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Perceptions of Presidential Candidates:
Implications for Electoral Change*

The purposes of this study were to analyze citizens' perceptions of presidential contenders, using data provided in the Center for Political Studies' 1970 national election study, seek a spatial representation of those perceptions, and consider the implications of changes from similar 1968 data for realignment of the electorate. In the 1970 analysis, we successfully replicated our 1968 findings. Partisan and issue factors emerged in a two-dimensional representation of the data, but with some significant changes from 1968. The location of a few candidates shifted over the two years as they became more or less salient to the public, while the partisan and issue dimensions became more correlated due to a process of polarization of the parties on new issues, resulting in convergence of the dimensions. A new analysis put the candidates within the context of societal cleavages, showing how closely the candidates were viewed with respect to a variety of social groups in this country. The conclusion placed the analysis in a framework of electoral change, tracing through the components of such change and finding implications of an issue realignment in the results.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS INVARIABLY raise questions regarding system change. Frequently, the short-term policy mandate which can be imputed to an election is unclear, but more often the long-term implications of an election for system change are misinterpreted. The classic case is the widespread discussion of the possible demise of the Republican Party after 1964, a topic which seemed irrelevant once a Republican president was elected in 1968. Yet a presidential election often can have important systemic implications which we would not want to overlook. The 1968 election spawned its own discussion of electoral change, with particular interest expressed in the possibility of a party realignment leading to a Republican majority. Our own analysis of 1968 survey data suggested the potential for system change, while

emphasizing our lack of suitable longitudinal data for the evaluation of our results.[1]

The mid-term congressional election affords another opportunity for students of voting behavior to assess the relative degree of electoral constancy and change. It lacks the intensity of a presidential election, but it permits replication of previous work to determine which results were more than ephemeral. Therefore, we have employed data from the 1970 national election study of the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies in order to test the validity of our previous work, as well as to examine whatever change may have occurred between 1968 and 1970.

Our approach is one of analyzing the factional lines of American politics. Presidential contenders in this country represent the various party factions. We examine the extent to which these contenders are perceived along traditional party lines, and the extent to which perceptions are molded by a new issue factor. The group context of candidate perceptions will be explored to see whether the candidates fit into the fabric of the new vocal social groups which are emerging, or if they are instead cast in the scenario of older group conflicts. The implications of the present panorama of candidate perceptions for possible changes in party structures will be emphasized—whether increased electoral volatility and eventually realignment will be the pattern of the future, or if such "surface" perceptions merely mask an increasing stability and constancy of the party system. The final section of this report places the results into a theoretical framework of the components of electoral change.

THE THERMOMETER QUESTION

Perceptions of possible contenders for the presidency were measured on a *feeling thermometer* in the 1970 election study. This measuring instrument is a 0-to-100 degree scale on which respondents indicated how they felt toward each candidate. Scores above 50 degrees corresponded to warm feelings, those below 50 degrees represented cold feelings, and 50 degrees signified that the respondent had no feelings about the candidate. The question also sought to obtain "don't know" responses to individual candidates when appropriate.[2] Our

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[1] A report on the 1968 results is given in Herbert F. Weisberg and Jerrold G. Rusk, "Dimensions of Candidate Evaluation," *American Political Science Review*, 64 (December 1970), 1167-1185.

[2] The full wording of the question is given in the Appendix of Weisberg and Rusk, "Dimensions of Candidate Evaluation," p. 1185. The thermometer card

ability to compare perceptions across time is enhanced by the availability of similar data collected after the 1968 election.

The selection of names for the study was restricted to those who seemed likely to be contenders in 1972, or who were fairly well-known figures within their parties. Such candidates included President Nixon, Vice-President Agnew, Ronald Reagan, John Lindsay, George Wallace, and a series of Democratic hopefuls—Edmund Muskie, Hubert Humphrey, Ted Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, and George McGovern.[3] The scores received by the candidates inevitably reflect the post-election timing of the study, those most active in the congressional campaign being most affected in this regard. Another aspect of the timing of this research is the fact that we describe public reactions two years before the 1972 election, well before the media campaigns increase the salience of the actual candidates. This means that our 1970 measurements were obtained at a less intense point in time than our 1968 data, so that some of the differences between the two sets of observations represent only the necessary differences, particularly in salience, between presidential and mid-term election settings.

A SPATIAL MAPPING OF CANDIDATE PERCEPTIONS

Perceptual data on the candidates can tell us much about how the public views the factional structure of politics—the basic conflicts and cleavages which exist in the political world today. Candidates both initiate and represent such conflicts, their nature and intensity most often become apparent in the presidential race, and the differences people perceive between the candidates center on the underlying structure of political conflict.

Inter-Candidate Correlations

An analysis of this underlying structure of political conflict must first start with an examination of which candidates are perceived as similar to one another and which are not. Clusters of candidates viewed as similar to one another and the relationships between these clusters

handed to the respondent is also shown in this article, although it was inadvertently placed on page 1175.

[3] The comparable candidate list for the 1968 election study included seven candidates listed in the 1970 study (President Nixon, Vice-President Agnew, Ronald Reagan, George Wallace, Edmund Muskie, Hubert Humphrey, and Eugene McCarthy), plus Robert Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Nelson Rockefeller, George Romney, and Curtis LeMay.

provide a rough guideline to ascertain the underlying factional bases of perceptions of candidates. Correlation values will be used to summarize the perceptual similarity or dissimilarity of pairs of candidates. Candidates being perceived in a similar fashion should have substantial positive correlations and fall into the same cluster; those seen as quite dissimilar from one another should have sizable negative values and fall into different clusters. Correlations near zero indicate an absence of shared perceptions between given pairings of candidates.

Using this logic in 1968, we found that the set of candidate correlations revealed four basic clusters—the members within each cluster being viewed by the public as similar in certain ways, while candidates residing in different clusters were perceived as dissimilar to each other. The four clusters consisted of (a) mainstream Democrats (Humphrey, Muskie, Johnson, and Kennedy), (b) mainstream Republicans (Nixon, Agnew, and Reagan), (c) American Independent Party candidates (Wallace and LeMay), and (d) bipartisan liberals (McCarthy, Rockefeller, and Romney). Shades of both partisan and issue cleavages were evident in such candidate perceptions—representing the major elements of political competition.

The candidate clusters visible in the 1970 data were similar but not identical to those found in 1968. A mainstream Republican cluster was again evident, since the correlations between Nixon, Agnew, and Reagan ranged from .51 to .58. Humphrey, Muskie, Kennedy, McCarthy, McGovern, and Lindsay formed a second cluster (correlations ranged from .21 to .60) which could be decomposed into two more familiar sub-clusters—the Democratic mainstream group of Humphrey, Muskie, and Kennedy (correlations between .43 and .50) and the Democratic and Republican liberal group of McCarthy, McGovern, and Lindsay (correlations between .34 and .60). Wallace, as in 1968, tended to be isolated from the other clusters.

Greater change was evident in the relationships between the clusters. Wallace's correlations with the mainstream Republican cluster in 1970 were all positive and larger than before. This could have resulted from less concentration on the unique aspects of Wallace's candidacy in the off-year, from policy convergence between the administration and Wallace, or both. Whatever the exact cause, one side effect of this was that the strongest negative correlations in 1970 were between the partisan clusters, whereas in 1968 the strongest negative correlations had been between the Democrats and Wallace. Hence, Wallace was both seen as closer to the Republican position (or vice-versa), and not

as the polar object to the Democrats, the Republicans being polar to the Democrats in 1970.

These elements of continuity and divergence suggest the possibility once again of mapping the American competitive space into partisan and issue terms, while at the same time, implying that the partisan factor had a greater weight in 1970 than in 1968 (as might be expected in an off-year election). But at this stage such projections of candidate perceptions along these factional lines are mainly conjectural. Based on our experience in 1968, the correlations do not present a ready or systematic comprehension of the underlying competitive structure from simple inspection alone. What is needed is to transform such correlational information into a geometric representation of the perceived differences between the candidates. By use of the Shepard-Kruskal scaling technique, we can arrive at a *candidate space* based on the correlational data; such a technique places the candidates in a space so that those with the highest correlations are closest together, while those with the most negative values are furthest apart. This monotonic rule may not provide a perfect solution within a space of small dimensionality, but the technique seeks a solution for any given number of dimensions, attempting to come as close as possible to satisfying the rule of monotonicity between correlation values and candidate distances.[4]

[4] Shepard-Kruskal scaling is a nonmetric, multidimensional scaling algorithm. A nonmetric technique has been employed because the order of the correlations is more invariant under the vagaries affecting the measurement than are the exact correlation values. Multidimensional scaling is preferable to factor analysis in that the latter overestimates the dimensionality of the data. See Weisberg and Rusk, "Dimensions of Candidate Evaluation," footnote 12, pp. 1173-1174.

Of more fundamental importance is our decision to analyze correlation coefficients rather than directly analyzing the individual preference orders. Since the correlations measure the covariation in the ratings of candidate pairs while controlling for idiosyncratic variation unique to each given candidate, the resultant spatial representation is particularly suitable for determining the common dimensions of conflict. Yet a space based directly on the individual preference orders would be better suited for describing the distribution of voters in the candidate space and discussing candidate strategies in competing in that space. Each approach has its own utility and limitations; we consider the correlational space appropriate for present purposes, but we expect future work to give more emphasis to the preference space. See George B. Rabinowitz, *Spatial Models of Electoral Choice: An Empirical Analysis* (Ph.D. dissertation in progress, University of Michigan). Also see Hans Daalder and Jerrold G. Rusk, "Perceptions of Party in the Dutch Parliament," in Samuel C. Patterson and John C. Wahlke, eds., *Comparative Legislative Behavior: Frontiers of Research* (New York: John Wiley and Sons,

The Candidate Space

By using this technique, we get a " physical picture " of the candidates—how close together or far apart they are from one another. Such a space gives us a better grasp of what competitive dimensions the public views as pulling some candidates together and others apart. Figure 1 shows the two-dimensional representation of the correlation coefficients.[5] The Republican and Democratic clusters suggested in the discussion of the correlations are evident here, with Lindsay being closest to the Democratic cluster. Wallace is seen to be separated from the two main clusters, but closer to the Republican one. The vertical axis, running from Nixon and Agnew to Humphrey and Kennedy, corresponds to a partisan factor. The Republicans are separated from the Democrats in the public's mind—certainly the essential basis of all political competition—with Wallace and Lindsay occupying the middle positions as a reflection of their ambiguous party positions. The horizontal axis places Wallace at one end and Lindsay and Muskie at the other. This second dimension has left-right overtones, but its exact meaning cannot be specified from Figure 1 alone.

This spatial representation is basically similar to the candidate space we obtained from the 1968 data. To illustrate this point, we have

1972), pp. 143-198, for a comparison of the two methods on Dutch elite data. In this latter report, the correlation approach revealed traditional dimensions of conflict, while the focus on individual preference order data highlighted a party coalition strategy space (analogous to the voter-candidate strategy space on the mass level).

[5] This solution was obtained from Kruskal's MDSCAL program (version 5). See Joseph B. Kruskal, " Multidimensional Scaling by Optimizing Goodness of Fit to a Nonmetric Hypothesis," *Psychometrika*, 29 (March 1964), 1-27. The extent of monotonicity between the correlations and spatial distances is summarized by a measure known as stress, ranging in value from 0 for a perfect solution to a maximum value of 1. The solution shown in Figure 1 has a stress of .060 which Kruskal would term "excellent." A "good" one-dimensional representation (stress = .177) could be obtained with the mainstream Republicans and Wallace on one end of the dimension and the other candidates at the opposite end (Nixon and Kennedy being at the respective extremes). However, such a solution places Wallace too close to the Republican mainstream candidates and Lindsay too far from them, problems remedied by the two-dimensional solution given in Figure 1. The stress values cited here are larger than those in our previous article because we have switched to Kruskal's second stress formula which leads to values about twice as large as those given by his first formula. The axes are arbitrary in multidimensional scaling; we have chosen a varimax rotation around the centroid of the space for the figures presented in this paper.

rotated the 1970 solution to obtain the best fit with the 1968 space.[6] This result is shown in Figure 2, the two solutions being superimposed on one another. The general structures of the two spaces resemble each other in the overall clustering and in the relations between the clusters. It is evident that the two partisan clusters remain largely

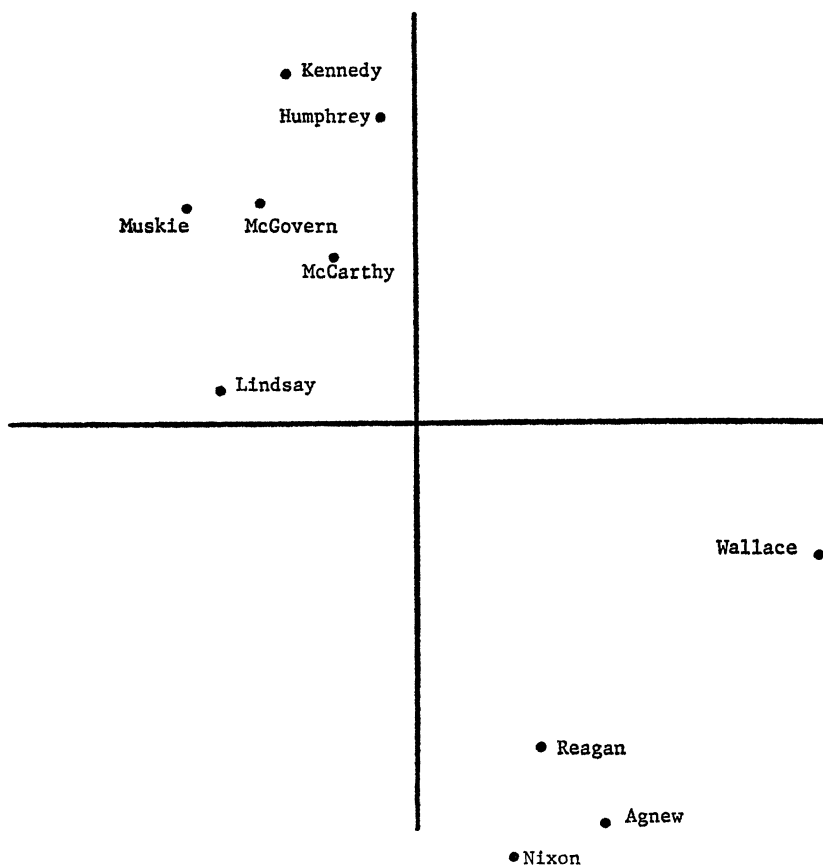

FIGURE 1

1970 CANDIDATE SPACE

[6] Schönemann and Carroll's least squares matrix comparison procedure has been used on configurations of the candidates common to both thermometer measurements. This procedure is described in Peter H. Schönemann and Robert M. Carroll, "Fitting One Matrix to Another Under Choice of a Central Dilation and a Rigid Motion," *Psychometrika*, 35 (June 1970), 245-55.

intact over the two year period, the 1968 and 1970 clusters for each party adhering closely to one another while the main clusters of the two parties reside in opposite parts of the space. Also, Wallace is separate from the partisan clusters in both measurements.

While the overall reading is one of stability in candidate perceptions, Figure 2 also calls attention to some elements of movement and
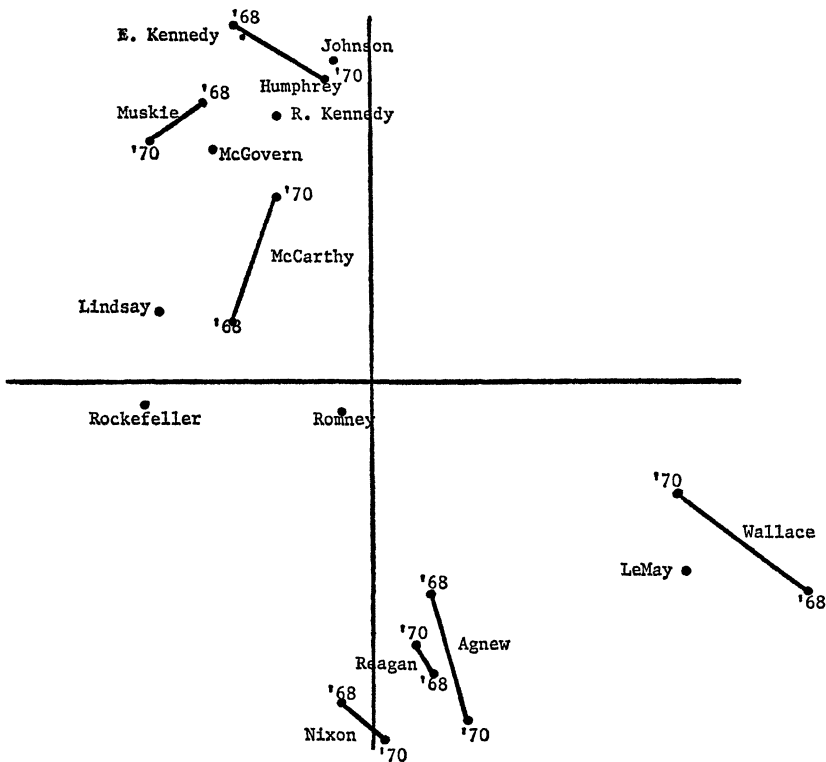
FIGURE 2

1970 CANDIDATE SPACE ROTATED TO 1968 CANDIDATE SPACE

change. The fourth cluster evident in our 1968 space—McCarthy, Rockefeller, and Romney—does not exist in 1970. In part this reflects the omission of the latter two candidates from our 1970 measurement, but it also denotes a movement of McCarthy toward the mainstream Democratic cluster, something that is more noticeable here than in our earlier discussion of the correlations taken alone. Essentially,

McCarthy is not viewed as distinct from his party as he was in 1968. Lindsay seems to occupy a position similar to McCarthy's in 1968, but he does not form a separate cluster entirely by himself, his ties to the Democrats putting him in a middle position.

The largest movements between the two years involve Wallace, McCarthy, and Agnew. Wallace is viewed as less extreme than in 1968, due presumably to the lower intensity of the 1970 election and its lessened focus on Wallace *per se*. McCarthy's move toward the Democratic cluster has resulted as circumstances causing him to deviate from his party have receded in the public memory. Agnew's move toward the end of the Republican scale reflects his greater embodiment of the Republican partisan position in 1970. His increasing salience and intense partisan rhetoric over the two year period undoubtedly explain this movement. Such movements add the flavor of change to perceptions of the candidates these past two years, but they are perhaps even more noteworthy because they stand against a backdrop of remarkable stability between the two candidate configurations. The basic notions of the vertical axis being a partisan factor and the horizontal one representing some type of left-right stance on the issues (or at least a Wallace versus non-Wallace position on the issues) remain unchallenged, the movement of Wallace, McCarthy, and Agnew only bolstering these interpretations by providing further reference points in such a discussion.

Societal Mappings

The essence of our interpretation thus far centers on the idea that conflict space of the kind we have described mirrors people's perceptions of the candidates. A further test of this contention would be to relate the public's perceptions of various social groups associated with these conflicts to how people view the candidates. If there is a firm relationship between the two sets of perceptions, then we have additional evidence that political conflict, whether partisan or issue-oriented, is the underlying basis for perceptions and evaluations of the candidates.

Our measurement of people's group perceptions is again based on the feeling thermometer, enhancing the comparability between these perceptions and those of the candidates. In the 1970 election study, we had respondents score some seventeen groups on the thermometer, ranging from standard partisan and racial groups to such new social groups as urban rioters and marijuana users. While the average popularities of candidates varied between 32 and 59 on the thermometer scale, the means for the seventeen groups used ranged from 8 (for

urban rioters) to 80 (for police). The mean scores for most of the groups were more extreme than those of the candidates. In short, the groups clearly evoked strong feelings, making the evaluations of the candidates look pallid by comparison.

Figure 3 portrays the scaling of the candidates with the groups.
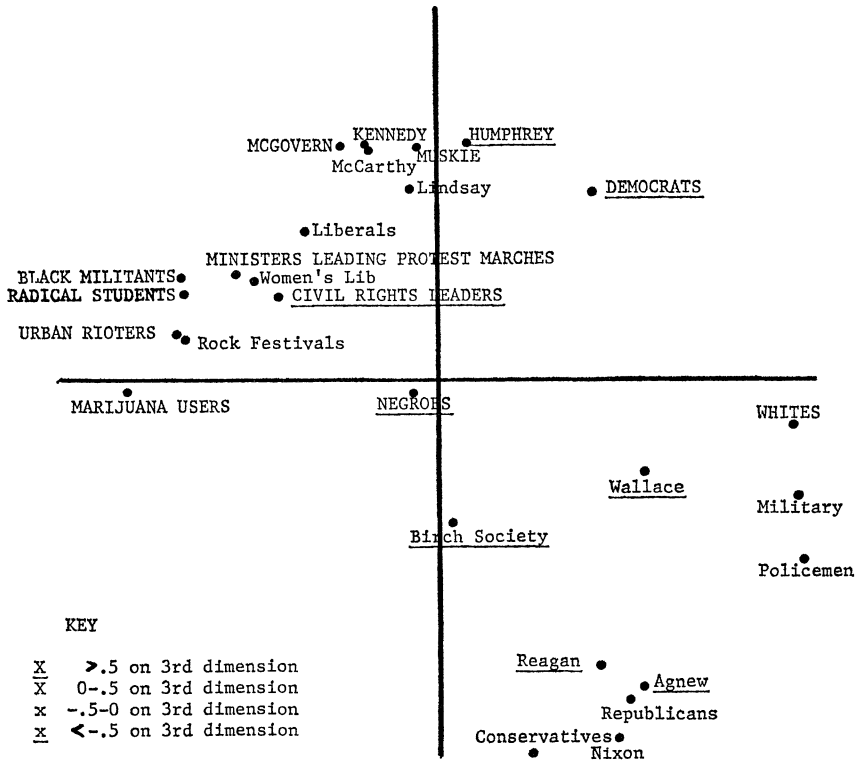
FIGURE 3

1970 CANDIDATE–GROUP SPACE

While it essentially retains the structure of the earlier candidate space (see Figure 1), some of the candidate positions have moved somewhat in order to satisfy the additional constraints imposed by the inclusion of the new data set on groups. To satisfy these additional constraints, a three-dimensional solution was required. The vertical dimension in this solution is partisan, as before—the Republican and Democratic candidates loading high on opposite ends of the dimension, with

Wallace being the only candidate not having his highest loading here. The vertical dimension poses President Nixon at one end of the axis to the Democratic candidates at the other.

Other items which loaded highly on this dimension include the Republican and Democratic partisan groups and the "conservative" and "liberal" groups. We would expect the Republicans and Democrats to be located on this dimension, lending further validation to its being a partisan factor, but why the conservative and liberal groupings? The answer lies in the fact that such terms have a very restricted meaning to the public—referring mainly to "government spending," a referent first attached to these terms in the social welfare, New Deal days, and one which became closely associated with people's party identification over the years (a point evident in the 1968 data and one which will again be demonstrated below for the 1970 materials).[7] Suffice it to say that such terms or groupings basically are not identified by the public with general ideological belief systems or left-right positions on the new political issues of the 1960s, but instead are associated with the partisan conflicts centering on "government spending" that originally arose in the New Deal days of the 1930s.

The horizontal dimension involves the left-right distinctions associated with some of the new issues and groups which have dominated political headlines in the past few years. The police and military seem posed at one end of the dimension, contrasted with the marijuana users, urban rioters, black militants, radical students, rock festival followers, protest march ministers, and women liberators at the other. Implications of a social or moral issue factor come to mind. Wallace, Agnew, Nixon, and Reagan are viewed on the *traditional* side of the dimension, while McGovern, Kennedy, McCarthy, and Lindsay tend toward the *change* side. This political-social dichotomy remains when we place specific issues into the space with the candidates. The third dimension has a special character of its own. It is concerned primarily with the racial question, pitting the blacks and civil rights leaders against Wallace. However, the John Birch Society also loads highly on the conservative side of this dimension, indicating that its meaning may be somewhat broader than a strictly civil rights interpretation. Both the second and third dimensions highlight a conflict structure underlying candidate perceptions which involves left-right cleavages over the new political issues of the day, and the groups associated with them.

[7] See Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in a Mass Public," in David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 206-256.

The spaces displayed thus far point to the fact that no one dimension alone shapes perceptions of the candidates. However, the vertical dimension—the partisan factor—has the strongest explanatory power, although it cannot account for perceptions of some of the candidates and most of the social groups. Ideological and life style considerations can begin to account for some of the differences we have shown, but these are matters best confronted when we add issues to our universe, a point to which we now turn.

ISSUES OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

In the 1968 election study, the public gave notice that a new issue area was an object of their concern, one that centered on such problems as the plight of the cities, civil rights, Viet Nam, protest, and law and order. In 1970, the public was still very much concerned with these issues. About 63 percent of the respondents in the 1970 election study continued to mention these issues as the major problems facing the country, compared to 75 percent two years earlier. Viet Nam was still the specific issue most mentioned though its salience as a problem fell from 42 percent to 30 percent in the two year span as Nixon began winding down the war. There were other changes in emphasis within the new issue context, such as less concern with urban riots and more concern with campus disorder. But, the overall concern with the new issues remained central as before. While there was much discussion in the media about the effect of economic issues on the 1970 election, we found that public concern over economic questions was still minimal, only increasing from 3 percent mentioning such problems in 1968 to 12 percent doing so in 1970.

We have mentioned this new set of problems as if it were a coherent issue area. The relationships among these issues are, however, far from perfect, a situation which is typical of attitudinal survey data. This limitation aside, we do find a tendency for attitudes on these issues to cohere. The 1970 study included attitude questions concerning possible solutions to eight problems: urban unrest, campus unrest, rights of accused criminals, government aid to minorities, Viet Nam, inflation, pollution, and government health insurance. The first five of these issues formed a distinct cluster, as one would expect if a new issue area really existed. The correlation values ranged from .20 to .50. The remaining items showed very little relationship to one another or to the new issue cluster.

The relationship between these issues and party tells us much about

the direction of partisan competition. The new issues had very small
correlations with party in 1968, correlations ranging from .02 to .15
but with an average of only .07. The new issues were correlated some-
what more with party in 1970, although the correlations remained low.
The average 1970 correlation with party was .12, ranging from .09
to .17. Two of the items were asked in both years: attitudes on urban
unrest became less partisan as a Republican president had to face
responsibility for such problems (.15 to .11), while attitudes on Viet
Nam became more partisan as leading Democratic candidates moved
to a more dovish position on the war (.02 to .08). Of the remaining
items, government health insurance had the highest correlation with
party (.23), coming closest to tapping the social welfare concerns out
of which present partisan divisions developed during the New Deal.

The Candidate-Issue Space

We have shown a spatial representation of the candidate perceptions.
Now we can add issue items to that space, to show the relationship
between the candidates and these issues. We employed four attitudinal
items for this purpose: party identification and government health
insurance as representative of traditional concerns, and urban unrest
and Viet Nam as representative of the new issue concerns. If our
contention is correct that a conflict structure underlies candidate per-
ceptions, we should be able to use these attitudinal items as validation,
much as we did with the earlier social group items.

Adding these items to the space results in the solution shown in
Figure 4.[8] The familiar partisan element seems to be the dimensional
basis for candidate perceptions along the vertical axis. The array of
candidates here resembles the cast of contenders in 1968, with Nixon
and Humphrey occupying the polar positions on the continuum and

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[8] We should emphasize that issues are being added to the space to facilitate
interpretation of the two-dimensional candidate space, and not as a separate test
of the dimensionality of the space. We include in Figure 4 both the liberal and
conservative poles of the issue items to draw attention to the placement of the
issues with respect to the full set of candidates within the confines of the two
dimensions of Figure 1. Additional issues could have resulted in added dimensions,
as in Figure 3 where the dimensionality of the 17 groups predominates over that
of the 10 candidates. However, our choice of issue areas is based on the analysis
of the major problems cited by the respondents in the 1970 election study, with
the cluster analysis testifying to the integrity of the issue areas. In particular,
the racial problem is part of the new issue cluster and is implicit in the urban
unrest item.

Wallace, the third party candidate, found relatively near the middle. Buttressing the partisan interpretation is the fact that the Republican and Democratic codings of party identification load very highly on this dimension. These party items are also located close in space to their respective clusters of candidates. The government health insurance item is found near these clusters and the party items, and this
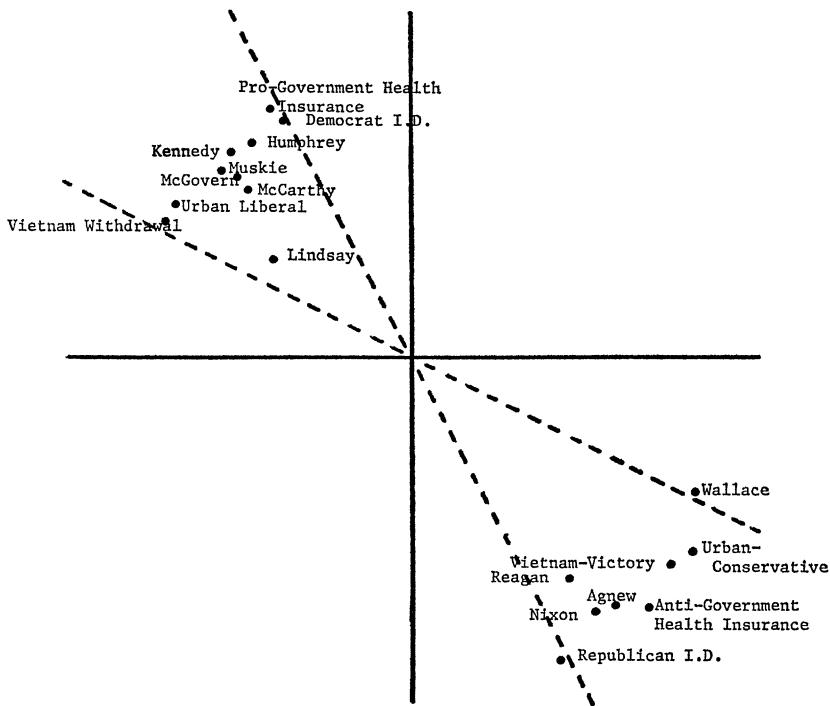
FIGURE 4

1970 CANDIDATE–ISSUE SPACE

finding fits well with the partisan interpretation since social welfare was the major issue of government spending arising out of the Roosevelt period, during which present party loyalties were molded.

The second dimension pits Wallace against Muskie, and among issue items, the conservative ends of the urban unrest and Viet Nam issues with their liberal counterparts. The position of these issue items indicates the effect which new issue and political forces have had on how the public perceives the candidates. Also, it indicates some breaking

away from the traditional partisan conflicts of the past, from a total
reliance on party to screen and color one's perceptions of the other
forces in the political environment. The separation of the new issues
and some of the candidates from party is hardly complete, but it begins
to give indications of what might develop as a major force in the
future.

We found a similar two-dimensional solution in 1968, but one im-
portant difference exists between the two years. In 1968, the two
dimensions of candidate perception, party, and the new issue factor,
were largely independent of one another; in 1970, they were not. One
can see readily that many of the candidates in the 1970 space have
moderate loadings on both dimensions. The dotted lines in Figure 4
indicate this fact of correlated dimensions in 1970, while the solid
lines show how the solution would look within the confines of an
orthogonal structure. The correlation of these oblique axes in 1970
was a high .81, whereas a similar set of axes for the 1968 solution
yielded a correlation of only .24 between the dimensions.

A fundamental question is, " Why were the two dimensions uncorre-
lated in 1968 but correlated in 1970? " Several possible answers can be
given, answers which are not necessarily mutually exclusive and which
cannot be completely verified with the data at hand. One obvious
explanation would be the fact that an off-year election, without the
presidential race, is relatively issue-less, with a stronger emphasis on
party loyalties. Basically, congressional races are partisan campaigns,
the contestants hewing to party appeals and the party line. What is all
the more remarkable is that, despite this partisan climate in an off-year
election, the issue dimension still was clearly visible in the electorate's
mind. Even in an off-year election, there are enough tensions in the
system to preclude total reliance on party.

A second explanation is that the parties and their leading presidential
candidates have moved closer to the new issue dimension. With
Johnson removed from the scene, Democratic candidates have more
flexibility to deal with the new issues, particularly more ability to
assume a dovish stand on the war. A Republican administration in-
evitably has the effect of forcing its party to take positions on these
issues, and thereby associate Republican candidates with those posi-
tions, as when Nixon had to act on the Viet Nam war and hence
identify his party with his position on that issue. This process is not
only partly inevitable, given a change of administration following
on the heels of wide dissension in the previous administration's party
concerning its policies, but also it may be the result of a more conscious

effort on the part of one or both parties to merge the new issues with traditional party appeals. Viewed in this light, the consolidation process has gone far, but still remains incomplete.

All told, the issue space, just as the social group space above, has presented the picture of both partisan and issue cleavages underlying perceptions of the candidates. While a tendency existed in 1970, unlike 1968, for the partisan and issue factors to merge, the circle has by no means been closed. Some candidates are still seen more in partisan than in issue terms, and others reflect the opposite pattern. Our next question will be to assess the relative explanatory weights these two factors have for each of the candidates.

Determinants of Candidate Ratings

A discussion of the results portrayed in Figure 4 has given some initial idea of the relative influences of party and issue factors on candidate perceptions. How close a candidate is to the extremity of a dimension obviously indicates the extent to which the public identifies him with the content of that dimension. A further and more direct aid to understanding the relative influence of these two factors is to partial out the effects of one factor in order to ascertain the independent explanatory power the other factor possesses when related to the public's perceptions of the candidates.

Table 1 presents partial regression statistics which summarize the relative importance of party identification and two of the new issue items in determining candidate ratings.[9] For example, the values in the party identification columns indicate the effect of partisan loyalty on candidate perceptions after the impact of attitudes on urban unrest and Viet Nam have been controlled. Data for both 1968 and 1970 are given in the table to facilitate comparisons between the two years.

Party is the major determinant of candidate ratings for a large majority of the candidates. The only instances in which one of the new issues is more important than party are with Wallace and Lindsay in 1970 and Wallace, LeMay, McCarthy, Rockefeller, and Romney in 1968. The principal change between the two years is in perceptions of McCarthy; McCarthy is seen in more partisan terms than earlier,

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[9] The figures reported here are partial beta coefficients produced by Multiple Classification Analysis, a multivariate technique which assumes additive but not linear effects. See Frank Andrews, James Morgan, and John Sonquist, *Multiple Classification Analysis* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1967).

a result which fits with his changing position in the multidimensional
scaling space (see Figure 2). Since issue conflicts recede in an off-
year election while partisan cleavages become intensified, it is little
wonder that party is the dominant perceptual cue for candidates in
1970, maintaining a much stronger position in this regard than it did
in 1968. Other factors are more important than party in 1970 only in
those rare cases in which the candidate's partisan location has become

TABLE 1

EFFECTS OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION, URBAN UNREST, AND VIET NAM ATTITUDES
ON CANDIDATE RATINGS, 1968 AND 1970

| Candidates | Beta Coefficients | | | | | | Multiple Correlation Coefficients | |
| | Party Identification | | Urban Unrest | | Viet Nam | | | |
	1968	1970	1968	1970	1968	1970	1968	1970
Muskie	.29	.28	.16	.17	.08	.14	.35	.39
Humphrey	.44	.41	.22	.15	.19	.07	.54	.46
Johnson	.42	—	.17	—	.10	—	.48	—
Kennedy, R.	.31	—	.20	—	.15	—	.43	—
Kennedy, E.	—	.41	—	.19	—	.10	—	.49
McCarthy	.09	.18	.14	.13	.17	.07	.24	.24
McGovern	—	.25	—	.12	—	.15	—	.34
Lindsay	—	.03	—	.12	—	.18	—	.22
Rockefeller	.10	—	.11	—	.10	—	.15	—
Romney	.09	—	.15	—	.10	—	.18	—
Agnew	.25	.33	.03	.16	.09	.13	.24	.42
Nixon	.42	.49	.03	.09	.09	.13	.42	.54
Reagan	.25	.36	.14	.09	.12	.09	.32	.40
LeMay	.10	—	.22	—	.20	—	.35	—
Wallace	.13	.09	.32	.27	.32	.18	.45	.38

blurred by having conducted campaigns for office as an Independent
and having, at the same time, become labelled as a party renegade.

Increases are visible in the partisan images of several of the candi-
dates. McCarthy's turn in this direction has already been noted,
reflecting the fact that the public has, to some extent, forgotten his
bold and independent moves to upset his party's incumbent president
in 1968. The mainstream Republicans—Nixon, Agnew, and Reagan—
are also viewed as more partisan in 1970 than in 1968, due, in part, to
the administration's active campaign in the partisan off-year elections.
Senator Edward Kennedy is another who is seen in heavily partisan

terms in 1970, the public obviously projecting its strong partisan image of his late brother to its perceptions of the senior senator from Massachusetts.

Table 1 also calls attention to shifts in the issue images of many of the candidates. Nixon, Agnew, and Muskie are perceived more in new issue terms in 1970 than in 1968. This increase, even if mild, is important since it was registered in a relatively issueless partisan election year. The issue positions of the Republican administration and the Democratic front-runner have become better known over the two year period, and issue partisans correspondingly differ more in their assessments of the candidates. On Viet Nam policy and urban problems, the soft-liners have become increasingly disenchanted with the administration positions, while Muskie has lost favor among Viet Nam hawks.

One important qualification must be added to this discussion of the impact of public attitudes on candidate perceptions. The combined impact of party and issues is only moderate at best. Much of the variation in candidate ratings is due to individual response differences among those interviewed which have not been controlled, to unclear public images of some of these figures, and to candidate personality factors which go beyond parties and issues (such as " charisma "). Little of the variation in the responses given to Lindsay and McCarthy are explained by party or the issues in the 1970 ratings (and the same was true for Rockefeller, Romney, McCarthy, and Agnew in 1968). A similar pattern is evident for McGovern, although the public's highly superficial knowledge of the South Dakota senator may well explain why he was identified more in party than in issue terms. All three—Lindsay, McCarthy, and McGovern—have more of a potential for an issue candidacy than is evidenced here, but it is contingent on their becoming salient to the public and communicating their positions to that public.

In summary, the mixture of partisan and issue cleavages is apparent, with party being the dominant element shaping perceptions of candidates. However, the fact that the issue dimension continues to persist into 1970 logically raises the question of what its impact may be on future elections and on the party structures competing in those elections. The extent to which issue dimension is correlated with party also raises the question of how party and issues will interact in the future in forming candidate perceptions. Will the new issue dimension merge with party, or will it break away in 1972 to achieve the same independent status it had in 1968? What will the implications of such

cleavages be on an electorate that is increasingly characterized as highly volatile in nature? Implications to the broader panorama of electoral change and party realignment are evident in the way people perceive candidates for the highest office in the land.

ELECTORAL CHANGE: TOWARD REALIGNMENT OR VOLATILITY?

The study of electoral behavior is fundamentally concerned with the study of long-term and short-term electoral change. On the short-term level, the prime question is whether there will be a change in the party and administration in power. Nixon's narrow victory in 1968 makes his position unusually vulnerable. Data from the 1970 election study indicate that he has captured the advantage in the two-year interim, but the data cannot tell us how safe that lead is.

While popular interest in short-term change is well-justified, our concern must also concentrate on the implications for long-term change. One basic bundle of long-term system components is *party alignment*—the number of parties, their group bases, their issue appeals, and most fundamentally, their levels of strength. A second bundle of long-term system components centers on the level of electoral *volatility* —the adhesion of the electorate to the party system and the fidelity of individual voters to their own party. Identification of the entire public with the parties, coupled with strict party voting, results in low system volatility; large numbers of Independent identifiers and sizable deviations from party voting indicate high levels of volatility. Increased volatility is inevitable as party alignments shift, with a corresponding decrease in volatility as voting patterns restabilize after a realignment period. Volatility can increase without realignment occurring, but increased volatility should heighten the potential for realignment.[10]

Evidence from the late 1960s is unequivocal in its indication of increasing volatility of the electorate. The proportion of Independent identifiers has risen, as has the extent of partisan defection.[11] The sizable vote gathered by Wallace in 1968 is further evidence of in-

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[10] For a recent clarification of the conceptual questions involved in what constitutes a realignment as well as analysis of recent survey data in this regard, see Bruce D. Merrill, *Party Realignment and Social Class: 1958-1970* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971).

[11] See Philip E. Converse, "Change in the American Electorate," in Angus Campbell and Philip E. Converse, eds., *The Human Meaning of Social Change* (New York: Russell Sage, in press).

creased volatility in the system. There are those who see the end of political parties in these developments. However, the parties still have a long life remaining to them if their speed of demise remains constant. Volatility may be on the increase, but does this imply changing party alignments?

Party identification, a basic survey measure of party strength, has been astoundingly stable since the early 1950s. But party identification by itself is an imperfect measure of changes in party alignments. The party identification measure may mask a balance between the partisanships of those entering the electorate and those leaving the electorate during this period, or it may conceal changes among those who were in the electorate throughout this period which were balanced by the differences in the partisanship of those entering and leaving the electorate. The overall stability of party identification provides no clue to whether the group bases of the parties and their issue appeals have changed. Our discussion of a new issue dimension points to the possibility of changing issue appeals.

The popular press has made much of Scammon and Wattenberg's presentation of a new "Social Issue" composed of such elements as crime (safe streets and the law and order theme), race, youth (campus unrest and the drug culture), values (changing standards in the areas of sexual mores and dress), and Viet Nam dissent (and the reaction to it).[12] Yet theirs is basically a *style issue*—one on which there is general agreement (no one really favors unsafe streets and few members of the electorate favor disruptive demonstrations) which can damage candidates who find themselves associated with the unpopular side. Elections can turn on style issues, but the party disadvantaged by style issues usually manages to defuse them before they cause irreparable harm.

By contrast, we would emphasize the *position issue* aspect of our new issue cluster. There are style overtones to the problems of the cities, civil rights, and Viet Nam, but they are fundamentally issues on which actors (parties, candidates, and voters) take differing stands. The emergence of an important new position issue introduces the possibility of major system realignment if that issue polarizes the electorate in a manner unrelated to existing partisan divisions. In 1968 the importance of the new issues and their virtual independence

[12] Richard Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

from traditional party appeals signified that the necessary conditions were met for a changing party alignment based on issue appeals.

How do parties cope with the development of a new issue dimension? One possibility would be to ignore the new issues with the hope that they would recede in importance. We have seen that the importance of these issues to the public decreased only slightly by 1970, and we would not expect the urban and racial problems to vanish. Party leaders could still feel that the issues are not yet intense enough to require the parties to take positions on them. Increased volatility is the likely consequence. Third and fourth party movements become more probable. Greater fluctuations between elections may occur, with the possibility of a series of one-term presidents. The question of which party is the dominant party may not change, but that dominant party would find itself losing a greater proportion of the elections. There is every evidence of these developments occurring up through 1968. If the issues were extremely intense and the parties did not respond to them, we would expect new parties to replace the major parties, but even Wallace's efforts did not seriously challenge the dominant positions of the major parties in 1968.

Alternately, the parties could directly address the new issues, taking opposite positions on them and thereby absorbing the new issue dimension. Convergences between the new issues and party would mean that the parties would remain intact but with corresponding changes in party alignment. There is evidence of such developments between 1968 and 1970. The increased correlation between party and the new issues indicates a degree of convergence, though that convergence is still far from perfect. That this convergence could be caused by the inevitable off-year concentration on partisanship rather than issues means that it may only be temporary. However, we have also argued that the polarization-convergence process (polarization of parties and convergence of dimensions) is partly inevitable. The administration must take stands which associate its party with the new issues while the out-party, freed from the associations of the previous administration, is able to move to a position of opposition to the new issue policies of the administration. The issue bases of the parties are changing, slowly but unmistakably. Leadership bolts have occurred more frequently than is often the case in major realignments, with a number of southern Democrats becoming Republican and with Mayor Lindsay becoming a Democrat. The extent to which the group basis of politics changes in the process is not yet apparent. No doubt the process is not yet finalized. The intense attitudes toward the new groups mentioned

earlier suggests that the party system is not yet able to accommodate these new groups so that continuing modification is likely.

A gradual realignment process can change the balance of the parties. Phillips has seen this resulting in the emergence of a Republican majority, in large part a consequence of the administration's southern strategy.[13] We find no evidence of a new Republican majority. A high level of volatility makes such a result possible, but it also makes possible the further solidification of the Democratic majority.

The enfranchisement of the 18-20 year olds further increases the potential for volatility. Even before that development, we argued that the coming of age of the post-war baby-boom was going to increase electoral volatility in 1972.[14] The infusion of this doubly large group is particularly significant because their attraction in sizable numbers to one party or another in their first presidential vote could give that party an advantage for a series of elections. Our data suggest that young voters would not be necessarily enthusiastic in their reactions to most of the candidates, with the exception of a strong positive reaction to Senator Kennedy. There is also some tendency for them to be enthusiastic about McCarthy, McGovern, and Lindsay, but relatively unenthusiastic about Humphrey and Republicans Agnew, Reagan, and Nixon. The minority party has accepted the enfranchisement of a set of voters which could cause that party's demise if it were attracted in large and permanent numbers to the majority party by an appealing candidate. What happens depends on the identity of the Democratic candidate, but the potential for large scale realignment resulting from the stream of new voters is unusually high.

A mid-term election does not afford a suitable setting for the resolution of questions concerning electoral change. However, it does provide an effective opportunity for sharpening our questions about future directions. We see electoral change as occurring presently, but as being incomplete. We see signs of increased volatility in the system, but we do not consider them as foreshadowing the end of parties or the emergence of long-term minor parties. We recognize the potential for a Republican majority, but we would also emphasize the possibility of the Democrats so increasing their majority as to make the Republican position untenable. We find the issue appeals of the parties to be changing, but with only limited effect to date on the

[13] Kevin P. Phillips, The Emerging Republican Majority (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1969).

[14] Weisberg and Rusk, "Dimensions of Candidate Evaluation," p. 1185.

group bases of these parties. The stability of indicators in the issue-less 1950s desensitized analysts to the possibility that continued stability during the issue-packed 1960s could hide real change. The 1970s should witness the culmination of this process. Our mid-term assessment is one of increased volatility with some realignment of the issue bases of the parties; the scope of the realignment and its ultimate implications for the partisan balance are questions which must be put off for a later report.