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Predicting party switching in U.S. state legislatures

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PREDICTING PARTY SWITCHING
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ABSTRACT

Using a strategic politician model, I argue that we should be able to predict when legislators are going to switch parties by weighing the costs and benefits of party switching under different circumstances. Using variables that measure electoral risk and opportunities for advancement to higher office, an event history model is used to predict when individual legislators will switch. Although this is a rare occurrence, and electoral risk seems to play little in the decision to switch parties, we do find that opportunities for advancement and the relative power of the two parties (measured by offices held) has a noticeable effect on the phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

Party switching, also known as partisan conversion or party defection, is simply the decision of individuals to change the party with which they affiliate. For the average member of the mass electorate, this is not a momentous event and is as easy as deciding to affiliate with the new party (at most requiring a change of party registration). For elected officials, this process is somewhat more complicated, as they often must make official statements of the switch and then establish themselves within the new party.

This activity is important, especially for elected officials, because of the importance of the political parties for the practice of democracy. In the United States, like most other democracies, the competing interests of the political parties organize much of the political dialogue. According to Wright and Schaffner (2002), "the link between parties and bundles of issues (which determine who works with the party) is a result of purposive action for political gain" (368). In addition to organizing the political debate, political parties actually organize the legislature. In most legislatures in the United States, with some notable exceptions, such as Louisiana and South Carolina, the majority party is responsible for distributing legislative responsibility and positions, such as committee chairmanships (Francis 1985, Hedlund and Hamm 1996). Cox and McCubbins (1994) argue that the political parties organize the decision-making process and help prevent cycling problems that could otherwise slow the legislative process. In addition to determining the organization of the legislature, or perhaps because of that, the majority party leadership may be the dominant influence in legislative outputs and policies (Cox and McCubbins 1991).

It is due to the significance of the political party, especially the majority party, that the action of switching parties, by legislators, is of importance to scholars. Changes in the party affiliation, of a legislator, can change the legislative focus and political outcomes. The 2001 switch of Senator Jim Jeffords from Republican to an Independent caucusing with the Democratic party, changed the control of the United States Senate. Granted, the activity of switching parties is uncommon, and it is even less likely that this activity will change the control of the legislative chamber. Even changes in the proportions of the political parties in a legislature may have an effect on what type of legislator receives leadership positions (Patterson 1963). In this environment, the switching of even a small number of legislators can have a significant effect on legislative outcomes.

Because of the possible impact of party switchers, it is important to understand why party switching occurs. This work is interested in the relationship between party switching and risks and opportunities. The basic argument is that legislators, who are strategic politicians, will use party switching as a tool in order to further their ambition. The use of this tool will be constrained by the risks associated with party switching and encouraged by opportunities that would be available from a membership in the new party.

In order to look at this question, I use data from several state legislatures. For this research, the state legislatures are particularly attractive. The states give us a comparative laboratory, an option that is not easily available for congressional scholars (Moncrief, Thompson and Cassie 1996). Additionally, the states provide variation in the electoral milieu and in contextual factors, which allows us to isolate these effects more efficiently. The combination of these factors provides for a greater degree of certainty of the

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generalizability of the theories proposed, than would a study that focused on any single legislature, even the United States Congress.

PREVIOUS WORK ON LEGISLATIVE PARTY SWITCHING

Because of the importance of parties to democracy, scholars study party switching extensively in three different milieux: elected officials (for example Aldrich and Bianco 1992, Castle and Fett 2000, Grose and Yoshinaka 2003), party activists, (see Kweit 1986, Nesbit 1988, Clark et al 1991, Stone 1991) and the mass electorate (see Dreyer 1973, Fiorina 1981, Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994, Palmquist and Green 1992). Although the questions addressed in each of these are different, there are certain parallels, such as the importance of ideology, which may inform the study of party switching of elected officials.

Most of the work on party switching among elected officials focuses on party switching by members of Congress. This interest in party switching, possibly inspired by the apparent surge of party switchers among members of Congress in the nineties, resulted in looking at a number of questions, both concerning the causes of party switching and the results of party switching.

The literature that discusses the causes of party switching has concentrated on several different theoretical foci. The first, advanced by Aldrich and Bianco (1992) is that members of Congress switch parties in order to reap electoral benefits. By switching parties, Aldrich and Bianco argue members of Congress can avoid costly and competitive primary battles and discourage strong challengers in the opposing party. Other scholars argue that the ideological concerns of the member of Congress fuel the decision to switch parties. Castle and Fett (2000) argue that cross-pressured politicians are the most likely to switch parties. Heller and Mershon (2002), who look at party switching among members of the Italian parliament, bring the electoral benefits and ideological models of elite party switching together. Heller and Mershon argue that individuals are more likely to switch parties for ideological reasons if the party is able to punish a member for ideological independence in the electoral process. Finally, there are scholars who argue that an understanding of major political events and other contextual issues are necessary to precipitate changes in political parties among members of Congress. Canon (1992) has argued that Republican Party activities to poach conservative members of the Democratic Party may explain a good deal of the party switching among southern Democrats in the last part of the twentieth century.

Authors have explored the effects of party switches on behavior of the switcher and others. Grose and Yoshinaka (2003) look at elections that took place after a member of Congress switches parties and find that in the long run, electoral competition decreases for the party switcher. Grose and Yoshinaka also found that before this benefit occurs, the party switcher often must go through a period of increased electoral competition, in both the primary and the general election. A good deal of the work on party switching has focused on comparing the votes of party switchers before and after the switch. A number of authors have proposed that party switchers make significant changes in their roll call votes after switching to the new party (Oppenheimer 2000, Nokken 2000, Nokken and Poole 2001). These changes in voting reflect either the member of Congress' true beliefs freed from the discipline of a party with which they were not ideologically compatible (Nokken 2000) or the enforcement of discipline, either from the new party leadership or self imposed discipline in an attempt to conform to the ideological standards of the new party (Nokken and Poole 2001).

This literature has produced relatively few conflicts. Of these conflicts, a major one is that the findings of Grose and Yoshinaka (2003) may cast doubts on Aldrich and Bianco's (1992) argument that party switchers may have an easier time of re-election after a switch. This raises the question, if party switchers are not likely to have an easier time of reelection what is their motivation for switching?

For this work, the previous literature provides us with three models of party switching behavior. The electoral model states elected officials switch parties in order to guarantee further elections. The ideological model argues that elected officials change affiliations to join a political party that is a better ideological fit. Finally, the contextual model asserts that party switching is a result of political events and other factors in the political environment.

THEORY

In the previous literature review, several theoretical models that could be used to predict the behavior of legislative party switchers have been presented. The most compelling of these are the electoral and ideological models of behavior. Although these models have a great deal of explanatory value, it is my argument that they fail to integrate the range of strategic considerations that politicians must take into account when making long-term decisions. In this section, I intend to present both an electoral and an ideological model of party switching, discuss the importance of contextual factors and then present the implications of ambition and strategy, resulting in an ambition model of strategic party switching.

To determine the behavior of individuals, we need to address why the individual would undertake a certain type of behavior. There are some divisions over what should be used as the primary motivation or motivations of legislators. Fenno argues that there are five motivations for the activities of a congressman: reelection, power in the legislative body, good public policy, higher office and personal gain (1973). Mayhew argues that although congressmen may be interested in good public policy or power within the legislative body, their primary motivation is simply reelection (1974).

Ideological Model

An ideological model of party switching argues that a legislator would switch parties in order to join a party that was ideologically more palatable to the legislator. If parties are, in fact, ideological coalitions then this model makes a degree of sense. In order to advance goals relating to good public policy, a legislator would attempt to join the ideological coalition with which the legislator is most ideologically congruent so that the legislator may be part of a unified front to advance good policy and prevent bad policy. Also, ideological parties would be likely to take steps to enforce ideological congruence on their members, either disciplining or possibly attempting to expel the member from the coalition.[1]

Even with the apparent self-evidence of ideological provocation for party switching, without evidence it cannot be assumed that this is an actual dynamic. The spatial model of behavior predicts much of the voting behavior of the members of Congress using only a single liberal-conservative dimension (Poole and Daniels 1985, Poole and Rosenthal 1997, 1999). These spatial models, that employ Poole and Rosenthal's D-Nominate scores, or derivatives thereof, have been used both to predict voting behavior after a party switch (Nokken and Poole 2001), and to actually predict party switching among Italian MPs (Heller and Mershon 2001). Much of the literature on activist party switchers focuses on the differences in issue positions between those activists that switch and those who do not, arguing that switchers are ideologically congruent with the party that they join (Kwiet 1986, Nesbit 1988, Clark et al 1992).

If party switchers are acting for ideological reasons, we should see certain telltale signs. Since this entire model rests on the fact that parties are ideological constructs, we

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[1] This could be seen in the 1999 Virginia General Assembly primaries, when two well funded primary challengers, ran against moderate suburban Republicans with the blessing of the Republican Governor. (Baker 1999)

should see some differences in voting behavior between the member who will switch and the rest of the members before switching parties. In fact, because this model assumes that parties are ideological constructs, it may be possible to take a few short cuts. It is likely that members of the party would have already noticed this difference, and possibly already have taken disciplinary action. Within a legislature, disciplinary action may take place by removing a legislator from a key committee or position, such as Phil Graham's removal from the House of Representatives Budget Committee in 1983 (Maraniss and Edsall 1983). Outside of the legislature, discipline may be handled by recruiting more palatable (relative to the party mainstream) primary opposition.[2] Harmel and Hamm (1986) argued that as legislatures transition from one party or "no party" systems to two party systems, the parties become more ideologically distinct and partisan (see also Patterson 1963). Assuming this and applying the ideological model, it can also be assumed that as legislatures move towards parity, they would become more ideologically distinct and therefore ideological concerns would rise, and with the rise of those concerns, party-switching would increase.

Electoral Models

Electoral models of legislative behavior owe much of their modern prominence to Mayhew's (1974) *Congress: Electoral Connection*. In this book, Mayhew argues that the primary motivation of any politician is re-election, because a politician's ability to work towards any other goals relies on the power of the politician's office. In order to accomplish goals such as good public policy, higher office or personal gain, a politician must first retain their office. The essential argument of this model is that politicians may switch parties in order to enhance re-election prospects.

In addition to Mayhew, there is a large literature on how the behavior of legislators is affected by re-election concerns. Of particular interest, is Patterson's (1961) argument that legislators that are elected from areas with high inter-party competition are concentrated in the middle and these individuals are less likely to be loyal to their party. Even though legislators know that the voters are poorly informed of legislative actions, Stone and McCrone (1986) argue "[legislators] still worry about citizens' potential for becoming informed or active should the legislator step out of bounds" (957). Aldrich and Bianco (1992) argued that party switching could be used to discourage prominent primary or general election opponents.

The electoral model's evidence should be obvious in election statistics. Individual legislators who receive neither primary competition nor general election competition should have little reason to switch parties. On the other hand, candidates who consistently see themselves being opposed by strong primary and general election opponents could have greater reason to switch. This begs the question; do strong primary challenges and strong general election challenges have a similar effect? Strong primary challenges cause candidates to essentially run in two elections, and could be reduced by switching parties. But if candidates expect to see strong general election challenges, would switching parties simply transform that into a strong primary challenge?

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[2] This was discussed by Democrats is Virginia's fifth district after Virgil Goode choose to vote to impeach President Clinton. (Hsu 1998)

Contextual Models of Party Switching

Several authors have argued that context plays a role in the decision to switch parties. This should hardly be a surprise, as it has been shown that contextual factors play a role in how parties are organized and the level of partisanship in a legislature (see Harmel and Hamm 1986, Patterson 1963). Many of these contextual factors are unique events, such as Operation Open Door, which actually sought out Democratic lawmakers for the Republican Party (Canon and Sousa 1992). Nevertheless, some consistent or regular features of the political environment have been shown to affect the behavior of legislators in general. Relative levels of competition within a legislature have been shown to have an effect on voting behavior (Patterson 1962). We also know that legislators alter their politics in order to conform to changes in their district (Glazer and Robbins 1985). One problem with the contextual elements' influence on party switching is that there is little unifying them into a "model" that would explain party switching. Of course, a comprehensive model of party switching is the goal of this work.

Ambition Model of Strategic Party Switching

The ambition model of strategic party switching integrates the previous three models into a single model. Rather than focus on the event that could cause the party switch, this model focuses on the decision-making process. Politicians weigh risks and opportunities from any action and take actions that minimize risks while maximizing opportunities. In this model, electoral uncertainty, ideological incongruency and contextual elements are all translated into either costs or opportunities for a legislator. Because party switching is an inherently risky activity (an assertion that will be addressed later) it should only be observed when it presents the greatest potential opportunities. Before going into the specific costs and opportunities presented by the previous three models, I will first address the concepts of strategic politicians and ambition.

Strategic Politicians

Jacobson and Kernel (1981) argued that when considering any potential action, a strategic politician considers a "strategic calculus" (22). This calculus is simply the weighing of the benefits of the *successful* completion of an activity versus the chance of failure and the cost of engaging in the activity. This "calculus" can be expressed with the following formula:[3]

$$u=(pb)-c$$

In this equation the variables have the following values "u" is the expected utility, "p" is the probability of a favorable outcome, "b" is the expected benefit from a favorable outcome, and "c" is the cost of the activity or the resources that must be expended in order to engage in the activity. In a binary decision, such as the decision to run for office during this election, a strategic actor would decide to attempt the activity if the utility was positive. When a variety of actions are possible, a strategic actor will compare the utilities of the activities and then select the activity that has the largest utility value.

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[3] A version of this equation can be found on page 22 of Jacobson and Kernell (1981).

Ambition

The ideological model and the electoral model each address one of Fenno's goals, namely good public policy and re-election concerns. The two goals are left untouched (the desire for prestige in the legislature, and the desire for higher office) can be collectively referred to as ambition. Schlesinger (1966) argues that politicians have three different types of ambition: discrete, static and progressive. Discrete ambition is simply a desire to hold an office for a specific amount of time, and static ambition is the desire to hold an office for an indefinite period. Neither of these previous ambitions would provide motivations much different from simple reelection. Finally, Schlesinger describes progressive ambition, which is the desire for higher office. Others have shown that progressive ambition could also include obtaining certain leadership positions within a legislature rather than a different popularly elected position (Herrick and Moore 1993).

Ambition should also lead to certain circumstances that would inspire the switching of party. If individuals switch parties for ambitious reasons, then we should see certain patterns emerge. Switches occur at a point in time when it becomes apparent that at least equal opportunities can be found in the opposing party. These increasing opportunities may be either in the legislative chamber or in higher office. Individuals should be more likely to switch to the majority party of a legislature than to the minority party. In one-party systems, when it becomes obvious that the minority party may be able to win state-wide elections, we should observe party switchers. These switchers move to the minority party to avoid having to compete with large numbers of experienced politicians in primary elections.

The idea of a party switcher doing so for reasons of ambition is certainly not new or surprising, and such examples are not uncommon. Former Louisiana Governor Mike Foster switched parties from Democrat to Republican in order to pursue the office of governor (Broder and Edsall 1995).

Costs and Opportunity in Party Switching

The argument of this work is that politicians are ambitious, and they seek to use party switching as a strategic tool. Although, it does not argue that all legislators are either strategic or ambitious, the nature of party switching makes it a tool that will be used by legislators who are strategic and ambitious. The time and effort that would be necessary to explain to the leadership of the legislature, the press, constituents, and others why the legislator switched are simply too large to make the switch (at an elite level) anything other than a calculated move in order to reach a certain goal.

Of course, the ideological, electoral, and contextual elements of political behavior are not left out of this model; they simply appear as risks and opportunities. Ideology makes little sense, when taken alone, as a reason for switching parties. Legislators in the United States are free to vote their conscience no matter which party they joined. In addition cross party factionalism is common in American politics (see Patterson 1962, 1963 Parker and Parker 1979). Poole and Daniels (1985) argue that ideology is more important than party membership in predicting legislative behaviors, such as roll call votes. As a cost, ideology makes more sense, Nokken and Poole (2001) argue that party switchers must convince the new party that they are in fact loyal members, and the party switcher can do that by exhibiting ideological congruence. If it could follow that ideological threats are simply threats to leadership positions (i.e. committee chairs) then it would be necessary to be at

least as ideologically close to the new party to secure comparable positions, and likely much closer to the new party in order to overcome the suspicion that a party switcher generates.

As with risk, electoral considerations work exactly as Mayhew (1974) argues. Legislators will not risk the loss of election, because loss of the election would lead to the inability to pursue other goals. However, Mayhew's argument only works if all legislators are perpetually, and rationally, frightened of losing an election. The safe seat allows a legislator a degree of latitude in their actions.

Contextual elements can be present as either risks or opportunities. A strategic politician would have to consider contextual factors in terms of risks and opportunities. As the parties in a legislature become more similar in numbers (i.e. closer to 50-50 in the U.S.) then there are a variety of risks and opportunities for a legislator. The parties may enforce discipline more strictly, as a result of increasing partisanship (Harmel and Hamm 1986) or change the patterns of allocating benefits within the chamber (Patterson 1963). These risks would be in addition to the need for more experienced leaders in an ascendent party and could send legislators scrambling across the aisle. (Canon and Sousa 1992).

Party switching is a tool available to strategic politicians in advancing their personal ambition. Strategic politicians are most likely to use this tool when potential benefits outweigh costs.

TAKING IT APART: OBSERVABLE CONSEQUENCES OF AN AMBITION MODEL OF STRATEGIC LEGISLATIVE SWITCHING

The hypotheses that result from an ambition model of strategic party switching fall into two different categories. These categories, are identical to the two considerations that a strategic legislator must consider, cost and opportunities. In conditions where the costs to a legislator from switching parties are increased, we expect legislators to be less likely to switch parties. In contrast, when party switching presents greater opportunities, we expect to see more incidents of party switching.

Costs and Party Switching

Party switching can be a risky business. When Michael Forbes switched from Republican to Democrat, his staff quit *en masse*, and then he was defeated in the Democratic primary, preventing him from pursuing any political goals that he may have sought to pursue through the switch. (Siegel 1999, Kulish 2000) The period after a switch is frequently uncertain, with electoral competition initially increasing after a switch (Grose and Yoshinaka 2003).

Electoral Risk

Aldrich and Bianco (1992) argue that legislators are likely to switch parties in order to preempt challenges from the opposing party. Essentially, party switchers are reacting to risks in the general election, by switching they are minimizing there own risks. Although compelling on the face, this hypothesis has a critical shortcoming, Grose and Yoshinaka (2003) have shown that in the first elections after a switch the electoral climate becomes more competitive, and anecdotal evidence (such as Michael Forbes defeat in his first post switch primary) reinforces this stance.

It would be unlikely that a strategic candidate, who won in a narrow election, would be willing to turn around and risk additional uncertainty in the next election. In addition, it does not seem likely that switching in order to pre-empt a strong challenge from the opposition party (as argued by Aldrich and Bianco 1992), would work. A strong challenger would likely already be established in the party, and a party switch would merely change the timetable from a general election showdown to a primary showdown. This switch would likely place the incumbent in the doubly bad position of not only facing the challenger, but facing the challenger in the very arena the challenger would have built the base of his or her support.

H1 – Legislators who were narrowly elected in the previous general election should be less likely to switch parties.

The general election is not the only source of electoral uncertainty for a sitting legislator. An incumbent legislator may also be defeated in his or her own party's primary. Here Aldrich and Bianco's (1992) argument seems to make more sense, especially if the opposition party does not provide fierce competition in the general election. This would allow the incumbent to save resources for the general election while future challengers must divide their resources between both a primary and a general election. We would expect switching to avoid a general election challenger would cause a candidate to place oneself in

two tightly contested elections in a single year, and cost resources necessary to compete in this way. Switching to avoid primary election challenges would actually reduce the costs associated in reelection by reducing the cost of one of the elections.

H2 – Legislators who face strong primary opponents should be more likely to switch parties.

Risk Tolerance

Risks and opportunities are often hard to separate out from each other in a two-party system. What may be a risk to one party is an opportunity for the other party, and many situations like this will be discussed in the later section on contextual opportunities. One factor in risk is the individual's tolerance for risk.

The concept of risk-taking has been frequently applied to giving up office in order to pursue higher office. It has been demonstrated that state senators who seek higher office are more likely to win the higher office if they had to give up their previous office to pursue it, which Hain, Roeder and Avalos (1981) argued showed that the state senators weighed the risks carefully. The fact that the legislators were more likely to win if they had to give up their seats showed that those legislators chose only the easiest victories if a run meant giving up a seat. This work built on Rhode's (1979) work that argued congressmen are less likely to run for higher office when there was greater risk. Abrahamson, Aldrich and Rhode (1987) used Senators' propensity to take risks as a factor that would predict if the senator would run for president.

Individuals that perceive relatively low risk are more likely to switch parties. Because this is not based on an objective account of risk (an impossibility without perfect information) (Black 1972), this perception must taken into account individual's ability or attraction to perform high risk activities.

Testing an individuals risk taking propensity requires us to be able to measure, even if crudely, an individuals risk taking propensity. Abrahamson, Aldrich and Rhode (1987), looked at senator's past behavior into order to determine if they had made risky political decisions in the past. They measured risk by looking at the previous career as a Senator, if those individuals made their first Senate run against a sitting incumbent Abrahamson, Aldrich and Rhode classified them as a risk-taker. If party switchers are more likely to take risks then we should see similar risky behavior over their career. Unfortunately, with the available data this hypothesis is not testable for state legislators.

Opportunity and Party Switching

As switching parties is always risky, risk cannot be the only factor that influences the decision to switch parties and if it were then the phenomenon would never occur.

Contextual Opportunities

A key comparison of opportunities between the two parties would be a comparison of the number of higher offices that are held by the two parties. Legislators would be able to gauge the opportunities presented by the opposing party by looking at the success of the opposing party in higher-level elections. When the opposing party is doing better, by winning such elections, the legislator would be more likely to switch parties. This observation is presented in the following hypothesis.

H3 – As the percentage of higher offices possessed by the opposing party rises, a legislator is more likely to switch parties.

Not all positions that an ambitious party switcher would be interested in are achieved by being elected to higher office. Some positions within the legislatures, such as the Speaker of the House or prestigious committee chairmanships, are frequently allocated based on party membership (Hedlund and Hamm 1986). Under these circumstances, a party switcher could increase their chances of achieving these positions by choosing to associate with the party that has the ability to hand out these benefits. This leads to the final hypothesis that is presented in this work.

H4 – Legislators should be more willing to switch into the legislative majority party.

Ideological Opportunities
Although there are definite opportunities for a legislator to advance ones ideological agenda, these are not directly addressed by this work for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, I am primarily concerned with the motivation of *ambition*, and ideological opportunities primarily fall in to the motivation of advancing *good public policy*. When ideological concerns overlap with ambition, it is often a result of other contextual factors, such as a partisan legislature that is anxious to impose discipline. Otherwise, at least in the United States, where legislators often vote without regard to party, based mainly on individual ideology (see Poole and Daniels 1985, Poole and Rosenthal 1997, 1999) would one endure the risk of switching parties? Of course, this may be different in proportionally representative systems (see Heller and Mershon 2002). For practical reasons, the data on state legislative ideology is simply not accessible, at this time, in a format that could be used in this analysis.

DATA AND METHODS

In order to predict which individuals are most likely to switch parties this work will use an event history analysis, on the lower house careers of state legislators from eight Southern states. The discussion of the data and methods in this work will start with a brief discussion and description of event history analyses. After describing the event history analysis, the dataset will be explored. Then we will move on to a discussion of the measures used in the analysis, starting with the dependent variables and then addressing each independent variables. Finally, the specific statistical modeling techniques will be addressed.

Event History Analysis

Berry and Berry (1990) explain event history analysis as follows, "in event history analysis, the goal is to explain a qualitative change (an 'event') that occurs in the particular behavior of an individual at a particular point in time" (398). This work's goal is to explain when, as in what "particular point in time" will legislators switch parties, which is "a qualitative change…in the particular behavior". As such, the event history analysis would be the most appropriate method for looking at this activity.

Before discussing event history analysis in detail, it is necessary to define several terms, both regarding the analysis and as the words apply to this data. An observation is the visible characteristics of an individual legislature at a specific point in time. In this study, an observation is the data attached to a legislator during a single term as a member of the legislature. When the event of interest (party switching) occurs, it is called failure, and the period before failure is called the duration.

The concept of interest in an event history analysis is the hazard rate, defined as the chance that an event will occur during any single observation. The hazard rate is the chance of a legislator switching party during a specific term of office.

The Cox Proportional Hazards model does not assume any probability distribution to predict the chance of failure but rather calculates base hazard rates for any specific period. (Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn 2001) Although these base hazard rates are constant for any set period, the effect of an intervening variable is assumed to be proportional to the base hazard rate. (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997) For example if an object is calculated to have base hazard rate of 10% at t_1 and a base hazard rate of 20% at t_2, we should observe that roughly 1 in 10 observations for t_1 should fail and 1 in 5 observations should fail at t_2. If a coefficient value was calculated to have a proportional hazard of 1.5 at a certain value, then we should see 3 failures in 20 cases at t_1 for cases with that coefficient value, and 3 in 10 at t_2.

Cases are examined from the point in time at which the event can possibly occur until the point in time in which the event can no longer occur. For the purpose of this analysis, it means that the entire period that a legislator is continuously reelected to the legislature is considered in the study.

Often in event history analyses, once the event has occurred the case is removed from the analysis, the assumption being that the event has occurred and is not going to reoccur. This study makes no such assumption, although it is conceded that it is unlikely that

a legislator will switch parties multiple time during a career, it is by no means impossibility.[4] After an event has occurred, the legislator will remain in the dataset as a member of the new party.[5]

Dataset

Because of the nature of an Event History analysis, as discussed in the previous section, it is necessary to have data for cases during the entire period in which an event can occur. As the data analysis here will examine party switching among members of the lower house of the state legislature, the period in with the event is from the first election to the chamber until a loss of election or retirement. For this the purpose of this work, the *State Legislative Election Dataset*, available from the ICPSR, will be the starting point. Because one of the presented hypotheses has an element involving primary elections, only the fourteen states with collected primary data are of interest for this work. Of these fourteen states, two, Louisiana and Oklahoma, did not report uncontested general elections in certain years which disrupts the continuity of the data over the period of interest and had to be excluded, and another, Virginia, favored conventions over primaries in this period and was excluded because of a lack of primary election data. Alabama, West Virginia and Texas were excluded from the analysis due to inconsistent primary election procedures or reporting.[6] In addition to these exclusions, two states, Arkansas and Mississippi had complete primary data for only one of the parties; so only legislators serving during this period in the party that has sufficient primary data are considered.

Table 1 lists the states, parties, and elections that this work covers. The data includes all legislators who were initially elected in or after the first election in the data set, who ran for re-election after their first victory and who did not win election to the chamber in the last election examined. Only individuals who attempted to serve two consecutive terms are examined in order to identify party switchers. This period, between 1968 and 1989, is a particularly interesting period for the study of party switchers in the South because it is at the height of the Southern realignment. Granted, despite the advantages of this period, it does restrict the data that is used in this analysis. None of the 1960s old guard are present in the analysis and it is lacking any politicians who serve more than 20 years.

In addition, congressional and gubernatorial election data was obtained from *America Votes* (Scammon 1972, 1975 Scammon and McGillivray 1981, 1983, 1989).

Dependent Variables

For the purpose of this work, a party switch is identified as when a legislator seeks office as member of a party different from the party that the legislator was last elected

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[4] An example of this outside of state legislatures would be Henry Howell who exited and reentered the Democratic party during the 1970s in Virginia. (Latimer 1998)

[5] The switching from one party back to the original party did not actually occur in the careers that are part of this study, but because of the potential to switch, these observations remained in the dataset.

[6] A special election in 1983 in Alabama had candidates selected by the Democratic Party executive committee. Texas failed to report primary election results for one year in the middle of the time period. West Virginia only reported primary results for 7 of its 47 districts in several elections covered by this dataset.

Table 1: Elections Used in Analysis

STATE	PARTIES	ELECTION YEARS
Missouri	Democrat and Republican	1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988
Arkansas	Democrat	1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988
Florida	Democrat and Republican	1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988
Georgia	Democrat and Republican	1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988
Mississippi	Democrat	1975, 1979, 1983, 1987
Kentucky	Democrat and Republican	1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1988
Maryland	Democrat and Republican	1974, 1978,1982, 1986
Tennessee	Democrat and Republican	1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988

to represent.[7] The party switchers that have been identified from the *State Legislative Election Dataset* are listed by state, original party, terms served with original party, date of last election from original party, new party and date of first election in the new party in table 2. These switchers are the focus of study for the event history analysis.

  For this model, the dependent variable is **switched**. This dichotomous variable is coded 1, if when seeking the next term the legislator affiliates with a different political party. In all other case this variable is coded 0.

Independent Variables

  The independent variables used in this analysis can be grouped into one of two categories, electoral variables, and contextual variables.

  From the previous outlined hypotheses discussing risk, relevant measurable variables should reflect the margin of the previous election, and the strength of previous primary challengers. The first variables that were considered are variables that measure the degree to which the candidate was challenged in the previous election. The percentage of the vote the candidate received minus the percentage of the vote received by the closest opponent in the previous general election is coded as **general election margin**. This same procedure was applied to the previous primary election and generates **primary election margin.** In addition

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[7] The exception to this is legislators who did not serve in the legislature for any period and then returned to run for office as a member of a different party. This occurred four times in the dataset. These legislators, along with any other legislator who sat out between periods of service were counted as separate legislative careers.

Table 2: Party Switchers by Party, Term, Year and State

Name	Original Party	Terms in Original Party	Last Election in Original Party	New Party	First Election in New Party	State
Taylor, James I.	Democrat	1	1968	Independent	1970	Tennessee
Ellis, Morriss W.	Democrat	2	1970	Republican	1972	Georgia
Jones, Herb	Democrat	1	1970	Republican	1972	Georgia
Comer, Jack	Republican	1	1970	Democrat	1972	Tennessee
Doyle, Francis	Democrat	2	1970	Independent	1972	Tennessee
Dixon, R. Earl	Republican	3	1972	Democrat	1974	Florida
Evans, Billy L.	Republican	3	1972	Democrat	1974	Georgia
Daniels, Doy L., Jr.	Democrat	1	1972	Republican	1974	Tennessee
Hazelton, Donald F.	Republican	3	1974	Democrat	1976	Florida
Maxwell, Clark, Jr.	Republican	1	1974	Democrat	1976	Florida
Anderson, R. G. "Pat"	Democrat	1	1975	Independent	1979	Mississippi
Lambert, Aaron C.	Republican	1	1975	Democrat	1979	Mississippi
Mamloy, John Cyril	Republican	1	1976	Democrat	1978	Florida
Williamson, George B.	Republican	3	1978	Democrat	1980	Georgia
Booth, Bert	Republican	2	1978	Democrat	1982	Maryland
Small, Neal	Republican	3	1978	Democrat	1980	Tennessee
Hall, Dick	Democrat	2	1979	Republican	1983	Mississippi
Auten, Dean G.	Republican	4	1982	Democrat	1984	Georgia
Morningstar, M. Albert	Democrat	1	1982	Republican	1986	Maryland
Buelow, Ed, Jr.	Democrat	3	1983	Republican	1987	Mississippi
Anderson, Wendell T. Jr.	Democrat	5	1984	Republican	1986	Georgia
Drew, Charles E. "Pete"	Democrat	3	1984	Republican	1986	Tennessee

to the margin, an additional set of variables is used to measure the electoral threat posed to a candidate. The most obvious measure of a threat to a candidate is whether or not that candidate is actually opposed by another candidate. In order to capture this if a candidate had an opponent in the previous general election, **general election opposition** was coded as 1; and if the candidate had an opponent in the previous primary election, **primary election**

opposition was coded as 1. These measures do have the draw back of not measuring a history of challenges, but rather the immediate past challenge.

In addition to electoral variables, variables that measure the political context are also used. First, a measure of which party holds the governor's mansion was coded as **opposition party governor**, coded 0 if a member of the legislator's party was governor and 1 otherwise. As a measure of the opportunity to gain higher office in the opposing party, the percentage of the state's delegation to Congress that are members of the opposing party is coded as **opposition Congress percentage**. In addition, to measure the absolute percentage of the opposition's seats in the Congressional delegation from the state a measure of the change in the level of representation of the opposing party was included. **Change in opposition Congress percentage** was calculated using the following formula:

$$change\ in\ opposition\ Congress\ percentage = opposition\ Congress\ percentage_t - opposition\ Congress\ percentage_{t-1}$$

This allows us to measure the change in the opportunities in the opposition party and tease out if switching is a result of absolute opportunities or a result of increasing opportunity. A measure of opportunities within the legislature was measured as **majority party**, which was coded 1 if the legislator was in the majority party in the legislator and 0 otherwise. Finally, **redistricting** is coded one if there was a redistricting between the previous election and the next election, and 0 otherwise. This is to measure any changes that may be a result of attempting to conform to the new district.

Cox Proportional Hazards Model

The Cox Proportional Hazards Model is used to estimate the chance of an event occurring during any set period. This model estimates a hazard rate, which is the chance of the event occurring during any set period. This hazard rate is then modified in an exponential manner by the summing the results of multiplying the variable values with the variable coefficients.

The Predictive Equation

p = HR exp(b1*general election margin+b2*primary election margin+b3*general election opposition+b4*primary election opposition+b5*opposition party governor+ b6*opposition congress percentage+ b7*change in opposition congress percentage+ b8*majority party+ b9*redistricting)

General election margin is a measure of threat within the general election (as **general election margin** increases the actual threat to the candidate increases). If H_1 is correct then it is expected that the coefficient of this variable would be negative.

Primary election margin is also a measure of threat, but within the primary election (as **primary election margin** increases the actual threat to the candidate decreases). As stated in H_3, switching parties can actually avoid this threat, then the candidate is more likely to switch as the threat increases. Therefore, it is expected that the coefficient for this variable will be negative.

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General election opposition is a measure of threat within the general election like **general election margin**, and is expected to behave in a similar manner, likewise, **primary election opposition** is expected to behave like **primary election margin**.

Opposition party governor measures whether or not the opposing party has enough support within a state to when a statewide election. This measures opportunities available within the opposing party and as such, it is expected to be positively related to party switching.

Opposition Congress percentage also measures the support that the opposing party has with in the state and thus also measures the opportunities available to the opposing party. Once again this is a variable that is expected to be positively related to party switching.

Change in opposition Congress percentages is a measure of recent successes that the opposing party has had, and as such shows changes in the support of the opposing party. This is also expected to be positively related to the chance a legislator will switch parties.

Majority party is a measure of the opportunities that are available to the legislator within the party that the legislator is a member. This measure should be negatively related to the to the chance that an individual switches parties.

Redistricting is simply a measure of if a redistricting occurs. As legislators are known to change their politics in order to respond to the changes in their legislative districts, we should expect this period to be a relative hotbed of switching. It is expected to be positively related to switching.

Checks and Controls

These tests were run on the full data sets, but in addition, these tests were run on the data set without Kentucky, Maryland or Mississippi. This was done to control for discrepancies in the term lengths between the states. The other states all had two-year terms for the lower house, while Maryland and Mississippi have four-year terms. Although Kentucky has two-year terms, the Kentucky legislature transitioned from odd to even year elections with a three-year term from 1981 to 1984. Although the Cox Proportional Hazards model is equipped to handle irregular time intervals, as long as time is measured consistently,[8] the other variables dynamics may not work the same for individuals who serve longer terms.

With only 22 observed switches in 1027 cases and 3584 observations, party switching certainly qualifies as a rare event. It is known that in the case of rare events the standard errors of the coefficients can be exaggerated (King and Zeng 2001), in order to address this problem all results are reported as significant if they reach p-value of .1.

Although a number of these variables seem to be related, tests were run on all combinations of these variables to insure that they were in fact independent. Despite this, three sets of variables had correlation coefficients of higher than .6: **general election margin** correlates with **general election opposition**, **primary election margin** correlates with **primary election opposition,** and **opposition congress percentage** correlates with **majority party**. As multicollinearity could compound the exaggeration of the standard errors, it was very important to avoid the additive effects of both rare events and

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[8] For this work, time is measured in "terms" each of which are two years, so Maryland and Mississippi legislators serve 2 "terms" at a time.

multicollinearity on the standard errors of the coefficients. In order to be sure of results, in addition to the model explained in the previous sections the additional models also were run. These models run the **majority party** variable independently from the **opposition congress percentage** in order to properly control for collinearity.[9]

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[9] Models isolating out the electoral margin variables from the opposition variables were also run but they did not show a substantive change in those variables and are not been reported.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Before addressing the results of the Cox Proportional Hazards Model it is useful to take a brief look at the data. Some relevant information is available in Table 2, a useful summary of the data, and Table 3, a look at the party switchers themselves. In these tables we the diversity of the party switchers is clear. We are looking at data from eight states, in which switching occurred in five. Of the 1027 legislators in the data set, more than 70% began their careers as Democrats and approximately 2% switched parties at some point during their career. Mississippi had a particularly high rate of party switching, but this may be a result of a small sample for that state. Moving to Table 3, we see that although slightly frontloaded these switches occur over the entire examined period.[10] We also see a variety of types of switches, as three Democrats became Independents, thirteen became Republicans and six Republicans became Democrats. From this we can say that party switching is not a one-way door from one party to another, even during the southern realignment, and that although switches are rare, they do happen consistently over time.

In order to discuss the results of the Cox Proportional Hazards Model, it is necessary to explain the tables that present them. Table 4 represents the results from the full data set on the three models that were run, while Table 5 presents the results the models generated using the dataset without Kentucky, Mississippi and Maryland. From each model, the coefficient and p-value are presented for each variable used in the model. In addition, these tables also report a "proportional hazard", which is the percentage change in the hazard rate that occurs when the dependent variable in question changes by a certain range and all other variables are held at the mean, or mode for dichotomous variables. This range is described in the "range" column and is, in general, the change from 0 to 1 on dummy variables or the change from the mean value minus one standard deviation to the mean value plus one standard deviation. The margin variables use a range from the mean value minus one standard deviation to the maximum possible value, which is in turn less than the mean value plus on standard deviation. No proportional hazard is reported for the opposition variables as changes in these variables are captured when changing the electoral margin variables. Tables 6 and 7 present the base hazard rate and the hazard rate for a sample case that has all continuous variables coded at the mean and all dummy variables coded to the mode and hazard rates over that are calculated by a certain change in each independent variable. For the purpose of this discussion, whenever the "full model" is addressed, it refers to Model 1 run on the full data.

Findings: Risks

In the electoral risk hypotheses, two different hypotheses were presented, candidates would be more likely to switch as general election margins rose, and candidates would be less likely to switch as primary election margins rise.

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[10] This frontloading may be an artifact of the sampling procedure. As switching was more likely to occur early in the career of a legislator, and the sample only includes full careers of legislators, we should expect to see the switching earlier in the sampled period.

Table 3: Legislators By State and Party

STATE	LEGISLATORS	OBSERVATIONS	DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATORS	REPUBLICAN LEGISLATORS	SWITCHERS
Arkansas	90	330	90	0	0
Florida	200	685	124	76	4
Georgia	208	769	171	37	6
Kentucky	123	423	97	26	0
Maryland	42	100	35	7	2
Mississippi	31	76	31	0	4
Missouri	184	681	113	71	0
Tennessee	149	520	76	73	6

Concerning hypothesis H_1, there appears to be no conclusive evidence for the hypothesis. In the primary model, the coefficient for **general election margin** is positive and **general election opposition** is not positive, lending no clear support to the hypothesis. However, neither variable is statistically significant and the null hypothesis cannot be rejected in good faith.

Hypothesis H_2, presents a similar picture. **Primary election margin** and **primary election opposition** still do not ever reach a satisfactory level of statistical significance. Like **general election margin**, **primary election margin** always has the correct sign, and in the primary model a candidate without a primary opponent would be less likely to switch parties than a candidate who had a victory margin on the low-side of normal (a **primary election margin** one standard deviation below the mean. Of course, this does not take into account the effect of the **primary election opposition**, which is in the wrong direction.

Support for the electoral risk hypotheses are consistently lacking though all of the models in both data sets. Based on this, it is likely that electoral considerations actually play a rather limited role in the decision to switch parties.

Findings: Opportunities

When examining the effect of opportunities, the findings seem to be a little clearer. Independent variables are more likely to be significant and behave in manners that were expected.

The most consistently significant and the variable which exerts the largest influence within the all models is the **opposition party governor** variable. One statement that can be made with a degree of certainty is that state legislators are more likely to switch if the governor is a member of the opposite party. In all the models, the coefficient was positive and significant, although there is a certain discrepancy between the 503% increase in the chance of switching in the full data analyses and the 204% increase in the reduced data set, but this can be easily explained by the volatility of standard errors when examining rare events. What is important is that legislators who are in a party other than that of the governor seem to be considerably more likely to switch parties.

In model 1, we find that neither **majority party** nor **opposition Congress percentage** are statistically significant, and **majority party** has a positive effect on party switching, which is a surprise considering our hypothesis. Because of the multicollinearity evidenced by these variables, models 2 and 3 were run and we get consistently different effects. Being in the majority party of the legislature has a negative effect on switching

Table 4: Full Models

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Range
	b	*p-value*	Proportional Hazard	*b*	*p-value*	Proportional Hazard	*b*	*p-value*	Proportional Hazard	
Electoral Variables										
Primary Election Variables	-.014	.248	-.38%	-.011	.271	-35%	-.014	.251	-39%	Mean-stdev to no contest (100%)
General Election Margin	.004	.396	-20%	.003	.420	-23%	.004	.392	-20%	Mean-stdev to no contest (100%)
Primary Opposition	-.524	.372		-.359	.410		-.506	.376		captured in primary margin
General Opposition	.554	.331		.510	.345		.556	.331		captures in general margin
Ambition Variables										
Opposition Party Governor	1.796***	.005	+503%	1.953***	.002	+605%	1.798***	.005	+504%	same party to opposition party
Opposition Congress Percentage	1.727	.158	+131%	--	--		1.557*	.070	+113%	mean-stddev to mean+stddev
Change in Opposition Congress Percentage	4.322**	.042	+124%	3.982*	.063	+110%	4.281*	.044	+122%	mean-stddev to mean+stddev
Majority Party	.115	.450	+12%	-.614	.140	-46%	--	--		not in majority to majority
Redistricting	.141	.798	+15%	.120	.414	+13%	.139	.400	+15%	not a redistricting year to a redistricting year

*=significant at a *p-value* of .1 or less, **=significant at a *p-value* of .05 or less, ***=significant at a *p-value* of .01 or less

Table 5: Partial Models

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Range
	b	p-value	Proportional Hazard	b	p-value	Proportional Hazard	b	p-value	Proportional Hazard	
Electoral Variables										
Primary Election Variables	-.010	.301	-11%	-.008	.332	-8%	-.010	.302	-34%	Mean-stdev to no contest (100%)
General Election Margin	.002	.476	-12%	.001	.433	-21%	.001	.424	-19%	Mean-stdev to no contest (100%)
Primary Opposition	-.587	.346		-.483	.371		-.289	.348		captured in primary margin
General Opposition	.285	.531		.310	.281		.283	.297		captures in general margin
Ambition Variables										
Opposition Party Governor	1.113**	.013	+204%	1.207	.007	+234%	1.111	.013	+204%	same party to opposition party
Opposition Congress Percentage	1.533	.156	+121%				1.450	.056	+110%	mean-stddev to mean+stddev
Change in Opposition Congress Percentage	1.586	.251	+31%	1.038	.328	+19%	1.552	.251	+30%	mean-stddev to mean+stddev
Majority Party	.054	.473	+6%	-.583	.109	-44%				not in majority to majority
Redistricting	.553	.105	+74%	.530	.115	+70%	.553	.105		not a redistricting year to a redistricting year

*=significant at a *p-value* of .1 or less, **=significant at a *p-value* of .05 or less, ***=significant at a *p-value* of .01 or less

parties, although we are not able to reject the null hypothesis here either, but the *p-value* is close to significance. On the other hand, the effect of the number of seats held by the opposing party in a state's congressional delegation seems to be positive and significant. In addition to these measures of the strength of the opposing party, we see that growth in the opposing parties delegation encourages party switching in the full model and this meets the requirements of statistical significance, although in the partial model the statistical significance disappears.

Taken together, these findings seem to indicate that party switchers definitely consider the situation of the other party before switching. Legislators appear to be more willing to switch if the party that they are switching into appears to have some degree of power. Recent showings of power, such as additional recent victories (gained seats in higher office) seem to further encourage those who may consider switching to switch.

Despite the showing on the contextual variables that compared strength of parties, our other contextual variable did very little. Although **redistrict** had a positive coefficient, it was not a statistically significant coefficient, and with a 13-15% effect in the full model it cannot be said to have a substantively significant effect in the results. The major jump in the importance of the *redistricting* variable in the partial model is probably more the result of the high level of switching in Mississippi and the fact that in Mississippi and Maryland, with elections every four years, it is much more likely that any particular election has redistricting.

Cautionary Note: The Rarity of the Event

Even with these increases in the chance of an individual legislator switching parties, it is necessary to exercise caution when applying these results to individual legislators. Even though party switchers are 3 to 6 times more likely to switch when the governor is a member of the opposing party, this does not make this a frequent event. As we see in tables 6 and 7 the base hazard rate tends to be less than ½ of one percent, and the hazard rate for the third term was chosen for these tables because that was the most likely term for a party switcher to switch. If we select an average legislator, we still find that there is never a 1% hazard rate, in fact we should only expect one in two or three hundred legislators to switch parties. Even adjusting these variables, in the full model we find that even if the average legislator has an opposing party governor we should never expect more 3% of the legislators to switch, *during the term that they would be most likely to switch.* This of course makes sense when we realize that in the data only 2% of the legislators switched parties over their entire career and a switch was observed in just over half of one percent of all observations. [11]

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[11] The average legislator having all variables set to the mean, except dichotomous variables, set to the mode, and opposition variables, set to 1 because if margin variables are set to the mean then that means there is opposition

Table 6: Full Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Base Hazard Rate (Term 3)	.0044	.0105	.0047	
"Average" Hazard Rate (Term 3)	.0048	.0036	.0044	all variables set to mean, except dichotomous, which are set to mode, and all opposition variables set to 1
Primary Election Margin	.0052	.0039	.0047	100% margin (+ Primary Opposition set 0)
General Election Margin	.0032	.0026	.0029	100% margin (+ General Opposition set to 0)
Opposition Party Governor	.0292	.0269	.0267	set to 1
Opposition Congress Percentage	.0074	--	.0065	set to mean + standard deviation
Change in Opposition Party Percentage	.0073	.0055	.0066	set to mean + standard deviation
Majority Party	.0043	.0070	--	set to not in majority
Redistricting	.0055	.0043	.0051	set to redistrict

Table 7: Partial Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Base Hazard Rate (Term 3)	.0029	.0074	.0031	
"Average" Hazard Rate (Term 3)	.0041	.0039	.0050	all variables set to mean, except dichotomous, which are set to mode, and all opposition variables set to 1
Primary Election Margin	.0053	.0049	.0049	100% margin (+ Primary Opposition set 0)
General Election Margin	.0033	.0030	.0039	100% margin (+ General Opposition set to 0)
Opposition Party Governor	.0080	.0082	.0098	set to 1
Opposition Congress Percentage	.0060	--	.0072	set to mean + standard deviation
Change in Opposition Party Percentage	.0046	.0043	.0057	set to mean + standard deviation
Majority Party	.0041	.0070	--	set to not in majority
Redistricting	.0061	.0058	.0075	set to redistrict

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have four questions to address. What have we learned about party switching in the state legislatures? How much of this can be generalized to legislative party switching in general? What does this say that adds to the discussion of legislative behavior in general? In addition, where does this research go from here?

The results of this analysis point to a number of significant findings. First, it does not appear that electoral concerns fuel party switching. The variables reflecting those electoral concerns consistently produce conflicting results and never were statistically or substantively significant. On the other hand, legislators seemed to be very responsive to the fortunes of the opposing party. If the opposing party seems to be gaining ground, either in the legislature or in higher offices, a legislator is probably more likely to switch. This work provides some empirical support for Canon and Sousa's (1992) argument that party switchers may be seeking opportunities in ascendant parties, which in turn need experienced vote getters to take full advantage of their ascendancy. This could create a situation where an initial set of victories could provide a party with new experienced politicians (party-switchers), without the need to cultivate a new group, who in turn provide another set of victories, which encourages a new set of switchers. This phenomenon could explain the apparent transition from a solid Democratic South, in the nineteen-sixties, to a Republican dominated South at the turn of the century.

What of this can be generalized to party switching in general? It does seem to cast some doubt on the generalizability of Aldrich and Bianco's (1992) claim that party switching is done for electoral reasons. It would not be a stretch to assert that due to the uncertainty of election conditions after a party switch, as shown by Grose and Yoshinaka (2003), a switcher would not be able to comfortably predict the outcomes of post-switch elections with the certainty required to use switching as a electoral tool.

The use of party switching as a tool for the advancing of ambition, in sense of using it to gain a higher office, is a little less clear as we move up the political career ladder. In the United States Senate it would be unlikely that an individual would switch in order to gain higher office, first because of the time investment in the individual's current party to reach such an office, and second because of the lack of higher offices to be pursued. Members of the lower house of a state legislature, such as the ones we have looked at here, are less likely to have the amount of time invested, as they are likely to be close to the beginning of their political career. (Francis and Kenny 2000) These members also have a greater number of higher offices available to them, from Governor, Congressman, Senator, State Senator to even chief executives of large cities or counties. The question becomes what about those individuals who are not at the highest positions in a legislative career but still farther along than just starting such a career. There are some anecdotal cases of party switchers in Congress who then pursue higher office, such as Phil Gramm who went on to run for senate successfully, or individuals who had already shown themselves to be ambitious before their party switch, such as Virgil Goode's challenge of Chuck Robb in the 1994 Virginia Senate campaign. Even more anecdotal evidence can be found among the party switchers in this data set. Clark Maxwell of Florida went on to become a state senator, and Jack Comer of Tennessee also attempted to move into the upper house. Billy Evans served Georgia as a U.S. Congressman during the mid-eighties. Not all of the switchers continued their careers

within the legislature. Neal Small moved onto the Western Tennessee Court of Appeals, while Ed Buelow became Mississippi's Tax Commissioner.

There is an important theoretical insight into legislative behavior contained within these results. Political science should never become too reliant on any single motivation to explain legislative behavior. This criticism is directed at those who would blindly follow Mayhew's assertion that all legislative motivations can be returned to electoral concerns. Although there is a large body of work that uses Mayhew's assertion as a starting point, and these results do nothing to diminish the results that that body of work has produced, these results do strongly point to caution in using electoral concerns to evaluate all legislative behavior. We can say that electoral concerns seem to be secondary when makes decisions about switching parties.

Finally, where does this work go from here? As argued earlier, the theory of ambition motivated party switching needs to be tested at higher legislative levels, as those levels may have different dynamics than those presented here. Although much work has been written on the effect of ideology on party switching, those questions are never addressed in this work. This question may be addressed at a legislative level where ideological measures are easier to get, such as the United States congress, or by expanding the data available to state legislature scholars, a worthwhile enterprise in and of itself. While on the topic of expanding the data available to the state legislature scholars, many of the results of this study are inconclusive due to a lack statistical significance. This may be remedied with the addition of ideological data but is more likely to require an expansion in the variation among the variables that are already presented. This can be achieved with a larger data set that can address this question, and similar questions, both over a larger range of time and range of states, thus allowing for more variation. Using a larger number of states would allow us to at the effects of legislative professionalism, if we use Squire's (1992) rankings this dataset overwhelmingly leans towards less professional legislatures and neglects both extremes of professionalism. These effects could also be explored by taking into account the strength of the governor, which the states (excluding Maryland and Tennessee) fall into the weak governor category if one uses Dometrius' (1987) scores.

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APPENDIX: VARIABLES

Variable	Measure	Min	Max
Switched	1 if legislator ran for next term as a member of the opposite party	0	1
General Election Margin	Legislator's percentage of the general election vote – the highest percentage of the vote garnered by an opponent	0	1.00
Primary Election Margin	Legislator's percentage of the primary election vote – the highest percentage of the vote garnered by an opponent	1	1.00
General Election Opposition	1 if the legislator had a general election opponent	0	1
Primary Election Opposition	1 if the legislator had a primary election opponent	0	1
Opposition Party Governor	1 if the legislator and the governor are of different parties	0	1
Opposition Congress Percentage	Congressional seats occupied by opposing party/Seats in state's congressional delegation	0	1
Change in Opposition Congress Percentage	*Opposition Congress Percentage$_t$-Opposition Congress Percentage$_{t-1}$*	-.4	.4
Majority Party	1 if the legislator is a member of the majority party in the lower house.	0	1
Redistricting	1 if there was a redistricting before the next election	0	1

VITA

Born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Dylan Scott Rickards primarily grew up in Charlottesville and Richmond, Virginia. A high school drop out, Dylan received his Bachelor of Science in sociology and anthropology from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, in May 2000. In 2002, he began graduate studies at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge Louisiana and will receive his Master of Arts in political science in May 2004, and intends to continue in the graduate program at Louisiana State University.

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