
Introduction

1 THE STUDY OF AMERICAN ELECTORAL realignments, which enjoyed its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, has been one of the most creative, engaging, and influential intellectual enterprises ever undertaken by American political scientists. During the 1960s and 1970s, it rivaled the Michigan election studies. Then and since, it has offered certifiable science, in the sense of a conceptual scheme, a theory, and quantitative analysis; breadth, in its tackling of large questions concerning the what, when, and why of American history; and even a secular eschatology, in the sense that it has encouraged generations of students and others, primed to seek “signs” along a presumed highway to an extraordinary historical destination, to keep asking: Is an electoral realignment about to happen? Are