O N E

Introduction

Although George W. Bush won both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, the way his campaign organization characterized these two victories differed dramatically. After Bush won in 2004 by more than three million votes, his reelection team was quick to claim that the people had given him a *mandate* to govern. In contrast, there were no such claims in 2000 when Bush received half a million *fewer* votes than his opponent. Yet, according to the electoral rules of the United States, Bush won both contests. Why would the margin of victory affect the interpretation of an electoral response if the main purpose of elections is to determine who wins and gets into the office?

In this book, we highlight the importance of electoral margins in political competition. Our work primarily describes two-party elections like those held in the United States; however, some of our results will also have implications for multiparty systems (cf., Kedar 2005). The core of our argument is that electoral margins contain information about the preferences of an electorate whose preferences are not known with certainty. In other words, electoral *margins* help to determine whether or not a candidate has received an electoral *mandate,* or authority to act on behalf of the electorate. All things equal, larger margins of victory mean stronger mandates— more of the public is in support of policies favored by the winner. As a result, after an election is held, *both* the winning and losing party have an incentive to shift their policies toward the policy preferred by the winning

party. The winner shifts in order to obtain more favorable policies and the loser shifts in order to remain competitive in the electoral system. Moreover, the size of the shift is increasing in the margin of victory, since larger mandates suggest larger shifts in public preferences. These dynamics have far-reaching implications for our understanding of democratic political processes. We study these processes by treating elections as a dynamic sequence, in which elections in the past affect policies in the present and elections in the future. As a result, both politicians and voters may see each election not as a stand-alone event but as a fragment of a larger picture, in which future policies and future electoral platforms are also important.

We emphasize that our main argument about mandates is a ceteris paribus argument. A landslide win by a party leads to a more extreme policy position by that party in the next election on the grounds that the median voter is much closer to that party. However, since this is not a unique and deterministic causal mechanism, the choice of a policy may be affected by a number of other factors like valence or partisan advantage of one of the parties, changes in the state of the economy, geopolitical factors, and even such variables as terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

We are not the first scholars to study electoral mandates. Several other authors (Stigler 1972; Kramer 1977; Stone 1980; Conley 2001) have suggested that politicians care about the margin of victory because it helps them implement their preferred policies should they win elections. Stigler (1972) and Kramer (1977) were among the first to suggest that the margin of victory in an election can be "valued in itself as a 'mandate' for the victor" (Kramer 1977: 317). In this case, larger margins of victory mean the party or candidate "can do considerably more" (Stigler 1972: 99). Examples of benefits from having a mandate include increased patronage, the election of legislators from marginal districts whose indebtedness to the party leadership ensures a more cooperative legislature (Kramer 1977: 317), and general political opportunity (Conley 2001). Similarly, voters care about mandates because they, too, have preferences over policies and they believe that politicians care about mandates as well.

Conley (2001) further argues that elections are uniquely important because they "convey information about public preferences to elected representatives so that these representatives know whether or not to adjust the policy agenda" (Conley 2001: 1). In particular, she argues that politicians have an incentive to react appropriately to the margin of victory in the previous election, or else "they will be punished at the polls in the future" (Conley 2001: 6). She also shows empirically that large

margins of victory are more likely to yield large policy changes (see also Stone 1980).

The importance of mandates, however, has yet to be widely accepted by students of electoral politics. Perhaps this is just a historical consequence of the fact that early treatments of elections happened to be conducted through the prism of static elections, office-motivated politicians, and pivotal voter motivations.

MANDATES AND PARTY BEHAVIOR

The seminal spatial models of electoral competition assumed that parties are *office-motivated*. In other words, parties formulate policies in order to win elections (e.g., Hotelling 1929; Downs 1957; Davis et al. 1970). Similar to shopkeepers choosing where to locate their stores on a given street, political parties choose candidates and positions on an ideological issue space. Similar to consumers choosing the closest shop, voters choose a party or candidate with the policy position closest to their own preferred policy. The equilibrium analysis of different models of electoral competition with office-motivated parties provides us with two main types of results: political parties either (1) converge to the same position—the location of the median voter (Downs 1957), or (2) diverge chaotically, offering an infinite variety of policies across a multidimensional issue space (Plott 1967; McKelvey 1976). These predictions do not fit well with what we know about the actual behavior of political parties. For example, parties typically offer policies that diverge significantly from the median voter and remain relatively stable over time (e.g., Peltzman 1984; Poole and Rosenthal 1984; Grofman, Griffin, and Glazer 1990).

Observed party differences can be easily explained if we acknowledge the fact that politicians have policy preferences that differ from those of the median voter. In other words, we assume that parties are *policy-motivated*. The assumption of policy-motivated politicians is completely consistent with the spatial modeling framework. The main difference is substantive: politicians try to win in order to implement their preferred policies instead of offering policies in order to win. A seminal analysis of policy-motivated candidates was offered by Wittman (1973, 1977, 1983) who described an equilibrium concept that now bears his name.

According to Wittman, political parties have preferences over the issue space and choose policies in order to maximize expected utility. In equilibrium, this choice is governed by own-party policy preferences, the other

party's policy preferences, and the probabilities of winning and losing the election. The probabilities of winning and losing are, in turn, a function of the offered policies and the distribution of voters. Each party simultaneously searches for an optimal trade-off—offering a policy closer to its most preferred policy increases a party's utility should it win the election, whereas offering a policy closer to the median voter's preferred policy increases a party's chances to win the election. Thus, politicians must balance their desire to implement favorable policies against their fear of losing the election and, therefore, not being able to implement *any* policies at all.

A critical component of Wittman equilibrium is uncertainty about the election outcome for a given set of offered policies. If political parties know the exact location of the median voter and voters know the exact location of offered policies, then the outcome of the electoral competition is certain. Under these conditions, if either party is even infinitesimally closer than the other to the center, then they will win the election. Since each party would prefer to win with a slightly less desirable policy, there is a race to the center. Thus, under certainty, the behavior of policy-motivated candidates is visibly the same as the behavior of office-motivated candidates in the traditional model.[1] However, when we introduce uncertainty about the election outcome, it creates a trade-off. Parties may be willing to give up a small increase in the probability they will win in order to have the opportunity to implement a more preferred policy (should they win). Under a wide range of conditions, uncertainty about the voter distribution causes parties to *diverge*, with both parties proposing policies away from those preferred by the median voter.

There are two main sources of election uncertainty. One possibility is that candidates know the exact location of the median voter but the voters do not know the exact location of the candidates' policy positions (e.g., Chappell and Keech 1986). In this case, policy-motivated candidates appear to be "fuzzy," which allows them to offer equilibrium policies that are different from the location of the median voter and still have a positive probability of winning the election. A more traditional way to represent uncertainty about the election outcome is through the parties' uncertainty about the location of the median voter (whereas voters have complete information about the candidates' locations). In this case, the location of the median voter is randomly distributed. The distribution reflects what parties believe about the preferences of the electorate. The mean of the distribution is the parties' best guess about the location of the median voter and the variance reflects how certain the parties are. By using polls, it is

possible to substantially reduce the variance of this distribution. However, it is possible that fundamental changes in beliefs about locations of the median voter happen only after major elections. One need only consider the many election "surprises" that have occurred over the years to realize that substantial uncertainty about voter preferences can only be resolved at the ballot box.

Wittman equilibrium analysis has been utilized in a number of political science studies (an incomplete list includes Hansson and Stuart 1984; Calvert 1985; Chappell and Keech 1986; Kollman, Miller, and Page 1992; Groseclose 2001; Adams and Merrill 2003). It is possible to show under certain relatively strict conditions that, in equilibrium, candidates' strategies differ if politicians are policy-motivated and there is uncertainty about the election outcome. However, despite being intuitively simple, Wittman equilibrium is very difficult to solve analytically, especially once we begin relaxing some of the restrictions. As shown in Roemer (2001: 60–61), the model of Wittman equilibrium is "intrinsically badly behaved" because the underlying expected utility functions are not quasi-concave. As a result, relaxing some of the basic assumptions about the model can make the model analytically intractable. For example, models based on Wittman equilibrium typically assume that parties have identical beliefs about the probability distribution of electoral outcomes and preferences that are equidistant from the expected location of the median voter. Of course, the latter assumption is violated if the expected location of the median voter changes through time (except for a degenerate case when all elections end in a perfect tie). Thus, a dynamic model of policy-motivated parties poses serious challenges for an analytical treatment of the model.

The main model that we describe in this book is just that—a dynamic model of electoral competition based on the Wittman equilibrium concept under uncertainty. We assume that politicians are policy-motivated (or have mixed motivations, which lead to substantively similar results). We also initially assume that there is inherent uncertainty about the true location of the median voter, which is randomly distributed according to some probability (though this distribution is generated endogenously in Chapter 4). The nature of this distribution reflects parties' subjective beliefs about the electorate. Finally, we assume that political competition is a dynamic process with multiple elections sequentially taking place. Because of the dynamic nature of the process, we cannot restrict party preferences (and, consequently, equilibrium policies) to be symmetric around the perceived location of the median voter. As a result, our general models become analytically intractable.

However, we analyze them using alternative formal methods in Chapters 2 and 4 such as numerical equilibrium analysis and agent-based modeling. We then test the predictions of these models using empirical evidence in Chapters 3, 5–8.

MANDATES AND VOTER BEHAVIOR

There are two ways to interpret party behavior in our models. First, the electoral mandate may affect policies that the winner proposes *in the present*, either right after a poll (see Meirowitz 2004) or right after an election (see, e.g., Conley 2001; Razin 2003). Large leads in the polls or large margins of victory in an election mean that winners can shift the policies they offer toward their own preferred policies without substantially increasing the risk of electoral defeat or resistance from the opposition. Conversely, close polls and elections should make parties more cautious. Second, the electoral mandate may affect the platforms of competing parties *in future elections* (e.g., Shotts 2000). A significant margin of victory indicates that the location of the median voter is closer to one of the parties, the winner. Both parties use this information to update their beliefs about the voters' distribution. Consequently, changes in beliefs tend to affect the choice of policies that the parties will offer in the next election.

In both cases, the margin of victory serves as a *signal*, where and how far the voters want politicians to go along the issue space, either in the present or in the future (or both). The signal is important if two requirements hold simultaneously: (1) politicians respond to the signal, that is, move with the mandate, and (2) voters believe that politicians respond to the signal. In this book, we focus on both requirements by presenting a theoretical model and examining its empirical implications for both voters and politicians. We show that, indeed, politicians are responsive to the margin of victory: in our theoretical analyses both the winning and losing party shift their equilibrium policies toward the policy preferred by the winning party and the size of the shift is proportional to the magnitude of the margin of victory. We also show that voters understand and believe in such electoral dynamics.

A desire to affect the margin of victory and send a signal to politicians can be defined as a *signaling motivation*. The idea of signaling is not new in an electoral context. Lohmann (1993) examines signaling as a cornerstone of "informative and manipulative" political action. She argues that if politicians pay attention to the size of a protest movement, then an individual may have an incentive not to free ride and to contribute to the public good

by joining the movement. The act of voting is subject to a similar collective action problem. However, if voters believe that parties are dynamic in the way we describe, then they may have an incentive to signal their preferences by voting in order to affect future policies offered by both parties. Thus, our model of electoral competition and empirical analysis is consistent with analysis presented by Lohmann. For example, extremists in either context— protest movements or elections—take political action in order to affect the behavior of politicians whereas less-concerned citizens (moderates) tend to free ride.

Other recent papers outlining the logic of signaling include Shotts (2000), Meirowitz and Tucker (2003), Razin (2003), and Meirowitz (2004). Shotts presents a two-period game theoretic model of elections in which candidates estimate voter preferences by using results from the first election. Thus, the first election affects candidates' behavior in the second election. As a result, voters have a longer time horizon and, therefore, make electoral decisions having *both* elections in mind. One of the implications of the model is that voters may have an incentive to signal their preferences for moderate candidates by abstaining in the first election (even when the cost of turnout is zero). Razin (2003) presents a somewhat different model in which election results affect post-electoral policies. He shows that voters may have a signaling motivation to vote if political parties are responsive. More-over, the signaling motivation is stronger than the motivation to be a piv-otal voter. We compare these two motivations using a decision-theoretic model and empirical analysis in Chapter 5. Meirowitz and Tucker (2003) suggest that the signaling motivation may be responsible for split-ticket voting in sequential elections (see also Alesina and Rosenthal 1995). Meirowitz (2004) extends these results from elections to polls, and shows that if voters believe parties respond to vote intention surveys by adjusting their policies, then polling results cannot be a reliable measure of public opinion.

A unified message from these papers is that voting determines not only *which* party wins an election but also *how* one wins. Whether the voters care about post-electoral policies or future electoral platforms, in either case they have an incentive to engage in signaling behavior as long as they believe that all votes count and that the political parties are responsive to the mar-gin of victory. Similarly, the signaling motivation lies at the heart of the the-ory of electoral mandates that we present here, since it makes the margin of victory the link between voter behavior and candidate strategies. Throughout this book, we consider theoretical evidence supporting the

notion of a signaling motivation and test it empirically, providing support
for the importance of electoral mandates in political competition.

Another message from these formal models of the signaling motivation
is that a belief in responsive parties gives voters an incentive to behave strate-
gically in contests between two alternatives. Specifically, we should expect
different behavior from extremist and moderate voters. Both kinds of
voters want their preferred candidate to win, and thus have an incentive to
vote sincerely. However, they also have an incentive to move post-electoral
policy as close to their own preferred outcome as possible. Extremists expe-
rience no conflict between these incentives. Each vote for the preferred party
increases the probability of victory and moves post-electoral policy closer
to their ideal point. Moderates, on the other hand, must consider a trade-
off. If they believe that larger margins of victory cause the winning party to
offer more extreme policies, then they may signal their preference for more
centrist policies by voting for the expected loser—even if it means voting
for their second choice. We call this type of strategic behavior *mandate bal-
ancing* (see Chapter 6).

PLAN OF THIS BOOK

In this chapter, we have introduced the reader to the two pillars of our the-
ory of electoral mandates: (1) for politicians—a dynamic extension of
Wittman equilibrium under uncertainty, and (2) for voters—a signaling
motivation to vote. We will be returning to these themes throughout the
book as we explore both theoretical and empirical evidence that supports
our theory of mandates, and our main thesis that politicians behave accord-
ing to the margin of victory and that voters know that. Here we outline the
substance of each chapter of the book as well as some of the methodolog-
ical contributions.

In Chapter 2, we begin with a game theoretic model of dynamic elec-
toral competition under uncertainty. Building on the classical Wittman
model, we study how policy-motivated parties behave when they use the pre-
vious election to update their beliefs about the electorate. For this model,
we treat voter behavior as exogenous (although we will endogenize voter
behavior in Chapter 4). Although the model is quite simple, it quickly
becomes analytically intractable when we introduce repeated elections
because candidates' preferences are no longer symmetric around the
expected location of the median voter.

We examine the properties of our model through the use of computer simulation. We believe this is a methodological contribution to the spatial modeling of electoral competition. Very little work has been done to extend the Wittman model because of its analytical intractability. This is unfortunate because the model can be examined by means of numerical equilibrium analysis. In this chapter, we provide basic guidelines for how to derive numerical comparative statics, and hope that these guidelines will be used by other scholars when they face similar problems with models that cannot be solved in closed form.

Substantively, we show that *mandates matter*. An increase in the winning party's vote share in the previous election helps the winner and hurts the loser because it causes *both* parties to shift their platforms for the next election in the direction of the winner's ideal point. This result will be tested empirically in later chapters. The model also yields other novel results. In the context of more than one election, we have two different kinds of uncertainty—electoral volatility and confidence in prior beliefs. The impact of electoral volatility is well known (see, e.g., Roemer 2001 for a rigorous treatment). More volatile elections yield greater uncertainty about the location of the median voter causing both parties to offer more extreme platforms. Our model reproduces this result with one exception. A party that wins the previous election in a landslide will actually offer a more *moderate* platform as electoral volatility increases because the greater uncertainty decreases the credibility of claiming a mandate. The second kind of uncertainty, confidence in prior beliefs, has not been studied previously but we show it also has an important impact on equilibrium platforms. We also show that polarization in the electorate plays a critical role in the dynamic behavior of parties. A more polarized electorate allows the winning party to choose a platform closer to its ideal point, but it also makes the losing party choose a more moderate platform.

Chapter 3 is devoted to further development and empirical testing of a theory about the link between election results and candidate ideology. Parties use past election results to update their beliefs about the location of the median voter and then adjust the candidates they offer accordingly. If the median moves right (left), Republican vote share increases (decreases) and causes both parties to move proportionally to the right (left). Testing this theory, we find that past elections have a dynamic impact on the ideology of future political candidates in the U.S. Senate. Winning parties tend to offer candidates who are more extreme in the next election and losing parties tend

to offer candidates who are more moderate. Moreover, the size of the vic-
tory matters. Close elections yield small changes in the ideology of future
candidates, whereas landslides yield larger changes. An average increase in
Republican vote share yields a shift to the right that is about one-quarter to
one-half the size of the average shift in ideology. This suggests that parties
and candidates pay attention to past election returns. One major implica-
tion is that parties may remain polarized in spite of their responsiveness to
the median voter.

In Chapter 4, we endogenize voter behavior and explore the effect of
local information and retrospection on voter behavior in the context of the
Wittman model. Specifically, we model voters as boundedly rational agents
who make turnout decisions on the basis of election results and simple
learning mechanisms. Voters are situated in social networks and use "fast
and frugal heuristics" to overcome cognitive limitations and informational
complexities (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Gigerenzer et al. 1999). Our goal
in this chapter is to describe a model of repeated elections in which voters
and parties act *simultaneously*. We place voters in a social context and let
them interact with one another when choosing whether or not to vote. We
also let parties choose platforms, and these choices may change from elec-
tion to election depending on feedback from the electorate. This allows us
to explore the endogenous interaction of dynamic platforms and costly
turnout.

In Chapter 4, we also hope to make a methodological contribution to
the study of electoral behavior. We believe that an interdisciplinary
approach, based on contributions from several social science disciplines,
will lead us to a better understanding of the subject. The agent-based model
we propose in this chapter is built on a number of contributions by sociol-
ogists (social context of voters), psychologists (bounded rationality and use
of heuristics), economists (platforms dynamics and turnout decision),
anthropologists (cultural influence exemplified by imitation), and last, but
not least, political scientists (interdependence of voters and candidates,
dynamic nature of the electoral competition). Agent-based modeling makes
it easy to add many variables to a model, but we believe that initial model-
ing efforts for problems like these should remain simple to provide a bridge
to what may already be an extensive analytical effort. Such an approach will
not only provide good predictive models of electoral politics—it will also
generate hypotheses that inspire future analytical efforts to find related
closed-form solutions and empirical efforts to test relationships suggested
by the model.

Consistent with the previous chapters, our substantive results suggest that mandates play an important role in electoral competition and they also help to address some of the most serious challenges in the field of electoral politics. Our model yields significant turnout, divergent platforms, and new hypotheses about the importance of social networks and citizen–party interactions. Making citizens boundedly rational and placing them in a social context turns out to be important. A closer look at social neighborhoods in the model shows that local imitation inherently yields negative feedback dynamics that encourage turnout. The effect is further amplified by the natural limits on information-processing capacities of citizens such as the length of memory.

Our model also shows that political candidates in the model pay attention to electoral mandates as they try to estimate the location of the median voter to remain competitive. As a result, proposed policies correlate with changes in the positions of both the median *voter* and the median *citizen* (the set of all people who vote and who do not vote). Interestingly, the greatest polarization occurs when voters' preferences are highly correlated between neighbors—that is, when neighborhoods are *ideologically* segregated.

In Chapter 5, we proceed to a closer examination of voters on the individual level. In this chapter, we assume party behavior is exogenous, letting politicians behave as in the models presented in Chapters 2 and 4. For voters, we construct a decision-theoretic model of turnout, in which individuals maximize their subjective-expected utility in the context of repeated elections. The model focuses on a citizen's subjective but rational estimates of whether he or she is better off voting or abstaining. In the model, we examine the value of a vote as a signal of one's preferences. Three empirical implications of our theoretical model are that citizens with higher levels of *external efficacy*, *patience*, and *electoral pessimism* should be more likely to vote.

We find limited empirical support for all three implications using validated turnout from National Election Studies (NES) data (1976–1988). Turnout is higher among citizens with higher external efficacy, higher discount factors (note that higher discount *factors* correspond to lower discount *rates*, i.e., less discounting), and lower expectations about the proportion of votes their favorite candidate will receive. The decision-theoretic model and empirical analysis have important empirical implications. First, our analysis suggests why a citizen may vote when elections are *not* close and there is a clear favorite. Second, we find further evidence for the phenomenon of *mandate balancing*, which we outlined above and examine in detail in

Chapter 6. Mandate balancing may explain why a voter would rationally support a party that is farther from one's ideal point. This happens when moderates support a party that is more likely to lose future elections in order to keep future winners from becoming too extreme. We also suggest that the NES studies showing the importance of close elections for turnout may, in fact, be capturing the effect of the signaling motivation. When we include the expected proportion of votes for one's favorite candidate in the empirical model, closeness ceases to be significant.

Chapter 6 focuses on how voter beliefs about politics and electoral mandates affect their behavior. In Chapters 2 and 4, we show two formal models that suggest parties have an incentive to respond to electoral margins, and in Chapters 4 and 5, we show how party responsiveness might influence voter behavior. In this chapter, we provide evidence that voters do, in fact, believe that parties are responsive, and this influences how they vote.

Using experimental data from the Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences (TESS) internet instrument, we find that voters believe an increase in the electoral margin of victory causes (1) the winning party to support more extreme policies and candidates, and (2) the losing party to support more moderate policies and candidates. We also test an important empirical implication of these voter beliefs, which suggests that some voters may vote strategically. Voting for the winner causes the winning platform to be adjusted further away from the center. Thus, moderates may have a "signaling" incentive to choose the party that is more likely to lose in order to keep the winning party from straying too far away from the voter's ideal point—another case of mandate balancing. Our results indicate that nonpartisan voters are more likely than partisans to switch their vote to the loser as the margin of victory increases. While it is possible that this reflects an antipartisan stance by nonpartisans, this is unlikely since only those nonpartisans who believe in responsive parties exhibit a tendency to vote strategically. If nonpartisans tend to prefer moderate policies, then these results are supportive of the mandate-balancing theory and the formal models in Chapters 2, 4, and 5 that generated this theory.

Chapter 7 draws attention to the fact that the costs of turnout are borne on Election Day and before, whereas benefits related to the outcome of the election are not reaped until much later. This suggests that patience plays an important role in the turnout decision, especially if voters are influenced by a signaling motivation to vote as hypothesized in Chapter 5. Patient citizens who are willing to wait for future benefits should be more likely to vote because they place a greater value on the impact of the election on *future*

policy changes. Impatient citizens should be less likely to vote because they are more influenced by the immediate burdens of decision-making and physical participation.

Evidence from the laboratory supports this hypothesis. Subjects were given a series of choices between an earlier, smaller prize and a later, larger prize. Those who consistently choose the later prize are significantly more likely to vote than those who consistently choose the earlier prize. The statistical relationship between patience and turnout remains even when we control for numerous other factors thought to affect the decision to vote. Patience is also found to correlate with political interest and church attendance, which suggests that variation in patience may be able to explain other relationships with turnout.

In Chapter 8, we look outside the electoral system for evidence of the importance of mandates. We utilize rational partisan and policy risk theories to show that presidential mandates (margins of victory) have an effect on interest rate expectations. If people expect parties to adjust the policies they offer in response to the margin of victory (or loss) in the last election, then rational partisan theory implies that people should expect higher inflation as expected vote share for the Left increases. Similarly, policy risk theory suggests that people should expect greater policy uncertainty as the margin of victory for *either* party increases since a larger margin of victory may give the winning party more leeway to implement the more extreme version of its policies. The empirical model confirms both expectations, showing that nominal interest rates rise when Democrats become more likely to win either branch of government.

In addition, the results are suggestive of new lines of research that could make contributions to several existing literatures. For example, the policy risk theory is an important complement to the rational partisan theory because it helps to make sharper predictions about interest rate expectations. Previous work that did not control for vote margin and incumbency (e.g., Cohen 1993) may have underestimated the partisan effect since both Democratic Party incumbents and Republican Party challengers may have an ambiguous effect on nominal interest rates. Future tests of partisan theory should, therefore, control for incumbency, the institutional division of power, and margins of victory.

The last chapter offers an overview of the theory of electoral mandates, substantive and methodological lessons the reader may have learned from this work, and the most important implications of our analysis for the study of electoral politics and democratic processes in general.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This work should appeal to a wide range of scholars in its breadth of methods and data employed. First, we hope to appeal to game theorists who study political competition. Our work has certain parallels with previously published books by Roemer (2001) and Conley (2001). Roemer presents a more rigorous and abstract treatment of the subject intended for scholars with advanced formal training. Conley's work, on the other hand, is more applied and focused. Our theoretical analysis fits somewhere in between. Additionally, we build upon both of these efforts by creating a model that is dynamic and by using an agent-based model to relax some of the stricter assumptions associated with the closed-form model.

Second, the models we employ should appeal to political scientists who are increasingly interested in bounded rationality, alternative formal models, and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of politics. In this respect, our formal models are influenced by recent developments in other disciplines: sociology, experimental economics, evolutionary psychology, and computational modeling in social sciences (see in particular Chapters 4–7).

Third, the extensive empirical analysis in the book should appeal broadly to scholars with substantive interests in the American party system and voter behavior. We draw on an unusually broad range of data sources, and utilize experimental data from TESS and the Iowa Electronic Markets (IEM) to complement more standard analyses based on National Election Survey and candidate position data.

Finally, several scholars now emphasize the value of combining formal theoretic and empirical approaches in a single work (known as empirical implications of theoretical models movement, or EITM). We hope to appeal to these readers, as well, with the variety of theoretical and empirical tools that we employ in our analysis.