CANDIDATES AND ISSUES IN THE 1980 CAMPAIGN: The Ideological Connection

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The notion that ideological perceptions in the mass public are shaped to some extent by elites and political candidates is widespread in the public opinion literature. However, there has been a lack of empirical research directly demonstrating the links between elites and the masses whose thinking they supposedly cue and structure. This paper attempts to show, through magnitude scale data collected over time in the 1980 campaign, the significant impact of political candidates in altering ideological perceptions of political stimuli. The chief "carrier" of ideology in 1980 is shown to be Ronald Reagan, whose strong issue stands and ideological label influenced perceptions of specific issues' ideological content. The findings are discussed in terms of both measurement problems in the ideology literature and more general theories of elite and environmental influences on mass political thought.

Recent empirical research on ideology in the mass electorate has attempted to move beyond descriptive analysis, i.e., assessing the number of ideologues at a given point in time, and to analyze the sources and influences on an individual's level of ideological sophistication. Although there are important problems with even the descriptive analyses that have still not been resolved (see the recent exchange of Abramson, 1981, and Nie et al., 1981), it seems clear that there has been a general increase in the number of voters in the post-1964 period who are familiar with, and at least partially understand, the basic liberal-conservative ideological dimension (Nie et al., 1976; Miller and Miller, 1976; Klingemann and Wright, 1973). The question remains, though, as to why and how this change came about.

Most scholars agree that *The American Voter*-inspired view (Campbell et

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Political Behavior Vol. 6, No. 1, 1984

al., 1960) of rising levels of education as responsible for any rise in "level of conceptualization" does not explain the increase; the percentage of ideologues at different education levels seem to increase uniformly over time (Nie et al., 1976; Abramson, 1982). The most plausible alternative hypothesis is the "nature of the times" explanation, that voters have responded to heightened ideological discourse in presidential campaigns and politics generally after 1964. As Nie et al. (1976) explain, "the data on levels of conceptualization do support the hypothesis that the way in which citizens conceptualize the political realm is dependent on the political content to which they are exposed" (p. 121). Similar explanations may be found in Asher (1976) and Niemi and Weisberg (1976), among other works, and this characterization of the public's post-1964 response to the environment is approaching the status of a truism in explaining observed changes in the electorate over time.

Smith (1980) extended the discussion of the "nature of the times" argument to the measurement realm, suggesting that the set of questions commonly used to tap ideological sophistication is invalid and unreliable and measures instead *only* how people respond to ideological rhetoric or discussion in the political environment. To the extent that this is true, the increases reported in the post-1964 period are not of "true" ideological awareness, but only of familiarity with ideological language.

Notwithstanding the measurement difficulties (see Abramson, 1981; Nie et al., 1981; Hagner and Pierce, 1982), the notion that familiarity with ideological concepts in the mass public is dependent on the nature of the political discourse of elites certainly has a plausible ring. The more that ideological cues are transmitted by elites to voters, and the clearer these cues are, the more likely it is that citizens will show some ideological grasp of politics. However, there has been no explicit validation of this idea in the empirical literature. Most research bestows ad hoc descriptions of the ideological content of a given campaign and then uses this to explain the rise or drop in the public's ideological awareness. Niemi and Weisberg (1976), for example, characterized the 1964, 1968, and 1972 elections as ones where elites "commonly used ideological terms," and Petrocik (1980) characterized the 1976 contest as a diffuse, non-issue-based, post-Watergate election. These facts are then used to explain the increase in conceptual sophistication until 1972 and the slight drop reported in 1976. What is missing from these analyses is a demonstrated empirical link between the cue givers and the receivers, between elites and the masses whose thinking they supposedly cue and structure.

There are several possible reasons why this link has not yet been specifically established. First is the lack of direct investigation into elite actions, discussions, or policy positions as causes of ideological awareness. The analyses discussed thus far contain no information on perceived policy

stances or ideological locations of major candidates, which are thought to be the actual cues that elites provide (Niemi and Weisberg, 1976). Instead, past research has substituted variables such as political interest, activity, and media attentiveness and assumed that the effects of these variables indicate that people are picking up environmental rhetoric (Nie and Anderson, 1974; Converse, 1975).

In addition, more recent evidence suggests that the use of ideological terms may be more highly variable *within* a given election period than across elections. Changes in interest, activity, and media awareness from 1956 to 1960 did not correlate with changes in levels of conceptualization in Smith's analysis, leading to the conclusion that the use of ideological terms is affected by even more short-term campaign influences. The inability, then, to discover the links between environmental cues and mass political thinking may be due to the absence of over-time data during a particular election campaign.

Our analysis attempts to overcome both of these problems using panel data collected during the 1980 election contest. This campaign, featuring a major party candidate widely seen as unusually "ideological," provided a welcome opportunity to test for the possible effects of environmental cues on the mass public. We show first that there was large variability in ideological judgments of both the major party candidates and specific policy issues within the given period. Moreover, differences in judgments of the issues are shown to be a direct function of the candidates' ideological stance and their positions on the various policies. In this way we hope to demonstrate the transmission of ideological information in the election through the major party candidates themselves. The results not only help us understand better some dynamics of public opinion in 1980, but also cast further light on issues left unresolved by the decade-old controversy over ideology in the American electorate.

MEASURING THE VARIABLES

The data for our analysis come from a panel survey, the first wave of which was carried out in April 1980 at the beginning of the primary season on a nonprobability sample of 184 Suffolk County, New York, adults. Eighty-three of these respondents were reinterviewed in October, shortly before the election. The sample is skewed in reference to national norms: On average, the respondents are older (mean age 48), better educated (with a mean of 14.2 years of formal education), white (96%), and more interested in politics than the average American. There is, nevertheless, sufficient variability within the sample on most variables.

In this local survey, respondents were called on to make magnitude responses in addition to category responses to each question; it was for cost

constraints that such data were not obtained from a randomly chosen sample. The procedures for obtaining magnitude responses follow those spelled out by Lodge (1981) and Lodge and Tursky (1981). From a measurement point of view, the major advantage to such scales is that they allow respondents a free range of intensity responses unconstrained by scale values arbitrarily imposed by the researcher. A respondent can indicate more accurately, for example, how liberal or conservative he or she perceives a candidate or issue to be. Aside from ensuring wider variability among responses than is true for category scales, magnitude scales produce interval-level data that allow us to test quantitative hypotheses, whereas "conventional category scales do not produce . . . coefficients which can be meaningfully interpreted as quantitative measures of the relationship between variables" (Lodge and Tursky, 1981, p. 415). In other words, the advantages of magnitude measures are that they gauge the intensity of attitudes and perceptions more accurately and fulfill the interval-level requirement made by regression and higher-level statistical techniques.

For illustrative purposes, let us describe the procedure for making numeric estimates of the ideological strength of one of the 10 issues studied, aid to minorities. The questions and scaling format read:

> Your task is to indicate how *liberal* or how *conservative* you think some policies are. First write in a reference number to represent a position *between* liberal and conservative.
>
> REFERENCE NUMBER _____
>
> Now for each of the following policy positions, please check if the position is basically liberal or basically conservative, then write in a response number; the more liberal *or* the more conservative you feel the position is, the *larger* your response number will be compared to your reference number.
>
> a. The government in Washington should *not* make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves.
>
> _____ Liberal
>
> _____ Conservative
>
> RESPONSE NUMBER _____

The same procedure was followed for the issues of health insurance, unemployment, gas and oil rationing, wage and price controls, nuclear plants, social services, detente, abortion, defense spending. For each of these 10 policy issues the two alternatives—one supposedly liberal, the other conservative—were presented to each respondent. (See Appendix for the exact wording of those 20 items.) The issues themselves correspond to those included in the 1980 CPS/NES preelection questionnaire. In addition to scaling the ideological content of the issues, respondents were also asked to give their judgments on where the major party candidates stood on each of

the issues. The perceived ideological location of the candidates was also elicited, as well as the respondents' own issue preferences, political interest, ideology, and vote intention in the 1980 election.

IDEOLOGICAL RATING OF ISSUES AND CANDIDATES IN 1980

How liberal or conservative were the 20 issue alternatives and two political party candidates in 1980? Figure 1 presents the mean rating provided by

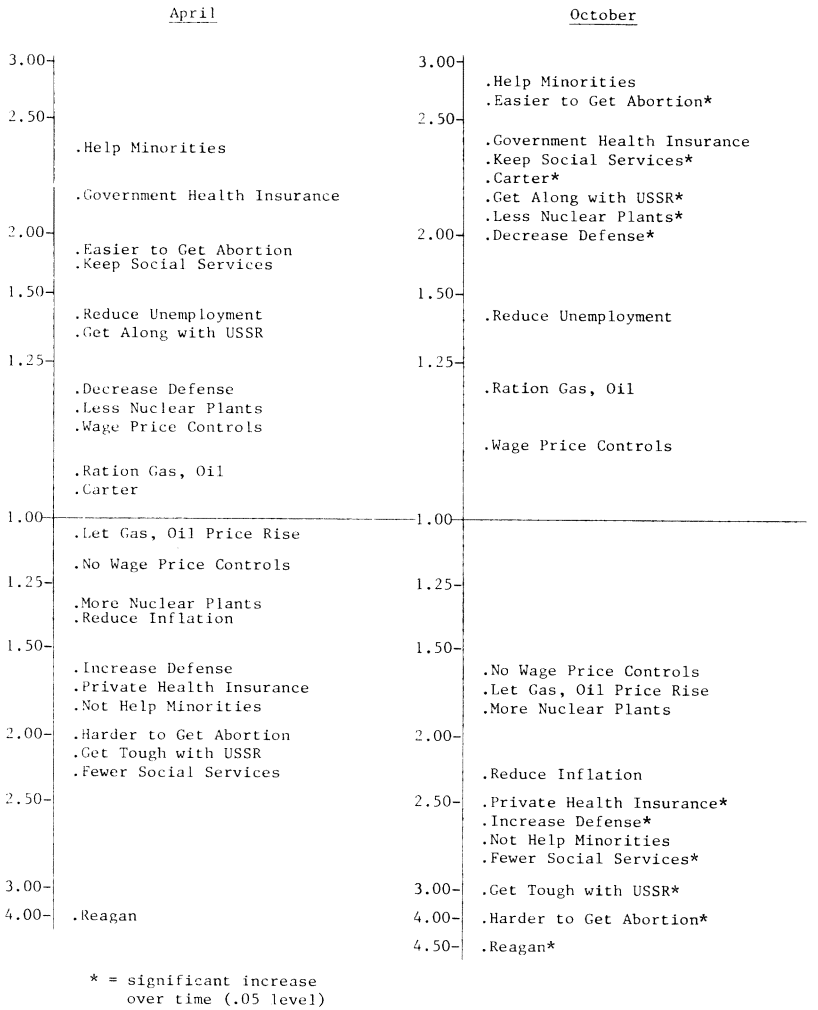

Fig. 1. Ideological ratings of issues and candidates in April and October 1980 ($N = 83$).

our sample for each of them at two points in time. Note that these means indicate how much more liberal or conservative a given issue was perceived relative to a neutral position represented by the value 1.0 in Figure 1. Also note that the vertical axis in that figure has a logarithmic scale (base 10); hence the unequal intervals.

The ideological ratings for the issues in April point to "help minorities" and "government health insurance" as the most distinctly liberal policies, followed at a respectful distance by "easier abortion" and "keep social services." On the other hand, economic policies such as "reduce unemployment," "wage and price controls," and "rationing gas and oil," as well as foreign policy issues such as "get along with Russia" and "decrease defense spending" barely receive a liberal rating. In other words, issues pertaining to the social welfare domain continue to define the liberal end of the ideological spectrum while strictly economic issues do not. Of the newer issues, abortion is recognized while nuclear power is not.

One might expect to find the ideological mirror image of the opposites of these policies on the conservative side of the spectrum in Figure 1. That is generally the case, but with some noteworthy exceptions. While the opposites of the four most liberal policies also rank among the most conservative policies, they are being joined by "get tough with Russia" and "increase defense spending." "Conservative" in April of 1980 appears to imply opposition not only to welfare state policies and abortion, but also to detente. At the same time, more strictly economic matters (gas and oil prices, wage and price controls, and fighting inflation) receive low conservative ratings, as does "more nuclear plants."

The candidate ratings in April reveal several interesting judgments by the sample. It is clear that of all the issues and candidates covered, the most distinctive ideological stimulus is Ronald Reagan, who is rated as 3.45 times more conservative than neutral. Reagan far outdistances the most conservative issue position, "fewer social services," and carries a stronger ideological weight than any of the liberal policies as well. This fact is of major importance in explaining the changes that will be seen below in ideological recognition. Candidate Reagan, even before the campaign was in full swing, was seen as strongly conservative, and this relative intensity will be shown to spill over onto issues on which Reagan takes a definitive stand.

The rating of Jimmy Carter in April, on the other hand, lacked ideological strength, and indeed his weak liberal rating is not significantly different from neutral. Table 1 offers a partial explanation for this judgment. As can be seen, there is a clear lack of consensus on even the proper ideological label for Carter in April. Only 36% "correctly" place him as liberal, while 16% see him as conservative and almost half will not answer or place him as ideologically neutral. Such ambiguity results in a mean ideological intensity

TABLE 1. Liberal-Conservative Placement of Carter and Reagan in Percentages

Candidate, Month	Liberal	Conservative	Neutral or Don't Know
Carter, April	36	16	48
Carter, October	61	7	31
Reagan, April	7	54	39
Reagan, October	4	80	16

Source. Suffolk County Panel Survey ($N = 83$).

barely greater than zero on the liberal scale. Reagan, in contrast, is placed as conservative by over half the sample, with only 7% incorrectly placing him as liberal. Carter's lack of ideological distinction may have been caused in addition by the presence of a strongly defined liberal, Ted Kennedy, in the Democratic primary contests at that time. Kennedy's ideological rating (not shown in Figure 1) was 1.7 times stronger than neutral, a figure greater than only a few liberal stimuli. As a result of his liberal intensity, Kennedy may have siphoned off Carter's liberal strength in April.

Before reaching too firm a conclusion on popular definitions of ideological terms, let us compare the April snapshot with the one taken in October (see Figure 1). While "help minorities" is still the strongest liberal issue, "harder abortion" and "tough with Russia" have edged out "fewer social services" on the other side. Even more than already in April, "conservative" at the end of the 1980 campaign implies a tough line on detente and moral issues, in addition to shrinking the welfare state. At the same time, the opposites of these policies (easier abortion and get along with Russia) have strongly shifted toward the liberal end. Thus, the concepts of both "liberal" and "conservative," in the collective judgment of our sample, now pertain to moral and foreign policy matters as well as to social welfare. The purely economic issues, on the other hand, remain less strongly identified with those concepts.

Among the candidates, movement from April to October is even more striking. Carter is now firmly recognized as a liberal. Indeed, in October he is one of the more liberal stimuli in the judgment of the sample. Table 1 reveals a now overwhelming consensus on both candidates' ideological location. Sixty-one percent see Carter as liberal, and 80% see Reagan as conservative. Fewer than half as many respondents "incorrectly" place the candidates in October, and the percentage of neutral or "don't know" responses decreased significantly as well. Carter's movement was almost certainly aided by the fact that his main opponent at that time was Reagan, not Kennedy, the more liberal candidate from his own party. Already the most conservative stimulus in April, Reagan is now rated as over 4.5 times more conservative than neutral.

Taking a global look at Figure 1, one can certainly conclude that most of 20 issue alternatives and major party candidates shifted toward their "correct" ideological poles over time. On the average, policies are rated 1.5 times more conservative or liberal in October than in April, although some do not show a significant change over time. Moreover, conservative policies tended to shift more strongly in the ratings. The result is a decided asymmetry at the end of the 1980 campaign, what with conservative policies being rated as more conservative than their opposites are rated liberal, the only exception being nuclear power.

What Figure 1 and Table 1 suggest more generally is the ability of the sample to use and recognize ideological language at the end of the campaign much more effectively (and willingly) than at the beginning. The ideological intensity of most stimuli, issues and candidates both, increased markedly, and the number of nonresponses or neutral responses declined. While we cannot claim that the sample became more sophisticated in the sense of understanding of labels or the principles which lie behind them, we may say that the campaign succeeded in disseminating ideological cues, which polarized mass ideological perceptions of issues and candidates. Within the space of 6 months during the campaign, there was an increase in what Field and Anderson call "explicit" ideologues, those who provide the language of ideology, if not "concern for substantive ideological problems" (Field and Anderson, 1969, p. 388). We take this development as support for the hypothesis of "campaign effects" on mass ideological perception. The question remains, How exactly did these effects come about? From what agent or source did the cues emanate, and what was the process that linked the cues to the mass public? The next section discusses the hypothesis that the candidates themselves provided the cues through their policy stands, enabling the public to alter or refine their ideological judgments.

EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN CANDIDATES, ISSUES, AND IDEOLOGY

In seeking to explain ideological change, our attention focuses on the presidential candidates. Previous studies linking rhetoric in the political environment to ideological perceptions typically pointed to candidates' campaign speeches and style. Barry Goldwater in 1964, George Wallace in 1968, and George McGovern in 1972 all ran campaigns whose "fiery rhetoric" changed the ideological tone of political discourse (Smith, 1980; Pierce et al., 1982). By the same token, the decline of ideological thinking reported in 1976 has been attributed to the weak ideological polarization between Ford and Carter in that year (Petrocik, 1980).

For a candidate to influence voters' ideological judgments, several conditions must be met. First, he must be ideologically perceived himself. The finding of Reagan's being a highly charged ideological stimulus in April establishes this condition for 1980, at least as far as Reagan is concerned. For Carter, however, the condition is not met, given his lack of ideological focus at the beginning of the campaign.

In addition to the ideological requirement, a candidate must also be seen as taking distinct policy stands in order to be able to shape a voter's notion of how liberal or conservative a particular alternative is. The process of attribution we have in mind is expected to work as follows: A voter (1), not unreasonably, views Reagan as a conservative; (2) sees Reagan favoring more defense spending; and thus, (3) concludes that spending more on defense is conservative. The more so, the more conservative Reagan is perceived and the stronger his stand on defense spending. This process would account for the sharpening of the ideological focus on issues shown by our sample between April and October, especially so with a candidate like Reagan providing such a visible standard.

Figure 2 supplies this second piece of information necessary to assess candidate effects. Here the perceived policy positions of Reagan and Carter in October are reported for the six most ideologically tinged issues: abortion, defense, USSR policy, national health, minorities, and social spending. In every case but one, Reagan is seen as taking a stronger stand than is Carter. In the areas of defense spending and policy toward the USSR, the gap is especially wide; here Reagan's mean policy scores are 5.01 and 3.72 times larger than neutral. While less intense, his stands on the other four issues are clearly distinguished from "neutral." Carter, again, is plagued by ambiguity. His stands toward the USSR, social spending, and minorities are fairly well defined, but his stands on the other three policies register close to "neutral." On defense spending, moreover, he is seen as favoring the same side as Reagan, that is, "increase defense," though only halfheartedly, we should add. The view nevertheless that Carter takes a "conservative" position on such a salient issue as defense further adds to the ambiguity surrounding his ideological position. Lacking ideological profile and strong issue stands, Carter is unlikely to shape voters' ideological perceptions of issues, whereas Reagan, who possesses both requisites, may be expected to do so.

We must be careful, however, not to jump to conclusions about the effect of candidates. It is conceivable that the candidates themselves are influenced by the issues. The ideological flavor of a particular policy alternative may make a voter appreciate the ideological coloration of a candidate, provided the candidate espouses the respective policy in relatively clear terms. Now we are positing an inferential sequence that might be illustrated as follows: A voter (1) considers more defense spending "conservative"; (2) sees

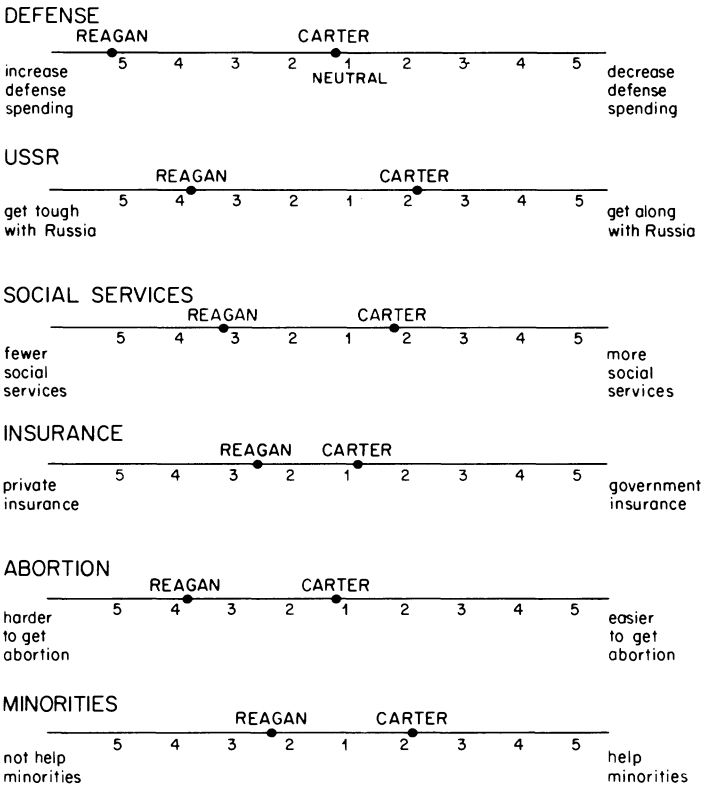

FIG 2. Mean perceptions of candidate issue stands (October 1980).

Note: From Suffolk County Panel Study ($n = 83$). Points are average ratios of strength of candidates' positions compared to 1, the neutral point; e.g., Reagan is seen as 3.7 times stronger than neutral on his stand, "get tough with Russia."

Reagan favor more defense spending; and thus (3) views Reagan as a conservative. These are the same steps as listed above, except for the order in which they are taken. The main a priori criterion for favoring one hypothetical sequence over the other is whether it is the candidate or the policy which initially has the sharper ideological focus. Beyond that, it is a matter of empirical analysis.

Such an analysis faces the problem of identifying and estimating a model involving simultaneous causation. It is not an insurmountable problem, even with cross-sectional data, but it surely does not surrender easily to empirical scrutiny. Panel data offer some promising prospects, but also

treacherous pitfalls (Heise, 1969; Duncan, 1969). Our analysis relies on a two-wave panel, and we have tried to stay clear of the pitfalls while exploiting the advantages of such data.

Our model, which is diagrammed in Figure 3, extends the basic two-variable, two-wave paradigm in an important way. Consistent with our reasoning above, we have entered "candidate policy position"—as reported by

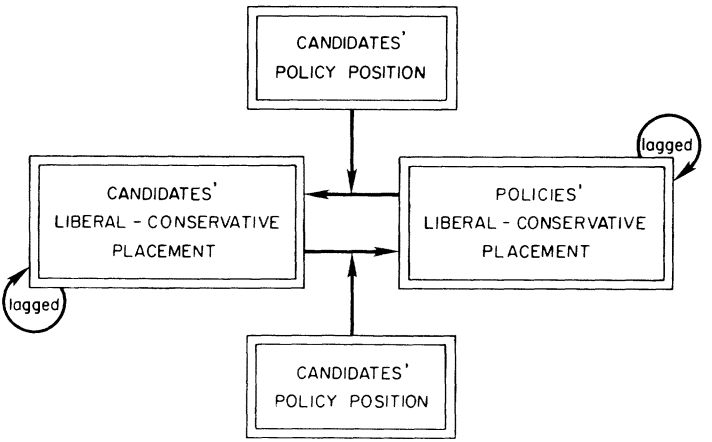

FIG. 3. A model of ideological recognition.

respondents (Figure 2)—multiplicatively. We assume that a policy's ideological rating can influence a candidate's ideological rating only in conjunction with a perception of that candidate's policy position. With two major party candidates and repeated measurements, the equation for the candidate-to-policy sequence for a given policy reads:

A policy's ideological rating
= policy's ideological rating at $t-1$ + (Reagan's ideological rating × Reagan's position on this policy) + (Carter's ideological rating × Carter's position on this policy)

The equation for the policy-to-candidate sequence, on the other hand, for a given candidate reads:

Candidate's ideological rating
= candidate's ideological rating at $t-1$ + (policy A's ideological rating × candidate's position on policy A) + (policy B's ideological rating × candidate's position on policy B) . . . + (policy Z's ideological rating × candidate's position on policy Z)

TABLE 2. Estimates of Equations Predicting Ideological Placement of Policies

	Decrease Defense Spending	Fewer Social Services	Tough toward Russia
Reagan	−.53*	+.65*	.44*
Carter	−.12	.14	.07
Policy at $t-1$	.23*	−.1	.22*
R^2	.44	.49	.34
	National Health Insurance	Harder to Obtain Abortion	Help Minorities
Reagan	−.64*	.14	−.26*
Carter	.12	.41*	−.31*
Policy at $t-1$	.31	.09	.33*
R^2	.47	.20	.25

Note. Liberal alternatives are coded as negative; *conservative* alternatives as positive. The interpretation of the equations for defense spending, for example, is that the interaction of Reagan's conservative ideology and his stand on defense (a positive term) leads to a more negative, that is, more liberal perception of "decrease defense spending." For social services, the interaction tends to a more positive, that is, more conservative perception of "fewer social services."

Source. Suffolk County Panel Study ($N=83$).

Standardized beta coefficients are reported.

* = Significant at .05 level.

Needless to say, "candidate's position" implies perceived position as recorded in our sample.

The candidate-to-policy equation was estimated separately for the six issues in Table 2, that is, those issues whose alternatives were clearly identified as liberal/conservative. As can be gleaned from the resultes presented in Table 2, five of the six issues reveal significant "Reagan effects." That is to say, the ideological ratings of "decrease defense spending," "fewer social services," "get tough with Russia," "government health insurance," and "more help for minorities," were each affected by perceptions of candidate Reagan's stand on the issue and Reagan's overall ideological rating. For the "liberal" alternatives among these five, the interaction of Reagan's perceived stand and ideology led them to be seen as more liberal than before, while the conservative alternatives were pushed further into conservative territory. These effects operated with the initial ideological rating of an issue alternative (in April) and the current ideological rating of Carter held constant. It is also worth noting that for none of the issues are the Reagan and Carter ideological ratings highly intercorrelated. These correlations range from −.17 to +.35 and, therefore, pose no danger of collinearity.

Carter effects can be seen only in two of the six equations, those of abortion and aid to minorities, but these two equations explain not much variance in ideological ratings, at .20 and .25, respectively. For the minorities issue, moreover, the significant Reagan effect shares the credit. There can be little doubt that Reagan did more to shape ideological evaluations of policies during the campaign than did Carter. Reagan's impact is especially pronounced in the "social services" domain where his contribution accounts for virtually all of the 49% of the variance explained by the equation. This is not surprising, given the special emphasis placed in the Reagan campaign on limiting the size of government and government programs. The other issues where Reagan showed strong effects were also highly salient campaign issues for him, such as defense spending and USSR policy. In each of these cases, Reagan's clear and definitive stand on the issue brightened the ideological color of the respective policy alternative. Given his strong conservative rating, which persisted throughout the campaign, issues became defined either as "conservative" because Reagan the conservative favored them or as "liberal" because Reagan the conservative opposed them. Carter, by contrast, largely failed to exert this kind of influence. The perceptions of his ideological location and issue stands were clouded by ambiguity.

Yet before reading too firm a conclusion, let us examine the alternative process, where the issue-candidate sequence is reversed. Table 3 provides evidence that this process may have been at work for Carter. The issues of

TABLE 3. Estimates of Equations Predicting Ideological Placement of Candidates[a]

Issues	Reagan	Carter
Abortion	.32	.45*
	(.21)	(.13)
Minorities	.35	.51*
	(.31)	(.33)
Defense	−.05	−.24
	(.20)	(.27)
Russia	.14	.25**
	(.13)	(.10)
Social services	.31*	−.23
	(.18)	(.32)
Insurance	−.28	.13
	(.23)	(.15)
Candidate ($t-1$)	.03	.81*
	(.11)	(.35)
R^2	.25	.54

Source. Suffolk County Panel Study ($N=83$).
[a]Coefficients are not standardized; standard errors in parentheses.

abortion, the USSR, and minorities appear to have shaped his October ideological rating, in addition to his April ideological stance. The adjusted R^2 for the Carter equation is a substantial .54, indicating that Carter's perceived ideological rating was affected by the positions he took on the various policy issues. For Reagan, by contrast, issues do not seem to spill back on his ideological rating. "Social services" is the only item with a significant effect, given a one-tailed test, and the R^2 for the Reagan equation (.25) is only half as large as that for Carter. We conclude that it was Reagan who defined the ideological content of the issues through his strong and clear positions and initially strong conservatism, and these same issues helped improve Carter's "liberal" rating in October. In other words, people rated Carter as "liberal" in October because he took positions on issues that Reagan had shown to be liberal or because he took the opposite position on issues that Reagan had shown to be conservative.

CONCLUSIONS

The 1980 election campaign offered rich opportunities to examine the notion of ideology in American politics. In this paper we were especially interested in voters' evaluations of policies and candidates in liberal-conservative terms. Are these evaluations stable or influenced by "social learning" that occurs during a political campaign? While we did not attempt to account for initial ideological judgments, which may be due to a wide range of factors, we have shown that the campaign did provide ideological cues which altered the sample's ideological ratings of issues and candidates. From April to October, the ideological focus of these stimuli became sharper in the eyes of the public and went in the direction a sophisticated follower of politics would predict. Evidently, at least superficial ideological learning occurred during the election year, the kind that we are not aware of having been demonstrated previously. The view of Smith (1980) and others, which supposes that day-to-day attention to political rhetoric will influence evaluations within a single campaign, has received ample support in this study.

The second half of the study analyzed the source of these ideological cues and concluded that Ronald Reagan was the main "carrier" of ideology in 1980. We have shown that the perception of Reagan as a strong conservative and as taking strong stands on various salient issues influenced the perception of those issues in a more ideological fashion. Such effects could be attributed to Carter only to a limited extent. Because Carter lacked sufficient ideological shape, it was difficult for a voter to associate the issue stands he took, where they were well enough defined, with an ideological label. Candidate Carter curiously behaved almost like one of the issues, gaining significantly in ideological profile during the campaign. We suggested

that this movement was at least partially due to his comparison with Reagan during the general election campaign. On issues dear to Reagan such as defense, social services, and policy toward the USSR, Carter began to look increasingly the liberal. In this way, he may have been able to reclaim the label denied him earlier in 1980 by Ted Kennedy, a more liberal rival within his own party.

Our study of the 1980 campaign bears out the effect of elites on mass political thought. Unfortunately, we have no way of discerning whether the newly acquired ideological knowledge of voters persisted after the election or not. Hence, it would be premature to make judgments as to the quality of this ideological learning. People do respond to the nature of political stimuli to which they are exposed, especially rhetoric disseminated by candidates in an election year, and this fact must be taken into account when analyzing the meaning of ideology in the mass electorate. To the extent that ideological language fills the environment, any measure which depends on the use of recognition of ideological terms in categorizing persons will misclassify at least some of the respondents as "sophisticated" when their responses are based solely on environmental influences. If this rhetoric is retained or leads to a better understanding of new issues or stimuli by an individual, then we may speak of increased ideological sophistication. This analysis shows that ideological recognition by the average citizen is highly variable and is susceptible to short-term influences from distinctly ideological candidates. Further research must address the stability and consequences of these elite-generated changes on mass political thought.

Acknowledgments. The research was supported by the National Science Foundation, Grant No. SES8025069. For criticism and encouragement we are grateful to John Herstein, Milton Lodge, Rod Kiewiet, Don Kinder, Ken Bollen, Leo van Doorn, and Richard Brody, and for secretarial assistance to Marilyn Muroff.

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APPENDIX

List of Twenty Issue Positions Related by Respondent

1. The government in Washington should not make any specific effort to help minorities because they should help themselves.
2. There should be a comprehensive government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone.
3. Government should take action to reduce unemployment, even if it means that inflation will go up a lot.
4. The government should allow the price of gas and oil to rise in order to encourage energy conservation.

5. The government should establish wage and price controls to reduce inflation.
6. The government should allow more nuclear plants to be built.
7. The government should provide fewer social services, even in areas of health, education and welfare to reduce spending.
8. The U.S. should get tougher with Russia, not emphasize too much getting along with Russia.
9. The government should take action to reduce inflation, even if it means unemployment would go up a lot.
10. The government should regulate people's use of gas and oil by some kind of rationing in order to reduce energy consumption.
11. The government should make it much easier for a woman to get an abortion.
12. The government should decrease defense spending.
13. The government should make every effort to improve the social and economic positions of blacks and other minority groups, even if it means giving them preferential treatment.
14. Medical expenses should be paid by individuals and private insurance plans like Blue Cross and other company-paid plans, not a comprehensive government insurance plan.
15. The United States should try harder to get along with Russia, not emphasize a get tough policy.
16. The government should put a stop to the building of nuclear power plants.
17. The government should increase defense spending.
18. Government should continue the social services it now provides in the areas of health, education, and welfare, even if it means an increase in government spending.
19. Government should not establish wage and price controls to reduce inflation.
20. Government should make it harder for women to get an abortion.