ELECTORAL CHANGE AND THE FLOATING VOTER: The Reagan Elections

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This paper presents two perspectives on a fundamental issue of elections as mechanisms of democratic accountability. One is the interelection floating voter hypothesis, which implies that it is the least informed segment of the electorate that contributes most to electoral change. The second perspective is from V. O. Key's argument that vote switching is rooted in rational policy concerns. A direct test of Key's formulation of the problem on the Reagan election victories of 1980 and 1984 adds to the evidence supporting Key's perspective. The reasons why some voters hold firm to particular parties and candidates while others switch support is well explained by their different positions on matters of party, policies, and judgments of the candidates. Vote switching is not simply the by-product of an ill-informed segment of the electorate responding to its meager grasp of the short-term stimuli of a campaign. Vote switchers appear to judge the policies and the performance of an incumbent against their best estimates of these qualities in the competing candidate. The data are from the 1980 and 1984 CBS/*New York Times* exit polls.

Who is responsible for electoral change? How politically informed and rational are those who switch parties from one election to the next? These questions have preoccupied scholars since the pioneering studies of the 1940 and 1948 elections (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954). The answers we discover are fundamental to the justification of elections as mechanisms of accountability and consent. If the voting decisions of standpatters and switchers are both moved by reasonably informed, comparative judgments of the past and future performances of the competing parties, then politicians who desire reelection will have an overriding political incentive to act as rational producers—that is, to give voters a government they truly value.

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In contrast, if voters are poorly informed about the promises and performances of competing parties, the need for parties to develop attractive policies and to communicate them to the public is minimal indeed. Incentives for rational persuasion are likely to be overwhelmed by the rewards of campaign image-making and manipulation.

So stated, the degree to which elections foster incentives in politicians to govern in ways that sustain the informed support of the electorate depends equally on the attributes of both standpatters and party switchers. If only standpatters are politically rational, in Downs' (1957) sense of that term, then changes in governments will not be grounded in shifting judgments of party performance. If only party switchers are attentive to the promises and performances of the parties, there will be no reason for confidence that the election outcome depends importantly on the overall balance of policy preferences and performance judgments in the electorate. The question, "Who is responsible for electoral change?" should therefore be restated as two related questions: Do vote decisions in general depend upon rational policy and performance judgments? And, do standpatters and party switchers differ in the degree to which they employ these judgments?

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON FLOATING VOTERS

There are two broadly different perspectives on the political rationality of those who switch parties from one election to the next. The first is what has come to be called the "floating voter hypothesis." It originated in the Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) study of the 1940 American presidential election. They focused on three different types of "party changers," defined as people who change a vote intention *during the election campaign*, either by shifting from indecision to a vote preference or vice versa or by shifting from supporting one party to supporting the other. The authors summarized the attributes of the last group, the intracampaign "party changers," in this widely quoted passage (p. 69):

> These people [the party changers] . . . were: the least interested in the election; the least concerned about its outcome; the least attentive to political material in the formal media of communication; the last to settle upon a vote decision; and the most likely to be persuaded, finally, by a personal contact, not an "issue" of the election . . . .
>
> The notion that the people who switch parties during the campaign are mainly the reasoned, thoughtful, conscientious people who were convinced by the issues of the election is just plain wrong. Actually, they were mainly just the opposite.

There is little in this conclusion that is surprising on reflection. It seems reasonable that people who are slow to arrive at a vote decision during a

campaign or who waver in that decision may be less attentive to politics and less informed about the campaign than people who decide early and who remain faithful to their decision once made. Plausible or not, Daudt (1961) and Converse (1966) both observed that the evidence for this intra-election version of the floating voter hypothesis was quite weak. Daudt provides an excellent review of this early literature, making another summary unnecessary.

The hypothesis became more controversial when British studies (Milne and Mackenzie, 1954 and 1958) extended it to the act of supporting different parties in two successive elections. One objection to the extension of the floating voter hypothesis to interelection party switches is theoretical. That is, there is no straightforward line of argument connecting changes of vote intentions within a campaign to shifts in party support across successive elections. When Converse investigated the floating voter problem in his classic article, "Information Flow and the Stability of Partisan Attitudes" (1966), he gave the intraelection version of the hypothesis a more sophisticated cast grounded in the concept of a normal vote:

> the probability that any given voter will be sufficiently deflected in his partisan momentum to cross party lines in a specified election varies directly as a function of the strength of short-term forces toward the opposing party and varies inversely as a function of the mass of stored information about politics. (p. 141)

However, Converse did not correspondingly revise the interelection version of the hypothesis, presumably because he recognized that a defection from one's party identification within a campaign is not analogous to voting for different parties in successive elections: a vote shift across successive elections can as easily signal a return to one's normal partisan voting pattern as a defection from it. Converse simply retested the original version of the interelection version of the hypothesis, showing that respondents who voted for the same party in both 1956 and 1960 were more informed about politics than other groups: people who voted for different parties in the two elections, people who voted in only one of the two elections, and people who voted in neither of them.

Butler and Stokes (1969, pp. 220ff) also tested the interelection version of the hypothesis, associating constancy of party support in the British general elections of 1964 and 1966 with an index measuring the number of communication "channels" through which respondents reported that they followed politics. Dreyer (1971–72) tested this hypothesis once again on constancy of party support in the U.S. election pairs of 1960–64 and 1964–68.

Unlike Converse, Butler and Stokes and Dreyer did not distinguish between types of party switchers. Butler and Stokes and Dreyer simply com-

pared people who supported the same party twice to an undefined set of all other respondents. Since this undefined set presumably included respondents who did not vote in either one or both elections, it is not surprising that the constant supporters, being constant voters, appeared to be more attentive to media than other respondents. Similarly, in their study of the 1952 American presidential election, Janowitz and Marvick (1956, pp. 30–39) typically compared constant party supporters with an undifferentiated category of party changers, which included respondents who either moved from nonvoting in 1948 to support for a party in 1952 or from support for an opposing party in 1948 to nonvoting in 1952. The pessimistic conclusions of these early studies have been challenged by Benewick et al. (1969), Pedersen (1978), and Himmelweit (1981, chap. 3). In short, persuasive evidence is lacking for both the inter- and intraelection versions of the floating voter hypothesis.

V.O. Key, Jr.'s *The Responsible Electorate* (1966) marked the beginning of a second research perspective on the rationality of voters, including those who switch party support across elections. In a study of elections spanning 1936 to 1960, Key found a consistent pattern in which switchers tended to shift to support parties that were closer to their current policy preferences than the party they were abandoning. This rationalistic view of the vote decision helped stimulate what has come to be a widespread acceptance of the Downsian perspective that policy views importantly influence vote choices.

More specifically, Key's work also suggests an answer to the question with which this paper began. Party switchers would not appear to be different from standpatters in the degree to which policy views influence votes. Natchez and Bupp (1968), RePass (1971), and Kirkpatrick and Jones (1974) support this conclusion with their evidence on the existence of "issue publics," that is, voters whose concerns with particular issues are systematically associated with shifts in party support. Asher (1984, pp. 88–107) places the recent studies of floating voters into the larger literature on issue voting.

A TEST OF KEY'S HYPOTHESIS ON THE REAGAN ELECTIONS

If Key is correct that party switchers are issue voters, then the interelection version of the floating voter hypothesis would be thrown into considerable doubt. A goal of this paper is to test Key's hypothesis on the Reagan victories of 1980 and 1984. The choice of these elections is more than simply a case of topical interest. If the switchers to Reagan were indeed issue voters, then the evidence that the 1980s may be part of an ongoing realigning period is all the stronger. Moreover, recent American elections

have been quite volatile, with rates of party switching that are unusual compared to past U.S. elections or to British elections (Boyd, 1985). If the number of party switchers is increasing, it is all the more important to understand the factors that move them.

The data bases are the CBS/*New York Times* exit polls of 1980 and 1984. One virtue of these polls is their very large size, since surveys of a more typical size of 1,500 may contain too few switchers to analyze. Even in the face of the Reagan landslide in 1984, there are still 498 respondents in the exit poll who reported that they switched to Mondale in 1984 after having voted for Reagan in 1980. A second virtue is that these polls contain known voters only. This design completely controls for misreports of turnout in the current election and greatly reduces misreports for the previous election.[1]

THE VOTING MODEL AND THE MEASURES

The model of voting choice consists of the variables reported in Tables 1 and 2. The independent variables comprise a reasonably well-specified model, including party identification, ideological self-placement, prospective position issues, perception of the economic situation, issue concerns, and perceived candidate characteristics. Taken together, the variables in the model accurately classify about 90% of the vote choices of the respondents in both elections.

The measures reported in Tables 1 and 2 are unstandardized regression coefficients. All of the independent variables are dichotomies, and the coefficients can be interpreted approximately as the effect of a variable on the probability of voting Republican or Democrat.[2]

I will discuss the analysis in two stages. First, I briefly describe the independent variables and summarize the factors that best discriminate between the supporters of the Republican and Democratic candidates in 1980. This section is designed to answer the question with which this paper began, i.e., are voters in general rational? It focuses on column one of each table. Then, I test Key's formulation of the floating voter hypothesis by comparing the partisan, policy, and candidate attributes of standpatters to those of party switchers.

THE MEASURES AND A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ELECTIONS OF 1980 AND 1984

Fundamental Loyalties

Each category is a dummy variable derived from two ordinal variables: party identification and ideological identification. The effects of Democratic and Republican identification are measured in terms of an omitted

TABLE 1. Carter versus Reagan, 1980[a]

	ALL VOTERS	STANDPATTERS	SWITCHERS
Fundamental Loyalties:			
Republican	.19**	.24**	.01
Democrat	-.17**	-.30**	.05**
Conservative	.05**	.05**	.06**
Liberal	-.06**	-.07**	.01
Policy/Position Issues:			
Don't Risk War With USSR	-.12**	-.10**	-.08**
Tax Cut Vs. Balanced Budget	.02*	.01*	.00
Inflation Vs. Unemployment	.02**	.03**	-.02
Oppose ERA	.07**	.07**	.05**
Personal Financial Situation:			
Finances Better Than 1 Year Ago	-.05**	-.04**	-.02
Finances Worse Than 1 Year Ago	.08**	.06**	.08**
Most Important Issues Cited:			
Economic Issues:			
Balancing the Federal Budget	.09**	.07**	.08**
Jobs and Unemployment	-.02*	-.01	-.02
Reducing Federal Income Taxes	.08**	.06**	.07**
Inflation and Economy	.05**	.04**	.03*
Social Issues:			
ERA/Abortion	.01	.01	-.01
Needs of Big Cities	-.11**	-.06*	-.32**
Foreign Affairs:			
Crisis in Iran	-.12**	-.08**	-.18**
U.S. Prestige Around the World	.03**	.03**	.01
Qualities of Candidate Choice:			
Competence:			
Strong Leader	.10**	.08**	.13**
Good Judgment	-.04**	-.03**	.02
Experience in Government	-.14**	-.10**	-.20**
Morality:			
Honesty and Integrity	-.15**	-.11**	-.21**
Ideology:			
Real Conservative	.11**	.08**	.16**
Not Too Extreme	-.23**	-.16**	-.39**
Other:			
Time for a Change	.32**	.26**	.27**
My Party's Candidate	-.17**	-.10**	-.23**
Vice-Presidential Candidate	.07**	.09**	.05*
Constant	.50**	.48**	.62**
Multiple R	.79	.85	.67
% Cases Correctly Classified	90	93	88
Number of Cases	7705	5857	1848

[a] Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Positive coefficients indicate factors associated with a 1980 Republican vote; negative coefficients, factors associated with a 1980 Democratic vote. 1980 CBS/New York Times Exit Poll.
*Significant at .10 level; ** significant at .01 level.

TABLE 2. Mondale versus Reagan, 1984[a]

	ALL VOTERS	STANDPATTERS	SWITCHERS
Fundamental Loyalties:			
Republican	.12**	.10**	.04
Democrat	-.17**	-.24**	.04
Conservative	.02**	.04**	-.08*
Liberal	-.04**	-.05**	.01
Policy/Position Issues:			
Abortion: Present Policy	-.06**	-.05**	-.08*
Abortion: Legal But Restrict	-.01	-.01	-.00
Pro-Nuclear Freeze	-.11**	-.10**	-.12**
Increase Federal Spending on Poor	-.07**	-.08**	-.03
Decrease Federal Spending on Poor	.02*	.01	.08*
Pro-U.S. Military/Central America	.05**	.06**	.02
Perception of Economy:			
Better Than 4 Years Ago	.27**	.25**	.29*
Worse Than 4 Years Ago	-.14**	-.13**	-.14**
Most Important Issues Cited:			
Economic Issues:			
Reducing the Federal Deficit	-.02**	-.02*	-.07*
The Economy	.02**	.02*	.05
Social Issues:			
Fairness Toward the Poor	-.13**	-.12**	-.12**
Abortion	.01	.01	.03
Foreign Affairs:			
Arms Control/Threat of War	-.07**	-.06**	-.11**
Policy Toward Central America	-.11**	-.09**	-.14*
Strong U.S. Defense	.05**	.05**	.07*
Qualities of Candidate Choice:			
Competence:			
Strong Leadership	.07**	.05**	.10**
Experience	.10**	.09**	.16**
Morality:			
Traditional Values	.01	-.01	.10*
Ideology:			
A Real Conservative	.05**	.03*	.20**
Other:			
My Party's Candidate	-.06**	-.06**	-.08
Dislike Other Party's Candidate	.03**	.01	.11**
His Vision for the Future	-.02**	-.02**	-.03
The Vice-Presidential Candidates	-.01	.00	-.04
Constant	.56**	.61**	.40**
Multiple R	.82	.86	.63
% Cases Correctly Classified	92	95	79
Number of Cases	5968	5132	836

[a] Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Positive coefficients indicate factors associated with a 1984 Republican vote; negative coefficients, factors associated with a 1984 Democratic vote. 1984 CBS/New York Times Exit Poll.
*Significant at .10 level; ** significant at .01 level.

category, Independents, which serves as a comparison group. The comparison group for conservatives and liberals is moderates. Party identification is substantially more important than ideological identification in discriminating between the supporters of Reagan and his Democratic opponents, Carter and Mondale, in 1980 and 1984.

Policy/Position Issues

In 1980 the issues were four agree-disagree items. Voters were inclined to Reagan if they agreed that "cutting taxes is more important than balancing the federal budget," if they disagreed with the view that "unemployment is a more important problem today than inflation," and if they opposed the Equal Rights Amendment. Voters were inclined to Carter if they disagreed with the statement, "We should be more forceful in our dealings with the Soviet Union even if it increases the risk of war."

In 1984 voters tended to support Mondale if they agreed that abortion should be legal "as it is now" or if they believed that abortion should be "legal, but only in extreme circumstances." The comparison group are voters who believed that abortion should be illegal under all circumstances. Voters were also inclined to support Mondale if they favored negotiating "a nuclear freeze with the USSR" and if they supported an increase in "federal spending on the poor." Voters tended to support Reagan if they favored a decrease in spending on the poor and if they answered yes to the question, "Is the communist threat in Central America serious enough to justify having U.S. military forces there?"

The importance of these policy/position issues has a significant implication for the ongoing interpretations of the Reagan victories in 1980 and 1984. A major issue is whether these elections were more influenced by the *policy* beliefs of the voters or by voters' judgments of the *performances* of the incumbent presidents, Carter in 1980 and Reagan in 1984. The distinction between policy and performance judgments is the same as what Schneider (1981; p. 249) terms a "plebiscitary choice—How do I feel about the way the Government is being run?—and an ideological choice—Which candidate is closer to my beliefs?"

Many analysts interpret the 1980 election as primarily a plebiscite—a negative performance judgment about Carter's handling of the economy and foreign affairs (see, for example, Schneider, 1981; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, 1982; Kelley, 1983; Miller and Wattenberg, 1985). Because Carter entered the 1980 campaign with the lowest job approval rating of any incumbent president since the 1940s (Schneider, 1981; p. 241), this interpretation seems imminently sensible. Miller and Shanks (1982) are among the few who argue that the 1980 election also involved a preference

for Reagan's policy views. Similarly, the first of what will be many interpretations of the 1984 elections emphasizes that Reagan's reelection was also primarily a retrospective, performance judgment, mainly on his handling of the economy (Pomper, 1985, chaps. 3, 4).

This analysis of the 1980 and 1984 CBS/NYT exit polls offers evidence that policy as well as performance judgments underlay both of the Reagan victories. In 1980 the position issues of relations with the Soviet Union and ERA clearly distinguish the supporters of Carter and Reagan. In 1984 all of the position issues in the exit survey – abortion, pro-nuclear freeze, the desired level of federal spending on the poor, and our commitment in Central America – are significantly related to preferences between Reagan and Mondale.

The Economic Situation

In 1980, the CBS/NYT exit poll asked whether "compared to a year ago, is your family's financial situation" "better today," "about the same," or "worse today." Compared to those whose situation was about the same, those whose situation had improved supported the incumbent Carter and those whose situation had deteriorated supported the challenger Reagan.

In 1984 the CBS/NYT exit poll substituted a "sociotropic" (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981) question about the U.S. economy "compared to four years ago" in the place of the 1980 pocketbook item about one's personal financial situation. People who believed the economy in 1984 was "better today" supported the incumbent Reagan; those who believed the economy was "worse today" supported Mondale.

Most Important Issues Cited

Voters were invited to review a check list of items under the heading, "Which issues were most important in deciding your vote?" Up to two checks were accepted from the lists presented in Tables 1 and 2. If a voter checked an item on either the first or the second mention, the issue category is coded 1; otherwise it is coded 0. Because supporters of both candidates can check the same issue topic as an influence on their votes, an item in this category of variables will be significant only if those checking an issue vote disproportionately for one of the candidates. Thus, the coefficients for these check list variables estimate the net impact of each issue on the election outcome. For example, in 1980 the Equal Rights Amendment is a moderately strong position issue distinguishing the supporters of Carter and Reagan.[3] However, the net effect of ERA on the election is indicated to be small (see the small coefficients for ERA/Abortion under Most Impor-

tant Issues Cited) because, presumably, the issue netted about equal numbers of voters for both candidates.

In 1980, balancing the budget, reducing taxes, controlling inflation, and U.S. prestige around the world were important issues for Reagan. The issues of jobs and the needs of the cities helped Carter. The only anomaly in either table is that the Crisis in Iran appeared to help Carter, *ceteris paribus*, in 1980.[4]

In 1984 Reagan appeared to benefit from people voting on the issues of the economy, abortion, and a strong defense. Mondale benefitted from the issues of reducing the federal deficit, fairness toward the poor, arms control/threat of war, and the administration's Central American policy.

Qualities of Candidate Choice

Respondents were invited to check up to two "qualities" (1980 wording) or "factors" (1984 wording) about the candidates that mattered most to their votes. These qualities are grouped into the categories of competence, morality, ideology, and other, and, as above, form a series of dichotomous variables measuring whether a particular quality was checked by a respondent as a basis for his or her vote. As in the case of the most important issue variables, a candidate quality is significant only if those checking a quality vote disproportionately for the same candidate. The coefficients can be interpreted, then, as the net effect of a quality on the election outcome.

In 1980 Reagan, the challenger, benefitted significantly from being perceived as a strong leader and as a real conservative. Those who checked "It is time for a change," of course, voted overwhelmingly for Reagan. President Carter benefitted from being perceived as a person of good judgment, experience, honesty and integrity, his party's candidate, and as a person who "is not too extreme." As to the vice-presidential nominees, Reagan's running mate Bush helped Reagan more than Mondale aided Carter.

In 1984 President Reagan enjoyed the advantages of incumbency, and with this, his perception as an experienced and strong leader. He was also perceived as a person of traditional values and a real conservative. People's dislike of Mondale added to his support. Mondale gained only from his perception as having a "vision of the future" and from being his "party's candidate." The net effect of the vice-presidential candidates, Bush and Ferraro, was about even.

In sum, the general model of voting choice in 1980 and 1984 is certainly consistent with a rational choice theory of the voting decision. Voting decisions in the Reagan elections are well explained by position issues,

perceptions of economic well-being, issue concerns, and perceived candidate characteristics. The second major question can now be addressed: Are standpatters different from party switchers in the degree to which these political beliefs and judgments influence their votes?

FLOATING VOTERS IN THE REAGAN VICTORIES

It is not possible to make a direct test of the floating voter hypothesis using the CBS/NYT exit polls; these polls, like nearly all surveys, do not measure the information that respondents possess about issues and candidates. Even so, V. O. Key's analytic strategy of comparing standpatters with party switchers provides one perspective on the plausibility of the floating voter hypothesis. If party switchers appear to be just as rationalistic and issue oriented as standpatters, then considerable doubt will be cast on the hypothesis that it is the least-informed segment of the electorate that contributes most to electoral change. Two general patterns stand out in the comparisons of standpatters and switchers in Tables 1 and 2.

First, standpatters and vote switchers are equally influenced by policy/position issues, economic well-being, and perceptions of the most important issues facing the country. The coefficients for the individual variables in these categories compare closely across the columns in both election years. Some of these variables are not statistically significant in the case of switchers, while coefficients of a comparable magnitude for standpatters are significant. These differences mainly reflect the larger size of the standpatter sample and should not obscure the larger point—the similarity of the impact of issues and the economy on standpatters and switchers alike.

Second, the important points of difference between standpatters and switchers concern the relative weighting of fundamental loyalties versus judgments of the candidates. Party identification and, to a lesser degree, ideological self-identification, are highly associated with the vote choices of standpatters. This is not the case for switchers. What matters more to switchers are their perceptions of the candidates—their leadership, experience, integrity, and general ideological stance. The consistently significant coefficients for these judgments are not simply rationalizations because there is a high degree of agreement among all switchers as to which of these valued attributes characterize which candidates. The implication is one that is quite sensible. Standpatters are more influenced by the more durable loyalties of party and personal ideology. Switchers care more about the qualities of the candidates. Both, though, are influenced by their issue beliefs and the economic performance of the incumbent administration.

SUMMARY

This paper has presented two perspectives on a fundamental issue of elections as mechanisms of democratic accountability. One is the interelection floating voter hypothesis, which implies that it is the least-informed segment of the electorate that contributes most to electoral change. The second perspective is from V. O. Key's argument that vote switching is rooted in rational policy concerns. A direct test of Key's formulation of the problem on the Reagan election victories of 1980 and 1984 adds to the evidence supporting Key's perspective. The reasons why some voters hold firm to particular parties and candidates while others switch support is well explained by their different positions on matters of party, policies, and judgments of the candidates. Vote switching is not simply the by-product of an ill-informed segment of the electorate responding to its meager grasp of the short-term stimuli of a campaign. Switchers vote on position issues, their sense of economic well-being, and their perceptions of the qualities of the candidates. They appear to judge the policies and the performance of an incumbent against their best estimates of these qualities in the competing candidate. Vote switchers do not detract from the quality of the electoral judgment; rather, they are fundamental to it.

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NOTES

1. Converse (1966) and Weir (1975), among many others, warn of measures of vote switches that rely on an accurate memory of a vote choice four years earlier. The typical error, of course, is for respondents to misrecall that they voted for the winner. The magnitude of these memory errors varies with the difference in the popularity of the candidates at the time respondents are asked to recall a vote (Boyd, 1983). In the 1980 and 1984 exit polls, the misrecall of the Carter vote in 1976 and the Reagan vote in 1980 is about five and six percentage points, respectively. This error is sufficiently small and random not to bias the conclusions of this study. The proportions of standpatters and switchers voting for the candidates are reasonably close to those estimated in other surveys (Boyd, 1985), as well as to the estimates of vote swing calculated from actual, aggregate election returns using Shively's (1982) method.
2. This analysis violates an assumption of multiple regression. When the dependent variable is a dichotomy like vote choice, predicted scores can exceed 0 and 1. Thus, the regression coefficients can only be interpreted as approximate probabilities. Probit or logit models are not viable alternatives because nonlinear models require a reasonable proportion of continuous or, at least, ordinal independent variables. The check list of exit polls contain no

continuous variables and few ordinal ones. A discriminant analysis yields the same inferences as multiple regression, since discriminant coefficients are constant multiples of these regression coefficients when the dependent variable is a dichotomy (Norusis, 1985, p. 90) and the standard errors of the coefficients of regression and discriminant analyses are exactly the same. Regression coefficients are presented here because of their ease of interpretation. The percentages of cases correctly classified come from a discriminant analysis that exactly parallels the regression analysis.

3. In 1980 male support for Reagan exceeded female support by about nine percentage points. Mansbridge's (1985) analysis of the 1980 CBS/NYT exit poll is that ERA was less important in contributing to this gender gap than other factors, such as people's attitudes on "risking war with the Soviet Union." Whether or not ERA contributed to differences in male and female support for Reagan, Table 1 still supports the conclusion that ERA discriminated between Reagan and Carter voters, regardless of whether these voters were male or female.
4. While the Iranian hostage issue in its early stages obviously benefitted Carter in his nomination battle against Kennedy, it seems counter-intuitive to suppose that the continuing crisis helped Carter in the general election. However, I have not seen any multivariate analysis that establishes that the Iranian hostage issue cost Carter general election votes. The pollsters for Carter and Reagan, Patrick Caddell and Richard Wirthlin, do not conclude that the hostage crisis hurt Carter, either (*Public Opinion*, 1981).

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