Candidate Repositioning

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Abstract

How do voters respond when politicians change positions over time? The answer is fundamental to understanding candidate competition, election outcomes, and representation in democracies. We develop a model in which repositioning affects voter behavior through two channels. First, repositioning causes voters to discount a candidate's current policy pronouncements when judging their proximity to the candidate. Second, repositioning prompts voters to draw negative inferences about a candidate's character. We test the model by administering survey-based experiments to a representative sample of 7,495 U.S. adults. Our data confirm that repositioning changes voter perceptions about both proximity and character, and that repositioning is costly on average. We then use our data to derive the optimal strategies for candidates. Our equilibrium analysis shows how voters, by reacting negatively to repositioning, deter politicians from adjusting their positions when public opinion changes or new policy-relevant information comes to light.

1. Introduction

How do voters respond when politicians change positions over time? The answer is fundamental to understanding candidate competition, election outcomes, and representation in democracies. If voters react negatively to repositioning, they could deter leaders from adapting to shifts in public opinion or the arrival of new policy-relevant information. The existence of voter-imposed penalties for repositioning could also contribute to polarization and legislative gridlock. Elected officials might not compromise with opponents out of concern that voters—including some who actually agree with the content of the compromise—would punish them for veering from past commitments. Finally, if voters held incumbents to past positions, even when such positions no longer appealed to the median voter, challengers could win without taking centrist positions themselves. Thus, punishing politicians for changing course could be detrimental to democracy.

Forgiving candidates for policy reversals would bring its own problems, however. Without penalties for repositioning, politicians would have little incentive to speak honestly. They could say almost anything during campaigns, knowing that voters would excuse them for reneging on commitments. Under such circumstances voters would find it extremely difficult to learn who represents their views. Advertisements, speeches, and policy manifestos would amount to cheap talk, rather than reliable cues about the policies that candidates would pursue in office. Thus, representative democracy may not function well unless voters apply at least some penalties against politicians who deviate from their promises.

The theme of repositioning is not only central to democratic representation, but also ubiquitous in U.S. political campaigns. When candidates change positions, competitors often expose the inconsistency and try to exploit it for electoral advantage. During the 1992

presidential election, President George H.W. Bush drew fire for breaking his "read my lips: no new taxes" pledge. In the 2004 presidential campaign, George W. Bush accused Senator John Kerry of flip-flopping from supporting the Iraq war to opposing it. And in the 2012 presidential race, Mitt Romney was ridiculed for repositioning on abortion and health care, while Barack Obama faced criticism for his evolving views about gay marriage. To understand how American democracy works, it is important to study when and how voters respond to politicians who break their commitments.

Unfortunately, we have little evidence about the electoral impact of politicians changing course. Although there is a building literature on the consequences of repositioning in party-centered electoral systems (Adams 2012; Adams, et. al. 2006; Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Tavits 2007) knowledge remains particularly thin about the consequences of repositioning in candidate-centered polities like the United States. This lacuna persists, in part, due to the inherently strategic nature of repositioning. When deciding which positions to advocate and whether to abandon old positions in favor of new ones, candidates anticipate the reactions of their constituents. They shift course when doing so would improve their electoral fortunes, but stand firm when audiences would react harshly to repositioning. Historical data therefore suffer from selection bias; they reveal the consequences of repositioning only in the specific circumstances when politicians thought repositioning would be optimal.

In this article we develop at theory of how repositioning affects the behavior of voters, and we test the theory with experiments that were embedded in public opinion polls. Our unique experiments make it possible to estimate the effect of repositioning while avoiding problems of selection bias that have hampered research with historical data.

Decades of research have shown that voters evaluate politicians on two dimensions: policy and character. We argue that repositioning affects how voters perceive both dimensions. First, repositioning affects expectations about the policy a candidate would pursue if elected. In our theory, voters discount new positions that contradict previous ones; they do not give a candidate full credit for the new position he is espousing. Second, repositioning affects opinions about character. Most voters, we claim, draw negative inferences about the traits of candidates who shift—disparaging them as dishonest, incompetent, and unfit for public office. These two effects create incentives for politicians to stand firm, even when the public would prefer a different policy outcome.

Our theory also generates the surprising prediction that people who regard an issue as important to them personally punish repositioning on that issue *less* than other types of citizens. The reason, we argue, is that these voters care mainly about whether a candidate represents their view; perceptions of policy congruence—rather than perceptions of character—drive their decisions. Other voters assign less weight to policy and more weight to character, which we predict to be tainted by repositioning. Consequently, the costs of repositioning should fall, not rise, with issue importance.

To test these predictions, we embedded experiments in a series of public opinion polls, which were administered to a nationally representative sample of 7,495 U.S. adults. We presented each respondent with two candidates who differed in their record of statements on either tax policy or abortion policy, and we asked which candidate the respondent preferred. We also gathered information about respondents' own policy preferences, the personal importance they assigned to the issue, their expectations about what candidates would do in office, and their evaluations of the candidates' traits.

Consistent with our theory, repositioning strongly affected beliefs about both policy and character. Voters discounted new positions that contradicted previous ones, and they disparaged the character of candidates who changed course. We further found that, on average, candidates who repositioned performed worse than candidates who stood firm. This finding contrasts with related research by Tomz and Van Houweling (2009), which showed that voters do not respond negatively to candidates who made vague policy statements. Thus, our evidence suggests that changing positions is more costly than remaining ambiguous.

Our data also confirm the counterintuitive prediction that people who view an issue as highly important are more, not less, tolerant of candidates who shift positions over time. Finally, we use our theory and data to derive implications for candidate strategy and democratic representation. Our analysis leads to an ironic conclusion: by reacting negatively to repositioning, the electorate deters officeholders from responding to changes in public opinion and increases the likelihood that they will not represent the policy preferences of the median voter.

These findings expose a paradox at the heart of democracy. If voters did not punish politicians for changing positions, campaign commitments would be meaningless and voters could not discern which candidate best represents their view. But by punishing politicians for changing positions, voters deter leaders from adapting to the public will. Thus, penalties for repositioning make representation possible, but they also prevent democracies from achieving the ideal of perfectly responsive government.

In the remainder of this article, we develop a theory of voter responses to candidate position-taking over time; describe the design of our survey experiment; and discuss what the data reveal about voter behavior, candidate strategy, and representation in democracies.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

For decades, scholars have argued that voters evaluate politicians on two dimensions: policy and character. An enormous literature, originating with Downs (1957), posits that citizens prefer politicians whose policy positions are closest to their own. Research has also shown that voters value politicians with good personality attributes, such as integrity and competence (Stokes 1963; Kinder et al. 1980).

We argue that *policy histories* affect both types of considerations. A policy history, in our terminology, is the sequence of positions that a politician has endorsed over time. Politicians express their views by making statements, issuing press releases, drafting legislation, and voting on bills. In some cases, new positions will differ from previous ones. By changing positions, candidates change how voters perceive both policy and character.

2.1 Repositioning and Expectations about Policy

We hypothesize that voters "discount" new positions that contradict previous ones. When a candidate abandons an unpopular position in favor of a popular one, many voters will doubt that the candidate would follow through if elected. Some will expect the candidate to pursue his old policy; others will conclude that the candidate's true intention lies somewhere between his old position and his new one. The tendency to discount new policy pronouncements instead of taking them at face value creates a deterrent to repositioning. If candidates who are currently "out-of-step" with the electorate cannot get (full) credit for moving to new positions, they may decide not to shift toward the preferences of the electoral majority.

To formalize this intuition, let $X \in R^1$ be a one-dimensional policy space, where lower values represent liberal positions and higher values represent conservative ones. Each voter i has an ideal policy x_i that he or she would like the government to enact. Suppose a candidate, whom we will generically refer to as candidate A, took positions on this issue at two points in time. Denote A's history of positions as $a = (a^1, a^2)$, where $a^1, a^2 \in X$ and a^2 is more recent than a^1. If $a^1 = a^2$, meaning the candidate's current position matches his previous one, we say that A has stood firm. If, on the other hand, $a^1 \neq a^2$, implying that the new position is either more liberal or more conservative than the original position, we say that candidate A has repositioned.

Each voter uses the information in sequence a to infer what candidate A would do if elected. We model the voter's expectation about A as a weighted average of the candidate's two policy statements. Formally, $\hat{a}_i = \lambda_i a^2 + (1 - \lambda_i)a^1$, where $\lambda_i \in [0,1]$. The weight λ_i measures how much emphasis voter i places on the candidate's current position relative to the candidate's past position. When $\lambda_i = 1$, the voter fully expects the candidate to implement his current position. When $\lambda_i < 1$, by contrast, the voter discounts new statements that differ from older ones. We expect that many voters will discount, that is, not give candidates full credit for shifting to a new position.

The value $\hat{a}_i$ is important, because it affects the expected distance between the candidate and the voter. In our theory, the utility a voter gets from a candidate declines with the absolute distance from the voter's ideal point to the anticipated location of the candidate. Formally, we express this policy component in a voter's utility function as $p_i^a = -|x_i - \hat{a}_i|$. Our simple formulation implies that voters are risk-neutral, an assumption bolstered by recent research. For example, Berinsky and Lewis (2007) analyzed data from the U.S. elections from the 1970s through the 1990s. They found that voters generally are not risk averse, and concluded that

models with "absolute value preferences" were most consistent with voter behavior. Tomz and Van Houweling (2009) reached a similar conclusion via experiments; they manipulated how much information voters received about the policy positions of candidates and found that voters did not prefer candidates about whom they knew more.[1] We assume risk neutrality because it accords with both observational and experimental research. Nonetheless, in section 4.4, we show that our findings are robust to the alternative assumptions about attitudes toward risk.

2.2 Repositioning and Beliefs about Character

In addition to arguing that repositioning causes discounting, we hypothesize that voters draw negative inferences about the character of politicians who change positions. Some might view repositioners as dissemblers who would say anything to get elected. Others might perceive repositioners as ignorant—as politicians who take different positions at different times because they do not understand policy issues. Still others might view repositioners as weak leaders who lack the competence to make decisions and/or the backbone to defend their views.

Previous experiments, conducted with college students, lend plausibility to this hypothesis. In one experiment, Allegeier et al. (1979) presented students with questionnaires that had been filled out by an anonymous individual at two points in time and asked students to evaluate the individual on a variety of traits. Overall, students gave lower evaluations to individuals whose answers to the questionnaire had changed over time. Carlson and Dolan

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[1] Earlier research on this question was mixed, with some analysts concluding that voters dislike uncertainty and appear to be risk-averse (Alvarez 1997; Bartels 1986; Brady and Ansolabehere 1989) and others reaching the opposite judgment (Campbell 1983).

(1985) reached similar conclusions in an analogous experiment, in which the individual who filled out the surveys was described as a political candidate.[2]

Admittedly, voters may see virtue as well as vice in candidates who change positions. In a novel experiment, Sigelman and Sigelman (1986) examined how people responded to fictional presidents whose policy actions were either consistent or inconsistent with their reputation as a foreign policy hawk or dove. Respondents "generally perceived presidents of either persuasion who acted out-of-character as more dishonest, inconsistent, insincere, unreliable, and indecisive than presidents who stuck with their previous stands. Still, subjects also saw some merits— flexibility and open-mindedness—in a president who could adapt to the circumstances, a fact that raises questions about any view that casts stepping out of character in an exclusively negative light (283)."

Nevertheless, we expect that, on balance, voters will draw negative conclusions about the character of politicians who change positions. Formally, let t_i^a represent the inferences that voter i draws about the character traits of candidate A. We assume that t_i^a is strictly decreasing in $|a^2 - a^1|$, the extent to which candidate A has changed positions over time. This assumption captures the idea that, in general, voters regard repositioning as evidence of bad character.

We further expect that voters will draw worse inferences about character when candidates adopt new stances on moral issues than when they reposition on pragmatic ones. In a pioneering nonexperimental study, Tavits (2007) examined how the electoral fates of parties in forty

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[2] Other experiments, though, lead to less definitive conclusions. Hoffman and Carver (1984), for example, experimentally examined how people evaluated candidates who changed positions on gun control. Consistent candidates scored higher on only two traits: whether the candidate was decisive, and whether he was well-adjusted.

advanced democracies changed when they shifted platforms over time. She hypothesized that voters would be more tolerant of shifts on pragmatic issues such as fiscal policy than on moral issues such as abortion, since on pragmatic issues the optimal policy may vary with the circumstances. Her time-series cross-sectional analysis of party platform data supported these arguments.

2.3 The Role of Issue Importance

The overall response to repositioning depends on the relative weight that voters attach to policy versus character. We expect that people who regard an issue as important to them personally will punish repositioning on that issue *less* than other types of voters. At one extreme, people who care deeply about the issue will attach heavy weight to policy proximity, instead of letting perceptions of character overwhelm their votes. At the other extreme, voters who care little about the issue will choose mainly on the basis of character, which is adversely affected by repositioning. Thus, the costs of repositioning should fall, not rise, with issue importance.

Formally, we model the utility that voter i receives from candidate A as $u_i^a = -\alpha_i p_i^a + (1 - \alpha_i)t_i^a$. This equation includes assessments about both policy and traits.[3] The policy

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[3] Erikson and Romero (1990) propose a related model, in which voters weigh both issues and non-issue considerations. They show that as issue salience increases, citizens are increasingly likely to base their votes on issues rather than candidate characteristics (see Figures 1, 3, 4, 5 on pp. 1108-9). The logic of our model is similar, but in our theoretical framework candidates take issue positions at several points in time, and those issue positions affect not only perceptions about proximity but also judgments about candidate character.

parameter, p_i^a, reflects the distance between the policy the voter prefers and the one he expects candidate A to implement. The lower the expected distance between the voter and the candidate, the higher p_i^a will be. As we argued above, repositioning may change the value of p_i^a by shifting expectations, but voters will not give the candidate full credit for a change in stance. The trait parameter, t_i^a, reflects beliefs about the quality of the candidate's character. Repositioning affects this parameter, as well: t_i^a should be higher for candidates who remain consistent than for candidates who shift.

The factor $\alpha_i \in [0,1]$ measures how personally important policy is to the voter. At one extreme, voters who do not care about the substance of the issue ($\alpha_i = 0$) base their decisions entirely on perceptions of character, which we hypothesize to be negatively affected by repositioning. At the opposite extreme, voters who assign maximal importance to the issue ($\alpha_i = 1$) focus single-mindedly on how well a candidate represents their view, giving no weight to perceptions about character. Voters between these extremes will take both policy and character into account.

This simple model has interesting implications for the effects of repositioning on voting behavior. Recall that, by repositioning, a candidate can move closer to the voter's ideal point and therefore improve his standing on the policy dimension. This move will have the biggest influence on the choices of voters with high values of α_i. However, attempts to reposition will involve character costs, which will factor most strongly in the decisions of voters with low values of α_i. Put another way, high-α_i voters should be especially sensitive to the potentially positive ways in which repositioning affects policy proximity, while low-α_i voters should be disproportionately responsive to the generally negative ways in which repositioning affects beliefs of character. Thus, somewhat counterintuitively, voters who view an issue as important

will punish candidates for repositioning on that issue less than voters who view an issue as unimportant.[4]

3. Experimental Design

We designed an experiment to assess the effect of candidate repositioning on voter choice and embedded it in opinion polls that were administered over the Internet to a representative sample of U.S. adults. Our experiment involved four steps. First, we measured respondents' preferences about a public policy issue and asked how important the issue was to them. Second, we described the policy statements of two candidates who varied randomly in whether and to what degree they had changed positions on the issue, and then asked which candidate the respondent preferred. Third, we measured the expectations of respondents by asking what they thought each candidate would try to do on the issue if elected. Finally, we invited respondents to evaluate each candidate on one randomly selected trait.

To see whether the effects of repositioning varied by issue, we split the sample into two groups. The first group, totaling 4,155 respondents, received a questionnaire in which the topic was the level of taxes on wealthy Americans. The second group, consisting of 3,340 respondents, received a questionnaire that asked about restrictions on abortion. Each respondent considered only one of these two issues. We now give details about the survey instrument.

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[4] We are not arguing that low-importance voters will draw harsher conclusions about the traits of candidates who change positions. Our model does, however, imply that low-importance voters will weigh character more (and weigh proximity less) in their assessment of the overall utility the candidate provides.

3.1 Measuring the Respondent Policy Preferences

The survey began by asking respondents about an important policy issue: either taxes on wealthy Americans or restrictions on abortion. For those assigned to consider the issue of taxes, we noted that "some people think the government should increase taxes on wealthy Americans, defined as people who make more than $250,000 per year. Other people think taxes on wealthy Americans should be kept at their current level. And still other people think the government should decrease taxes on wealthy Americans." We then asked whether the respondent thought the government should increase taxes on wealthy Americans, keep taxes on wealthy Americans at their current level, or decrease taxes on wealthy Americans (Figure 1a).

[Figure 1 about here]

For those assigned to consider the issue of abortion, we explained that "some people think the government should increase restrictions on abortion to make it more difficult for women to get abortions. Other people think restrictions on abortion should be kept at their current level. And still other people think the government should decrease restrictions on abortion to make it easier for women to get abortions." We then asked whether the respondent thought the government should increase restrictions on abortion, keep restrictions on abortion at their current level, or decrease restrictions on abortion.

The policy options were described with text rather than numerically, though for convenience we sometimes use integers as shorthand for the three fully labeled options. In those instances, the integer one represents the most liberal position (increase taxes on wealthy Americans or decrease restrictions on abortion), two represents a moderate position (keep taxes on the wealthy or restrictions on abortion at their current levels), and three represents the most conservative position (decrease taxes on wealthy Americans or increase restrictions on abortion).

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Immediately after gathering respondents' opinions about the issue they were assigned, we asked, "How important to you personally is the issue of [abortion/taxes on wealthy Americans]?" The response options were: extremely important, very important, moderately important, slightly important, or not at all important. Thus, this phase of the experiment provided measures of the respondent's ideal point, x_i, and issue importance, a proxy for α_i.

3.2 Measuring Preferences about Candidates

We then asked respondents to choose between two candidates who had expressed opinions about the issue. In the case of taxes, for example, we noted that "Non-partisan groups often survey candidates about tax rates for wealthy Americans. We would like your views about two candidates, whose names will remain confidential. They are Candidate A and Candidate B." By denoting candidates with letters, we were able to test theories about the effects of repositioning in their purest form, without the potentially confounding effects of party or other candidate attributes.

We reported what the candidates had said on two occasions: two years ago and this year. On each occasion, a candidate took one of the three positions that respondents had considered when expressing their own opinion on the issue. Let L, M, and C represent the liberal, moderate, and conservative position on each issue. Using this notation, each candidate's history of statements on the issue can be summarized as (L,L), (L,M), (L,C), (M,L), (M,M), (M,C), (C,L), (C,M), or (C,C), where the first letter represents what the candidate said two years ago and the second letter represents what the candidate said this year.

Excluding scenarios in which the candidates had identical histories and could, therefore, be expected to tie, we were left with thirty-six combinations of candidates with different

histories. We randomly presented one combination to each voter, randomly labeled one candidate as A and the other as B, and asked: "On this issue, which candidate do you prefer?" An example involving taxes appears in Figure 1b; the question format for abortion was identical.

3.3 Measuring Expectations about Future Action

The next phase of the experiment investigated expectations about the likely positions of candidates. We reminded each respondent of the statements candidate A had made and asked: "If you had to guess, what do you think Candidate A would try to do if elected?" For respondents who were randomly assigned to the issue of taxes, the response options were "increase taxes on wealthy Americans, keep taxes on wealthy Americans at their current level, or decrease taxes on wealthy Americans" (see Figure 1c). For respondents who completed the questionnaire about on abortion, the question layout was identical except the phrase "taxes on wealthy Americans" was replaced with the phrase "restrictions on abortion." We repeated this procedure for candidate B, thereby obtaining measures of $\hat{a}_i$ and $\hat{b}_i$, the expected locations of candidate A with history a and candidate B with history b.

3.4 Evaluating Each Candidate's Traits

The final phase of the experiment asked respondents to evaluate each candidate on one of the following traits, selected at random: "he is honest," "he provides strong leadership," or "he is open-minded." We included honesty and leadership to tap the two central dimensions of candidate evaluation, integrity and competence, which others have identified as mediating candidate support (Kinder, et. al 1980, Markus 1981). We added open-mindedness not only because voters regard it as important (Kinder et. al 1980), but also because it is a dimension on

which candidates could score points by changing positions instead of standing firm (Sigelman and Sigelman 1986).

To measure perceptions, we redisplayed Candidate A's history of positions and asked whether the trait described the candidate extremely well, very well, moderately well, slightly well, or not well at all. We concluded by redisplaying Candidate B's history and asking participants to judge that candidate on the same trait (Figure 1d). This portion of the experiment provided insight into parameters t_i^a and t_i^b, which summarize perceptions about the traits of candidate A with history a and candidate B with history b.

4. Data and Findings

The experiments discussed in this paper were administered by Knowledge Networks, an Internet-based polling firm. Knowledge Networks uses random digit dialing to recruit participants and provides Internet access to households, resulting in a nationally representative sample of adults. The interviews took place between February and December of 2009, and 7,495 people (about 60% of invitees) agreed to take the survey. In our sample 59% of respondents favored increasing taxes on the wealthy, 33% favored keeping taxes the same, and 8% favored decreasing taxes; 33% favored increasing restrictions on abortion, 44% favored keeping restrictions on abortion at their current level, and 23% favored decreasing restrictions on abortion.

4.1 How Past Positions Shape Expectations

We hypothesize that voters discount (look skeptically upon) the current policy positions of candidates who espoused different policies in the past. To test this hypothesis, we measured respondents' expectations about what the candidates would try to do if elected.

Our evidence, presented in Figure 2, strongly supports the discounting hypothesis. For each of the nine possible histories a candidate could possess, panel (a) summarizes respondents' expectations about what a candidate with that history would try to do if elected. The upper row pertains to candidates who advocated the liberal position (increasing taxes on wealthy Americans) this year. The row contains three dots: one for candidates who espoused the liberal position two years ago, one for candidates who were moderate two years ago, and one for candidates who favored the conservative position two years ago. The horizontal coordinate of each dot indicates the mean expectation about candidates with the identified history.

[Figure 2 about here]

For example, the leftmost dot denotes average expectations about a candidate who had advocated increasing taxes two years ago and also advocated increasing taxes this year. When asked about such candidates, 82 percent of respondents thought the candidate would try to increase taxes. Only 15 percent felt the candidate would keep taxes at the same level, and a miniscule 3 percent guessed that the candidate would try to reduce taxes. On a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 represents an effort to increase taxes and 3 represents an effort to decrease taxes, the average expectation about candidate (L,L) was (.82 x 1) + (.15 x 2) + (.03 x 3) = 1.2.

Voters were significantly more skeptical of candidates who switched from advocating higher taxes two years ago to calling for lower taxes today. The rightmost dot on the top row

indicates mean expectations about these candidates. Only 56 percent of citizens who evaluated this type of candidate expected him to strive for lower taxes. Fully 32 percent guessed the candidate would maintain the status quo, and 12 percent expected the candidate to stick to his prior position and push for tax cuts. The mean placement of candidates with history (C,L) was, therefore, 1.6. Clearly, voters had less faith in the pro-tax intentions of candidates who only recently embraced that position than of candidates who had proposed it repeatedly.

The center dot in the top row refers to candidates who advocated increasing taxes this year but had previously called for retaining the status quo. A large majority of respondents, 70 percent, believed these candidates would actually try to increase taxes if elected. However, because the remaining 30 percent doubted these candidates to some degree, the mean expectation fell between expectations about candidates who had either stood firm or had flipped across the policy space. The 95% confidence intervals around these means are narrow, giving us great certainty that voters discount the present promises of candidates who have repositioned. The pattern repeats for each row in the figure, not only for taxes but also for abortion.

Comparing each row to the adjacent row provides an additional insight: on average, voters place more weight on a candidate's current positions than on his past positions. Compare, for example, candidates who now advocate increasing taxes, versus candidates who call for keeping taxes the same. The top two rows in panel (a) display expectations about these candidates conditional on their past commitments. As the figure clearly shows, voters regard candidates with histories L,M (the first dot on the second row) as more conservative than candidates who advocated C,L (the last dot on the first row). Thus, when voters form opinions about the likely behavior of candidates, even the most extreme difference in previous commitments (liberal versus conservative) cannot compensate for a more modest difference in

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current pronouncements (moderate vs. liberal). This pattern recurs in every comparison between

adjacent rows except one.[5]

4.2 How Repositioning Shapes Character Assessments

We hypothesize that repositioning can be costly partly because it encourages voters to

conclude that position-switchers have poor character. To test this hypothesis directly, we asked

each respondent to assess the candidates they encountered on one of three randomly selected

traits: he is a strong leader, he is honest, or he is open-minded. Higher ratings on the five-point

scale correspond with more positive trait assessments. Table 1 presents the mean trait ratings of

candidates who held firm over time, and also displays how these means were affected when

candidates repositioned by one and two steps.

[Table 1 about here]

Across both issues, people were less likely to ascribe strong leadership to candidates who

repositioned than to candidates who had stood firm. As expected, though, the negative effect was

more evident on the issue of abortion than on tax policy. On abortion policy, the mean score for

"strong leader" was 1.3 points lower for candidates who moved two steps in the policy space

than for candidates who stood firm. The analogous effect of moving two steps on tax policy was

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[5] Figure 3 also shows that people are, in general, skeptical of candidates who advocate tax cuts

for wealthy Americans. This can be seen in the tendency of the expectations on taxes to be

shifted to the left in the issue space. Only 69% of respondents believed that a candidate who

consistently advocated lower taxes would actually attempt to reduce taxes if elected, compared to

82% of respondents who believed a candidate who repeatedly called for higher taxes on the rich.

only 0.9 points. The 95% confidence intervals around these estimates allow us to be quite certain that repositioning on abortion undermined perceptions of "strong leadership" to a greater degree than repositioning on tax policy.

Relative to candidates who stood firm, candidates who repositioned were also more likely to be classified as dishonest. This negative effect was marginally larger on taxes than on abortion, 1.4 and 1.3 points respectively, although the two effects were not statistically distinguishable.

Respondent evaluations of candidates on the final trait, open-mindedness, reveal a small potential upside to repositioning. On both issues, a candidate who moved one position was viewed as marginally more open-minded than a candidate who stood firm. However, once a candidate moved two steps, this effect essentially disappeared, leaving us unable to reject the null hypothesis that candidates who flipped from one pole to the other were regarded as no more or less open-minded than candidates who stuck to their guns. The fact that repositioning undermines perceptions of leadership and honesty, two of the most important candidate traits scholars have identified (Kinder, et. al. 1980, Marcus 1981), helps explain why policy inconsistency has electoral costs.

4.3 The Average Effect of Repositioning

We now turn to examining the average effect of candidate repositioning on voter choice. To estimate the cost of repositioning we considered the following counterfactual: how much better would a candidate have done on average, against all possible opponents, if he been consistent instead of repositioning? There are two distinct but related ways of thinking about this counterfactual. How much more support would the candidate have received if he had stayed with

his original position, instead of moving to a new one? Alternatively, how much more support would the candidate have received if he had always expressed his current position, instead of shifting to arrive there? Simple arithmetic shows the two counterfactuals to be equivalent on average. They can be estimated by computing the mean support for consistent candidates against all possible opponents, and subtracting the mean support for inconsistent candidates against all possible opponents.

Following this strategy, we calculated the proportion of times that respondents preferred an inconsistent candidate (a candidate with L,M; L,C; M,L; M,C; C,L; or C,M) in pairwise competition against all possible opponents, both consistent and inconsistent. Similarly, we computed the proportion of times that respondents preferred a consistent candidate (one with history L,L; MM; or C,C) in races against all conceivable opponents. The difference between these two values represents the average effect of repositioning.

As noted earlier, we did not present respondents with scenarios in which the two anonymous candidates had identical histories, because respondents would have found no basis for preferring one over the other. The choice between Candidate A and Candidate B would have reduced to the flip of a coin. In actual political competition, of course, candidates sometimes take identical positions, so a complete set of opponents would include those with policy histories exactly like one's own. We reincorporated these ties into our analysis by assuming that, if candidates had competed against their clones, each would have received 50 percent of the vote.

Table 2 confirms our hypothesis that voters dislike inconsistency generally, but also holds an interesting surprise. On taxes, candidates who changed positions over time received 46.2 percent of the vote on average, whereas candidates who stood firm received 57.7 percent. The estimated cost of repositioning was, therefore, 11.5 points. The 95 percent confidence

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interval around this estimate ranged from -13 to -10, enabling us to reject the null hypothesis that voters are indifferent about inconsistency on taxes.

[Table 2 about here]

On abortion, the penalty for repositioning was slightly smaller, with the average inconsistent candidate receiving 46.7 percent of the vote and the average consistent candidate receiving 56.7 percent, for a net difference of 10 percent. The confidence interval around this difference spanned -12 to -8 percent. This finding runs counter to the hypothesis that voters respond more harshly at the ballot box to policy shifts on the moral issue of abortion than on the pragmatic issue of taxes. In fact, our simulations suggest that the electoral cost of repositioning on taxes exceeds the cost on abortion approximately 90% of the time. We return to this finding below—and to its contrast with indications that the trait-based costs of repositioning are somewhat higher for abortion than taxes—when discussing the role of issue importance in electoral choice.

It is important to note that our analysis does not imply that repositioning on any given issue is politically suicidal. There are, in fact, many circumstances under which candidates could gain votes by repositioning—for example, when the electorate overwhelmingly prefers a position different than the one the candidate has taken historically. Our estimates simply imply that the incentive to move to a new position is dampened for candidates who have held a different position in the past. Below we use our data to address directly the question of when candidates will find it worthwhile to pay the cost of repositioning given policy stances of their opponents and the preferences of voters.

It is also important to note that our estimates of the electoral penalty for repositioning on any one issue are almost certain to overstate the magnitude of the negative electoral

consequences of such a change. Campaigns usually involve many policy and character issues, and are rarely focused on a single issue like the contests we present to voters. Nevertheless, our analysis highlights the *marginal* incentives that candidates face when considering whether to alter their policy stances on a single issue. They may choose to ignore these electoral incentives, but doing so will heighten their level of electoral risk to some degree.

4.4 Could the Cost of Repositioning be Due to Risk Aversion

Our experiments revealed that repositioning is costly on average. Why? We theorized that repositioning affects the behavior of voters by changing their expectations about what the candidate would do if elected, and coloring their impressions of the candidate's character. There is, however, another potential mechanism that deserves consideration. Perhaps voters dislike repositioning because it heightens uncertainty about how the candidate would behave in office. If repositioning contributes to uncertainty *and* voters are risk-averse, this might cause candidates who stand firm to outperform candidates who reposition.

In our experiment, however, risk-aversion did not drive the choices of participants. To develop this point, we first define the conditions under which risk aversion could cause voters to choose a candidate who stood firm over a candidate who repositioned. Suppose a voter with ideal point x_i faces a choice between candidate A, who stood firm, and candidate B, who repositioned. Using the notation introduced earlier, candidate A's history is $a^1 = a^2$, while candidate B's history is $b^1 \neq b^2$. The voter feels certain that A would pursue the policy he has repeatedly advocated. The same voter guesses that B would pursue $\hat{b}_i$, a weighted average of b^1 and b^2, but is not confident in this prediction; he allows that B might pursue other policies in the interval $[b^1, b^2]$.

Given this setup, when could risk aversion *cause* a voter to choose A over B? This question can be answered by identifying the conditions under which a risk-neutral voter would prefer B, while a risk-averse voter would prefer A. Two conditions are central. First, a risk-neutral voter would prefer B on policy grounds if and only if the voter was closer to B's expected location than to A's. Formally, $|x_i - \hat{b}_i| < |x_i - a^2|$. Second, even a risk-averse voter would not prefer A unless the voter feared that B might deliver a worse policy. Formally, there must be at least one policy $\tilde{b} \in [b^1, b^2]$ such that the voter assigns positive probability to the inequality $|x_i - \tilde{b}| > |x_i - a^2|$. If B posed no greater risk—that is, if the worst possible realization in $[b^1, b^2]$ was no further from the voter than a^2—then risk aversion would not cause the voter to prefer A over B. Moreover, the two conditions are necessary but not sufficient. The probability of bad outcomes would need to be large enough, and the utility from bad outcomes would need to be low enough, to overcome B's expected proximity advantage.

Many voters in our experiment chose candidates who stood firm over candidates who changed position. However, unless both of the aforementioned conditions are satisfied, it would be wrong to cite risk aversion as a potential reason for the pattern. With this fact in mind, we partitioned our data into two groups: cases that satisfied both conditions, and cases that did not. Interestingly, only 5% of scenarios in our experiment involved situations in which risk aversion could have led the voter to choose the candidate who stood firm over the candidate who changed positions. When we dropped those scenarios from our dataset, the estimated cost of repositioning did not appreciably change. We conclude, therefore, that the effects in Table 2 were not due to risk aversion.

4.5 The Mediating Role of Issue Importance

As issues become more personally important, we predict that voters will weigh character less heavily and proximity more heavily, when choosing between candidates. To test this hypothesis, we asked voters how important the issue they were assigned was to them personally. We found that 47% of respondents regarded abortion policy as extremely or very important, while only 38% put tax policy in that high-priority category. Thus, to the extent people who view an issue as important are more tolerant of repositioning as we hypothesize, its role may help explain why the electoral cost of changing stances is not higher for abortion than for taxes.

To identify the effect of issue importance, we divided the sample into two groups: respondents who viewed an issue as extremely or very important and those who viewed it as less important. For each issue, we then computed the overall cost of repositioning for the high-importance subgroup, and separately for the low-importance subgroup (Table 3). Recall from our discussion of Table 2 that this analysis is based on pairing each type of candidate against all possible opponents. The difference in the vote shares of consistent and inconsistent candidate provides an estimate of the overall cost of inconsistency.

[Table 3 about here]

On both taxes and abortion, respondents who see the issue as important are significantly less averse to selecting candidates who reposition than are respondents who see the issue as unimportant. The pattern is strongest on tax policy, where people who feel intensely about the issue penalize candidates who reposition by only 7 points. In contrast, people who do not feel intensely about the issue punish inconsistent candidates at more than twice that rate, disfavoring them by 15 points. The analogous punishments for inconsistency on abortion are 8 and 12 points.

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This yields a smaller, but still statistically significant, difference of 4 percentage points between voters who regard the issue as important to them personally, and voters who do not.

4.6 The Consequences for Dynamic Representation

In this section we examine the implications of our findings for representation. We consider, for example, how candidates should respond when the views of voters they are courting changes—which might happen, for example, because public opinion changes, because candidates run for higher office, or because candidates must triumph in a primary election before facing a general election. For each configuration of voter preferences, we analyze how candidates should behave in equilibrium this year, conditional on the position they espoused two years ago.

As a first step in this analysis, we combine the abortion and tax data to consider both issues jointly. We do this because our goal in this section of the paper is to consider the general implications of repositioning, independent of the particular issue at stake or particular distribution of opinion on that issue. After combining the datasets, we divided voters into two groups by folding the issue scale. Thus, we grouped together voters who took a polar position on the issue they considered, and separated them from voters who took a moderate position. We then took the following five steps:

1) For both groups of voters we calculated the actual share of the vote each candidate received in all possible candidate strategy pairs.

2) We posited a particular distribution of opinion in the electorate. For example, that the electorate was composed of voters equally distributed across the space, with a third at each of the two poles and a third at the center.

3) We held fixed the positions candidates took last year, and calculated the vote share each candidate would receive for each possible combination of positions the two candidates could take this year.

4) We identified each candidate's best response to each possible strategy of the candidate's opponent.

5) Using this information, we determined the Nash equilibrium strategies of the two candidates, conditional on the positions they took two years ago and the distribution of opinion in the electorate.

Figure 3 displays, for all possible electorates, the equilibrium strategies we identified for candidates who started at the same position as each other—either both at the same pole (top graphs) or both at the center (bottom graphs). The graphs on the left are based on the observed choices of voters who considered the issue they were assigned highly important, whereas the graphs on the right are based on the observed choices of voters who considered the issue to be of lower importance.

[Figure 3 about here]

Consider the graph in the upper left, which identifies the equilibrium strategies of candidates who stood at the same pole two years ago, and who now confront an electorate that sees the issue as highly important. For any point in the plotted triangle, the composition of the electorate is the percentage of voters at 1, as identified on the y-axis, the percentage of voters at

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3, as identified on the x-axis, and the percentage of voters at the center, which is simply the remainder of the electorate. The graph identifies three distinct regions in which the candidates have different Nash equilibrium strategies, depending on the composition of the electorate. (Because, in this first example, the candidates took identical positions two years ago, they have identical equilibrium strategies this year.)

In the darkly shaded region at the top of the triangle, the best strategy for the two candidates is to remain at the pole they previously occupied. This equilibrium is indicated by the small pictograph in the region that has dots at the candidates' starting positions. In this region, the candidates stick to their original pole even though the region clearly contains points that imply an electorate in which moderate and conservative voters are a majority, and the median voter is a moderate. For these hypothetical electorates, the candidates do not find it in their interest to converge to the median voter because they would pay a penalty for repositioning.

Now consider the lightly shaded region in the middle of the triangle. If the electorate were in this region, the candidates would find it in their interest to shift to the center of the policy scale. This is indicated by the pictograph in which the arrow runs from the candidates' starting positions to their new positions. In this region, there are enough voters in the center and to the right that the spatial benefits of repositioning outweigh the character-based costs. Finally, in the darkly shaded region at the right corner of the graph, both candidates find it in their interest to move all the way to the other pole to satisfy the large share of voters at 3.

It is useful to compare this graph to the adjacent, analogous graph for voters who do not regard the issue as highly important. The difference between the graphs is most easily observed by focusing on the dark region at the bottom right of each graph. This region is much smaller

when voters place low importance on the issue because such voters more heavily punish candidates who reposition across the space.

Figure 4 displays the remaining strategic scenarios, in which the candidates occupied different positions two year ago. As in Figure 3, there is a pure strategy equilibrium (summarized by a pictograph) for each shaded region. Unlike in Figure 3, however, Figure 4 contains un-shaded regions where there are no pure strategy Nash equilibria.

[Figure 4 about here]

What are the implications for representation? To find out, we calculated the proportion of possible electorates for which the winning candidate would occupy the position of the median voter when the candidates are playing equilibrium strategies. Table 4 presents this summary statistic for each graph in Figures 3 and 4.

[Table 4 about here]

Winning candidates are more likely to represent the median voter when the electorate views the issue as important than when they regard the issue as relatively unimportant. For example, when the issue is of high importance and the candidates start in the same position, the winning candidate will, in equilibrium, take the position of the median voter for 88 percent of hypothetical electorates. In contrast, when the issue is less important, the winning candidate will serve the median voter in only 66 percent of hypothetical electorates. This pattern, which repeats for each of the four possible candidate starting positions, arises because high-importance voters place relatively less weight on character considerations, and therefore afford candidates more slack to change positions without getting punished.

Inspection of the figures shows that there are many additional scenarios in which at least one candidate fails to converge to the ideal point of the median voter. These scenarios become

relevant because, as we noted above, real elections are not single-issue affairs like the contests we present in the experiments. Thus, the candidates we identify as losing in equilibrium on the issue at hand, might actually attain office given the strength of their positions on other issues, character traits, or other considerations. This presence of these other considerations, however, does not imply that candidates do not face the strategic incentives we uncover. To the contrary, our analysis can be viewed as identifying what position a candidate should take today on an issue given the candidate's policy history on the issue, in order to maximize his vote share and chance of attaining office. It turns out that, because of the consequences of repositioning, candidates who find themselves out-of-step with the preferences of the median voter will sometimes conclude that remaining out-of-step is the strategy that gives them the best chance of winning.

5. Conclusion

The policy positions candidates have held in the past can exert a substantial influence on the choices of voters and, in turn, the strategic incentives facing candidates when deciding what positions to espouse today. The cost that candidates pay if they choose to alter a previously held policy stance will, our equilibrium analysis suggests, often lead those who find themselves out-of-step with the electorate to remain so if they are interested in maximizing their vote. These candidates face twin disincentives for change: the electorate would fail to give them full credit for their newly adopted position and would also look askance at their character if they chose to shift.

Voter reactions to repositioning, thus, create an apparent representational irony. By deterring politicians from responding to changing circumstances, including shifts in the preferences of the electorate, voters themselves incentivize non-representative outcomes. We do

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not claim, however, that representation would necessarily be better if voters ignored the past commitments of candidates. Letting candidates off the hook would allow them to make promises they have no intention of fulfilling. The need to hold candidates accountable for their commitments, while also incentivizing them to be responsive, presents a democratic conundrum. On the one hand, if the electorate were to tolerate candidates who change positions, the policy promises of all politicians might become an unreliable guide to the actions they would take once in office. On the other hand, by withdrawing support from candidates who reposition, the electorate would provide officeholders with disincentives to represent its views.

Our finding that voters who view an issue as particularly important are more tolerant of candidates who reposition has further implications for representation. From one angle, this tendency may allow the electorate to strike a balance between accountability and responsiveness. While candidates have seemingly perverse incentives to remain consistent in the policies they advocate even when those policies become outdated or lose popularity, these incentives weaken substantially for issues about which the electorate cares intensely. Thus, in the case of an unexpected turn of events that both heightens the salience of an issue and demands a shift in policy, the electorate may be particularly permissive of repositioning by politicians.

From another angle, the usual tolerance for repositioning among of subgroups of voters who view an issue as highly important—the "issue public"—has potentially troubling consequences. In primary electorates "issue publics" with extreme preferences abound. To the extent that candidates find it in their interest to adopt a position to satisfy these voters in a primary, they find themselves out-of-step in a general election. Yet, the less intense policy views of pivotal general election voters and, hence, their lower tolerance for repositioning, may

forestall any efforts by the candidates to bring their policies back in-line with the preferences of this broader electorate.

It is important to note that our experiments present voters with scenarios in which the past and present policy stances of candidates are clearly stated and accessible. This allows us to precisely identify the consequences of repositioning on a single issue. The back and forth of a campaign, of course, could alter these incentives in various ways that suggest avenues for future research. Candidates can use strategies that may mitigate the costs of repositioning. They can offer explanations for their decision to change positions or simply deny that their views have, in fact, changed (Karol 2009). Of course, electoral challengers can attempt to heighten the costs of repositioning by bringing it to the attention of the electorate, and using it to raise doubts about the character of their opponents or the likelihood they will follow through on their current-day commitments.

One way candidates might be able to inoculate themselves from penalties for repositioning is by taking imprecise policy stances when possible. Other research has found that voters do not punish candidates who take ambiguous positions—in fact, they sometimes prefer such candidates (Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). Our finding that repositioning on an issue is costly suggests a further benefit of ambiguity. By remaining vague on certain issues, candidates can avoid getting pinned to positions that would be costly to change at a later date. This tactic might be particularly attractive for candidates facing a contested primary, and anticipating the need to shift to the center in the near future.

In response, other political actors like interest groups can play a role in forcing candidates to make clear commitments and holding them accountable if they attempt to renege. One increasingly common tactic, which appears to be aimed at tying candidates to positions popular

with their primary electorates, is signed political pledges. Signing such a pledge has the potential to increase the reputational or characterological cost of a policy reversal.

Interest groups appear to carefully craft pledges with the goal of making them enforceable. For example, the Taxpayer Protection Pledge (or the "no new taxes" pledge) contains simple language and does not include loopholes. As the sponsors Americans for Tax Reform explain, "There are no exceptions to the Pledge. Tax-and-spend politicians often use 'emergencies' to justify increasing taxes. In the unfortunate event of a real crisis or natural disaster, the legislator should propose spending cuts in other areas to finance the emergency response." Moreover, if questions of interpretation arise, the interest group that drafted the pledge can act as the ultimate arbiter of its meaning. Both features blunt the ability of candidates to deny, conceal, or explain away instances in which they renege on past commitments. Thus pledges seem aimed at foreclosing standard strategies that candidates might employ when they change their positions, and heighten the potential costs of inconsistency. In ongoing research we employ our experimental template to examine the consequences of candidate rhetoric, candidate ambiguity, interest group pledges, and other factors that are likely to affect how the electorate responds to repositioning.

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FIGURE 1. Measuring Preferences, Expectations, and Trait Evaluations

(a) Preferences about policy options

(b) Preferences about candidates

(c) Expectations about candidates
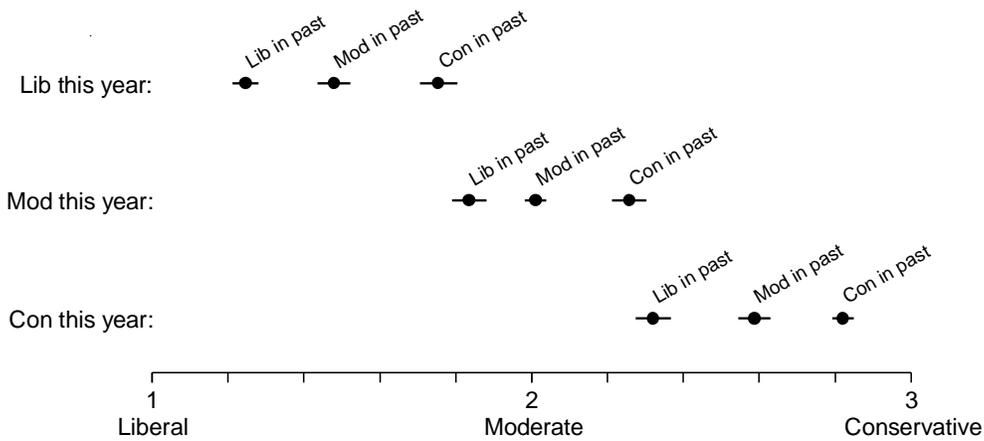

(d) Evaluations of candidate traits

FIGURE 2. Expectations about the Positions Candidates Would Adopt if Elected

(a) Taxes

(b) Abortion

Note: The figures summarize expectations about the policy positions candidates who were liberal, moderate, or conservative this year, and who were liberal, moderate, or conservative two years ago. Expectations are plotted on a scale from 1 (liberal) to 3 (conservative). Each dot represents the average expectation about what the candidate would try to do if elected. Horizontal lines through the dots are 95% confidence intervals. In the tax figure, each dot is based on a sample of between 669 and 1,147 observations; in the abortion figure, each dot is based on a sample of between 636 and 858 observations.

FIGURE 3. Nash Equilibria if Candidates Previously Took the Same Position
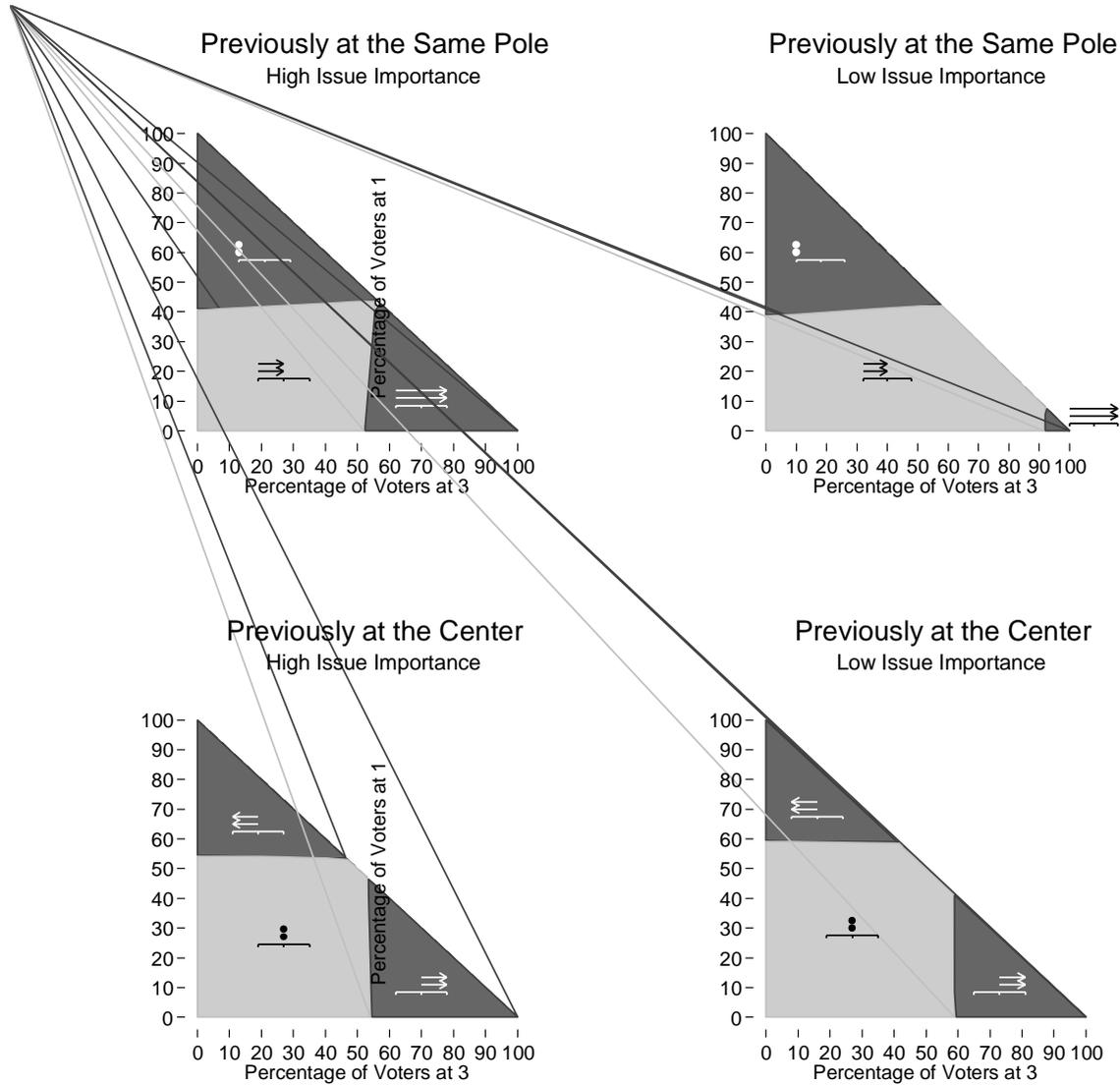
Note: The figures show Nash equilibria for all possible distributions of voters. The dot-and-arrow diagram within each shaded region summarizes the region's pure-strategy equilibrium. The figures were generated by combining data from two issues, taxes and abortion.

FIGURE 4. Nash Equilibria if Candidates Previously Took Different Positions
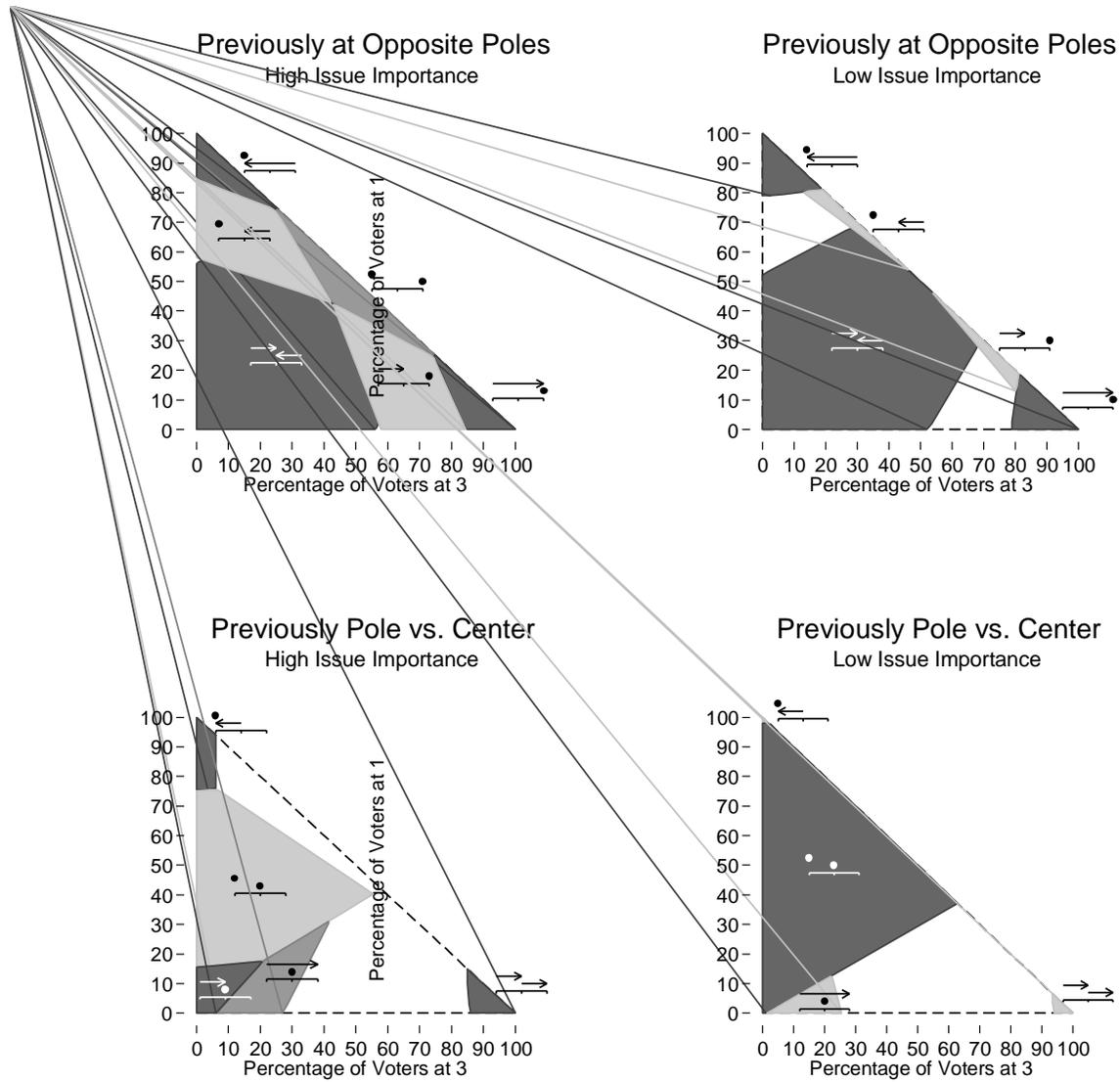
Note: The figures show Nash equilibria for all possible distributions of voters. The dot-and-arrow diagram within each shaded region summarizes the region's pure-strategy equilibrium. In the unshaded regions, only mixed strategy equilibria exist. The figures were generated by combining data from two issues, taxes and abortion.

TABLE 1. Estimated Effect of Repositioning

	Taxes		Abortion	
	Estimate	95% C.I.	Estimate	95% C.I.
Candidates who reposition	46.2	(45.1 to 47.4)	46.7	(45.6 to 47.9)
Candidates who stand firm	57.7	(56.2 to 59.2)	56.7	(55.2 to 58.2)
Effect of repositioning	-11.5	(-13.1 to -9.8)	-10.0	(-11.6 to -8.3)

Note: The table compares the average level of support for candidates who repositioned (when paired against all possible opponents), versus the average level of support for candidates who stood firm (when paired against all possible opponents). The difference between these two values represents the average effect of repositioning. 95% confidence intervals appear in parentheses.

TABLE 2. Effect of Repositioning on Trait Evaluations

Trait	Taxes	Abortion
Strong Leader		
Baseline rating when stood firm	2.9 (2.8 to 3.0)	3.1 (3.0 to 3.2)
Effect of moving one step	-0.7 (-0.8 to -0.5)	-0.8 (-1.0 to -0.7)
Effect of moving two steps	-0.9 (-1.1 to -0.7)	-1.3 (-1.5 to -1.1)
Honest		
Baseline rating when stood firm	3.1 (3.0 to 3.2)	3.3 (3.2 to 3.4)
Effect of moving one step	-0.8 (-1.0 to -0.7)	-1.0 (-1.2 to -0.9)
Effect of moving two steps	-1.3 (-1.4 to -1.1)	-1.4 (-1.6 to -1.3)
Open-Minded		
Baseline rating when stood firm	2.2 (2.1 to 2.3)	2.3 (2.2 to 2.4)
Effect of moving one step	0.3 (0.1 to 0.4)	0.2 (0.0 to 0.3)
Effect of moving two steps	0.1 (-0.1 to 0.3)	-0.1 (-0.3 to 0.1)

Note: The table gives the baseline rating (on a scale from 1 to 5) for candidates who stood firm, and shows how much higher or lower the ratings were for candidates who moved either one step or two steps. 95% confidence intervals appear in parentheses. Sample sizes for "strong leader" were 1,211 for taxes and 1,143 for abortion; sample sizes for "honest" were 1,221 for taxes and 1,177 for abortion; and sample sizes for "open-minded" were 1,285 for taxes and 1,146 for abortion.

TABLE 3. Estimated Effect of Repositioning, By Issue Importance

	Issue Importance			
	High		Low	
Taxes				
Candidates who stand firm	54.6	(52.5 to 56.6)	60.1	(58.3 to 61.8)
Candidates who reposition	47.7	(46.4 to 49.1)	45.0	(43.8 to 46.3)
Effect of repositioning	-6.9	(-4.0 to -9.5)	-15.1	(-17.3 to -12.7)
Abortion				
Candidates who stand firm	55.5	(53.6 to 57.6)	58.0	(56.2 to 59.8)
Candidates who reposition	47.2	(46.0 to 48.6)	46.0	(44.7 to 47.3)
Effect of repositioning	-8.3	(-10.8 to -5.8)	-12.0	(-14.2 to -9.7)

Note: The table shows the estimated effect of repositioning, conditional on the degree to which respondents said the issue was important to them personally. Respondents were placed in the high-importance category if they said the issue was extremely important or very important to them personally, and were placed in the low-importance category if they said the issue was moderately important, slightly important, or not at all important to them personally. 95% confidence intervals appear in parentheses.

TABLE 4: Percentage of Electorates in which the Nash Winner Takes the Position of the Median Voter

| | Issue Importance | |
Candidates' Previous Positions	High	Low
Previously at the Same Pole	88	66
Previously at the Center	93	84
Previously at Opposite Poles	92	72
Previously Pole vs. Center	83	79
Average	89	75

Note: The table gives the percentage of electorates (the percentage of the simplex summarizing the percentage of voters at 1, 2, and 3) in which the Nash equilibrium produces a winner who takes the position of the position of the median voter. Estimates are derived from the Nash equilibria in Figures 3 and 4.