

The Impact of State Party Ideology

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This study looks at the impact of state party elite ideology in American state politics. Drawing on the spatial theory of Anthony Downs, we develop hypotheses first to explain the non-convergence of candidates. Party elites are ideologically distinct, influential and strongly policy motivated. They are a force pulling candidates away from the average voter in varying degrees across the states. Second, elites influence public policy. Although the single greatest influence on the general liberalism-conservatism of state policy is public opinion, the ideological tendencies of the party elites have an important added impact. Finally, we examine the long-term impact of party elite ideology on state partisanship. We find that ideological extremism loses party identifiers; across the states, the ideological tendencies of party elites, relative to public opinion, is an important influence on state partisanship. Party elites, particularly the policy motivated activists, are an important force shaping politics in the states.

For the last decade we have been involved in the exploration of the impact of public opinion on patterns of policy in the American states. Our results contradict the "politics does not matter" conclusions that had such a loud voice in the heyday of comparative state politics research in the 1960s and 1970s. Our message is that politics does matter; the state political systems do a surprisingly effective job of translating general mass preferences into corresponding patterns of public policy. That is, with remarkable fidelity, the more liberal states produce more liberal policies, and the states with more conservative electorates produce more conservative policies (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993).¹

As part of that story, and particularly in looking at the paths of influence for public opinion, we discovered a prominent role for the ideological tendencies of the state party elites. The objectives of this article are to explore the effects of state party ideology, and to place them in a theory of party and candidate strategy. We do so in three parts: we will examine the impact of party activists on candidate issue strategies, the influence of party ideologies on state policy, and, finally, the effects of party elite ideologies on state partisanship.

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Party Activists and Candidates

Our focus is on the ideological character of the parties in the states and the effects of the party positions on state politics. Before jumping into the data, it seems wise to consider what we should expect. Not much attention has been paid to the issue bases of the parties in the states (for some exceptions see Fenton 1957; Garand 1985; Dye 1984; Jennings 1979); rather state party research has focused on party electoral strength, conceptualized as measures of partisan tendencies, or interparty competition (Ranney 1971; 1976; Patterson and Caldeira 1984), and more recently attention has turned to state party organizational strength (Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, and Huckshorn 1984). Since there is little work on the comparative ideologies of the parties in the states, we draw on the more general literatures on parties. Here two important traditions stand out, each with quite different predictions about what we might find in the states. First there is the spatial models tradition, often traced to Anthony Downs (1957) for the elaboration of the model in an electoral context. After years and many articles on the equilibria of the spatial model, it still appears that something like Downs' original conclusions predicting that electoral pressures will produce a strong force for convergence still applies (Calvert 1985). That is, in a one-shot election with two election-motivated parties and with citizens that are at least partially motivated by policy, candidates and parties should converge. Extremist candidates ought to lose votes due to their policy positions when the opposition stands significantly closer to the median voter.

The second tradition is the responsible parties model (Schattschneider 1942; Committee on Political Parties 1950). This is sometimes portrayed more as a normative ideal than as an analytic model, but it has the virtue of making clear predictions, and for being at least partially correct. The responsible parties model expects the parties to be motivated by policy. This means they should take clearly divergent stands on the issues, maintain party discipline, and enact their party platforms. It therefore can provide both policy coherence in governing and accountability to the public. For our purposes, the difference of greatest interest is that the responsible parties model predicts the parties will offer voters an unambiguous choice on the issues whereas the Downsian model expects the parties to converge toward the median voter.

The differing predictions of the responsible parties and Downsian models lies with the motivations of the parties in the two models. In the simple spatial model the parties are only motivated by the desire to win; policy preferences or ideological stands are taken only instrumentally. The responsible parties are considered sincere in having policy positions in which they deeply believe. With each party having a differing view of the

role of government and differing means (for example market versus non-market mechanisms) for achieving their ends, the voters are offered large issue choices.

Both models seem to posit a unity of vision or motivation for parties and candidates. In the real world of U.S. politics, we think it is important to make a distinction between the party activists and officials on the one hand and candidates for elective office on the other. Because of their positions, each is likely to put differing weights on the objectives of winning versus achieving policy objectives. We expect that candidates will behave more like the office pursuers of the Downsian model and that party activists will be a force for ideological distinctiveness, approaching the responsible parties model in some respects.

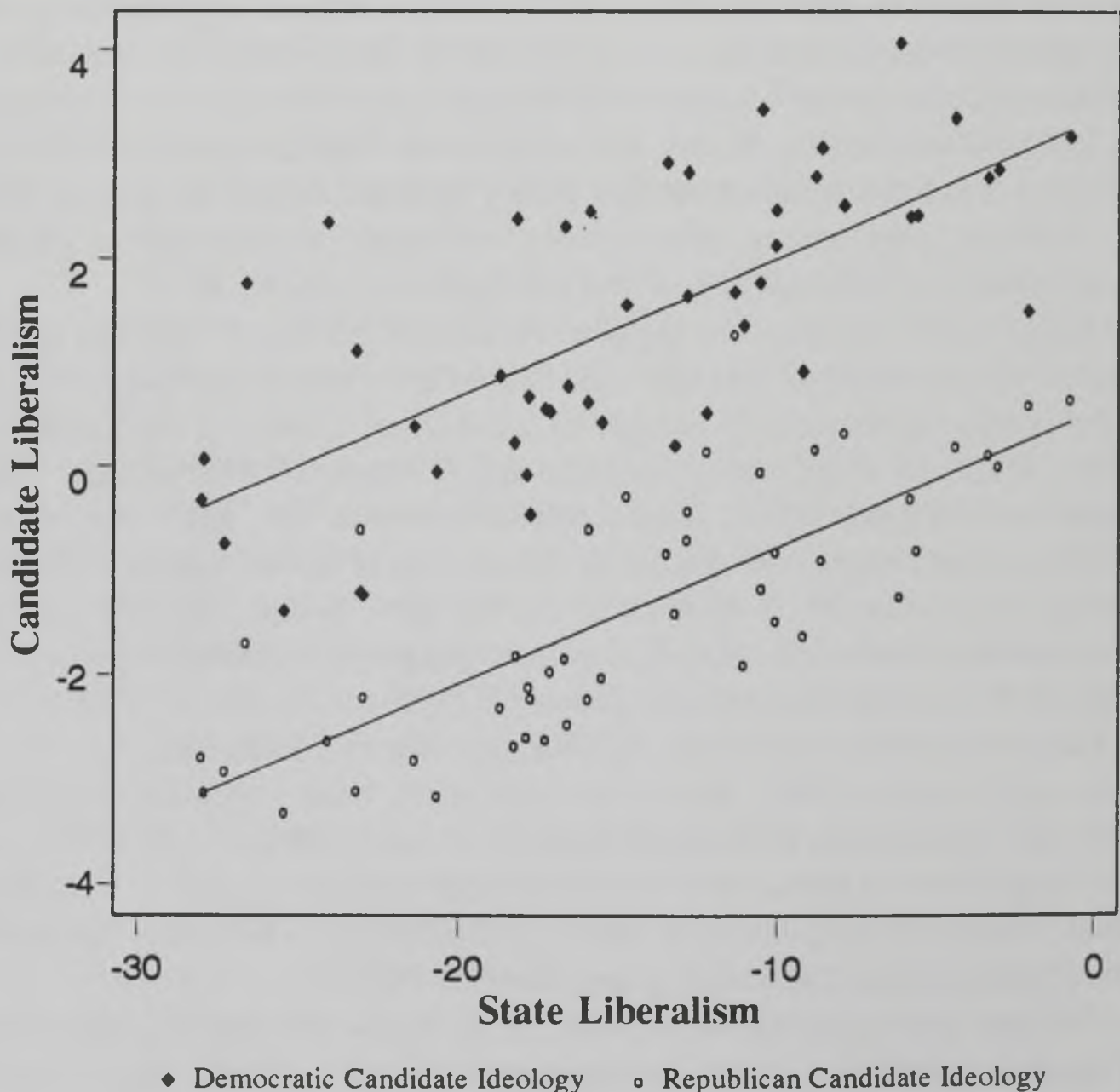
Candidates are motivated by the desire to beat the opposition. Even if candidates have their own policy objectives, these have to take a back seat to the goal of winning; without office a serious political candidate has nothing.² Winning in the general election continues to mean a drive toward the median voters; convergence is a robust equilibrium under a wide set of deviations from the simple Downsian model (Calvert 1985).³ Moreover, the empirical literature provides support for the moderation hypothesis. Politically extreme candidates do not do as well at the polls as more moderate candidates (Erikson and Wright 1993; Wright and Berkman 1986; Abramowitz 1980). Thus, both in theory and practice we find that candidates should experience a distinct pressure toward policy moderation for the general election. Without some strong counterforce, we ought to find that candidates converge toward the middle position for their constituencies.

Empirically this does not happen. Numerous studies of contests for the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have found that candidates are not the me-too quasi-mirror images of each other predicted by the spatial model (McClosky et al. 1960; Sullivan and O'Connor 1972; Wright 1986; Erikson and Wright 1993). Democratic candidates are more liberal and Republican candidates are distinctly more conservative. Parties are also different at the state level. In contests for the U.S. Senate, several scholars have noted that candidates sharing the same geographic constituency provide markedly different policy representation (Wright and Berkman 1986; Poole and Rosenthal 1984; Groffman, Griffin and Glazer 1990; Shapiro, Brady, Brody and Ferejohn 1990). Also at the state level, where legislative constituencies can be assumed to be more homogeneous, candidates do not appear to converge. For instance, in at least one supposedly patronage-driven state, Indiana, there are quite marked ideological differences between the parties in the state legislature (Browning and Shaffer 1987).

To measure candidate tendencies in the states we combine data from two sources: one is a set of polls of congressional candidates aggregated to

the state level, the other is a survey of state legislators. Together these provide a nice sample of the ideologies of candidates that run under the banners of the two parties in each of the states.⁴ The key feature of the mean candidate scores by party, across the states, is their divergence. In most of the states the candidates offer quite distinctive ideological positions to their state electorates. This can be seen in Figure 1 which plots the mean candidate liberalism-conservatism scores for the Democratic and Republican groups of candidates by mean state opinion (also see Table 1). Notice that across the levels of mass ideology, the Democratic candidates are markedly more liberal than the Republican candidates in the same states. Also we see that candidate ideologies are responsive to state opinion; while retaining a healthy ideological distance from the other party, candidate positions also vary with state opinion. While the Democrats run at a more liberal level and the Republicans at a more conservative level in a given state, substantial intra-party variation across the states exists for both parties.

Figure 1. Democratic and Republican Candidate Ideologies in the States by State Opinion



Our next task is to account for candidate positions. The correlation between state opinion and candidate positions is easy. Candidates that do not respond to state issue preferences are less likely to get elected. However, this does not account for the clear ideological distance between the parties in the states. Here we believe the explanation lies in the strategic positions and strong ideological motivations of the party activists.

Activists are more programmatic and ideological than candidates. Unlike the candidates, activists get very little from a candidate getting elected *per se*. Policy matters a great deal for the party activist. The benefits activists receive lie with the policy changes that candidates who vote the right way and work on the right issues can achieve (Jewell and Olson 1988: 52-66; Abramowitz, McGlenndon, and Rapoport 1986b: 61-66).

Liberal Democratic activists are expected to want to nominate and elect liberal Democratic candidates; conservative Republicans should similarly want Republicans who stand for they believe in. Ideological differences that may seem small to the average relatively disinterested citizen can loom quite large for the intensely involved. Given that their values are held strongly enough to bring them to active participation, we expect the activists to have steep preference functions in the sense of putting a high value on ideological proximity in deciding whether to support a candidate or not. From this perspective, the activist has little incentive to incur the costs of working for a candidate if the candidates converge. If both candidates promise the same, or even similar policies, they no longer offer a policy distinctiveness. Thus, only small policy differences between converging candidates would produce little incentive for the activist to incur the costs of time and money that defines their participation.

Candidates cannot afford to ignore their party's activists. Activists, because of their strong policy motivations and strategic influence on candidates, are a centrifugal ideological force. This argument can be found in some of the formal works that have sought to model the effects of primaries and of activists' contributions upon candidate or party strategies. Coleman (1972) and Aranson and Hinich (1972) both look at the role of primaries and, assuming that primary voters have policy preferences that are different from those of the general electorate, they show that the need to win in primaries should pull candidates away from the general election median voter. Aldrich and McGinnis (1989) look specifically at activists and the resources they bring to candidates. Building on Aldrich's earlier work (1983), which finds activists will gravitate to ideologically distinct blocs, they argue that the candidates who need activists' contributions will be ideologically split.

The theoretical groundwork in which candidates (1) must run in primaries and (2) need to get resources from policy-motivated activists gives

the activists a special influence on candidates that far outstrips their limited numbers. Especially important for our analysis is the premise that activists put a higher value on policy than candidates. That is, we suspect that activists generally are less willing to trade off preferred policy positions for anticipated general election prospects than are candidates. *Thus, candidates should position themselves not at the median voter, but somewhere between their party activists and the median voter.*

Now let us look at the data to document these claims. First, we need to describe our measure of party activists. This, like the candidate ideology measure, is a combination of two previous data collections. One is a survey of county party chairs from across the country; the other is a survey of delegates to the national presidential conventions. In both cases respondents' ideological self-identifications were aggregated to the state level for our indicator of state party activist ideology.⁵ These samples of activists seem to have a good deal of face validity. Presidential activists are not always a true reflection of state activists because they reflect to an extent the outcomes of the presidential preference primaries. Nevertheless, we agree with Warren Miller (1988, 5-8) that they constitute a quite useful and important sample of the activist public.

Similarly, county party chairs are a good source of the issue attitudes of party "regulars." They typically have been around for quite a while, and it is reasonable to assume that, *on average*, they reflect the general policy preferences of the party activists in their counties. Aggregation to the state level quiets a good deal of random measurement error. Then, summing the two measures further squeezes out much of the remaining random and idiosyncratic errors to yield a reliable and valid indicator of activists' sentiment.

The scores are presented in Table 1. In general they comport well with expectations. For example, Democratic activists of the southern states are more conservative than their counterparts in the large industrial states. Similarly, Republican activists of New England and the Middle Atlantic tend to be more moderate than their colleagues in other parts of the country.

Given this face validity, let us turn to the main question for this part of the analysis: do the ideological differences among state party activists influence their parties' nominees? To assess this we do a set of regressions to examine the interplay of activists' ideology, state opinion and party affiliation on candidate issue positions. Our dependent variable is the set of candidate ideology scores for both parties (N=96). Table 2 shows the results of our regressions. In the first column of figures we see large effects on state candidate ideology for party affiliation and state opinion; this simply presents the data shown in Figure 1 in regression terms.⁶ The party effect represents the mean ideological distance between candidates with state

Table 1. State Party Elite Liberalism Scores

State	Democratic Party			State	Republican Party		
	Activists	Candidates	Total		Activists	Candidates	Total
MS	0.72	-1.39	-0.67	TX	-2.88	-3.12	-6.00
LA	0.66	-1.24	-0.58	NC	-2.63	-3.17	-5.79
AL	0.71	-1.21	-0.50	OK	-2.82	-2.93	-5.75
OK	0.72	-0.74	-0.02	ID	-2.43	-3.13	-5.56
GA	0.58	-0.46	0.12	MS	-2.21	-3.32	-5.54
AR	0.74	0.23	0.97	NV	-2.64	-2.62	-5.25
NC	1.11	-0.05	1.06	SC	-2.43	-2.82	-5.25
DE	0.69	0.52	1.21	VA	-2.35	-2.60	-4.95
KY	1.17	0.20	1.37	NM	-2.68	-2.24	-4.92
MO	1.01	0.43	1.45	LA	-2.63	-2.22	-4.85
NM	0.91	0.63	1.54	FL	-2.72	-1.97	-4.69
SC	1.22	0.39	1.61	GA	-2.45	-2.23	-4.68
FL	1.12	0.54	1.66	AR	-1.96	-2.68	-4.64
UT	2.17	-0.33	1.84	UT	-1.79	-2.79	-4.59
VA	1.93	-0.08	1.86	SD	-1.90	-2.64	-4.54
TX	0.84	1.11	1.95	WY	-2.38	-2.12	-4.50
TN	1.18	0.78	1.96	MT	-2.55	-1.91	-4.46
WV	1.11	0.92	2.03	TN	-1.64	-2.47	-4.11
NV	1.61	0.56	2.17	NE	-1.77	-2.32	-4.09
ID	2.29	0.07	2.36	MO	-2.00	-2.03	-4.03
NE	1.70	0.88	2.58	WV	-2.32	-1.62	-3.94
WY	2.17	0.68	2.84	CO	-2.64	-0.89	-3.53
RI	1.35	1.50	2.85	CA	-2.11	-1.25	-3.35
IN	1.20	2.31	3.51	ND	-1.63	-1.70	-3.34
MT	2.44	1.37	3.81	IN	-1.45	-1.84	-3.29
PA	2.11	1.78	3.88	OH	-1.80	-1.49	-3.28
IL	1.75	2.13	3.89	AZ	-1.45	-1.82	-3.27
NH	2.58	1.65	4.23	KY	-1.80	-1.41	-3.21
VT	2.57	1.68	4.25	AL	-2.18	-0.61	-2.78
SD	1.91	2.35	4.26	WI	-1.36	-1.17	-2.53
KS	1.94	2.46	4.39	IL	-1.55	-0.82	-2.36
ND	2.65	1.76	4.41	NH	-1.56	-0.70	-2.27
OH	1.99	2.47	4.46	KS	-1.67	-0.60	-2.26
MD	2.09	2.42	4.51	WA	-1.95	-0.31	-2.25
WA	2.13	2.41	4.54	MD	-1.05	-0.80	-1.84
AZ	2.29	2.38	4.67	ME	-1.50	-0.28	-1.78
ME	3.14	1.56	4.70	IA	-0.73	-0.84	-1.57
NJ	2.04	2.78	4.82	MN	-1.07	-0.42	-1.49
NY	2.06	2.86	4.93	DE	-1.45	0.15	-1.31
OR	2.65	2.51	5.16	PA	-0.99	-0.05	-1.04
CT	1.88	3.35	5.23	MI	-0.96	0.17	-0.79
MI	2.55	2.79	5.34	CT	-0.95	0.19	-0.76
CO	2.29	3.06	5.35	NY	-0.62	0.00	-0.62
MA	2.27	3.17	5.44	OR	-0.88	0.33	-0.55
IA	2.76	2.92	5.68	RI	-1.11	0.59	-0.51
MN	3.12	2.83	5.94	MA	-1.07	0.65	-0.43
WI	3.25	3.43	6.68	NJ	-0.47	0.12	-0.36
CA	3.46	4.07	7.53	VT	-1.62	1.27	-0.35

*States are ordered from most conservative to most liberal based on the composite total measures for each party.

Table 2. The Effects of Party Affiliation, State Opinion, and Activist Ideology on Candidate Ideology

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Party Affiliation	2.76 (.18)**	-.402 (.42)	
State Opinion	.132 (.01)**	.091 (.01)**	.096 (.01)**
Activists' Ideology		.876 (.11)**	.778 (.04)**
Adj R ²	.79	.87	.87
N=96			
Significance: * p < .05; ** p < .01			

opinion controlled, and it is the gap that we would not anticipate in a simple spatial model of converging candidates. In the second column we add the indicator for activists' ideological preferences. Now activists' ideology and state opinion have large significant effects, but party affiliation no longer accounts for anything at all; indeed, it has the wrong sign. Finally, in the third column we drop party from the analysis and find that a simple model with activist and state ideologies does an entirely satisfactory job of accounting for candidate ideology. Thus, by including activist ideology in the equation we impart the variance initially captured by the party affiliation dummy variable. We have "explained" the party effect (which now goes to essentially zero). This is reinforced when we note that the adjusted R² does not drop with the deletion of party affiliation from the equation.

We see here the unmistakable impact of party activists on candidates. Candidates generally offer a choice, and the magnitude of the choice is well accounted for by the joint effects of activists, ideology and state opinion. The significance deserves to be emphasized: without the pull of activists (and, we believe, the workings of the primary elections) candidates would probably go a good deal further in converging as predicted by the classical Downsian model.

The irony here is that the issue pressures of the general election push candidates together. Without a countervailing force, convergence would occur and then issues would have not have an impact in deciding the winner—the deciding factor would more likely than not be non-policy factors such as friends and neighbors, personality or superior ads. As it is, the "contribution" of the ideological activists is to provide the voter with a policy

choice. The more ideologically extreme the activists, the more a candidate should be pulled away from the median voter, and with this movement comes some threat of losing votes on the issues. It is a threat the policy motivated activists are willing to live with.⁷

Parties and State Policies

We have just argued that the parties differ in their policy stands, and that this is due in good part to the ideological pull of policy motivated activists. This is interesting, but it is less important for state politics unless what the parties stand for actually matters. There is room for doubt in this. The state politics literature has amounted to a monumental denial that party preferences matter. Indeed, some of the early literature suggests that party control does not influence state policy (Dye 1966; Winters 1976; Plotnick and Winters 1985), or if it does, it is only under conditions where the parties are especially class-based or issue-oriented (Jennings 1979; Dye 1984; Garand 1985).

Our objective in this section is to explore the impact of state party ideology on state policy, and to assess whether party elite preferences have an impact that is independent of state opinion. This exploration is set by a discussion of how party elites actually might have a policy impact.

The clearest way is through the candidates that are elected. We have seen that the candidates of the parties are ideologically distinct. The obvious hypothesis is that, over time, the party in government moves policy from the status quo toward the positions advocated by their issue stands and the preferences of their party's activists. Here we will only demonstrate the effects of the parties' ideologies on policy. Elsewhere we have examined the mechanisms of influence in terms of the partisan balance of the state legislatures (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993, ch. 6).

We examine here several measures of state policy to assess the variable influence of party and public opinion across different issue areas. We also look at an overall index of policy liberalism for a grand summary of the parties' policy influence in the states. This index includes eight indicators of policy liberalism-conservatism.⁸

Our initial analysis looks at party ideology as a single index. This is simply the grand mean of the combined activists and candidate ideology scores for both parties. It is our measure of safe party ideology since it represents the ideological center, or the "midpoint," of the party programs in the states. The logic of this is as follows: as the Democratic party moves to the left while the Republic party stays put a greater proportion of the electorate will be closer to the Republican party—assuming, as we do, that

the parties' positions span the median voter. This leftward movement pulls the midpoint to the left. Similarly, if the Republicans move either way, right or left, they have a corresponding effect on the party midpoint. Thus, the midpoint is a convenient summary of the parties' general ideological positions.

The analysis also considers the parties separately by entering the overall party ideology scores (activists + candidates) for each party into the regressions. The original policy variables were in a variety of metrics, not all of which have any clear intuitive meaning other than the ideological direction they indicate. Thus, to facilitate comparing the results across policies, the policy indicators were put into standard form with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of unity.

Our hypothesis for each policy is straightforward. More liberal electorates and more liberal party elites should each contribute to policy liberalism. This is supported by positive, statistically significant coefficients for both types of variables. We already know that state opinion has a strong direct effect on each of these policy variables, and these effects hold up for controls for income, education and urbanism of the states (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993, ch. 4). Given this overall effect of our exogenous variable of state opinion, an insignificant coefficient for state opinion when party elite liberalism is in the equation indicates that the effect is indirect; state opinion in these cases works on policy through its impact on party elite ideology. Our primary concern here is whether party ideology adds independently to the explanation of state policies.

First, the signs of the coefficients for the party elite ideology variable in Table 3 are all in the correct direction. However, only for half of the eight policy variables does this effect reach statistical significance (consumer protection, criminal justice penalties, the Equal Rights Amendment, and tax progressivity). For composite policy liberalism, the parties do have a strong effect. In fact, the direct effects of party elite ideology on policy actually surpass that of state opinion with a standardized regression coefficient of .51 compared to .43 for state opinion.⁹

It is not too hard to guess why the relative effects of elite ideology and state opinion are as they seem to be for some of the variables. Gambling, for example is not an issue that has traditionally split the parties, so it is not surprising that it is more directly responsive to state opinion. Similarly, the tax structure is of intense concern to core groups within the parties with the actual structure of taxes probably being a somewhat "hard" issue for the mass public (Carmines and Stimson 1980). For a different reason, consumer protection may be more responsive to elite forces. It is a classic collective goods problem (Olson 1971) so that if one of the parties, most

Table 3. Party Elite Liberalism and State Policy

	Party Midpoint	State Opinion	Adj R ²	State Party Ideology			Adj R ²
				Democrat	Republican	State Opinion	
Education	.157 ^a (.09)	.076 (.02)**	.58	.043 (.06)	.137 (.09)	.071 (.02)**	.57
Medicaid	.160 (.10)	.050 (.02)*	.50	.088 (.07)	.170 (.09)*	.046 (.02)*	.49
AFDC	.160 (.10)	.062 (.08)**	.44	.077 (.07)	.084 (.10)	.062 (.02)**	.43
Consumer Protection	.278 (.104)**	.028 (.03)	.38	.202 (.08)**	.033 (.11)	.036 (.02)	.39
Criminal Justice	.260 (.11)*	.016 (.03)	.26	.149 (.08)*	.104 (.12)	.018 (.02)	.25
Gambling ^b	.058 (.08)	.083 (.02)**	.57	-.008 (.06)	.092 (.08)	.077 (.02)**	.57
ERA	.292 (.10)**	.024 (.02)	.38	.188 (.08)**	.077 (.11)	.030 (.03)	.38
Tax Pro- gressivity	.371 (.11)**	.001 (.02)	.38	.122 (.08)	.290 (.11)**	-.008 (.03)	.38
Composite Liberalism	.299 (.06)**	.059 (.02)**	.77	.148 (.05)**	.152 (.07)*	.059 (.02)**	.76

^aThe dependent variables are standardized values of the separate policy indicators. The coefficients are then unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Statistical significance (one-tailed): *p < .05; **p < .01.

^bNevada is excluded in the gambling equation as it stands as a huge outlier.

likely the Democrats, does not strongly advocate for consumers, it is not likely to get much agenda space in the legislatures.

On the other hand, we were surprised by the lack of party effects for education spending, medicaid and AFDC. These are policies that we traditionally have thought of as core differences between the parties. The results of the tests may not be as dismal as they appear at first; in fact, the pattern is not firm evidence that the parties have no influence here. First, note that the signs are all in correct direction. The probabilities of this happening by chance if party ideologies really have no impact are fairly small. Second, if we construct a mini-index of just the three redistribution variables

(educational spending, Medicaid and AFDC) and regress this on party ideology and state opinion the results are quite clear: party ideology does have an impact on policy. Apparently, there is too much noise in the individual indicators to pick up the actual party influence that emerges when we aggregate across policies, and thus achieve greater reliability in the measures.¹⁰

Our party elite ideology measure, recall, is influenced by the positions of both parties. It is possible, however, in some policy areas that the parties are not equally influential. The Democrats may care more about welfare, for example, while the Republicans may put more political muscle behind realizing their preferences on tax policy. Thus, the right hand half of Table 3 presents the same regressions we just looked at only this time with separate variables for Democratic and Republican party liberalism. The results are highly suggestive. Democratic party elite ideology is more important for consumer protection policy and the Equal Rights Amendment whereas the Republican party elite ideology variable has stronger direct effects for Medicaid and especially for tax policy. Neither of the parties seems to matter (at least at the level of statistical significance) in the areas of education expenditures, AFDC scope, or gambling. Criminal justice lies in between. We see the Democrats have a significant effect, but this is shared with a significant direct effect for state opinion. For composite policy liberalism we find that each party has strong positive and approximately equal effects on policy.

The variation across policy areas is suggestive for further research. The policies initially were selected for their hypothesized relationship with state opinion. That is, we sought policies that we thought had clear liberal-conservative sides; we did not select a set of policies on which we thought the parties were most likely to disagree. Looking back at the policies in partisan terms, the data suggest that Republicans are more influential on tax policy (which is probably more salient for them than for Democrats) while Democratic party elite effects are clearest on the "have not" policies that do not have a clear price tag: consumer protection, the ERA, and, perhaps, criminal justice penalties. Thus, we see in the individual policies, as well as in our measure of composite policy liberalism, that the states are influenced by party elite ideologies. The primary determinant remains public opinion, but we nevertheless find an important impact for party elites.

This is as we would expect from our earlier discussion. We have the intensely involved elites affecting policy, pulling it to the left or right, but only to a degree. The general policy direction of the states remains tied to the sentiments of their electorates. That is, in the day-to-day struggle of politics in the state capitols, the parties can, and seemingly do, move policy without each small change being dictated by public opinion. However, this

policy variation occurs within some limits that are set by public opinion. The findings here substantiate V. O. Key, Jr.'s (1961) view of public opinion *dikes*. Elites can make policy within this "permissive consensus" without stirring up much controversy. However, if the dikes are breached, the public is capable of exercising the blunt instrument of the ballot to change the general direction of policy in the states.

Party Elites and State Partisanship

In this final section we examine the feedback impact of party policy stances on the mass public. In particular, we look at the influence of the party elites on the partisan attachments of the mass electorate. Now the very idea that party elites can influence a seemingly stable and deeply held attitude like party identification may be greeted with some skepticism by those who, like the authors, were introduced to the *American Voter* vision of partisanship (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). In fact, from that perspective, the idea that hardly visible *state* political actors could influence party loyalties seems preposterous.

Our argument against this dismissal, and in fact, in favor of the hypothesis that party elite ideologies are an important factor in mass partisanship at the state level has several components. First, the old view of partisanship has undergone a good deal of revision. New work shows that party identification is endogenous; it is influenced by the events of campaigns and issues, while at the same time it is influencing voter perceptions and voter choice (Franklin and Jackson 1983; Franklin 1984; Page and Jones 1979; Luskin, McIver and Carmines 1989; Carmines, McIver, and Stimson 1987). Taking a longer time perspective, MacKuen, Erikson and Stimson (1989) find that "macro partisanship" varies over time with intelligible national political events.

Second, we are not arguing that state party elites are a big influence on *individual* partisanship, but rather, they have a significant impact on the *aggregate* or macro-partisanship of the states. Our interest is in marginal effects, not in accounting for each individual's party identification. Party can be reasonably stable, passed from generation to generation, and it can even be *primarily* responsive at the individual level to national political events and conditions and still leave lots of room for important effects due to state political factors at the margins. We find it reasonable to expect that part of the explanation of interstate variations in state partisanship can be found at the state level. Some state-to-state variation in partisanship is due to differences in demography: different types of people are Democrats and Republicans and these are not spread evenly across the states. We find else-

where, however, that demography is not a very strong predictor of state partisanship (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993, ch. 3). Thus, we think that at least some of the state differences are due to how the parties in the states have offered themselves to their electorates and the policies they have advocated over the years.

Let us consider how citizen party identification might be influenced by state party elite ideologies. The process we envision is a simple, incremental one in which citizens compare their political loyalties and their agreement with what they learn about the parties and their candidates. This assumes that individuals are exposed to a significant level of political communication about politics at the state and local levels. In spite of relatively low levels of interest and information (or at least the ability to recall political information) we believe the electorates do respond to the political signals they receive from elites. We certainly have ample evidence of this responsiveness in the case of voter mobilization in state elections (Patterson and Caldeira 1983). It seems entirely reasonable that these same communications, as well as information about party programs and policy preferences that reach the voter in the interelection periods, can be reflected against the voter's basic predispositions, i.e., party identification. This can be seen in the same spirit as Fiorina's (1981) conceptualization of party identification as a running tally of party performance. In this case, however, our focus is more specifically on the long run effects of party ideology.

Southern Democrats provide a good illustration of the process we have in mind. One can reasonably wonder how many southern conservatives could hold onto their Democratic party affiliations for even as long as they have if their primary images of the Democratic party were of the McGovern-Dukakis-Mondale-Clinton liberal programs as featured in presidential campaigns and national news. Only a dunce could continue to embrace an identification with a party when its policies are consistently disagreeable.

But national politics are not the only party images to which citizens are exposed. These same Democrats also see official, fully certified Democrats running for state and local offices, or Congress. As we have shown above, state opinion has a big effect on candidate issue stands, so these southern Democratic candidates are generally more congenial (moderate) in their issue stands. Thus, the erosive effects of national party images are be substantially mitigated by the relative moderation of the state candidates.

The question then becomes the degree to which the state party elites reinforce national party images. We noted above there is a good deal of variation in state party elite ideologies. We hypothesize that these constitute an ongoing incremental source of information that should influence how the

state electorates see the parties. Over time, we believe the message and signals about the state parties influence a sufficient number of citizens to have an important impact on the interstate variance in state partisanship.

This perspective takes us again to draw on the spatial model to develop the specific hypotheses that guide our analysis. As party images due to state party elite actions accumulate, some members of the public find that they are less and less in sympathy with their party and perhaps feel more comfortable with what they hear from the other party. For example, where the Democratic party is quite liberal relative to state opinion, fewer citizens of the state will embrace a Democratic party identification. The same electorate exposed to years of more moderate messages from the Democratic party should have a higher percentage of Democratic party identifiers. The same goes for the GOP. It should lose identifiers as its party elite espouses more conservative themes, and it should hold onto its identifiers as its stands remain closer to the state's electorate.

The bivariate evidence is mixed. The correlation between percentage of the electorate identifying as Democrats and Democratic party elite ideology is $-.57$. More liberal elites lose party identifiers. On the Republican side we expected that more liberal Republican elites should yield more Republican identifiers in the states, but the simple correlation of $-.20$ between Republican party elite ideology and percent Republican does not support this. Fortunately for our hypotheses, the full impact of the party elites on state partisanship becomes clearer in our multivariate analysis.

First, we need to include state ideology since, as discussed above, it is elite ideology relative to public opinion that should influence macro partisanship in the states. We also include a variable for the type of primary in the states. Some states have a "closed primary" in which voters must explicitly register as a member of one of the parties. There is evidence that this public declaration actually affects levels of partisanship (Finkel and Scarrow 1985) as well as the incidence of political independence (Norrander 1989). Thus, we have a dummy variable for the closed primary (using Norrander's classification at 526) to improve the specification of our model.

We begin with a summary simple regression of our overall measure of state partisanship (percent Democratic - percent Republican) regressed on our index of party elite ideology (the midpoint measure) as well as state opinion. The closed primary variable does not make sense for this dependent variable because we have no hypothesis for the relationship between overall partisan balance and the existence of a closed primary. Our expectation is that the more liberal the party elites are the more the Republicans should tend to gain identifiers. Thus, the coefficient for party elite liberalism should be negative. Controlling for elite behavior, we expect that more liberal

electorates will have more Democratic identifiers so the coefficient for state opinion should be positive. This is exactly what we find:

$$\text{PID} = 25.1 - 6.50(\text{Midpoint}) + 1.29(\text{StateOpinion}) + e \quad \text{Adj } R^2 = .38$$

(1.18) (1.29)

Overall, elites do matter for state partisanship: the more liberal they are the better Republicans do in the mass electorate and, conversely, as they become more conservative, the Democrats pick up party identifiers. We can look at this process in more detail by considering the individual contributions of each party while also bringing into the analysis the impact of having to declare a party affiliation as a condition for participation in the primaries.

Looking at more refined versions of both our dependent and primary independent variables yields a rich array of predictions for the set of coefficients. To the extent that the pattern is correct across a wide array of tests, we gain in our confidence in the underlying effects of elite ideology on mass partisanship. We have four related indicators of partisanship: percent Democratic, percent Independent, percent Republican, and our summary index, percent Democratic minus percent Republican. Consider each as the dependent variable in the following equation:

$$\text{Partisanship}_i = a + b_1\text{Elite}_{\text{Dem}} + b_2\text{Elite}_{\text{Rep}} + b_3\text{StateOpinion} + b_4\text{ClosedPrimary} + e$$

When Party_i is percent Democratic we expect both b_1 and b_2 to be negative: more liberal Democratic party elites and more liberal Republican elites should result in fewer Democratic identifiers (hyp: b_1 and $b_2 < 0$). When Party_i is percent Independent, we expect opposite signs: more liberal Democratic elites should yield more independents (hyp: $b_1 > 0$) while more liberal Republican elites would yield fewer independents (hyp: $b_2 < 0$). Finally, when Party_i is percent Republican we expect positive coefficients: more liberal Democratic party elites and more liberal Republican party elites should increase the number of Republican identifiers (hyp: b_1 and $b_2 > 0$). The overall measure has the same hypotheses as percent Democratic: both coefficients should be negative.

The effect of the closed primary we are interested in here is that it makes many citizens actually declare a party preference in order to vote in a primary. In other states, no such public declaration is required. Thus, we expect that the impact of the closed primary should be to increase party identification: b_4 should be positive for percent Democratic and percent Republican but negative for percent Independent.

Table 4 shows the results of our analysis. For identifying with a political party (percent Democratic or percent Republican) the signs are correct

Table 4. Party Elite Ideology Effects on State Partisanship

	% Democratic	% Independent	% Republican	%Dem - % Rep
Elite Ideology				
Democratic	-1.98 (.58)**	-.224 (.47)	2.20 (.37)**	-4.20 (.87)**
Republican	-1.39 (.81)*	1.33 (.67)*	.055 (.51)	-1.53 (1.22)
State Opinion	.408 (.20)*	.313 (.16)*	-.721 (.13)**	1.13 (.29)**
Closed Primary	5.51 (1.80)**	-9.11 (1.49)**	3.60 (1.16)**	1.62 (2.70)
Adj R ²	.40	.58	.55	.39

Coefficients are unstandardized; significance: *p < .05; **p < .01

for our elite ideology variables. Both coefficients are statistically significant for percent Democratic, but only Democratic elite liberalism is significant for percent Republican. However, a test for the joint significance of Democratic and Republican elite ideology for percent Republican is significant ($F_{2,43} = 19.9, p < .001$). Overall, then, our hypotheses are supported for identifying with a party. The results for percent independent are not so encouraging—the coefficients have the wrong signs. The effects are not strong, and we suspect they are at least partially an artifact. We have strong hypotheses for elite ideology effects on percent Democratic and percent Republican. These effects are necessarily related to changes in percent Independent, since the three values sum to 100 percent. For present purposes, we have considerable confidence in the impact of elite ideology on levels of party identification as a Democrat or Republican. The percent independent variable seemingly is less directly affected by elite ideology (cf. Norrander 1989).

The important message that comes through is that state party elites do influence state partisanship. It is an important factor in accounting for interstate variation in levels of party identification. Thus, we add elite behavior at the state level to the short list of factors (realignment, demography, political culture) that accounts for the wide variations in partisanship across the states.

Conclusions

Party elites play several important roles in the politics of the states. Here we touched only on some of the manifestations of their seemingly pervasive influence by looking at some of the consequences that flow from a focus on the ideological character of the parties. Most of our conclusions stem from analyses that are motivated by slight revisions of the logic of the basic Downsian spatial model. Changing key features of the simple spatial model to match more closely the realities of politics of the states yields a still relatively parsimonious theory of elite-mass interactions, but which nicely accounts for the patterns of candidate issue strategies we observe, patterns of policy influence, and even feedback effects on partisan identifications in the states.

We will conclude with just a summary of the key features of the theory and how these pointed the way for examining the impact of party ideologies. First, the basic spatial model maintains a unity of purpose and action between party and candidates: both want only to win. We posit a set of activists who are highly motivated by policy or ideology and candidates who, because of their position, put a relatively higher value on election goals. This separation led to different measures of activists and candidate opinion. Our analysis demonstrated that, first, there are quite substantial differences in general issue positions between Democratic and Republican candidates across the states, with the distance being larger in some states than others. Second, our measures of activists' opinion completely account for the impact of "party" in the states. That is, the data strongly indicate that activists pull candidates away from the average voter with the result of a reasonably clear issue choice for the general electorate. The more extreme the activists, the further the candidates are found from the average voter. The influence of activists results, as indicated above, from their strategic position; including their ability to provide resources and their influence in the recruitment/nomination process.

The consequence of indulging this ideological purity of activists is a smaller number of offices won under the party banner. For example, we find a modestly strong negative impact of party elite liberalism (the midpoint measure) on average Democratic strength in the state legislatures, controlling for partisanship and state opinion (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993, 130). This is exactly what we would expect if voters paid attention to the relative issue proximity of candidates. Thus, we see a clear linkage between activists' opinion, candidate issue positions, and then the composition of the legislatures.

Our analysis also showed a clear policy side to the parties' impact in state politics. Simply put, public opinion is the big variable in determining overall levels of policy liberalism in the states, but the liberalism-conservatism of party elites has a distinct impact. Controlling for public opinion, more liberal party elites produce more liberal policies, and more conservative party elites produce more conservative policy. The relative direct effects of public opinion and elite ideology varied across issue areas, but for overall liberalism, both have important independent effects. Within this, we saw glimmers of evidence that the parties' effects are not equal across policy areas.

Finally, our analysis took us to consider the long run impact of party ideology and policies on the mass electorate. We again drew on Downs, only here considering party identification as responsive to party programs. We find that this long run "standing decision" has a definite policy component. Party elites do influence levels of partisanship by the positions they espouse: more liberal Democratic parties lose identifiers and more conservative Republican parties lose identifiers.

Our analysis points out in several places the electoral advantages of policy moderation. Moderate candidates do better at the polls, and moderate parties gain party identifiers, further reinforcing the likelihood of success. But the parties move toward the middle begrudgingly. Their hearts and souls belong to the activists, who bring to the parties their energy, their ideas and many resources. These activists continually veer to the left or veer to the right, eschewing the safer middle way. It seems that what makes politics worthwhile for the activist is the promise of changing policy to match the values they hold dear. They understandably have little enthusiasm for the candidate whose primary plan is to nudge the status quo more efficiently and more competently than the opposition. Their insistence on clear issue positions may be the bane of some candidates and an irritant for those who need to govern and compromise, but this policy pull also gives both life and shape to politics in the states, and it provides the general electorate with the possibility of making meaningful changes with the ballot.

NOTES

¹The primary vehicle for this project is measures of state public opinion. We draw on the national *CBS/New York Times* polls, executed about monthly beginning in 1976, to construct measures of state ideology and partisanship. When aggregated to the state level the polls spanning the period from 1976-1988 yield highly reliable indicators of these attitudes in the states (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993: Chapter 2).

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gress, are composed of people who are very serious in their political ambitions in the sense that they strongly value holding political office. We expect them to put their election goals first. Those that do not put a premium on winning—for example they take unpopular issue positions or do not bother to raise money because they find it distasteful—do not win.

³In a recent experimental effort to account for platform divergence Rebecca Morton (1993) imposed the constraint that candidates receive no payoff for winning; rewards are simply a function of enacted policies. Interestingly, subjects still converged more than the theory predicted. They demonstrated a tendency to sacrifice payoffs just to increase the chances of winning the mock elections. We suspect that candidates' personal motivations to win are much higher in the real world than in Morton's experiment.

⁴The state legislator data are from Uslaner and Weber (1977) and the congressional data are calculated by the authors from the 1974, 1978, and 1982 *CBS/New York Times* surveys of congressional candidates (Erikson and Wright, 1993; Wright, 1986; Wright and Berkman, 1986). Each set yielded a single clear liberal-conservative dimension. These were standardized and summed. See Erikson, Wright and McIver (1993, Ch. 5) for details.

⁵The county party chair data are from Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, and Huckshorn (1984); the convention delegate data were gathered by Miller and Jennings (1986). The full set of parties (2 x 48 = 96) were first standardized for each data set and the two data sets were summed for our measure of party activists ideology. See Erikson, Wright and McIver 1993, Ch 5.

⁶This is not exactly correct. The regression lines in Figure 1 are allowed to vary by party. However, building this into the regression does not yield a significant interaction between party affiliation and state opinion. That is, a single slope adequately captures the relationship between candidate ideologies and state opinion.

⁷There is a rationality of sorts to the activists' pull on candidates. They can trade off some votes lost on the issues and gain a candidate worth working for. But this does not necessarily mean losing the election; activists' contributions to the campaigns might be able to make up for the lost issue votes in knowledge, work and other resources the activists bring to the candidates' campaigns (Wright 1994).

⁸ The eight policy indicators of our analysis are as follows:

Education	Public educational spending per pupil. (Source: January 1984 report by the U.S. Department of Education)
Medicaid	Hanson's (1984) measure of the "scope" of Medicaid, or the state's extension of eligibility for Medicaid beyond the minimal levels required by federal regulations.
AFDC	Hanson's (1985) "scope" of AFDC eligibility, analogous to the Medicaid measure.
Consumer Protection	Sigelman and Smith's (1980) index of state responsiveness to the consumer movement, based on enactments through 1974 of legislation in 28 areas such as unit pricing, open dating, drug advertising, cooling off periods, small claims courts, construction standards, etc.
Criminal Justice	Our index of state support for "liberal" approaches to criminal justice. The scale is based on presence of state laws concerning victim compensation, domestic violence (injunction relief and shelter services), the decriminalization of marijuana possession, and the absence of the death penalty (data source: <i>Book of the States 1982-83</i>).
Gambling	Our index of state legalization of ten different kinds of legalized gambling: lotteries, numbers, sports betting, off-track betting, horse racing, dog racing, casinos, card rooms, and bingo. Nevada allows for nine of these forms of gambling. The remaining states range from six legalized and operating activities to none permitted (data source: <i>Book of the States 1982-83</i>).
ERA	Number of years from ERA ratification (if any) until 1978 (Boles, 1979).
Tax Progressivity	Phares' (1980) scale, which is the only systematic evaluation of state tax systems that considers the allocation of tax burdens across income categories within each state. Lowery (1985) argues convincingly that Phares' calculations provide the best measure of tax progressivity.

Composite

Liberalism This is a summation of the standardized versions of the eight indicators listed above.

⁹If party elite ideology is assumed to be endogenous, the indirect effect of state opinion (.76 x .51 = .39) plus its direct effect (.43) remains the single largest predictor of policy liberalism (total effect = .82).

¹⁰The regression is $(\text{Ed} + \text{Med} + \text{AFDC}) = 2.8 + .55(\text{EliteIdeology}) + .18(\text{StateOpinion}) + e$
 (.19) (.05)

with an adj. R^2 of .70. The primary function of summing the three policy indicators is to reduce the amount of measurement error and random noise in the observed variables. When we get to the underlying liberal-conservative aspects of these measures it appears that, in fact, parties do make a difference for educational expenditures, Medicaid and welfare policy.

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