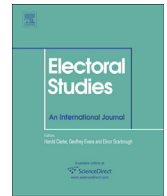




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Positional effects of partisan attachments on candidate position taking[☆]

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the causal mechanism for the effect of citizens' partisan attachments on candidate position-taking by offering a spatial model that treats the partisan attachments as voter-specific valence. An analysis of the model reveals that it is rational for candidates enjoying partisan favors to deviate from their partisans toward the center of their constituencies. The model also shows that the candidates with partisan favors could have a centrifugal incentive if the partisan favors translate into political activism. Empirical tests in the context of the U.S. House of Representatives elections in 2006 support the expectation that candidates with larger partisan bases are ideologically closer to their district preferences. The tests also show that partisans' ideological campaign contribution has a centrifugal force; however, it is not strong enough to offset the centripetal force of partisan attachments.

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1. Introduction

According to our intuition, if a large number of partisans are biased in favor of a party, the party represents the preferences of the partisans. In the empirical world, however, parties with larger partisan bases tend to converge more toward median voters than do the parties with smaller bases. Why does our intuition not agree with the empirical reality? This paper analyzes the causal mechanism for the centripetal effect of citizens' partisan attachments on candidates' position-taking. For this task, I offer a spatial model that treats partisan attachments as voter-specific valence.¹ An analysis of the model reveals that it is rational for candidates enjoying partisan attachments to deviate from their partisans toward the center of their

constituencies. The model shows that the candidates with a partisan advantage have an incentive to converge toward the center in order to make their policies less distinguishable from their opponents', thereby making partisan biases more salient in citizens' voting decisions.

The model also shows that candidates with partisan attachments could also have an incentive to represent the preferences of their partisans if the partisan attachments translate into political activism. More specifically, if strong partisans with extreme ideology reward or punish their candidates by offering or withdrawing their campaign contributions, they could restrain their candidate from moving away from their preference and going towards the center. Without such constraints, however, partisan attachments provide candidates with an incentive to defect from their partisans' preferences. In the context of the U.S. House of Representatives elections in 2006, empirical tests strongly support the expectation that candidates with larger partisan bases are ideologically closer to their district preferences. The tests also reveal that partisans' ideological campaign contribution has a centrifugal force; however, it is not strong enough to offset the centripetal force of partisan attachments.

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¹ The treatment of partisan attachments as candidate-specific valence is originally suggested by Adams et al. (2005).

The paper is organized as follows: first, I review the previous spatial theories; second, I specify a spatial model and analyze the model; third, I test theoretical results from the model; and fourth, I conclude with a discussion on the implications of the results.

2. Literature review

There are two contrasting approaches in the realm of electoral studies (Enelow and Hinich, 1984). Spatial theorists explain voters' and candidates' behaviors as intended consequences of self-interested actors. In his seminal book, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Downs (1957) offers the median voter theorem based on explicit assumptions as to the motivations of political players and their political environments. More specifically, Downs depicts that two parties competing to win an election on a one-dimensional policy space would converge to the ideal point of the median voter. Deductive rigor of Downs' approach has attracted the attention of spatial theorists who are interested in theorizing the mechanism of candidates' position taking in equilibrium.

Empirical scholars disagree with the Downsian assumption that electoral competition revolves only around policy positions. They claim that the factors that condition the votes are not only candidates' policy policies (position issues), but are also non-policy factors (valence issues) that do not fit neatly into a spatial framework (Stokes, 1963). Some empirical researchers focus on short-term non-policy factors, such as candidates' images, incumbents' constituency services or economic performance (Cain et al., 1987; Fenno, 1978; Ferejohn, 1974; Jacobson, 1981; Lewis-Beck, 1988; Mayhew, 1974). The other researchers, represented by the Michigan school (Campbell et al., 1960), emphasize the significance of long-term, affective and psychological identification with political parties. For these behavioral researchers, citizens may vote for a party of their partisan attachment even when they prefer different parties' policies (Jennings and Niemi, 1981).

Recognizing the significance of non-policy factors emphasized by empirical studies, recent spatial theorists attempt to offer more realistic explanations by incorporating candidates' valence in their models (Dixit and Londregan, 1995; Enelow and Hinich, 1982; Feld and Grofman, 1991; Macdonald and Rabinowitz, 1998). However, the spatial models do not agree with the effect of candidates' valence on their policies. Some studies show that candidates with a valence advantage diverge from the center, since they are more immune from district pressures (Burden, 2004). In contrast, other scholars argue that the advantaged candidates converge toward the center in order to make their valence advantages more salient in garnering votes (Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2000; Groseclose, 2001; Moon, 2004; Stone and Simas, 2010).

More recent spatial theories distinguish candidates' valence into different types. According to Stone and Simas (2010), candidates' valence could be divided into "character valence" and "campaign valence."² Character valence is the candidates' characters that voters intrinsically value

in office holders. It includes integrity, competence, diligence, and so on. Campaign valence is the candidates' qualities and abilities that are "instrumental to winning elections" (Adams et al., 2011: 17). It includes name recognition, fundraising ability, campaigning skills, and so on. Stone and Simas (2010) show that character valence has a centripetal effect on candidates' position, whereas campaign valence does not.

While these studies focus on valence factors that are specific to candidates, other scholars incorporate voter-specific non-policy factors. Erikson and Romero (1990) pioneer incorporating voter-specific non-policy factors. They find that vote-seeking candidates who benefit from partisan biases have strategic incentives to diverge from their partisans' positions.³ Recently, Adams et al. (2005) analyze the effect of a "voter-specific" valence advantage. Unlike candidate-specific valence, which is usually assumed to be identical across voters, voter-specific valence varies across voters. These include citizens' partisanship and other psychological attachments resulting from socio-demographic characteristics (gender, race, etc.). Adams et al.'s (2005) incorporation of the psychological and socio-demographic factors in their "unified theory of party competition" represents an effort to synthesize the formal theory tradition of spatial models and the behavioral tradition of socio-psychological models.

The spatial models that incorporate candidate-specific or voter-specific valence commonly find that the valence imbalance between candidates results in asymmetric position-takings by the candidates. However, the models analyzing the effect of candidate-specific valence obtain this divergence result from different sets of assumptions. For example, Groseclose (2001) analyzes two-candidate competition models using Wittman's (1983) assumption of policy-seeking candidates with incomplete information. They find that if policy-seeking candidates are uncertain about voter distribution, candidates with a valence advantage converge more toward the center than the valence disadvantaged candidates. By contrast, Adams et al. (2005) find that if policy-seeking candidates have incomplete information as to valence instead of policy, valence advantaged candidates diverge more from the center. While these studies yield an asymmetric divergence result with Wittman's assumption, Moon (2004) obtains the result from the Downsian assumption of office-seeking candidates with complete information. Assuming that candidates advertise their valence with campaign resources provided by extreme party activists, Moon (2004) finds that candidates with a valence advantage converge more toward the center.

The spatial models analyzing the effect of voter-specific valence also require different sets of assumptions in order to obtain the divergence result. Adams et al. (2005) find that citizens' partisan loyalties have a centrifugal effect in multicandidate elections. In particular, they find that an increase in (1) "the electoral salience of policies," (2) "the electoral salience of partisanship," (3) "the size of the

² Adams et al. (2011) also call the campaign valence "strategic valence."

³ While this paper obtained this result from non-probabilistic model, Erikson and Romero derived this result from their probabilistic model.

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