

Who are the spatial voting violators?

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Abstract

Most applied work on spatial voting theory has sought to measure whether voters choose the candidates whose ideological positions are closest to theirs. Few of these studies have used the most basic measurement tool of proximity voting that the American National Election Studies (ANES) provide. This article uses ANES seven-point ideological placements from 1972 through 2004 to distinguish between spatial voters and voters who are ideologically closer to one candidate yet vote for another candidate. For each of these cycles, between 9 and 15% of voters are spatial voting violators. These individuals demonstrate below-average levels of political knowledge, activism, and interest, yet considering the direction of the violation yields a mix of potential incentives for violations.

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A central premise of the median voter theory, and spatial theories of voting more generally, is that citizens vote for candidates based on the competing candidates' ideological proximity to the voter's own most preferred policy position, or ideal point. Yet there is a broad consensus that unidimensional models of this nature — models in which voters evaluate candidates, for instance, solely in terms of their liberalism or conservatism — do not accurately capture voting behavior in large electorates. Few studies find strong evidence that voters, in the aggregate, choose candidates based on which candidate is closest to them ideologically, or that candidates follow the precepts of this theory and gravitate towards the political center. In general literature on U.S. presidential elections, there is support for this notion — candidates far from political center do often lose, and their losses are often blamed on unpopular

ideological appeals — but the consensus in the research has been that ideological proximity is not a particularly important factor. Studies of presidential voting have instead focused on other determinants of vote choice — the state of the economy, candidate personality, fundraising, or incumbency — or on alternative spatial logics such as [Rabinowitz and MacDonald's \(1989\)](#) directional theory.

The notion of proximity-based voting remains at least intuitively appealing, however. It is a useful tool for explaining voting in small, well-informed bodies such as congressional committees, and certainly its internal logic is compelling to anyone who accepts that candidates or officeholders can be categorized or ranked according to their views on economic or social issues. Among those familiar with ranking tools such as the rankings of members of Congress provided by Americans for Democratic Action and the American Conservative Union, or even the [Poole and Rosenthal \(1997\)](#) DW-NOMINATE scores, it seems logical that

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one would, in general, find one member more favorable than another according to the numerical rankings of members and a general sense that one would place one's self at a broadly defined position on this scale — at either end, or perhaps in the middle. This can even be a campaign tactic, as witnessed by the Bush campaign's proclamation that John Kerry was “the most liberal senator” according to the *National Journal's* numerical rankings.¹

It has long been a tenet of survey research, however, that a sizeable number of voters do not evaluate politics or politicians in ideological terms, and that, in fact, many voters do not even have a well-defined idea of what it means to be liberal or conservative (Converse, 1964; Stokes, 1963). Some voters both understand and evaluate candidates in these terms, some understand the terms but do not evaluate candidates along these lines, and still others do neither. If it is clear that some voters choose based on ideological proximity and some do not, however, then it is logical to ask what differentiates these two types of voters. Can we predict who will choose to vote for a candidate based on ideological proximity?

In this article I analyze the difference between these types of voters using seven-point ideological scales from 1972 to 2004 American National Election Studies (Sapiro et al., 2005). In each presidential election year during this time, respondents were asked to place themselves on a seven-point scale, from most liberal to most conservative, and then were asked to place the two major-party candidates on this scale as well. I simply measure the distance between the voter and each candidate, identify the candidate to whom the voter is closest, and then check the voter's choice to see who has voted for the candidate closest on this scale and who has not. I consider a vote for either candidate to be in accordance with the spatial logic when the candidates are an equal distance away from the respondent, and I exclude all votes for third-party candidates and abstentions. Given these limitations, the small range of the seven-point scale, and the fact that respondents are, in fact, defining ideology here rather than confronting objective measures, this is a rather conservative test of the spatial logic.

This article is also a deliberately simple test — I would contend that the insertion of the seven-point scales into the ANES is designed to facilitate the straightforward tests and comparisons I present here, and it does seem odd that such tests have not been done frequently. To the extent that the results here are supported by other work, one can conclude that it is

not necessarily as difficult to develop baseline measurements of proximity voting as one might assume from the extant literature. I limit the analysis here to comparing characteristics of those who have voted according to the unidimensional spatial logic with those who have not, to see what types of differences there are. I focus here on demographic differences, to assess whether the voters who violate the spatial logic are, for instance, less educated, from a particular region of the country, of a particular party, or less politically knowledgeable. I then present a series of probit equations, both for the full 1972–2004 sample and for the sample in each year. It is important to note, however, that there is a form of rationality to these decisions even absent a spatial logic. I explore one obvious reason here — partisanship — but there are surely others pertaining to group affect or candidate traits.

Most ANES respondents do attempt to categorize the candidates and themselves ideologically. The percentage of respondents who can make placements has also steadily been growing over the past 30 years. In 1972, 57.2% of respondents answered the seven-point self-placement question, and 50.9% of respondents could place themselves and the two major-party presidential nominees. The percentage of respondents has steadily increased since then, peaking in 1996, when 77.5% of respondents placed themselves and 73.7% answered all three placement questions. Over the full 1972–2004 period, 58.5% of respondents answered all of the placement questions.

Among these respondents, the vast majority vote in accordance with their self-professed ideology and their interpretations of the ideology of the candidates. The percentage of voters who do not choose the candidate closest to them averages 12.1% over the 1972–2004 time period, fluctuating between a high of 14.5% (in 1988) and a low of 9.7% (in 1992). Furthermore, 60.5% of what I shall call in this article the “spatial voting violators” or SVVs, only violate the spatial logic by one point on the seven point scale (for instance, ranking themselves as a 4, and choosing the candidate who they rank a 6 rather than the candidate they rank a 3). A substantial majority of SVVs (70.5%) place themselves between the two candidates, so their vote choice may indicate either that SVVs view themselves as being more moderate than both candidates or that SVVs may still behave in a manner consistent with the Rabinowitz and MacDonald directional argument.

As I shall demonstrate here, many SVVs fall into easily defined types. Many flipped the candidates on the ideological scale (claiming that the Democrat was more conservative than the Republican, for instance),

¹ For discussion, see Annenberg Political Fact Check (2004) and Clinton et al. (2004).

many were less politically active or felt less politically efficacious, and many displayed socioeconomic traits that have been found to correlate with lower levels of political knowledge. These results suggest that in general, one can draw conclusions about voting behavior based on the relatively simple ideological distance questions in surveys, as long as one is cautious about which voters are less likely to follow this logic.

1. Spatial voting in theory and practice

I shall assume that the reader is familiar with the basic spatial, or median voter, theory as articulated by Downs (1957). Although the theory has been applied to numerous voting outcomes in small, elite bodies (see, e.g., Krehbiel, 1998), there are few rigorous tests in large-scale elections. Many textbook-style explanations of spatial voting have considered the relationship between candidate positions and voter positions in a multidimensional framework (see Enelow and Hinich, 1984, pp. 169–206; Hinich and Munger, 1994, pp. 153–160). Aldrich's (1980) *Before the Convention* and Page's (1978) *Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections* are both extended analyses of the fit of median voter models to several presidential elections. Yet few studies have undertaken as simple a task as comparing voter self-placement and candidate self-placement.² Enelow and Hinich and Hinich and Munger both develop complicated indices using multiple issue-specific ANES questions and several of the thermometer questions. Merrill and Grofman (1999) use the ANES thermometer questions to place candidates and survey respondents, drawing on two German political scientists' (Kramer and Rattinger, 1997) work comparing American and German candidates. Aldrich and Page rely on a number of public opinion polls but do not spend a substantial amount of time on the ANES seven-point ideology scales. This is a puzzling lacuna in the literature in large part because the ANES questions seem designed for just this type of analysis.

Similarly, the trend among more recent papers has been to integrate the various seven-point issue scales provided in the ANES (of which there are on average seven per candidate each year), or to integrate these scales with other types of candidate measurements provided by voters. Hence, Erikson and Romero (1990)

develop a complex, multidimensional model of vote choice based on the open-ended likes and dislikes questions, and Dow (1998) uses several different seven-point scaling questions to compute a candidate position and thereby evaluate the Rabinowitz and MacDonald (1989) directional argument. Adams et al. (2006) use ideological distance on the seven-point scale as one of several measures of citizen alienation from or indifference between the candidates. Again, however, the basic building block here — how many voters actually fail to follow the spatial logic, and what types of voters they are — remains elusive.

This gap begs the question of whether there might be something wrong with, or something overly simplistic to, simply using the ideological placement questions. To be certain, these questions do pose a rather rudimentary test of spatial voting for several reasons. The first and most obvious defect is that respondents may simply project their own views onto candidates, placing the candidate they prefer closer to their own position, irrespective of where that candidate actually stands or where they know the candidate to stand on individual policy issues (see Bartels, 1988, pp. 104–107). Second, a variant of this defect is that respondents may tailor their responses such that they result in a proximity-voting outcome. In the context of the 2004 ANES, for instance, respondents are first asked to place themselves, then asked to place George W. Bush, John Kerry, and Ralph Nader (there are no intervening questions). If the respondent has initially given a response of “4,” then is asked about the two major-party candidates, the respondent may strive for consistency in placing Bush and Kerry, knowing how he plans to vote. And third, voters may have difficulty pinning a candidate to a particular spot — just as candidates may be ambiguous about their positions, voters may see the candidates as being “mostly liberal but conservative on some issues” or some other combination. Just as candidates are expected to strive for ambiguity in many spatial models (Shepsle, 1972), so voters may perceive candidates ambiguously.

In defense of using alternate measures, these simple scales also do not capture the ways in which voters prioritize issues — a voter may believe that overall a candidate is too liberal, yet find that on her primary issue of concern that candidate is better than the other candidate. Issue-specific questions may be better at identifying why people vote for particular candidates, especially when paired with questions on what the respondent believes the most important issues to be. Nonetheless, a relatively straightforward analysis such as the one I present here is valuable for two reasons. First, it provides a baseline test of the extent of proximity voting,

² In fact, ideological scaling in Senate elections may have received more attention than scaling in presidential elections; several studies have used Senate elections to test the merits of spatial and directional theories (Lewis and King, 1999), assess reasons for abstention (Plane and Gershtenson, 2004), and assess the determinants of voters' placement of Senators (Husted et al., 1995).

which might usefully precede any more complicated analyses. That is, in presenting applications of any spatial theory, it seems useful to first provide a simple analysis — “Do voters choose in accordance with their placement of the candidates on liberalism/conservatism scales?” The fact that such tests are lacking in the existing comprehensive treatments of spatial voting renders even commonplace assertions, such as the assertion that George McGovern was seen by most voters as being too liberal, either unsubstantiated or needlessly complicated. Second, few studies of proximity voting and other rational choice logics of voting allow for mixed electorates — for the notion that some voters choose based on ideological proximity while others do not. Identifying the prevalence of proximity voting, then, seems again a useful endeavor, especially when one begins to address who votes based on proximity and who does not.

2. Hypotheses and method

All data used in this analysis are drawn from the presidential election years from 1972 to 2004 in the ANES cumulative data set. A complete list of variables is provided in [Appendix](#).

2.1. General hypotheses about SVVs

For the most part, the socioeconomic attributes that one might expect to correlate with spatial voting violations are relatively straightforward, and they are worth applying to voters irrespective of their ultimate vote choice (that is, we should not necessarily expect voters to break for one party or the other). First, in measuring socioeconomic factors, this analysis draws largely upon political knowledge studies. [Delli Carpini and Keeter \(1996, pp. 144–45\)](#) identify several variables that might affect political knowledge, including education, gender, and age. Each of these variables is highly significant in multivariate analyses of different political knowledge domains. I also insert an income variable into my analyses, although most studies of political knowledge and political participation (see, e.g., [Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993](#)) have found that while income may be related to knowledge, it is not income *per se* that affects political knowledge but other correlates of income such as education. Thus,

H1. SVVs will be less wealthy, less well-educated, and younger than proximity voters. SVVs also may be more likely to be women.

Second, if we assume that developing a sense of candidate liberalism or conservatism is a function of

involvement with political campaigns, there are several ways to use ANES data to assess citizens’ political engagement. The ANES contains four separate indices that are of use for this purpose. The political discussion index measures how often the respondent discusses politics with others; the media exposure index summarizes exposure to political news in different media; the campaign participation index adds different types of participation in campaigns; and the external efficacy index aggregates various responses to questions regarding whether an individual has an effect on politicians.

H2. SVVs will be less politically engaged, as measured by their involvement in political campaigns, their propensity to discuss politics with others, their exposure to politics in the media, and their sense of political efficacy, than proximity voters.

Third, SVVs may merely make mistakes. In this article I insert a dichotomous variable if respondents have “flipped” the candidates on the liberal/conservative scale — for instance, by responding that John Kerry is more conservative than George W. Bush. One can read this action in one of two ways. First, the respondents may know little about the candidates or about ideology, and so may merely be making guesses. That is, they may not know that one is “supposed” to vote for the candidate closest in ideology. Respondents may also simply be making a mistake in their statements — they may have misheard the question or the poles of the scale or have become confused about which end is which between the personal question and the candidate questions. That is, they may get the question right when asked about themselves but mishear it when asked about the candidates. It is, of course, debatable whether respondents are wrong in their placement at all — they may, in fact, sincerely believe that, for instance, Jimmy Carter is more conservative than Gerald Ford — but one can argue that SVVs are more likely to place the Democrat to the right of the Republican than are other voters.

H3. SVVs are more likely than proximity voters to view the Democratic candidate as being more conservative than the Republican candidate.

2.2. Hypotheses pertaining to the direction of the violation

Differences may also exist that relate to the direction of the violation. That is, predicted Democratic voters who choose the Republican may exhibit a different socioeconomic profile from predicted Republican voters who choose the Democrat. Of the socioeconomic traits

discussed above, the trait most commonly associated with partisan differences is income. Research has consistently shown that Republican voters are wealthier than Democratic voters. Although below I provide separate equations for Democrats and Republicans according to all of the socioeconomic variables, one might expect income to be most directly related to the direction of the violation, with predicted Democratic SVVs being wealthier than Democratic proximity voters, and the converse being true of predicted Republican voters:

H4. Predicted Democratic SVVs will be more likely to be wealthy than Democratic proximity voters, and predicted Republican SVVs will be more likely to be less wealthy than Republican proximity voters.

A second trait of relevance to the direction of the violation is party identification. Two recent papers (Van Houweling and Sniderman, 2005; Jessee, 2006) juxtapose voting based on ideological proximity voting with the traditional Michigan school model of partisanship (Campbell et al., 1960). Both papers find that partisanship can distort or interfere with proximity voting. Furthermore, both contend that partisanship is most likely to trump proximity voting for less politically sophisticated voters — the same types of voters that the above hypotheses identify as potential SVVs. While the aim here is not to provide rigorous measures of political sophistication of the type used by Van Houweling and Sniderman or Jessee, merely inserting a simple party identification variable can capture some of the logic of SVVs.

H5. Predicted Democratic SVVs will be more likely to self-identify as Republicans than Democratic proximity voters, and predicted Republican SVVs will be more likely to identify as Democrats than Republican proximity voters.

Finally, factors specific to both the voter and the candidate may influence decisions to violate the spatial logic. One simple factor is where that candidate is

from. I did not seek to identify home-state voters in this analysis, in large part because the small number of such voters would pose problems. It is possible, however, to measure whether Southerners are more likely to violate the spatial logic than non-Southerners. If they do, it may be for two reasons. First, given the historical advantage of the Democratic Party in the South for much of the time preceding the 1972–2004 period, voters from the South may be conservative but still favor the Democratic Party. The decline of the Democratic advantage in the South was clearly underway during this period, but some lingering affection may have affected responses. Second, the Democratic candidate was a Southerner in five of the nine elections covered here (all but 1972, 1984, 1988, and 2004) so voters may have been choosing a candidate from their region over a candidate who shared their ideological beliefs. I also explore this hypothesis.

H6. SVVs who chose the Democratic candidate are more likely than proximity voters to be from the South.

3. Spatial voting and spatial voting violators, 1972–2004

As a first step in assessing who does and who does not vote according to ideological proximity to the candidates, Tables 1 and 2 present the predicted and actual vote choice of ANES respondents, by year, arranged in several different ways. Table 1 simply presents the SVVs by year, and Table 2 breaks out the SVVs according to which party's candidate they chose. SVVs are relatively constant across years, but the direction of their violation is not. In all but two elections they break for the winning candidate; the only exceptions are 1976, when there is no significant difference between Democratic and Republican SVVs, and 1988, where more break towards Michael Dukakis. Tied voters, as well, tend to break for the winning candidate, with the

Table 1
Spatial voting violators by year, 1972–2004

Spatial voting violator?	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	Total
No (%)	88.3 (962)	87.6 (789)	86.6 (471)	86.3 (876)	85.5 (714)	90.3 (895)	90.6 (754)	87.1 (372)	87.9 (569)	87.9 (6402)
Yes (%)	11.7 (127)	12.4 (112)	13.4 (73)	13.7 (139)	14.5 (121)	9.7 (96)	9.4 (78)	12.9 (55)	12.1 (78)	12.1 (879)
Total <i>N</i>	1089	901	544	1015	835	991	832	427	647	7281

Includes only major party voters who could place both candidates and themselves on seven-point scale. "No violation" category includes ties. *N* is given in parentheses. Column percentages sum to 100.

Table 2
Spatial vote violations and ties by vote decision

Year	No violation	Tie (no violation)				Violation		Other (no violation)			
	Closer to D voted D, closer to R, voted R (%)	Voted D (%)	Voted R (%)	Voted third party (%)	Did not vote (%)	Closer to R, voted D (%)	Closer to D, voted R (%)	Closer D, voted third party (%)	Closer to R, voted third party (%)	Closer to D, did not vote (%)	Closer to R, did not vote (%)
1972	57.4 (777)	5.3 (72)	8.3 (113)	0.1 (2)	4.3 (58)	3.8 (52)	5.5 (75)	0.3 (4)	0.6 (8)	5.4 (73)	8.9 (120)
1976	50.9 (583)	9.0 (103)	9.0 (103)	0.2 (2)	6.6 (76)	4.8 (55)	5.0 (57)	0.7 (8)	0.9 (10)	7.6 (87)	5.3 (61)
1980	49.0 (377)	4.3 (33)	7.9 (61)	1.4 (11)	5.7 (44)	2.7 (21)	6.8 (52)	6.0 (46)	2.3 (18)	7.7 (59)	6.2 (48)
1984	49.9 (781)	4.9 (64)	9.0 (117)	0.2 (3)	5.7 (74)	3.1 (40)	7.6 (99)	0.0 (0)	0.3 (4)	8.5 (110)	7.1 (92)
1988	51.7 (671)	6.1 (66)	5.3 (57)	0.1 (1)	5.8 (63)	6.3 (68)	4.9 (53)	0.4 (4)	0.2 (2)	8.2 (89)	7.9 (85)
1992	45.4 (839)	6.0 (89)	3.5 (52)	3.4 (51)	4.6 (69)	3.8 (57)	2.6 (39)	6.6 (98)	6.4 (96)	7.5 (112)	5.0 (75)
1996	52.8 (715)	5.2 (59)	3.8 (43)	1.5 (17)	4.1 (46)	5.3 (60)	1.6 (18)	3.1 (35)	2.8 (32)	8.3 (94)	6.2 (70)
2000	54.1 (346)	7.7 (41)	4.0 (21)	0.6 (3)	5.5 (29)	4.7 (25)	5.7 (30)	1.9 (10)	0.9 (5)	5.3 (26)	5.3 (26)
2004	65.1 (506)	3.1 (24)	5.0 (39)	0.3 (2)	2.4 (19)	3.6 (28)	6.4 (50)	0.1 (1)	0.9 (7)	8.0 (62)	5.0 (39)
Total	54.8 (5245)	5.8 (551)	6.3 (606)	1.0 (92)	5.0 (478)	4.2 (406)	4.9 (473)	2.2 (206)	1.9 (182)	7.5 (714)	6.5 (618)

Includes only respondents who could place both candidates and themselves on seven-point scale and answered vote choice question. *N* is given in parentheses. Row percentages sum to 100.

exceptions of 1976, when they split evenly again, 1988, where they break more towards Dukakis, and 2000, where a majority break for popular vote winner Al Gore. Both of these trends suggest that winning candidates may hold a valence advantage, be it in terms of charisma, competence, or other non-ideological factors, which may sway even some voters who do not agree with them on ideological issues (see [Groseclose, 2001](#)). One can also conclude from each of these tables that SVVs are not numerous, but that they are a consistent presence in elections and that their tendency to support the winning candidate indicates that they are not dramatically different from proximity voters in their overall voting tendencies.

3.1. Respondent characteristics

When one considers the bivariate relationships between age group, income, and education level and the percentage of SVVs, relatively predictable patterns occur. For instance, 15.3% of 17-to-24-year-olds are SVVs, as opposed to 10.0% of those 45–54. About 15.1% of those earning between \$15,000 and \$29,999 are SVVs while only 11.5% of those earning over \$125,000 are SVVs. And 19.9% of those with only a grade school education are SVVs while only 7.9% of those with a graduate degree are SVVs. The percentage change in each of these groups is not extraordinarily large, but it is significant and it does change as one would expect based on other studies of political knowledge.

A more nuanced outcome results from consideration of the relationship between the propensity to violate the spatial logic and the various ANES indices of political

activity and media exposure. [Table 3](#) shows these relationships. For two of them — campaign participation and external efficacy — the relationship is as expected. But there is no relationship for media exposure — perhaps in part because media exposure does not correlate with political knowledge — and the relationship for political discussions is actually the reverse of what is expected, with SVVs reporting that they engage in more political discussions than do proximity voters.

In [Table 4](#) I present the “party flipping” or “candidate flipping” responses according to whether one is an SVV. SVVs are significantly more likely than proximity voters to respond that the Democratic Party is more conservative than the Republican Party, that they do not know which party is more conservative, or that the Democratic candidate is more conservative than the Republican candidate. As noted above, this is not necessarily a matter of interpreting the candidates differently than others would, and it does not fit neatly into the other “respondent characteristics” categories. For one reason, or another, however, SVVs are more likely to have drawn different conclusions about candidate ideology than have most other voters.

There is reason, then, to expect that socioeconomic factors, including age, education, income, and gender may influence one’s propensity to violate the spatial logic in one’s voting choice. In addition, several other characteristics of the respondent, including party identification, political engagement, and one’s region of the country, may also influence one’s propensity to be an SVV. [Table 5](#) presents three separate probit models of the propensity to violate the logic of proximity voting. The first equation considers all violators, using

Table 3
Spatial voting violators by knowledge and activism indexes

Spatial voting violator?	Mean knowledge/activism index scores			
	Campaign participation index	Media exposure index	Political discussion index	External efficacy index
No	1.96 (1.14)	3.64 (1.04)	2.92 (1.23)	61.94 (39.65)
Yes	1.71 (0.96)	3.57 (0.98)	3.20 (1.25)	57.53 (40.71)
Total	1.93 (1.12)	3.63 (1.03)	2.95 (1.24)	61.41 (39.80)
<i>F</i>	40.98	2.32	10.57	9.50
Sig.	<0.01	Not significant	<0.01	<0.01

Campaign participation index is a summary of responses to individual ANES questions on participatory activities: trying to influence other voters, attending political meetings, working for a party or candidate, displaying a campaign button or bumper sticker, and donating money to a party or candidate. Lowest value is 1; highest value is 6.

Media exposure index is a summary of individual ANES questions on media exposure to candidates: watching television shows about the election, hearing radio coverage of the election, reading articles about the election in magazines, and reading articles about the election in newspapers. Lowest value is 1; highest value is 5.

Political discussion index measures how often respondent discusses politics with family or friends. Values are number of days each week – lowest value is 0, highest value is 7.

External efficacy index is a 0–100 scale of responses to two ANES questions – “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think” (question wording was changed in 1990) and “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” Higher scores represent individuals with a higher sense of external efficacy.

All index means calculated for major party voters only. Standard deviation is given in parentheses.

traits that are not necessarily specific to the direction of the violation – that is, to whether one ultimately voted for a Democrat or a Republican. The second equation considers only respondents who were ideologically closer to the Democratic candidate, assessing the propensity of respondents to violate the proximity voting logic and vote for the Republican candidate. And the third includes all voters who were closer to the Republican candidate, assessing the probability of voting for the Democrat.

It is evident from the first column that the likelihood of violating the spatial logic decreases with education and campaign participation. It is also strongly influenced by having flipped the candidates on the ideological scale. One might, in turn, attribute the propensity to flip candidates on the scale to a lack of education;

because this propensity may also merely reflect confusion on the part of the respondent, however, I have left it in the analysis and have not interacted it with education.

In Table 5, then, education is the lone characteristic in Hypothesis 1 that is influential; SVVs are less well-educated than proximity voters, but they are not likely to be less wealthy or younger than proximity voters, nor are they more likely to be women. While three of the four political knowledge measures discussed in Hypothesis 2 are significant when considered by themselves, only campaign participation is significant in Table 5, and its effects are rather weak, although in the expected direction. Hypothesis 3, which states that SVVs are more likely to have flipped the candidates on the ideological scale, is clearly borne out.

Table 4
Spatial vote violators and “flipping” of the parties or candidates

Spatial voting violator?	Which party is more conservative?				Which candidate is more conservative?		
	Republicans (%)	Democrats (%)	Don’t know/neither (%)	Total <i>N</i> (%)	Republican/neither (%)	Democrat (%)	Total <i>N</i> (%)
No	63.9 (3070)	7.5 (359)	28.6 (1376)	100.0 (4805)	90.7 (5808)	9.3 (594)	100.0 (6402)
Yes	52.5 (363)	12.9 (87)	34.7 (233)	100.0 (673)	75.1 (660)	24.9 (219)	100.0 (879)
Total	62.5 (3423)	8.1 (446)	29.4 (1609)	100.0 (5478)	88.8 (6468)	11.2 (813)	100.0 (7281)

For party question, $\chi^2 = 46.77$; $p < 0.01$ for 2 df.

For candidate question, $\chi^2 = 190.5$; $p < 0.01$ for 1 df.

The parties question places ties in a separate category; the candidate question (computed from the seven-point candidate scales) does not because by definition a spatial voting violation cannot occur if respondent gives both candidates the same placement. Thus, there is no “don’t know/neither” category for candidates.

The parties question was not asked in 1980, 1996, or 2000.

N is given in parentheses.

Table 5
The effect of respondent characteristics on spatial voting violations, probit (1972–2004)

	All observations	Predicted Democratic voters	Predicted Republican voters
Age	–0.015 (0.012)	0.037 (0.020)	0.0061 (0.021)
Income	–0.0061 (0.020)	0.11** (0.033)	–0.084* (0.035)
Education	–0.077** (0.023)	–0.12** (0.039)	0.044 (0.041)
Gender	0.024 (0.039)	0.037 (0.066)	0.015 (0.068)
Flipped candidates	0.59** (0.053)	0.32** (0.085)	0.63** (0.097)
Campaign participation index	–0.091** (0.020)	–0.17** (0.035)	–0.011 (0.034)
Media exposure index	–0.018 (0.022)	0.11** (0.038)	–0.036 (0.040)
Political discussion index	0.041 (0.030)	0.093 (0.049)	0.015 (0.055)
External efficacy index	–0.00052 (0.00050)	0.0021* (0.00086)	–0.0027** (0.00084)
Party identification	–	0.92** (0.039)	–0.80** (0.037)
South	–	–0.040 (0.079)	0.18** (0.077)
Constant	–1.00** (0.18)	–0.83** (0.33)	–71** (0.34)
log Likelihood	–2581.21	–920.97	–869.10
Pseudo- R^2	0.037	0.28	0.30
Sample size	7281	2808	3316

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Turning to columns two and three, which consider the direction of the violation, it is evident that having flipped the candidates plays the same role as in the equation which considers all violators. The direction-specific equations are intriguing in regards to a variety of other factors, however. In accordance with Hypothesis 4, income is positively correlated with violations in favor of the Republican and negatively correlated with violations in favor of the Democrat. Other factors related to political sophistication, as measured by the external efficacy index and the media exposure index, have a weak but significant and positive effect on the violations of predicted Democratic voters, while education has a negative effect. The political discussion index falls just short of significance at the 0.05 level. In the case of predicted Republican voters who choose the Democrat, income has the effect predicted in Hypothesis 4, education has no effect, and the external efficacy index, which has a small and negative effect, is the only one of the indices that has any effect. It would appear, then, that the party-specific equations present a mix of more sophisticated choices and less sophisticated choices.³

³ A further party-related difference, not captured in this table, is in the mean placement of the candidates. While proximity voters and expected Republican SVVs (that is, respondents closer to the Republican who voted for the Democrat) place the Democratic candidate and the Republican candidate at roughly the same spot (approximately 3.5 and 5.4 on the scale), expected Democratic SVVs (respondents who were closest to the Democrat but chose the Republican), placed the candidates much closer together, with a mean score of 4.04 for the Democrat and 4.83 for the Republican.

The major effect shown in columns two and three, however, is due to party identification. As predicted in Hypothesis 5, predicted Democratic SVVs are far more likely to identify as Republicans than Democratic proximity voters, while predicted Republican SVVs are more likely to identify as Democrats than Republican proximity voters. Hypothesis 6 is borne out, as expected, for predicted Republican SVVs.

It is also important to note here that the percentage of the variance predicted by the party-specific equations is much higher than the percentage explained by the variables in the equation for all respondents. This supports the notion that violation of the spatial logic can be a conscious decision — that, as expected based on other work, SVVs prioritize partisanship over ideology.

Table 6 presents the results of separate equations for each year in the sample. As the table shows, several variables that are not significant in the full sample are significant in particular years. Most notably, region, age, income, and education each have an effect in particular years. The “South” variable is significant only in 1972 — when neither candidate was from the South. These equations follow the format of the initial equation in Table 5, not the party-specific ones.

4. Conclusions

Many of the results here are relatively predictable. Most voters do choose candidates in accordance with their ideological leanings, or at the least adjust their views on the candidates’ ideological leanings to match their own. Those that do not follow the spatial logic

Table 6
Significant variables in probit equations by year

	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
Age						Positive**			
Income				Negative*					
Education					Negative**				Negative*
Flipped candidates	Positive**	Positive**	Positive**	Positive**	Positive**	Positive*	Positive**	Positive**	Positive*
South	Positive*								

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.01$.

tend to be different from proximity voters in relatively predictable ways — they are less politically involved by a variety of measures, but it can certainly be argued that they are considering various other aspects of the candidates. The merit of this exercise, then, is largely that it provides a baseline that is frequently absent in discussions of spatial theory. To peruse many of the more recent articles, one would conclude that spatial theory is either wrong about how voters make their decisions, flies in the face of much of what we know about voters from survey research, or is so abstract that it cannot be applied to large-scale elections. None of these conclusions are warranted. Furthermore, as these findings show, debates regarding spatial theory tend to take relatively extreme positions — voters either follow a spatial logic or they do not. In an early critique of Downs' (1957) *An Economic Theory of Voting*, Diamond (1959) argued that the basic hypothesis of the book was unfalsifiable: either politicians followed a median voter logic, or they did not, and no theory could be meaningful and include both alternatives. Similarly, one might argue that an electorate in which some are proximity voters and some are not ultimately neither proves nor disproves spatial theory. Yet, if one can distinguish between the two types as I have sought to do here, it may be that we can at least be a little more certain who the voters in these two camps are.

There are many further directions in which this project might be taken. I do not, for instance, rigorously compare the violations in different years, but it should be clear that the differences in the motivations for violations across election periods can tell us something about the nature of the presidential campaigns in these years, the qualities of the candidates, and the concerns of voters. In addition, one might consider changes in the correlates of ideology — how self-described liberals and conservatives respond to issue questions on the ANES, and how proximity voters and SVVs differ in their issue question responses. That is, one might address which characteristics of candidates lead voters to vote against their ideological leanings, or one might address how these ideological leanings themselves are constructed. Substantial literatures on both of these questions exist; as with the questions addressed in this paper, however, they can and should be brought to bear on the basic tenets of spatial theory.

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Appendix. ANES variable numbers and descriptions

Description	Number	Values	Notes
Age group	CF0102	1–7	
Gender	CF0104	1–2	1 = Male
Income	CF0114	1–5	
Education	CF0110	1–4	
Political South	CF0113	1–2	1 = South
Party ID collapsed	CF0303a	1–3	1 = Democrat
Which party is more conservative?	CF0502	1–2	1 = Democrats
External efficacy index	CF0648	0–100	100 = Most efficacious
Timing of vote decision	CF0712	1–6	6 = Election day
Political discussion index	CF0732	1–5	1 = Every day
Campaign participation index	CF0723	1–6	1 = None
Media exposure index	CF0728	1–5	1 = No Media

Appendix (continued)

Description	Number	Values	Notes
Democratic presidential candidate seven-point liberal/conservative scale	CF9088	1–7	1 = Extremely Liberal
Republican presidential candidate seven-point liberal/conservative scale	CF9096	1–7	1 = Extremely Liberal
Respondent self-placement, seven-point liberal/conservative scale	CF0803	1–7	1 = Extremely liberal
Vote choice	CF0706	1–4, 7	1 = Democrat 2 = Republican 3, 4 = Other 7 = Did not vote

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