A Unified Theory of Party Competition

This book integrates spatial and behavioral perspectives – in a word, those of the Rochester and Michigan schools – into a unified theory of voter choice and party strategy. The theory encompasses both policy and nonpolicy factors, effects of turnout, voter discounting of party promises, expectations of coalition government, and party motivations based on policy as well as office. Optimal (Nash equilibrium) strategies are determined for alternative models for presidential elections in the United States and France, and for parliamentary elections in Britain and Norway. These polities cover a wide range of electoral rules, numbers of major parties, and governmental structures. The analyses suggest that the more competitive parties generally take policy positions that come close to maximizing their electoral support, and that these vote-maximizing positions correlate strongly with the mean policy positions of their supporters.

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A Unified Theory of Party Competition
A Cross-National Analysis Integrating Spatial and Behavioral Factors

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Several different strands of literature have influenced our work, which integrates the perspectives of spatial modeling and behavioral research in an effort to understand the real-world policy behavior of political elites. Our analyses of office-seeking politicians have been directly influenced by the extensive spatial modeling literature extending Downs’s work, particularly that of Enelow, Hinich, Munger, and Schofield. Our work on policy-seeking candidates has been similarly influenced by Wittman’s seminal work, and also by the important recent extensions developed by Groseclose, Londregan and Romer, and Roemer. Finally, our thinking about how to apply survey data to the analysis of elite behavior in real-world elections has been enriched by the empirical and theoretical work of Schofield and his coauthors, Erikson and Romero, Dow, and Alvarez and Nagler.

We particularly thank Barry Burden, Jay Dow, Roy Pierce, Norman Schofield, and Anders Westholm for general discussions and for correspondence that has advanced our thinking about the topics covered in this book. Jay Dow kindly provided us with some of the statistical estimates of survey respondents’ voting behavior that we used in the analyses we report in Chapter 8. At Cambridge University Press, we thank Lew Bateman, Russell Hahn, and Sarah Gentile. We owe special thanks to Florence Sanchez of the UCSB Political Science Department, whose tireless copyediting greatly improved the presentation of our ideas.

The data sets used in our study were made available by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), and the Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST) and are acknowledged with appreciation. Berndt Aardal and Henry Valen were the Principal Investigators of
the 1988 Norwegian Election Study, Roy Pierce was the Principal Investigator of the 1988 French Presidential Election Study (FPES), and Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell, J. K. Curtice, and Pippa Norris were the Principal Investigators of the 1997 British General Election Study. The ICPSR, the NSD, CREST, and the Principal Investigators of these studies are not responsible for the analyses presented here.

Portions of the following chapters are based on previously published work of the authors: Chapter 4, on Merrill and Adams (2001, 2002); Chapters 7 and 8, on work presented in Adams and Merrill (2003a); and Chapter 10, on Merrill, Grofman, and Adams (2001). The analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 are sequels to related analyses in Adams and Merrill (2000) and Adams and Merrill (1999b), respectively. Material adapted from Merrill and Adams (2001) is used with permission from Oxford University Press; that adapted from Adams and Merrill (2003a) is used with permission from the Journal of Politics.
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