An Outline for a Model of Party Choice

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This article is a synthetic effort. It attempts to mold the issue voter of traditional democratic theory and rational choice models with the "nature of the times" and partisan voters of empirical voting studies. The vehicle for this attempted synthesis is a voter decision rule more complex, more inclusive, and perhaps less "rational" than others previously suggested. After motivating and developing the formal representation of the decision rule, a variety of empirical findings about voting behavior are reexamined in light of the rule. Some reinterpretations result, particularly in the case of party identification.

I. Introduction

This article takes a first step toward formalizing a number of ideas about American voting behavior. Specifically, I will sketch a model which integrates the familiar notions of party identification, retrospective voting, and issue voting into a single decision rule. As intimated, the ideas in this paper are not new ones. But the process of formalizing familiar notions may force a greater degree of precision in our thinking, and perhaps make evident the full implications of the ways we think about voting behavior (see Fiorina, 1975).

The article divides into two sections. In the first I outline a model of the individual voting decision, proceeding from the simplest conception of electoral choice to the most complex. This section is largely abstract. In the second section of the paper I attempt to show that the model provides an explanation for a variety of empirical findings which emerge from the research of specialists in voting behavior. Such findings include low correlations between specific issue positions and the ultimate vote decision, the general importance of party ID for voting behavior and why it may vary over time, the strengthening of party ID with political experience in some societies but not in others, incumbency advantages, the importance of the personal qualities of candidates for office, and others.

II. The Model

Simple Issue Voting

Suppose that a society has been created *ex nihilo* and a two-party democratic system imposed on it by the creating force. How would our new

citizens make their voting decisions? Let us indicate by X^i the vector of policy positions held by individual i, by SS_p the vector of policies constituting the present social state (i.e. the status quo), by θ_{p+1}, ψ_{p+1} the vectors of policies which lead to alternative future social states (i.e. the campaign platforms of parties θ and ψ), and by U^i the utility function of the i^{th} citizen. At this stage nothing need be assumed about the latter except that it is monotonically decreasing with the "distance" (however defined), of a social state from the citizen's preferred position, and at its maximum when the two coincide.[1] Because I will be referring to an arbitrary citizen in what follows I will drop the superscript i.

Using the notation just introduced I suggest that the voter in the new society will evaluate the two parties in terms of their promised changes in his personal welfare between the present, p, and the next election at (p + 1). Thus, the evaluation functions are:

$$\begin{aligned} E(\theta) &= U(X_{p+1}, \theta_{p+1}) - U(X_p, SS_p) \\ E(\psi) &= U(X_{p+1}, \psi_{p+1}) - U(X_p, SS_p) \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

and he votes for θ rather than ψ only if

$$E(\theta) \geqslant E(\psi)$$

which implies

$$U(X_{p+1}, \theta_{p+1}) - U(X_{p+1}, \psi_{p+1}) \geqslant 0. \tag{2}$$

The decision rule (2) represents *simple issue voting,* a vote based solely on an evaluation of the relative attractiveness of the two parties' platforms; it is, of course, the model of partisan choice which underlies spatial models of party competition (Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook, 1970).

Notice that although simple in conceptualization, (2) is not without consequences for numerous empirical studies of issue voting (*American Political Science Review* Symposium, 1972; Pomper, 1975). To wit, because X, θ, and ψ are vectors of issue positions (not necessarily of identical order from voter to voter), because voter distance functions may differ, and because voter utility functions may differ, there is no particular theoretical reason to expect large correlations between positions on specific issues and the vote. Rather, a

[1] Note that no comparability assumptions are made here. For example, citizens might evaluate the candidates on different dimensions (both as to content and number), using different distance functions, different utility functions, and so on.

complex amalgam of issue positions determines the voting decision. Thus, even if the model of simple issue voting were perfectly determinative of the vote, one might still find low to vanishing correlations between positions on every single issue and partisan choice.

Simple Retrospective Voting

Assume that party θ wins the first election and governs the society for one interelection period. At the time of the next election how does a citizen choose between θ and ψ? Certainly, he could again use (2), but should he ignore the hardest bit of information he has—θ's performance during his term in office? Surely not. But just *how* can the citizen take θ's performance into account?

Downs suggests one way; namely, that the citizen uses θ's past performance to estimate the likely future position of θ (Downs, 1957). Downs argues that past actions provide a more precise estimate of future actions than do campaign pledges. But at times might not the past provide less precise information? The citizen might have learned that θ is so incompetent that his stated positions bear no relation to policy outcomes. Or it could be the case that although θ is extremely unpredictable, his policies typically work out well for the citizen. Perhaps the citizen believes that the issues of the future are disjoint from the settled issues of the past. If so, θ's past performance would be irrelevant according to Downs. But in each of these cases does not θ 's performance still convey some information about his general ability or competence to govern?

For this reason I favor introducing the incumbent's performance into the citizen's voting decision in a way more explicit than as a mere aid in estimating the terms in (2). Specifically, let the incumbent's performance "bias" the citizen's voting decision, with the degree of bias directly related to the citizen's evaluation of the incumbent's performance. Rather than (2), consider (3).[2] Vote for θ only if

$$\alpha_{p-1}[U(X_p, \theta_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})] + \alpha_p[U(X_{p+1}, \theta_{p+1}) - U(X_{p+1}, \psi_{p+1})] \gtrless 0 \qquad (3)$$

where

$$\alpha_{p-1} \gtrless 0$$
$$\alpha_p \geqslant 0$$
$$\theta_p = SS_p .$$

[2] Obviously, condition (3) includes condition (2) as a special case.

The decision rule given by (3) is an attempt to formalize the concept of retrospective voting. The bracketed term weighted by α_{p-1} is a bias, a symbolic pat on the back or kick in the pants from an electorate that is a "rational God of vengeance and reward" (Key, 1964, p. 568). If the citizen has prospered under the incumbent, he enters the voting booth predisposed toward the incumbent, ceteris paribus. If the citizen has suffered, the challenger might capture his vote even with an inferior campaign platform.

How plausible is (3) as a behavioral model of the voting decision? Precise numerical estimates of utility differences exceed the capabilities of present measurement methods. But something less than such precise estimates may still be valuable. Note that (3) partitions the set of voters into nine classes as illustrated in Table 1:

The descriptions of the classes follow (assume that α_{p-1} and α_p are not both equal to 0):

1. (positive, positive): All voters in this class have improved their positions under the incumbent, and all prefer the anticipated future under the incumbent to that under the challenger. (3) specifies that all class 1 citizens vote for the incumbent.
2. (positive, zero): All voters in this class have improved their positions under the incumbent, but all are indifferent between the incumbent's and challenger's promised futures. (3) specifies support for the incumbent unless $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$, i.e. "virtually all" class 2 citizens vote for the incumbent. The only exceptions are those citizens who completely ignore the past.

TABLE 1

Vote Direction as a Function of Two Components of (3)

$[U(X_p, \theta_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})]$	$[U(X_{p+1}, \theta_{p+1}) - U(X_{p+1}, \psi_{p+1})]$		
	positive	zero	negative
positive	θ	θ^*	?
zero	θ^{**}	$(\frac{1}{2}\theta, \frac{1}{2}\psi)$	ψ^{**}
negative	?	ψ^*	ψ

* unless $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$, ** unless $\alpha_p = 0$

3. (positive, negative): In this class voter fortunes have improved under the incumbent but the challenger promises a better future. (3) specifies incumbent support if $\alpha_p = 0$, challenger support if $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$, otherwise it depends. Class 3 citizens will divide their votes between incumbent and challenger.
4. (zero, positive): In this class voter fortunes have not changed under the incumbent, but the incumbent promises a better future than the challenger. (3) specifies incumbent support unless $\alpha_p = 0$, i.e. "virtually all" class 4 citizens vote for the incumbent. The only exceptions are those citizens who completely ignore the future.
5. (zero, zero): No change under the incumbent, no difference expected in the future. These citizens vote randomly and produce an expected even split.
6. (zero, negative): In this class voter fortunes have not changed under the incumbent, but the challenger promises a better future. (3) specifies support for the challenger unless $\alpha_p = 0$.
7. (negative, positive): In this class voter positions have worsened but the incumbent promises a better future than the challenger. (3) specifies support for the incumbent if $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$, support for the challenger if $\alpha_p = 0$, otherwise it depends. Class 7 citizens will divide their votes between challenger and incumbent.
8. (negative, zero): In this class voter positions have worsened and all are indifferent between the challenger's and incumbent's promised futures. Unless $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$, (3) specifies that class 8 citizens will vote to throw the rascal out.
9. (negative, negative): Class 9 citizens have nothing good to say about the incumbent. He has already screwed up and they expect from him more of the same—at least relative to the challenger. (3) specifies that all class 9 citizens support the opposition.

From the preceding descriptions one would expect the following rank ordering of classes in terms of support for the incumbent:

Class 1
Classes 2, 4*
Class 3 } in any of the
Class 5 } six possible
Class 7 } orderings
Classes 6, 8*
Class 9

(* presumes equal numbers of citizens for whom $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$, or $\alpha_p = 0$)

Additionally, one would expect the following rank ordering of classes in terms of increasing within class variance in voting behavior:

Classes 1, 9
Classes 2, 4, 6, 8*
Classes 3, 7
Class 5

(* presumes equal numbers of citizens for whom $\alpha_{p-1} = 0$ or $\alpha_p = 0$)

Admittedly, these two rank order predictions implied by (3) are not terribly strong, but they seem intuitively plausible and at least they permit some rough judgments about the degree to which (3) comports with the real world.

Having suggested a voter decision rule which incorporates retrospective voting, and advanced criteria by which to judge its plausibility, let us consider the consequences of retrospective voting for the conduct of the upcoming election in our hypothetical society.

Assume $\alpha_{p-1} > 0$ for all citizens. Then, what if $[U(X_p, \theta_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})] > 0$ for a majority of voters? Clearly, to match campaign platforms is to hand the election to the incumbent, a situation he may find quite desirable, but hardly one in which the challenger sees any merit. Alternatively, if $[U(X_p, \theta_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})] < 0$ for a majority of voters, then matching campaign platforms assures a victory for the challenger. Now, recall that when equilibria exist in spatial models, they typically have the candidates matching platforms and settling for an expectation of a tied election. Evidently, such results hold because the model assumes citizens enter the voting booths with no biases. But (3) is a decision rule which assumes that citizens are biased, or at least permits them to be. Citizens may be biased for or against the incumbent based on his past performance. Given (3) one expects a matching of campaign platforms to produce ties only if bias based on past performance is randomly distributed, or systematically distributed so that those biased toward the incumbent are precisely counterbalanced by those biased against him, thus letting the election outcome ride on promises for the future. In the absence of such symmetries we should not be surprised to see one candidate desperately trying not to be matched. The convergence predictions of spatial models presume a very special class of voter decision

rules, or very special situations given more general classes of decision rules.[3] One can easily extend these observations. Simple examples demonstrate that the decision rule given in (3) can destroy a winning strategy for simple issue voters, and even more importantly, create winning strategies where none exist for a simple issue-voting electorate.

While the preceding discussion suggests the empirical and theoretical plausibility of (3), some additional theoretical considerations suggest that (3) is needlessly restrictive. Consider the candidate evaluations which generate (3):

$$E(\theta) = \alpha_{p-1}[U(X_p, \theta_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1}) + \alpha_p[U(X_{p+1}, \theta_{p+1}) - U(X_p, \theta_p)]$$

$$E(\psi) = \alpha_p[U(X_{p+1}, \psi_{p+1}) - U(X_p, \theta_p)]. \quad (4)$$

Clearly, from (4) we see that the hallmark of (3) is its assymmetry. There is no "what might have been" term for the challenger. Rather, (3) assigns the initiative to the incumbent to make or break his own fortunes. If the incumbent has performed well, he enters the campaign with a stock of credit. If he has performed poorly, he enters the campaign with a handicap. This assymmetry is not too bothersome—real elections *are* assymmetric. Focusing on the point at hand, I expect that many Americans considered Ford's handling of the economy when they made their voting decision, but I doubt that many took the additional step of calculating what McGovern might have done.

Still, perhaps some did. Perhaps a citizen's lot has improved under the incumbent, but he believes that any given "man from Missouri" could have done even better. By totally ignoring opportunity costs, do we go too far? Why not look upon (3) as a special case in which the citizen completely ignores the potential performance of the challenger? The general case would include a term representing the challenger's hypothetical past performance:

[3] Defenders of spatial models can reply that if an equilibrium exists, it is still the best position for (3) as well as for (2), although it is likely to assure one candidate of a loss in the former case. I would argue that if guaranteed to lose, a candidate would surely turn his attention to factors outside the present spatial model (to be discussed below), rather than meekly take the equilibrium position and accept certain defeat. The assumption that campaign strategies are limited to changes in platforms is untenable if the election game is nonsymmetric. In such a case the disadvantaged candidate has a compelling motivation to attempt to circumvent the limitation of campaign strategies to platform changes.

$$r_{p-1}\alpha_{p-1}[U(X_p, \psi_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})]$$

where

$$0 \leqslant r_{p-1} \leqslant 1.$$

We can think of r as a reliability, uncertainty, or competency discount. If the citizen believed not a word of what the challenger said, or paid no attention, r = 0, thus producing (3). Because the incumbent actually governed, his performance is *not* discounted; the voter *experiences* the effects on his welfare which have occurred.

Thus, a more general retrospective voting model has candidate evaluations of

$$\begin{aligned} E(\theta) &= \alpha_{p-1}(U_p{}^{\theta} - U_{p-1}) + \alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_p{}^{\theta}) \\ E(\psi) &= r_{p-1}\alpha_{p-1}(U_p{}^{\psi} - U_{p-1}) + \alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\psi} - U_p{}^{\theta}) \end{aligned} \qquad (4')$$

where notation is simplified as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} (U_p^{\theta} - U_{p-1}) &= [U(X_p, \theta_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})] \\ (U_p^{\psi} - U_{p-1}) &= [U(X_p, \psi_p) - U(X_{p-1}, SS_{p-1})] \\ (U_{p+1}^{\theta} - U_p^{\theta}) &= [U(X_{p+1}, \theta_{p+1}) - U(X_p, \theta_p)] \\ (U_{p+1}^{\psi} - U_p^{\theta}) &= [U(X_{p+1}, \psi_{p+1}) - U(X_p, \theta_p)] \end{aligned}$$

and θ_p is the actual SS_p, while
ψ_p is an hypothetical SS_p, when
θ is incumbent, ψ challenger

The candidate evaluations (4′) in turn yield a more general retrospective voting model:

(3′) Vote for θ only if:

$$\alpha_{p-1}(U_p{}^{\theta} - U_{p-1}) + \alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_{p+1}{}^{\psi}) - r_{p-1}\alpha_{p-1}(U_p{}^{\psi} - U_{p-1}) \geqslant 0$$

Although formidable in appearance, (3′) is quite simple. It asserts that in making his voting decisions the citizen looks at the incumbent's performance, the alternative platforms of the incumbent and challenger and (perhaps) imagines a hypothetical past performance term for the previous challenger.

It is worth pointing out that already the model provides latitude for a

great deal of individual level variation in voting behavior. If we presume $\alpha_{p-1} \ll \alpha_p$, we have the classic policy voter of democratic theory. If we presume $\alpha_{p-1} \gg \alpha_p$, we have the "nature of the times" voter of *The American Voter.* The introduction of the past performance term and the variable weights, α_{p-1}, α_p, r_{p-1} allow for dissimilar appearing voting decisions *within the confines of a single model.*

One final modification. We have discounted the challenger's hypothetical past performance by a factor, r_{p-1}, in recognition of the uncertainty and ignorance surrounding such a calculation. The same considerations suggest a similar discounting of the *promised future* performances of *both* candidates. If we discount θ's promises by s_p and ψ's by r_p, then we can write formally symmetric candidate evaluations as

$$E(\theta) = s_{p-1}\alpha_{p-1}(U_p{}^{\theta} - U_{p-1}) + s_p\alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_p{}^{\theta})$$
$$E(\psi) = r_{p-1}\alpha_{p-1}(U_p{}^{\psi} - U_{p-1}) + r_p\alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\psi} - U_p{}^{\theta}) \qquad (4'')$$

where

$$s_{p-1} = 1,\ 0 \leqslant s_j, r_j \leqslant 1.$$

Having proceeded thus far, the next step is rather obvious.

Party Identification

Assume that our hypothetical society has been in existence for several generations. How do the descendants of the original issue voters and retrospective voters make their voting decisions? I suggest that to some extent the descendant takes into account all his past experiences with the parties, from the election occurring at the time of his first political consciousness to the present, p, and the future, p + 1:

$$E(\theta) = \sum_{j=1}^{p} s_j\alpha_j(U_{j+1}{}^{\theta} - U_j)$$
$$E(\psi) = \sum_{j=1}^{p} r_j\alpha_j(U_{j+1}{}^{\psi} - U_j) \qquad (5)$$

where

$$0 \leqslant r_j,\ s_j \leqslant 1$$

$s_j = 1$ if θ is incumbent during period j

$r_j = 1$ if ψ is incumbent during period j

and a citizen votes for θ rather than ψ only if $E(\theta) \geqslant E(\psi)$. This formulation yields the issue voting and retrospective voting formulations as special cases. But it also allows the sixty-five year-old union member to vote for McGovern partly on the basis of his approval of FDR. This last observation sounds curiously similar to a statement about party identification. It is intended to.

We can decompose the general candidate evaluations into two classes of terms: past political experiences (PPE), and current issue concerns (CIC), i.e.

$$E(\theta) = PPE(\theta) + CIC(\theta)$$
$$E(\psi) = PPE(\psi) + CIC(\psi)$$

where

$$PPE(\theta) = \sum_{j=1}^{p-1} s_j \alpha_j (U_{j+1}{}^{\theta} - U_j)$$
$$CIC(\theta) = s_p \alpha_p (U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_p)$$
$$PPE(\psi) = \sum_{j=1}^{p-1} r_j \alpha_j (U_{j+1}{}^{\psi} - U_j)$$
$$CIC(\psi) = r_p \alpha_p (U_{p+1}{}^{\psi} - U_p) \qquad (5')$$

The PPE terms summarize the citizen's past experiences with the two parties. The CIC terms summarize his appraisal of the alternative futures the parties promise him.

In light of the preceding discussion it seems natural to propose the following definition of party identification:

$$PID(\theta) = (PPE(\theta) - PPE(\psi) + \gamma)$$
$$PID(\psi) = -PID(\theta)$$
$$PID = \text{independent, if } PID(\theta) = PID(\psi) = 0 \qquad (6)$$

where γ is an initial bias (+, 0, −) which the individual brings to the political arena. (Presumably γ is a direct function of socialization, but indirectly a function of the past political experiences of the socializing agents.)

With the definition of party ID advanced above, we can write the candidate evaluations in quite simple form. A citizen votes for θ rather than ψ only if $E(\theta) - E(\psi) \geqslant 0$ which is equivalent to

$$PID(\theta) + CIC(\theta) - CIC(\psi) \geqslant \gamma. \qquad (7)$$

Thus, according to this model, party ID combines additively with current issue concerns.[4] But party ID at any given point is a function of issue concerns prior to that point.

Condition (7) completes the outline of the model. In the next section I will use (7) in a discussion of various findings about real world voting behavior. Before doing so, however, let us take note of several aspects of the model.

First, there is an obvious technical point: the simple additive structure is only one among many formal structures which could encompass the considerations raised in the motivating discussion. The purpose of this paper is conceptual; I wish to outline a model which includes features capable of subsuming the sometimes conflicting viewpoints of the several electoral behavior schools. Thus, I have used the simplest and most familiar mathematical structure available. Given that (7) and its simpler forerunners are not yet axiomatized, simplicity is as good a criterion as any. But this is not to deny that an important line of future theoretical work entails an investigation of the logical structure of individual voting decisions: what kinds of behavioral considerations are embodied in (7) or possible alternatives which include similar concepts?

Second, models built around decision rules such as (1), (3′), and (7) are typical of models proposed by rational choice theorists. Yet I would hesitate to call the model I have proposed a rational choice model. Why in the world would a sixty-five year-old union member vote for McGovern on the basis of what he thought of Roosevelt? Sunk costs are sunk, our colleagues in economics say. But as argued at length elsewhere, how voters behave and how theorists think they ought to behave are separate questions whose confusion courts intellectual disaster (Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1975).

Whether rational or not, the model is at least realistic. It is inconceivable that so many scholars could have written about retrospective voting and party identification if such phenomena did not exist. But I am not convinced by the traditional conceptualizations of these phenomena. In the various discounting variables (s_j, r_j, α_j) there is considerable room for psychological factors to operate. Nevertheless, at base the concept of party ID I have proposed has its roots in reality, albeit past reality. Undoubtedly, the real

[4] It is worth noting that the proposed definition does not imply that the strength of party ID is interpersonally comparable. Behaviorally, people in the various categories of party ID appear to behave roughly the same the country over. But there is nothing in current measurement methods (or the present model) which ensures interpersonal meaningfulness of the party ID categories.

voter falls somewhere between the socialized responders of Homo Sociologicus and the robot calculators of Homo Economicus.

A third observation concerns the flexibility (to be illustrated momentarily) of the model. To put it simply, there are enough free parameters in the model to enable one to "explain" a large array of empirical findings. In truth, this very breadth of applicability points up the fact that the model is less an explanatory device than a representational device. I have not offered any basic set of axioms which imply the model as a logical consequence. Rather, I have simply developed a rule which represents forces which affect individual voting decisions. Hopefully, the model is a useful organizational device. And, as I will argue in the next section, it does suggest some additional interpretations of existing findings. Unfortunately, the richness of the model creates the usual cost: the model might prove useful in simulations, but if used in any degree of complexity it probably will not yield analytical results about electoral processes.

A final observation concerns the need to extend the model to multi-candidate elections. I have developed the model in a context of unified parties competing for a single vote from the citizen. In American elections the citizen must cast a series of votes for separate offices. Surely he does not form evaluations such as (5) for every pair of competitors for every office. Does he form such evaluations for a few top offices (or even just one) and do we define his party ID as some combination of the past performance portions of such evaluations? Does he use this ID as a rule of thumb in voting for lesser offices? This class of questions deserves a great deal of study.

III. American Voting Behavior: Model and Data

This section contains no new data. Its purpose is to examine existing findings about voting behavior from the standpoint of the model developed in the preceding section.

Issue Voting

One of the most active current research areas goes under the heading of issue voting. Without summarizing the work going on, suffice it to say that many scholars now contend that public policy matters play a critical role in citizens' voting decisions whereas previously it was widely believed that issues were of slight import (*APSR* Symposium, 1972; Pomper, 1975). Both the past and present findings are consistent with the model proposed in section

II. Within the model there are five possible reasons why the vote might bear little or no relationship to current public policy questions.

1. *The Irresponsible Voter.* According to the traditional view the absence of issue voting is the fault of the voter. He has so little information that he can not calculate a $(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_{p+1}{}^{\psi})$ term, he is so uncaring that he ignores issue differences in voting ($\alpha_p \rightarrow 0$), he is so uncertain that he discounts issue evaluations heavily (s_p, $r_p \rightarrow 0$), or any combination of these three. The pre-1970 Michigan group is widely associated with this view.

2. *The Alienated Voter.* A voter who refuses to believe what candidates tell him (r_p, $s_p = 0$) will show no direct influence of current issue concerns in his voting behavior. I am not familiar with any attempted tests of this hypothesis.

3. *There's Not a Dime's Worth of Difference.* If the voter estimates that $(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_{p+1}{}^{\psi}) = 0$, there is no reason to find a relationship between his issue positions and his vote. Page and Brody (1972) have recently explored this possibility at some length.

4. *Different Strokes for Different Folks.* As mentioned in section II even if the citizenry were responding solely to issues, we might find no relationship between any single issue and the vote. The citizen responds to a combination of issues. These combinations may differ in content from person to person and the weights attached to common content may similarly differ. It is not unthinkable that we should find a strong relationship between some single issue and the vote, but failure to find such a relationship in no way implies the absence of issue voting. The work of Natchez and Bupp (1968), Repass (1971), and others who have called attention to issue publics is relevant here. So are recent efforts to explain the voting decision by the use of voter specified issues and/or issue weights (Shapiro, 1969; Reynolds, 1974; Patterson et al., 1974).

5. *"I like Reagan, but Hoover took Dad's Farm."* Logically speaking, we might find citizens for whom $\alpha_p \neq 0$, r_p, $s_p \neq 0$, $(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_{p+1}{}^{\psi}) \neq 0$, and for whom the vote bears no relationship to their current issue concerns. Why? Simply because

$$\sum_{j=1}^{p-1} s_j\alpha_j(U_{j+1}{}^{\theta} - U_j) \gg s_p\alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_p)$$

and/or

$$\sum_{j=1}^{p-1} r_j\alpha_j(U_{j+1}{}^{\theta} - U_j) \gg r_p\alpha_p(U_{p+1}{}^{\psi} - U_p)$$

that is, their current issue evaluations are overwhelmed by their past political experiences, or as I have called it, their party ID. Notice that in the model party ID does not cause a misperception of current issues, it may simply overwhelm them. If this fifth possibility is a real one, we might expect to find the closest relationship between current issues and votes among those with little in the way of past political experiences (e.g. younger voters) or among those with "balanced" past political experiences (e.g. independents). (See Jackson, 1975, for evidence consistent with this hypothesis.) In sum, the model includes a range of possible explanations for (a) the apparent unimportance of current issues, (b) the true unimportance of current issues, and (c) the true importance of current issues.

The Development of Party ID

This subtitle might appear overambitious, but I am referring only to the conception of party ID developed in section II of this paper, i.e.

$$\mathrm{PID}(\theta) = \sum_{j=1}^{p-1} s_j\alpha_j(U_{j+1}{}^{\theta} - U_j) - \sum_{j-1}^{p-1} r_j\alpha_j(U_{j+1}{}^{\psi} - U_j) + \gamma$$

Consider again the hypothetical society of section II. A citizen enters political consciousness with no past political experiences, i.e. $\mathrm{PID}(\theta) = \gamma$. Assume $\gamma = 0$ for purposes of this discussion. Evidently, experience with the system is a *necessary* condition for the development of a party ID. If θ wins the first election, governs well from the standpoint of the citizen, and $\alpha_1 > 0$, then at the time of the second election the citizen has an embryonic party ID: $\mathrm{PID}(\theta) > 0$. If θ continues to win and govern well, then $\mathrm{PID}(\theta)$ grows larger over time. As formulated, party ID is simply a net difference between the summed actual and hypothetical past performances of the parties. After current promises become past performances they affect party ID by changing the net difference.

A notable finding from studies of American voting behavior is that strength of party ID increases with the length of an individual's identification with a party. Converse (1969) has proposed an ingenious model to explain the American and some European data. But the model proposed in this paper identifies a weakness in the Converse model.

What of the *consistency* of an individual's political experiences? The scenario considered above has θ governing well vis-à-vis some citizen, and consequently $\mathrm{PID}(\theta)$ increasing for that citizen. But if θ governs well, then poorly, loses to ψ, who governs well, then poorly, loses to θ, who governs

well, etc. we could very well find PID = 0 even after a lengthy exposure to politics. Length of exposure or extent of political experience is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a strengthening of party ID. The *consistency* of political exposure is critical. This element is missing from the Converse model, a lack which seems especially curious when one considers that the use of a learning model virtually demands the recognition of positive and negative reinforcement possibilities.

Empirically, when would we find a relationship between length of party ID and strength of party ID? The conditions are easy to specify. If most citizens undergo little change in their life situation during their political maturity, and the parties advocate the same points of view over time, then large numbers of citizens would find one party or the other consistently better from their point of view. The result would be a strengthening of party identification over the period of a citizen's political involvement. One can make a plausible argument that the aforementioned conditions held to a reasonable degree of approximation between 1932 and 1962 in the United States. Thus a positive relationship between strength of party ID and length of party ID may be an empirical fact for that period, but that fact probably reflects a particular configuration of socio-political circumstances rather than a law of political behavior valid for all times and places.

Changes in Party ID

A number of authors (Dobson and St. Angelo, 1975) have remarked that at the individual level, party ID is not nearly so stable as a glance at its overall distribution might suggest. At the same time, however, these authors note that political "conversions" are few: one does not find many changes from strong Democrat to strong Republican, or vice-versa. Most changes tend to be between adjacent categories of the party ID measure. Such marginal change is quite consistent with the model proposed in section II.

Consider equations 5 and 6. Ceteris paribus, the greater a citizen's party ID the less influential will be any recent dissatisfaction with his party's performance (or satisfaction with the other party's). Changes in party ID should be most likely among those with little in the way of past political experiences (e.g. younger voters), and among those with inconsistent past political experiences (e.g. older independents?). Such arguments are not terribly original, to be sure, but they do not presuppose any complex psychological mechanisms. They are examples of the simple fact that say, one is fifty percent of two but only five percent of twenty.

What about *widespread* changes in party ID, the concern of those involved in the study of critical elections (Burnham, 1970)? In the model summarized

by (7) a critical election can occur in either or both of two principal ways. Most obviously, a widespread shift in party ID can result when either

$$U_{p+1}{}^{\theta} - U_{p+1}{}^{\psi} \tag{a}$$

or

$$U_{p}{}^{\theta} - U_{p-1} \tag{b}$$

is of opposite sign and sufficiently great in magnitude to overcome the sum of all other past political experiences. In so many words, the rise of a life and death issue, or a frightfully bad governmental performance (or remarkably good one) may outweigh the individual's store of past experiences. Of course, those most likely to be "converted" are those with little or inconsistent past political experiences. In this connection recall that the New Deal realignment apparently resulted less from massive conversions of Republicans to Democrats than from the Democratic capture of the lion's share of new members of the electorate (see Campbell et al., 1960, pp. 153–156; Anderson, 1976).

A second, more subtle way for a critical election to occur would involve a widespread recalculation of the weights, α_j, employed in the voting decision (presumably under the stimulus of current events). Looking back, a number of voters might decide that period j did not just witness some new government programs; rather, period j was the beginning of, for example, the march down the road to socialism. As a consequence the weight accorded this period of infamy might shift markedly upward. A likely consequence of such changes of heart would be an associated recalculation of voters' previous issue positions, X_j. Those voters deciding that period j marked the beginning of the country's slide into socialism might similarly decide that they were terribly misled about their own positions at that time: "I did not know my own mind."

In sum, critical elections in the model summarized by (7) could occur through either or both of two mechanisms: (1) the widely felt impact of current government performance and/or the widely appreciated existence of new salient issue cleavages, or (2) a widely-occuring reevaluation of past performance and past issue debates.

Types of Party Identifiers

The only types of party identifiers customarily distinguished are stronger and weaker, and Republican and Democratic. Additional types could derive from different bases for the development of party identification. I will

mention just three plausible possibilities although certainly there are others.

1. The Responsive Party Identifier: $\alpha_j < \alpha_k \ V_{j,k} < p$. According to this hypothesis the citizen weights recent political experiences more heavily than temporally more distant ones.[5] Over time a given past political experience plays an increasingly smaller role in determining the citizen's party ID, a smaller role resulting from a relatively smaller weighting of the past as well as the accumulation of additional political experiences.

2. The Traumatized Party Identifier. According to this hypothesis α_j is an increasing function of $|U_{j+1} - U_j|$. Thus, Sherman's march to the sea or Hoover's depression may outweigh everything else throughout the citizen's lifetime.[6]

3. The Negative Party Identifier. According to this hypothesis deteriorations in a citizen's welfare count more heavily than improvements of comparable magnitude (see Kernell, 1977 and Bloom and Price, 1975). In essence, the citizen's party ID reflects who did what *to* him more than who did what *for* him.

Summary: The Importance of Party ID

In (7) the current campaign is only one of the elements which determine the current voting decision. Moreover, because the current campaign is to a considerable extent exaggerated rhetoric, the citizen may weight it less than actual past performances. Such a discounting may also result from the fact that monitoring the current campaign imposes significant information costs whereas the past performances of the parties have produced directly perceivable effects on citizen, e.g. it is costly to ascertain where Humphrey and Nixon stand on Vietnam; it is much less costly to ascertain whether one's son has been drafted.

As a consequence, in the proposed model the current voting decision may be dominated by the elements of party identification: the past performances of the parties. Thus, I have no great quarrel *in principle* with the prerevisionist emphasis on the importance of party identification. I do have reservations, however, about the interpretations propounded by the tradi-

[5] Stigler (1973) suggests that citizens might make their estimates of the likely economic performances of the parties in such a fashion. However he rejects the hypothesis.

[6] Traditionally political scientists have considered the possibility the only reality-based explanation for the development of party ID. While attributing most of the explanation for party identification to socialization, *The American Voter* (Ch. 7) clearly recognized that the party system of the 1950s originated in the electorate's reaction to the economic distress of the 1930s.

tionalists. An increasing amount of research suggests that we have been misled by conceiving of party ID as a childhood-instilled, affectively-based allegiance to the elephant or the donkey. As an alternative I offer a conception of party ID as a citizen's running balance sheet on the two parties. To be sure, there may be misperception, rationalization, and idiosyncratic variation in the citizenry's scorekeeping, but at base they are watching the same game: political reality. I am unaware of any findings about party identification which are irreconcilable with this alternative view, and the alternative conception has at least one step up on the traditional view in that it explicitly provides a mechanism for change—large and small—in a citizen's party identification.

The Candidates

In the pre-1970 SRC pantheon, attitudes toward the candidates occupy a position roughly coequal with attitudes toward the parties (Stokes, 1966). Attitudes toward issues bring up the rear. I have already dealt at some length with issue voting and party performances, but have not yet addressed the question of the differences the candidates make.

Considerable misconception surrounds the discussion of the importance of candidate qualities for the voting decision. Various authors have suggested that voting on the basis of candidate qualities is irrational, or at least of a lower order of rationality than voting on the issues (Campbell et al., 1960, passim). Such suggestions apparently stem from the erroneous belief that attitudes toward the candidates reflect no more than Ike's smile, Nixon's beard, or Kennedy's accent. Actually, the bulk of the citizenry's impression of the candidates focuses on qualities which are of legitimate relevance to the latter's capacity to govern: experience, leadership ability, and so on. Even in the purportedly personality-dominated election of 1956 the vast majority of comments favorable to Eisenhower were comments relevant to his ability to serve as President.[7] Why should a candidate's intelligence, administrative ability, etc. be any less a legitimate issue than where he stands on medicare or aid to Israel?

[7] Table 3.12 from *The American Voter* is reproduced below. Following each category of response I have placed an "r" (relevant) or an "i" (irrelevant) to indicate those candidate qualities which I consider to be of legitimate concern to a citizen making his Presidential voting decision. Obviously, this classification is subjective, but I suspect that most people's judgments would be even more generous than mine. Note that even in 1956 nearly 70 percent of all the personal references to Eisenhower are classed as relevant.

Questions of the legitimate relevance of candidate qualities aside, there appears to be no doubt that they play a large role in voting behavior. But existing models of the electoral process have difficulty in accounting for that role. In spatial models, for example, one can posit intelligence or experience "dimensions" in the issue space. But what kind of spatial mobility has a candidate on such "dimensions"? According to some research (Popkin et al., 1976), during the 1972 campaign McGovern steadily lost ground among those who saw themselves as closer to him than to Nixon on the issues. Why? The data suggest that the reason was an increasing disparity in the perceived competence of the candidates. But clearly McGovern was not intentionally moving away from Nixon on such a "dimension." Events were influencing the electorate to discount his expected performance.

The model proposed in section II allows evaluations of the candidates to affect the voting decision through the weights s_j, r_j attached to the utility differences which the parties promise to effect. Recall that I wrote of the s_j, r_j as reliability measures or uncertainty discounts. Candidate qualities can

TABLE 3.12

Favorable References to Eisenhower

	1952	1956	
Generally good man, capable, experienced	301	330	r
Record and experience			
Military experience	202	111	r
Record in Europe	250	94	r
Political and other experience	57	106	r
Qualifications and abilities			
Good leader, knows how to handle people	138	107	r
Good administrator	64	26	r
Strong, decisive	53	32	r
Independent	70	17	r
Educated	97	62	r
Good speaker	31	42	i
Personal qualities			
Integrity, ideals	271	291	r
Sense of duty, patriotism	70	74	r
Inspiring, inspires confidence	53	39	i
Religious	19	85	i
Kind, warm	11	41	i
Sincere	63	126	r
Likeable, nice personality, I like him	220	363	i
Good family life	26	57	i

affect the voting decision through their effects on these weights. If a candidate is perceived to be insincere, or thought to lack integrity, the citizen will attach less weight to his evaluation of the candidate's proclaimed platform than if he perceives the candidate as sincere. If the citizen believes the candidate is a good leader and able administrator, he assigns a high $s_p(r_p)$ to the candidate's promises, whereas if he views the candidate as an incompetent, he may discount or even ignore the candidate's promises (s_j or r_j equals 0).

Thus, stupidity, incompetence, weakness, insincerity, lack of integrity, and lack of experience would be expected to produce low s_j and/or r_j as the case may be. The opposite characteristics should work to produce higher s_j and/or r_j. It would be surprising indeed were the voter to ignore such relevant and easy to obtain (compared to issue positions) information. And, of course, the voting studies indicate that he does not ignore such information. Thus, it would behoove us to develop and test models which explicitly allow the operation of candidate characteristics. The model proposed here does so. But it does not simply add up candidate, issue, and party evaluations in a regression equation. Rather, candidate qualities constitute a mechanism by which to discount evaluations of expected performance.

A Word on Incumbency Advantages (and Disadvantages)

Real world elections generally appear to be highly assymmetric: incumbents are significantly more likely to stay incumbents than are challengers to become incumbents. But political scientists do not have a very clear understanding of the advantages of incumbency. We know that incumbents generally raise and spend more money than challengers. But what is cause and what is effect in the money-votes nexus are inextricably confounded.[8] Incumbents have informational advantages (Mayhew, 1974). But the data do not indicate that such advantages translate directly into citizen-held information (Ferejohn, 1977). We hear the argument that many citizens have become suspicious of a party rule of thumb and now tend to replace party with an incumbency rule. This argument rests on the peculiar notion that an elec-

[8] Good government groups typically assume that incumbents win because they spend more money, but surely incumbents have more to spend because they are incumbents. The uncertainty over the effects of money in campaigns can be clearly seen in the debate over the campaign spending limitations in newly enacted "reform" legislation. Do such limitations amount to "incumbent protection acts," or do they actually work to benefit challengers?

torate smart enough to grow suspicious of party ID replaces it with the seemingly simple-minded rule of voting for incumbents.

Much research will be necessary to clear away the confusion surrounding the role of incumbency on voting behavior. But the model proposed in section II does have the potential to predict *one kind* of incumbency advantage.[9] Recall that the incumbent's past performance is certain (s_j or r_j equals 1) whereas the challenger's hypothetical past performance is discounted ($0 \leqslant r_j, s_j \leqslant 1$). As a consequence an incumbency advantage may exist. To illustrate, let us return to the hypothetical society of section II and consider a simple example.

Assume θ has won the first four elections and during each of his administrations has improved the citizen's welfare two units, i.e.

$$(U_{j+1}{}^{\theta} - U_j) = 2 \quad j = 1, \ldots, 4.$$

Assume, moreover, that during the fifth campaign θ advocates a platform that will improve the citizen's welfare another two utiles. On the other hand ψ has advocated and continues to advocate platforms which would increase the citizen's welfare by three utiles.

Because θ is the incumbent with known past performance, $s_j = 1$, $j = 1, \ldots, 4$. Assume his campaign promises are discounted by $s_p = .5$. Assume that the citizen discounts all of ψ's promises similarly, i.e. $r_j = .5, j = 1, \ldots, 5$. For simplicity assume that $\alpha_j = j, j = 1, \ldots, 5$ (i.e. progressively decreasing weight is attached to past performance). Then,

$$E(\theta) = 1(2) + 2(2) + 3(2) + 4(2) + 2.5(2) = 25$$

$$E(\psi) = .5(3) + 1(3) + 1.5(3) + 2(3) + 2.5(3) = 22.5$$

and the citizen votes for θ who promises two utiles in the next interelection period over ψ who promises three. An observer unaware of the citizen's decision rule might understandably consider the citizen's behavior as evidence of an incumbency effect. In fact, there is an incumbency effect here—an effect which stems from being a known quantity rather than an uncertain (discounted) one.

As the reader will notice, the preceding example is symmetric in that an

[9] No doubt there are a variety of incumbency advantages. Possibly different types are associated with different offices. For a theory of the congressional incumbency advantage, see Fiorina (1977).

incumbency *disadvantage* could exist. In the example the incumbent is a known *relatively satisfactory* quantity. Should the incumbent make a misstep vis-à-vis the citizen, however, he becomes a *known unsatisfactory* quantity who may be less preferred than an uncertain challenger. The difference is that between Nixon in 1972 and Johnson in 1968.

Campaign Strategies

Existing models of electoral competition conceive of campaign strategies exclusively in terms of the issue positions chosen by the competing candidates. In such models the issue dimensions and the importance of these dimensions remain constant throughout the course of the campaign (Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook, 1970). Thus, only by changing the position he holds can a candidate hope to affect the distribution of the vote.

In the model I have outlined, there are two additional classes of strategies available to the candidates. The first, already mentioned under candidates, involves attempts to affect citizen's estimates of the r_j, s_j, especially r_p, s_p. A candidate can attempt to impugn his opponent's integrity, to raise doubts about his opponent's competence, to emphasize his opponent's lack of experience, and so on. And, of course, he will attempt to portray his own qualities and characteristics in a positive light.

A second class of strategies involves attempts to affect the weights, α_p, which attach to the citizenry's evaluations of the past performances of the parties. A candidate at a disadvantage in the present may emphasize his party's triumphs and the opposition's tragedies in the past. For years after 1932 (and to some extent even now) Democratic candidates ran against Hoover. They attempted to keep the relevant α_j of significant magnitude. In 1960 Kennedy emphasized the Democratic party, whereas Nixon downplayed party affiliations—as he did in 1972 (see Kessel, 1966). Presumably Kennedy felt he had a stock of good Democratic past performances to draw on, and presumably Nixon agreed.

Thus, we might see an entire campaign fought with campaign platforms, θ, ψ, absolutely constant. All the dynamics could lie in the candidate's efforts to determine the vote distribution by altering the distributions of α_j, r_j, s_j in the electorate. And, in fact, what do we observe in real world campaigns? Do we observe successive dramatic policy shifts like Humphrey's 1968 Salt Lake City speech? Or do we observe an emphasis on candidate qualities and characteristics, what the parties have done, and the groups they have helped in the past?

Summary

In this section I have attempted to demonstrate that a wide variety of empirical findings fit comfortably within the framework of the ideas advanced in section II. Sometimes reinterpretations of the meaning of existing findings is necessary. But on the whole the model provides a plausible way of organizing and connecting the plethora of empirical studies of American voting behavior. Admittedly, however, this is a far cry from using data to refine and/or modify the model, let alone estimate its parameters.

IV. Further Research Directions

Future research involving the model advanced in section II can proceed in two directions: backward to the model's antecedents, or forward to its consequences.

Other than inherent curiosity, the primary reason for studying voting behavior is to understand the characteristics of elections as collective choice mechanisms. How well do elections ensure governmental accountability (however defined)? How significantly do elections constrain the nature of public policy outputs? How do elections compare with alternative mechanisms (e.g. the market)?[10] At times we get so involved in the study of voting behavior that we lose sight of the intellectual end for which the study of voting behavior is the intellectual means. But presumably we will eventually feel sufficiently confident in our grasp of voting behavior to confront the larger questions.

As I suggested earlier the model advanced in section II is probably too complicated to be tractable in analytical models of electoral processes—unless its richness is assumed away. Thus, the model would appear to be limited in its ability to answer basic questions about the nature of elections. Of course, it would be possible to simulate electoral processes using the model. One could create electorates with party identifications, without party identifications, and everything in between, electorates which pay attention to the issues, and those which don't, electorates which are choosing between incumbent and challenger, and those which are not, etc. I tend to believe that computers are overused in political science model-building. Only where brainpower, paper, and pencil are overwhelmed should we turn to the computer. But when they are, perhaps we should resignedly go to the computer rather

[10] For a rather one-sided analysis, see Buchanan (1954).

than ignore variables of critical empirical import in order to get a tractable model.

The other research direction would be of more interest to political psychologists. What are the factors which determine how citizens assign values to the α_p, r_p, s_p? How malleable are such estimates–how subject to change as a result of the campaign? How consistent with the model are the numerous studies of party identification, attitude change, and other socio-psychological topics?

Obviously, a sobering amount of research remains to be done. But progress may come more easily if we rise above the simplistic controversies which attract so much of our effort (e.g. rational vs. irrational voters, issue voting vs. party ID) and work to formulate synthetic theories which can encompass the elements of truth in all sides of such controversies.

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