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POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

S. C. Stokes
Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60637;
e-mail: s-stokes@uchicago.edu

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ABSTRACT

A central claim of democratic theory is that democracy induces governments to be responsive to the preferences of the people. Political parties organize politics in every modern democracy, and some observers claim that parties are what induce democracies to be responsive. Yet, according to others, parties give voice to extremists and reduce the responsiveness of governments to the citizenry. The debate about parties and democracy takes on renewed importance as new democracies around the globe struggle with issues of representation and governability. I show that our view of the impact of parties on democratic responsiveness hinges on what parties are—their objectives and organization. I review competing theories of parties, sketch their testable implications, and note the empirical findings that may help adjudicate among these theories. I also review debates about the origins of parties, about the determinants of party-system size and characteristics, and about party competition.

> Political parties created democracy...modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties.
>
> E. E. Schattschneider (1942)

INTRODUCTION

Schattschneider believed that political parties "created" American democracy out of a "small experiment in republicanism" (1942:3) by drawing the masses into political life. Despite this achievement, Schattschneider complained, po-

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litical theorists were at the founding, and remained a century and a half later, silent on parties.[1] The founders of the American republic tried to create institutions in which parties and "factions" would wither; yet parties appeared when American democracy was still in its infancy, just as they have reappeared in every democracy on earth. Later normative theorists, many of them no less skeptical than Madison or Jefferson of parties as promoters of the public good, seem to regard political parties as an unpleasant reality, a hardy weed that sprouts up in what would otherwise be the well-tended garden of democratic institutions.

Among positive theorists and empirical students of democracy, regard for political parties is higher. Early postwar political scientists in the United States yearned for a strengthening of parties that would allow "party government"; their aspirations are echoed today by observers of new democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America who blame the shortfalls of these democracies on the absence or weakness of political parties. Perhaps because their normative world is ordered not around notions of the public good but around the effective representation of inevitably conflicting interests, positive democratic theorists are more likely to view parties not as a weed but as a necessary microbe lodged deep in the digestive tract—not pretty, but vital to keeping the body politic in good health. In one view, parties promote interests that are partial (note the common etymology) or extremist; in the other, parties are the link between citizen interests and government actions. In addition to inducing governments to be responsive to citizens, parties are reputed to give order to legislative processes, reduce problems of multidimensionality of the issue space, and permit voters an object to hold to account. The debate over political parties—are they an inevitable evil? Are they what makes democracy democratic?—remains unsettled. It will not be settled until some agreement is reached about the nature of parties—what their objectives are and how they are structured. In this review, I outline the competing positions in this debate and suggest directions for empirical research that may help settle it, or at least move it to a fully normative plane. I turn to that task in the second section. In the first section I review prominent currents of research about political parties in postwar political science.

I restrict my discussion to political parties in democracies [i.e. political systems in which important governmental posts are decided by fair, competitive elections held on a regular schedule, freedoms of association and speech are protected, and the franchise is extended to nearly all adult citizens (see Dahl 1971)]. For discussions of parties in nondemocratic systems, see Duverger 1963, LaPalombara & Weiner 1966, and Janda 1993. Space limitations force

[1]The silence persists. The encyclopedic *Democracy and its Critics* (Dahl 1989), a 400-page volume, devotes seven pages to political parties.

me to ignore some streams of research, in particular the burgeoning literature on the behavior of legislative parties. For a sampling of recent contributions, see Rohde 1991; Cox & McCubbins 1992; Schickler & Rich 1997; Krehbiel 1993; and JM Snyder & T Groseclose, unpublished manuscript.

RESEARCH ON POLITICAL PARTIES: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The Origins of Political Parties

Political parties are endemic to democracy. However, they are not part of the formal definition of democracy; nor do the constitutions of most democracies dictate a role for parties. Indeed, in most countries, parties operate in a realm little regulated by statutory law. In the United States, the founders were dead set against parties. Madison, in Federalist 10, drew no distinction between parties and factions—"a minority or majority" united by "some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" (1982 [1787]:43)—but he realized that the price paid in liberty of eliminating the cause of parties would be too great. Parties, then, were an inevitable by-product of the liberties associated with a republican community combined with the human propensity toward division and conflict; "where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions" (1982 [1787]:44). Despite the efforts of founders, including the authors of the Federalist papers, to design institutions to control parties and factions, within a decade of the birth of the American state they had begun to organize the new nation's political life (see Hofstadter 1969).

Many contemporary students of democracy give a more upbeat answer to the question, "Why parties?" A leading answer is that legislative politics is unstable without parties; hence, legislators who want to get something done and who want their preferred policies to prevail will form parties. Far from an unfortunate consequence of human nature plus liberal freedoms, parties introduce effectiveness into democratic institutions.

A recent book entitled *Why Parties?* (Aldrich 1995) explores the origins of the US party system. Members of Congress faced important decisions about debt repayment and the future structure of government. It became clear even to anti-party thinkers such as Hamilton and Jefferson that there were advantages to be gained from coordinating votes over a number of issues among congressmen with similar (though not identical) preferences. The formation of parties in the legislature was a natural reaction to the problem of a multidimensional issue space and the resulting instability and issue cycling. The minority legislative party then had an interest in mobilizing votes to enhance its position in

the legislature, leading to the transformation of legislative parties into mass parties. Aldrich (1995) echoes Schattschneider's (1942) explanation of the natural advantages of party organization in legislatures, and he draws on theories of instability of decisions under majority rule (Condorcet in Black 1958; Arrow 1963; McKelvey 1976; Riker 1982; Schwartz 1986; MO Jackson, B Moselle, unpublished manuscript).

The universality of the scenario whereby parties originate in legislatures and then extend themselves to the electorate has not been established. In countries where military dictatorships suppressed parties for long periods, when a transition to democracy begins, parties often spring up before legislative politics is underway (see e.g. Linz & Stepan 1996). In these instances, the advantage of party organization seems to arise out of the dynamics of a negotiated transition from authoritarian rule, a process that may or may not have much in common with normal legislative processes. To settle the debate, which may mean establishing not the origins of parties but the conditions under which either elite politics or popular mobilization will engender political parties, we need better, more social-scientifically informed historical research into the origins of parties (see Vincent 1966, Cox 1987).

The extension-of-legislative-politics answer to the "why parties?" question competes in contemporary scholarship with several up-from-the-bottom explanations (see next section). By one account, parties are the projection into the political realm of historically inherited social cleavages. By another, parties arise out of district-level competition for office; there are heuristic and coordination advantages to organizing this competition along partisan lines, particularly in the leap from local to national parties. Note that the effect of parties in normative terms is still, contra Madison, good: although they do not stabilize legislative politics, they give more effective expression to the people's interests and solidarities.

Party Systems, Social Cleavages, and Electoral Rules

Parties are endemic to democracy. Yet their number, degree of institutionalization, and structure vary enormously from continent to continent and from country to country. The size of a party system (how many parties regularly compete in elections) and its scope (which cleavages and identities are politicized, which are not)— have profound normative implications. If parties convey the preferences, opinions, and interests of constituencies to government, then the expression of societal interests or their suppression via the party system will critically influence the quality of democracy.

In the debate over the determinants of the nature and size of party systems, one side champions a "comparative sociology of politics" (Lipset & Rokkan 1967:1), the other side an institutional analysis. The political sociology contin-

gent explains variations in party systems in terms of the nature of underlying social cleavages (Campbell 1958, Grumm 1958, Lipson 1964, Lipset & Rokkan 1967, Rokkan 1970, Nohlen 1981, Beyme 1985, Solari 1986). In Lipset & Rokkan's (1967) formulation, the party system that emerged in European countries was the consequence of alliances struck in the wake of critical historical events—the Reformation, the construction of nation-states, and the industrial revolution. Although the sociological approach is sometimes caricatured as ignoring the impact of electoral rules on party systems, it often, in fact, acknowledges the force of institutions on party systems. Lipset & Rokkan, for example, recognize the centrality of the "rules of the electoral game" (1967:30) and make some gestures toward explaining how these rules arise out of preexisting societal cleavages. Recent scholarship has carried this project further. Boix (1997), with a strategic-action orientation, explains the choice of majoritarian versus proportional systems in European countries at the moment when workers were enfranchised and socialist parties appeared. Liberal voters and parties faced the dilemma of how to retain control of legislative seats. If one of the preexisting liberal parties dominated the other electorally, this party could serve as a focal point for liberal voters, and majority rule remained attractive. If two preexisting liberal parties tended to divide the vote equally, the liberal leadership would prefer to shift to a proportional system to assure continued liberal representation.

Boix's (1997) analysis is a welcome innovation on a comparative sociology of politics that was weak on agency. Comparative sociologists never accounted satisfactorily for the emergence and persistence of one set of cleavages over another. The claim that some social cleavages were simply more central than others ignores extensive evidence of the non-mobilization of differences that, from a logical or historical standpoint, might well be politicized (see Laitin 1986). When comparative sociologists seek to explain why one or another cleavage is expressed in the party system, they link these cleavages to alliances and divisions in the distant past without taking sufficient account of party-system volatility and the decline of parties affecting many democracies (see Mair 1997). Kalyvas (1996) shows that divisions around religion, for example, are not fixed but can remake themselves from one period to the next, with drastic effects on party systems. He shows that liberal anticlericalism at the end of the nineteenth century led the Church to self-defensive strategies, with the eventual outcome—unintended by the Church—of the establishment of Christian Democratic parties. As long as agency persists, there is little reason to believe that party systems will remain immutable.

Institutionalism has developed as an alternative to the comparative sociology of political systems. Yet, as we shall see, instituionalists are better at answering the question "How many parties?" than "What kinds of parties?" Institutionalism originated in the writing of Duverger (1951, 1966). "Duverg-

er's law" holds that single-member districts in which a simple plurality is required to win the seat produces two-party systems at the level of the electoral district. Duverger reasoned that voters would not waste votes on parties with little chance of gaining representation and that parties that failed to mobilize votes would become discouraged and disband. The same reasoning was extended by Leys (1959) and Sartori (1968) to multi-member districts in which seats are allocated by proportional representation. Proportional representation produces systems with three or more parties, depending on the number of seats in districts and the minimum number of votes required to gain any legislative representation.

A large literature extends and refines Duverger's insights (see e.g. Leys 1959; Wildavsky 1959; Sartori 1968, 1976; Gibbard 1973; Satterthwaite 1975; Riker 1982; Lijphart 1994). The most important advance in this area since Duverger is Cox's *Making Votes Count* (1997). In the context of a broader discussion of strategic voting, Cox shows that Duverger's law should be understood as placing an upper limit on the number of parties. Through an analysis of the impact of distinct electoral rules (single-member simple majority, single-member with run-offs, proportional representation of various kinds), Cox concludes that electoral rules interact with "social diversity" to determine the effective number of parties in a system. Social diversity comes into the story in the linkage between district party systems and national systems. Consider single-member districts with a simple majority rule. Duverger's law obviously produces bipartism in individual districts, but why might the national party system repeat this same two-party structure? Cox (1997:186) suggests that "Some preexisting group, that is already of national scope or perspective, seeks to accomplish a task that requires the help of a large number of legislators or legislative candidates; this group therefore seeks to induce would-be legislators from many different districts to participate in a larger organization." The preexisting groups may be labor unions, religious sects, ethnic groups, or regional interests. The prominence of one group or another is not caused by electoral rules. The empirical findings, like those of Taagepera & Grofman (1985), Powell (1982), and Ordeshook & Shvetsova (1994), support the conclusion that local-level district magnitude, itself determined by electoral rules, places an upper bound on the number of effective parties; this institutional effect then interacts with social heterogeneity to produce the effective number of parties. In the end, institutionalism needs a comparative sociology to give a full account of party systems. The work of Boix and Kalyvas suggests a more vital, strategically sensitive comparative sociology.

Parties and the Mobilization of Voters

How do parties mobilize voter support? Postwar political science offers competing answers with distinct implications for the impact of parties on democ-

racy. Do parties reveal and aggregate voters' preferences such that governments are responsive to citizens? Or do parties form oligopolies of competitors with interests and preferences at odds with those of voters?

The leading early studies of voting behavior saw parties as organizations that mobilized voters through ties of socialization and affect. Drawing heavily on social psychology, scholars in the Michigan school in the 1960s developed the notion of party identification as an emotional tie to a political party, which is inculcated early and which, barring major partisan realignments, shapes voting behavior throughout a person's life (Campbell et al 1960, 1966; Converse 1969, 1976; Edelman 1964; Clarke & Stewart 1998). Later this perspective was displaced by ones in which parties competed for the support of voters whose posture was more rational and instrumental. Downs (1957) had posited that voters choose whom to vote for based on the proximity of a party's issue position to their policy ideal point (for a recent review see Ferejohn 1995). Downs offered some remarks suggesting that party labels may play a heuristic role in allowing voters to locate candidates on an issue space even when they lack detailed information about the past policies of incumbents or the proposals of challengers. Key (1966) is the father of contemporary theories of retrospective voting, where citizens assess not issue positions but past performance of governments in deciding how to vote. Here, too, the role of the party label is heuristic. The "running tally" (Fiorina 1981) view of parties, according to which party labels summarize the past performance of governments under a particular party's leadership, is an extension of this perspective (see also Zechman 1978, Alt 1984, Popkin 1991, Achen 1992).

A different kind of cognitive role for parties is proposed by Rabinowitz and Macdonald (Rabinowitz & Macdonald 1989, Rabinowitzet al 1991). Beginning with the observation that Downs's prediction of convergence of parties at the preferred position of the median voter is not borne out in the real world (see below), and following the lead of D Stokes (1966), who underscored the importance of "valence" as opposed to position issues,[2] they posit that voters perceive politics in dichotomous terms. Parties can adopt either "my" side of an issue or the "other" side. In order to clearly signal which side a party is on, parties send relatively "intense" messages—ones which, in spatial terms, might be termed extreme. Rabinowitz et al provide some empiri-

[2]Spatial issues are ones in which positions can be defined across a Euclidean space. An example is taxes; in theory, people's ideal points can fall at any point between 0% and 100% tax rates. Valence issues are ones that "involve the linking of the parties with some condition that is positively or negatively valued by the electorate" (D Stokes 1966:170–71). An example is prosperity or corruption. Whereas strategy on spatial issues is conceived as a matter of locating the party at a point proximate to some set of voters whose support the party wants to mobilize, party strategy on valence issues is to try to establish a bond in the public's mind between the party and the issue with positive valence, e.g. to be known as the prosperity or anti-corruption party.

cal evidence from the United States for their "directional theory" of party competition.

Iversen (1994a,b) notes the diverging predictions of directional theory and spatial models. If directional theory is correct, parties should adopt more extreme (or intense) positions than those of voters. In Downs's spatial model, party programs are predicted to converge to the same point, the one preferred by the median voter.[3] Iversen explores these predictions with evidence from European democracies. He finds that, contrary to the predictions of spatial models, leaders of left-wing and right-wing parties hold policy positions that are extreme relative to those of their constituents and even of party activists. Only centrist parties occupy positions that converge on the median of their constituents. The finding lends support to the directional model, as well as to a "mobilizational" perspective (see Przeworski & Sprague 1986), wherein parties pursue both short-term electoral gains and longer-term changes in the political identities and beliefs of their target constituents. Iversen's exploration of party positioning suggests that voters' preferences are shaped by electoral politics and party competition and that they respond not only to positional cues about what a government plans do to but also, potentially, to deeper appeals for social transformation.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

What Are Political Parties?

Democracy induces governments to be responsive to the preferences of the people. This, at least, is a central claim of many democratic theorists. According to Dahl (1971:1), "continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens [is] a key characteristic of democracy," and equivalent claims abound. Yet, just as responsiveness of governments to the people's will is normatively controversial, the degree of responsiveness of elected governments is disputed (see S Stokes 1998a, Przeworski et al 1999). Postwar democratic theory often asserts that political parties transmit popular preferences into policy. Echoing Schattschneider, Key wrote that an "essential function" of parties is to obtain "popular consent to the course of public policy" (1958:12). Yet here again much rides on one's view of political parties. By some accounts, parties force elected governments to be responsive to constitu-

[3]The prediction assumes that voters' utility functions are single-peaked and decline asymmetrically as policy moves away from their ideal point, an assumption challenged in the directional model. For discussions of the extension of Downs's model to multidimensional issue spaces, multiparty systems, and a variety of electoral rules, see Hinich & Munger (1994) and Cox (1990, 1997).

Table 1 Two dimensions in the conceptualization of political parties

Internal structure	Objectives	
	Winning office	Pursuing policies
Unified	Spatial theory	Modified spatial theory Directional theory Mobilization
Divided	Incumbent hegemony	Overlapping generations Curvilinear disparity

ents. Others claim parties make governments unresponsive. Much is at stake in the competing perspectives on political parties.

Scholars impute to parties different characteristics on two dimensions, namely their objectives and their internal structure. Parties' objectives may be exclusively to win office or may also include implementing their preferred policies; parties' internal structure may be unified or divided.[4] A two-by-two table illustrates these two dimensions and locates major theories of political parties simultaneously on both dimensions (Table 1).

Unified Parties

SPATIAL THEORY Beginning in the northwest cell of Table 1, spatial theory in its early form assumed parties that were single-mindedly interested in attaining office and were internally unified around this goal. Downs invoked the metaphor of parties as teams (Downs 1957, Black 1958). Parties were assumed to move freely across the policy space in pursuit of votes. The prediction that parties would converge at a single point (the position of the median voter) raised troubling questions about the degree of choice voters faced. Yet, for the most part, ideological displacement in pursuit of votes was regarded as what made governments responsive. Electoral competition induced parties, and hence governments, to give voters what they wanted, just as economic competition induced firms to produce what consumers wanted. Barry (1978:99–100) noted the parallel between spatial theory and the invisible hand: "[J]ust as the baker provides us with bread not out of the goodness of his heart but in return for payment, so the politician supplies the policies we want not to make us happy but to get our votes."

MODIFICATIONS Moving to the northeast cell, a later set of writers, still influenced by spatial theory, relaxes the assumption of preference- or ideology-free

[4]Strom (1990) suggests that distinct party objectives are not static features of parties but are endogenous to the institutional environment.

parties and explores the implications for party competition when parties care about policies as well as about winning (Wittman 1977, 1983; Calvert 1985; Chappell & Keech 1986). Calvert shows that if the distribution of voters across the policy space is known, even parties with ideological commitments will converge around the position of the median voter. The prediction is identical to that of Downs under the assumption of office-seeking parties [Ledyard (1984), Coughlin (1984), and Hinich (1977) show that the convergence result is more general than the median voter theorem]. Calvert reasons that unless a party wins the election, its opportunities to pursue its preferred policies are nonexistent; hence it will be willing to (almost) entirely give away its preferred position in order to win. Thus, the original spatial model's prediction of party responsiveness to voter preferences generalizes to the case of ideological parties.[5]

The nearest approach to a theory in which parties care about expressing policy positions but are indifferent to winning is Edelman's (1964). Such parties can be thought of as gaining consumer utility from the expression of a preference or ideology, but few examples of such behavior among political parties are to be found.

The story is different if the distribution of voter preferences is unknown. In this case, the behavior of office-seeking versus ideological parties should diverge. Office-seeking parties are expected to use available information to form a belief about the median voter's ideal point and adopt that position; assuming the available information is the same, both parties will form the same conjecture and arrive at the same position. [Ferejohn & Noll (1978) derive a result of nonconvergence when parties are purely office-seeking, are uncertain about the outcome of elections, and use different information to formulate predictions about electoral outcomes; see below.]

What about ideological parties? Uncertainty about the ideal point of the median voter means that the outcome of elections is uncertain. Parties must choose policy positions on the basis of their expected utility. Assuming that a party's campaign position is binding on its behavior in office (see below), the expected utility of adopting a given position is

$$E(U/x_a) = Pw(V_x) + (1–Pw)(V_y), \qquad 1.$$

where x_a is the policy announced in the campaign, Pw is the probability of winning the election, V_x is value the party derives from implementation of its preferred policies, and V_y is the value the party derives from the implementation of the other parties' preferred policies.

[5]Additional assumptions are that voters' preferences are formed by processes other than party competition and, relatedly, that parties are focused on the current election—assumptions that are challenged by mobilization theory, as noted above.

Calvert shows that the degree of divergence in campaigns depends on parameter values. In particular, the greater the value derived from one's own policies compared with those of one's opponent, the wider the gap between platforms. Note then that ideological parties under uncertainty are less responsive to voters than they are in spatial models, in which parties just want to hold office. Now their own ideological predispositions, as well as the preferences of voters, determine their policy position.

The result gains relevance if we acknowledge that some of the uncertainty about electoral outcomes is because voters' preferences are partly determined by electoral politics. This was the point of mobilization theory, a point that has been strengthened by recent work exploring the impact of party messages on public opinion (Zaller 1994, Gerber & Jackson 1990). Politicians consider voter preferences sensitive to campaigns; otherwise they would not waste their time and money campaigning.[6] Under the assumption of partially endogenous voter preferences, parties must make two projections: about the distribution of voter preferences before the campaign and about the persuasiveness of messages (and hence the distribution of preferences on election day). Viewed this way, the assumption of uncertainty regarding electoral results seems realistic. Still, we have much to learn about the formation of voter preferences, and endogeneity of voter preferences raises difficult problems for normative democratic theory.

Divided Parties

The bottom half of Table 1 is occupied by theories that explore the implications of party competition if parties are composed of actors with conflicting objectives. But below this level of abstraction, these models are miles apart. In overlapping generation models, parties induce governments to be responsive to voters; in incumbent hegemony and curvilinear disparity models, parties make governments less responsive to voters than they would be without parties.

OVERLAPPING GENERATIONS Overlapping generation models conceptualize political parties as composed of individuals who want to win office but once in office desire to impose their own preferences, which are distinct from those of the median voter. Fellow party members, however, induce them not to indulge their ideological preferences and to remain responsive to voters.

Following Alesina & Spear (1988), assume a political party whose individual members all have policy ideal points that are eccentric in comparison with the median voter. Party members know that their preferences deviate from the median voter's, although they do not know the exact distribution of voter

[6]The other explanation for campaigns is to induce participation in settings in which voting is not compulsory. But even where it is compulsory, such as in parts of Latin America, substantial sums are spent on sending out policy-relevant messages.

preferences. Party members, for these purposes, are defined as individuals of sufficiently high rank that they realistically anticipate running for office in the future. Members have a finite number of years remaining in their careers, and when they retire, young, new recruits will take their place. For simplicity, consider a party with three members. Member 1 has one political term remaining in her career; she will run for office now and retire at the end of the term. Member 2 has two terms left; his turn to run for office will come upon the retirement of Member 1, one term from now. Member 3, the youngest, has three terms remaining and gets to run at the end of the term that would correspond to Member 2. If, counterfactually, Member 1 were not constrained by a party, she would use office as a tool for her ideological commitments and impose her ideal policy, x_p, which (by assumption) is different from the ideal point of the median voter.

Alesina (1988) shows that if office holders are not bound in some way, any announced policy position will be inconsistent over time and hence incredible to voters. Voters expect office holders to impose their own preferred policies and hence expect government policy to diverge from campaign positions (see also Ferejohn 1986). Voters only believe campaign statements that reflect the candidate's true ideal point; candidates announce their true positions, and their campaigns (and policies) diverge from each other and from the preferences of the median voter.

But Member 1 *is* a party member, and Members 2 and 3 may have some ways of controlling her behavior in office. They can force her to adopt policies in office (and in her now-credible campaign) that match those preferred by the median voter. They want to because their own future electoral prospects are diminished if voters associate their party with unpopular policies of the past. Alesina & Spear (1988) posit that parties compensate incumbents by offering them services in exchange for policy moderation, such as helping to get the leader's agenda through the legislature or defending her before the press and public. Zielinsky (unpublished manuscript) shows that internal party democracy has the same effect of compelling incumbents to be responsive to voters. If the party in government chooses policy by majority vote of party members, then the incumbent Member 1, whose instinct is to indulge her own ideological predisposition, is outvoted by Members 2 and 3, who want to hold office in the future; by a two-to-one vote, the party chooses the policy preferred by the median voter (x_v) over the one preferred by Member 1 (x_p). Whether the mechanism of control is internal democracy or exchange of services, the impact of the party is to make government responsive to voters and not to the whims of individual office holders or the ideological commitments of parties.

INCUMBENT HEGEMONY Now consider a cleavage between incumbents and non-office-holding party leaders, similar to the one described above except

that incumbents care mainly about retaining office and are unconstrained by nonincumbent members when they choose their platform. Parties will be responsive to the median voter in the districts they already represent. But many voters, potentially a majority, will be deprived of representatives with more proximate policy stances than those of their actual representatives.

What I call the incumbent hegemony model has been developed by Snyder (1994) and S Ansolabehere & JM Snyder (unpublished manuscript) (see also Austen-Smith 1984). Political parties are composed of incumbents and would-be incumbents in a multidistrict legislature, where each district is represented by a single member. There are two parties. In this model, unlike overlapping generation models, would-be incumbents have no power to influence party platforms. Incumbents care about retaining office, and their careers are modeled as infinite. They also care, but less, about the size of their party's majority in the legislature. Snyder (1994:205) describes the utility function of Party X's candidate in district *i* as

$$u(w_i, W) = w_i\,[\alpha + \beta(W)], \qquad 2.$$

where w_i is an indicator variable that is 1 if Party X's candidate wins and 0 if Party Y's candidate wins, and W is the total number of seats Party X wins. Note that the party member derives no utility if she loses the election. As an incumbent, she prefers a larger number of copartisans in the legislature over a smaller number, but she is unwilling to reduce her prospects of reelection in favor of adding members to her party's legislative contingent.

The party platform is chosen by party members who are incumbents immediately before the election. Platforms are assumed to be binding. Given Party Y's platform, Party X chooses a platform that cannot be defeated by any alternative in a pairwise vote; Party Y uses the same procedure. The process for determining the platform is entirely democratic, at least as far as office holders are concerned. Under these assumptions, party platforms diverge; incumbents want voters to be able to easily distinguish their party from the other. The intuition, as explained by Snyder (1994), is that representatives from inner-city Democratic districts want voters to identify them as liberals, just as Republicans from affluent suburban districts want voters to identify them as conservatives. Divergence allows incumbents to retain safe districts.

A critical finding is that, to the extent that incumbents are more concerned about protecting their seats than about increasing their party's numbers in the legislature, a majority may not agree to change the platform in order to take advantage of new seats the party might pick up at the cost of a reduced probability of retaining seats it already holds. Under conditions specified by S Ansolabehere & JM Snyder (unpublished manuscript), parties will forgo opportunities to increase their seats, even dramatically, and the legislature may be made up of representatives whose policy positions are less responsive to the

full set of district medians than would be the case if parties were more sensitive to changes in public opinion.

CURVILINEAR DISPARITY Returning to the southeast cell of Table 1, consider finally the curvilinear disparity view of parties. In this account of parties, as in the overlapping generation model, leaders' preferences diverge from those of members. Yet the effect is not to force leaders, despite their preferences, to be responsive to voters, but rather to force leaders, despite their preferences, to be *unresponsive* to voters.

In both models, party leaders are people who run for and sometimes hold office. Members, in the curvilinear disparity view, are defined as activists or militants, people who are unlikely ever to hold office themselves. Most important, they are people with intense policy preferences that are more extreme than those of most voters. In Hirschman's (1970) formulation, this is not an ad hoc assumption but flows from the tenets of spatial theory. If, as Downs showed, vote-maximizing parties converge on the position of the median voter, then people whose policy preferences are far from the median face a dilemma: How to force politicians to consider their preferences? "Exit" is not an attractive option (Hirschman 1970). If they abstain, they only increase the weight of the opinions of people whom they disagree with. If they protest by voting for a party whose position is even farther from their own, they are supporting politicians whose views are even more obnoxious than the more proximate party's.

Hirschman's (1970) solution is that extremists join parties. They can then exercise "voice"—harass, harangue, and keep their leaders awake at night until they shift policy positions. If ideological extremists disproportionately join political parties, then the median position of party activists will be extreme in comparison with the position of the median voter. And if activists use voice effectively to shift their party's leaders toward their position, party leaders (and governments) will be drawn away from the median voter and end up somewhere between voters and party activists—hence the term curvilinear disparity, coined by May (1973). This disparity is the observable implication of parties staffed by extremists under the assumptions of classic spatial theory of party competition. Hirschman (1970) thus supplies another plausible condition under which party platforms diverge, namely when party activists use voice to pressure leaders away from the median. The critical point is that, in curvilinear disparity models, parties reduce the responsiveness of candidates/governments to the median voter, whereas in overlapping generation models they impose that responsiveness.

An objection to the law of curvilinear disparity challenges its assumptions about the ideological differences between leaders and activists. Where do leaders come from, after all, if not from the ranks of parties? Is it realistic to

maintain that leaders do not share the ideological agenda of activists? The answer suggests a modification of Hirschman's formulation (1970), one that allows leaders' primitive or pre-electoral preferences to be identical to those of activists; it is the allure of office, rather than fundamental (and theoretically ad hoc) differences in ideology, that creates a potential conflict between activists and leaders.

Consider the leader of Party 1. She wants to win office both because it allows her to implement her preferred policies and because she values the prestige and perks attached to it; in the phrase of Rogoff & Sibert (1988), she seeks "ego-rents." The value of holding office for its own sake is denoted by k. The precise distribution of voters' preferences is unknown. Following Alesina & Spear (1988), the goal of party leaders in choosing a campaign position is to maximize the sum of the expected utility of implementing their preferred policy and the expected utility of holding office for its own sake. Alesina & Spear (1988) show that the Nash equilibrium of a game with two parties is found by solving the following problems:

$$\max_{x} w^1 = \alpha\{P(x,y)u(x) + [1 - P(x,y)]u(y)\} + (1 - \alpha)P(x,y)k \qquad 3.$$

for Candidate 1, and

$$\max_{y} w^2 = \alpha\{P(x,y)v(y) + [1 - P(x,y)]v(x)\} + (1 - \alpha)P(x,y)k \qquad 4.$$

for Candidate 2. In the above equations, w^1 and w^2 are the utility of policy positions adopted by Parties 1 and 2, respectively. $P(x,y)$ is the probability of winning given campaign positions x and y. $u(x)$ and $u(y)$ are the value that the leader of Party 1 derives from the implementation of her program or her opponent's, respectively; $v(x)$ and $v(y)$ are the value that the leader of Party 2 derives. α is the value each leader derives from implementation of her preferred program relative to the value derived from holding office ($0 \leq \alpha \leq 1$). Alesina & Spear (1988) show that the more the party leaders care about policies as opposed to office (the larger α is relative to $1 - \alpha$), the greater the divergence between platforms. At the same time, if the value derived from office (k) is large enough, then policy positions will converge even when α is large. The more the party leaders approximate pure office seekers, the more responsive their platforms are to the preferences of the median voter; the closer they are to being pure ideologues who are indifferent to office for its own sake, the farther their platforms from the preferences of the median voter.

Party activists, in Hirschman's (1970) world, are people for whom the allure of office approaches zero. Few of them will rise in the ranks to hold office themselves; their entire motivation for getting involved in politics is to hold party leaders to an ideological vision. In the terms of the model above, for ac-

tivists both k and α approach zero. The party's leaders were ideologically identical to the activists when they were low-level activists themselves, but as they rise organizationally, so does the value of their party's winning office apart from the good works that it will allow them to carry out. k becomes a non-zero value and α begins to rise. In this model, parties' policy positions reflect distinct ideological orientations of activists and leaders, and these orientations are endogenous to their structural positions in the party organization.

Evaluating Models of Political Parties

Spatial theory's prediction of programatic convergence is unsustainable, even for two-party systems, where the prediction is clearest. Because of this anomaly, the authors whose work I have reviewed went looking for alternatives. Recent research confirms that political parties in two- and multiparty systems occupy persistently different policy positions, as expressed both in their campaigns (see e.g. Klingemann et al 1994) and in the policies they adopt (see e.g. Iversen & Wren 1998, Boix 1998). Modifying spatial models so that parties care about winning but are uncertain about the distribution of voters yields divergence only when parties formulate different predictions about the location of the median voter (Ferejohn & Noll 1978). It is possible that parties would have private information, perhaps from their own polls, about the preferences of the electorate; but such private information is insufficient to account for the broadly divergent policies adopted decade after decade by liberal, social democratic, and confessional parties in Europe, or by Democrats and Republicans in the United States. Either parties care about policies as well as office or they have more complex sets of constituencies than the median voter to whom they appeal.

Overlapping generation, incumbent hegemony, and curvilinear disparity models may help us make sense of parties under democracy. These models diverge in assumptions and predictions; hence, with appropriate data, we should be able to adjudicate among them (see Table 2).

Several of the predictions in Table 2 have been subjected to extensive research, though usually not in an attempt to understand parties. We have extensive knowledge of the impact of manifestos and platforms on policy but little more than scattered evidence on what turns out to be a crucial issue: "Who controls the platform?" The lacuna is regrettable because our three models make sharply distinct predictions. Future candidates exercise majority control over the platform, according to overlapping generation models; incumbents have control according to the incumbent hegemony model; and leaders plus activists have control in the curvilinear disparity model. We would also benefit from more systematic study of the relationship between national party platforms and the ways that individual candidates from parties run. Incumbent he-

Table 2 Divergent assumptions/predictions of three models of parties

	Overlapping generations	Incumbent hegemony	Curvilinear disparity
Who controls the platform?	Leaders (future candidates)	Incumbents	Leaders and activists
Mechanism of control over incumbent	Services from party leaders	No control	"Voice"—pressure from activists
Preferences of distinct party actors	Induced preferences same	Divergence: incumbents vs non-incumbent leaders	Activists more extreme than leaders
Government responsive to whom?	Median voter	Median voter in districts, not over-all median	Median voter and median party member
Dynamic responsiveness?	Policy changes with public opinion	Policy stable despite changes in public opinion	Policy changes with public opinion but moderated by activist opinion
Last term effects?	No	Yes, toward overall median voter	Yes, toward office-holder's preferences
Stability of relative party strength in legislature	No prediction	Stable	Changes with voter/party preference change

gemony posits platforms that are national in the sense that all candidates from a single party run on the same platform and voters identify all party candidates with this set of positions. Alternatively, if a party's platform is aggregated from individual candidate platforms, the results posited by S Ansolabehere & JM Snyder (unpublished manuscript) do not follow (see Austen-Smith 1984).

The same lament applies to the question, "What are the mechanisms of control that parties exert over office holders?" Future research might profitably focus on these mechanisms. In incumbent hegemony, there is no control; in curvilinear disparity, voice is the mechanism of control. Overlapping generation models posit services—defense of the office holder in public opinion and the press, help getting his agenda through the legislature—or internal party democracy. Any of these mechanisms could be treated as an independent variable whose value could vary over time within a given system or across systems. One could then test for variation in dependent variables, such as last-term effects, policy congruence between incumbents and potential future office holders from the same party, and congruence between voters' preferences and government policy. Furthermore, in overlapping generation models, governments are induced to be responsive by party leaders who are worried about future elections. Office holders' responsiveness should be less in countries where democracy and party careers are periodically interrupted by coups. If overlapping generation models have the mechanisms right, comparative research ought to reveal an association between the age of parties and the age of

democracy, on one hand, and government responsiveness, on the other. A common complaint about new democracies is that governments are unresponsive (see e.g. O'Donnell 1994). More theoretically informed research on parties in these as opposed to stable democratic systems may well turn up evidence in favor of overlapping generations.

Some systematic research has addressed the question, "Do distinct sorts of actors in parties have distinct policy preferences?" In overlapping generation models, party members may all have the same primitive policy preferences; retiring incumbents would want to indulge these preferences, but they are kept to the median voter position by younger party leaders. Hence the "induced" policy preferences of current and future office holders—preferences they will report publicly and attempt to pursue in office—will be the same. In incumbent hegemony models, no party actor need care much about policy and all care most about office; a conflict should be observable between a party's incumbent legislators and would-be legislators from districts controlled by the other party, the latter wishing to shift the party's platform in a direction that would enhance their chances of winning. Curvilinear disparity predicts activists who are extremist in relation to most voters and party leaders who fall in between.

Iversen (1994a,b) finds evidence from Europe contradictory to this prediction. Yet one must worry about his data on party leaders' policy preferences, reported in surveys taken at party congresses. These ultrastrategic actors may wish to appear bold in their ideological positions in the eyes of the activists who populate such congresses, and this strategic posture could influence their answers to survey questions. Bruce et al (1991) present evidence that leaders of "presidential parties" are ideologically more extreme than the parties' constituents, and they conclude that parties are interested in "advocacy" rather than office maximization or representation, a finding seemingly at odds with overlapping generation predictions and more in line with curvilinear disparity. The difficulty is that Bruce et al's "leaders"—county campaign directors— seem suspiciously like Hirschman's (1970) activists. The critical question is how likely they are to ever run for office.

Government responsiveness, defined as a shift in government policy in response to a prior shift of preference of some other actors, is a well-researched topic. The prediction of overlapping generation models is that incumbents will be induced by future candidates to be responsive to the median voter. The prediction of incumbent hegemony models is different; government as a whole, such as an entire legislature, may be distinctly unresponsive to the electorate as a whole. But a given party's program should reflect the preferences of the median of district median voters in districts under that party's control. Curvilinear disparity predicts a kind of muffled responsiveness; governments may, for example, change their position when the median voter's preferences

change, but all policy responsiveness is mediated by activists, who by assumption are extreme. Researchers have used widely different strategies to scrutinize responsiveness. In the United States, an early, organizing essay by Miller & Stokes (1966) found members of Congress to be responsive to (or ideologically predisposed to agree with) voters in their districts. Later research shifted to an aggregated level, the overall responsiveness of branches of government to shifts in public opinion (Stimson et al 1995, Page & Shapiro 1992, Mishler & Sheehan 1993, Bartels 1991, Jackson & King 1989). Their basic finding is that American government is responsive to changes in public opinion. Stimson et al (1995), for example, show that between 1950 and 1990, a one-point shift of public opinion to the left or right on an ideological scale was followed by a 0.74-point shift in the same direction by the president and a 1.01-point shift in the same direction by the House of Representatives. So powerful were shifts in public opinion that they dwarfed the effect of changing partisan composition of the House; a 1% increase in Democrats (about 4 additional Democratic members) produced only a 0.48% increase in policy liberalism.

Note that the change in the research strategy, from disaggregation at the level of individual districts to aggregation at the level of general public opinion and government as a whole, changes the significance of these findings for theories of parties. To choose between overlapping generation and incumbent hegemony models, we need to know whether the responsiveness of individual legislators to their districts is more or less powerful than the responsiveness of the government as a whole to the electorate.

Another way that political scientists have investigated responsiveness is by examining the predictive power of pre-electoral policy positions and post-electoral government policy: "mandate-responsiveness" (S Stokes 1999). Their reasoning is that manifestos and campaigns express voters' preferences as interpreted and aggregated by parties, so that remaining true to campaign positions is equivalent to remaining responsive to voters. Most studies do find a substantial consistency between campaigns or pre-election manifestos, on the one hand, and government policy, on the other (Krukones 1984, Fishel 1985, Budge et al 1987, Keeler 1993, Klingemann et al 1994). The Comparative Manifestos Project finds that manifestos predict policy; the authors credit this responsiveness to political parties.

The theoretical significance of mandate responsiveness depends on one's view of parties. As shown above, according to curvilinear disparity, party leaders' (induced) policy preferences diverge in the direction of the median voter from the more extreme position of activists from their own party. Activists may use party manifestos as a contract between themselves and party leaders, a common understanding of the position they were able to get candidates to adopt in exchange for a quieting of voice. If parties are only partially responsive to voters, and if manifestos are a testament to the gap between party

activists and voters, the policy predictiveness of manifestos may indicate the opposite of responsiveness to voters.

Consideration of theories of parties should raise awareness of the potential for differences between what politicians say in campaign speeches, debates, and nominating conventions, which are directed at voters, and the program they run on, which may have more to do with their relationship with their party. Manifestos are not generally widely disseminated to voters. Studies of the responsiveness of parties to their campaign positions have scrutinized actual policy in relation either to campaign "speech" (Krukones 1984, Fishel 1985, Keeler 1993) or to written manifestos (Budge et al 1987, Klingemann et al 1994), or both (S Stokes 1998b) without considering the potential for systematic slippage between speech and manifestos. A possible implication of the law of curvilinear disparity, and of the modification I suggested above, is a consistent difference between the two, with speech more responsive and manifestos less responsive to voters.

Another rival prediction supported by some data concerns last-term effects, a shift in an office holder's behavior when he does not face reelection at the end of the term. Last-term effects are predicted to be minimal in overlapping generation models: if services, defense before the media, and the like are effective, then younger members should be able to induce retiring incumbents not to depart from the policies the party advertised in its campaign. The other models predict significant last-term effects. If the law of curvilinear disparity has force, leaders in their last term may well return to their primitive or preelectoral preference, which should (like those of activists) be more extreme than most voters'. Predictions of incumbent hegemony are less clear. By assumption, office holders do not retire. If they do retire and if their vote on the party platform still counts, they may favor a shift in the direction of the electorate median and away from the median of district medians in order to increase their party's number of seats in the legislature. For the United States, there are some empirical findings on last-term effects, namely that they are small; no major change in roll-call behavior is observed among members of Congress who are not seeking reelection (see Lott & Bronars 1993 and citations therein).[7] The absence of last-term effects favors overlapping generation models, but we need more data.

The preceding suggests future lines of research that may help adjudicate the parties-as-cause-of-responsiveness and parties-as-cause-of-unresponsiveness debate. Still, combination may be as fruitful as adjudication. What if both overlapping generation and curvilinear disparity models are accurate portrayals of different parts of political parties? Perhaps parties are composed of cur-

[7]They do, however, vote less. Last-term members of Congress are not "ideological shirkers" but plain shirkers!

rent candidates or incumbents, future candidates who have an interest in keeping current incumbents in line with voter preferences, and activists who have no prospect of holding office, care most about ideology and policy, and have ways of inducing candidates away from the median voter. If this is the right picture, then certain dynamic patterns ought to appear. When a party leader is actively seeking office or holds office and can seek reelection, she ought to ally with other leaders who will someday be candidates and distance herself from activists. When she is a last-termer, her natural allies should be the party activists, and her natural antagonists should be party leaders who will run in the future. A horizontal pattern of party cohesion should be in evidence when a leader is reeligible; a vertical pattern of cohesion, linking office holders with activists against the leadership, should appear when the leader is ineligible.

PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today, more of the world's population lives under democracy than ever before. Hence, it is more urgent than ever before to understand how democracy works and assess how well it performs the functions imputed to it, such as responsiveness, representation, accountability, and realization of the public good. Observers of the myriad new democracies around the globe (but not they alone) complain of the ineffectiveness of democracy in achieving these functions. They not infrequently cast the blame on weak political parties (see e.g. Mainwaring & Scully 1994). Conversely, when observers detect a strengthening of parties in new democracies, they expect representation and responsiveness to be similarly strengthened (see e.g. Dix 1992).

Certainly it is hard to shake off the intuition that the more political parties are in evidence, the more consolidated the democracy. Yet it may well be that parties are markers of democracy, inevitable expressions of its advance, without being causally connected to all that is presumed good about democracy. If the foregoing stroll through empirical democratic theory taught us anything, it is that the connection between political parties and the responsiveness of elected governments is not at all settled. Some contemporary models of political parties reinforce the fears of early theorists that political parties would intervene between elected governments and the achievement of the public good. In the original conception, parties were partial and bound to the passions and prejudices of local public opinion; in some recent conceptions, parties are partial to their own conception of the good and unconstrained by public opinion.

It is clear that parties are here to stay, an unavoidable part of democracy. Whether, as Schattschneider believed, political parties made modern democ-

racy, or whether they are an inextricable weed in its garden, is a question that social science research does not yet answer.

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