail to recognize that 25 to 50 percent of all self-identified conservatives (during the last 35 years) have been Democrats, and these Democratic conservatives are the polar opposites of Republican conservatives. Fried found a huge education gap (nearly 2 full years) between these two categories of “conservatives.” In addition, he found that Democratic conservatives are only 50 to 70 percent as likely to be rated as having high “apparent intelligence.” Political scientists who fail to recognize this conservative dichotomy are likely to reach false conclusions and to disseminate false impressions to the public.

The charity gap is enormous, even after controlling for income differences. Fried estimates that charities could get an additional \$55 billion per year if Democrats simply contributed as much as Republicans who have similar incomes. This begs the question, why do Democrats lobby for government funding of embryonic stem cell research, environmentally-sound energy solutions, aid to the homeless, etc.? Many of the problems could be addressed if Democrats would simply open up their wallets to the same degree as Republicans at similar income levels.

Democratic women are now as or more likely to have advanced (graduate) college degrees than Republican women, but in all other cases, Republicans seem to have more education. In addition, Republicans are more likely to correctly answer questions designed to test political knowledge, and are judged to have more “apparent intelligence” than their Democratic counterparts. The Republican knowledge and education advantage has been measurable for decades.

Much of the income disparity between employed Democratic men and employed Republican men is attributable to Republicans working additional hours per week. Fried estimates that the average Democratic male could add at least \$170,000 to his retirement nest egg if he worked as many hours per week as his Republican counterpart. Fried identifies other factors (such as work attitude and education) that may explain the disparity in wages.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, for at least 30 years Republicans have been a little more likely to express tolerance for controversial speech and books within their communities – no matter what the topic.

Most federal income tax is paid by a small minority of the population, so median tax amounts (the amount paid by people in the middle of the income spectrum) are generally low. Nevertheless, there is a sizable difference between the median amounts paid by Democrats and Republicans, and this may account for the different perspectives they have with regard to income taxes.

On average, Democrats are about 13 months younger than Republicans when they start having children, and are much more likely to be teen parents. This tendency can have an enormous and detrimental impact on the educational, professional, and personal achievements of Democrats and their offspring. In his recommendations chapter, Fried urges the Democratic Party to directly advise its constituents of these risks.

In addition to the weightier findings, the book is infused with lots of trivia. For example, we learn who:

- \* finds life to be more exciting
- \* commits more adultery
- \* watches more TV
- \* has higher body mass index
- \* plays the lottery more often

Although the tone of the book is mostly academic and objective, Fried devotes the last chapter to his own conclusions and interpretations. He presents a lesson that can be learned from each of the preceding chapters.

The book will be out this April from Algora Publishing, in New York. It can be obtained from the publisher's web site (<http://www.algora.com/205/book/details.html>) or from Amazon Books.