Uncovering the Reform Dimension in U. S. Presidential Elections, 1992-2004

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Abstract

Since Downs (1957) and Enelow and Hinich (1984) demonstrated how the spatial positioning of parties and candidates on a single left-right continuum affects political competition, scores of analyses have attempted to verify the relationship between issue or ideological proximity and candidate or party preference. Quite a few analyses, though not as many, have attempted to identify additional dimensions to political competition. Most prominently, there is an array of research suggesting the existence of a "social issue" dimension to electoral competition in the United States. We offer an adaptation of an innovative methodology to test for the existence of multiple competitive dimensions in U.S. presidential elections from 1992-2004. We find not only that a second dimension occurs across these cases, but also that it is consistently driven by a reform versus establishment cleavage. Although the nature and existence of this dimension is beyond question, it is unclear whether it is animated by evaluations of competence or corruption with respect to the party in power.

Introduction

While much of Anthony Downs' argument in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* was previewed in other social science research, Downs crystallized two ideas that continue to influence scholarship examining political behavior. First, he contends that parties and candidates locate themselves in an issue space to maximize their prospects for success (usually defined as electoral victory and control over the political process). Second, Downs postulates that this issue space is typically defined by opinions on the scope of government involvement in the economy. Taken together, these ideas have produced enormous literatures on proximity voting (see Kedar, 2003 for a review), candidate and party positioning strategies, and candidate and party ambiguity (see Alvarez, 1997 for a review).

A slightly less voluminous literature has focused on the possibility and nature of multidimensional political competition, both in the electorate (Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Inglehart, 1977; Petrocik, 1981) and in the legislature (McCubbins and Cox, 1993; Poole, Rosenthal, and Koford, 1991). Of the two, research into electoral behavior has been less

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common, more difficult, and more controversial. Many studies have attempted to specify the existence and nature of prospective second or third dimensions (e.g., Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Inglehart, 1977 and 1990; Myagkov and Ordeshook, 1999), but few have offered a satisfactory methodological platform and been generalizable beyond a specific country at a given point in time.

In this paper, we offer two arguments. First, we contend that the linkage between voters and parties has been under theorized. We posit that key actors—interest groups, issue publics, and the news media—provide voters with information about the positions of political parties in some ideological space that voters can use to reach electoral preferences. There have been some efforts to empirically establish this linkage, but almost none of these utilize the tool of spatial modeling. A more formal conceptualization of this linkage would pave the way for more fruitful theoretical inquiry and hypothesis testing.

Second, we argue that it is possible to identify a broad, consistent structure to electoral competition at the dawn of the twenty-first century. First and foremost, voters and electorates still see politics in terms of the classic left-right, economic dimension. But they also see politics in terms of reform movements versus established interests. That is, the second dimension to electoral competition appears to revolve around perceptions of whether a candidate represents an established political order or regime, or whether she represents an insurgent, outside, reform movement. This argument concerning the nature and consistency of a second dimension is contrary to the conventional understanding of elections in the United States and abroad.

We proceed by reviewing the literature on spatial voting and identifying the linkage model. We then propose a distinct methodology for measuring the dimensionality of electoral competition and present our empirical tests, which draw on National Election Study (NES) data from the 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 presidential elections. Finally, we discuss the structure of electoral competition in the United States, explicitly contrasting our findings of a reform dimension with expectations derived from the extant literature.

A Brief, Critical Review of Spatial Models

The early literature in economics on "spatial" competition addressed apparently similar situations. Hotelling (1929), Lerner and Singer (1937), and Smithies (1941) all considered the problem of location, in the sense that a set of firms selling zero cost, undifferentiated products might compete by choosing the physical setting for the business. The classic metaphor is the choice of two hot dog stands on a street or beach, with potential patrons distributed along the linear dimension of competition. The key assumption is that, since the products are undifferentiated (all hot dogs are the same), patrons will choose solely based on location. The equilibrium set of locations, as was shown by various means in this literature, was achieved when (in the case of two firms), the businesses converged to a "central place." With more than three competitors, however, the results are ambiguous (there are many possible equilibria), and with many firms very little can be said.

The problems of spatial location for firms and spatial preference representation in politics are that results are often not very useful, and can be misleading. The idea that voters might choose the candidate "closer" to their own ideal seems plausible enough, but

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it is by no means clear what "close" means once the idea of simple Euclidean distance is dispensed with. Notions of Euclidean distance make good sense in the hot dog stand competition, since it takes just as long to walk one hundred yards north as it does to walk one hundred yards south, but assumptions of this extreme kind of symmetry make little sense when representing political spatial preferences.

Furthermore, the problem is worse if there are multiple dimensions. Euclidean distance makes two assumptions about preferences: (1) separability—my evaluation of issue i is not affected by the level of issue j I expect to result from the decision process, and (2) equal salience—marginal changes in issue i have the same increment/decrement for my utility as marginal changes in issue j. Neither of these is a problem for the spatial location set-up, because my reaction to having to travel is based on distance, not whether the distance is in any one direction. But if we are to use a policy "space" to represent political preferences, the assumptions of separability and equal salience are both empirically unrealistic and theoretically limiting.

Downs (1957) extended this reasoning to political problems, particularly problems involving party competition. It is clear, however, that Downs' analysis is of a piece with the earlier work. Consider, for example, Smithies' first paragraph:

The very fact that Professor Harold Hotelling's pioneer article explained so successfully the close similarity of the Republican and Democratic platforms in 1928 indicates that something more was needed in 1936. It was probably true to say in 1928 that by moving to the center of electoral opinion neither party risked losing its peripheral support. The situation at the present time requires no elaboration; suffice it to say that neither party feels itself free to compete with the other for the undecided votes at the center, in full confidence that it will retain its support from the extremes of political opinion.

This is a very sophisticated statement, recognizing that equilibria, if they exist, will depend on the reliability of turnout and support from those at the extremes. If, to use the

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economic analogy for the last time, the "elasticity of demand" of citizens is high, moving toward the center may actually reduce one's vote share, as the ardent supporters out in the wings lose interest. To be fair, Downs concentrated on the problems of turnout and information, but Downs has come to be associated with the idea that candidates converge to the middle, or median, in two-party elections and it has since been shown that the convergence result is actually very fragile under the plausible set of "Downsian" assumptions, and unlikely to be observed empirically (for a review, see Berger, Potthoff, and Munger, 2000).

The first rigorous statement of the spatial model as a representation of preferences, at a level of generality analogous to that of economics, was laid out by Davis and Hinich (Davis and Hinich, 1966; 1967; 1968). Using a generalized quadratic form for representing preferences, they were able to account for non-separability and differences in salience. The most widely recognized paper in this collaboration, Davis, Hinich and Ordeshook (1970) offers a general exposition of all results, with some extensions, and is the generic original reference in the spatial theory literature.

The spatial model has since been extended in a number of instructive ways, a review of which would extend beyond the scope of this project. Useful, though very different, reviews of the literature can be found in Coughlin (1992), Enelow and Hinich (1984; 1990), Hinich and Munger (1997), and Ordeshook (1986; 1997). But directly relevant for this study are extensions focusing on the restriction of the "space" of conflict to only a few dimensions, based on the empirical phenomenon of clustering of issues. Research in this vein has resulted in two related, yet distinct, theoretical extensions of the spatial model. First, the idea that "ideologies" are important for explaining mass behavior

was developed by Hinich and Pollard (1981), extended by Enelow and Hinich (1984), and given a firmer theoretical foundation by Hinich and Munger (1994). Second, the claim that "ideology" is an important empirical predictor of both the vote of members in Congress and of the structure of the space of competition itself can be found in Poole and Rosenthal (1996), which reviews the authors' many previous contributions to the development of this idea.

Despite these extensions, it is still the case that little theoretical or empirical work has been done specifying the linkage between the issue preferences of voters and the positions of political parties in some ideological space. The recent work of Hinich and Munger (1997) moves us in this direction, but still leaves us short. The absence of such a linkage is a serious shortcoming in formal conceptualizations of electoral behavior. Perhaps more to the point, developing such a model would undoubtedly enhance our ability to explore and test the nature of elite-mass relations. Our present work takes aim at this gap.

The Linkage Model

This section presents an introduction to modern spatial theory using a two dimensional latent ideological space. This model can be used in a simulation program to experiment with rational choices of candidates, parties and voters when there is no core to the electoral game.

The political space is a commonly held simplification of the complex network of government policies and political issues. Most citizens pay little attention to politics since they have little influence on what their government does (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1997). The vote

totals of an election can result in a change of government that will produce significant policy changes but usually a change of government has scant impact on people's lives.

But political interest groups have a vested interest in keeping in close touch with the executive branch as well as committees in the legislature that affect their issues. A political interest group that has a business base also lobbies the bureaucracies that regulate the actions of the businesses that belong to the group. In some cases these interest groups attempt to influence public opinion by running advertisements in newspapers and on television. The social and economic networks in a democracy help form a link between the ideological positions of parties in the political space and issues that are relevant for voters.[1]

The mathematical model of this linkage in the spatial theory of electoral politics stipulates that there is a linear relationship between the points in the latent political space and positions in the space of issues on which voters have preferences. There may be several at different levels of complexity for a given individual.

Suppose that all voters have quadratic utility functions whose maximum is at their ideal positions in the issue space. To simplify this exposition suppose that there are only two important issues. Voter v's quadratic utility for party p's policy position θ_p in the policy space is of the form $U_v(\theta_p, \mathbf{x}_v) = \beta c_{vp} - a_{v11}(\theta_1 - x_{v1})^2 - 2a_{v12}(\theta_1 - x_{v1})(\theta_2 - x_{v2}) - a_{v22}(\theta_2 - x_{v2})^2$, where $x_v = (x_{v1}, x_{v2})$ is voter v's ideal policy preferences and $a_{v11} > 0$, $a_{v12} > 0$, and $a_{v12} < \sqrt{a_{v11}a_{v22}}$ are parameters of the v's preference. The term c_{vp} is voter v's assessment of the competence and integrity of party p that has the power to attempt to enact policy θ_p. The parameter β is the weighting of the candidate competence term relative to the weighted Euclidean distance term. Voter v prefers party p to party q if and only if $U_v(\theta_p, \mathbf{x}_v) > U_v(\theta_q, \mathbf{x}_v)$.

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[1] This line of reasoning is similar to that of the "issue publics" literature (see Hutchings, 2003 for a review).

This quadratic preference model for voter v is shown in figures 1 and 2 for a two dimensional issue space as a top down view of an elliptical hill. The point (x_{v1}, x_{v2}) is the maximum of voter's v utility function for both issues. For expository purposes the issue on the horizontal axis is the federal income tax rate. The issue on the vertical axis is the percent of the government budget devoted to social welfare programs. The ideal position for voter v on the tax rate issue is x_{v1} and the ideal position for the social welfare issue is x_{v2}. The ellipse is a level surface of the elliptical hill. In utility theory terms it is called an indifference contour since voter v is indifferent between any points on the level set. Note that a point is a pair of positions on the two issues.

The orientation of the major axis of the ellipse determines the type of tradeoff voter v makes between the two issues. When the ellipse's major axis has a Northwest-Southeast orientation as in Figure 1 we know that if the government sets the social welfare budget percent at the value WB less than his ideal position x_{v2} then the voter prefers a tax rate level TR_i that is larger than his most ideal percentage x_{v1}. If, on the other hand, the major axis of the voter v's elliptical indifference contour has a Northeast-Southwest orientation as in Figure 2 then if the government sets the social welfare budget percent at WB voter v prefers a duty percentage that is less than x_{v1}.

Figures 1 and 2 about here

An example of a linear linkage between a one dimensional political space and the two dimensional issue space is shown in Figure 3. The thick line at about a 45 degree angle is the image of the latent political ideology in the two issue space. Democrats prefer a higher tax rate and that a higher portion of the budget goes to social welfare, whereas Republicans prefer a lower tax rate and that a lower portion of the budget go to social welfare. If the Republicans move to the left on the political dimension, then they would want a larger reduction in the social welfare budget and the

elimination of federal taxes. This image line is the society's shared perception of the public policies a party's ideological position translates into if that party is elected. A party to the right of the Democrats would want to increase social welfare spending and increase the federal tax rate. The angle of the linkage line determines how much a unit shift in political ideology translates into increases or decreases in the output levels in the issue space. This representation is, of course, greatly simplified but it provides some insight about the theory.

Figure 3 about here

Now recall the perceived party or candidate competency term c_{vp} in the citizen's utility. For many societies a citizen's evaluation of a party's leadership dominates the policy and ideological preference of that citizen in voting or supporting a party. Thus, any empirical method for studying political spaces must be able to incorporate party competence in the choice model. The quadratic plus constant model above does just this.

The ideal points of voters are not immutable. The propaganda and advertisements that the parties and candidates disseminate during a political campaign is designed to alter preferences. A candidate wishes to draw voters towards his position in the political space and away from his opponents as well as providing information to connect the latent political space with the issues that are salient during the campaign. We may not be able to presently model the affects of the media tactics of candidates during a campaign but we can make inferences about where candidates and parties and voter are located in the space as well as providing some insight into the linkage between issues and the latent political space.

Identifying Dimensions to Electoral Competition

Having specified the linkage model, we must now propose a methodology for determining political space. In particular, our goal is to articulate a means for determining the

relevant issue dimensions of electoral competition. As suggested above, since the pioneering work in the 1960s many spatial models have attempted to account for electoral competition in a multidimensional setting. What is striking, however, is the lack of consensus over (1) how to specify dimensions beyond the simple left-right continuum, and (2) the nature of the second dimension.

The linkage model is an important component of our approach. A linear linkage between policy spaces and the latent political space for quadratic preferences results in an induced quadratic preference for parties located in the political space. This is true for a two-dimensional political space as well as a one-dimensional political space. This important mathematical result makes it possible to determine the political space using existing statistical methods and public opinion data that fit the contours of the spatial theory of electoral competition. The statistical method is called *MAP*, and was developed by Cahoon and Hinich (1976) and modified by Hinich (2004). *MAP* allows a user to learn the nature of the political space and its linkage with critical issues as well as track changes of the space over time. The underlying logic is straight forward: the induced preference model in the political space for each voter is also a quadratic model with a party competence term. Chapter 4 of Enelow and Hinich (1984) presents the algebraic details of the inheritance of quadratic preferences in the low dimensional space. Assuming that the political space is one-dimensional, voter v's induced utility for party's p's ideological position p in the political space is $U_v(\boldsymbol{\pi}_p, \mathbf{x}_v) = \beta c_{vp} - (\pi_p - y_v)^2$, where y_v is v's induced ideal position in the policy space. Note that the policy space may have more than one dimension.

The Cahoon-Hinich (1984) methodology uses candidate evaluation scores to estimate a Euclidean representation of political space in a given election. Specifically, the methodology assumes that each voter's evaluation of a candidate 2, T_{i2}, is inversely related to the spatial

distance between the voter and candidate and may be written $T_{i2} = -(|B_2 - \mathbf{Z}_i|^2)^{1/2} + e_{i2}$, where B_2 and $\mathbf{Z}_i$ are, respectively, candidate 2's and voter i's location in the underlying space and e_{i2} represent unmeasurable, non-systemic influences on T_{i2}. The methodology estimates B_2 by calculating a factor analysis of the covariance matrix from the evaluation scores. To do this, the scores (T_{i2}) must first be transformed so they are linear in B_2 and $\mathbf{Z}_i$. This is accomplished in a two-step process. First, one candidate's average scores, T_{io}, are subtracted from the others. Then the difference between each candidate's average score and T_{io}'s mean score is subtracted from the first difference. The selection of the candidate whose scores are to be selected is mathematically arbitrary, but interpreting and comparing the maps is easier if one candidate represents the status quo and is the same in each map. The factor analysis of the covariance matrix from these adjusted scores produces, up to an arbitrary rotation, an initial estimate of candidate locations in the underlying space. We then perform two-stage least squares regressions to estimate the remaining parameters of the model including the angle of rotation of the candidate positions. Finally, voter locations are estimated in a separate regression with the dependent variable $T_{i2} - T_{io}$, where the right hand side of this equation includes the estimated B_2. In evaluating the estimated maps, the proportion of explained variance from the two regressions should be quite high. As a rough measuring stick, the coefficient of determination, R^2, in the second of these regressions ought to exceed 0.50, which would indicate the scaling solutions are correct.

Previous studies applying the spatial model to political competition have largely limited themselves to a single election from a single country. Although we cannot offer across time analyses of multiple countries, we can look at U. S. presidential elections over the past four cycles. The inclusion of multiple elections in our analysis enhances our ability to evaluate the

general structure of recent politics and competition in the U. S. and to comment on whatever dynamic exists with respect to candidate and party positioning. More specifically, we use the 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 NES surveys, which include items asking for respondents' thermometer ratings of public figures and parties, as well as issue placement questions. The thermometer ratings allow us to gauge general affect towards different political players and, as suggested earlier, can be used to define the relevant political space. These ratings range from 0-100—higher numbers indicate "warmer" feelings towards that person and lower numbers indicate "colder" feelings. A rating of 50 implies feelings towards that person are neutral. Responses indicating a lack of familiarity with the person are treated as missing data.

The issue items ask respondents to place themselves on a 1-7 scale, with 1 representing (for example) the conservative extreme on the issue and 7 representing the liberal extreme. Subsequent items then ask the respondent to place the presidential candidates or the political parties on the issue. In particular, we examine items on the level of government services, the level of defense spending, the level of aid to blacks, and attitudes about the root causes of criminal behavior (this last item is only available for 1996). Collectively, these items encompass social welfare (services), social (crime), race (aid to blacks), and security (defense spending) issues, all of which have been offered as relevant to contemporary American party competition.

These data clearly meet our methodological requirements; in fact, the properties of the NES actually surpass what is immediately necessary. At a minimum, the Cahoon-Hinich method for determining the political space necessitates party score data from a group of respondents who are representative of the politically active citizens in a society. Although the NES is a national, random sample, respondents need not be a random sample of the voters for *MAP* to work since its purpose is to determine the political space and not predict an election. It is important,

however, that the party preferences of respondents span the political space. For example, if the space is the standard one-dimensional European left-right space then the respondents must range from the extreme left to the extreme right. It is also important to note that the wording of the issue questions is vital since the respondents must recognize the issue in each question. It is not unusual for researchers to inadvertently project their political conceptions onto the survey and into the minds of respondents. Fortunately, this does not appear to be an issue here.

Our analyses proceed in a straightforward manner. First, we offer descriptive information on the distribution of opinion for the thermometer rating and issue placement items from each year. Second, we present the MAP estimates of the political space for each year. This second analysis strongly indicates the existence of a second dimension across recent presidential elections. We then offer an extended discussion of the nature of the second dimension.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the thermometer ratings for each year are shown in table 1. The mean ratings and standard deviations should be familiar to students of American politics, as they largely confirm our *a priori* expectations about which candidates were popular and which candidates were polarizing. Bill Clinton, for example, registers both a high average rating and a large standard deviation. George W. Bush's ratings are similar in 2004, although he was clearly much less controversial in 2000. Insurgent candidates such as Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan, and Ralph Nader are not viewed positively, at least not on average. Moreover, the standard deviations associated with their ratings are relatively low, indicating consensus among respondents. Ideally, we would prefer a measure of parties and candidates that does not also

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capture affect. Still, we are confident that the present measures provide, at the least, a

conservative test of latent policy or issue dimensions.

Table 1 about here

Respondent positions on the government services, defense spending, aid to blacks, and

crime items are presented in table 2. We also present respondent perceptions about where the

presidential candidates and political parties stand on these issues. It is interesting to note that

Americans have tended to prefer slightly higher levels of government spending, slightly lower

levels of defense spending (except for 2004), less aid to blacks, and a tougher position on crime.

These results fit with broad brush treatments of public opinion in the U. S. (see, e.g., Flanagan

and Zingale, 2005). As expected, Democratic candidates are perceived as being on the liberal

side of all of these issues, while the Republican candidates are perceived to be on the

conservative side. Generally, the candidates are perceived to "bracket" the respondents on these

issues, with only a point or so separating them from the respondents. Interestingly, in 2004 the

candidates were clearly perceived to have been further from respondents than in any of the other

three elections.

Figures 4-7 present the *MAP* estimates of (1) the median ideal points of respondents in a

two-dimensional space taking extreme positions (1, 2 or 6, 7) on the particular 1-7 point issue

scales—along with the median ideal points of respondents who saw the candidates as holding

extreme positions on particular issue scales—and (2) the positions of the candidates and parties

in a theoretical two-dimensional space based on the thermometer ratings from each election. A

critical point to make at the outset is that the results indicate that the political space of the United

States is, in fact, two-dimensional across these four presidential elections. The median ideal point

maps demonstrate that social welfare, defense, and race attitudes largely load on the same

dimension, but that even on these issues there is additional, structured variance that cannot be accounted for. The candidate maps make this point even more plainly, as they are not inherently constrained to some accumulation of issue positions. In both instances, the horizontal axis clearly represents the traditional New Deal party system divide, with those preferring greater government involvement in the economy (left) squaring off against those preferring less government involvement (right). The vertical axis also discriminates between and amongst the most prominent political figures and parties in the U.S., but—as stated earlier—the basis of this discrimination is not obvious at first glance.

Figures 4-7 about here

Further Discussion

We believe the two dimensions shown in the data represent the latent ideological cleavages in the country. The question is the linkage or expression of these latent cleavages in the constellation of issues and specific candidates for office in a given election. The data suggest that the U. S. parties represented the traditional left-right cleavage reasonably well in the 1992-2004 presidential elections. The candidates and parties were much less effective, however, in representing the second dimension. So what is the nature of this second dimension?

The extant literature provides a few possible clues. In their original study, Enelow and Hinich (1984) also found two ideological dimensions to electoral competition in American elections, but the entire study was treated more as test of a new methodology rather than as a substantive political argument. Still, in the wake of Enelow and Hinich and the transformation of the New Deal Party system, the nature of multidimensional competition in the U. S. generated significant interest. For example, Brady (1989) uses the candidate rankings of Iowa Democrats to uncover two dimensions to 1984 Democratic nomination politics. These dimensions appear to

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have been represented by (1) social welfare issues and (2) foreign policy and defense issues involving questions of how to meet the Soviet and Communist threat. Chittick, Billingsley, and Travis (1995) accept the notion that foreign policy opinions constitute a latent political dimension, and use general election results to argue that there are three dimensions directly related to foreign policy opinion—identity, security, and prosperity.

Unfortunately, the data in figures 3-6 do not conform to the notion that foreign policy or defense issues are a latent dimension structuring political competition in the U. S. In 1996, for example, the vertical distances between Steve Forbes, Lamar Alexander, and Colin Powell (on the one hand) and Robert Dole and Newt Gingrich (on the other hand) are far more significant than one would expect if foreign policy of defense issues were lurking in the background of voters' minds. Similar incongruities exist in the other years.

Perhaps more plausible are the handful of projects which argue that traditional, social issues constitute a second dimension to American political competition. Relying on data from the 1994 and 1998 U.S. midterm elections, Steeper (1995) argues that a social issue dimension has emerged in America and has helped polarize party competition. This is consistent with many analyses of the U.S. party coalitions and electoral politics (see, for example, Aldrich, 1995; Carmines and Stimson, 1989; Petrocik 1981). It is also related to the widely known work of Inglehart (1977, 1990), who contends that European politics has seen the rise of a "post-materialist" dimension—centering on environmental, women's rights, and secular-humanist interests—since the 1950s. Thus, it seems reasonable to posit that a latent ideological dimension—centering around issues such as abortion, school prayer, the death penalty, and the role of traditional values in society—has developed since the 1960s in the U. S. and cross cuts the current party system.

Once again, this possibility is not borne out by the data. If social (or post-materialist) issues were driving the vertical distance between and amongst candidates, one would certainly not see Pat Robertson loading close to Hillary Clinton in 1996 (for example). Or how about Hillary Clinton loading with Dan Quayle in 1992?

What, then, is responsible for the occurrence of this second dimension? We believe Americans view politics and politicians as more or less associated with the established political order. Candidates or persons seen as outside or "above" the established order are imbued with a "reform" aura that can be quite powerful given the frustration Americans often feel towards their government. In fact, we would go so far as to say that the politics of reform drive a host of political parties and candidates across a wide swath of democratic electorates. From the insurgent campaigns of Ross Perot and John McCain in the U. S. to the challenges to one-party domination in India, Japan, and Mexico, reform movements have been a staple of democratic politics since the late 1960s.

Thus, we posit that reform candidates and parties develop in response to the almost universal voter cynicism that exists today. There has, of course, always been cynicism with respect to governmental authority. But the rise of the extensive bureaucratic state and the proliferation of relatively free broadcast media as a means for mass communication have probably exacerbated this cynicism (see Hetherington 1998) for an instructive analysis of the U.S. case). As a result, we believe there is typically a significant portion of any mass electorate that holds the existing government, or ruling majority, to be corrupt, incompetent, or perhaps both. Candidates articulating this cynicism tap into this latent ideology and crosscut the traditional left-right order.

Does this perspective explain the second dimension we see in our 1992-2004 data? By and large, the evidence is quite supportive.

In 1992, the variation along the y-axis ranges from Jesse Jackson and Pat Buchanan—both clearly perceived as outsider, reform candidates—to the Clintons and Bushes. Ross Perot loads somewhat in the middle, but is clearly distinct from the two major party candidates. The positions of the Republican and Democratic parties are somewhat unexpected, but neither loads as a true outsider on the "reform" dimension. In fact, the "establishment" hue of the Clinton-Gore and Bush-Quayle campaigns (as distinct from the Democrats and Republicans) might account for the relative placement of the parties.

In 1996, Jackson, Perot, Steve Forbes, Lamar Alexander, and Colin Powell are clearly distinguished from the major party candidates (and Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich) along the second dimension. Interestingly, Buchanan is perceived as much closer to Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich than the "reform" candidates in 1996, but this is not unexpected given that he was running as a "traditional" Republican candidate in that election.

In 2000, we lose some purchase on the question at hand by using John McCain as our pivot point, but we are still able to see that figures such as Ralph Nader, Bill Bradley, and (in yet another reinvention) Pat Buchanan are clearly distinct from the major parties and their candidates. Buchanan's position is actually quite expected given that he bolted from the GOP in the fall of 1999 and ran as the Reform Party's presidential candidate.

In 2004, with Ronald Reagan as the pivot point—his death earlier that year made him a non-polarizing figure—we see that the vertical dimension discriminates between establishment powers such as George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and the Clintons, and maverick figures such as John McCain, Colin Powell, John Edwards, and Ralph Nader. So far, so good for the reform

dimension perspective. What is odd in the 2000 estimates is the position of John Kerry: while Edwards (and his "Two Americas" rhetoric) can certainly be seen as a reformer, the case is less obvious for a four-term senator from Massachusetts. Still, we believe Kerry's political history was much less well-known than his personal history, which could reasonably be interpreted as having a strong "reform" impulse.

Conclusion

The *MAP* estimates do not allow us to falsify the hypotheses that (1) there is a second dimension to American political competition and (2) that it is driven by reform versus establishment perceptions. The consistency of the results across four different presidential elections—and the absence of any serious effort on the part of major party candidates to articulate, let alone represent this cleavage—give us reason to believe that the American electorate is ripe for significant change.

In 1992 and 2000, insurgent and third party candidates tapped into the latent support that exists for a reform candidate. In 1992, Ross Perot appealed to voters who believed the federal government to be incompetent. His signature issue, the budget deficit, was effective not because people grasped the complex relationships between the deficit, bond markets, and the macro-economy (they clearly didn't), but because failing to balance its own checkbook was emblematic of federal government's inability to govern. John McCain's campaign to win the Republican nomination in 2000 nearly derailed George W. Bush's juggernaut because McCain was also able to tap into the latent support for a reform candidate. Unlike Perot, however, McCain's appeal drew on peoples' belief that the federal government is corrupt. McCain's signature issue, campaign finance reform, was effective not because people understand the potentially corrosive

effects of soft money, but because the proliferation of money in politics is emblematic of the federal government's corruption. We believe that competence and integrity are two important yet distinct components to the reform dimension. A reform candidate or party can tap into either or both, but they are not quite the same thing.

Interestingly, a few presidential candidates with enormous potential to draw support as reformers failed in part because they did not understand the nature of their appeal. Most obviously, there is Bill Bradley in 2000. In our view, Bradley mistook his rise in the polls during the late summer and early fall of 1999 as a mandate for a liberal challenge to Al Gore. In fact, Bradley would have been a much more appealing candidate had he pursued a course closer to that championed by McCain on the Republican side; decrying the rank corruption of entrenched interests within his own party. As for third party challenges, Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader occasionally showed a grasp of the potential for a reform candidate but both probably carried too much baggage to take advantage of reformist impulses in 2000. Buchanan's identification with social conservatism and protectionism undercut the broad appeal of his critique of the establishment. Similarly, Nader's identification with environmentalist causes often obscured his iconoclastic indictments of the major parties and their candidates.

As suggested earlier, the notion of a reform dimension alongside the traditional left-right dimension has enormous appeal when one seeks to describe recent electoral developments in democratic party systems around the world. The success of the PAN in Mexico, the SDP in Japan, the BJP in India, the xxx in Chile, the xxx in Ukraine, and a host of outsider parties cannot be satisfactorily explained by left-right or post-materialist politics. They have heretofore been treated as indicating a democratic versus anti-democratic dimension, but we believe the

reform-establishment nomenclature more broadly and accurately captures its underlying character.

Clearly more empirical analyses are needed, both for the U. S. as well as for other democratic systems. We also feel compelled to point out some of the limitations of our own data. For example, we rely on thermometer ratings of candidates in delineating the latent ideological structure of electoral competition. But these ratings are influenced by emotions, which can effect our empirical representation of the dimensions. Ideally, we would prefer candidates and parties be given simple grades by respondents: A-F scales have worked nicely in some recent studies. We would also prefer a wider range of public figures from which to determine the relevant political space; in some years we are largely confined to the presidential and vice-presidential candidates and perhaps their spouses.

Another limitation concerns the issue questions. Although the scaled items of the NES allow us to assess the relevance of government spending, defense spending, and aid to minorities, we do not have items that allow us to test our belief that the second dimension captures reform versus establishment perceptions. There are a few items measuring efficacy and trust in government, but these tend to offer discrete response options and not the scaled options we would prefer. Nor do they ask respondents to rate candidates along a "reform" continuum.

These limitations notwithstanding, we believe the data examined here offer important clues about the nature of electoral competition in the U. S. at the dawn of the 21st century. And, if we are right, debates on issues such as illegal immigration ought to be viewed from a very different perspective than is currently being offered by either party or news media elites. In particular, we would argue that the potential for disruption within the current party system is significant. When the parties do not address issues judged salient by the public—when the

linkage model identified earlier breaks down—reform sentiment can crystallize in the place of the absent issue debate. Similarly, reform sentiment can crystallize if new voting groups are mobilized but their interests are not structured effectively by the existing, left-right political debate. The rise of new issues and voting groups is long overdue for the post-New Deal party system, and the concomitant rise of a reform movement is a distinct possibility.

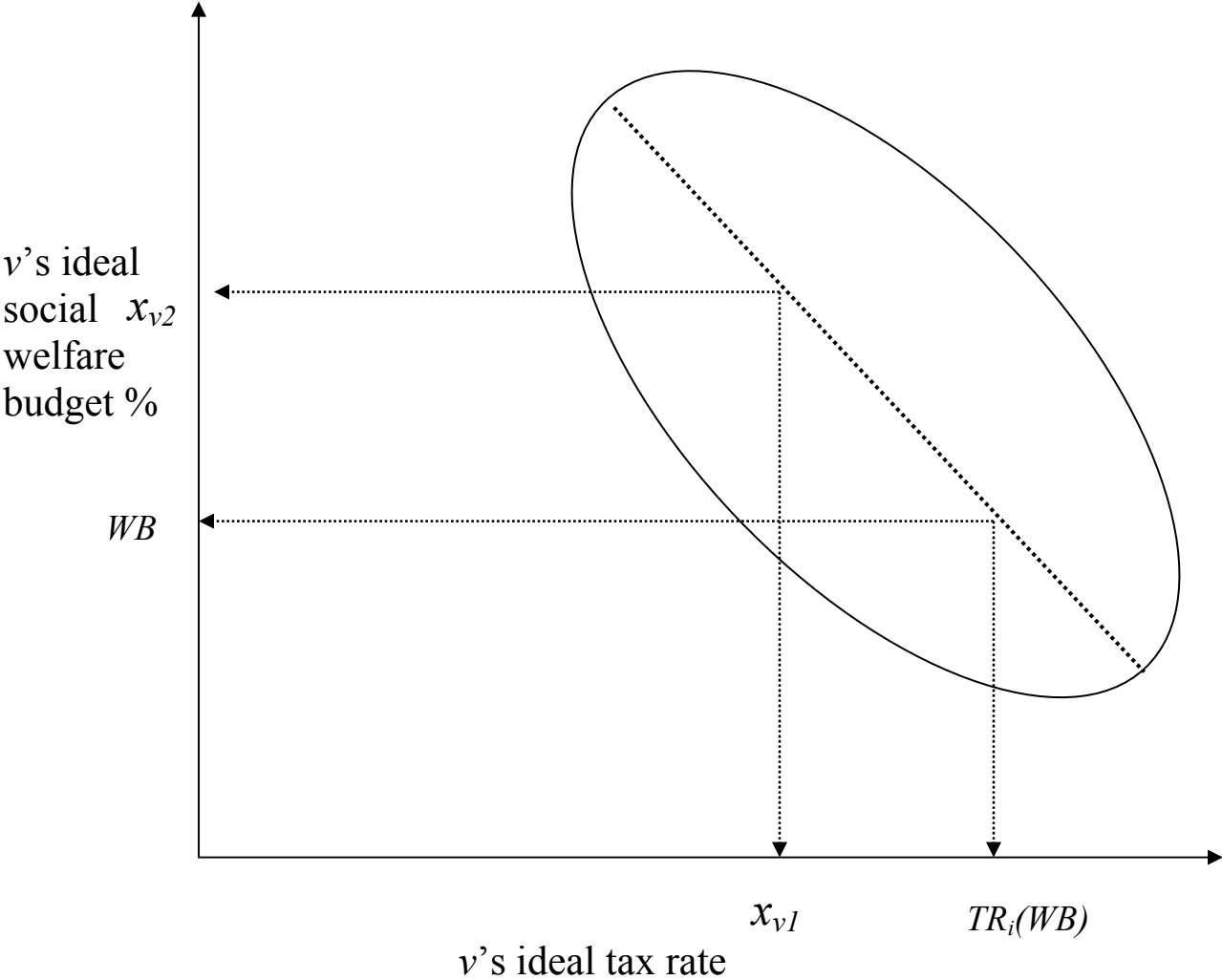**Figure 1—Example of a quadratic preference model for voter *v* in a two-dimensional space**

v's ideal social x_{v2} welfare budget %

WB

x_{v1}

$TR_i(WB)$

v's ideal tax rate

Figure 2—Example of a quadratic preference model for voter *v* in a two-dimensional space

x_{v2}

v's ideal
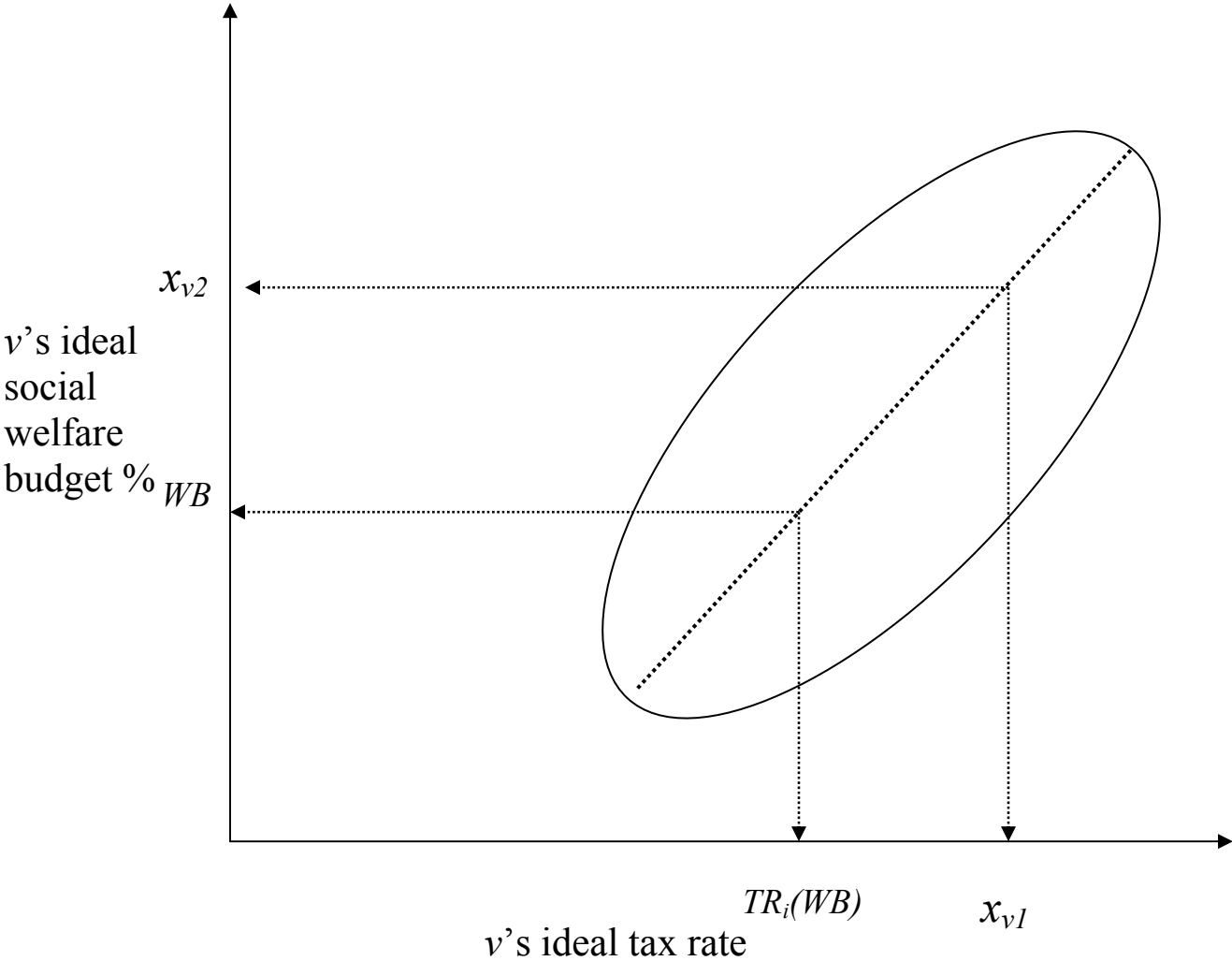social
welfare
budget % $_{WB}$

$TR_i(WB)$ x_{v1}

v's ideal tax rate

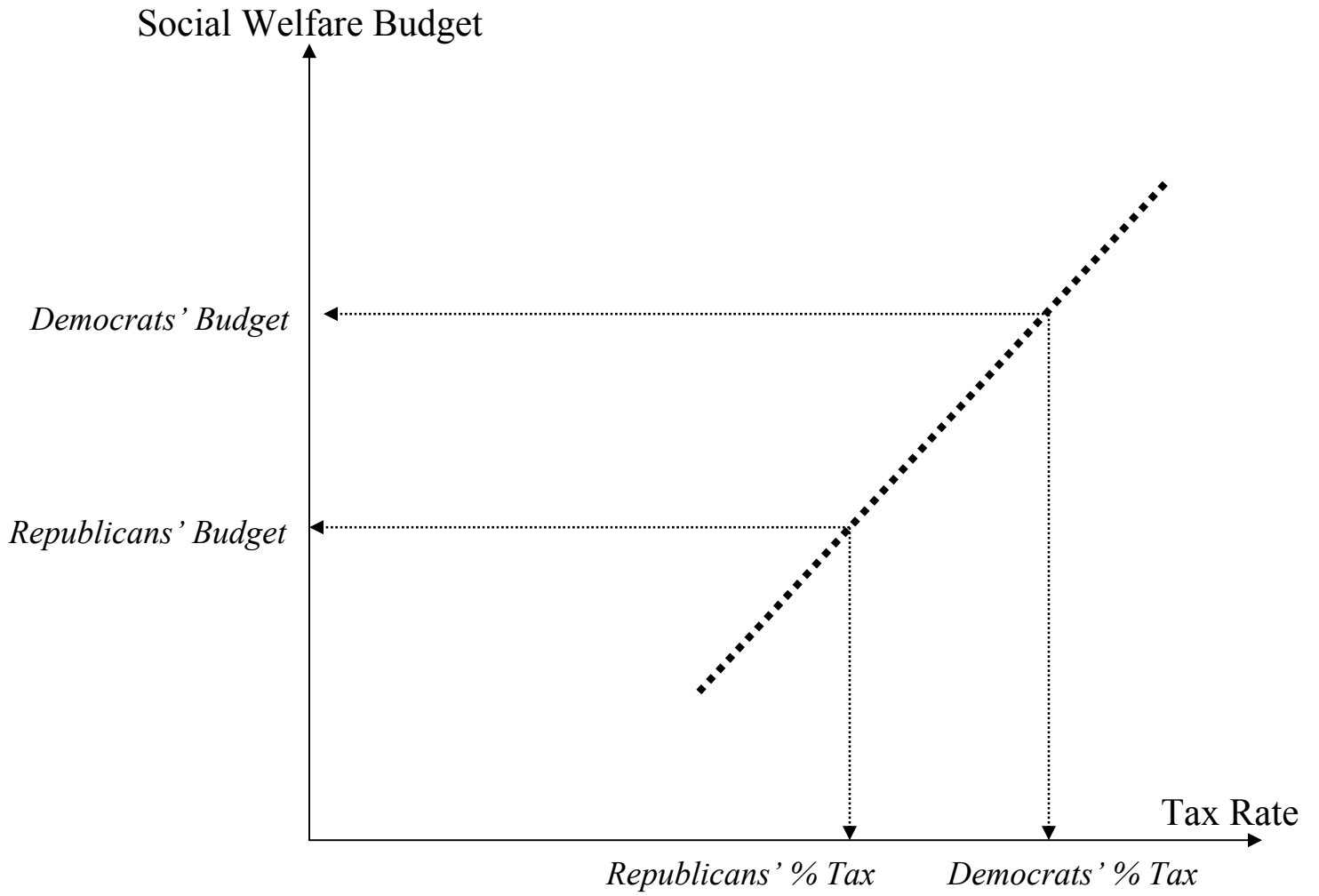**Figure 3—Example of linear linkage between a one-dimensional political space and a two-dimensional issue space**

Social Welfare Budget

Democrats' Budget

Republicans' Budget

Tax Rate

Republicans' % Tax   *Democrats' % Tax*

Table 1—Respondent ratings of parties and political figures, 1992-2004

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
2004			
George W. Bush	54.9	33.5	1,207
John Kerry	53.0	26.4	1,191
Ralph Nader	42.8	22.6	980
Dick Cheney	49.5	28.5	1,140
John Edwards	55.5	24.4	1,050
Laura Bush	66.4	25.0	1,163
Hillary Clinton	55.6	32.1	1,199
Bill Clinton	59.2	32.2	1,202
Colin Powell	69.3	21.9	1,146
John Ashcroft	48.8	24.7	880
John McCain	61.1	19.2	952
Republican Party	58.4	24.2	1,178
Democratic Party	53.2	27.0	1,176
Ronald Reagan	71.5	26.3	1,180
2000			
Bill Clinton	55.4	29.6	1,204
Al Gore	58.5	25.3	1,188
George W. Bush	56.1	24.4	1,185
Pat Buchanan	38.8	22.2	996
Ralph Nader	53.0	22.7	884
John McCain	59.2	19.8	974
Bill Bradley	55.1	19.4	881
Joe Lieberman	57.2	21.7	877
Dick Cheney	55.7	21.5	909
Hillary Clinton	52.2	30.7	1,192
Democratic Party	59.1	24.7	1,175
Republican Party	53.9	23.3	1,168
Reform Party	42.6	20.9	900
1996			
Bill Clinton	59.3	29.6	1,705
Bob Dole	51.8	23.5	1,680
Ross Perot	39.6	23.8	1,655
Al Gore	58.2	24.5	1,633
Jack Kemp	56.9	20.2	1,421
Hillary Clinton	52.8	29.8	1,685
Pat Buchanan	44.4	21.9	1,525
Jesse Jackson	47.0	25.4	1,658
Newt Gingrich	39.5	26.4	1,512
Colin Powell	69.9	19.3	1,552
Steve Forbes	50.2	17.9	1,268
Phil Gramm	48.9	19.4	1,095
Louis Farrakahn	25.3	26.2	1,171
Lamar Alexander	50.6	28.4	902
Elizabeth Dole	60.1	26.9	892
Pat Robertson	44.7	27.9	1,001
Republican Party	53.3	24.3	1,623
Democratic Party	58.9	25.8	1,619

1992	52.4	26.4	2,458
George H. W. Bush	56.1	24.4	2,416
Bill Clinton	45.0	26.6	2,300
Ross Perot	42.3	26.3	2,386
Dan Quayle	57.3	23.0	2,058
Al Gore	49.0	25.7	2,043
Anita Hill	48.1	17.9	1,105
Tom Foley	67.2	22.3	2,425
Barbara Bush	54.6	21.8	2,272
Hillary Clinton	44.9	23.2	2,118
Clarence Thomas	42.0	22.7	1,963
Pat Buchanan	47.0	25.7	2,383
Jesse Jackson	58.9	22.9	2,384
Ronald Reagan	51.6	23.4	2,386
Republican Party	58.9	25.2	2,385
Democratic Party			

Source: 1992-2004 National Election Studies.

Table 2—Respondent issue positions and perceptions of candidate and party positions, 1992-2004

	2004	2000	1996	1992
Government Services				
Respondent	4.52	3.30	3.89	4.37
Republican Candidate	3.43	2.79	3.15	--
Democratic Candidate	5.02	3.69	4.91	--
Republican Party	--	--	--	3.57
Democratic Party	--	--	--	4.83
Defense Spending				
Respondent	4.57	3.37	4.02	3.57
Republican Candidate	5.75	3.67	4.65	--
Democratic Candidate	3.63	3.00	3.95	--
Republican Party	--	--	--	5.06
Democratic Party	--	--	--	3.56
Aid to Blacks				
Respondent	4.54	3.47	4.82	--
Republican Candidate	5.00	3.41	5.00	--
Democratic Candidate	3.33	2.51	3.32	--
Republican Party	--	--	--	--
Democratic Party	--	--	--	--
Crime				
Respondent	--	--	4.46	--
Republican Candidate	--	--	5.10	--
Democratic Candidate	--	--	3.70	--
Republican Party	--	--	--	--
Democratic Party	--	--	--	--

Source: 1992-2004 National Election Studies.

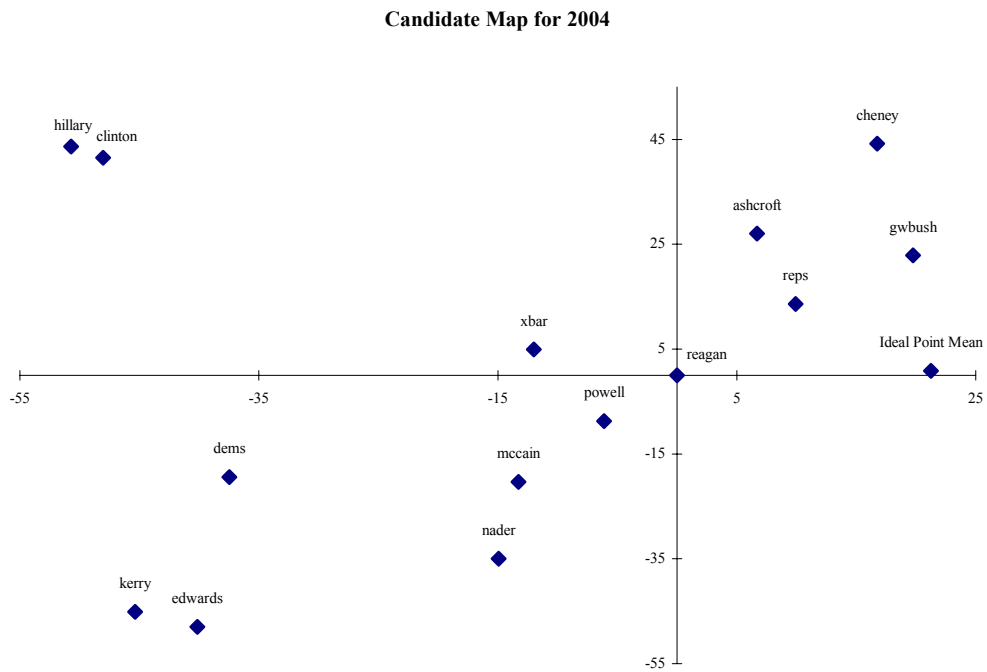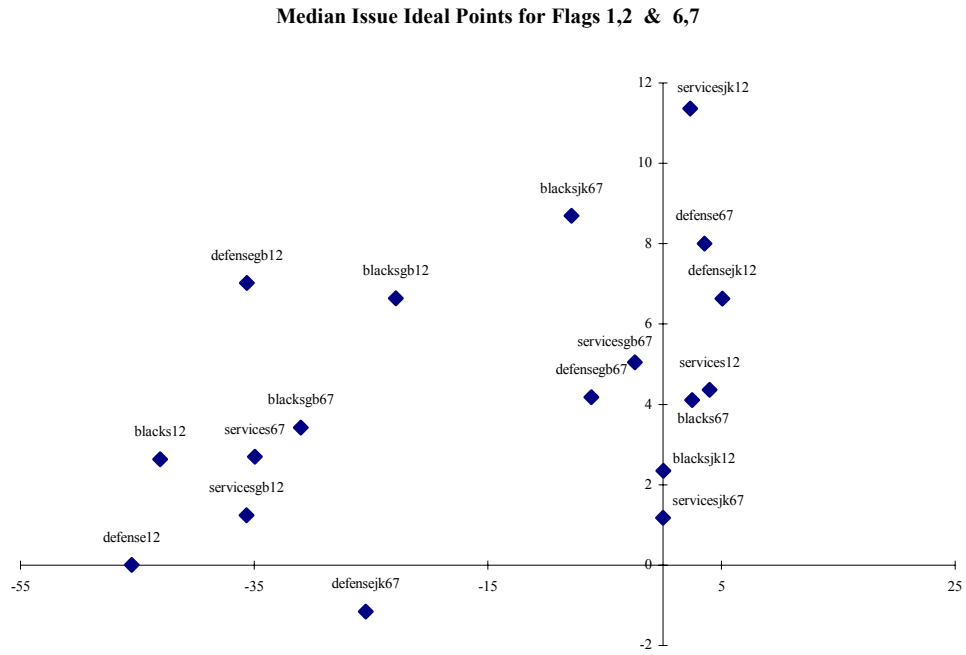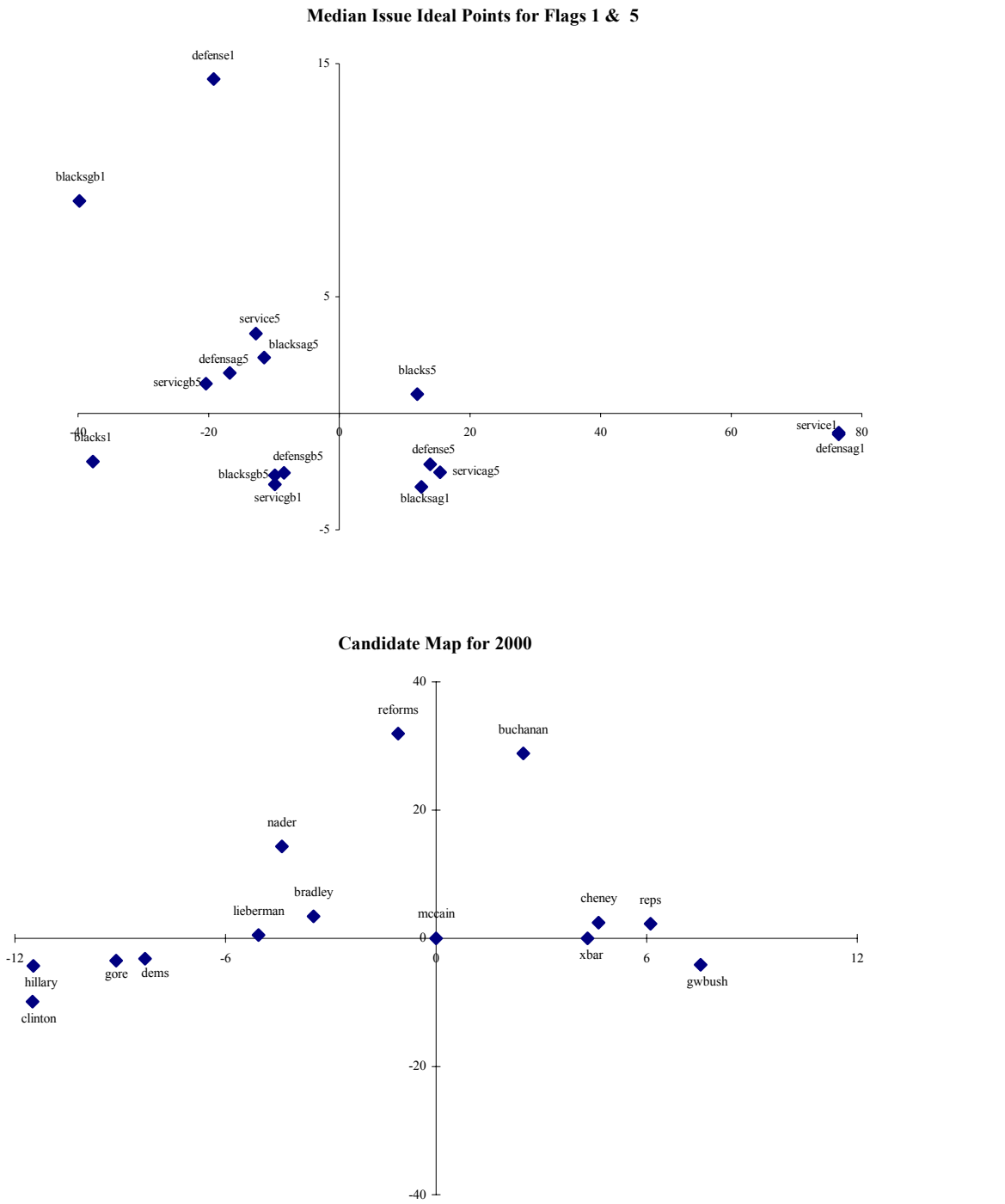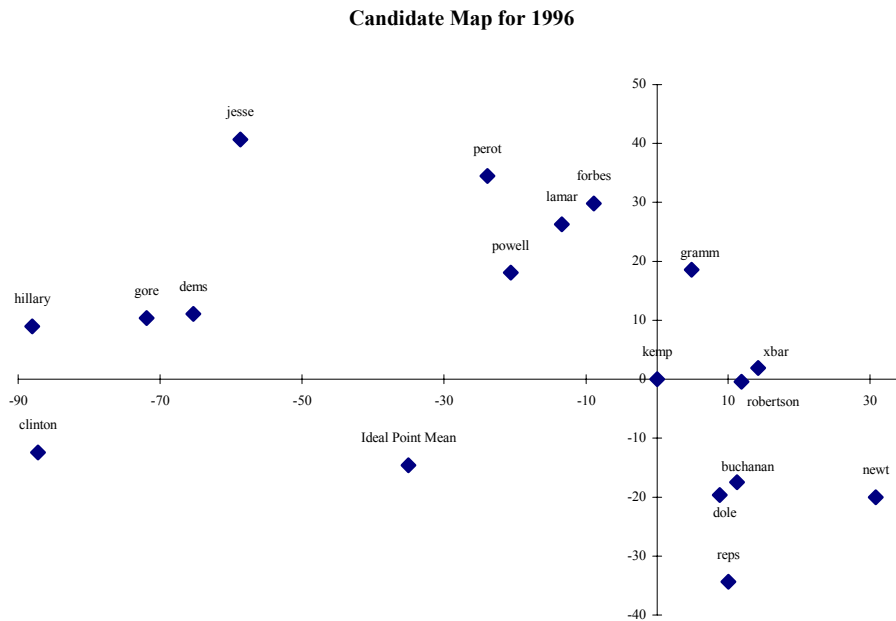**Figure 4—Respondent ideal points and candidate and party positions, 2004**

Median Issue Ideal Points for Flags 1,2 & 6,7

Candidate Map for 2004

Figure 5—Respondent ideal points and candidate and party positions, 2000

Median Issue Ideal Points for Flags 1 & 5

Candidate Map for 2000

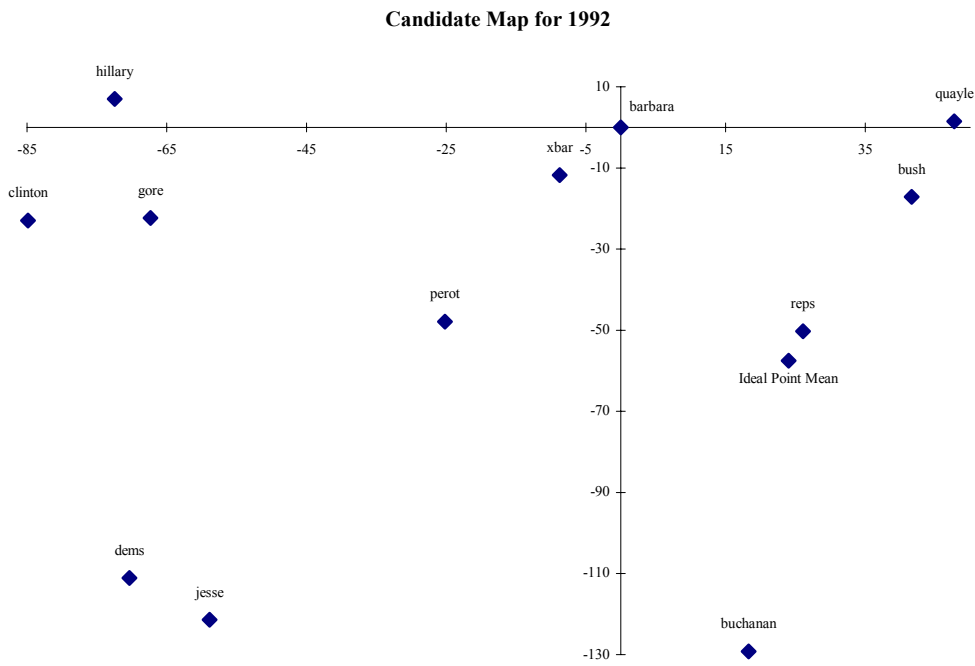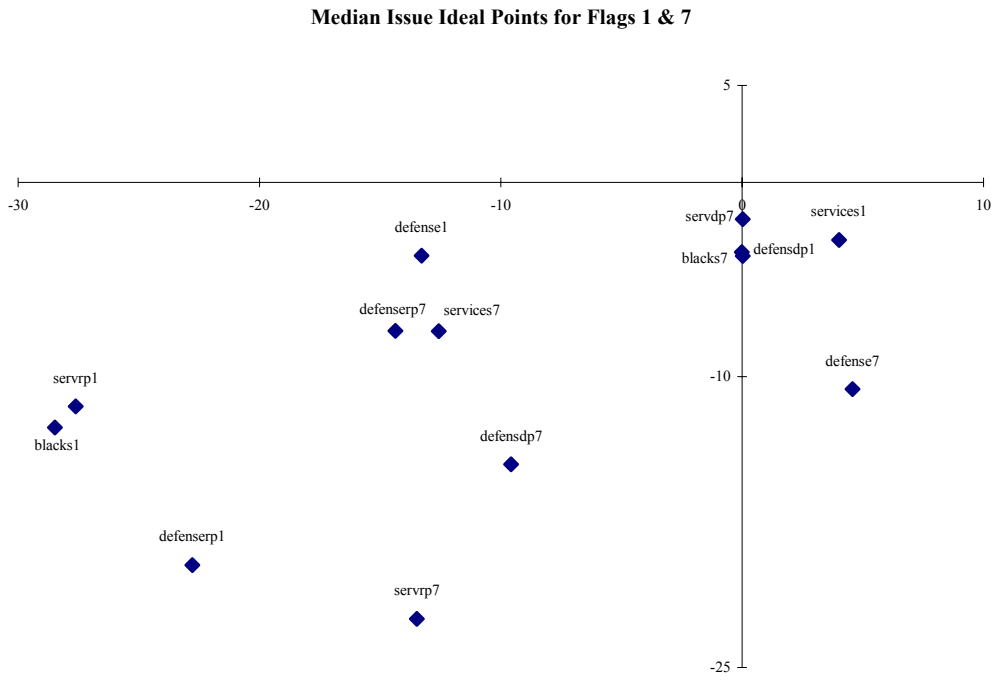# Figure 6—Respondent ideal points and candidate and party positions, 1996

Median Issue Ideal Points for Flags 1 & 7

Candidate Map for 1996
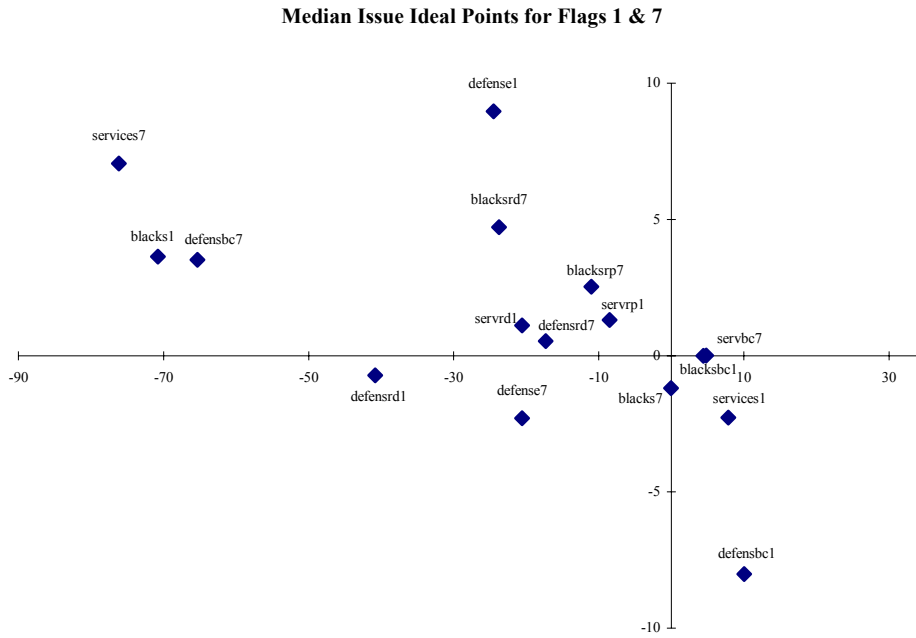
Figure 7—Respondent ideal points and candidate and party positions, 1992

Median Issue Ideal Points for Flags 1 & 7

Candidate Map for 1992

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