IDEOLOGY, PARTY AND THE CREATION OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY COALITION

Hans Noel
Assistant Professor
Georgetown University
Department of Government
Washington, DC 20057
202-687-7871 (voice)
202-687-5858 (fax)
hcn4@georgetown.edu

Abstract: How should we understand the relationship between ideology and party? Ideology may be thought of as a description of a party’s agenda, created to justify its electoral coalition. Or ideology may be created separately and pushed on party leaders, perhaps against their interests. Distinguishing these processes requires distinguishing purely ideological opinions from the partisan behavior of elected politicians. This paper develops such a model and applies it to the case of partisan change on slavery. Intellectuals in 1850 divided into two camps over slavery and the other major issues of the day at a time when slavery cross-cut the two parties in Congress. The ideological division matches one that develops in Congress a decade later, suggesting that the parties responded not just to electoral incentives, but also to this elite division. The ideology was accepted, even though it undermined longstanding attempts to hold together intersectional alliances.

1 I wish to thank John Zaller, Jeff Lewis, Kathleen Bawn, Andy Sabl, Ken Kollman, and participants at the Stanford Conference on Measurement Modeling and the UCLA Methods Workshop for valuable comments. Data analyzed were collected with support from John Zaller and the UCLA Political Science Department. Errors, omissions and any clumsiness are my own.
Abstract: How should we understand the relationship between ideology and party? Ideology may be thought of as a description of a party’s agenda, created to justify its electoral coalition. Or ideology may be created separately and pushed on party leaders, perhaps against their interests. Distinguishing these processes requires distinguishing purely ideological opinions from the partisan behavior of elected politicians. This paper develops such a model and applies it to the case of partisan change on slavery. Intellectuals in 1850 divided into two camps over slavery and the other major issues of the day at a time when slavery cross-cut the two parties in Congress. The ideological division matches one that develops in Congress a decade later, suggesting that the parties responded not just to electoral incentives, but also to this elite division. The ideology was accepted, even though it undermined longstanding attempts to hold together intersectional alliances.
The focus of this paper is antebellum American politics. But the argument begins in the present.

American politics in 2006 has become more ideological. Elected officials, especially in Congress, are increasingly polarized (Jacobson 2000, 2004, McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2006), and voters, too, may be divided into two ideological camps (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2005, Hetherington 2001, but see also Fiorina 2004). American politics has also become more partisan. Party unity has increased in government (Bond and Fleisher 2000), and party voting has increased in the electorate (Bartels 2000). These two developments are no doubt related to the increasing relationship between ideology and partisanship.

What drives this relationship? Do ideologies shape party coalitions, making them the tools for implementing them. Do parties define ideologies to justify a coalition created primarily to win office? This question recurs in the study of elite political activity. We often treat political actors as though their most important goal is getting power. But once they have that power, what will they do with it? Since, in a democracy, politicians’ chances of winning power are a function of their policy positions, it might be that that function completely determines those positions. In this view, the rewards from holding office itself are the rewards that matter most. Alternatively, the goals of political actors might be independent of the need for election. In which case, the need to get elected is merely a hurdle for implementing those goals, and it might alter those goals, but it does not determine them. Our intuition is usually that both processes matter. This project attempts to get at exactly how.

One possibility is that individuals care about individual issues, but it is politicians that bind together multiple issues into a coalition. An actor’s preferences on any one issue may be independent of the need for election, but the relationship between that issue and another is driven by electoral goals. This, ultimately, is the logic behind most models of parties as coalitions (e.g., Riker 1962, Schwartz 1992, Aldrich 1995). Actors care about issues, but they compromise on those issues to create logrolls with other policy-minded actors.

To the contrary, I argue that ideological coalitions are created not by election-minded office-holders, but by political intellectuals. Ideological thinkers define goals that party leaders have a choice to
adopt. But since the driving force for many political actors is implementing their goals, changes in those goals will lead to changes in party coalitions. To demonstrate this claim, we need three things. First, we need conceptual clarity on ideology and on party. Second, we need distinct measures of ideology and of partisanship. Third, we need to find periods in which party and ideology were not so closely related as they are today. This paper focuses on the mid 19th century, when slavery was central to ideological thinking, but not to partisan divides.

Politics in the 1850s was also about party and ideology, but they were easy to distinguish. The issues that divided the parties reflected a commercial vs. agricultural conflict, but did not include slavery. Slavery and the “Slave Power” were a source of controversy, but they were not controversial between the parties. To be a Whig or a Democrat said nothing about being pro- or anti-slavery. That is, slavery was as an orthogonal issue that cross-cut the existing party system. But I find that when we measure ideology independent of Congress, the picture is different. Slavery was not an orthogonal issue; it was well-integrated into an ideological dimension that included trade and the other partisan issues of the day. Business leaders who wanted government aid in building a national economy opposed slavery, and those opposed to pro-business protections like the tariff favored slavery. It is thus too simple to say that the issue of slavery broke apart the party system. Rather, an ideological system that incorporated slavery was incompatible with a party system that did not.

This finding takes up a question left unexplained by the accepted political science account of the formation of party coalitions (Schwartz 1989, Aldrich 1995, Cox and McCubbins 2006), in which election-minded legislators form partisan teams in Congress. These accounts do not account for which teams should form, except to suggest that the decision is made by the election-minded legislators. The Democrats and the Whigs were teams cementing logrolls in the legislature, but they explicitly avoided organizing the issue of slavery. We must look elsewhere to see the actors who made slavery part of the dominant ideological division of the day. At that point elected officials responded to a world, where slavery was not only on the agenda, but was part of the prevailing ideological division.
The argument proceeds as follows. In Section I, I lay out a theoretical framework for understanding political parties and political ideologies. Section II reviews the politics of 1850, on the eve of the Civil War, in light of the theory in the first section. Section III develops a measure of ideology that is distinct from partisanship. Section IV presents that measure as calculated for the politics of the 1850s, to demonstrate that ideology then included the issue of slavery, and Section V concludes.

**Section I: A THEORY OF IDEOLOGY AND PARTY.**

Understanding ideology requires that we disentangle it from political parties. This is not straightforward. Ideology and party are closely related. Both define who is on your side, and who is opposed. The first step, then, is to conceptually distinguish ideology from party.

Chiefly, these are the domains of different actors, who have different purposes and dominate different spheres. Parties are dominated by politicians, while ideologies are shaped by activists, political thinkers and other opinion makers. Politicians want to get elected and control government, and that action takes place within the institutions of government. Ideologues want to figure out right and just policies, convince others to agree with them, and then hope to see their policies enacted. They do their work in a less well-defined realm of political discourse. These two missions are distinct, but the lines between the groups pursuing them are not bright. We need concrete definitions to separate them.\(^1\)

I define a political party as an organized effort to gain political power (Schattschneider 1942; see also Cohen et. al. 2001, forthcoming). Parties form a united front, putting aside their differences so that they can capture control of government. They then use government to gain power and influence policy. Those who form the united front often differ from one another in important ways. All they need have in common is a desire to control government. They might include activists who have strong ideologies. Or

\(^1\) This approach to ideology differs from that found in, for example, Gerring 1998, in which ideologies might describe a party’s agenda. Parties can have ideologies or not. I am considering the case where an ideology exists without a party, thus asking where the ideology that a party might adopt came from.
they might be a collection of unrelated interest groups. Parties can even be based entirely on patronage. Some kinds of groups may be easier to unite or manage than others, but parties can be formed in many ways. However the group is formed, the party binds its members’ efforts together in the service of their collective goals.

I define ideology as a shared set of policy preferences. Like a party, an ideology unites many different people, but unlike partisans, ideologues are united, but not a front. They really want the same things. Members of parties expect to agree on little and to be indifferent on a lot of things; members of ideology expect to agree on everything and to be indifferent about little. The shared set of preferences may be logically coherent and derived from first principles, but it need not be. Ideologies are comprehensive: They prescribe policy positions on nearly every issue on which there is any political disagreement, and certainly across all domains of issues. This definition of ideology is consistent with Converse’s (1964) notion of ideology as a system of constrained beliefs. To be politically relevant, an ideology must be widely held. Otherwise, it is just one person’s belief system. Ideologues want to see their ideology implemented as policy and this requires many adherents.

Party and ideology are natural answers to each other’s needs. Ideologues want to see their ideologies implemented, and party leaders want people who will act in concert. Ideologies create blocks of people with common preferences. Party leaders can use such blocks in building a united front. And since parties capture control of government and implement policies, they are natural means for ideologues to get their preferences enacted.

Following the definitions given here, parties and ideologies are explicitly parallel. An ideology identifies a set of political issue positions that are collectively supported by a group of people, and a party identifies as set of people who act collectively to achieve certain goals. If we imagine a matrix of issue choices, with each column an issue and each row an actor (say, a roll call matrix) with some structure, then parties determine the structure through actors who should vote together (if Hastert votes for it, so should DeLay), and ideologies determine structure through issues that should go together (if one votes for the PATRIOT Act, one should vote to repeal the Estate Tax). This causes the confusion noted above,
since we cannot tell which mechanism is behind the structure. But it is also convenient, since it means ideology and party might be compared using similar measures: specifically something like the scaling of issue positions, familiar to users of NOMINATE scores in Congress, and other measures of structure.

These two paths to the same structure begin in two different domains. One is in official political activity, the principal domain of parties. Party coalitions are manifest in many places in this domain, but most conveniently in the votes of members of Congress. And they are not generally hidden. So learning what divides the parties is as simple as studying the issues on which known party members vote together and which issues divide them.

The other domain is in the realm of ideas, or the political discourse. This is the principal domain of ideologues. Intellectuals and other writers offer opinions on a range of ideas. When a set of intellectuals agrees on a set of issue positions, they are expressing an ideology. Ideologues work to tie different issues together, developing arguments or even philosophical principles that imply a set of policies. Ideologues are, in this view, political moralists: they want to get to the right, just, best solution. But they take positions that are not merely morally satisfying, but also compatible with the interests and predispositions of large groups of people. As they work to figure out what they think is right, like-minded intellectuals will develop sets of issues on which a group of them agree. These are ideologies. Ideologues often do not always self-identify as members of one ideology or another. But their common positions nonetheless define an ideology.

But parties and ideologies do bleed into each others’ worlds. Some politicians are more influenced by ideology than by party. And some party figures, even elected officials, make reasoned ideological arguments beyond merely defending their votes. In some periods, there are even well-identified partisan publications, which can be said to speak for the parties, although with far less discipline and fewer negotiations than a party platform.

---

2 Krehbiel’s (1993) argument that parties may not have influence in Congress is based on this observational equivalence.
Sometimes, these activity in these two domains looks the same. Today, when Republicans take positions in the discourse or when they vote in Congress, they are conservative. Likewise Democrats and liberals. Some actors are moderates, but the coalitions in Congress and among intellectuals today are fairly well defined, and the coalitions we see in each domain are similar.³

And so, today, we cannot easily disentangle the partisan and ideological mechanisms defining coalitions. But sometimes we can. There are a number of reasons why parties and ideologies might even ignore one another. Politicians could built their parties on patronage, regionalism, the pork-barrel, or some ad hoc coalition with serious internal disagreements. And ideologues might also eschew political parties and attempt to influence policy in other ways, through education, the popular media, or issue-by-issue persuasion.

Still, the drive to interact is great. Parties are the most efficient and direct way to win in politics, and implementing a comprehensive ideological program is best done with a party. If, in some periods, ideologies and parties do not define the same coalitions, how might we come to a world in which they do? I argue that there can be one of two mechanisms.

**Partisan rationalization:** Coalitions may form for politically expedient reasons — to win votes in elections or logrolls in a legislature — and party organs may afterward craft a message that justifies them. In Schwartz’ (1989, p.11) words: “a majority party will be able to formulate its legislative goals in a pithy program or platform.” Downs (1957, pp. 96-113) likewise conceptualizes ideologies as something created to justify a party’s claim to power. Once a party’s platform becomes an ideology, party discipline becomes internal.

In such a case, the needs of partisan coalition building would be foremost in the minds of ideologues. If they are not, party leaders might try to convince them that they should be. But this assumes that ideologues do not attempt to think independently of political necessity, or that they agree with the

---
³ There are, of course, some cross-cutting schisms today. But they are nothing on the level of the Conservative Coalition at mid-century, or in the period before the Civil War.
coalition built by party leaders. I suspect this pattern is especially likely when ideological thinkers are mostly themselves active politicians, as in the case of early American history. When politicians who have a stake in political outcomes also write ideological arguments, those arguments will justify the decisions they have made or will have to make. More independent intellectuals may be less loyal.

**Ideological marketing:** Just as partisans may wish to have an ideology to justify their coalition, ideologues will want to steer party coalitions to accept their ideology. The party coalition might need to draw in more votes than the ideology provides by itself, but if a winning party is going to have an ideology at its kernel, ideologues will want it to be theirs. For this reason, I call ideologues “coalition merchants.” They have created what could be a useful component of a party coalition -- ideally, as ideologues see it, the biggest component of the coalition -- and they hope to get a party to accept it.

Ideologues can influence parties both directly and indirectly. Directly, they can attempt to persuade elected officials that they are right, and some ideological thinkers even run for office themselves. More typically, however, ideologues influence politics by persuading other politically relevant actors, in Mayhew’s (1974) sense, including voters and especially activists. Party leaders need the support of activists (Aldrich 1983, 1995, see also Masket 2002, 2005, and Bawn et. al. 2006) and bend to the activists’ pressures.

Depending on how open the party system is to new parties, ideologues may pressure newly forming parties as well as existing ones. Since they operate by shaping the preferences of political actors, they can create competition between multiple parties with similar constituencies. Parties either respond to the new ideology or resist and risk losing the support of those in the ideology.

Sometimes that risk is worth taking. For example, the Whig and Democratic parties resisted the growing slavery-based ideology, because each party had members in both the North and the South, and the party leadership wanted to keep it that way. Acquiescing in the new ideological division would have threatened the intersectional alliance. This is especially interesting for the Whigs, since the new ideology was promising. It could (and for the Republicans, eventually would) end Democratic dominance. But the risk involved was apparently too great.
Whig and Democratic politicians alike also may have resisted the new ideology because of the longstanding connections they had with their own parties. Cotton Whig politicians may have been drawn to the pro-slavery ideology that Democrats eventually defended, but that meant abandoning their allies in the Whig united front that had gotten them elected. Switching to a new party means that lifetime of connections has to be built up from scratch. The same is true of Northern Democrats (and for the decision of Northern Whigs to switch to the Republican Party).

Party resisted ideology again in the 1950s and 1960s. Southern Democrats had political connections and loyalties to the Democratic Party, but were ideologically conservative on social issues. As the Democratic Party became more clearly liberal on the racial and social issues important to those southern Democrats (and their constituents), those southern Democrats had a difficult choice. But so did the leaders of the party. So long as southern Democrats remained Democrats, the party could not completely adopt the new ideology.

Both partisan justification and ideological marketing are theoretical mechanisms. I suspect that both occur in politics from time to time, but their relative frequency is an empirical question. Do parties shape ideologies, or do ideologies shape parties? How effectively are such influences resisted? I argue that ideologues tend to be more effective at influencing parties. Parties may resist new ideological alignments, but if the activists and citizens who nominate and elect them have embraced the new ideology, party politicians will eventually either succumb or be replaced. However, if ideologies are epiphenomenal, then partisan justification is more common than ideological marketing.

We can distinguish these mechanisms by focusing on the places where party coalitions have changed. If ideologies dominate coalition formation, then major changes in party coalitions should be preceded by ideological changes that create those new coalitions. If ideologies rationalize party coalitions, then the new division should appear first between parties in the political sphere, for instance, in Congress, and then be rationalized later in the ideological sphere.
I move now to test this question by looking at one of the most significant changes in party coalitions in American politics — the destruction of the second party system by the issue of slavery. As noted, this is but one of several cases to which this method will be applied.

Section II: SLAVERY AND THE SECOND PARTY SYSTEM

The economic, political and cultural significance of slavery is the centerpiece story in early American history. Struggles over slavery gave rise to a new political party and cast a shadow on ideology that is felt even today. The reader is no doubt familiar with the outlines: An inter-sectional party system structured around economic issues was split apart by the cross-cutting issue of slavery. Slavery left some people torn between the old party cleavage and the increasingly salient new issue, and when slavery became the dominant issue, the party system collapsed.

This well-known story does not, as commonly told, focus on ideology. Let me highlight how it does not, and then explain why and how ideology ought to be incorporated.

For the most part, early political parties in the United States were not built solely around cohesive ideological missions. The Whigs, in particular, were often defined in opposition to the Democratic Party, which was regularly the in-party (see Sundquist 1983, p. 55, and especially Holt 1999). The parties struggled to connect local issues to national ones and define themselves clearly in opposition to one another. On Holt’s account, the primary difficulty of the Whig Party was in crafting a consistent, unified message in opposition to the Democratic Party. Both parties also relied extensively on patronage. Patronage-based parties have an incentive to avoid major issues that would interrupt the flow of largesse to their members.

Nevertheless, the division between the parties was not arbitrary, and policy-based ideologies did divide them. The precise nature of the division is debated and has generated a rich literature. But generally, the Democrats were an agricultural and working class party, while Whigs represented commercial interests and the upper class (Sundquist 1983, Gerring 1998). Thus Whigs favored a National Bank and protective trade policy to protect nascent American industry, while Democrats felt those
policies enriched already wealthy commercial leaders at the expense of the agricultural sector. Ethnic and religious divisions also split the parties, and a number of social issues, but not slavery, became important in campaigns by the 1850s (Gienapp 1988, p. 40).

However scholars characterize the division, they agree that it was cross-sectional. And deliberately so: “The existence of national political parties … necessitated alliances between political elites in various sections of the country.” (Foner 1980, p. 35, see also Riker 1982, Sundquist 1983, Aldrich 1995)

Since Democrats and Whigs were attempting to build and maintain coalitions that could win, they dared not risk alienating an important constituency. But taking up the subject of slavery would have had that consequence. Anti-slavery candidates would lose across the South, while pro-slavery candidates could face trouble in the North. Thus, scholars describe slavery as an orthogonal issue. Sundquist writes, “The slavery issue cut squarely across the two major parties that existed at the time” (p. 50). Riker uses slavery as a prime illustration of the use of an orthogonal issue to break apart an existing dominant party. Aldrich (1995, pp. 126-135) and Weingast (1998) trace the institutional practices designed by both parties used to keep sectional issues, and especially slavery, from disrupting their cross-sectional coalitions. And Poole and Rosenthal (1997) demonstrate that slavery was cross-cutting in congressional voting.

Slavery was cross-cutting in the electorate, as well. In the presidential election of 1848, Democratic candidate Lewis Cass won eight free states and six slave states. His rival, Whig Zacharay Taylor, won the presidency with seven free states and eight slave states. The pattern occurred again, in 1852, when the Democrat won the election with 14 free states and 12 slave states. Franklin Pierce’s rival, Whig Winfield Scott, picked up just four states: two free and two slave.

The parties in Congress also represented both free and slave states. In the 31st House of Representatives (1849-1850), there were 28 Whigs and 58 Democrats from slave states, about one-third to two-thirds. And the free states were even more closely split, with 83 Whigs, 60 Democrats.

So for parties in the early 1850s, slavery was a cross-cutting issue. And by the time of the Civil War, we know that the party system had been disrupted, and this issue is the reason. Others have traced
the process. Aldrich (1995), for example, argues that as the Whig Party began to falter, ambitious politicians had to decide which party would be the most likely to be one of the major parties in Congress and the government. Former Whigs switched to the Republican Party as that party showed promise. Issues such as slavery or temperance might have motivated some politicians, but they still needed to choose which party could win. And Republicans had the better strategy. Gienapp (1988) traces the process of issue selection and capitalization in different local settings. Republicans had to build a platform that could beat Democrats, and some policies, such as temperance, proved unsuccessful. The prevailing interpretation is that a number of issues, slavery among them, might have been exploited to build a winning coalition, and the many political parties at the time each were attempting to build the optimal coalition.

What, if any, was the role of ideology in all of this? One cannot look at the political discourse of the antebellum period without becoming vividly aware that slavery was a significant issue for political thinkers. These thinkers did not have to run for election in the second party system, so electoral incentives did not impel them to avoid the issue. Political thinkers in the North and the South saw far-reaching implications of the South’s “peculiar institution,” and they reached judgments on it.

Moreover, many of the thinkers who addressed the slavery issue addressed other contemporary issues as well – the tariff, internal improvements, the national bank. And it so happens, as I show below, that, by 1850 if not sooner, they had incorporated slavery into their attitudes on these other issues as well.

Let me begin with what has become known as Republican ideology. The Republicans emerged as a major force in the late 1850s, and as they coalesced, this is the platform that they presented. This ideology was not simply abolitionist, or even simply about slavery at all. But slavery was a key part of it. The most comprehensive work on this ideology, and how attitudes toward slavery were related to those on other issues, is Eric Foner’s (1995) *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*. The Republican ideology opposed slavery, but not because it was morally wrong to mistreat blacks. Rather, Republicans felt that slave-holding corrupted the white slave holder. And in turn, the Slave Power of the South corrupted the nation as a whole. Like Whigs, Republicans
wanted to see the nation’s economic infrastructure grow, and that would require government investment, and possibly tariffs to protect fledgling American industry. Slavery was a threat because a slave economy was stagnant, and the slave-holder need not develop a work ethic of his own.

A work-ethic was an important component of “free labor.” The concept of free labor does not mean more rights to working class laborers. Free labor was the work done by the entrepreneur, who might apprentice himself, or otherwise start out small and at the bottom levels of the economy and, through his own hard work and ingenuity, work up to a better place. A country of such men would develop a strong national economy. Commercial entrepreneurs would be the backbone of the future.

It should be noted that this description has slavery mapping rather closely onto the pre-existing Whig agenda. It is not entirely wrong to say that the Republicans were Whigs plus anti-slavery. But it did not have to happen that way. As Foner notes (1980, pp. 57-76), an effort was made to create an alliance between the abolitionist and labor union movements. Philosophically, there was common ground, and some activists saw potential in making linked moral appeals: The trapped wage laborer and the trapped slave could make common cause. Many Republicans found this argument compelling. But the anti-slavery ideology did not develop in that direction. It moved instead in a “free labor” direction.

A rival ideology developed to the Republican ideology. Thinkers opposed to a national economic order oriented around urban commercial interests also came to oppose an anti-slavery agenda that also seemed to serve those interests. Southerners did not think of themselves as a Slave Power, but as a maligned and marginalized group whose way of life was threatened by commercial interests that did not understand it. The North was parasitic. It sought to use government power to give favors to already-wealthy commercial interests at the expense of Southern farmers and wage laborers. The tariff in particular was designed to protect commercial interests, but it did not protect farmers, who relied on trade for their profits, or the working class, whose pockets were not lined with the effective graft that was the tariff. Slavery was just part of the system of agriculture that the Northern business interests did not understand, despite the fact that Northern businesses relied on cotton and other Southern products for their development.
Thus the slavery issue did not stand apart from the ideological discourse of the day. It was an integral part of it. One ideology was a free soil, free labor, protectionist, Northern commercial ideology. The other was a slave-holding, working-class, free trade, Southern agrarian ideology. This division eventually divided the country in the election of 1860. But what role did it play in 1850?

I argue that this ideological division created the party coalitions that came to power a decade later. I do not, of course, have detailed evidence, of the sort modern surveys supply, to show how the competing ideologies spread among the politically aware and active segments of the antebellum population. I must therefore assume that the mechanisms of ideological diffusion described by Philip Converse in his famous belief systems article (1964) apply in the 19th century in more or less the same way they do in the 20th. Foner’s and Gienapp’s accounts of the development of the Republican Party do show that these issues were coming together among party elites and in the party’s platform as it rose to power of the course of the 1850s.

Thus the Whig and Democratic politicians who resisted the slavery issue were not resisting just that issue. They were resisting new ideologies that incorporated slavery into the larger political discourse, and that were likely to be animating the behavior of the voters and activists whose support they needed to remain in office. They resisted these ideologies because both parties wanted an intersectional alliance. Most of the issues of the two ideologies could at least plausibly play in parts of the North and parts of the South. But slavery could not. Democrats, more often in power, tried to avoid an issue that would break up their successful coalition. Whig leaders, perhaps with good political reason, balked at taking the risk that a free soil plank in their platform would entail.

Republicans seized on the ideology and used it to win election. It was hard work, and not at all straightforward. Individual parties in different parts of the country had to come together, and party leaders had to adjust the coalition to win. But they also responded to common wants across the country. Activists wanted something the Whigs were not providing, and that was this ideology. Gienapp (1988) traces this process through the 1850s. But the ideological building blocks were in place by at least 1850.
It was, I believe, inevitable that ideologues would develop opinions on slavery. Ideological thinkers do not ignore important issues because they are politically perilous or inexpedient. And, this being so, the re-alignment that occurred was probably also inevitable, since most of the other issues of the day, from the tariff to the national bank, also had some sectional character, at least potentially.

This argument does not seek to explain the cause of the Civil War. Nor does it explain why one party failed and another replaced it, or why it was the Whigs who suffered and not the Democrats. The argument does seek to explain how and when slavery was integrated ideologically into the other issues that created the division that led to war.

As indicated, I cannot trace in detail the process by which political intellectuals created new ideologies, the ideologies diffused through the population of political active and aware individuals. These individuals either pressured party politicians to reflect the new ideology or became politicians themselves, carrying their ideologies into office. What I can do is trace how these ideologies organized political thinkers. But it is difficult to detect the ideological forest for all the specific trees we have. Historians and biographers, rightly, delve into the nuances and idiosyncrasies of their subjects, so that it is difficult to detect a general pattern, across a number of people and across a number of issues. What we want is not the belief system of William Lloyd Garrison but the ideological space in which he found himself. What we want to see is how widespread is the Republican ideology Foner describes, and how widespread is its polar opposite. This requires a new metric.

**Section III: A MEASURE OF THE IDEOLOGICAL SPACE**

Ideal point estimates, such as those referenced above, might be interpreted straightforwardly, as indicators of true preferences. In practice, many scholars do treat NOMINATE scores as measures of ideology. But most recognize that these scores are in some way influenced by strategic behavior, notably party discipline, but also other political influences, such as lobbyists or constituency constraints.

NOMINATE scores do tell us, of course, who votes together, and are thus a good measure of political activity, including party activity. The idea behind such scaling is that we believe there is some
dimension that explains people’s votes or issue positions. This conception is explored formally in Hinich and Munger (1996), which treats ideology as a predictive dimension that voters can use to map a candidate or party to specific policy positions. The ends of this dimension might be called liberalism or conservatism. All political actors have a position on this underlying dimension. And we think that, for instance, a member of Congress’ vote on a particular issue is a function of her position on that dimension. Some issues are strongly related to the ideological dimension, but some are not. If trade preferences are related, for instance, then as a member’s score on the latent ideological trait increases from one extreme to the other, she might go from opposing a tariff to favoring one, along the way reaching a point at which she is indifferent on the issue. Another issue, say slavery, might be unrelated. Then, as a person’s score increases, it will not predict a change in her position, or it will predict only weakly.

We cannot observe this latent trait, nor can we know a priori how well it will predict votes. What we can do is look at the pattern of the votes and deduce both the trait itself and the parameters that relate each issue to the trait. Scaling does this. In one dimension, the question is just whether or not an issue maps to the measured dimension. 4

In Congress, this dimension measures the behavior of partisan actors, which, as noted above, is not a pure measure of ideology. To detect the role of ideology independent of partisanship, we need a measure divorced from those political concerns. I develop such a measure by looking at political writers — those who express opinions in political magazines, newspapers and journals.

This section will first discuss in detail the collection process and describe the data. In will then describe the model used to infer the issue space defined by these pundits.

4 It is common to estimate more than one dimension, but this is not necessary. In higher dimensions, we ask whether the primary dimension explains the division between two members on an issue, or whether a second dimension is needed. But if a second dimension is needed and we estimate only one, then the issue will simply not be predicted by that dimension.
THE DATA: The data are the recorded positions of pundits in major political publications on the issues of the day. The database includes everyone from The New York Times editorial board to correspondents with a publication to major figures such as Henry Ward Beecher. It includes some elected officials, such as William H. Seward and James A. Seddon, who at times in their careers served as intellectuals. It also includes excerpts and summaries of opinions expressed elsewhere, in speeches or books. The issue space defined by these opinions is not influenced by the strategic considerations of political actors voting on the floor of Congress, and therefore is presumably a more direct measure of ideology. Indeed, many of the opinions are expressed as frustration with the “compromises” or blind partisan loyalty of elected politicians.

The data analyzed here are part of a larger dataset on intellectual opinion, ranging from 1830 to 1990. The data are then organized to be analogous to legislative roll call data. Opinions were drawn from large samples of a number of publications. For monthly and weekly publications, effort was made to collect every article published in each year studied, 1850 for the present paper. For daily publications, large samples were taken from each month. Publications were selected for inclusion based on their perceived relevance to politics. For the 19th century, publications archived with the Making of America database were used, on the grounds that these represent what historians believe to be the most politically

5 Of course, all human behavior is influenced by considerations that make it less than “sincere.” Political pundits no doubt temper their opinions to win friends, influence audiences and keep credibility. However, those adjustments are the determinants of ideology. Opinions crafted in this sphere define ideology. Opinions revealed through votes on the floor of Congress reflect this ideology, plus the constraints of being active politicians.

6 As of late 2005, the database had 907,750 pages, with 955 serial volumes. “Making of America (MOA) represents a major collaborative endeavor to preserve and make accessible through digital technology a significant body of primary sources related to development of the U.S. infrastructure. … The initial phase of the project, begun in the fall of 1995, focused on developing a collaborative effort between Cornell University and the University of Michigan. Drawing on the depth of primary materials within their

The data analyzed in this paper are from publications in the calendar year of 1850, with a few exceptions for journals that begin publication after 1850. This means that some issues that developed after 1850 do show up in the data, but not many. Data from those publications was supplemented by direct searches on the names of all writers to capture articles written shortly before or after 1850. In the few cases in which a writer is an important figure in American history, biographical information is used to fill in positions on issues not addressed in available sources from a given year. Biographical information is used only when it reflects opinions that were held in and around 1850.

As should be evident, these data differ in several ways from the data usually used to estimate ideal points of Members of Congress from their recorded votes. I discuss the most important of these differences below.

First, defining the issue is tricky. For Congress, everyone is voting on the exact same bill. For the pundit data, the context must be used to to define the issue. On the one hand, overly general issue definitions can mask significant differences from writer to writer. For instance, an advocate of slavery in respective libraries, these two institutions are developing a thematically-related digital library documenting American social history from the antebellum period through reconstruction.”

http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/moa/about.html

Data were collected by the author and a team of undergraduate researchers. For each opinion article, researchers recorded the author, source and issue position. Articles were coded for all positions taken in them, which in most cases was more than one. Researchers also wrote a detailed abstract of the article. Articles include unsigned editorials for each publication, which are attributed to the “editorial board” of the publication. A subset of articles (about half) were double-coded to confirm the reliability of each coder. In only one instance did two coders concluded that the same article took opposite positions on an issue.
general might still support the end of the slave trade. Quite often, writers who oppose slavery nevertheless
do not favor the immediate abolition of slavery. On the other hand, overly specific issues degenerate into
minutia, where each writer is writing about some very narrow matter unaddressed by others. Effort was
made to be as specific as possible while still maintaining a large number of responses on each issue.
Similar issues are clumped together in general issue areas (taxes, foreign policy, slavery, trade) and then
broken down further as appropriate.

Second, many pundits address the same issue more than once, and at different times. Usually,
they take the same position. In the very few cases when they do not, it is usually because the issue has not
been defined in a sufficiently nuanced way. The issue in such cases is redefined. In other cases, a better
judgment can be made on the basis of the entire set of articles.

Third, different pundits address different issues. In analyses of legislatures there may be some
abstentions, but by and large, every legislator faces and usually votes on the same set of issues. The
pundit-by-issue matrix produced by my coding procedure is “missing” just less than 90 percent of the
possible observations (that is, compared to a scenario in which every pundit addressed every issue that
has been raised in the year). This missingness is misleading, however. It comes largely from the many
writers who take on two or three issues, or the many issues that are addressed by only a few writers.
We could drop those cases and instead analyze the editorial boards and a few key writers who all address
most of the leading issues. Then the project would be akin to the estimation of ideal points of the nine
members of the Supreme Court (Martin and Quinn 2002), although with fewer issues. Dropping the
remaining cases would leave less “missingness,” but it would also throw away useful information. We
cannot learn much about some of the issues or writers, but we can learn from them about the underlying
dimension, which in turn tells us something about the other issues.

Finally, pundits are free to describe their ideal point on a given issue with more detail than a
legislator can on an up-or-down vote. Each article was thus originally coded on a five point scale: Solid
support, lukewarm support, neutral, lukewarm opposition and solid opposition. (More nuanced coding
would be possible on some issues, but that would require more careful investigation than is possible over
a large number of issues.) However, for the analysis in this paper, the codes have been collapsed to a
binary support/opposition. (Neutral is treated as abstention.) There are three reasons for this decision. First, as an empirical matter, nearly all responses are at the extreme ends of the five-point scales. Lukewarm positions in on op-ed pages and in opinion journals are, unsurprisingly, rare. Second, coding the nuances is less reliable. It is usually easy to tell what “side” a writer is taking. Less easy is identifying how close she is to the “cut point.” Third, writing styles can confuse the issue. Some writers take a more conciliatory tone, while others are more confrontational. Disentangling these idiosyncratic styles from actual position is tricky. Thus for the present analysis, this characteristic of the data is not exploited. Future analyses will use other specifications.

Following these guidelines, I create a pundit by issue matrix. The data for 1850 represent almost 3,000 coded opinions. However, many of those are redundant. Such redundancy helps to clarify that the coded opinion is correct, but in the end, it is only one opinion. Still others are on issues on which no other writer is engaged. Or on issues on which all writers take the same stand. After eliminating non-informative cases, the matrix for 1850 has 648 opinions, spread over 68 pundits and 84 issues.

THE MODEL: The model is an adaptation of a standard Item-Response Model. To address the missing values, I leverage another feature of the data. We know not only who wrote each article, but also for which journal they wrote. I thus combine an Item-Response Model with a Hierarchical Model, in which each pundit’s ideological position is a draw from a journal-specific distribution.

An Item-Response Model: The paper adapts the Item-Response Model, as developed by Albert and Chib (1993; see also Baker 1992, Treier and Jackman 2002, and Clinton, Jackman and Rivers 2002). The model can be estimated for any number of dimensions that the data will support. In this paper, I estimate a one-dimensional model. The model is a variant of the common models used to estimate ideal points in legislatures (For a discussion of the relationship, see Poole 1999 and Londregan 2000).

Responses to items – in this case issues in the public debate – are the dependent variable. They are predicted by the latent trait – in this case ideology – and parameters. More formally, each $ij^{th}$ article is a Bernoulli trial with a probability defined by parameters for the $j^{th}$ issue and the latent traits for the $i^{th}$ pundit:

$$y_{ij} \sim F_{\text{Bernoulli}}(\pi_{ij})$$

[1]
where $\pi$ is a function of the $x$’s, as follows:

$$\pi_{ij} = f_{\text{logit}}(\beta_i(x_i - \alpha_j))$$  \[2\]

and where $\pi$ is the probability of a “1” response, $x$ is a respondent-specific ideology score, and $\alpha$ and $\beta$ are item-specific parameters. The model can be generalized to higher dimensions.

The estimated $x$, $\alpha$ and $\beta$ parameters all have straightforward interpretations. The $x$’s are the ideal points on the latent ideological dimension. The $\alpha$ parameters are the cutpoint for each issue. Those with values of $x$ to one side of $\alpha$ are predicted to take one position, opposing those to the other. The $\beta$’s are the discrimination parameters. They measure how well each issue reflects the underlying ideological dimension. Issues with high values of $\beta$ define the ideological dimension, while those with low values are off-dimensional. A second, third or higher dimension is needed to explain them.

**Hierarchical parameters for ideology:** Many of the *pundits* in the dataset address very few issues. However, each *publication* is represented on nearly every issue.

It would be possible to simply treat every article in a given journal as representing the same ideal point, that of the journal’s editorial board. This would collapse the data down to eight almost complete cases, one for each journal.\(^8\) But this is surely inaccurate. Even among ideological fellow travelers there can be disagreement. Some publication editors even take pride in the diversity of opinion presented. On the other hand, we would be ignoring useful information if we didn’t account for the relationship between different pundits writing for the same journal. Ideological birds of a feather do tend to flock to the same publications.

A reasonable middle ground is a hierarchical model, in which each pundit’s latent trait is a draw from a journal-specific distribution. A hierarchical model does more than address the missingness problem. Even without missingness, the model is more efficient by borrowing strength across observations involving pundits writing for the same outlet. That is, we add to the model above these hierarchical parameters:

$$x_i \sim f_{\text{N}}(\mu_{\text{journal}}, \tau_{\text{journal}})$$ \[3\]

\(^8\) The results of such a model are not substantively different than those presented here.
where $\mu$ is the mean for the journal and $\tau$ is the journal’s “precision,” or the inverse of the variance ($1/\sigma^2$). Both $\mu$ and $\tau$ are parameters to be estimated. This is a reasonable model of the actual process. Editors presumably have ideal points, but they are also willing to accept writing by pundits who deviate from them to some degree. And the editors probably differ in how much deviation they are willing to accept. I depart from this procedure only in the few instances in which the editors of the publication explicitly point out that they disagree with the writer in question. This occurs four times in the current dataset. These writers are then treated as free agents, with their ideal point drawn from a flat prior.

The model is estimated in WinBUGS, which explores the parameter space using a Markov-Chain Monte Carlo algorithm. For a one-dimensional model, identification is straightforward. Here, each posterior draw is normalized to have mean 0 and standard deviation of 1 (see Levendusky, Pope and Jackman 2005 for more on this procedure).

**Section IV: MEASURING IDEOLOGY IN THE 1850s**

In a spatial model of politics, every issue can be its own dimension. In most legislative voting models, however, stable coalitions emerge over a set of issues, such that one group of legislators consistently takes the same side and another group consistently takes the other side. Scaling models establish the extent to which such patterns exist for any set of decision-makers, including the pundits in my data whose “votes” are the positions they take in print. Ideology is present in a set of votes insofar as the voters can be reliably ordered along a dimension, from the furthest left to the furthest right. Issues that do not contribute to that ordering are off the first ideological dimension. Issues that do contribute to the ordering of the voters define the ideology.

---

9 Reported posterior means are based on 5,000 iterations after a 25,000-interation burn-in. Standard diagnostics suggest that the model converged, and that the posterior distribution has been explored.
In this section, I report a one-dimensional model\textsuperscript{10} of the issue space of pundits at around 1850, and compare it to the equivalent model estimated in Congress at the same time (31st House) and also a decade later (36th House), by which point the dimension structure of voting in Congress had changed. I then discuss the ways in which decisions among the pundits and in Congress appear to split the parties that are represented in both spheres. Finally, I delve into the specifics of the arguments made by the intellectuals in the writers sample, exploring how they help to knit together the ideology.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 describe the results. Recall that, given the sparseness of some of the data, many of the parameters cannot be estimated well. We should focus on those with more observations, and on those with large effects or which are tightly estimated. The parameters supported by the most data are represented by heavy bars on the 95 percent credible intervals. [FIGURES 1, 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE]

**Figure 1** reports the posterior means of the ideal points, along with 95 percent credible intervals. The well-represented writers are at the poles of the distribution (as expected, since the others offer little information for estimation of their ideal points). Writers for the United States Democratic Review, three “free agent” writers from the American Whig Review, and a few others are on the left of this dimension, while most other writers are on the right.

However, the ideal points are not the focus of interest in this case. Most studies of NOMINATE scores and other scaling techniques focus on the ideal point estimates because that is what is of interest to them. What are the floor, committee and party medians? Do MC’s ideal points reflect characteristics of their districts? But the question here is about the space itself -- most especially, the relationship between the ideological space of the pundits and that of the Congress. So far I have just noted who has a “lower” score (who is to the left). But what does it mean to be to the left or the right?

\textsuperscript{10} A two-dimensional model could be estimated, but the data are too noisy to provide consistent estimates. However, a one-dimensional model will still tell us which issues are on the first dimension. What it cannot tell us is, of the issues that are not on the first dimension, which are on the second and which would require a third.
To answer this question, Figure 2 plots the discrimination parameters, which measure how well and in which direction each issue is related to the ideological dimension. Pundits on the “right” take the “pro” position on the issues at the top, with positive parameters, and the “con” position on the issues on the bottom, with negative parameters. Pundits on the “left” are the opposite. So the “right” in this case is the free labor, commercial ideology that Foner identified. These pundits are positive toward the Free Soil and Republican parties, and, less dramatically, the Whig party. They favor the manufacturing industry, public works and a national bank. They favor the tariff and abolition. They are pro temperance, an issue that we had not identified above, but which is not surprising. Temperance at this point was an ethnic issue, and there was an ethnic character to the Whig/Democratic division. There were also some organizational links between the temperance movement and the abolition movement, so in a space that unites slavery and the Whig/Democratic cleavage, temperance should also fit well. These “free labor” pundits are opposed to slavery. They do not value trade in general or free trade. Instead, they would like to see the country develop its own economy, protected if necessary. They dislike the South and the Democratic Party. The “left” pundits, then, are the opposite: Pro-slavery, pro-trade and anti-manufacturing.

The direction of the discrimination parameters is arbitrary, however. If “free trade” were coded as “protectionism,” all the votes would have flipped, and it would have had a positive parameter. But its meaning wouldn’t have changed. Figure 3 thus reverses all the parameters with negative posterior means, so we can compare their relative magnitudes. Figure 3 doesn’t tell us how each issue influences ideology, but it focuses attention on which issues do. It is clear that slavery and related issues dominate the dimension, but that the other aspects of the “free labor” ideology do as well.

It is also important to look at the issues that do not load well onto the ideological dimension. These are the issues that a second (or higher) dimension would be needed to describe, and they do include a few slavery-related issues. Some of these, such as attitudes toward popular sovereignty in the territories or the slave trade, have so few writers that they cannot be estimated at all. Only two off-dimensional
issues touching on slavery have more than a few writers discussing them. Both illustrate important concepts with respect to ideology and slavery.

One is states rights, which is “significantly” related to ideology, in that its 95% Bayesian credible interval does not include 0. But it has a much smaller estimated coefficient. But states rights, then and now, is a step removed from the slavery issue. Part of the reason that the argument is made is that it is compelling to those on the other side. Many anti-slavery writers acknowledge and support the idea of states’ rights, even if they don’t think they should apply to slavery. What is more, some writers recast the question of popular sovereignty in the territories in these terms. Those who favored popular sovereignty because they felt states like California would vote to disallow slavery turned the idea of states rights around on slave-holders. This helps to illustrate the danger in taking rhetorical devices at face value.

The most significant ill-fitting slavery issue is attitudes toward blacks. Slavery in the 1800s was not a civil rights issue. Opposition to slavery among elites was often paternalistic, or even unrelated to the well-being of slaves at all. Attitudes toward blacks are more like attitudes toward women’s rights, immigrants and American Indians, all of which do not load well on the first dimension, despite having many writers discuss them.

These issues, which might be grouped together as cultural, do not help to define the dominant ideology of the 1850s. But they will become significant in the future, after the Civil War leads to a new winner on the contemporary issues and frees space on the agenda for these other issues. These data cannot tell us how well these off-dimensional issues formed their own dimension in 1850, but we know that, in the future, they will come to be related. I do think that it is notable that one component of the free labor ideology, attitudes toward labor unions, is in some ways similar to these issues. In fact, the reason it does not fit well is that writers like William H. Seward, who are otherwise consistent Whigs, are pro labor. We know that eventually, a schism in the Republican Party will give rise to the Liberal Republicans, and people like Seward are the precursors of that development.

Nativism also doesn’t seem to be a part of the dominant ideological dimension, although some Republicans later took nativist positions. But attitudes toward the Catholic Church, for instance, do not
map closely to the primary dimension. And there was a near elite consensus on immigration itself. Only the editors of the *International Review* opposed immigration, and writers from across the spectrum praised immigrants. That nativism is not on the first dimension does not necessarily explain why the issue didn’t work as a party strategy. Nativism might still have appealed to many voters. But its absence from the dominant ideology would have made it easier to ignore when it turned out not to be electorally successful.

One possible element of nativist arguments that does map well to the ideological dimension is temperance. As noted above, some of its advocates were allied with abolitionists, but for many, it was fused with attitudes toward immigration. Irish and German immigrants’ consumption of alcohol served to separate them from other Americans. The Republican Party did explore the temperance issue, but ultimately abandoned it with nativism as unworkable. They avoided the issue for the same reason that Whigs and Democrats avoided slavery. And this, too, is an issue that eventually becomes more significant in party politics.

Another set of ill-fitting issues in Figures 2 and 3 are on foreign policy, another domain that will become important as the United States grows larger and begins to have conflicts with other world powers.

The estimates for issues that have few comments on them should not be taken too seriously. But they do contribute to defining the space. And they illustrate the way in which unusual and minor issues are incorporated into an ideological dimension, and help to estimate it. Consider the question of a proposal to lower federal postal rates. Only five writers took up this question, and while the posterior mean of the discrimination parameter has a large and negative coefficient, its 95 percent credible interval includes 0. Most writers applaud the idea of lower postage rates, almost in passing. However, one objects. “The postages are now mostly paid by the capitalists of the eastern cities; to relieve them from the charge, and raise the amount from customs, is to relieve the millionaires from the charge on their business letters,
magnitudes of the discrimination parameters for these votes. Because much more data are available for Congress, we get much tighter estimates on each of the issue parameters. [FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

What is the nature of the dimension these bills define? I highlight two sets of bills in the figures. Credible intervals in solid black are for slavery bills, while those with dotted lines are trade policy bills. As expected, most trade policy bills are at the top of the figure with discrimination parameters around 6.0, and correct classification is over 90% for these bills. The slavery bills are more scattered. Their average discrimination value is, at best, less than half that of the tariff bills. Thus, the issue that most sharply divides Whigs and Democrats in Congress is trade; slavery does not distinguish the two parties.

Ten years later, however, the structure of congressional voting is markedly different. To see this, compare Figure 4 with Figure 5, which has parallel results for the 36th House (1859-1860). In the later period, slavery has become part of the ideological dimension, perhaps the most important part. The bulk of the slavery votes have very high discrimination parameters, with only a few having small ones. The average discrimination parameter for the whole model is 3.24, while for the slavery votes it is 4.98. The trade votes also have high discrimination values, with an average of 3.86. [FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

This is to be expected. The 36th Congress ushered the nation into the Civil War. By this time, the polarization between northern Republicans and southern Democrats has reached its peak, and politics was now about slavery. The inability to resolve the question caused a war.

Altogether, then, the dimension structure of pundit space in 1850 resembles the issue space in the Congress of 1860 but not that of 1850. This pattern is not consistent with a situation in which pundits rationalize party voting, but is consistent with a story in which pundits shape party coalitions.

The PRE’s for the congresses support a similar conclusion. Table 1 compares the PRE for both of these congresses with similar numbers for the pundits. For the pundits in 1850 and the Members of Congress in 1860, both slavery and trade issues have larger PRE’s. In the Congress in 1850, however, the

---

12 Without knowledge of the details of the bills, the direction of the parameters is unhelpful.

13 Bills are classified using the categories provided by Poole’s Voteview archive.
model does little for slavery and a lot for trade. The ideological space among the pundits in 1850 looks more like the space that emerges later in Congress. [TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The scaling technology thus leads to the following conclusion. Among the pundits, a noisy ideological dimension is present. The issues that define it include both slavery and the trade and economic issues that will eventually come to divide the Republican Party from the Democrats. Among Members of Congress, however, the slavery issue is off the agenda until those Republicans come to power. The legislature lagged behind the development of a new ideology on slavery. This is consistent with ideological marketing. The cleavage that developed among ideologues arrived in Congress years later.

**Party splits:** Still, comparing to Congress is not entirely clear. Slavery does not appear to be a central issue in Congress, but it is at least weakly related. Of course, with the data from Congress, we can look more directly at how the issues split the parties. The best measures of party divisions are Rice cohesion scores and measures of likeness between the parties. In this period, such measures do not indicate a strong party system. Rice cohesion scores measure how often the members of a party vote together. A score of 100 is a perfectly unified party, while a score of 0 means the party was perfectly split. [TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 2 shows Rice cohesion scores for Democrats and Whigs in 1849-1850. The Rice cohesion for the Whigs in the 31st House is 57.0, while the score for the Democrats is 43.6. Both of these scores are low, compared with an average Rice cohesion of about 70 since the Civil War, and measures of 80.3 and 88.7 for Democrats and Republicans in the 107th Congress. But on the slavery votes, the Democrats and the Whigs are even less cohesive, with measures of 34.7 and 35.4, respectively. The only time the parties do consistently separate is on trade policy votes, where their cohesions are much higher. [TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

We can also look at similarity measures. How similar are the voting blocks between the two parties? The “Likeness” measure is 100 minus the absolute value of the difference between the percent of each party voting yea. When both parties are equally supportive of the vote, the score is 100; perfect party line votes give scores of 0. So the slavery votes not only show more difference within the parties. They also show less difference between the parties. This cohesion changes by the time we get to the 36th
House. The only similarities between the two periods are in the trade votes. Trade divides the parties in both periods, but by 1859-1860, slavery has also split the parties. The similarities between the parties fall away. The 36th House is a chamber that is divided, on trade and on slavery.

This pattern should be familiar. Students of antebellum parties have consistently shown that while the Whigs and the Democrats were distinct on a number of issues, slavery was not one of them. Gerring (1998), for instance, shows that there is little difference on slavery-related issues in the Whig and Democratic platforms in 1850 (p.110). The division grows later, when the Whigs are replaced in his analysis by Republicans.

**Ideological argumentation:** The statistical analysis above suggests an ideological division. But the data are richer than that. We have the actual arguments the writers are making on behalf of their ideologies. The claim in this paper is that ideologues have created a set of mutually consistent issue positions, and that positions on one imply positions on another. We can examine their arguments to see how this works.

The writers make conscious efforts to link the issues, often in the same article. For instance, one article in the *United States Democratic Review* (1850a) places government restrictions on trade in the context of a history of Northern misunderstandings of the needs of the South. Samuel Beman (1850), writing in the *United States Democratic Review*, links the tariff with an oppressive central, and Northern, government, and its opposition with the principle of states’ rights. Another article, one of many of its kind, argues that the global free trade economy relies on slave labor because it relies on agricultural products, that slavery and free trade are natural complements to each other, and that Great Britain suffers for having failed to recognize this and thus emancipating its slaves. Britain wants America to follow suit, so that it may compete again. But if that happened:

> At the most moderate calculation, there would be no very extensive production of cotton—the factories of New England, as well as of Europe, would lose their supplies——American shipping lose two-thirds of its freights. … (United States Democratic Review 1850b)
Anti-slavery arguments also worked to tie together the elements of the free soil ideology. The New-Englander (1850) says that California was rescued from the “black flag of slavery” by the discovery of gold:

Just at this crisis the hand of God uncovered the gold-mines; and thenceforth it was settled that California at least must be free. In her golden dust there was a motive power which was sure to bring northern enterprise to her shores, and speedily to fill her valleys and cover her hills with men who would be true to the principles of their fathers, and would honor their early homes by refusing to have fellowship with oppression. But why might not the sons of the South be attracted thither, in as great or greater numbers than those of the North? Sure enough, why? Not because they were less the lovers of wealth, but because when there is a demand for enterprise, skill and labor, they are never found volunteering first and in greatest numbers.

In other words, the Lord works through the profit-motive of enterprising, hard-working Northerners who will come to California to win their fortunes as they build up the American nation. And their enterprise will best any efforts by Southerners to come to California, since mining gold, like building a nation, requires “enterprise, skill and labor” that slave-holders, reliant on their slaves, have not developed. This short passage thus touches on almost every element of the free labor ideology.

These arguments have been noticed before, of course. What is notable is that these arguments, tying the commercial/agrarian division to slavery, dominate the ideological division. The scaling here shows us which issues are more strongly related to the others. No articles in this sample argue for the connection between slavery and wage labor. No articles explain why farmers in the new territories should be afraid of competition from slave labor, even though some applaud new territories for voting to enter the union as free states.

And so I argue that what we have witnessed was ideological marketing, and not partisan justification. The free labor ideology that Foner described was not an isolated set of ideas brought to the
table by the Republican Party. Party leaders still had to craft a winning coalition from these ideas, but the initial building blocks were there. The free labor ideology, and its pro-slavery counterpart, defined a discourse that divided intellectuals, and ultimately the country.

Section V: CONCLUSION

Ideology is a central component of modern politics — so central that we use ideological labels with ease. But the meaning of those labels is constantly being re-defined by the political intellectuals who discuss ideological opinions.

These intellectuals mean to influence politics, and I think they do. But the traditional way of thinking about how an actor might influence politics is to ask whether the policy positions advocated by that actor are later enacted by policymakers. This is an important question, but it is perhaps not the most important question. When policy change happens, some favor it while others oppose it. It is notable how often the coalitions defined by one issue are the same as those defined by another. Political parties are one reason this happens. But ideology is another. The greatest way that ideology influences politics may not be issue-by-issue, but through binding issues together into a coalition.

A perfect partisan would not much care who his logroll partners are. So long as they are loyal and they help him get elected and re-elected, they qualify. But ideological thinkers do care. For this reason, I suspect that the coalitions that are defined by ideology will work their way into party coalitions. Partisans need to worry about other things, including loyalty to their past collaborators and the electoral incentive from their constituents. And so sometimes ideology will be a nuisance -- often a very insistent nuisance.

It was especially insistent in the antebellum period. Slavery was an issue that threatened party coalitions. It was a threat largely because it was so intractable. It could not be resolved without forcing one side to accept the other side’s position. Politicians hoping to deal with the nation’s business thus tried to look the other way. But ideological thinkers did not. Since they care about what they think is right, rather than on what will win election, they saw no risk in talking about slavery. So they engaged it, even though that road led to the end of the second party system and the onset of the Civil War.
A similar process may explain changes at other times. The Civil Rights movement, for instance, began outside the party system but ultimately shaped the parties. Owing in part to the party’s history with slavery that we’ve just discussed, the Democratic coalition included segregationists. But the party eventually became the party of civil rights. It did so when the economic liberalism came to include racial liberalism as well, which led northern liberal activists to be intolerant of southern conservatives in the Democratic Party. This transformation has been well-studied (see for instance Carmines and Stimson 1989). But what was the origin of the ideological pressure for partisan change? The party of labor unions might have opposed civil rights, had ideology not pressured them in another direction.

The religious conservative movement in the Republican Party is another example. The evolution of the issue of abortion has also been carefully studied. Voters did not polarize on the issue until the 1990s. Members of Congress polarized in the 1980s (Adams 1997). Activist groups take up stands – after Roe v. Wade in 1973. But ideological elites had already chosen sides in 1970. They soon made their influence felt in the Republican Party. The religious character of the Republican Party has been shaped over the course of the last few decades. But the religious character of modern conservatism dates at least back to William F. Buckley’s God and Man at Yale.

If these interpretations are correct, then the most significant changes to the party system in U.S. history were driven not only by the electoral calculations of politicians, but by the ideological thinking of public intellectuals.
WORKS CITED


### TABLE 1: PROPORTIONATE REDUCTION OF ERRORS, PUNDITS AND CONGRESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>31st Congress (1849-1850)</th>
<th>36th Congress (1859-1860)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pundits 1850</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All issues</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery issues</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade issues</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 2: PARTY COHESION IN THE 31ST AND 36TH HOUSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whig</th>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>Likeness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>31st HOUSE</strong></td>
<td>Rice Cohesion</td>
<td>Rice Cohesion</td>
<td>Likeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Votes</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery Votes</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Votes</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36th HOUSE</strong></td>
<td>Rice Cohesion</td>
<td>Rice Cohesion</td>
<td>Likeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Votes</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavery Votes</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Votes</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 2: 1850 Discrimination Parameters

- RELIGION
- TEMPERANCE
- MANUFACTURING
- IN NATIONAL BANK
- PUBLIC WORKS
- SECESSION
- ABOLITION
- SEWARD, WILLIAM
- WHIG PARTY
- INTERVENTION OVER INDIA
- FREE SOUL
- REPUBLICAN PARTY
- MISSIONARIES
- NORTH
- FELONIES
- CROMWELL, OLIVER
- GREELEY, HORACE
- CORPS LAW
- TARIFF
- ANCIENT GREECE
- COLONIALISM
- RENTERS
- PAPER MONEY
- MILITARY POLITIC
- INEQUALITY
- BRITAIN
- PURITANS
- ISLAM
- POPE
- COPYRIGHT LAW
- MORMONS
- CALVINISM
- BLACKS
- EMERSON, RALPH
- CATHOLIC CHURCH
- EUROPEAN REVOLUTION
- AMERICAN CULTURE
- SLAVE TRADE IN DOVER
- TALLEYRAND
- CRIMINAL PRISON
- COMPROMISE OF 1850
- LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE
- PATENTS
- GERMANY
- FRANCE
- PROTESTANTISM
- GUIZOT, M.
- MARRIAGE
- WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE
- WOMEN’S RIGHTS
- FEDERAL POWER
- NEWSPAPERS
- CAPITAL PUNISHMENT
- CORRUPTION
- MEXICANS
- SECTIONALISM
- BUSINESS
- RAILROAD CORPORATION
- EDUCATION — RELIGION
- CALHOUN, JOHN C.
- ANNEXATION OF OUR COUNTRIES
- ASTRONOMY
- NAPOLEON, LOUIS
- PRUSSIAN REVOLUTION
- JEWS
- TAMMANY HALL
- SLAVERY — POPULISM
- STATES RIGHTS
- EDUCATION — RELIGION
- FREEDOM REVOLUTION
- ADAMS, JOHN
- IMMIGRANTS
- WESTWARD EXPANSION
- DISPLAY OF WEALTH
- UNIVERSAL SUFFERING
- NATIONALISM
- BRITISH LAW
- SLAVERY — EXPANSION
- FRENCH
- JEFFERSON, THOMAS
- DOUGLAS, SENATOR WALKER, GOV.
- TECHNOLOGY
- LABOR
- MAJORITY RULE
- HOMESTEAD ACT
- EVOLUTION
- MEXICAN WAR
- CARRIE THOMAS
- SLAVE TRADE — B
- CORPORAL PUNISHMENT
- SLAVE TRADE — A
- CLAY HENRY
- SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE
- WEBSTER, DANIEL
- FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW
- JACKSON, ANDREW
- PARTISANSHIP
- CASS, LEWIS
- FREE TRADE
- SOUTH
- DEMOCRATIC PARTY
- POSTAGE RATES — SLAVERY
FIGURE 4: Discrim. Magnitudes in U.S. House (1849–1850)

Solid bars: Race votes
Dotted bars: Trade policy votes
Tips only: All other votes

Solid bars: Race votes
Dotted bars: Trade policy votes
Tips only: All other votes