

Collaborative Research: The American Party Platforms Project
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Intellectual Merit

We propose to construct a comprehensive database of American state party platforms from 1828 to the present. Unlike many national party systems, American political parties have, from the beginning, been federal organizations that are neither purely national nor local in character. For most of American history, state parties have met in biennial (or in some cases, annual) conventions to endorse nominees for office and to write a platform that sets out the party's position on issues of the day. These platforms provide a valuable window into how each party has positioned itself on key issues over time and into the interplay of state and national forces in shaping party politics.

We will draw on this database for two collaborative research projects. First, building upon Feinstein and Schickler's (2008) use of state platforms in their study of the civil rights realignment, we will develop a time-series, cross-sectional dataset that tracks the degree of attention to major issues and the position of each state party (and the national parties) on these issues over time. We will test hypotheses derived from theories of political competition to understand better when political parties adopt convergent or divergent issue positions, change their positions on existing issues, highlight new issues, and drop existing commitments. We will also leverage the data to illuminate the *vertical* dynamics of position-taking between state and national levels of the party, examining when and in what ways one observes a nationalized party system despite the immense socioeconomic and demographic diversity that has characterized the U.S. polity.

Second, the platforms will serve as a key data source for a project exploring the development of U.S. welfare state policies since the 1920s. Our preliminary coding of a sample of platforms from the 1920s and 1930s suggests that the enactment of major New Deal social and labor policy innovations generally followed substantial demands expressed in state party platforms. By contrast, health care was almost completely absent from the state platforms we have coded thus far. In combination with survey data, we will use the longer, more complete time series of platforms to explore how mass preferences about a range of proposed national social policies in this period were (or were not) transmitted to, and aggregated by, parties, legislators, and other executive officials.

Broader Impacts Resulting from the Proposed Activity

This project will provide the scholarly community and the public with access to the full text of the several thousand state party platforms written by the major political parties (and significant third-party challengers) from 1828 to the present. We will archive searchable text versions of each state party platform – along with the national party platforms from this period – at the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). We will also create documentation that assists scholars and the public in understanding who wrote the platforms and the platforms' changing role in American politics. These platforms will provide a rich new source of data for students of party politics, the policy-making process, state politics, political behavior, and American political development. American national platforms have been a key source of data for several important studies (e.g. Gerring 1998; Carmines and Stimson 1989) and the Comparative Manifestos Project has generated a rich research agenda on cross-national variation in how parties position themselves over time. However, the difficulty of tracking down American state party platforms has meant that few scholars have used them as a source of data, even as they speak to important theoretical debates concerning the nature of American federalism, the dynamics of partisan realignments, the content and meaning of party “brand names,” and how major parties address challenges from third parties. The Project's webpage will be a central repository for studies using the platforms data, and will include results from various content analyses of the platforms along with ancillary time series data on state election outcomes and demographics, along with systematic information concerning the actors involved in framing a sample of the platforms. By creating a database of state party platforms and providing examples of content analysis using the platforms, we hope to foster numerous studies of the interplay of state and national parties in the policy process.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The American Party Platforms Project has three primary aims:

- To assemble a dataset of several thousand state party platforms written by the major political parties and significant third-party challengers from 1828 to the present. These difficult-to-find platforms will provide a rich new source of data for students of party politics, the policymaking process, state politics, political behavior, elections, and American political development.
- To disseminate this dataset widely to the academic community. Platforms will be available in a variety of text-searchable file formats. These platforms, as well as national party platforms for the same period, will be hosted on a special webpage by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). The webpage will feature ancillary state-level time series data, coding schemes, and guidance for exploiting recent innovations in computer-assisted analysis of political texts. We will also provide documentation that assists researchers, teachers, and the public in understanding the settings in which platforms were written, who wrote them, and how they illuminate the changing nature of party politics since the rise of the world's first mass political parties.
- To use the state and national platforms data in a large project on the development of issue positioning by American parties. By undertaking a systematic content analysis of the platforms, we will develop a time-series, cross-sectional dataset that tracks the degree of attention to major issues and the position of each state party (and the national parties) on major issues over time. We will evaluate competing spatial theories of electoral competition to understand better when political parties adopt convergent or divergent issue positions, change their positions on existing issues, highlight new issues, and drop existing commitments. We will also leverage the data to illuminate the *vertical* dynamics of position-taking between state and national levels of the party, and in so doing enhance the growing literature on party aggregation. The results will contribute to emerging research on the nature of parties in federal politics, the importance of party labels in political competition, and the role of parties as agents of America's political development.

Introduction

Party position-taking is consequential, both for electoral outcomes and for policymaking (e.g., Ginsberg 1976; Royed and Borrelli 1999). Voters' choices at the ballot box are shaped, at least in part, by their evaluation of the positions articulated by the competing parties and their candidates. These positions, despite the many sources of friction in the American political system, have a significant impact on policy outcomes (e.g., Bartels 2008; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2003). We also know that candidates and parties often adopt distinct positions on major policy issues, rather than converging to the median voter in the electorate (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Stonecash, et al. 2003). Yet these generalizations themselves raise crucial questions: How do political parties position themselves on leading policy issues of the day? Under what conditions do competing parties adopt similar positions? Under what conditions do parties change their position on an existing issue, or seek to transform the competitive landscape by making a new issue more salient? When do parties choose to talk past one another rather than engaging directly on a given dimension? Do parties lead the public in adopting these issue positions, or vice versa?

These are core questions that speak to the nature of partisan competition and the role of political parties in democratic politics. They have inspired three main sets of answers. First, Downs' (1957) spatial model of party competition spawned a large literature that seeks to understand when parties will stake out issue positions that converge or diverge from those of their competitors. Many of these models assume citizens vote based on the relative proximity of their policy preferences to each party's positions (e.g., Aldrich 1983; Ansolabehere and Snyder 2000; Enelow and Hinich 1990; Groseclose 2001; Miller and

Schofield 2003; Schofield and Miller 2007; Levy 2004). Second, these have been challenged by what has been called salience theory (Grofman 2004). These models do not view a failure of parties to converge to the median voter as an aberration requiring explanation; rather, they predict some degree of divergence in position-taking. Some assume that voters are more interested in the general direction of policy change, while others suggest that parties often do not engage one another in their position-taking, and instead emphasize those issues that the public considers them more competent to tackle (Budge and Farlie 1983; Robertson 1987; Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989; Iversen 1994; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003; Sigelman and Buell 2004).¹ Third, political scientists (Caramani 2004), sociologists (Manza and Brooks 1999), and historians (Kleppner 1970, 1979; Holt 1999) suggest that, contra Downs, parties have little flexibility in their position-taking; instead, party positions are largely determined by the social groups that (durably) comprise the parties. These three approaches—proximity models, salience theory, and social cleavages—have spawned many testable hypotheses but much less empirical testing.

Conversely, there is a rich empirical literature on American parties, but it has rarely spoken directly to the conditions under which parties are more or less likely to converge in their positions, highlight new issues, or talk past one another. Major contributions have closely analyzed how parties have adopted their positions on specific issues (e.g. Carmines and Stimson 1989; Karol 2009) and have explored the degree of party polarization in the voting behavior of members of Congress (e.g., McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008). In recent decades, survey data and experiments have made possible a series of studies exploring voter perceptions of candidate and party positions (Aldrich and McKelvey 1977; Page and Jones 1979; Popkin 1991; Tomz and Van Houweling 2008). While a handful of studies have also used national party platforms to derive measures of party positioning (e.g., Royed and Borrelli 1999; Ginsberg 1976), these studies have been limited by the paucity of cases and have largely been divorced from the theoretical literature on issue positioning (but see Finegold and Swift 2001).

Theory testing requires comparable data that chart the rise, fall, and transformation of issues in the party system over a long span of time. National platforms are a useful starting point, but incorporating party behavior at the state level greatly increases our analytic leverage by providing crucial variation in electoral conditions, voter preferences, and party organization. With cross-sectional time-series data on party positioning, we could make real progress in testing competing approaches to political parties. We could also illuminate the murky relationships among America's local, state, and national parties and contribute to the accumulation of knowledge about parties in federal polities.

We propose to assemble a comprehensive database of state party platforms from 1828 to the present in order to lay the empirical foundation for resolving important theoretical questions about how parties position themselves on policy issues. We are particularly interested in understanding the conditions under which parties adopt new positions on existing issues, highlight new issues (e.g., Riker 1982), and drop existing commitments. We also seek to understand how changes in political context—such as the nationalization of party competition, the rise of issue activists and candidate-centered elections, and the increased role of the national government—have affected parties' strategies as they craft their issue positions. We do not enter into this project aiming to show that a single theory of parties is superior to the alternatives. Proximity models, approaches emphasizing differential issue salience, and sociological approaches focused on the social groups associated with each party all contribute to understanding party dynamics but generate a range of competing expectations about party positioning.² We believe that the American party platforms database will become a valuable tool that can be used to examine the conditions under which these theoretical approaches are useful. Finally, the vertical relations of parties in federal systems—the conditions under which influence over party position-taking flows from the states to Washington or vice versa—has received scant empirical and theoretical attention. We expect that this dataset will provide an empirical basis for further theoretical development concerning how parties position themselves in federal systems.

¹ Scholars have used officeseekers' campaign statements and advertisements to test issue ownership (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003; Sigelman and Buell 2004). See Page (1978) for a classic study of candidate positioning.

² Still another potentially useful theoretical perspective is offered in new work by Bawn et al. (2006).

American Parties, American Platforms

Rather than viewing American parties as adopting a single position on each issue at a given point in time, we believe that there is considerable leverage in analyzing the range of positions and issue emphases adopted by the state parties as well as the national parties. Unlike national parties in other federal polities, America's political parties were until the 1960s *confederally* structured. The national committees, governed by two members from each state, had little leverage over the activities of the state parties. This confederal structure suggests a weak holding company for state party interests (Schattschneider 1942; Key 1964; Milkis 1993; Cotter and Hennessey 1964; Klinkner 1994).³ The relatively high degree of state party autonomy began with Martin Van Buren and the birth of mass parties. State parties delivered presidential votes—and financed national party activities—in exchange for substantial control over their own affairs, including their primaries, conventions, delegate selection, and the promulgation of their principles and policy positions (Aldrich 1995; Ceaser 1979; Yearley 1960).

Since 1840, national parties have disseminated a party platform at their presidential nominating conventions. Even before then, state parties began to meet in biennial conventions to endorse nominees for office and to write a platform that sets out the party's position on issues of the day. The principles and policies articulated by state parties have often diverged from those of the national party's platform. This frustrated advocates of responsible party government, who claimed that it "makes nonsense of the party system" (APSA 1950: 54).⁴ But what frustrated them entices us: state parties' ability to devise platforms that fit local political conditions provides far greater leverage for assessing how parties develop their positions on issues (i.e., their spatial location) and their emphasis on particular policy domains. For example, as discussed below, Feinstein and Schickler (2008) use state party platforms to show that even as many national Democratic elites sought to avoid dealing with civil rights issues in the 1940s and 1950s, non-southern state Democratic parties generally paid more attention to the issue and adopted a more liberal position than did their same-state Republican counterparts.

More generally, recent formal models of party competition often emphasize the role of activists in driving changes in party positions and the divergence in party platforms (Aldrich 1983a, 1983b, 1995; Miller and Schofield 2003; Schofield and Miller 2007). For most of American history, understanding the role of activists requires understanding state parties, since there were few strictly *national* party activists. Instead, at least until very recently, those activists important with respect to national politics were also active in the process of selecting candidates for state offices and in state and local party politics generally (Rapoport et al. 1986). That is, the primary entry-point for activists for most of U.S. history has been through state and local parties, rather than directly into national politics. State parties have been important intermediaries between local officials and national elites, and have often allowed new issues and priorities to gain an institutional foothold at the subnational level and then spread to the point that national elites are forced to take notice. These hard-to-find platforms provide a great opportunity to untangle the ties between subnational actors, national party leaders, and the national agenda.

Several thorny issues of interpretation accompany this opportunity. One's views of how to read these platforms is bound up in large part with how one thinks about political parties. From a Downsian perspective, platforms are what Key (1964: 421) called "electioneering documents." Here, platforms may not be ripe for analysis of the sincere policy preferences of politicians, but nonetheless reflect the positions that these office-seekers believed would maximize their chances of winning the upcoming election. Those viewing office-seekers as motivated in part by policy (Calvert 1985; Wittman 1973, 1983, 1990) would read these platforms differently. Alternatively, platforms may reflect internal compromises

³ Key (1964: 334) writes that "[f]ederalism in our formal governmental machinery includes a national element independent of the states, but in our party organization the independent national element is missing. Party structure is more nearly confederative than federal in nature."

⁴ The American Political Science Association's famed Committee on Political Parties proposed that state platforms be limited to positions on "purely state and local issues," and that, if necessary, state laws be changed so that state conventions would be held *after* the national convention so as to encourage conformity with the national platform.

among contending factions, and thus may track their variable influence within the party apparatus.

Further complexities emerge when reading the platforms of subnational parties. What inferences can be drawn about national party competition from an analysis of state-level platforms? It would be difficult to argue that these platforms themselves have a *direct* causal effect on national party position-taking. It is more plausible to assert that these platforms reflect the views of party activists and lower-level party officials, and that these activists and officials—or the social groups or organized interests from which they are drawn—help determine either official national party position-taking (i.e., national platforms), presidential nominations, or the policy agenda of national party leaders. Regardless, one's priors about the relationship between levels of parties in federal politics affect one's interpretive practices.

State parties' diversity complicates matters as well. State parties have long varied in their internal organization (Mayhew 1986); they have used different processes to nominate state convention delegates, different procedures to craft and ratify platforms, and drawn on different traditions and norms about political speech. This diversity provides useful variation for assessing the causal dynamics surrounding platform positions but also complicates broad generalizations as to their authorship and meaning. As discussed below, we will gather information about the actors involved in writing a sample of the state platforms in order to understand who influences platform-writing.

Moreover, the relationship between state and national parties has been anything but static across the broad sweep of U.S. history. Since the late 1960s, the equilibrium reached by Van Buren and the state parties has collapsed, and the flow of power and resources has begun to reverse (Ranney 1978; Ceaser 1979).⁵ The two major parties have taken different paths down this road: Democrats have secured leverage over state parties through the enforcement of a host of rules regulating primaries, delegate selection, and so on, while Republicans have done so not through rules but through financial and technical assistance provided to state Republican parties by the party's National Committee (Bibby 1998). There are many implications of this nationalization for interpreting state party platforms (see discussion below).

Finally, the centrality of these platforms to campaigns – and the importance of conventions in selecting nominees and other party leaders – have evolved over the past 180 years. Technological developments have fed the rise of candidate-centered politics *and* parties. Nonetheless, producing a platform has consistently been one of the main roles of party conventions. Contemporary platforms remain a valuable window onto the influence of organized interests on party deliberations. While the meaning of platforms has differed across space and time, systematic analyses of these platforms would advance our understanding of how each party has positioned itself on political issues over time, and of the interplay between state and national forces in shaping party politics and American policymaking. By supplementing the platforms that we collect with information about the composition of platform committees and the dynamics of state party conventions, the state party platforms database will provide the contextual information essential for making valid inferences from the platform texts themselves.

The Use of Platforms in the Study of Parties and Policymaking

In stark contrast to scholars of American politics, comparativists have regularly drawn upon analyses of national party platform texts to advance knowledge on a number of fronts. The most important data-gathering endeavor has been the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP). In operation since 1979, the CMP has put together a database of national party platforms from 50 countries covering all free elections since 1945. These data have generated a wealth of empirical findings, and have also been used in some of the discipline's most important theoretical work on party competition and policymaking (e.g., Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; Budge et al. 2001; Baron 1991; Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005). Moreover, the CMP has helped spark a productive methodological debate about the relative virtues of hand-coded interpretations of these texts versus a variety of contending computer-assisted techniques, as well as the

⁵ For Ranney, the Democrats' McGovern-Fraser reforms were "the first increase in the power of a party's *national* organs since the heyday of presidential nominations by congressional caucuses from 1800 to 1824."

development of software for interpreting political texts (e.g., Laver and Garry 2000; Budge 2001; Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003; Benoit and Laver 2007; Benoit, Laver, and Mikhaylova 2009; Hopkins and King 2010). In our proposed research, we plan to capitalize on these developments (see below). Americanists have occasionally drawn on national platforms; for example, several studies have shown that national platforms are generally a good indicator of winning parties' post-election behavior (Ginsberg 1976; Pomper and Lederman 1980; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Royed and Borrelli 1999).⁶ There also have been a few recent hand- and computer-coded analyses of U.S. national platforms (Robertson 1987; Kidd 2008; Finegold and Swift 2001). While historians have commonly drawn on state platforms to describe factional conflict and ideological divisions within and among parties (Woodward 1951; Keller 1977; Kleppner 1979; McCormick 1986), very few studies systematically compare them. Such analyses would offer a potentially important complement to the CMP. To articulate this point, we briefly discuss three relevant studies.

One of the most important studies of American national platforms is John Gerring's *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (1998). Gerring undertakes a content analysis of Whig, Republican, and Democratic national platforms spanning over 150 years. He uses the platforms to identify distinct "party ideologies" that persisted for decades. For example, Gerring identifies three distinct ideological periods in the Democratic Party's history: an anti-statist, civic republican, openly racist, tradition in the nineteenth century; a "populist" epoch that spanned 1896 through 1948, in which the focus was "the masses versus the elites;" and a post-1948 "universalistic" period that put greater emphasis on minority rights and moved away from class-based appeals. Gerring's influential analysis indicates the potential for careful content analysis to uncover changes in party ideology. Systematic coding of state platforms would illuminate the degree to which the party ideologies that Gerring identified reflected a consensus position within the party or instead was the subject of divergent renditions across states and regions. In other words, to what extent did these *national* party ideologies penetrate throughout the party system, and has the degree of nationalization changed over time (Silver 2006)? Furthermore, the state platforms database would provide greater leverage for understanding the causal process underlying the transitions identified by Gerring; for example, comparing the timing of the shift in party ideology across states may illuminate the role of factional fights, national political elites, and demands from the mass public in driving the change.

Where Gerring uses national platforms to analyze the general ideological orientation of each party over time, Edward Carmines and James Stimson draw upon national party platforms to understand the partisan realignment on race. In their landmark work, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (1989), Carmines and Stimson code each national platform from 1932 to 1980 for the number of paragraphs dealing with civil rights and for the priority given to civil rights within the platform. They find that civil rights received relatively little attention in both parties' platforms up until the 1960s, but that Republicans were more attentive to the issue than were Democrats (1989: 57). Starting in 1964, civil rights became a much more important component of party platforms. Furthermore, after 1964, Democrats consistently placed greater emphasis on racial issues in their national platforms than did Republicans. The national platforms are thus a key piece of evidence they use to support their argument that 1964 constitutes a critical break-point in the partisan politics of race.

Drawing upon a collection of several hundred state party platforms, Feinstein and Schickler (2008) challenge Carmines and Stimson's treatment of the civil rights realignment as a contingent event driven by elite choice at a critical juncture (also see Chen, Mickey, and Van Houweling 2008). Feinstein and Schickler find that non-southern Democratic parties embraced civil rights liberalism in the 1940s, while state Republican parties gradually moved away from their historical association with civil rights. By the mid-to-late 1940s, Democratic state parties were generally to the left of same-state Republican parties in most states, and the gap between the two parties gradually widened over the following two decades. But the Feinstein-Schickler findings are, of necessity, tentative because there were many non-southern state platforms that they were unable to obtain. Furthermore, the development of party competition during the South's democratization (Mickey 2011) is entirely missing from Feinstein and Schickler's analysis. When did southern Republican parties begin to craft "racially conservative" appeals? "Lily white" and nominally

⁶ Reiter (1996; 2001; 2004) has published important work on factionalism using national convention floor votes.

integrated “black and tan” southern factions fought over the ownership of the “Republican” label until the early 1960s. Did these battles alter the policies and rhetoric espoused in state platforms? The study of the development of the two-party South—a large, multidisciplinary endeavor—would be enhanced by the use of the platforms data.

Despite their promise, the difficulty of collecting state party platforms has meant that few scholars have made systematic use of them in analyzing U.S. politics (Boots 1923; Elling 1979; Paddock 1998; Silver 2006; Coffey 2007). An important exception is Richard Bense’s (2000) *The Political Economy of American Industrialization*. Bense draws upon the full text or excerpts of over 1,100 Democratic, Republican, and minor-party state platforms from 1877 to 1900. Bense codes their degree of attention to and position on several specific issues, such as the tariff, currency, racial policy, immigration, and prohibition. Bense determines the percentage of each party’s platforms that included a plank on these and other issues, focusing on how attention to issues varied over time and across regions and parties. He finds that economic development issues predominated in the state platforms: both major and minor parties consistently included planks on leading economic issues, such as the tariff, railroad regulation, and currency. Cultural issues, such as prohibition and immigration, received far less attention. This poses an important challenge to ethnocultural interpretations of nineteenth century politics (e.g., Kleppner 1970, 1979), which emphasize the centrality of cultural issues to party competition. Bense also explores how party divisions varied across issues, regions, and time. He finds that the tariff was the single issue that divided the two parties most pervasively, both over time and across regions. By contrast, divisions over the currency were far more regional than partisan until the mid-1890s, when silver forces captured the Democratic Party and the Gold Democrats who had dominated in many northern states either withdrew or were pushed aside. Bense transcribed the relevant quotes or provisions from the original platform sources, but did not photocopy them. As a result, Bense’s work does not obviate the need for an accessible and comprehensive platforms collection. More importantly, Bense gained powerful insights into the interplay of party and region in shaping late 19th century politics; in doing so he points to the promise of a complete dataset of state party platforms.

Constructing the Dataset

Availability of Platforms

In order to study the partisan realignment on civil rights, Feinstein and Schickler undertook a preliminary effort to gather as many non-southern state party platforms as they could find for the 1920-1968 period. They canvassed an array of sources. For some states, platforms appeared in government registers, newspapers, or in pamphlets published by the parties themselves. For many other states, however, party platforms proved to be more elusive, and so they hired on-site researchers to comb through libraries and state archives. Since Feinstein and Schickler conducted this initial research, additional newspaper archives have come online. Furthermore, they did not conduct detailed searches for several states due to time and resource constraints. We believe that a concerted search effort would result in finding many additional platforms for the 1920-1968 period. Feinstein and Schickler obtained approximately 1,000 platforms, which we estimate constitutes 60 percent of all platforms written by non-southern state parties over the forty-eight year period of their study.

In this proposed project, we aim to enlarge our scope back to 1828 and forward to the present. All told, we estimate that 6,400 platforms of major parties remain to be obtained, along with approximately 1,000 platforms of relevant minor parties (about which see below).⁷ In collecting the platforms data, we plan to follow a multi-prong strategy. The easiest step will involve gathering together the platforms for those states that published their state party platforms in a readily accessible form. For example, Nebraska published all of its state platforms from 1840 to 1940 in a single volume. A handful of other states published their platforms as part of annual or biennial official state registers or blue books available

⁷ This estimate is based on our preliminary count of how many parties would meet the thresholds outlined below.

through interlibrary loan. Based on Feinstein and Schickler's preliminary efforts, we expect that this simple approach will yield good coverage for eight to twelve states for at least a substantial share of the 1828-2010 period. For the remaining states and years, we will start with the annual *Tribune Almanac*, *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, and *McPherson's Hand-book of Politics*, which published the full text or excerpts of many state party platforms from the mid-19th century through the 1890s. Even when the *Tribune* or *Appleton's* only published excerpts from a platform, they typically included the date on which the platform was adopted. This information will help us turn to newspaper coverage to find the full platform text (along with material about how the platform was written). We will supplement these resources through systematic online searches of such databases as ProQuest Historical Newspapers, newspaperarchive.com, Google's news archives, and the Library of Congress' Chronicling America program. Platforms in the period 1828-1865 are the most difficult to locate. However, we are optimistic that the vast majority of these platforms can be found. Historians such as William Gienapp (1987) and Michael Holt (1999) have already conducted much of the legwork necessary in finding these platforms. Additionally, new digitized collections of 19th century newspapers will greatly facilitate the location of antebellum platforms. For instance, Readex's new databases feature more than one million issues from more than *one thousand* newspapers across the country, many of which were owned by party leaders and regularly published platforms.

When online searches come up short, we will also examine the state's leading newspaper (often available on microfilm). Our search will be relatively targeted and efficient because of the information we will gather on the timing of state party conventions. Finally, in those cases where the above sources turn up limited results, we will contact the state parties and state archives to identify potential resources. When state archives have relevant records, we will hire professional on-site researchers or travel to the archives ourselves. The former strategy proved cost-effective in Feinstein and Schickler's preliminary research, which generated a useful list of archives and contacts.

The Time Period Under Study: 1828 to the Present

Most state parties wrote platforms every other year. We will not limit our search for platforms to presidential election years. Indeed, more than one-third of all states have held their gubernatorial elections in "off-years"—and even a few in odd-numbered years—as part of a broader attempt to shield their state's politics from unwelcome national (or partisan) trends (Key 1956; Gimpel 1996). It is plausible that platforms disseminated in off-years may be less attentive to national issues.⁸ A focus only on presidential election years may underestimate the degree to which state platforms responded to locally-based issues.

We propose to expand greatly the time period and the geographic scope of the Feinstein-Schickler study, collecting state party platforms from 1828 to the present for the entire United States. Starting in 1828 provides new leverage for understanding the origins of the world's first national, mass-based party system. To what extent did the state parties that coalesced behind Andrew Jackson in 1828 share a common policy agenda? What were the common threads uniting early Democratic and Anti-Jackson/Whig state parties? By illuminating how Democratic, Whig, and Republican parties staked out positions on a range of issues and avoided others, systematic study of antebellum platforms can help answer questions in the study of American political history, and also better connect the U.S. case to the comparative study of party formation and change (Caramani 2004).

This expanded time period also incorporates an era in which minor parties played a vital role in challenging the two dominant parties and forcing new issues onto the agenda (e.g., Sanders 1999). The state platforms data will provide a new window into how the major parties responded to these challenges over time. The state platforms—in combination with the national platforms, which we will also collect both for major and minor parties—will enhance scholars' efforts to understand the diffusion of new policy proposals and agenda items across states, parties, and levels of government. Extending the time period forward from 1968 to the present will expand the set of scholars who would use the platforms data.

⁸ In the few cases in which state parties published annual platforms, we will search for those written during the years featuring gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Several major changes in party alignments could be studied by systematically examining platforms from the past four decades. For example, the incorporation of Christian conservatives into the Republican Party and women's activists into the Democratic Party might be explored through examining the two parties' treatment of such issues as abortion, gay rights, and school prayer.

Inclusion of Platforms by Minor Parties

The prominence of minor parties will make it difficult to collect all of the relevant platforms. Many of these parties have left scant records for scholars to recover. However, it is vital to collect many of these parties' platforms in order to understand more clearly the conditions under which major parties responded to the threats posed by minor-party challenges. Parties that seem in retrospect as "minor" may have been important in shaping the positioning and issue attention of major parties (Hirano and Snyder 2007). Minor parties also often had profound effects on state-level policymaking and policy diffusion (Valelly 1989). Fortunately, such publications as the *Tribune Almanac* and *Appleton's* made an effort to include minor parties' state platforms during the period of peak post-Civil War minor party activity (1870s-90s). And these parties' national organs, such as *The Political Prohibitionist*, often reprinted state platforms (Kleppner 1979).

Given the many minor parties that have existed over the course of American history, it is critical to decide which parties warrant inclusion in the collection. Our strategy will be as follows: in addition to the Democrats, Whigs, and Republicans, we will only target platforms for parties that received at least 5% of the statewide vote for governor, senator, or president in at least one election during its period of activism within the state, or that elected a major statewide officer, House member, or Senator.⁹ This would enable us to include such parties as Mississippi's Freedom Democratic Party and New York's American Labor Party, and to include minor parties engaged in fusion candidacies (Mayhew 1986; Scarrow 1983). However, if we come across platforms for parties that do not meet this threshold, we will nonetheless include them in the database (specifying in the codebook that such platforms were found incidentally).

Meeting these goals is, we realize, a tall order. We anticipate some serious challenges along the way. For instance, we estimate that the print quality for photocopies of about 10% of the platforms will prove unsuitable for scanning and conversion into text-searchable format. Thus, we will need to spend additional time retyping these platforms, along with platforms for which copyright issues preclude scanning the source. Based on Feinstein and Schickler's experience working with the 1920-1968 period, consultations with BenseL concerning the late 19th century, and our examinations of relevant sources, we estimate that, over the two years of an NSF grant, we will find, locate, scan, and convert about 80% of all of the platforms that meet our criteria. We are confident that we can reach this target, but even were we to fall short on coverage at the beginning of the period, the dataset will still be extremely useful as long as we obtain detailed coverage of the vast majority of states for an extended time span.

Dissemination

Once we have obtained the platforms, we will turn them over to the University of Michigan's Administrative Information Services (MAIS) for scanning and conversion of the documents into .txt and .pdf files. It will use Optimal Character Recognition (OCR) technology to render these text-searchable. MAIS is superior in price and quality to outside vendors. The university's Institute of Social Research (where Mickey is a Faculty Associate) has considerable experience in large-scale scanning and OCR projects, including the scanning of ballots for Herrnson, Traugott, et al.'s NSF-supported project on voting technology. After this process is completed, the text and .pdf files will be archived by the Inter-University Consortium of Political and Social Research (ICPSR) and made available on a webpage devoted to the project. ICPSR has agreed to archive and disseminate the data, and is an ideal partner. It is

⁹ We will include the national platforms for parties receiving at least 2% of the presidential vote, or that elected a governor, senator, or at least two House members.

increasingly home to less traditional datasets, including state constitutions, relational data, GIS, etc.

The Project's webpage will be a central repository for studies using the platforms data, and will include results from various content analyses of the platforms. We will make the platforms data available as a single file, as well as separate files by state, by party, by political era, etc. As suggested above, there is no consensus as to how to think about what political texts such as party platforms *mean*, or how best to use them to make descriptive and causal inferences. Some scholars will use them as speech acts to be interpreted by the scholar herself. Others, such as most users of the Comparative Manifestos Project and ourselves (see below), will draw on hand-coding methods to render platforms across space and time comparable. Still others may use computational methods that offer uncertainty estimates about the accuracy of the analysis. For the purposes of constructing this dataset, we will be agnostic as to both the question of deeper meanings of platforms and the proper methodologies for uncovering these meanings.

We hope to make this webpage a site of integrated analysis in which users employ pull-down menus to select data and then select open-source versions of data analysis software. If these are not available, the webpage will provide users with the computer code necessary to install programs such as *Wordscores* and *ReadMe*. We will also advise users about how to exploit the dataset within the context of proprietary software environments. Finally, we will encourage the posting of user-developed coding schemes and other information useful to the scholarly community. After the grant period, the online archive will serve as a clearinghouse for new platforms and for older platforms found subsequently.

Ancillary Data about Platforms and about States

An important feature of the project is the collection of information about the process of platform-writing and dissemination. One product that will result is a spreadsheet with information on the location and date of each convention, the identity and institutional affiliations of the platform committee chair, a coding of that state party's delegate selection procedures for county and state conventions, and basic information about the platform-related deliberations. The Project's webpage will provide summaries or links to newspaper articles. For a random sample of platforms, we will seek more detailed information about the key players involved in writing the platform, including descriptions of platform committee hearings, deliberations at state party conventions, and discussions related to the platform in the ensuing campaign. Feinstein and Schickler (2008: 6-7) conducted similar research for their civil rights project, systematically searching newspaper coverage of state party platform deliberations in a handful of states in 1942 and 1950. They found considerable information about the composition of the platform committees, the groups testifying at platform hearings, and maneuvering concerning specific planks. This more detailed inquiry will allow a more refined understanding of how the framing and usage of platforms has changed over time, and will allow us to analyze how the content of platforms relates to the set of individuals within a state party that have a hand in its authorship. We will code the background of those involved in writing the platform, the extent to which the platform was discussed and subject to amendments at the convention, and whether hearings or other mechanisms for outside input were held by the platform committee (and who testified, if there were hearings). With the help of newspaper databases, we will also estimate the degree of distribution and publication of each party platform over time.

Information about the participants in platform-writing will help illuminate the representativeness of the state platforms. For some questions, issues of representativeness are central. For example, if we wish to understand the role of state parties in transmitting mass preferences from the local to national levels, it is crucial to assess which groups and actors within the state party are driving its platform decisions. On the other hand, for studies that seek to explore the relative liberal-conservative placement of the state parties as organizational units, it is less important to know precisely which interests are represented in intraparty deliberations. Generally, we expect that the set of actors involved in shaping platforms will vary across states and periods. This variation in who is being represented is a great opportunity: one can explore how variation in the kinds of actors involved in platform deliberations affects party positioning.

A related concern is whether variation in platforms reflected meaningful differences across state parties. The ancillary data we collect will aim to address this concern as well. We will draw upon state party delegations' voting behavior in the U.S. Congress for a sample of issues to explore the extent to

which variation in state party positioning corresponds to variation in congressional voting. That is, one indicator of whether the platforms reflect distinctive state party positioning would be the extent to which members of Congress from the state vote in ways that are consistent with the state party position.

We will also post spreadsheets of comparable time-series data for all states, such as demographic information, data concerning organized interests (e.g., union membership and NAACP membership), political-economic variables such as the share of the state's economy dominated by a few sectors, and so on. There are several opportunities to link the platforms data to other datasets. For example, to pursue the questions described below about the role of party activists in preventing policy convergence in two-party competition, a marriage of state party platforms and the data from the two NSF-supported Southern Grassroots Party Activists Projects may be fruitful.¹⁰ Finally, other possibilities present themselves. For example, annual messages by governors have typically been archived in state libraries. They (or some subset of them) would be relatively easy to gather and scan, and could be used, for instance, in assessing the degree to which platforms related to governors' position-taking. Below, we describe our plan to exploit the dataset in our own collaborative research, and suggest avenues that other researchers might pursue.

Planned Collaborative Research Drawing on the Platforms Dataset

The Development of Party Issue Positions

We plan to use the state party platforms database as a key resource in a broad study of the development of party issue positions over time. The project has two main goals: first, to test theories of party competition regarding issue positioning and emphasis; second, to advance our understanding of the dynamics of party "brand names" in federal settings. We will draw upon the extensive formal literature on political parties' strategic calculus in developing and testing hypotheses concerning the conditions under which parties adopt convergent or divergent issue positions, change their positions on existing issues, highlight new issues, and drop existing commitments. Party theorists differ sharply in the predictions they make regarding party ideological placement. One major strand of modeling holds that Downsian convergence to the median is prevented by the power of issue-motivated activists over the nomination process and the dependence of the parties on activist contributions to general election campaigns (e.g., Aldrich 1983a, 1983b, 1995; Aldrich and McGinnis 1989; Miller and Schofield 2003). Empirical support for this proposition has been suggestive but not definitive (e.g., Brady, Han, and Pope 2007). State party platforms data, in concert with ancillary data on party organizational characteristics and electoral conditions, will be used for fuller tests of alternative explanations for party divergence.

We will employ content analysis to track the position of each state party on several major policy issues over time, as well as the party's degree of attention to that issue. Here we build upon Feinstein and Schickler's (2008) coding of state parties' treatment of civil rights policy and our preliminary coding of platform planks regarding social and labor policy (see discussion below). The resulting time-series, cross-sectional data will provide measures for how each party positioned itself on leading issues both within a given year and over time. This, in turn, will allow us to measure the degree to which a state's parties adopt convergent positions on each issue, along with the range in positions across states for a given party. The time-series data will allow us to explore the conditions under which parties change both their emphasis and positioning on issues, as well as to track the degree to which the two major parties offer voters more or less polarized choices. We will draw upon ancillary data to explore potential explanations for the observed patterns. A key question will be whether variation in party organization, such as the relative role of "pros" and "amateurs," is related to the degree of party divergence within a state (Aldrich 1983a; Wilson 1962). Similarly, does increased reliance on direct primaries for candidate selection correspond to greater divergence in platforms? By exploring the covariates associated with the degree of within-state party convergence, we expect to gain leverage for understanding the conditions under which

¹⁰ These data have been used in Hadley and Bowman (1995), Steed et al (1998), and Clark and Prysby (2004).

competing spatial theories are borne out, and the factors that exert centripetal and centrifugal pressures on issue positioning.¹¹

We also plan to develop measures of state-level public opinion, applying the hierarchical modeling approach outlined by Lax and Phillips (2009a) and drawing upon the compilation of Gallup polls by Schickler and Berinsky as part of their NSF-funded project, “The American Mass Public in the 1930s and 1940s” (see below). For the era with available survey data, we can track the extent to which state parties’ positioning corresponds both to the central tendency of mass opinion within the state and to the views of partisans. Directly relating survey measures to platform positions will be difficult due to imperfect comparability of the scales. However, as Bafumi and Herron (2007) show, “bridging observations” can be used to address this problem when there are at least some survey questions that correspond closely to the positions articulated in platforms. Fortunately, this often holds for major policy areas. For example, several national surveys asked respondents direct questions about support for the union shop, a policy on which numerous parties took either a “yes” or “no” position during the 1940s-1960s.¹² Even when comparability remains a problem, we can assess the degree to which variation across states (and time) in voter preferences tracks the relative position of parties across states.

The content analysis will allow us to compare the realignment dynamics on race with other cases in which the parties have shifted ground over time, both drawn from recent American politics (e.g., abortion, gun control, taxes, environmental policy, and gay rights) and from earlier periods (e.g., the gold standard, women’s suffrage, immigration, trade). Prior studies of “issue evolution” have typically focused on the national parties’ stance towards a single policy domain (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989; Adams 1997; Layman 2001; Carmines and Woods 2002).¹³ As a result, while some suggestive generalizations about the process of issue evolution have been offered (Carmines and Wagner 2006), we do not yet know how well those generalizations travel across time, space, and policy domains. Our data will facilitate a systematic analysis of how new agenda items and issue positions arise within America’s party system (Sundquist 1983; Mayhew 2002). The data’s historical scope will allow us to compare the covariates associated with a party’s abandonment of an issue position with those associated with its embrace of a new position. For instance, a comparison of Republicans’ gradual abandonment of Reconstruction with Democrats’ new commitment to racial equality in the 1930s-60s may be of considerable value (Valelly 2004).

While many of these questions focus on intra-state dynamics, there are also important potential insights that concern the intersection of U.S. party competition with federalism. We are most interested in understanding the degree to which the national parties represent—or have represented—a single coherent brand, or alternatively, are better characterized as heterogeneous coalitions that stand for distinct positions across geographic units. We will develop measures of the distance between each state party’s stance on key issues and the national party position, and will track how party heterogeneity has changed over time. Innovative new models have demonstrated how voters can use party brand names as information shortcuts and how these brands can be of value to elected officials (Snyder and Ting 2002; Ashworth and de Mesquita 2008). Yet little empirical work explores how these brands are formed in practice. What are the common features of party labels across time? Under what conditions does a national party countenance diversity in how its subnational parties position themselves on leading issues? To what extent does a party’s brand—as reflected in the national platform—bubble up from innovations at the state-level? Alternatively, under what conditions does the national platform evidently set the tone for lower level party units? To what extent does the median voter in a state, as opposed to the national party position,

¹¹ Stokes (1999) derives predictions from opposing theories of parties about who controls the promulgation of party platforms and messaging (incumbents, future office-holders, or a combination of incumbents and activists). Along with our ancillary data, the platforms dataset may help evaluate these predictions. Formal models have also suggested that incumbent parties are more constrained in their ability to offer new issue proposals than are out-parties; to assess this hypothesis, we will analyze whether parties that are out-of-power more likely to innovate, or to moderate their positions, than are incumbent parties (Finegold and Swift 2001; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009a,b).

¹² Bridging platforms to survey data may be more straightforward than with roll-call data; the latter often involve complex issues difficult to relate to surveys. Platforms can more often be coded into binary terms on given issues.

¹³ Karol (2009)—focusing on six issues (the major change in each occurring since the late 1940s)—is an exception.

shape the agenda put forward by a state party in its platform?¹⁴ U.S. federalism has produced neither a simple two-party nor a 100-party system (Polsby 1997), but a blend of both in which each national party encompasses a more or less diverse range of positions. Across states, the resulting party “brands,” while not identical, nevertheless share a family resemblance. For all of the sophistication of our formal models of party competition and all of the high-quality empirical studies of issue alignments, we do not yet have a clear understanding of how the federal nature of U.S. parties has shaped their behavior and responsiveness. Given the socioeconomic and demographic diversity within and across states, when do party activists and lower-level officials come together across states and line up nationally, and when do cleavages and alignments vary across geographic units? Put simply, the platforms database can help illuminate when and in what ways one observes a nationalized party system despite the country’s immense diversity of interests (Jones and Mainwaring 2003).

This second part of the study will build upon the rich literature in comparative politics on the nature of parties in federal systems and on the number of parties that are likely to compete seriously in a given jurisdiction (Cox 1997; Fillipov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova 2004; Gibson 2004; Meguid 2008). One hypothesis that emerges from this literature is that a more nationalized party system (and the concomitant decline of minor, regional parties) follows an increase in the responsibilities of the national government. Chhibber and Kollman (2004) argue that voters’ resulting perception that the most important governance decisions were made at the national level drove the U.S. political system towards two national parties, largely eliminating the political space occupied by regional parties.¹⁵ An alternative view suggests that the consolidation of two-party politics preceded this New Deal-era centralization, and, based on the declining presence of minor-party state legislators, this consolidation was built “from the states up” (Bowler *et al.* 2009: 137). We will also be attentive to additional factors that may shape the extent to which state parties hew to a single, national brand. For example, it may be that state parties’ ability to respond to the state’s median voter has been diminished by their reliance on issue activists and contributors who tend to be more extreme than the patronage activists of earlier eras (Aldrich 1995). The rise of direct primaries may also have played a role in limiting state parties’ insulation from national forces. As Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) observe in their study of congressional candidates, to understand the historic lack of convergence to the district median voter in U.S. House elections, one must address how parties coordinate across electoral units. Our platforms database will allow us to trace the unfolding of this coordination using a consistent coding system across states over a long time span.

An important, related issue worth tackling is the quite belated development of two-partyism in the United States (not until the 1920s or 1930s did two-party politics become dominant throughout the country). Why did it take so long for two-partyism to emerge? Conversely, why did minor parties decline when (and where) they did? Some argue that institutional changes, such as the use of caucuses and primaries to nominate candidates, made major parties permeable enough to co-opt the issues of minor parties and weaken their appeal (Epstein 1986). Alternatively, others argue that, even without a credible electoral threat, minor parties’ issue positioning forced a preemptive cooptation by major parties (Hirano 2008). Still others suggest that legal changes, such as barriers to ballot access, are critical for explaining America’s two-party politics. By comparing minor and major party platforms before and after such changes, we can better understand the relative importance of these changes in the demise of minor parties. *Ceteris paribus*, in states with lower barriers to entry for minor parties, were major parties more likely to co-opt the issue positions of minor parties? To what extent did major parties’ borrowing of positions decline after new barriers to ballot access emerged?

¹⁴ Cross-state dynamics are also relevant for thinking about parties’ role in the diffusion of electoral strategy. It has often been noted that states are policy laboratories, but state parties may play an analogous role. When one adopts a new position which seems to pay electoral dividends, others—and the national party—may follow suit. Under what conditions do state parties take cues from successful innovations adopted elsewhere?

¹⁵ They do not offer a developmental account of party aggregation. Rather, aggregation ebbs and flows with (de)centralization of political authority in federal polities. But it may be that once centralization occurs—and state parties are aggregated “up” to the national level—aggregation does not unravel even if decentralization occurs).

In sum, in this study we will combine platforms data with other data sources in an effort to leverage our analysis of issue positioning. This analysis will help evaluate spatial theories of competition and advance the study of party “brand names” in federal settings.

Parties, Congress, and the Development of the American Welfare State

The platforms will also serve as a key data source for a second collaborative project by Mickey and Schickler exploring the development of the U.S. welfare state since the 1920s. Drawing also on polling data and an analysis of congressional deliberations, we seek to clarify how mass preferences about social policy were transmitted to and aggregated by parties, legislators, and others. Preliminary analysis reveals the platforms’ usefulness: demands for pensions, collective bargaining rights, and hours/wages legislation in the state platforms track policy change. Our coding system, which builds upon Feinstein and Schickler (2008), tracks both the frequency with which a policy area is mentioned in each platform and the position adopted by each party on the issue. To gauge party priorities, we code the share of platform paragraphs devoted to each policy area (Budge 2001). Thus far, we have coded a sample of the platforms for the 1920s and 1930s, and find much greater demand for state and federal old-age pensions and hours/wages legislation than for health insurance or improved medical care. The Social Security Act was preceded by widespread calls by Democratic parties (and some Republican parties) for old-age pensions, while key labor statutes followed many calls in Democratic platforms for state and federal action on labor matters.

By contrast, health care is largely absent from the platforms written in the 1920s and early-to-mid-1930s. This preliminary evidence suggests that bottom-up pressure for reform was likely greater in other policy domains. If these findings hold up, they challenge the notion that the 1930s constituted a “critical moment” for health policy innovation in which elite timidity, rather than a lack of public pressure and intense organized opposition, stymied national health reform (Hacker 2002). To sustain this inference, we must extend the content analysis into the 1940s and beyond and to a more complete set of states. These platforms will also help illuminate the national parties’ positioning on social policy more generally. Comparing the patterns of support and opposition to national health insurance over time with those of other issue-areas will provide us with additional leverage to understand both the accomplishments and limitations of the American welfare state that took shape in the New Deal era.

Examples of Other Possible Uses of the Platforms Dataset

The project will enable scholars to use state party platforms in the systematic study of a range of topics. To demonstrate the dataset’s potential, we point out only a few possible research avenues.

The Study of U.S. State Politics

The study of state-level politics has long been given less attention than it deserves—both in its own right, and in the possibilities fifty subnational polities present for developing inferences about politics more generally. However, the subfield is making a deserved comeback, fueled in part by the development of exciting new datasets on legislative politics, public opinion, policymaking, and other matters, as well as institutional changes such as term limits. Recent work has explored the relationship between public opinion, state ideology, and policy outcomes (Lax and Phillips 2009b). This line of research would be greatly strengthened by the availability of the platforms dataset. These data could also help clarify the influence of organized interests on state parties (e.g., the changing role of the Christian Right in Republican state parties (Conger and Green 2002; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2006)).

Many other questions present themselves. Over much of the period we propose to cover, a large plurality of states could be characterized as dominated by a single party (Key 1964). How has issue positioning differed between parties as the state’s electoral competitiveness has changed? Are state parties that have been out of power more likely to innovate in the embrace of new issue positions? Finally, the platforms data could be drawn on by the new wave of methodologically sophisticated scholars of processes of policy diffusion and contagion across the U.S. (e.g., Shipan and Volden 2008). The state

platforms could serve as a useful marker for the spread of issues onto the policy agenda of different states, and can be used to trace the diffusion of specific policy proposals and instruments.

The Politics of Group Incorporation

Scholars have long debated the role of party competition in shaping the inclusion or expulsion of groups of voters into or out of the electorate, as well as their incorporation or “extrusion” (Shefter 1995) into party coalitions (e.g., Converse 1972; Kousser 1974; Harvey 1998; Keyssar 2002; Valelly 2004; Mickey 2011). The platforms dataset could provide a unique resource to trace how the parties have positioned themselves on the many battles over suffrage and demobilization techniques over the past 140 years. These include the battles over immigrant rights (including non-citizen voting and language rights), women’s suffrage, the voting rights of blacks and others, and the use of various tools to demobilize the participation of particular groups. Are parties more likely to promote the incorporation of new groups when they face heavy competition? Alternatively, are partisan calculations driven solely by perceptions of who the new group would be likely to support? How do the strategic environments at the local level aggregate to party behavior at the state level? Parties are clearly important intermediaries in either incorporating new groups or blocking their incorporation; the party platforms database will allow scholars to use systematic data to illuminate the conditions under which parties promote incorporation (or not).

We envision several other research agendas being pursued with platforms data. For example, scholars might draw on the platforms as part of larger investigations of the political culture and styles of political communication of particular eras (McGerr 1986). Those employing interpretivist methods might conduct close readings of platforms in order to explore deeper meanings burrowed within political speech and performance across space and time (Baker 1983). In sum, we expect the platforms database will be a key resource for many scholars pursuing a variety of research agendas. Along with recent NSF-supported data gathering projects concerning elections and public opinion, it will foster a new generation of historically-grounded, systematic empirical research in U.S. political behavior and development.

Merit Review Criteria

Intellectual Merit of Proposed Research

The party platforms database will be of value to a wide range of scholars interested in party competition, policymaking, and American political history. State party platforms provide an important window into how each party has positioned itself on key issues over time and into the interplay of state and national forces in shaping party politics. We will use the database as a key resource in the two projects described above. As part of our collaboration, we will assemble a time-series, cross-sectional dataset that tracks the degree of attention to major issues and the position of each state party (and the national parties) on major issues over time. We will use the dataset to test hypotheses derived from spatial theories of party competition and to analyze when and how one observes a nationalized party system despite the immense socioeconomic and demographic diversity that has characterized the U.S. polity.

Broader Impacts of Proposed Research

The American Party Platforms Project will have a broad impact both in providing rich data for researchers and in educating undergraduate and graduate students. By archiving searchable text versions of each state party platform at the ICPSR, the project will provide a new source of data for students of parties, policymaking, state politics, political behavior, and political development. The Project’s webpage will be a central repository for studies using the platforms data, and will include results from various content analyses along with ancillary time series data on state election outcomes and demographics.

Integration of Research & Teaching and Training

The party platforms webpage will include suggestions for using platforms and our ancillary data as

teaching tools. For example, classes on state politics might incorporate the platforms as a resource in examining how campaign promises are reflected in policymaking. Also, graduate students will play an integral role in constructing the database, and will gain valuable experience in archival research, developing coding schemes, and using cutting-edge software for analyzing qualitative data.

Integrating Diversity into NSF Programs

At Michigan, an African-American graduate student will oversee the project. She will draw extensively on the platforms data in her dissertation on race and state-level variation in welfare policy. Additionally, one of the major issues explored in our collaborative research will be the intersection of race and party competition. We anticipate that other scholars will use the database to study group inclusion and incorporation. As noted above, there are many possibilities here, including the attainment of women's suffrage, the political incorporation of women, feminism, immigration, and gay rights.

Results from Prior NSF Support

Schickler received NSF funding for "Collaborative Research: The American Mass Public in the 1930s and 1940s" (Grant #0646403; \$177,431, July 1, 2006-May 31, 2011; co-Principal Investigator, Adam Berinsky). The project made suitable for analysis the 450 national opinion polls conducted in the U.S. from 1936 to 1945. These surveys contain a wealth of information for scholars but they have not been exploited because they were not easily usable. The surveys employed now-discredited quota sampling procedures, and the data often contained numerous miscodings and other errors. Schickler and Berinsky corrected many errors, recoded the datasets, and developed and implemented weights that allow for better inferences about mass opinion during this period. They have recently provided the final, recoded and weighted Gallup surveys (over 300 of the 450 polls) to the University of Connecticut's Roper Center for dissemination. The remaining datasets, nearly complete, will be finalized in early 2011.

Co-Principal Investigator Adam Berinsky used the data in his recent book (2009). Co-Principal Investigator Schickler drew heavily upon the data in a manuscript (co-authored with Devin Caughey) that is under journal review ("Public Opinion, Organized Labor, and the Limits of New Deal Liberalism, 1936-1945"). Schickler and Caughey find that important segments of the mass public turned against key New Deal constituencies and programs in the late 1930s, and they argue that this mass shift played a crucial role in limiting the reach of New Deal liberalism. Schickler is also drawing heavily upon the public opinion data in his ongoing research on the civil rights realignment. In a paper presented at the 2010 APSA annual meetings, he shows that non-southern white Democrats became more favorable to civil rights than non-southern Republicans in the late 1930s, a shift that predates elite-level change. He will feature the civil rights public opinion data--along with analyses of changes in black partisanship and voting behavior, and data on state platforms and congressional voting--in a book focused on the civil rights transformation as a window onto when and how America's representative institutions accommodate new demands. A book prospectus is currently under review at Princeton University Press.

Berinsky and Schickler have presented the preliminary results of their research to more than a dozen academic audiences, conferences, and workshops. Prior to the public release of all of the recodes, codebooks, and weights, they made available extracts of the data from the recoding project. Political scientists interested in taxation, social policy, and popular referenda have already used these data (e.g., Campbell 2009). Sociologists and historians studying attitudes toward inequality and race have also made use of some of the data, including Newman and Jacobs (2010) and Chen (2009).

Mickey is Co-Principal Investigator (with Vincent Hutchings and Hanes Walton) of a current project ("Elite Communications and Racial Group Conflict in the 21st Century," Grant No. 0920838; \$257,331). One round of experiments has been conducted, and preliminary analyses will be presented at the 2011 Midwest annual meetings. A second paper based on these experiments has been proposed for presentation at the 2011 APSA annual meetings, and additional papers are being planned. The second round of experiments is now being prepared and will enter the field in April, 2011.

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