

# Presidential Ambition in the United States Congress

*An analysis of senators' legislative behavior as they approach a bid for the Presidency*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Several accounts of legislative behavior in American politics have been made, reflecting the complexity of American legislative politics. In disciplined two-party systems, such as Great Britain, the majority party proposes legislation. The legislation is routinely approved by all members of the majority and opposed by all members of the minority. In the United States, such a model is not applicable (Poole and Rosenthal 1997: 1). In U.S. legislatures, the policy outcomes reflect not only the preferences of the legislators themselves, but the pressures and appeals of staff members, lobbyists, and constituents (Poole and Rosenthal 1997: 1).

Ideology is found to be the superior predictor of legislative behavior (Feld and Grofman 1988; Poole 1981; Poole and Rosenthal 1991; Poole and Rosenthal 1997), but other factors such as political ambition, may also have predictive capacity. Theories of legislative politics with a political ambition component are commonly referred to as ambition theories and are usually traced to Joseph Schlesinger (1966). The central assumption of Schlesinger's ambition theory is that "a politician's behavior is a response to his office goals". Moreover, "the politician as office seeker engages in political acts and makes decisions appropriate to gaining office." And finally, "our ambitious politician must act today in terms of the electorate of the office which he hopes to win tomorrow" (Schlesinger 1966: 6).

Relatively few studies have sought to ascertain whether these assumptions are true. Moreover, existing studies have produced mixed results (Lubalin 1981; Hibbing 1986; Herrick and Moore 1993; Francis and Kenny 1996; Herrick 2001). Therefore, this study aims to explore whether an ambition-based approach to politics can contribute to the understanding of legislative behavior. More specifically, the study examines the effect of ambition on United States senators who ran for president from 1976 to 2004.

One approach to assessing whether ambition theory may explain legislative behavior is to compare ambitious politicians to their colleagues to see if their legislative behavior differs from that of other politicians in a predictable manner. Given the assumptions of ambition theory, senators running for president can be expected to alter their behavior as they approach a bid for the Presidency. By using measures of legislative behavior, such as attendance and roll call voting, it is possible to assess whether this is in fact the case. Consequently, the research question of this thesis is:

**Do senators running for president alter their behavior as Election Day approaches more than other senators?**

In sum, I have stated that several accounts of legislative behavior in the United States' Congress have been made, and that ideology is said to be the superior predictor of legislative behavior, but that political ambition may also have predictive capacity. In the next section, I explain how I define and measure the core concepts of the analysis—political ambition and legislative behavior.

## **1.1 Political Ambition**

Today, in everyday language, 'ambition' is defined as a desire for rank, fame, or power. Earlier definitions were more explicitly political. It comes from the Latin *ambitio*, which means canvassing, or personal solicitation of honors (Schlesinger 1966: 1). In this study, I use the word 'ambition' in the explicitly political sense—meaning the desire for an office. According to Schlesinger, ambition can be classified into three categories: (1) discrete ambition, meaning "the politician desires an office for its specified term and then chooses to withdraw from public office"; (2) static ambition, meaning "the politician seeks to make a long-run career out of a particular office"; and (3) progressive ambition, meaning "the politician aspires to attain an office more important than the one he now seeks or is holding" (Schlesinger 1966: 10). Being primarily concerned with presidential ambition in the Senate, I focus on category three—progressive ambition.

As pointed out John R. Hibbing (1989: 28), “[s]ystematic examination of ambition is problematic because ambition is best thought of as a psychological predisposition.” One approach to measuring ambition assumes that everyone who seeks a higher office has progressive ambition while those who remain in their current office without moving on to another have static ambition (Herrick and Moore 1993: 766). Progressive ambition may be possessed by many who never actually run for higher office. However,

classifying some members who may have higher office ambition as having static ambition minimizes the observable differences between the classifications and makes for a conservative test of the hypothesis that ambition for higher offices yields a pattern of distinctive behavior (Herrick and Moore 1993: 766).

Rebekah Herrick (2001: 470) argues that this approach is flawed. According to her, instead of examining the effects of members’ ambition, this approach tests whether those who run for higher office have unique legislative styles. She argues that the flaw is two-fold. First, the independent variable occurs after the dependent variables. Instead of testing whether ambition affects behavior, this approach tests whether members with certain legislative styles are more apt to seek higher offices. Second, as mentioned above, this approach is likely to underestimate ambition as members may want to advance but never have the opportunity.

Herrick (2001: 470-471) suggests an alternative approach to measuring ambition—measuring ambition as expressed desires. To do so, she surveyed non-incumbent candidates running in the 1992-94 House elections. Whereas this approach does not have to rely solely on assumptions, it has two obvious weaknesses, to which Herrick herself points. First, candidates may not be forthright in their responses about their political ambition, and second, members’ ambition may change after they are in office.

In this study, I use the former approach—assuming that everyone who seeks a higher office has progressive ambition. Because some might question this choice, I stress that



I use the actual decision to seek a higher office as a surrogate for a member's psychological predisposition to seek it, which is assumed to exist *prior* to their legislative activity (Herrick and Moore 1993: 772). Moreover, I recognize the limitations of the approach and interpret the findings accordingly.

## **1.2 Legislative Behavior**

In this study, the term 'legislative behavior' refers to how the senators vote in the Senate. Two measures of legislative behavior are used, attendance and roll call voting<sup>1</sup>. These activities are chosen because of their logical relationship to presidential contesting, and because they are quantifiable and retrievable from public records.

### **1.2.1 Attendance**

Defining 'attendance' is difficult when analyzing U.S. Senators' behavior. Senatorial duties take members to the chamber to vote, to committee hearings, to meetings with staff, as well as activities in a senator's home state--to name just a few. However, one approach to measuring attendance is to look at the senators' percentage of missed roll call votes. The percentage of missed roll call votes will not give an accurate account of attendance, as a senator may have missed votes due to other senatorial responsibilities such as committee work, but serves as an adequate proxy. Hence, in this study, attendance is measured as the senators' percentage of missed roll call votes.

### **1.2.2. Roll Call Voting**

To describe voting positions political scientists have generally relied upon the concept of political ideology. As pointed out by Marshall H. Madoff (1997: 146), "[p]olitical ideology is one of the most frequently used concepts in the social sciences, yet has a variety of meanings." He presents the following summary:

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<sup>1</sup> A roll call vote is a vote on the record, noting the name of each senator and his/her voting position.

Downs (1957) defines political ideology as a platform or set of positions on issues that individuals adopt in seeking political office. Bluhm (1974) contends that political ideology is a philosophy about the goals of public policy and the means by which these policies are implemented. Jackson and Kingdon (1992) assert that political ideology is a set of core beliefs that organize perceptions of political issues and that underlie individual preferences. Kalt and Zupan (1984) suggest that political ideology is a statement about how government can best serve their proponents' conceptions of the public interest (Madoff 1997: 146).

In this study, however, I use 'ideology' in the sense intended by Philip E. Converse (1964)—that an ideology is a belief system or a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some constraint, meaning that a particular belief is predictive of another belief, and that this predictive power holds true across a wide set of issues.

One way to think about the continuum of ideological positions is in terms of a spectrum that ranges from the left to the right, from very liberal to moderate to very conservative (Poole and Rosenthal 1997: 4). In American politics, liberals generally view government as a regulator in the public interest, favor higher taxes for the rich, and favor spending more on the poor. They generally believe the government should spend less on the military and are less willing to commit troops to action. Liberals are also more likely to support legal abortion, oppose prayer in school, and favor affirmative action. Conservatives, on the other hand, generally favor free-market solutions, low taxes, and low spending on the poor, emphasizing instead aid to the poor by religious and secular charities. They generally believe the government should maintain peace through strength and are more likely to support military intervention around the world. Conservatives are also more likely to oppose legal abortion, support prayer in school, and oppose affirmative action (Edwards III et al 2002: 192). This summary, of course, is oversimplified. However, it provides a basic understanding of the key differences between the liberal and the conservative camps in contemporary American politics.

Among Americans and students of American politics, the liberal-conservative spectrum is a “perceived reality” (Poole and Rosenthal 1997: 4-5). In other words, a large percentage of the American public would probably agree that members of Congress can be thought of as occupying a position on the liberal-conservative spectrum. Edward “Ted” Kennedy would be labeled a liberal, Dianne Feinstein a more moderate Democrat, Joe Lieberman even more so. On the other end of the spectrum, Olympia Snow would be labeled a more moderate Republican, while Rick Santorum a conservative Republican (MaCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2006: 3).

Nevertheless, to make ideological positions amenable to quantitative analysis, they must be given an operational definition. As indicated at the beginning of this section, this study links ideological positions with voting positions (or more precisely, voting positions with ideological positions). To measure voting positions of members of the US Congress, scholars have customarily relied upon interest group ratings which are derived from congressional roll call votes. However, many such ratings have no confidence intervals for the reported scores (Clinton et al 2004b: 2), and given that they are produced by interest groups there is a possibility of bias. Therefore, in this study, I use *ideal points*.

An ideal point is a measure of the legislators’ legislative preference, estimated from their voting records, using all recorded votes in a given Congress. Clinton et al (2004: 355) explains the appeal and importance of ideal point estimation in the following way:

First, ideal point estimates let us describe legislators and legislatures. The distribution of ideal point estimates reveals how cleavages between legislators reflect partisan affiliation or region or become more polarized over time (e.g. McCarthy, Poole, and Rosenthal 2001). Second, estimates from roll call analysis can be used to test theories of legislative behavior. For instance, roll call analysis has been used in studies of the U.S. Congress, both contemporary and historical, state legislatures, courts, comparative politics, and international relations. In short, roll call analysis makes conjectures about legislative

behavior amenable to quantitative analysis, helping make the study of legislative politics an empirically grounded, cumulative body of scientific knowledge (Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers 2004: 355).

There are several procedures of estimating ideal points.<sup>2</sup> I use the procedure developed by political scientists Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal—NOMINATE, Nominal Three-step Estimation. In short, to locate a politician's voting position, this procedure uses information on who votes with whom and how often (MaCarty et al 2006: 5). For example, if legislator A votes with legislators B and C much more frequently than legislators B and C vote together, then NOMINATE positions legislator A as moderate, in between legislator B and C. Poole and Rosenthal show that this algorithm allows for quite precise measures of politicians' positions on the liberal-conservative continuum (MaCarty et al 2006:5).

The NOMINATE scores range from -1 to +1, from most liberal to most conservative, or vice versa, depending on which legislator is chosen as "polarity" (i.e. the "pole" determining how the other Senators are ordered). In other words, if one of the most conservative legislators is chosen as "polarity", then a score of -1 equals most liberal. If one of the most liberal legislators is chosen as "polarity", then a score of +1 equals most conservative. In chapter 3, I go into detail about how the NOMINATE scores are estimated.

To sum up, this study seeks to determine to what extent political ambition affects legislative behavior, or more precisely, to what extent senators who run for president alter their legislative behavior. To do so, this study employs two measures of legislative behavior, attendance and roll call voting. The main hypothesis is that political ambition does affect legislative behavior, that senators who run for president do alter their legislative behavior more than those members who are running for

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<sup>2</sup> See Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers (2004) for an account of Bayesian methods for ideal point estimation and Heckman and Snyder (1997) for an account of the factor-analytic approach to estimating ideal points.

reelection to the Senate. The basis for this hypothesis is found in ambition theory, to which I turn in Chapter 2.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

As mentioned in the introduction, relatively few studies look at the ambition-behavior relationship. The effect of higher ambition on behavior has not been totally ignored, but it does seem safe to say that ambition theory has not represented a dominant, or even major, stream of either thought or research in the political science literature. Prior to Schlesinger's work on ambition and behavior in the United States Congress, it did not even exist as an explicit theoretical position (Lubalin 1981: 2). According to ambition theorists, ambition has the potential for significantly affecting the substance of public policy. The ever-increasing literature on Congressional voting, therefore, does not seem to pay sufficient attention to perhaps the most fundamental factor of all-ambition. More research on the ambition-behavior relationship is thus called for.

Existing studies of the ambition-behavior relationship have produced mixed results. Eve Lubalin (1981), John R. Hibbing (1986), Rebekah Herrick and Michael K. Moore (1993), Wayne L. Francis and Lawrence W. Kenny (1996), and Herrick (2001) all find evidence of alteration in behavior by politicians seeking a higher office but differ in terms of the extent to which these politicians alter behavior. This lack of agreement suggests a need to further explore the topic.

Very few such studies, moreover, look at the ambition-behavior relationship in the Senate context. In the majority of the studies reviewed, ambition theory has been applied to the House of Representatives, and the aim has been to determine the extent to which ambition affects the behavior of Representatives who seek a seat in the Senate (Hibbing 1986; Herrick and Moore 1993; Francis and Kenny 1996; and Herrick 2001). Given one of the most important findings in *Ambition and Politics* (for purposes of this study), the indication that the ramifications of ambition are most

pronounced at the highest level of the political system, more research on presidential ambition in the Senate is called for.

The studies that look at the ambition-behavior relationship in the Senate context are old. For instance, Jack Van der Silk and Samuel Pernaciarro's study of senators with presidential or party leadership ambition dates back to 1979. Eve Lubalin's dissertation on presidential ambition and senatorial behavior dates back to 1981. Given changes in American politics the past thirty years, these studies may be outdated. At the very least, an up-to-date analysis is needed. More specifically, the polarization in American politics the past 20-30 years has changed the context within which the possible effect of ambition on behavior takes place and should therefore be taken into consideration when studying the ambition-behavior relationship.

None of the studies, to the author's knowledge, analyze the ambition-behavior relationship in the Senate context by using NOMINATE scores. This is what the research reported here does. To evaluate ambition theory, this study applies it to the Senate and employs NOMINATE scores to determine the extent to which ambition affects behavior or more precisely, the extent to which senators running for president alter their legislative behavior.

## **1.4 The Nomination Process**

The nomination process is an important part of the context within which the effect of presidential ambition on senatorial behavior is expected to occur, and should therefore, along with some important features, be highlighted at the outset.

### **1.4.1 The Nomination Process**

The contemporary nomination process consists of two major parts: a series of caucuses and presidential primary elections held in each state, and the national party conventions held by each party. A caucus is a meeting of all state party leaders for selecting delegates to the national party convention whereas a presidential primary

election (often just called a primary) is a state election in which voters vote for a candidate (or for delegates pledged to him or her). Whether to hold a primary is the states' decision. Some states only hold primaries, some only hold caucuses, and some hold both. These primaries and caucuses take place from January through June in the election year, with New Hampshire and Iowa traditionally holding the first primary and caucus, respectively. The national party convention is the supreme power within each of the parties<sup>3</sup>. At the convention, the selected or elected delegates officially nominate the party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates and write the party's platform. The conventions are usually held during the summer before the federal election (Edwards III et al 2002: 267-268).

### *The Caucus Road to the National Party Convention*

Before primaries existed, all state parties selected their delegates to the national convention via caucuses. Sometimes one or two state party bosses ran the caucus show. Such state party leaders could control who went to the convention and how the state's delegates voted once they got there. They were in many ways the "kingmakers" of presidential politics (Edwards III et al 2002: 267).

Today's caucuses are different. In the dozen states still holding them, caucuses are now open to all voters registered with the party. Caucuses are usually organized like a pyramid: At first, small, neighborhood, precinct-level caucuses are held. At this level, delegates are chosen, based on their preference for a certain candidate, to attend county and then congressional district caucuses, where delegates are chosen for the next level--a state convention. At the state convention, which usually occurs months after the precinct caucuses, delegates are finally chosen to go to the national convention (Edwards III et al 2002: 267).

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<sup>3</sup> Some might attack the accuracy of this statement.

Since 1972, Iowa has held the nation's first caucuses. Because the Iowa caucuses are the first test of the candidates' vote-getting ability, they usually get a lot of media attention. Well-known candidates like Senator John Glenn in 1984 and Senator Phil Gramm in 1996 saw their campaigns virtually fall apart because of poor showings in Iowa. Most importantly, candidates who were not thought to be contenders have received tremendous boosts from unexpectedly strong showings in Iowa. Former presidents Jimmy Carter and George Bush (41) made their first big step onto the national scene by winning in Iowa in 1976 and 1980, respectively. In fact, the Iowa caucuses have become so important that Iowans can expect at least one presidential candidate to come through the state weekly during the year preceding the caucuses (Edwards III et al 2002: 267).

#### *The Primary Road to the Party Convention*

The presidential primary was promoted around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by reformers wanting to take the nominating process out of party bosses' hands. The reformers wanted to let the people vote in primaries for candidates who delegates to the national conventions would finally vote on. In 1912, the first presidential primaries were held in 13 states. Today, most delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions are selected via primaries (Edwards III et al 2002: 268).

The primary season begins in January in New Hampshire. Like the Iowa caucuses, the importance of New Hampshire is not in the number of delegates or in how representative the state is, but rather that it is traditionally the first primary. At this early stage, the campaign is not about winning delegates, but about image--candidates want the rest of the country to see them as front-runners. The frenzy of political activity in this small state is given a lot of attention in the national press. In fact, in 1996, 22 percent of TV coverage of the nomination process was devoted to the New Hampshire primary (Edwards III et al 2002: 270).



State laws determine how the delegates are allocated, but they operate within the general guidelines set by the parties. The Democratic Party requires all states to use some form of proportional representation whereby a candidate getting 15 percent or more of a state's votes is awarded a roughly proportional share of the delegates. The Republican Party gives states a large degree of discretion. Some states, like California, allocate all Republican delegates to whomever wins the most votes; others, like Texas, award delegates according to who wins each congressional district, and yet others employ some form of proportional representation (Edwards III et al 2002: 271).

The primaries serve as elimination contests, as the media continually monitor the number of delegates each candidate wins. Candidates who fail to score early wins are labeled as losers and typically drop. Usually they have little choice since early losses quickly inhibit a candidate's ability to raise money necessary to campaign in other states. As one veteran fundraiser put it, "People don't lose campaigns. They run out of money and can't get their planes in the air. That's the reality" (Edwards III et al 2002: 271).

By party convention time, the winner is usually known. The last time there was any doubt about who would win at the convention was in 1976, when Ford won the Republican nomination over Reagan. Both parties have also learned that it is not in their best interest to provide high drama. The Republican convention in 1964 and the Democratic conventions in 1968 and 1972 captured the public's attention, but they also exposed such divisiveness that the parties were unable to unite for the fall campaign (Edwards III et al 2002: 273-274).

### *Key Features of the Contemporary Nomination Process and their Consequences*

Participation in primaries and caucuses is low and unrepresentative (Edwards III and Wayne 2006: 31-32). About 50 percent of the population votes in the November presidential election, but only about 20 percent votes in presidential primaries. Participation in caucus states is even smaller because a person must usually devote

several hours to attending a caucus. Except in Iowa, where the extraordinary media attention usually boosts participation, only about 5 percent of registered voters typically attend caucuses (Edwards III et al 2002: 272).

The low turnout rate in the primaries matters. An analysis of data from the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) indicates a high level of ideological constraint among voters in 2006 with a much lower level of constraint among nonvoters (Abramowitz 2007). Consequently, the low turnout rate in the primaries gives party activists and the groups they represent greater influence on the nominations. Because party activists exercise a disproportionate influence on nomination campaigns, the delegates have also been more likely to reflect the activists' attitudinal preferences, which tend to be more ideological than those of other partisans. Democratic delegates tend to be more liberal and Republican delegates tend to be more conservative than their respective rank-and-file partisans are (Edwards III and Wayne 2006: 32).

Another important feature of the contemporary nomination process is the importance of interest groups. Since the 1970s, powerful interest groups have gained considerable leverage. Edwards III and Wayne (2006: 32) argue that not only are candidates more beholden to these groups for their contributions, grassroots support, and public relations campaigns, but also they are forced to take positions that the groups support, positions that may limit their appeal in the general election.

In an attempt to combat this development, a string of new finance laws were enacted in the 1970s. The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), enacted in 1974, provided for public disclosure, contribution ceilings, campaign spending limits, and federal subsidies. New legislation enacted in 1976, and amended in 1979, provided for public disclosure of all contributions and expenditures over a certain amount (today \$200), limits on individual and group contributions to candidates, federal subsidies for the nomination process, and grants for the federal election. Despite the continuous effort

toward limiting the disproportionate leverage of some due to contributions, however, Congress has only partly succeeded (Edwards III and Wayne 2006: 34).

Other important features of the contemporary nomination process are the size and significance of the nomination process's public dimension and the use of new communication channels. These confront aspiring presidential candidates with a host of challenges. First, today's candidates must be willing to campaign continuously in the public eye through the mass media (primarily on radio and television, but increasingly also through the Internet). Second, they need to be well versed on many issues, with relatively well-defined messages that generate strong appeal within the party's electoral coalition. Third, while appealing to the party's electoral coalition, candidates must also try to avoid alienating other partisans whose support is necessary in the general election (Edwards and Wayne 2006: 38).

To sum up, the contemporary nomination process generates some obvious demands. Candidates need to raise sufficient funds to mount an effective primary effort. They need to cultivate the national news media. They need to court party leaders and political activists in key states to pull together a grassroots organization for primary and caucus contests. They need to increase their national name recognition so as to look good in the polls. They need to build a public record to sell themselves to potential supporters and answer the inevitable question with which candidates are faced: "Why you?" (Lubalin 1981: 77)

Once nominated, candidates concentrate on campaigning for the general election--an endeavor at least as arduous as the nomination struggle. Directed toward a larger and more heterogeneous electorate, the general election campaign requires similar organizational skills but different strategic plans and public appeals to build a majority coalition.

## **1.5 Plan of the Thesis**

The remainder of the study consists of four chapters. Chapter 2 presents ambition theory as described by Schlesinger, addresses some of the criticism raised against it, and lays out the hypotheses that guide the study. Chapter 3 describes the research design and the quantitative procedure W-NOMINATE. Chapter 4 describes the findings and discusses them in relation to ambition theory. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and suggests topics for further research.

## 2.0 A Theory of Ambition

Schlesinger (1966: 1) asserted that “[a]mbition lies at the heart of politics. Politics thrive on the hope of preferment and the drive for office”. In other words, Schlesinger asserted that without ambition, the political life of any given entity would deteriorate. Indeed,

[a] political system unable to kindle ambitions for office is as much in danger of breaking down as one unable to restrain ambitions. Representative government, above all, depends on a supply of men so driven; the desire for election and, more important, for reelection becomes the electorate’s restraint upon its public officials. No more irresponsible government is imaginable than one of high-minded men unconcerned for their political futures (Schlesinger 1966: 2).

Ambition should, therefore, constitute an integral part of political analysis. This was not to say that ambition as the motive for individual political action had been neglected—there had been considerable concern among political scientists for understanding *why* men had political ambition<sup>4</sup>—but much less attention had been given to developing an understanding of the consequences of such ambition. Put another way, political ambition had been employed frequently as a dependent variable, but only sparingly as an independent variable. Hence, there was a need for “a theory which explicitly accepts the assumption that politicians respond primarily to their office goals, in effect an ambition theory of politics, rather than a theory which explains personal ambitions” (Schlesinger 1966: 4). Here, the explanatory variable is ambition—that which explains some other events or behavior.

“The central assumption of ambition theory is that a politician’s behavior is a response to his office goals” (Schlesinger 1966: 6). In other words, according to ambition theory, much of the politician’s behavior in one office can be explained in terms of his

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Harold Lasswell (1948).

ambition for some higher office. Once we know “what he wants to be” rather than “how he got to be where he is”, his—or her—behavior becomes understandable (Sigel 1968: 286).

A politician’s ambition, according to Schlesinger, is closely linked to the opportunity he or she faces. As he puts it, “[a] man in an office which may lead somewhere is more likely to have office ambition than a man in an office which leads nowhere” (Schlesinger 1966: 8). For example, a New York governor is more likely to have ambition of becoming president than his counterparts in Mississippi or South Dakota, because a New York governor is more likely actually to become president than the Mississippi or South Dakota governors (Schlesinger 1966: 9). Effectively, he is saying that ambition is not free floating (Prewitt 1967: 767). Rather, it “flow[s] from the expectations which are reasonable for a man in his position” (Schlesinger 1966: 9).<sup>5</sup>

The link between ambition and opportunity implies that ambition varies. As mentioned in the introduction, Schlesinger (1966: 10) suggests classifying ambition into three categories. The first category is discrete ambition, meaning the politician desires an “office for its specified term” and then intends to “withdraw from public office”. The second category is static ambition, meaning the politician wishes to “make a long career out of a particular office”. The third category is progressive ambition, meaning the politician aspires to “attain an office more important than the one he now seeks or is holding”.

Effectively, Schlesinger (1966: 11) suggests that different career opportunities exist for different political positions—a “structure of political opportunities”. The wealth of political opportunity depends on the shape and size of this opportunity structure. The shape of the structure derives from “the ways in which men typically advance in

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<sup>5</sup> Former Presidents Clinton and Carter were governors of Arkansas and Georgia, respectively. Former New York Governors Nelson Rockefeller and Mario Cuomo went nowhere in their presidential bids. This fact adds weight to the importance of an up-to-date test of ambition theory.

politics” whereas the size of the structure consists of the “number of offices available and the frequency with which new men attain them” (Schlesinger 1966: 20). This “structure of opportunities”, according to ambition theory, is a useful guide to the effective ambitions of American politicians and their repercussions (Schlesinger 1966: 199).

## 2.1 Critique

As correctly pointed out by Kenneth Prewitt (1967: 768), “Schlesinger’s ‘ambition theory’ and his evidence on the opportunity structure meet only in the *assumptions* he makes. Data and theory do not conjoin in the analysis itself”. In other words, Schlesinger assumes that ambition affects behavior, but nowhere does he offer proof that this is anything but an assumption. Instead, he proceeds to address the issue of the “opportunity structure” of public offices and then to finding and documenting the presence of such a structure. Schlesinger (1966: 198-199) defends his approach in the following way:

It is true that I have presented no direct evidence about the ambitions of American politicians. I have only assumed that men’s ambitions are stirred by opportunities and, to the extent that experience brings order to opportunity, that opportunity will guide men’s ambitions. Nevertheless, by demonstrating the existence of a hierarchy of elective offices in the United States, and one in which the key positions are obvious positions, we bring reasonable order to the American political scene. I am well aware that I have not demonstrated either that American politicians do in fact perceive their opportunities as I have described them, or that the opportunity structure affects political aspirations. Nevertheless, I feel that the structure of opportunity is a useful guide to the effective ambitions of American politicians and their repercussions.

Schlesinger’s disclaimer notwithstanding, his ambition theory is still “far more a theory of opportunity than it is a theory of ambition” (Sigel 1968: 287). To be a theory of ambition, it would need to be based on “data showing that ambitious politicians were aware of the presence of a political opportunity structure and then chose the targets of their ambitions accordingly.” Moreover, one would have to know “what role

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(if any) ambition played in the heads of those men (successful and unsuccessful) who deliberately by-passed the standard routes to office” (Sigel 1968: 287). Schlesinger only shows that politicians in key positions more often than not walk a certain path to success. He does not make clear if this is the best path and hence is deliberately chosen by men of ambition because they know it to be the best path or whether ambitious men happen to have been successful via this path (Sigel 1968: 287).

To sum up, so far, this chapter has presented ambition theory as described by Schlesinger. It has then outlined some of the criticism toward the theory, leaning primarily on Prewitt and Sigel. The criticism is primarily concerned with the lack of connection between the theory and the data Schlesinger presents to substantiate his claims. The rest of the chapter deals with the hypotheses that have guided the study.

## **2.2 Hypotheses**

If ambition theory is right, the ambitious politician should be acting today in terms of the electorate of the office which he or she hopes to win tomorrow. He or she must be interested in compiling a voting record that is perceived to be appealing to the desired, not the current, electorate. This situation should lead to some noticeable alterations in previously established voting patterns (Hibbing 1986: 653)--patterns that are found to be quite stable across time (Asher and Weisberg 1978, Nokken 2000, Poole 2003, Nokken and Poole 2004).

Senators who are running for reelection to the Senate generally appeal to the same electorate, though that electorate may change internally as to its makeup. Consequently, there is little reason to expect their voting behavior to be fundamentally transformed. Senators who decide to run for president, however, target a significantly different electorate than that they targeted in running for the Senate. According to ambition theory, they are likely to be concerned about appealing to the nationwide, not the statewide, electorate. Their Senate voting records as Election Day approaches should reflect this concern. A plausible, general hypothesis, therefore, would be that *if*



*ambition theory is right, a greater degree of behavioral alteration should be registered by senators running for president than by senators running for reelection to the Senate.*

Contenders must travel widely to gain exposure to potential supporters and rank-and-file voters (individuals constituting the body of the party as distinguished from leaders). Therefore, during the inter-election period, senators running for president can be expected to feel less pressured to stay in Washington to attend to Senate business. Their increasing absence from Washington should be visible in their attendance. Therefore, *during the inter-election period, it is expected that contenders' attendance will decline.*

As argued in Chapter 1, the nomination and general election processes have an influence in terms of which strategies contenders choose when pursuing the nomination and during the general election, for instance, and most importantly for the purposes of this study, in terms of what electoral groups they focus on. In short, when pursuing the nomination, contenders aim their message at party activists; during the general election, they aim their message at rank-and-file members of their party and at independent voters to build a majority coalition.

Given that party activists are more ideologically constrained and more homogenous than average voters, contenders can be expected to become more ideological, or more partisan, during the inter-election period. More precisely, *it is expected that contenders' voting records will show a movement to the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum as the primary season approaches.*

Given that the nationwide electorate is less ideologically constrained and less homogenous than party activists, contenders can be expected to become more moderate in order to appeal to more people as the general election approaches. A plausible hypothesis, therefore, would be that *it is expected that contenders' voting*

*records will show a movement to the middle of the liberal-conservative spectrum as the general election approaches.* However, testing this hypothesis would be difficult for two reasons:

First, front-loading<sup>6</sup> of both parties' primaries and caucuses ends the nomination process's competitive phase very early, lengthening the period during which victorious contenders must maintain media attention, improve their presidential image, broaden their issue appeals, and prepare for launching their official campaign for their party's nomination (Edwards III and Wayne 2006: 46). However, the nomination process's competitive phase still constitutes the largest part of the electoral process. Primary campaigning starts in January of the election year, but today it is customary for contenders to start preparations before the midterm elections preceding the presidential contest, e.g. two years prior (Edwards III and Wayne 2006: 33). The gestation phase may span several years. The post-convention/pre-election phase, on the contrary, lasts only three to four months. Relative to the primary phase, therefore, the post-convention/pre-election phase is very short.

Second, because the post-convention/pre-election phase constitutes such a small part of the electoral process, it would be difficult, even impossible, to discern position shifting in this phase using a summary measure of ideology such as NOMINATE scores which are estimated per Congress (e.g. per second year) rather than per month or even year. Estimated per Congress, NOMINATE scores would mask possible shifts toward the middle of the liberal-conservative spectrum in the post-convention/pre-election phase. Estimating NOMINATE scores for a shorter period of time would increase the uncertainty for the reported scores. Being unable to conduct quantitative analysis using NOMINATE scores to probe for position shifting in the post-convention/pre-election phase limits their utility somewhat. On the other hand,

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<sup>6</sup> In American politics, front-loading refers to the recent tendency of states to hold primaries early to capitalize on media attention (Edwards et al 2002).

NOMINATE scores make ideology amenable for quantitative analyses and allow for comparisons over longer periods and between individuals.

To sum up, based on ambition theory, and given the demands of the contemporary nomination process, the following hypotheses have been derived. One, a greater degree of behavioral alteration should be registered by those senators running for president than by those senators running for reelection to the Senate. Two, contenders' percentage of missed roll call votes can be expected to progressively increase during the inter-election period. Three, their voting records can be expected to show movement to the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum as the primary season approaches. Because the fourth hypothesis is difficult to test using a summary measure of ideology, testing it is left for future research.

### 3.0 Research Design and Methodology

Surprisingly few studies have analyzed the ambition-behavior relationship. Moreover, existing studies have primarily been concerned with the effect of senatorial ambition in the House of Representatives. Therefore, this study looks at the effect of presidential ambition in the Senate. However, for both substantial and methodological reasons, the Senate appears to provide a good setting for exploring the contribution that ambition theory can make to understanding legislative behavior.

First, one of the most interesting findings in *Ambition and Politics*, for purposes of this study, is the indication that the effects of ambition are most pronounced at the highest level of the political system. Based on his findings on career patterns, Schlesinger concludes that despite the fact that there are relatively few prerequisites for office and a multitude of entry points, there is considerable order discernible in American political recruitment patterns. Further, he also finds that there are definite marks of hierarchy in the system, one of which is that “the higher the office the fewer and more sharply defined its career lines” and hence, the more pronounced and clear the effect of ambition on behavior. Based on this finding, contenders for the Presidency are appropriate subjects for investigation, given the intent of the study to examine ambition theory (Lubalin 1981: 13-15).

Second, in *Ambition and Politics*, Schlesinger locates “manifest” offices empirically, by tracing the frequency with which certain positions are used as stepping stones to other, higher offices. Lubalin (1981: 15) suggests the Senate possess the characteristics that Schlesinger attributes to such offices.

Conventional wisdom supports the notion of the Senate as a breeding ground for the Presidency and Vice Presidency. It has been called the “Mother of Presidents”, “presidential incubator”, “presidential nursery”, and “presidential pre-school” (Dewar 1980; Peabody et al 1976; MacNeil 1972). In fact, nearly every senator has been considered a potential candidate for president at one time or another simply because of

the office he or she occupies (Burden 2002: 81). The Senate became a very salient manifest office for those seeking the Presidency particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In this period, there was an increase both in numbers of senatorial contenders and success by senators in securing the nomination (Lubalin 1981: 15, 26). Some elections have seen many senators running for president simultaneously. For example, the 1976 contest brought out Senators Birch Bayh, Lloyd Bentson, Robert Byrd, Frank Church and Henry “Scoop” Jackson.

However, the historical record shows that it is almost unheard of for presidents to come directly from the Senate. In fact, of the forty-four U.S. presidents, only three—Warren Harding in 1920, John F. Kennedy in 1960, and Barack Obama in 2008<sup>7</sup>—moved straight from the Senate to the White House. Of the fifty-five presidential elections held since 1789, only fifteen saw current or even former senators win. Considering only contemporary elections, some of the worst defeats were suffered by senators running for president. Among others, Senators Barry Goldwater (1964), George McGovern (1972), Walter Mondale (1984), and Bob Dole (1996) lost by large margins. Of the last eight presidents, only Nixon had senatorial experience, and he had but a partial term as a senator (Burden 2002: 82).

Why choose the Senate as setting for exploring the ambition-behavior relationship? The fact that many senators have been called, but few chosen, has not deterred senators from running for president. In fact, since 1976, an average of four senators have run per election year, with the 1976 election seeing as many as five senators running for president (See tables 4.1 and 4.2). Thus, while history shows that senators have fared less well than conventional wisdom would suggest, from 1960 to 1996, senators made up the largest grouping of presidential contenders at more than one-third of the total (Burden 2002: 95). The decision to evaluate ambition theory using the Senate as setting is thus well grounded.

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<sup>7</sup> Elected in 2008, President Barack Obama is not included in the dataset.

Third, choosing the Senate setting makes sense on methodological grounds. For one, it is accessible and well researched. More importantly, investigating governors—the other major group of contenders for the Presidency—would have been a methodological challenge given the dramatic variations in the positions and politics from which gubernatorial contenders are drawn. Examination of the effect of ambition on the behavior of senators running for president, on the other hand, means that variations in the offices held by contenders are kept to a minimum. Moreover, the respect in the Senate for each senator’s rights, the individualistic ethos of the institution and the tolerance for each member’s political needs and idiosyncrasies, give members considerable latitude in defining the scope and style of their participation (Lubalin 1981: 16).

Since nearly every senator has been considered a potential candidate for president at one time or another, one must decide upon exactly whom to study. Barry C. Burden (2002: 94) defines candidates who seriously pursue a presidential bid as presidential “contenders” and defines them as “people who chose to move beyond just being considered potential candidates by actually initiating their candidacies.” His operational definition of a “contender” is “any presidential candidate who officially declares his or her candidacy and runs in at least one primary outside of his home state (to avoid the idiosyncratic ‘favorite-son’ phenomenon<sup>8</sup>)” (Burden 2002: 94). As he points out, “these criteria are a reasonable compromise between analyzing the thousands of possible candidates and studying only party nominees” (Burden 2002: 94). In the following analysis, I draw on Burden’s definitions, but I confine the scope to senators. Since I look at political ambition’s effect on legislative behavior in the

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<sup>8</sup> A favorite son (or a favorite daughter) is a political term that can refer to a) A politician whose electoral appeal derives from his or her regional appeal, rather than his or her political views; or b) A member of a political party favored by the party leadership to assume a prominent role. In American politics, nominating favorite sons was used as a technique to send uncommitted delegations to the national conventions. A popular, well-known governor or senator would be nominated, but was not a serious candidate. At some point during the convention, he would withdraw, thus freeing his delegates to support another candidate.

Senate, I observe only senators who were serving in the Senate when they initiated their presidential candidacies.

I have further chosen to confine the study to the period from 1976 to 2004. I have done so for three reasons. First, as summarized by Lubalin (1981: 46, 52), during the thirty years following World War II, the American presidential nomination process was transformed by three major developments that had pervasive effect on both delegate and contender behavior: 1) an increase in popular influence; 2) a revolution in the American communications system; and 3) the nationalization and increasing competitiveness of American presidential politics. These developments altered the parameters of presidential nomination contesting as they confronted aspiring presidential candidates with new opportunities and liabilities in their quest for the Presidency.

Second, changes in the nature of the presidential nomination process during the thirty years following World War II occurred together with changes in the Senate during this period. As argued by Lubalin (1981; 66), this greatly benefitted ambitious senatorial presidential contenders over their traditional gubernatorial rivals, especially senators of the congressional partisan majority. The opportunities offered senators by virtue of their membership in the Senate of the 1960s and 1970's gave them unique advantages in the nomination process, shared and surpassed, perhaps, only by those enjoyed by the Vice President. The historical records support Lubalin's assessment. The changes in the nomination process and in the Senate during the 1960s and 1970s coincide with a string of successes by senators during that time in contesting presidential nominations.

The third reason I have chosen to confine the analysis to the post-World War II era, more precisely 1976-2004, is of a methodological nature. My main data sources for identifying senators who have run for president are the Federal Election Commission (FEC) Presidential Address lists, which contain data on all individuals who have declared their candidacies for the Presidency. The FEC was created by Congress in

1975 to administer and enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), the statute that governs the financing of federal elections, enacted in 1974 (FEC 2009). Consequently, FEC's data goes back only to the 1976 Presidential Election.

Given the scope of the study, a choice regarding how to confine the analysis had to be made. The enactment of FECA marks, in several respects, the beginning of the nomination process as we know it today. FECA has had a major effect on the nomination process by altering the way in which money is raised and spent, greatly increasing the amount available to candidates, parties and nonparty groups. More specifically, it provided for public disclosure, contribution ceilings, campaign spending limits, and federal subsidies for the nomination process (Presidential Leadership). Thus, the period 1976 through 2004 seems to constitute a natural unit for analysis.

Based on availability of data and because the period 1976 through 2004 seems to constitute a natural unit for analysis, the following analysis is confined to senators who sought their party's nomination in the eight presidential elections that took place during that period. This results in a total of twenty-seven senators. Of these, two sought the nomination more than once, Senator Robert Dole of Kansas who sought the nomination in 1980, 1988 and 1996 and Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut who sought the nomination in 2000 and 2004. In total therefore, senators pursued the presidential nomination thirty times from 1976 to 2004.

### **3.1 The Analytical Technique**

Chapter 2, section 2.2, identified two hypotheses about how ambition might be expected to influence contenders' legislative behavior. One approach to assessing the extent to which these hypotheses are supported is to compare contenders to their colleagues to see if their legislative behavior differs from that of other senators in a predictable manner.



To explore the effect of presidential ambition on legislative behavior in the Senate, I compare the behavior of the senatorial presidential contenders with that of their colleagues, from 1976 to 2004. To allow for a more in-depth examination of the effect of ambition on behavior, I compare contenders individually to both Democratic and Republican colleagues.

I compare contenders to their colleagues for three Congresses prior to their bid for the Presidency and for the Congress of the election year. I have done so for two reasons. One, a Congress constitutes a short period of time in most senators' service as senators are elected for six-year terms and often get re-elected over and over again. In recognition of the possibility that changes in voting behavior may only be arbitrary, the observation period is expanded to eight years. Moreover, the assumption that "our ambitious politician must act today in terms of the electorate of the office he hopes to win tomorrow" implies that the politician must start early to appeal to the electorate of the office being sought. An observation period of eight years seems a reasonable compromise between analyzing senators' behavior from the time the senators were first elected, and doing the same but only for the two years of the pertinent Congress.

Specifically, I record each contender's percentage of missed votes and estimate each contender's W-NOMINATE score, along with the standard error. In addition, I estimate the Senate medians for missed votes and W-NOMINATE scores for the pertinent Congresses.

### **3.3 NOMINATE**

As mentioned in the introduction, voting positions are often described in terms of the concept of ideology. NOMINATE is a scaling program which is designed to measure ideology. This chapter explains the logic and assumptions upon which it is based. It opens with an explanation of spatial models of choice, then proceeds to the spatial theory of voting. Finally, it offers an explanation of how spatial theory of voting,

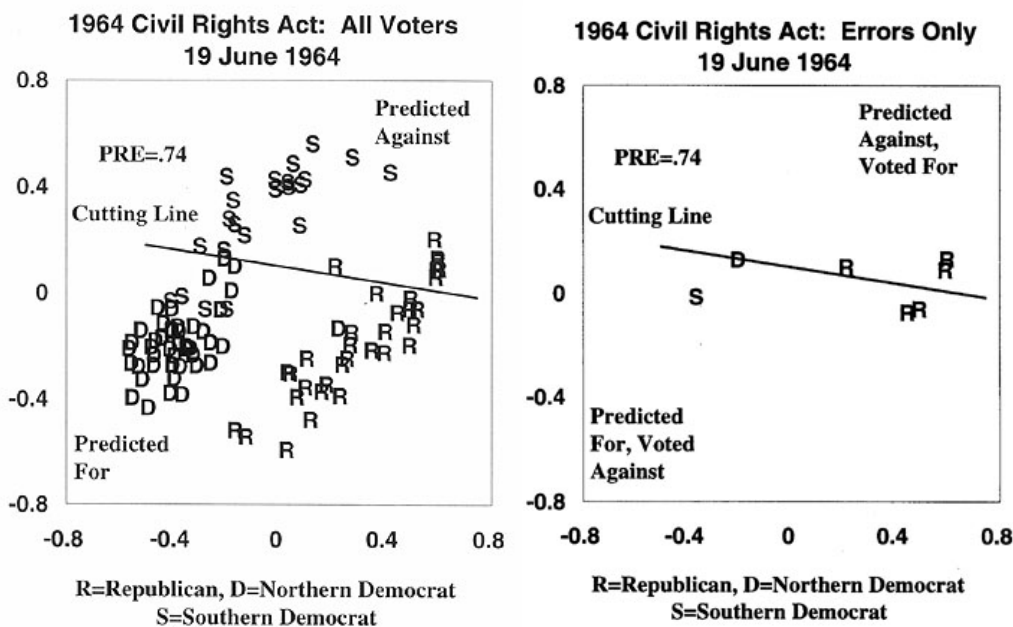
positing a multidimensional issue space with each issue having its own dimension, (Poole 1999: 2), may be reconciled with low-dimensional maps.

### 3.3.1 NOMINATE – Background

According to political scientist Keith T. Poole (1999: 1), “the correct way to measure ideology or Congressional belief systems [is] through empirical estimation of spatial models of choice”. As explained by him, in spatial models of choice, or more specifically, in spatial models of voting,

each legislator is represented by one point and each roll call is represented by two points—one for Yea and one for Nay. On every roll call each legislator votes for the closer outcome point, at least probabilistically. These points form a spatial map that summarizes the roll calls (Poole 2005: 1).

A spatial map formed from roll calls provides a way of visualizing the political world of a legislature. The closeness of two legislators in the map shows the similarity of their voting records, and the distribution of legislators shows what the dimensions of voting are (Poole 2005: 1). Poole illustrates this as shown below:



(Poole 2005: 6)

The number of dimensions needed to adequately represent the points is usually small because “legislators typically decide how to vote on the basis of their positions on a small number of underlying or *basic* dimensions” (Poole 2005: 1). An indication of the low dimensionality of voting is found in the ease with which we usually can predict how a “liberal” or a “conservative” will vote on most issues. The underlying or basic dimensions structure the roll call votes and are captured by the spatial maps (Poole 2005: 1).

### *The Spatial Theory of Voting*

As explained by Poole (2005: 7), in its simplest form, “the spatial theory of voting can be represented as a map of voters and candidates where the voters vote for the candidate closest to them”. When applied to a parliamentary setting, “voters” and “candidates” are simply replaced by “legislators” and “policy outcomes” (Poole 2005: 8-9).

According to Poole (2005) the intellectual origins of the spatial theory of voting can be traced to Hotelling (1929) and Smithies (1941). However, not until 1957 and the publication of Downs’s seminal *An Economic Theory of Democracy* was spatial theory established as a conceptual tool (Poole 2005: 7).<sup>9</sup> In short, the treatise puts forth a model with precise conditions under which economic theory can be applied to political decision making. Moreover, Downs presents three major theoretical claims of which the first is of particular interest here—the median voter theorem. According to the median voter theorem, to maximize their chances of being elected, candidates must take a position at the median of a normal distribution of voters. A candidate who does not do so can be circumvented by another candidate who takes a position between the first candidate and the median voter.

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<sup>9</sup> For a thorough discussion of the early contributions to spatial theory, see Keith T. Poole (2005).

However, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* did not present spatial theory in a way that was amenable to empirical testing. More specifically, “[n]o rigorous mathematical structure was presented from which measuring instruments could be constructed to actually test the theory” (Poole 2005: 8). The task of providing such a structure was claimed—and completed—by political scientists Otto Davis, Melvin Hinich, and Peter Ordeshook in the early 1970s (Poole 2005: 8). The structure was as follows:

The dimensions of the space represented issues/policies. Each voter had a position on each issue/policy and this vector of positions was the voter’s *ideal point* in the space. Each voter also had a utility function centered on her ideal point that assigned a utility to each point in the space. The further a point was from the voter’s ideal point, the lower the utility. Each candidate also had a position on each position and therefore was represented as a point in the space. Each voter then voted for the candidate for whom she had the highest utility (Poole 2005: 8).

The new version of the theory had, however, one major shortcoming. It did not allow for “error” on the voters’ part. In other words, the theory assumed that voters always voted sincerely, that is, never strategically, or due to some other reason, contrary to how they usually voted (Poole 2005: 9). This shortcoming has been addressed, and the contemporary version of the theory allows for “errors” to occur. The shortcoming notwithstanding, the new and improved version of the 1970s made the spatial theory of voting amenable for empirical testing.

### *The Puzzle of Low Dimensionality*

Standard spatial theory posits a multidimensional issue space with each issue having its own dimension (Poole 1999: 2). How, then, can it be reconciled with low-dimensional maps? Peter Ordeshook’s (1976) theory of the “Basic Space”—a small number of underlying fundamental dimensions that generate all the specific issue dimensions--provides a possible answer.

As mentioned in the introduction, according to Converse (1964: 207), an ideology—or a belief system—is “a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence”. By “constraint” he means, as clarified by Poole (2005: 13-14), that “issues are interrelated or bundled and that ideology is fundamentally *the knowledge of what-goes-with-what*”. In other words, “[f]rom an observer’s point of view, the knowledge of one or two issue positions makes the remaining positions very predictable” (Poole 2005: 14).

The simplest yet most efficient continuum of positions is the continuum of positions ranging from liberal to moderate to conservative. In the words of Converse (1964: 214):

[t]he efficiency of such a yardstick in the evolution of events is quite obvious. Under certain appropriate circumstances, the single word “conservative” used to describe a piece of proposed legislation can convey a tremendous amount of more specific information about the bill—who probably proposed it and toward what ends, who is likely to resist it...its long-term consequences...and how the actor himself should expect to evaluate it.

Most people, however, it has been shown, do not have highly structured attitudes about politics (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1963; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1978, cited in Poole 2005). On the other hand, it has been argued that people are not “ideologically innocent” either, and that:

Americans do, for the most part, understand the philosophical underpinnings of the policies they endorse, and that, much more than the belief systems literature would lead one to expect, Americans make use of cultural values and principles in explicating and justifying their political preferences (Feldman and Zaller 1992: 269).

The extent to which people are ideologically consistent, however, clearly varies (Poole 2005: 14). Many political science studies have sought to find the answer to how and why. Here, it suffices to state that ideological consistency is almost certainly a top-down phenomenon—meaning that [p]olitical elites are more ideologically consistent

than the mass public. This, it is argued, quite likely has an effect on how issues are “packaged” (Hinich and Munger 1997: 180-213, cited in Poole 2005). Consequently, “members of national legislatures such as the U.S. Congress should exhibit highly structured belief systems” (Poole 2005:14).

To the extent that legislators do have highly structured belief systems, “within the spatial theory of voting this means that their issue positions lie on a low-dimensional plane through the issue space because attitudes across the issues are constrained” (Poole 2005: 15). In other words, to the extent the legislators are ideologically consistent, within the spatial theory of voting, only one or two fundamental dimensions are necessary to describe their specific issue positions because attitudes across the issues are interrelated or bundled. The liberal-conservative continuum is found to be one fundamental dimension; another, now largely unimportant, is related to the issue of race (Poole and Rosenthal 1997: 5).

Low dimensionality in voting implies two spaces—one with a few fundamental dimensions such as the liberal-conservative continuum and a high-dimensional space representing all the distinct issues. As explained by Poole (2005: 15):

[S]uppose there are  $s$  fundamental dimensions,  $p$  voters, and  $q$  issues where  $s < q$ . Let  $X$  be the  $p$  by  $s$  matrix of ideal points of the  $p$  voters on the  $s$  dimensions and let  $Y$  be the  $p$  by  $n$  matrix of voters’ ideal points on the  $n$  issues. The presence of constraint means that the voter’s positions on the fundamental dimensions  $X$  generate all the issue positions  $Y$ ; that is,  $XW=Y$  where the  $s$  by  $q$  matrix  $W$  maps the fundamental dimensions onto the issue dimensions.

This algorithm is known as the two-space theory, and it was the result of combined efforts by Cahoon, Hinich, and Ordeshook. The low dimensional space was called a *basic space* and the high dimensional space an *action space* (Poole 2005: 15). To conclude, the two-space theory, which assumes a basic space—a small number of underlying fundamental dimensions that generate all the specific issue dimensions—

may explain how spatial theory, which posits a multidimensional issue space with each issue having its own dimension can be reconciled with low-dimensional spatial maps.

According to Poole (1999: 2), “Converse’s belief system theory with its emphasis on ‘constraint’ fits like a key into a lock with the Ordeshook-Hinich spatial theory of choice.” Together, these two theories form the foundation upon which NOMINATE rests.

### 3.3.2 NOMINATE-The Procedure

In spatial models of parliamentary voting, policies are represented as points in a low-dimensional—or basic—space. Legislators have a most preferred policy—or ideal point—in this space and their utility for a given policy declines as the distance of the policy from their ideal point declines. Ideal points are estimated from roll call data. Thus, legislators’ ideal point is a measure of their legislative preference, a proxy for their ideology. There are several ways of estimating ideal points. I rely on NOMINATE—Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal’s multidimensional metric unfolding procedure.

Underlying NOMINATE is an assumption that voting in Congress is entirely driven by one basic dimension—liberalism-conservatism—so that legislators’ degree of liberalism determines all their issue positions. Translated into standard spatial theory, members are arrayed from left to right on a single dimension, have symmetric utility functions centered at their ideal points, and when faced with a choice between the two alternatives corresponding to Yea and Nay on a roll call, they vote for the alternative closest to them on the dimension (Poole 1999: 3).

Assuming roll call voting is in accord with this model, the scaling problem consists of taking a roll call matrix and “unscrambling” it—meaning finding a rank ordering of legislators and the correct “polarity” (Yea to the left of the cut point or Yea to the right

of the cut point) for each roll call. If the data is perfect, the solution is easy and the correct rank ordering is always found (Poole 1999: 3).

Error in the data complicates the procedure. When there is error in the data, the aim is to find a rank ordering that maximizes the correct classification of the observed Yeas and Nays. This is not a simple task because if there are  $n$  legislators, then there are  $n!/2$  possible rank orders to check to find the best one. For example, for 50 legislators this number is about  $1.52 \times 10^{64}$ —a formidable number even with modern supercomputers. Consequently, “Edith”—an early version of NOMINATE—embodies a “sensible” search procedure (“Heuristic”) to find a solution. A good starting rank order of the legislators is generated and the corresponding cutting points are found. These cutting points are used to get a new rank ordering of the legislators, and so on. At each step the correct classification increases until a rank order is found that produces cutting points that reproduce the rank order (Poole 1999: 4).

During the 1960s and 1970s, there were three loosely aligned voting blocs in Congress, Northern Democrats, Southern Democrats, and Republicans. This alignment strongly implied that one needed *two* basic dimensions to adequately account for roll call voting. Moreover, even if voting was one-dimensional, “Edith” treated all errors exactly alike. This treatment clearly did not make sense on substantive grounds. For example, Ted Kennedy’s defecting from his fellow liberals and voting with Jesse Helms seems to be a bigger error than does a moderate’s (like John Heinz) defecting from his fellow moderates and voting with Jesse Helms (Poole 1999: 5).

These shortcomings were addressed by transferring a standard decision model from economics to a legislative setting. In this model, legislators have utility functions and they vote for the alternative on a roll call for which they have the highest utility. This utility function consists of (1) a deterministic component that is a function of the distance between the legislator and a roll call outcome in the basic space; and (2) a



stochastic component that represents the idiosyncratic component of utility (Poole 1999: 5).

It is assumed that the stochastic component is a random draw from the logit distribution. Given these random draws, it is possible to calculate the probabilities of each legislator voting Yea or Nay. Therefore, given a matrix of roll calls, the problem is to estimate legislator ideal points and roll call outcomes that maximize the joint probability of the observed votes. Estimating ideal points and outcomes that maximizes the joint probability of the observed votes is what NOMINATE is designed to do (Poole 1999: 5).

### 3.3.3 The Pitfalls of NOMINATE—and How to Avoid Them

Over the last 15 years, much scholarship in legislative politics has used NOMINATE or other similar procedures to construct measures of legislators' ideological locations (Lewis and Poole 2003: 1). Recent work in political methodology has focused on the pitfalls of using such estimates as variables in subsequent analysis without explicitly accounting for their uncertainty and possible bias (Herron and Shotts 2003). Lewis and Poole (2003) present a method of forming unconditional standard error estimates and bias estimates for NOMINATE scores using the parametric bootstrap.

The bootstrap is usually used to provide estimates of the standard errors and confidence intervals that do not rely on asymptotic normality. When the non-parametric bootstrap is employed, the resulting confidence interval and standard errors are non-parametric in the sense that they do not rely on the correctness of the likelihood function for the data. This can be particularly useful in cases where 1) the robustness to distributional assumptions is of great concern; 2) the estimation is itself non-parametric; or 3) the samples are too small to rely on asymptotic approximations (Lewis and Poole 2003: 4).

More importantly, for the purposes of this study, the bootstrap also allows for estimating the uncertainty of auxiliary quantities of interest such as the location of the median legislator. Recovering the variance-covariance matrix of parameter estimates, by forming and inverting the full (estimated) information matrix for roll call voting models such as NOMINATE, is sufficiently difficult such that the bootstrap is an attractive and tractable alternative (Lewis and Poole 2003: 4).

### **3.4 Data and Sources**

To distinguish those who seriously pursued a presidential bid from the large pool of possible contenders, I use the Federal Election Commission's Presidential Address Lists 1976-2004, provided by the FEC's Information Division.

Pursuant to the FECA, all individuals who are running for the U.S. House, Senate or the Presidency must register with the FEC once they (or persons acting on their behalf) receive contributions or make expenditures in excess of \$5,000. Within 15 days of reaching that \$5,000 threshold, they must file a Statement of Candidacy authorizing a principal campaign committee to raise and spend funds on their behalf. Within 10 days of that filing, their principal campaign committee must submit a Statement of Organization (FEC 2009).

The FEC Presidential Address Lists contain the names and addresses of individuals and committees who were involved in presidential campaigns from 1976 to the present. Section I of the list includes all individuals whose campaigns have submitted statements and reports to the FEC indicating that they consider themselves to be "candidates" for the office of president. The term "candidate", moreover, is defined in 2 United States Code Sec. 431 to mean

an individual who seeks nomination for election, or election, to federal office, and for purposes of this paragraph, an individual shall be deemed to seek nomination for election, or election if a) such individual has received contributions aggregating in excess of \$5,000 or has made expenditures aggregating in excess of \$5,000; or b) such individual

has given his or her consent to another person to receive contributions or make expenditures on behalf of such individual and if such person has received such contributions aggregating in excess of \$5,000 or has made such expenditures aggregating in excess of \$5,000 (FEC 2009).

Section II includes all individuals who have filed statements of candidacy and/or committee statements of organization, regardless of the amounts of activity in the campaign. In this study, I concentrate on the group of candidates who have received or spent more than \$5,000 on their campaigns.

To distinguish serious contenders from potential favorite sons or daughters, I analyze the statistics on every primary from 1976 to 2004 provided by Congressional Quarterly and published in *Guide to U.S Elections 1789-2004* (CQ Press 2006). Additional sources on senators who have run for president include *The Congressional Biographical Directory 1789-2005* (Congress, Joint Committee on Printing 2005) and various summaries of the Democratic and Republican national conventions.

The roll call data is obtained from political scientists Poole and Rosenthal's website *Voteview*, established August 1995 at the Graduate School of Industrial Administration, Carnegie-Mellon University, now affiliated with the Department of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego.

Roll call matrices and codebooks for Congresses 109-110 are compiled by Jeff Lewis and Keith Poole. Roll call matrices and codebooks for Congresses 102-108 are compiled by Keith Poole and Nolan McCarty. Roll call matrices and codebooks for Congresses 1-101 were originally compiled by the Interuniversity Consortium for

Political and Social Research (ICPSR) which is part of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan<sup>10</sup>, then later revised by Poole et al.

### *W-NOMINATE scores*

This study uses W-NOMINATE scores to measure voting positions. W-NOMINATE is a static (i.e., meant to be applied to only one Congress) version of D-NOMINATE, the original NOMINATE procedure. It has a number of improvements designed to increase the efficiency of the algorithm so that it can be run on personal computers. More specifically, it differs from D-NOMINATE in two ways: 1) It uses a slightly different deterministic utility function; and, 2) because it is a static algorithm, it constrains the legislators and roll call midpoints to lie within an s-dimensional hypersphere of radius one (in contrast to the rather flexible constraint structure necessitated by the dynamic model). The W-NOMINATE scores are highly correlated with the D-NOMINATE coordinates for most Congresses (Pearson r's typically greater than .95 for both the 1st and 2nd dimensions). However, unlike the D-NOMINATE scores, W-NOMINATE scores are not directly comparable between Congresses (Voteview 2009).

Yet, the W-NOMINATE scores are not necessarily unfit as measures of voting positions for the purposes of this study. As explained in the introduction, to locate a politician's voting position, NOMINATE uses information on who votes with whom and how often (Poole and Rosenthal 1997: 5). As mentioned in the introduction, if legislator A votes with legislators B and C much more frequently than legislators B and C vote together, then NOMINATE positions legislator A as moderate, in between legislator B and C. Given that there are relatively marginal differences between

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<sup>10</sup> Established in 1962, ICPSR is the world's largest archive of digital social science data. ICPSR acquire, preserve, and distribute original research data and provide training in its analysis (ICPSR 2009).

Congresses, the rank ordering is relatively stable. In other words, the dimension along which the legislators are ordered is relatively constant. Thus, while W-NOMINATE scores, strictly speaking, should not be compared between Congresses, the practical consequences of doing so are relatively small.

The robustness of the scores is further demonstrated by the fact that changing “polarities” (i.e. the “poles” determining how the other Senators are ordered) does not result in substantially different W-NOMINATE scores. In fact, use of four different conservative senators as “polarities” resulted in virtually no change at all for the pertinent Congress. This result strengthens the argument that while comparing W-NOMINATE scores between Congresses may be problematic, for the purposes of this study, the practical consequences are relatively small.

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

To test the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 2, I recorded each contender's number and percentage of missed votes and estimated each contender's W-NOMINATE score, along with the standard error, for three Congresses prior to their bid for the Presidency, and for the Congress of the election year. In addition, I calculated the party median for missed votes and W-NOMINATE scores for the pertinent Congresses. In this chapter, I present the results. The scope of the study does not allow for a detailed account of all the senators in the dataset. Instead, I use the eight elections as organizing principles and refer to individual senators where doing so serves to illustrate the main tendencies.

### 4.1 Attendance

As the data in table 4.1 show, most contenders' percentage of missed roll call votes increases during the inter-election period, while the medians for the Democratic and Republican Parties remain relatively stable. However, the data in table 4.1 also show that the contenders' tendency to miss progressively more votes as the election nears is not equally pronounced for everyone, nor is it equally pronounced throughout the period under observation.

Data for the 1976 election<sup>11</sup> reveal a consistent pattern. All contenders have a higher percentage of missed votes (hereafter abbreviated PMV) in the Congress of the election year than they have in the previous Congress. However, the contenders' tendency to miss progressively more votes is far from equally pronounced for everyone. Senators Bayh, Bentsen and Church's PMV increases during the inter-election period. Senators Byrd and Jackson's percentage, on the other hand, hardly increases at all. Their PMV is consistently low. The largest increase is registered for Senator Bayh who misses 17.4 % of the votes in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress and 32 % in the

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. the data for the contenders who ran for President in 1976.

**Table 4.1 Percentage of Missed Votes (PMV) per Congress**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>EY*</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>Time period</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>	
Birch E. Bayh, Indiana	D	<b>1976</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1975</b>	20,1	17,9	17,4	32	
Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr., Texas	D			<b>-Jan. 3, 1977</b>		9,3	17,7	20,4	
Robert C. Byrd, West Virginia	D					1,2	0,9	0,1	0,8
Frank Church, Idaho	D					13,5	15,3	18,7	28
Henry M. Jackson, Washington	D					0,6	1,3	0	0,2
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>					<i>11,9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>9,4</i>
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>					<i>6,6</i>	<i>8,5</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>10,2</i>
				<b>1980</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1979</b> <b>-Jan. 3, 1981</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>95</b>
Howard H. Baker, Jr., Tennessee	R				20	19,3	11,9	28,4	
Robert J. Dole, Kansas	R				4,5	11,1	3,6	4,7	
Edward M. Kennedy, Massachusetts	D				11,9	16,3	10,8	53,9	
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				<i>9</i>	<i>9,4</i>	<i>6,7</i>	<i>9,2</i>	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				<i>10</i>	<i>10,2</i>	<i>9,1</i>	<i>7,8</i>	
		<b>1984</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1983</b> <b>-Jan. 3, 1985</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>98</b>	
Alan M. Cranston, California	D				7,1	9,8	9,6	33	
John H. Glenn, Jr., Ohio	D				1,4	5,8	11	27,9	
Gary W. Hart, Colorado	D				6	8,1	6,3	46,9	
Ernest F. Hollings, South Carolina	D				6	9,5	6,4	36,3	
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				<i>6,7</i>	<i>9,2</i>	<i>4,6</i>	<i>5,2</i>	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				<i>9,1</i>	<i>7,8</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5,3</i>	
		<b>1988</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1987</b> <b>-Jan. 3, 1989</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	
Joseph R. Biden, Delaware	D				5,7	3,9	6,6	57,4	
Robert J. Dole, Kansas	R				1,4	3,5	0,9	9,1	
Albert Gore, Jr., Tennessee	D						0,4	36,9	
Paul M. Simon, Illinois	D						3,9	42,3	
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				<i>4,6</i>	<i>5,2</i>	<i>2,8</i>	<i>3,1</i>	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				<i>3</i>	<i>5,3</i>	<i>2,6</i>	<i>4,7</i>	
		<b>1992</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1991</b> <b>-Jan. 3, 1993</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>102</b>	
Tom Harkin, Iowa	D				2,4	4	1,1	25,3	
J. Robert (Bob) Kerrey, Nebraska	D						0,3	19,6	
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				<i>2,8</i>	<i>3,1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1,7</i>	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				<i>2,6</i>	<i>4,7</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2,4</i>	
		<b>1996</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1995</b> <b>-Jan. 3, 1997</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>104</b>	
Robert J. Dole, Kansas	R				0,3	0,2	1,4	1,7	
William P. Gramm, Texas	R				3,4	4,5	8,3	9,6	
Richard G. Lugar, Indiana	R				2,2	2,5	0,7	3,3	
Arlen Specter, Pennsylvania	R				0,2	2,7	9,3	1,5	

<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				1	1,7	1,4	1
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				2	2,4	2	1,4
		<b>2000</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1999 -Jan. 3, 2001</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>106</b>
Orrin G. Hatch, Utah	R				1,4	1,1	1	2,7
Joe Lieberman, Connecticut	D				1,4	1	0,7	10,1
John McCain, Arizona	R				4,8	3,4	4,4	29,8
Robert C. Smith, New Hampshire	R				1,5	1,2	0,5	0
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				1,4	1	1	1
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				2	1,4	0,8	1
		<b>2004</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 2003 -Jan. 3, 2005</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>108</b>
John Edwards, North Carolina	D					0,4	0,5	45,2
Bob Graham, Florida	D				0,2	0,9	0,2	25,2
John Kerry, Massachusetts	D				1	2,8	3,2	72,3
Joe Lieberman, Connecticut	D				0,7	10,1	1,9	39,1
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				1	1	0,8	1,7
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,8	1	2	1,4

\* Election Year

\*\* Number of Congress

94<sup>th</sup>, e.g. an increase of 14.6 percentage points. At the other end is Senator Jackson who does not miss a single vote in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress and only 0.2 % in the 94<sup>th</sup>.

Data for the 1980, 1984, and 1988 elections do not only reveal consistent patterns but also a more pronounced tendency to miss progressively more votes. Almost all contenders have a considerably higher PMV in the Congress of the election year than they have in the previous Congresses. The only exception is Senator Dole whose PMV is consistently low, throughout both the inter-election period starting in 1976 and the one starting in 1984. He too, however, misses more votes when he runs for president than when he does not, but very few compared to the other contenders. In stark contrast to Senator Dole is Senator Biden who misses 6.6 % of the votes in the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress and 57.4 % in the 100<sup>th</sup>, e.g. an increase of 50.8 percentage points, an increase not surpassed until Senator Kerry ran for president in 2004. Senator Biden is, however, far from unique in this context. Five of the ten individual contenders for the 1980, 1984, and 1988 elections have an increase larger than 30 percentage points



during the inter-election period, and none (with the exception of Senator Dole) has an increase smaller than 15.

Data for the 1992 election reveal a consistent pattern and a pronounced tendency to miss progressively more votes for both contenders, with a 24.2 percentage point increase in PMV for Senator Harkin and a 19.3 percentage point increase in PMV for Senator Kerry.

Data for the 1996 election reveal a consistent pattern with one exception. Senator Specter actually misses fewer votes in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress than in the 103<sup>rd</sup>. This can easily be explained, however, by the fact that he withdrew very early in the race. On November 23, 1995, even before the start of the primaries, Specter suspended his campaign to endorse Senator Dole (Edsall 1995). In terms of strength, the tendency to miss progressively more votes is much less pronounced than in the 1980s and in the early 1990s. Whereas the 1980s and early 1990s see increases in contenders' PMV ranging from 16.5 to 50.8 percentage points (Senator Baker, 1980, and Senator Biden, 1988, respectively) the late 1990s do not see increases larger than 2.6 percentage points (Senator Lugar).

Data for the 2000 election also reveal a consistent pattern with one exception. Senator Smith has a consistently low PMV, but miss even fewer votes in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress and then none in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. Like Senator Specter, Senator Smith withdrew very early from the race, July 1999 (Schmitt 1999), and this early withdrawal can explain why he did not miss any votes in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. Though in average more pronounced than in the late 1990s, the tendency to miss progressively more votes is not equally so across contenders. Senators Hatch, Lieberman, and McCain's PMV increase in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress by 1.7, 9.4, and 25.4 percentage points, respectively.

Data for the 2004 election, on the other hand, reveal a perfectly consistent pattern with pronounced increases in PMV across contenders. All contenders have a considerably

higher PMV in the Congress of the election year than they have in the previous Congress. Moreover, the increases range from 25 to 69.1 percentage points (Graham and Kerry, respectively). The largest increase in 2004, registered for Senator Kerry, is also the largest increase registered for the entire pool of contenders whose behavior have been observed herein.

Up to this point, the account has focused on contenders' behavior, or more precisely, alterations in contenders' behavior in inter-election periods. As the data in table 4.1 show, most contenders' PMV increases during inter-election periods, while the Senate means remain relatively stable. Based on this observation, it can be argued that the decision to run for president leads to an increase in the contender's PMV. However, there is a possibility that some senators' PMV increases and decreases arbitrarily during their service. To infer that their decision to run for president leads to an increase in their PMV could consequently be wrong. In recognition of this possibility, the period of observation was expanded to eight years instead of just four, or to four Congresses instead of just two. This expanded observation revealed four tendencies. First, for six contenders, the PMV decreases from the first Congress to the third, then increases from the third to the fourth. Second, for five contenders, the PMV increases during all four Congresses. Third, for eleven contenders, the PMV increases from the first Congress to the second, then decreases from the second to the third, then increases again from the third to the fourth, forming a zigzag-like pattern. Fourth, for three contenders, the PMV decreases from the first Congress to the second, then increases from the second to the fourth.<sup>12</sup>

However, the increases and decreases are seldom large, at least not compared to most increases in the inter-election periods leading up to the elections in which the contenders observed here ran. On the contrary, the contenders tend to be quite stable

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<sup>12</sup> In addition, for one contender, the PMV decreased during all four Congresses. For another, the PMV increased progressively before it decreased considerably from the third Congress to the fourth. Three contenders served in only two Congresses prior to the Congress of the election year.

when it comes to being present and voting, tracking the rest of the Senate members, up until, generally speaking, the beginning of the inter-election period leading up to the election in which they ran.

The key point from the section above is that contenders tend to be quite stable concerning being present and voting, tracking other Senate members, up until, generally, the beginning of the inter-election period leading up to the election in which they ran when most contenders' PMV increase considerably. This, in turn, points to the likelihood that the increases we see in contenders' PMV are not arbitrary.

#### 4.1.1 Summary of Findings for Attendance

As data in table 4.1 indicate, the decision to run for president seems to take a toll on contenders' attendance. Throughout the pertinent inter-election periods, most contenders' attendance decreases progressively. As the Senate means indicate, most members seem to miss a few more votes in an election year, but there is a major difference in the size of the attendance decline depending upon the office goals of the members.

However, the data reveals variations among the progressively ambitious. Despite the overall tendency apparent in the data, a closer look reveals different patterns among contenders. Consider the cases of Senators Jackson and Smith. They were by any definition serious contenders, but did not alter their attendance. Senators Dole and Lugar too hardly altered their attendance. Consider also the cases of Senators Dole and Kerry, the only nominees in the dataset. Dole's decision to run for president does not seem to affect at all his tendency to be present and voting. Kerry's decision to run, on the contrary, seems to affect considerably his tendency to be present and voting. However, the number of contenders whose PMV increases considerably is sufficiently large to argue in favor of hypothesis two, namely that contenders' attendance will decline progressively during the inter-election period. If one can say nothing else, one

can say that decisions to run for president reasonably can be expected to be followed by a considerable decline in contenders' attendance.

There is also considerable variation across decades. Whereas the (late) 1970s and 1980s see considerable drops in attendance by contenders in the inter-election period, particularly in the Congress of the election year, the 1990s hardly see drops in attendance at all. However, explanations as to why these variations occur are beyond the scope of the study.

In Chapter 2 it was hypothesized that contenders' attendance will decline during the inter-election period leading up to the election in which they plan to run. The findings presented above provide support for this hypothesis. Although the patterns for individual contenders vary, data regarding the attendance of all but three contenders are consistent with this hypothesis. This, in turn, provides support for ambition theory. Particularly the material presented in the analysis of individual senators indicates that their presidential ambition affected their legislative behavior.

These findings are consistent with conventional wisdom. Running for president is a rigorous endeavor and it surely progressively cuts into the time a senator spends in Washington. A study is hardly needed to convince readers of that. However, as pointed out by Hibbing (1986: 663),

by presenting specific evidence on the connection between ambition and political behavior we can begin to move beyond the stage where we are only able to say "ambition matters". Determining the extent to which ambition influences political behavior will permit us to make more informed statements about the positive and negative aspects of ambition--and there are both positive and negative implications to political ambition. While it is easy to criticize politicians for doing things solely to satisfy their personal ambitions, we can also argue that ambition is a requisite for a true representative democracy.

Moreover, as will become clear later in this chapter, knowing to what extent running for president reduces the time that senators spend in Washington is instrumental to analyzing the extent to which running for president affects the contenders' roll call voting as measured by W-NOMINATE scores.

## 4.2 Roll Call Voting

Table 4.2 W-NOMINATE Scores per Congress

Name	Party	EY*	#**	Time period	91	SE	92	SE	93	SE	94	SE
Birch E. Bayh, Indiana	D	1976	94	Jan. 3, 1975 -Jan. 3, 1977	-0,621	0,029	-0,784	0,032	-0,668	0,061	-0,774	0,05
Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr., Texas	D				0,001	0,047	-0,118	0,038	-0,032	0,054		
Robert C. Byrd, West Virginia	D				0,063	0,053	-0,007	0,041	-0,161	0,025	-0,165	0,053
Frank Church, Idaho	D				-0,508	0,075	-0,576	0,076	-0,641	0,056	-0,502	0,071
Henry M. Jackson, Washington	D				-0,296	0,045	-0,153	0,037	-0,398	0,037	-0,523	0,064
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,257		-0,394		-0,535		-0,447	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,503		0,28		0,339		0,3	
		1980	96	Jan. 3, 1979 -Jan. 3, 1981	93		94		95		96	
Howard H. Baker, Jr., Tennessee	R				0,375	0,031	0,274	0,072	0,184	0,042	0,313	0,08
Robert J. Dole, Kansas	R				0,356	0,029	0,334	0,045	0,412	0,071	0,313	0,043
Edward M. Kennedy, Massachusetts	D				-0,928	0,052	-0,904	0,069	-1	0,026	-1	0,091
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,535		-0,447		-0,515		0,483	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,339		0,3		0,349		0,306	
		1984	98	Jan. 3, 1983 -Jan. 3, 1985	95		96		97		98	
Alan M. Cranston, California	D				-0,584	0,094	-0,809	0,076	-0,881	0,089	-0,944	0,073
John H. Glenn, Jr., Ohio	D				-0,245	0,045	-0,476	0,067	-0,408	0,091	-0,595	0,075
Gary W. Hart, Colorado	D				-0,548	0,036	-0,485	0,065	-0,761	0,065	-0,886	0,071
Ernest F. Hollings, South Carolina	D				-0,222	0,076	-0,112	0,065	-0,23	0,095	-0,574	0,04
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,515		0,483		-0,435		-0,627	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,349		0,306		0,557		0,395	
		1988	100	Jan. 3, 1987 -Jan. 3, 1989	97		98		99		100	

Joseph R. Biden, Delaware	D				-0,574	0,115	-0,713	0,098	-0,676	0,039	-0,724	0,107
Robert J. Dole, Kansas	R				0,618	0,066	0,44	0,147	0,426	0,134	0,294	0,133
Albert Gore, Jr., Tennessee	D								-0,632	0,048	-0,785	0,064
Paul M. Simon, Illinois	D								-0,813	0,071	-0,969	0,054
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,435		-0,627		-0,591		-0,634	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,557		0,395		0,318		0,294	
		<b>1992</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1991 -Jan. 3, 1993</b>	<b>99</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>101</b>		<b>102</b>	
Tom Harkin, Iowa	D				-0,959	0,042	-0,836	0,033	-0,673	0,112	-0,976	0,071
J. Robert (Bob) Kerrey, Nebraska	D								-0,543	0,083	-0,581	0,067
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,591		-0,634		-0,561		-0,553	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,318		0,294		0,386		0,381	
		<b>1996</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1995 -Jan. 3, 1997</b>	<b>101</b>		<b>102</b>		<b>103</b>		<b>104</b>	
Robert J. Dole, Kansas	R				0,461	0,057	0,464	0,148	0,452	0,143	0,675	0,049
William P. Gramm, Texas	R				0,611	0,036	0,628	0,152	0,58	0,116	0,929	0,053
Richard G. Lugar, Indiana	R				0,386	0,073	0,349	0,15	0,239	0,148	0,479	0,146
Arlen Specter, Pennsylvania	R				0	0,045	-0,087	0,118	-0,025	0,114	-0,041	0,192
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,561		-0,553		-0,655		-0,779	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,386		0,381		0,33		0,578	
		<b>2000</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>Jan. 3, 1999 -Jan. 3, 2001</b>	<b>103</b>		<b>104</b>		<b>105</b>		<b>106</b>	
Orrin G. Hatch, Utah	R				0,414	0,133	0,609	0,117	0,425	0,109	0,535	0,109
Joe Lieberman, Connecticut	D				-0,487	0,058	-0,558	0,048	-0,52	0,098	-0,723	0,102
John McCain, Arizona	R				0,478	0,122	0,752	0,063	0,448	0,127	0,543	0,115
Robert C. Smith, New Hampshire	R				0,886	0,082	0,919	0,027	0,975	0,089	1	0,058
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				-0,655		-0,779		-0,724		-0,593	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				0,33		0,578		0,473		0,659	

		2004	108	Jan. 3, 2003 -Jan. 3, 2005	105		106		107		108	
John Edwards, North Carolina	D						-0,804	0,109	-0,557	0,088	-0,891	0,083
Bob Graham, Florida	D				-0,53	0,093	-0,774	0,088	-0,59	0,062	-0,887	0,088
John Kerry, Massachusetts	D				-0,815	0,142	-0,836	0,11	-0,742	0,056	-0,954	0,083
Joe Lieberman, Connecticut	D				-0,52	0,098	-0,723	0,102	-0,622	0,08	-0,684	0,026
<i>Democratic Party</i>	<i>D</i>				<i>-0,724</i>		<i>-0,593</i>		<i>-0,641</i>		<i>-0,747</i>	
<i>Republican Party</i>	<i>R</i>				<i>0,473</i>		<i>0,659</i>		<i>0,616</i>		<i>0,763</i>	

\* Election Year

\*\* Number of Congress



As the data in table 4.2 show, most contenders' W-NOMINATE scores change in the predicted direction during the inter-election period. However, the party medians for W-NOMINATE scores are far from as stable as the party medians for attendance. Moreover, the data in table 4.2 also show that the contenders' tendency to move left or right on Senate votes as the election nears is not equally pronounced for everyone, nor is it equally pronounced throughout the period observed.

Data for the 1976 election reveal an inconsistent pattern. Two of the five Democratic contenders seemingly move to the left on Senate votes during the inter-election period leading up to the election in which they ran, two seemingly move to the middle, and one seemingly does not move at all. However, for the two contenders who seemingly move to the left, the findings are pronounced. In the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Senator Bayh and Jackson's W-NOMINATE scores (hereafter simply scores) were -0.668 and -0.398, respectively. In the 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, they were -0.774 and -0.523, indicating a move to the left. Senator Bentsen and Church's scores, on the other hand, change from -0.118 and -0.641 in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress to -0.032 and -0.502 in the 94<sup>th</sup>, indicating that contrary to expectations, they move to the middle on Senate votes. Senator Byrd's scores hardly change during the inter-election period, indicating he does not move on Senate votes, at least not noticeably.

Data for the 1980 election also reveal an inconsistent pattern, with the two Republican contenders and the one Democratic contender each exhibiting unique voting patterns. Republican Senator Baker is the only one whose scores are consistent with expectations. Republican Senator Dole moves by 0.101 points but in the opposite direction of what is expected. Democratic Senator Kennedy seemingly does not move at all on Senate votes during the inter-election period, receiving instead a perfect score of -1 in both the 95<sup>th</sup> and the 96<sup>th</sup> Congresses, indicating a consistent, ultra-liberal voting pattern. This is not perfectly consistent with expectations, but Kennedy's lack of change is not at odds with expectations either insofar that he can not move farther to the left than he already has done.

Data for the 1984 election, on the contrary, do not only reveal a consistent pattern but also reveal a pronounced tendency to move on Senate votes. For all contenders, noticeable alterations in voting patterns are registered. In fact, three of the four Democratic contenders who ran in the 1984 election move more than -0.100 points. The largest move is registered for Senator Hollings who moves -0.344 points, indicating a considerable leftward move.

Data for the 1988 election reveals a consistent pattern with one exception. Almost all contenders' moves on Senate votes are in the expected direction. Again, as was the case for the 1980 election, Senator Dole represents the exception. His scores for the 1984-1988 inter-election period indicate that he moves to the middle of the liberal-conservative spectrum in the inter-election period, a finding at odds with expectations. In the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, his score was 0.426; during the inter-election period it changes to 0.294, indicating a quite considerable move to the middle. The moves in the expected direction are also, with one exception, quite considerable. Senators Gore and Simon move -0.153 points and -0.156 points, respectively, indicating a considerable move leftwards, whereas Senator Biden moves -0.048 points, indicating a noticeable, but less considerable move leftwards.

Data for the 1992 election reveal a consistent pattern. There is, however, considerable difference in terms of the strength of the findings. Whereas Senator Harkin moves leftward by -0.303 points, Senator Kerrey hardly moves at all, moving only by -0.038.

Data for the 1996 election reveal a consistent pattern with one exception. Republican Senator Specter, who according to the prediction should move to the right, instead moves to the left. Indeed, he not only moves to the left on the Republican side of the spectrum, but also, his scores show, he voted with liberals on several issues in the inter-election period. The alterations registered for Specter, however, are small, indicating a relatively stable voting pattern. Generally, in terms of strength, the tendency of contenders from the Senate to move to the extremes of the liberal-

conservative spectrum is quite pronounced. For all but Senator Specter, noticeable alterations in voting patterns in the expected direction are registered, the largest alteration being represented by Senator Gramm's scores which were 0.58 in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress and 0.929 in the 104<sup>th</sup>, indicating a considerable move rightwards.

Data for the 2000 election reveal a perfectly consistent pattern. For all contenders, alterations in voting patterns are registered, and they are all in the expected direction. However, the tendency to move on Senate votes as Election Day approaches is not equally pronounced across contenders. Moreover, the difference in degree of change is considerable between the contender who changes the least and the contender who changes the most. Senator Lieberman's score changes from -0.520 in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress to -0.723 in the 106<sup>th</sup>, whereas Senator Smith's score changes only slightly, from 0.975 in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress to a perfect score of one in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, indicating he hardly moves at all on Senate votes, but instead votes consistently ultra-conservative throughout the period. As was the case with Senator Kennedy in 1980, this is not perfectly consistent with expectations, but Smith's lack of change is not at odds with expectations either insofar that he can not move farther to the right than he already has done.

Data for the 2004 election reveal a similar pattern, consistent and with pronounced findings for all but one contender. Senator Lieberman's scores for the inter-election period beginning in 2000 indicate that he hardly moved at all on Senate votes. This is one of the most interesting findings for this period given that Senator Lieberman moved quite far leftwards during the inter-election period beginning in 1996. Indeed, as outlined above, Senator Lieberman's move leftwards was the largest move registered among the contenders in the 2000 election. Generally, the findings for the 2004 election are the most pronounced for the entire period observed with moves exceeding -0.334 points (Senator Edwards). Indeed, with the exception of Senator Lieberman, none of the contenders move less than -0.212 points.

As in the previous analysis on attendance, the time of observation was expanded to eight years to see if this expanded observation period changed the picture (Is movement to the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum in fact associated with the decision to run for president, or do alterations in voting patterns seemingly occur arbitrarily?) Also as in the previous analysis, this expanded observation revealed a more nuanced picture, more specifically four tendencies which are briefly outlined below.

The most pronounced tendency is the tendency to become more liberal from the first Congress (of the four Congresses for which data are collected) to the second, then less liberal from the second to the third, and then more liberal from the third to the fourth. The second most pronounced tendency is the tendency to become more conservative from the first Congress to the second, then less conservative from the second to the third, and then more conservative from the third to the fourth.<sup>13</sup> The peaks dovetail with presidential elections. Senators observed become more extreme (and lose more votes) in Congresses of election years long before they are contenders themselves. Therefore, one could ask whether senators generally become more extreme in election years or if this tendency is particular to the senators observed, indicating that they start as early as eight years prior to an election to tailor their behavior. Comparisons of contenders with their colleagues, or more precisely, with the party medians for the Congresses, for which data are collected, indicate that this is the case to some extent. The tendency of the parties as a whole to become more extreme in an election year is, however, generally less pronounced than the tendency of the senators observed, perhaps suggesting that senators begin to tailor their roll call voting to appeal to the desired electorates as early as eight years prior to an election.

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<sup>13</sup> This must be seen in connection with the fact that mostly Democratic senators ran for President between 1976 and 2004. Of the 27 senators observed, 19 were Democrats. This predominance of Democrats in turn reflects the fact that from 1977 to 2005 there were three Republican presidents of whom all ran for a second term, thus naturally reducing the number of Republican contenders.

The key point from the section above is that expanding the time of observation reveals a more complex pattern regarding the contenders' tendency to move on Senate votes prior to and during running for president, but the position shifting does not seem to be arbitrary given that most senators observed seem to behave similarly, but differently from others in their respective parties. Although there are contenders whose voting patterns do not fit any of the descriptions above, it seems safe to say that alterations in voting patterns do not occur arbitrarily, given the historical data. Moreover, patterns revealed by expanding the observation to eight years point to the likelihood of senators' starting as early as eight years prior to an election to tailor their behavior, given that they start to become more extreme as early as during the inter-election periods prior to the inter-election periods leading up to the elections in which they run.

#### 4.2.1 Summary of Findings for Roll Call Voting

As the data in table 4.2 indicate, the decision to run for president seems to affect contenders' roll call voting. Almost all contenders seem to move to the left or right (depending on their political affiliation) on Senate votes during the pertinent inter-election periods. The party medians indicate, however, that the effect is less dramatic than expected, as they too move, although not to the extent that most contenders do.

However, the data reveals variations among the progressively ambitious that need mention. Despite the overall tendency apparent in the data set, a closer look at the comparisons presented above of contenders with their colleagues reveals different patterns among contenders. Some contenders move considerably during the inter-election period, while other contenders hardly move at all, while others' again move, but in the wrong direction. As in the analysis on attendance, one of the most interesting findings pertains to Senators Dole and Kerry, the only ones to be nominated by their parties in the period observed. Whereas Senator Dole, contrary to expectations, moves toward the middle of the liberal-conservative spectrum, Senator Kerry moves very far leftwards. However, the number of contenders whose voting

records show movement to either left or right clearly outnumber those whose voting records hardly show movement at all.

There is also considerable variation across decades. Particularly striking is the difference in the extent to which contenders seem to move on Senate votes between the 1976 election and the 2004 election. Whereas the 1976 election sees noticeable, but relatively small shifts in voting, the 2004 election sees considerable shifts in voting across all contenders except Senator Joe Lieberman. This hints at the polarization that has taken place in American politics both in government and in the electorate over the past 20 years. However, explanations as to why there are considerable shifts in voting among the progressively ambitious in the 2004 election as opposed to the 1976 election are beyond the scope of the study.

In Chapter 2 it was hypothesized that contenders' voting records will show a movement to the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum during the inter-election period. The findings presented above provide support for this hypothesis. Although the patterns for individual contenders vary, data regarding roll call voting are generally consistent with this hypothesis. This, in turn, provides support for ambition theory. Particularly the material presented in the analysis of individual senators indicates that their presidential ambition affected their legislative behavior.

### **4.3 Discussion**

As tables 1 and 2 make clear, contenders alter their behavior in terms of attendance and roll call voting during of the inter-election period leading up to the election in which they ran. Almost all the contenders miss more votes in the Congress of the Election Year and move to the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum during this period. This is consistent with the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 2. However, evaluating a theory consists of more than just deriving and testing hypotheses and commenting on the results. To evaluate a theory one also has to consider alternative explanations to the findings. This is what the following discussion does. It starts out

with a discussion of possible methodological explanations, then proceeds to substantial explanations. More specifically, it assesses the validity of the measures of ambition and legislative behavior, the extent to which the estimated W-NOMINATE scores are reliable and free of bias, and whether the data allow for generalizations beyond the period of time and institutional setting studied.

Following the lead of others (Hibbing 1986; Herrick and Moore 1993), this study uses the actual decision to seek a higher office as a surrogate measure for ambition. (More specifically, it uses the official declaration of candidacy for the Presidency as a measure for progressive ambition.) Lacking psychological profiles of elected officials, using the actual decision to seek a higher office is one approach to measuring ambition. However, by using this approach, there is a possibility that the effect of ambition is either overestimated or underestimated. It may be overestimated because senators may decide to run for president for reasons other than ambition, underestimated because senators may harbor presidential ambition but never declare their candidacies.

The effect of ambition may be overestimated because there may be ulterior motives behind a senator's decision to run for president. He or she may decide to run to keep someone else from running, to support another candidate or to gain attention for a cause. However, running for president is such a rigorous endeavor that it is unlikely many decide to run for president for strategic reasons only. It is particularly unlikely for senators given the demands of their current office.

The effect of ambition may be underestimated because presidential ambition may be possessed by many who never actually run for president. There are many reasons why potential contenders would eventually refrain from deciding to run, but the demands of the contemporary nomination process in terms of money is one possible explanation. A second explanation may be lack of sufficient support within the party in the early stages. Other explanations may be related to constituency and individual factors.

Whereas it is unlikely many decide to run for president for strategic reasons only, it is likely some harbor presidential ambition, but never make it farther than the initial stages of the presidential election process.

In theory, by using the actual decision to run for president as a measure for presidential ambition, there is a possibility of treating senators who decide to run for president for strategic reasons, as having presidential ambition, thus potentially wrongfully inferring an effect of ambition. There is also a possibility of treating senators who do not run for president as not having such ambition while in fact they do, thus wrongfully *not* inferring an effect of ambition. However, while acknowledging the fact that using this measure may either overestimate or underestimate the effect of ambition, it should be safe to say that the decision to run for president provides a measure of presidential ambition that adequately serves the purposes of this study.

To describe contenders' voting positions, this study relies on the concept of political ideology. To measure contenders' voting positions, the study employs W-NOMINATE scores which are estimated from the contenders' decisions on roll calls. The intuition underlying statistical models of legislative voting such as that underlying NOMINATE is that each roll call present each legislator with a choice between a "yea" and a "nay" position. Legislators are presumed to vote for the position most similar to their own ideal policy position (Clinton et al 2004: 807). Underlying NOMINATE is also an assumption that voting is fundamentally driven by one basic dimension, the liberal conservative dimension (Poole 1999:3).

Studies of congressional roll call voting have frequently employed W-NOMINATE scores and alternative versions of NOMINATE scores as dependent variables ( e.g. Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Bartels 2002; Griffin and Newman 2004). Moreover, as a practical matter, W-NOMINATE scores are highly correlated with alternative, summary measures of legislator roll call behavior such as interest group ratings and Heckman-Snyder scores (Burden, Caldeira, and Groseclose 2000).



However, as pointed out by Clinton et al (2004: 806),

the legislator's decision on any analyzed vote may well have been influenced by party pressure, presidential pressure, and/or lobbying by interest groups, and is not a perfect reflection of the legislator's ideology.

Without considerable more data, the effects of these plausible sources can not be ascertained. Therefore, voting scores estimated from roll calls should not be literally treated as a measure of a senator's personal ideology, but rather as a mix of these possible influences on roll call voting (Clinton et al 2004: 807).

Even if W-NOMINATE scores are not perfect reflections of legislator's ideology, they may still serve as useful summaries of the ideological content of legislators' voting records (Clinton et al 2004: 807). In any event, they provide an easily understood and easily communicated basis for assessing whether senators move on Senate votes as they approach a bid for the Presidency.

As tables 1 and 2 show, decisions to run for president is strongly associated with alterations in behavior in terms of attendance and roll call voting. For most senators, considerable increases in percentage of missed votes are registered. Most senators also move toward the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum. More specifically, most senators' W-NOMINATE scores change considerably, with some senators' score moving as much as -0.433 (Senator Hollings, 1984).

As indicated in Chapter 2, section 2.2, and in Chapter 3, section 3.3.3 scoring legislators' voting records (and then using them in subsequent analysis) is not without its problems. Estimating voting scores for incumbent legislators running for president is particularly difficult. Campaigning takes these legislators away from Washington, generating, as demonstrated in table 4.1, considerably high rates of abstention in their voting records in the run up to an election. This problem is enlarged by the fact that most roll calls drawing candidates back to Washington to cast votes are not a random

subset of roll calls, but are on issues where the legislators' votes might have utmost importance for procedural reasons. Party loyalty rather than a genuine ideological position might explain some of these votes (Clinton et al 2004: 809). This situation could lead to wrongful interpretations of the legislators' W-NOMINATE scores. However, by accounting for uncertainty and estimating W-NOMINATE scores per Congress rather than for shorter periods of time (thus from more votes), this problem is largely dealt with.

To evaluate ambition theory, this study looks at all senators who ran for president from 1976 to 2004, the total of which is 27. Strictly speaking, the results can not be used to generalize about the interplay between progressive ambition and legislative behavior beyond this period in time or in other institutional settings. Given that the senators do not constitute a random sample, it is not possible to generalize with a set amount of uncertainty that the results for the senators examined hold true for all progressively ambitious senators, let alone all progressively ambitious politicians.

However, the contender group consists of both Democratic and Republicans, junior and senior senators, from all four major regions in the United States. There is not reason to believe that they differ systematically from their colleagues in terms of personal and constituency attributes. Moreover, twenty-eight years is a long time span over which many sorts of idiosyncrasies should iron out. Generalizations accordingly gain strength.

Two dependent variables were set out as focal points for the inquiry: Attendance and roll call voting. Clearly, these variables represent only a very small slice of legislative behavior. Legislative activities also include bill introduction, co-sponsorship, legislative generalization, and legislative specialization to name a few. In addition to these quantifiable types of activities, there are floor activities, such as speeches and special orders, or major floor amendments, often receiving more press, weighing more heavily with attentive outside groups, and having a greater effect on policy outcomes

than does mere introduction of legislation. In addition to these overt activities, there are behind-the-scenes efforts to mobilize support for legislative proposals, work out compromises on pending matters, and the like (Lubalin 1981: 113-114).

The findings for both attendance and roll call voting are mostly consistent and strong, although more so for attendance than roll call voting. In consistence with the hypotheses, these findings support ambition theory. However, there is a possibility that attendance and roll call voting are not representative of legislative activities as a whole, limiting the ability to generalize about the effect of ambition on legislative behavior. Using for instance bill introduction and co-sponsorship may yield different results, thus devaluating ambition theory. This possibility should be taken into consideration in future research on the ambition-behavior relationship.

Recognizing the possibility that using other dependent variables may produce other results, a strong case on behalf of ambition theory's ability to explain legislative behavior can still be made. First, this study uses two measures for legislative behavior. Second, the results for both attendance and roll call voting prove supportive of the hypotheses, although less so for attendance. While not ruling out the possibility that using other dependent variables may yield other results, these findings strengthen the ability to make inferences about the effect of ambition on legislative behavior.

This discussion has sought to critically review the study to assess to what extent choices made regarding research design have had an effect on the results. None of the variables are ideal, but the measures used are found adequate for the purposes of this study. Using the actual decision to run for president as a surrogate for contenders' psychological predisposition to seek the Presidency, assumed to exist *prior* to their legislative activity, provides for an adequate measure of ambition in the absence of psychological profiles. Using contenders' PMV and W-NOMINATE scores as measures of attendance and roll call voting, respectively, makes attendance and contenders voting positions amenable for quantitative analysis, but simplicity has its

costs. Focusing on senators running for president from 1976 to 2004 and attendance and roll call voting limits the ability to generalize about the findings. However, roll call voting constitutes one of the most substantive activities senators perform (Griffin and Newman 2004: 9) and assessing the extent to which senators move on roll call votes provides a way of ascertaining whether ambition has an effect on ambition.

In sum, then, the results of the analysis strengthen the hypotheses stated in chapter 2. One, during the inter-election period, it is expected that contenders' attendance will decline. Two, it is expected that contenders' voting records will show a movement to the extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum as the primary season approaches. The validation of the hypotheses, in turn, strengthens the case made on behalf of ambition theory. Various types of ambition give rise to different types of behavior.

However, the variations among the contenders examined suggest a need to take individual campaign strategies and other mediating variables into account when attempting to develop generalizations about the effect of progressive ambition on behavior. To take account of subsets of politically meaningful variables associated with Senate incumbency<sup>14</sup> and presidential contesting, Lubalin (1981) advances a refinement to ambition theory, as presented by Joseph Schlesinger. This refinement suggests that the ability of ambition theory to explain the responses adopted by diverse political actors to similar office goals can be enhanced by examining the mediating role of five variables: 1) constituency factors; 2) institutional factors; 3) policy factors; 4) individual factors; and 5) campaign factors.

According to Lubalin (1981: 968-969), constituency and individual factors may help explain differences in, for instance, Senators Bayh and Bentsen's voting patterns. Through extensive case studies, she finds that during their candidacies, both senators

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<sup>14</sup> 'Incumbent' refers to a person who holds a particular office or position; 'incumbancy' to the office, duty, or tenure of an incumbent.

moved on Senate votes, contradicting votes they had recorded earlier, or put a different cast on issues in their national campaigns than they had previously put on such issues in their home-state senatorial campaigns. Occasionally, each also adopted a position on new issues that was more in line with their national campaign needs than with their constituents' views. These moves tended to take place on very salient issues, or on policies of special importance to selected groups who were influential in the nomination process. However, Bentsen was less likely to make such moves than Bayh. As his Senate re-election approached, he became even less likely to do so.

Lubalin (1981: 968-969) suggests that the difference in the behavior of the two senators results from a combination of constituency and individual factors. Bayh's progressively more liberal voting record was damaging to him in Indiana, just as Bentsen's move to the left in 1973 and 1974 hurt him in Texas. However, in Bentsen's case, the ramifications of voting "against Texas" were more severe because of the coincidence of his Senate and presidential races. With four years separating his 1976 presidential race and 1980 Senate re-election campaign, Bayh was not under the same kind of immediate, intense constituent pressure as Bentsen was.

The research design adopted in this study does not allow for an exploration of this explanation. The study has, however, found that senators with progressive ambition behave noticeably different from their less ambitious colleagues in terms of attendance and roll call voting, measured using percentage of missed votes and W-NOMINATE scores, respectively. The findings, moreover, are mostly consistent and strong, strengthening the proposition that ambition affects legislative behavior. The extent to which constituency and individual factors mediate the effect of ambition on legislative behavior is left for future research.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This study was undertaken to assess whether an ambition-based approach to politics can contribute to the understanding of legislative behavior. More specifically, the study has examined the effect of ambition on United States senators who ran for president from 1976 to 2004. The United States Senate was selected as a focus for the inquiry on both substantial and methodological grounds. A quantitative analytical technique was employed in exploring the effect of presidential ambition on legislative behavior.

Data presented in this study provide support for the hypothesis that ambition for higher office has a marked effect on legislative behavior. In most instances examined here, the presidential candidacies had a pronounced effect on behavior in the Senate during the period in which the presidential nomination was sought.

Of the two dependent variables examined, the findings are strongest and most consistent for attendance. In most cases, interest in the Presidency led to a drop in Senate contenders' attendance, or more specifically to an increase in their PMV. The effect of ambition on contenders' roll call voting is also noticeable—considerable for some—but the overall effect is not as dramatic as it was expected to be.

The variations among the progressively ambitious senators may be explained by five mediating variables—constituency, institutional, policy, individual and campaign factors. These mediating variables may provide politically meaningful and plausible explanations for the major variations in legislative behavior apparent among the contenders during their pursuit of the presidential nomination. As the research design did not allow for an exploration of this possibility, it is left for future research.

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## Appendix

R - Codes<sup>15</sup>

```
#####  
# Wnominate #  
#####  
  
sen91 <-readKH("ftp://voteview.com/sen91kh.ord")  
summary(sen91,verbose=TRUE)  
result<-wnominate(sen91,polarity="THURMOND (R SC)",dims=1, trials=5)  
summary(result,verbose=TRUE)  
  
rm(list=ls())  
library(wnominate)  
senDat <- readKH("ftp://voteview.com/sen91kh.ord")  
senData <- dropRollCall(senDat,  
  dropList=list(lop=3,dropList=list(legisMin=25)))  
senInfo <- summary(senData,verbose=TRUE)  
senResults <- wnominate(senData,dims=1,polarity="THURMOND (R SC)",trials=5)  
senResults$legislators  
senResults$legislators[,13:14]  
Info <- merge(senInfo$legisTab,senResults$legislators,by="row.names")  
Info <- cbind(senInfo$legisTab[-1,],senResults$legislators[-1,])  
MeanMissingVotesDemo <- mean(Info[,10][Info$party=="D"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MeanMissingVotesRep <- mean(Info[,10][Info$party=="R"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MedianMissingVotesDemo <- median(Info[,10][Info$party=="D"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MedianMissingVotesRep <- median(Info[,10][Info$party=="R"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MeanMissingVotesDemo  
MeanMissingVotesRep  
MedianMissingVotesDemo  
MedianMissingVotesRep  
#####  
MeanNominDemo <- mean(Info$coord1D[Info$party=="D"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MeanNominRep <- mean(Info$coord1D[Info$party=="R"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MedianNominDemo <- median(Info$coord1D[Info$party=="D"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MedianNominRep <- median(Info$coord1D[Info$party=="R"],na.rm=TRUE)  
MeanNominDemo  
MeanNominRep  
MedianNominDemo
```

---

<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Bjørn Høyland for valuable help regarding these R-codes.

## MedianNominRep

### #Polarities used

# Sen91 THURMOND (R SC)  
# Sen92 GOLDWATER (R AZ)  
# Sen93 FANNIN (R WY)  
# Sen94 GOLDWATER (R AZ)  
# Sen95 SCOTT (R VA)  
# Sen96 HUMPHREY (R NH)  
# Sen97 GOLDWATER (R AZ)  
# Sen98 SYMMS (R ID)  
# Sen99 WALLOP (R WY)  
# Sen100 SYMMS (R ID)  
# Sen101 SYMMS (R ID)  
# Sen102 HELMS (R NC)  
# Sen103 HELMS (R NC)  
# Sen104 KYL (R AZ)  
# Sen105 HELMS (R NC)  
# Sen106 GRAMM (R TX)  
# Sen107 GRAMM (R TX)  
# Sen108 THOMAS (R WY)