Proximity Voting Versus Party Effects in Congressional Decision Making

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ABSTRACT

In this article we seek to revise and extend congressional party theory and to test its claims against preference-based approaches that deny party theory any explanatory power. We argue that the nature of electoral verdicts and their attendant consequences bar any smooth translation of constituent preferences into legislative decisions through the mechanics of proximity voting. These consequences, we contend, provide a powerful platform for endogenous effects that advantage the majority party. We test our theory against a voting model recently presented by Keith Krehbiel. We find that preferences are indeed influential in roll call voting but not to the exclusion of party effects, that Krehbiel's preference-based model provides faulty predictions of actual results, and that it is especially flawed in explaining bipartisan voting. We close by identifying the primary puzzles that a party-based approach must solve.

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Despite the important contributions of John Aldrich and David Rohde (1995 and 2000) and Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins (1993 and 2002), the rationale for the importance of party in congressional decision making requires a firmer and broader foundation than cartel theory or conditional party government theory provide. In this article we seek to provide a theoretical framework that deepens and extends the case for party effects in congressional decision making, to test its claims against preference-based approaches that deny party any explanatory power, and to outline a research program for the further development of party theory.

I. Party and Preference

Although there has been an abundance of work in recent years that seeks to explain voting patterns in terms of preferences, Keith Krehbiel has been the leading advocate of a pristine application of the neo-classical economic model to congressional decision making and the leading critic of party-based explanations of congressional decision making. Krehbiel's case against party is at heart a case for the virtues of deduction and simplification in building theories that are coherent and causal. For him preference theory, despite its costs in terms of realism, is to be preferred because it can explain in a rigorous manner what party theory cannot (Krehbiel, 1991 and 1998).

The primary features of preference theory, as formulated and applied by Krehbiel, are as follows. First, the preferences of members of Congress are determined exogenously in the electoral process. Though subject to updating, they can be seen as fixed in character as far as the processes of legislative decision making are concerned. Aside from the structures and processes established to bring information to bear on choice, there is therefore no endogeneity that is of any importance theoretically in the legislative process—no independent internal effects on decision making that figure significantly in explaining outcomes. Rather, voting choices, assuming rational behavior that seeks to maximize utility, can be treated as revealed preferences. As such, they can also be seen to be controlled by the dictates of proximity voting, by voting in terms of the proximity of a proposal to a member's most preferred position or ideal point relative to the status quo. As a result, outcomes respond simply to the distribution of member preferences, as shaped by the voting rules that determine the pivotal voter in different legislative situations (Krehbiel, 1991 and 1998).

Second, party theory, as currently formulated, is deeply flawed theoretically and, despite the claims of its advocates, incapable of explaining outcomes in the legislative process. Party voting requires voting against preferences—otherwise it is preference voting. It thus must be based on force or discipline, not preferences. As a result, party theory, as presently formulated, is fraught with inconsistencies and limitations. It can explain why the result of a vote will be at the party median, not the chamber median, only in situations in which a 100% of one party oppose 100% of the other. Yet these situations are rare. In the preponderant majority of situations its ability to explain and predict outcomes is clouded not only by lack of unity within the parties, but also by the fact that the policy positions of members are not consistently ordered by party labels (Krehbiel, 1993 and 1999).

Third, preference theory can explain in a rigorous fashion what party theory cannot. What has been seen as party voting is just a mask for preference voting and can be shown to be such. Party scores, such as the Rice cohesion score, can be derived from the party vote score, which itself is determined or controlled by the defining features of the preference distribution. Party scores are thus deceptive indicators of the strength of party voting and the importance of party effects. The evidence in the form of high party voting scores that has often been relied upon to show the impact of party, in fact, proves little or nothing. All voting results can be far better explained in terms of a theory of preferences (Krehbiel, 2000).

Given his assumptions and claims, Krehbiel is unfazed by several aspects of congressional politics that are often cited to demonstrate the importance of party's role. He is quite aware that political, as well as substantive, preferences exist, that legislatures are organizations which formally confer power on party leaders, and that presidents are influential actors in the legislative process. His response to the existence of political preferences is to argue that one can be agnostic as to the source and character of preferences and treat them as basic units of analysis no matter what their differences (Aldrich and Rohde, 2000). His response to the existence of formal organization and the role of the president is to argue that both structure and policy reflect the will of majorities and thus that presidents as well as party leaders are captive to the manner in which preferences are distributed relative to the status quo (Krehbiel, 1998, Krehbiel and Wiseman, 2001, and Krehbiel and Meirowitz, 2002). Thus, in the end neither legislative structure nor the power of leaders, internal or external, trump the control of the median or pivotal voter.

On these issues Krehbiel's rejoinders suffer from his unwillingness to confront the difference between substantive and political preferences, his inability to explain the protections given to minorities in the rules, the limitations his approach to theory building impose on explaining institutional instability or change, and the misplaced or exaggerated concreteness of his majoritarianism in both the electoral and legislative processes (Krehbiel, 1991 and Rohde and Aldrich, 2000). Nonetheless, the case Krehbiel makes against party theory remains very difficult to counter if standard presumptions of rational choice with respect to fixed preferences, the median voter, and proximity voting are allowed to parametize the case for the importance of party effects (Krehbiel, 1999 and Krehbiel and Meirowitz, 2002). In varying ways both cartel theory and conditional party theory seek to sidestep or escape the limitations of these presumptions without directly confronting or negating them. In the case of conditional party government, their restrictive effects are rendered moot by recognizing multidimensionality and the role of endogenous processes in privileging some preferences over others. In the case of cartel theory, their restrictive effects are avoided by privileging political preferences and treating them rather than substantive preferences as primary.

Such solutions are insightful and instructive. However, for a variety of reasons they require bolstering and extension. First, when fixed preferences, proximity voting, and/or median status are treated or interpreted so as to be compatible with party effects, theories that attribute importance to party remain very vulnerable to challenge by arguments that are more pristinely reductionist or micro-foundational. It is not surprising, then, that advocates of cartel and conditional party theory have had difficulty providing formal proofs of non-centrist results that Krehbiel cannot seriously question or that many of their best arguments for independent party effects rest on inferences regarding organizational power and mixed motives, not notions of fixed preferences, control by the median voter, or proximity voting. Second, cartel theory and conditional party theory fail to adequately develop the implications of their insights with respect to political preferences and multidimensionality. As a result, although they are correct in rejecting Krehbiel's claim that preference and party effects must be treated as separate and adverse to one another, the manner and extent to which party effects and preference effects interact is neither adequately explored nor identified as a prime concern. Third, neither cartel theory nor conditional party theory exploit the weaknesses in preference-based theory's approach to uncertainty, intensity, and indifference. Fourth and last, although Aldrich and Rohde (2001) have recently extended the coherence of their argument by rejecting reelection as the dominant motive of members, both these theories see members as agents of constituency preferences and pay little attention to the president as party leader. In so doing they have in essence accepted the agency perspectives of preference-based theory, while doing little to recognize and elaborate the role of party in the intricate patterns of linkage among the electoral, legislative, and executive processes that actually exist. In sum, there are substantial reasons for believing that the challenge Krehbiel's pristine version of preference theory poses to party theory cannot be met without enriching its content in ways that both escape and transcend the boundaries of the neo-classical economic model.

All this discussion of theory is not to discount the fact that the conflict between Krehbiel and his critics has generated a host of innovative empirical studies by a variety of authors as well as the leading protagonists (Cooper and Young, 2002). Nonetheless, these studies have been limited by their reliance on the current state of party theory. Although the great majority of them find independent party effects on voting and/or outcomes, they do not in and of themselves constitute an adequate answer to Krehbiel's critique of party theory. Many are empirically framed and adopt research designs that in one way or another test for the existence of party effects that can be logically distinguished from preference effects. However, these studies, though persuasive in the evidence they muster regarding such matters as "party switchers", the use of restrictive rules, or differences in actual party medians vs. randomly estimated party medians, do not extend our understanding of the basis of party effects or the relationship between party and preferences (Nokken, 2000, Sinclair, 2002, and Wilson, 1998). Others explicitly accept Krehbiel's assumption that party effects and preference effects are separately based, and seek to show empirically that party effects are present that are distinguishable from preference effects (Snyder and Groseclose, 2000 and Ansoloabehere et al, 2001). However, these studies also have no developed and coherent theory of party voting to rationalize such a separation except acceptance of conventional notions regarding shared reelection goals or personal policy preferences adverse to constituent preferences. In addition, all these studies, and especially the latter type, are subject to challenge in terms of their measurement assumptions. It is thus no accident that in the exchanges between Krehbiel and those who criticize him on empirical grounds Krehbiel has more often than not held his own (Krehbiel, 1998, 1999, and Krehbiel and Meirowitz, 2002). In short, despite a host of good empirical studies, Krehbiel's challenge to party theory will remain difficult to answer until we have a clearer conceptual understanding of the basis of party effects to rationalize findings and guide in the design of measures.

II. Creating Room for Party Theory

To develop a more adequate version of party theory we must first provide a more adequate rationale for the importance of endogenous effects in legislative decision making. We need, in short, to create room or leeway for party theory by explaining why the translation of preferences into vote choices is not smooth and unproblematic, why a model that assumes that preferences are electorally determined and then aggregated into legislative decisions quite mechanically through proximity voting is flawed. In fact, this is not at all difficult to do if we critically consider the premises associated with the claims of exogenously fixed preferences and proximity voting and the issues they raise.

The most basic concerns the character of the preferences the electoral process channels into the legislative process and the manner in which this occurs. As noted earlier, a key underlying assumption of preference theory, when framed in terms of the canons of neo-classical economics, is that one may treat preferences in a uniform fashion as desires or goals of equal standing and quality analytically. Their differences in character and variety thus can be assumed to make no more difference in institutional analysis than differing desires for milk or bread do in market analysis. In addition, for purposes of modeling politics in terms of economics, elected officials can be assumed to be passive agents in transmitting electoral preferences into the legislative process. However, if differences in the character and variety of preferences matter and if elected officials are more than passive agents of constituent preferences, then the simple and direct translation of electoral preferences into vote choices becomes questionable.

We may begin with the claim that one may be agnostic about the source and character of preferences and treat them as basic and uniform units of analysis (Krehbiel, 1999). Even if we initially focus only on substantive preferences, persuasive reasons exist for rejecting this view. The notion that the preferences transmitted into the legislative process, whatever their differences in character, can be treated uniformly and concretely as factors or forces that directly and immediately determine vote choices is mistaken. In truth, preferences exist at different levels of abstraction with different degrees of ordering or fit between higher and lower levels. At the highest levels of abstraction broad policy or ideological orientations exist which shape or order preferences at lower levels of abstraction. Such preferences are better conceived of as commitments, not tastes, since they reflect basic moral and empirical assumptions about human nature and society (Hinich and Munger, 1994). At the lowest levels of abstraction, preferences may be defined in quite hard and specific terms, e.g., those that relate to highly particularistic benefits, but even at these levels contingencies of various kinds temper the translation of preferences into specific votes on bills. In sum, what is channeled into the legislative process is a mélange of preferences of varying degrees of concreteness with respect to policy goals, whose compatibility and consistency are shaped by shared preferences or policy orientations at the highest levels of abstraction.[1] The precise implications of preferences in terms of concrete policy choices are thus variable and often unclear (March, 1994).

Indeed, what other result could obtain, given that voters cast one vote over all issues and members vote on detailed bills and amendments that are generated in the legislative process, not the electoral process. Nor, for similar reasons, are members the abject prisoners of their electoral majorities' preferences, general or concrete, either during elections or between elections. Not only do they participate in defining and shaping the mix of general and concrete preferences that provide the bases of their majorities, but the preferences they aggregate in elections and respond to between elections are necessarily marked by elements of vagueness and inconsistency in content and intensity. Members, though constrained in all cases by the ideological orientations they share with their electoral majorities and in some cases by concrete preferences of extremely high salience to their constituencies, thus retain leeway in defining the legislative implications of the variegated and ambiguous mix of electoral preferences they represent and can expand such leeway by a variety of means, both good and bad, through forms of interaction with their constituents that go far beyond mere "updating" (Fenno, 1978 and Hurley and Hill, 2003). In short, although we can all agree that the electoral process channels preferences into the legislative process, we need not agree that it does so in a manner that fixes them so specifically as to ban endogenous effects in the legislative process.

Given the variegated character of the preferences transmitted into the legislative process both in terms of levels of abstraction and degrees of fit, a number of consequences follow that provide a broad and sturdy platform for endogeneity. The first concerns the impacts of uncertainty. Let us for the moment again confine ourselves, as Krehbiel does implicitly, to substantive preferences. Krehbiel is well aware of the threat uncertainty poses for preference theory. Nonetheless, in his analysis the problem simply becomes an information problem on the assumption that the knowledge members need to make reliable in the sense of highly probable decisions regarding end-means relationships can be acquired, largely through the expertise a specialized standing committee system provides. Information is thus assumed to be equivalent to objective knowledge, necessary only with respect to means, which are compartmentalized from ends, and readily obtainable for purposes of empowering rational decision making (Krehbiel, 1991).

In politics this type of solution skirts the problem. Krehbiel's solution is one that is satisfactory only to the degree that policy problems are like engineering problems where the translation of broad goals to specific choices is eased by agreements on goals, accepted standards for determining facts, and highly developed knowledge regarding ends and means relationships. In such circumstances means-ends calculations reduce to probabilities that can be precisely identified. None of these conditions usually obtain to any high degree in politics (Cooper, 1981). In politics choices of the best means to achieve ends are often rendered ambiguous by sharp disagreements over the ends to be achieved, the correct facts, and the character of causal mechanisms. This is why legislative conflict over matters such as tax or health care policy takes the form of contests in which allied sets of external actors and members present different narratives of the facts and causal mechanisms at work and draw on rhetoric and emotion as well as analysis in building coalitions. To see substantive preferences as exogenously determined and fixed in a manner that, once aided by the appropriate information, translate relatively unproblematically into concrete choices is thus to exaggerate the potency of knowledge or expertise in politics. This is true at all levels of abstraction but especially true when preferences take the form of broad policy goals. Indeed, even among person who share similar ideological orientations, we do not have determined and smooth translations of ends into means, but rather what Simon (1947) long ago referred to as a complex ends-means ladder of decision-making in which disagreements on ends, facts, and means continually emerge as general goals are translated into concrete actions. Note, for example, all the intermediate steps in terms of ends and means choices that are involved in translating broad liberal policy orientations into concrete bills on patients' rights, medicare, or taxation.

All this is not to argue that agreements on ends, facts, or causal mechanisms are totally absent or unimportant to the degree that they do exist. Indeed, as the case of airline deregulation in the 1970's shows, when an end such as economic efficiency predominates and all the acknowledged "experts" are agreed on facts and causal mechanisms, policy choices are exceedingly narrowed no matter what the more general policy or ideological orientations that normally separate Democrats and Republicans—a somewhat anomalous result for preference theory (Derthick and Quirk, 1985). It is rather to argue that such agreements are typically incomplete and highly variable and that in legislatures they assume more definitive form through a process of decision making in which broad value commitments and emotional attachments privilege certain versions of facts and causal mechanisms over others by establishing grounds for trust and credibility. Thus, in politics the translation of preferences into policy choices is far more than an information problem (Jones, 2001). It is a problem of beliefs in which disagreements over ends and means are typically so pronounced that neither theory nor facts can resolve basic conflicts or definitively identify the best course of action. The result is that the mobilization and application of knowledge is far less a technical process of the kind Krehbiel imagines than a political and strategic process in which information is rendered consequential and relevant in the context of policy goals, beliefs, and allegiances.

A second basis for important endogenous effects derives from the impact of variation in the intensity of preferences. Once again, for the moment, let us confine ourselves to substantive preferences and recall several basic assumptions of Krehbiel's application of the neo-classical economic model to politics—that members have preferences that are treatable like consumer preferences or tastes for commodities, such as milk or bread or wheat or corn, and that decision making can therefore be explained in terms of proximity voting. Yet, as elected representatives in a legislature rather than consumers in a market, members vote on all issues, not simply trade for favored commodities. Moreover, they have both broad and narrow preferences across a variety of issues that are characterized by highly variable degrees of interest, affect, and commitment across these issues. Thus, no matter what the character of a bill, members will vary greatly in the intensity of their policy desires and these differences will vary far more than the differences in support or opposition. Hence, qualitative considerations matter as well as quantitative ones with the result that the units of measurement on a uniform and fixed quantitative scale may well not reflect the weight of preferences or their weights across issues. My vote on abortion or vouchers will be determined by considerations quite different than my vote on particularistic benefits and will not necessarily be controlled by proposals that reduce the distance to my ideal point relative to the status quo.

As a consequence, the intensity of policy preferences varies in ways that the notion of proximity voting cannot recognize or encompass (Hall, 1996). When preferences are conceived as hard and uniform and voting is seen as based on the distance of a person's ideal point from a proposal as compared to the status quo, intensity simply becomes a matter of spatial location on a quantitative scale whose equivalence across issues is assumed. Proximity voting models, in short, both make the weight of the preference the same as the definition of the preference and assume that variation among members across all issues can be treated in constant and equivalent terms along a single unidimensional scale. The result is to strip the concept of intensity of its richness and effects in the real world. A concomitant result of importance is to cripple the notions of indifference and salience. Given its assumptions, zero intensity or indifference can occur only when a proposal and the status quo overlap or alternative proposals are equally distant from a person's ideal point. The first occurrence makes no sense and the second is not only likely to be rare, but also dependent on the questionable presumption that the direction of a policy proposal does not matter.[2] Similarly, the deficiencies of proximity voting with respect to intensity lead it to ignore the effects of salience as well. Attention is a variable, not a constant as proximity voting assumes (Jones, 1994). The consequences are substantial both in providing leeway for framing issues so as to capitalize on inherent aspects of multidimensionality in the complex set of preferences that emerge from the electoral process and in providing a basis for different types of decision making, for example, relying on cues from trusted sources rather than gathering information or choosing policies on the basis of preferences (Kingdon, 1981). In sum, then, variations in intensity and its correlates in terms of indifference and salience provide another and powerful set of reasons for believing that legislative decision making necessarily involves important endogenous effects. Intensity, like uncertainty, impacts the translation of preferences into choices in a manner that cannot be accounted for by a theory that sees externally determined preferences as dictating choice in a uniform and mechanical fashion.

A third, important impact of the character of preferences transmitted into the legislative process derives from the manner in which they inevitably involve and foster patterns of mixed motivation on the part of members. Although we have thus far only challenged Krehbiel's treatment of preferences as uniform units of analysis substantively, in politics the difficulties that agnosticism create also pertain to the presence of political preferences as well as substantive preferences. Political preferences, like substantive preferences, are varied in their character and source. They are rooted in desires to please constituents, to win the favor of party leaders, to promote the appeal of the party "brand" so as to retain or gain control of the chamber, and to maintain good relations with close friends and allies (Kingdon, 1981 and Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Similarly, substantive or policy preferences may be rooted in electoral self-interest and/or in personal, even moral, commitment to certain policy goals. Motivations, in short, are always mixed and indeed must be if democratic systems are to be responsible as well as responsive. Thus, even aside from the problems posed by ambiguity and intensity, the presence of mixed motivations gravely complicates any smooth translation of preferences into choices. The fact that different types of preferences, each beset with problems of ambiguity and intensity, exist confounds the basic logic of any unidimensional model based on ideal points. Once again then and for added reasons, substantive preferences, transmitted through the electoral process, do not dictate votes or control outcomes in the manner proximity voting assumes. Such preferences, even when relatively specific and intense, rather serve to establish zones of acceptability whose boundaries are quite flexible and responsive to political incentives. Kent Weaver's study (2000) of the continuing changes in party positions prior to the passage of the Welfare bill on the eve of the 1996 election provides an excellent example. The presence of and interaction between various types of incentives, like the other factors we highlight, thus expand opportunities for persuasion and bargaining beyond those provided by electoral influences. In so doing, they too provide a powerful basis for endogeneity.

A fourth and final impact that provides a basis for important endogenous effects concerns organizational power. As noted earlier, Krehbiel recognizes the existence of organizational power, but still sees it as subservient to preferences. In his view the structures that distribute power reflect majority will and do not obstruct the rule of the median or pivotal voter in policy decision making. Once again, however, the reality is more complex. There are, to be sure, substantial limits to the degree to which elements of structure can be imposed on an unwilling majority. But at the institutional level an even more highly entrenched zone of acceptability exists due to the enhanced difficulties and costs of collective action (Shepsle, 1986 and Schickler, 2001). Structure in the Congress thus represents a consensus, largely inherited, on what overall are acceptable decision making arrangements and/or not worth challenging, and it responds to pressures for major change only under conditions in which the desire of majorities for change is intense, focused, and prolonged. Indeed, the claim that organizational structure reflects majority will, if interpreted strictly, raises problems of cycling proximity voting cannot solve and Krehbiel (1991) declines to face.

As for the policy effects of structure, it is true, to be sure, that the Congress of necessity remains a non-hierarchical organization and that its rules and procedures thus require party majorities to organize actual chamber majorities to pass particular bills. It is true as well that the involvement of party majorities is not consistent across policy areas and that to varying degrees over time they are subject to displacement by cross partisan and bipartisan majorities even in policy areas they seek to control. However, to transform these kernels of truth into a sweeping proposition regarding the sovereignty of preferences is a mistake. Organizational power is not plastic; whatever its dimensions it cannot be concentrated in fleeting majorities. Rather it must be given to a single majority and its possession inevitably allows the leaders of that majority to prejudice outcomes both through acts of commission and omission (Cooper, 1975).

As a result, Krehbiel's attempt to deny the importance of the endogenous effects of organizational power by arguing that leaders exercise power as the faithful servant of majority preferences fails (2001). Admittedly, as suggested earlier, the potential for agreement that emerges from the electoral process is constrained and constraining. There are indeed limits to what legislative leaders can accomplish through their power over the agenda and the rewards and penalties at their disposal. Similarly, it is undeniable that leaders act as agents of their majorities. However, neither of these propositions means that the exercise of power by congressional leaders is reducible simply to action on behalf of majority preferences. On the one hand, such power is often exercised to induce members to vote against their substantive preferences and hence is reducible to preference effects only in the sense that all voting that is not irrational reflects preferences. On the other hand, as in the case of his analysis of electoral verdicts, Krehbiel's majoritarianism in the legislative process suffers from misplaced concreteness. It ignores the necessary discretion that accompanies and empowers the agency of party leaders and the broad zones of acceptability that parametize accountability. It ignores as well the manner in which such discretion can be exercised not only to build majority coalitions for majority party programs, but also to frustrate the ability to build majority coalitions adverse to the desires of a majority of the majority party. To be sure, the exercise of such discretion can inspire bitter dissatisfaction and even revolt in the chamber as a whole or in the majority party for reasons of omission as well as commission. But the broad conditions and terms of its exercise, despite the negative possibilities, are critical to successful lawmaking and are part and parcel of the basis for endogenous effects in the legislative process. In sum, the exercise of leadership power is too subtle to be reduced to service of some pre-existing, concrete, and stable set of majority preferences. It necessarily involves action based on judgment, not tight deductions, and dangers of abuse. The choices in conceptualizing and assessing leadership power are, in short, not limited to strict adherence to majority will or gross irresponsibility.

III. The Role of Party

For all these reasons we need not accept the claim that legislative theory may ignore endogenous effects on decision making and its corollary that legislative outcomes can be explained simply in terms of exogenously determined patterns of preference. If then, there are good grounds for believing that there is no predetermined and smooth translation of constituency preferences into concrete decisions on bills through the mechanics of proximity voting, on what grounds can party be presumed to influence the outcomes that actually occur? To answer this question we need only to reexamine the factors that create endogeneity in congressional decision making and relate them to the role of party.

We may start again with the role and impact of the electoral process. Party theory like preference theory assumes that preferences are channeled into the legislative process from the electoral process. However, it sees the channeling as less determinative of vote choices and sees preferences as part and parcel of what constitutes a party. Thus, at both the electoral and legislative levels parties are constituted by preferences for policy and political gain that unite partisans around the goals of winning elections, securing power and prestige within the legislature, and enacting policy programs. It is these preferences, and particularly the broad policy orientations that animate and inspire partisan allegiance, along with the character and motivation of party activists, that establish party identities. Parties, in short, at both the electoral and legislative levels take shape in terms of and express preferences, both substantive and political, and are instruments for their realization. Hence, there is no absolute dichotomy between party and preferences. To be sure, the degree to which partisans are agreed on their policy goals varies across policy areas and across time. Disagreement, however, is highly destructive of party identity and effectiveness only when it involves broad policy orientations. Indeed, it is these types of divisions, far more than disagreements over the particulars of bills, that deprive political preferences of their salience and weight. Nonetheless, although variable in strength over time, party provides the widest and most consistent basis for commonality and reconcilability in patterns of preferences, both at general and specific levels, in legislative decision making. In sum, what the electoral process contributes are not patterns of fixed preferences that mechanically determine results, but patterns of preferences that are shaped at the electoral level by partisan commitment and activity and have to be converted into concrete decisions at the legislative level. The contours of these patterns define the possibilities for persuasion and bargaining and hence the potential for forging agreement on concrete legislation on the basis of partisan conflict and/or bipartisan agreement. Such potential thus both bounds and empowers the legislative process at one and the same time. To a large degree it is the creation of party at the electoral level and the basis of party's role in the legislative process (Cooper and Wilson, 1994).

Given the role of party in shaping the patterns of preferences that emerge from the electoral process and the fact that the import of these patterns lies far more in their implications and malleability than in their immediate content, the same aspects of congressional decision making that provide a platform for endogeneity in the legislative process serve also to advantage the power and responsibility of the majority party and its leaders. The presence of uncertainty provides a better basis for theory that recognizes both preference and party effects than one that seeks to base explanation wholly on preferences effects, supported by a technical view of expertise that make the problems of translating preferences smoothly into choices tractable. The ambiguity that surrounds ends-means relationships permits individual decisions to be influenced by argument and rhetoric. The centrality of party leaders and the expectations of their followers therefore require that they play a major role in mobilizing, diffusing, and exploiting information favorable to party policy goals. In so doing they can rely largely, though not exclusively, on the shared commitments and beliefs of their fellow partisans to render their arguments and rhetoric persuasive. But however pursued and accomplished, their ability to frame the issues and the evidence is critical to success. As noted earlier, although the positions taken and pressed may be circumscribed to the degree that expert opinion is unified, such patterns are normally limited in breadth and depth in major areas of policy with the result that typically information becomes as much a political weapon as an objective source of guidance (Rochefort and Cobb, 1994).

Differences in intensity are also an important factor in building majorities, and again largely advantage majority party leaders. The degree to which members feel intensely about policy proposals will vary from issue to issue and have important impacts on choice. In some areas the translation of general ideological orientations to policy choices may be direct, not bedeviled with much uncertainty, and intense, for example, abortion. Members will be obdurate and inclined not to proximity voting, but to voting against any proposal that does not protect or advance their broad policy position. In other areas, however, most members may be indifferent. Here too, neither the distribution of preferences nor uncertainty matter because members care far more about reasonable mechanisms of gatekeeping than results. The bulk of decision making can be seen to occur along this continuum, not at the extremes. But since intensity, like uncertainty and mixed motivation, acts to establish a range of acceptability, not proximity voting, differences in intensity facilitate the ability of party leaders to build majorities in a variety of ways. They increase their ability to mobilize obligations that derive from shared commitments to partisan success, past favors, or the feelings of solidarity that membership in conflicting groups breed. Equally important, they facilitate bargaining and even “vote buying” by majority party leaders both in the ranks of their own partisans and with members of the minority as well as cue taking directed by majority leaders.[3] Last, but not least, the overlap between ideological orientations, party positions, and intensity allows party leaders to use their organizational positions to focus attention and manage salience in ways that confer substantial political advantages (Jones, 1994).

Similarly, mixed motivation provides incentives and leeway for building majorities on the basis of party. As noted earlier, the presence of mixed motivation, based on the multiple goals of members, expands possibilities for endogenous effects in important ways. Nonetheless, the arrays of substantive and political preferences that exist both conflict and reinforce one another. The achievement of substantive policy goals both promotes reelection and helps to preserve the policy and personal benefits that derive from majority status. Indeed, it is a mistake to see the effects of party as wholly or largely based on political preferences. Rather, the strength and vitality of political incentives varies with the strength and vitality of substantive agreements. Still, it is also true that shared political goals can facilitate the satisfaction of policy goals by inducing members to provide support that they might otherwise not provide, for example, on key procedural votes. Yet, substantive and political preferences also conflict. At the individual level members cannot escape conflicts between their own views and the views of significant elements of their electoral majority. At the collective level, members whose views are in line with constituency preferences may nonetheless be at odds with the positions of most of their fellow partisans and hence in danger of opposing or frustrating the efforts of party leaders to build a record that will win public favor. Hence, at all times one of the prime duties and contributions of party leaders is to exploit the commonalities in these different types of preferences and to manage the conflicts. Not only are they best positioned and expected to perform this task, its successful performance maximizes the degree to which the potential for agreement that exists among fellow partisans as well as minority members can be translated into action.[4] Such performance thus constitutes a critical and defining component of both majority building in the Congress and the role party plays through it leaders in passing legislation (Cooper and Wilson, 1994).

Finally, if the leverage or power that derives from organizational structure provides an unavoidable and important basis for endogenous effects, it does so to a substantial degree under the aegis and control of the majority party and its leaders (Aldrich and Rohde, 2000 and Cox and McCubbins, 2002). As suggested earlier, though necessarily less hierarchical than bureaucratic organizations, rules and procedures are still essential in Congress to constrain the impacts of the various forms of multidimensionality that exist and to provide mechanisms and incentives for majority building and majority success. Moreover, although levels of organizational power vary across time and between the House and Senate, the rigidities of structure always severely limit the degree to which the advantages it confers can be placed in the hands of shifting majorities. Such power thus gravitates into the hands of the leaders of the broadest and most stable majority available—the party majority. In translating the mix of general ideological orientations and more concrete preferences that emerge from the electoral process into actual policy decisions, the role of party and party leaders is therefore critical. In controversial areas of policy shared partisan commitments and goals provide the best grounds for constructing majorities. The authority conferred on their leaders to control the agenda, the terms of debate, and the distribution of organizational rewards reflects this fact and both enjoins and allows them to take the lead in majority building through persuasion and bargaining. Similarly, as we have also suggested, their authority and leverage as leaders give them initiative and advantage in framing issues and evidence, exploiting differences in intensity that exist among members, and combining them with political appeals and rewards to garner the votes in their own party and in the minority party that are needed for victory.

However, none of these facets of party influence in translating electoral outcomes into actual legislation can be fully understood or appreciated if we restrict our attention to congressional party leaders. Given the status, power, and role of the modern president, no theory of legislative parties can ignore the fact that the president is the preeminent party leader and congressional party leaders of his own party largely only his lieutenants. It is the president who takes the lead in translating broad ideological orientations into concrete policy proposals and in so doing both defines the contours of party conflict. Similarly, it is the president who dominates the continuing process of interaction with the electorate—who frames the issues for the party, chooses the rhetoric, and serves as the primary advocate before the public. Indeed, the interactive character of the relationship between elected officials and constituents is no more vividly demonstrated than by the public role of the modern president and its effects in making message politics a prime feature of congressional politics as well. Finally, with the growth of the administrative state and the nationalization of politics the status and power of the president serve as the prime generator of political incentives. Given his status and his resources, it is no accident that the 20th century president, encouraged by his fellow partisans in Congress, has become an active participant in the legislative process in Congress not only to exploit the bargaining advantages his veto power confers, but even more to capitalize on his ability to mobilize public opinion, to seize the initiative in defining the policy agenda, and to deploy a host of rewards and penalties beyond the reach of congressional leaders (Kernell, 1997, and Cooper, 2001).

All this is not to deny the importance of preferences, but only to argue that policy outcomes are not reducible to some set of fixed, hard, and predetermined preferences. The degree of commonality and reconcilability in the broad and concrete policy goals that emerge from the electoral process matters. This is true both with respect to decision making in each house of Congress and with respect to decision making across the houses and branches. The ability to construct majorities on the basis of party and through the efforts of party leaders, including the president, is thus bounded from the start quite apart from the other limits that apply. Nor, is party ever the only basis of aggregation and accommodation—the only basis of solving collective action problems. The potential for aggregation on the basis of party is often in need of some reinforcement from members of the minority as well as subject to challenge by cross partisan majorities and to displacement by bipartisan majorities (Cooper and Young, 2002). It is equally true that uncertainty, intensity, and mixed motivation are far from unmixed blessings for party voting and party leaders. Especially in an age of candidate-centered and issue politics, each of these factors can lead members to adopt rigid and/or self-serving positions that heighten the difficulties party leaders have in building majorities. Finally, organizational leverage is highly variable and not easily concentrated both because it responds to differences in institutional setting and because it requires high levels of shared party policy goals. As a result, organizational arrangements typically combine decentralized and centralized elements in different and changing proportions. They thus can be a detriment to party success as well as a contributor.

IV. Hypotheses and Tests

Despite these caveats, our revised and extended version of party theory provides a powerful rationale for affirming the theoretical significance of party in congressional decision making. Nonetheless, in the end theory matters only to the degree that it enhances the explanation of actual behavior and outcomes. Hence, our ability to define and argue for a party-based approach does not necessarily mean that it should be favored any more than Krehbiel's ability to define and argue for a preference-based approach means that it should not. To provide a basis for empirically assessing the merits of our framework of analysis as opposed to Krehbiel's, let us summarize the salient differences. First, while our framework recognizes that member desires or goals are an essential part of explaining legislative behavior and can be conceptualized as preferences, it rejects the view that preferences can be treated as uniform and basic units of analysis, whatever their differences in content. Rather, it treats preferences in a manner that recognizes the importance of different kinds of motivations, sees preferences as entities that exist at various levels of abstraction, emphasizes those that take the form of general policy or ideological orientations, and does not see elected officials as mere captives of constituent preferences.

Second, our framework does not define party in a manner that treats preferences as something apart from party and equates party voting with non-preference voting. Parties organize and necessarily reflect the preferences of their members, both substantive and political, and are highly constrained by them in solving their internal collective action problems and those of the chamber. In both regards, however, it is not sheer preferences that count—these are an illusion if treated as unified, unchanging, and pre-determined entities, as billiard balls on a pool table. What does count are the contours and malleability of the mix of preferences that emerge from the electoral process both in and between elections and then are further defined, ordered, reconciled, and aggregated by the structures and processes of the legislative process in the context of continuing interaction between presidents, members, and constituents.

Third, our framework reaffirms that in legislatures, as in all formal organizations, cooperative action is not a vector of processes of decision making driven by the force of hard and fixed preferences. Rather, it sees cooperative action as structured by organizational arrangements that distribute tasks, power, and authority, and as influenced by the presence of mixed motivations, uneven levels of intensity, and the strategic use of information. Party leaders, and particularly the president, play a prime and creative role in these processes. They both shape and manage the interface between the potential for agreement that emerges from the electoral process and the impacts of organizational power, ambiguities in ends-means relationships, different levels of intensity, and mixed motivations.

These differences in perspective necessarily lead to conflicting explanations of the character of congressional decision making. With respect to voting behavior, as elsewhere, Krehbiel argues that party does not matter; only the distribution of preferences does. To substantiate that claim he has recently put forward a model of roll call voting that assumes fixed preferences and proximity voting, and then proceeds to derive differences in voting alignments from differences in the distribution of preferences (Krehbiel, 2000). His intent is to demonstrate that his model can account for all patterns of voting simply in terms of the patterns of preferences (See Appendix A). Krehbiel contends that he has constructed his model, not for testing propositions, but for demonstrating analytically that party theory is empty, that party scores are a fiction, and that voting results can be fully explained simply in terms of a theory based on fixed preferences and proximity voting. His model, however, amounts to a tautology in which varying degrees of overlap in the preferences of members of the two parties, posited by the model, logically determine the level of the party vote or Condition X, in Krehbiel's terminology, as well as all other voting patterns at different levels of Condition X. Yet, the ability of the model to sustain Krehbiel's claim that party scores are mere masks of preferences cannot rest on logic alone. As is always true, the worth of theoretical claims and the basic assumptions that underlie them depend on their fit to empirical reality.

If, then, the logical character of the relationships between the underlying assumptions of Krehbiel's model and its claims do not exempt his model from testing, neither do its operational assumptions. Aside from the basic assumptions of the model, drawn both from preference theory and his concept of party, Krehbiel makes four additional assumptions to operationalize the model—that ideal points are uniformly distributed within the parties, that preferences within the parties extend to the very ends of their side of the scale, that cut points are uniformly distributed along this left-right scale, and that increases in intra-party unity or homogeneity are always associated with increases in inter-party heterogeneity or division (and vice versa). Though in abstraction these assumptions may seem unrealistic, they are perfectly appropriate for building a model based on an anarchic and indiscriminate view of preferences. Indeed, Krehbiel assumes and, in the case of the uniform distribution of ideal points and cut points argues explicitly, that his model rests on operational assumptions that are neutral or not consequential for results. This claim, however, rests on prior acceptance of several assumptions that are central to his concepts of party and preference—the assumption that party voting requires voting against preferences which, in turn, equates party voting with party discipline and perfect unity, the assumption that all voting other than perfect party voting is non-partisan so that whether a vote unites or divides the parties does not matter theoretically, and the assumption that the median voter always prevails, which follows logically if one assumes voting is non-partisan and unidimensional.

Such assumptions are, of course, adverse to the assumptions and claims of party theory. Party theory necessarily presumes a lumpy distribution of preferences within the parties. Not to do so is to remove much of the rationale for the organized pursuit of collective purposes. It also assumes the manipulation of cut points by party leaders. Not to do so is to destroy the rationale for and intended consequences of organization. Finally, since party theory does not see party voting as an empty phenomenon, it distinguishes bipartisan voting from party voting and does not assume that the same relationships between unity and difference exist in both realms of voting. In sum, then, Krehbiel's operational assumptions are all highly congruent with his basic assumptions which see party as an empty concept properly subject to reduction to the fundamental determinant—preferences. They, thus, do not argue against testing, but render supportive results of even greater consequence than in cases in which these two sets of assumptions are highly independent of one another. Indeed, for Krehbiel to deny testing is to contradict his underlying methodological rationale for applying a neo-classical economic approach to politics—that simplification, even at the cost of unrealism, is justified because of the rigor deductive theory brings to explanation when confirmed by experience.[5]

Our framework of analysis, when contrasted with Krehbiel's model, suggests four clear tests of conflicting claims with respect to voting patterns.[6] First, Krehbiel's model allows us to test the claim that aggregate voting scores reflect nothing more than the distribution of preferences. As noted earlier, in Krehbiel's model the level of the party vote, the percentage of votes in which at least 50% of one party vote against at least 50% of the other, provides the baseline for identifying different types of preference distributions. Given this relationship, Krehbiel constructs a formula that demonstrates that the Rice index of cohesion score is simply a linear transformation of the party vote score. Though Krehbiel does not provide a formula for deriving other aggregate scores, such as the party and bipartisan unity scores, the logic of his model allows one to deduce them as well from the preference distribution reflected in the level of the party vote. In contrast, party theory posits that aggregate voting scores are not mere masks of preference effects—that a variety of endogenous effects, mediated by party leaders, also influence voting and hence that aggregate voting scores will not be simple products of exogenously defined preference distributions as reflected in the level of the party vote. It further assumes that to reduce all voting essentially to non-partisan voting will be to ignore important differences in partisan and bipartisan voting patterns.

Second, Krehbiel's model allows us to test the claim that preference distributions determine patterns of vote splits on party votes as well as aggregate cohesion and unity scores. Here again, the claim that preference distributions determine voting patterns and can be identified in terms of levels of the party vote means of necessity that the structure of voting divisions or splits will also vary in terms of the level of the party vote. For example, when the level of the party vote or Condition X is .6 in Krehbiel's model, the same preference distribution that makes 60% of the votes party votes also produces a distinctive pattern of vote splits on these votes. The Krehbiel model thus can be applied to predict the pattern of vote splits on party votes at distinct levels of the party vote—for example, what percentage of votes that divide the parties will split them 100% vs. 100%, what percentage 90% vs. 90%, and so on, when Condition X is .6 in Krehbiel's model. In contrast, party theory would expect the application of such logic to fall far short of capturing the realities of legislative voting. If voting outcomes are a product of a variety of endogenous factors as well as exogenously determined preferences, then the proportions of different types of vote splits that actually occur on party votes will differ significantly from those predicted by the model.

Third, since Krehbiel's model treats patterns of bipartisan voting as well as party voting as the product of preference distributions, it also can be applied to identify or predict patterns of vote splits on bipartisan votes at different levels of the party vote (or its reciprocal, the bipartisan vote). In this case Krehbiel's model constricts and regularizes the patterns of vote splits to a far greater degree than in the cases of partisan vote splits. It predicts that at all party vote levels from 0 to .9 (bipartisan vote levels of 1 to .1) 20% of both parties will vote together 90% or more of the time, 20% will vote together 80% of the time but not 90% of the time, and 20% will vote together 70% but not 80% of the time. In contrast, party theory believes that the presence or absence of party effects makes a difference. It not only sees endogenous effects in bipartisan voting, but also sees bipartisan voting as involving different dynamics of choice than party voting. It thus rejects the assumption of the model that increases in intra-party unity are always accompanied by equivalent increases in inter-party division (which, in fact, is not true in the case of bipartisan votes), and rather assumes that differences in the direction of the vote (parties majorities voting together rather than opposed) typically involve different dynamics of coalition building. For all these reasons party theory sees bipartisan voting as a different type or realm of voting, subject like party voting to variation in levels of unity across and within different levels of the party vote, but less constrained by conflict and more constrained by information costs and indifference than party voting.

Fourth, and last, Krehbiel's model allows us to derive predictions regarding DW Nominate polarization scores, even though he himself does not derive them. Many presume that these scores because of their scaling procedures provide a better measure of preferences than traditional party scores. Be that as it may, these scores provide another way of testing Krehbiel's claims that is possibly more favorable to preference theory. We may note that in Krehbiel's model the distance between the party medians is equivalent to the party vote or Condition X and varies in a perfectly linear fashion as the party vote increases or decreases. Given these features, the model can also be used to predict the distance between the party medians in the DW Nominate Scores in individual

Houses and Senates on the basis of the level of the party vote that prevailed in those Houses and Senates. Thus, if voting is entirely controlled by preference distributions, in any particular House or Senate the distance between the DW Nominate party medians and the distance between the party medians in Krehbiel's model should be the same at the level of the party vote in that House or Senate, and these two measures of distance should vary in lock step with one another as the party vote increases or decreases. Alternatively, if party effects as well preference effects are present, these relationships should be substantially less than perfect.

V. Roll Call Evidence

These four conflicting hypotheses or conjectures can be tested by comparing actual scores with scores derived from Krehbiel's model. Before we begin, it should be noted that in all our tests we have been careful to preserve comparability between Krehbiel's model and actual scores. In Tables 1-3, it is necessary to convert actual levels of the party vote (which can vary from 0-100%) to the compressed scale Krehbiel's model relies on to measure it (which varies from 0-1). We do so by treating the intervals that define the level of the party vote in the model in terms of their mid-points. Thus, for example, any House or Senate with an actual party vote score between 25% and 34.9% we classify as a .3, and so forth for all 10 points on the scale used in the model. Similarly, in calculating the Pearson r and the R square between predicted distance (the level of the party vote) and actual distance (the DW Polarization Score) in Figures 1 and 2, we have divided the difference between party medians in the Nominate Scores by two. This is necessary because the DW Nominate scores are based on a scale from 1 to -1, whereas Krehbiel's party vote scores vary from 0-1. As noted, the character of Krehbiel's model allows him to equate the party vote with Condition X, his measure of different patterns of preference distribution. We have used this term in all our tables and figures to indicate the levels of the party vote at which we are comparing actual and predicted scores.

Table 1 contrasts actual mean scores for cohesion, party unity, and bipartisan unity with those that are predicted by the Krehbiel model for both the House and Senate from 1867-2001 (See Appendix B). What Table 1 indicates is that the actual mean scores are often significantly different statistically from those that can be derived from the Krehbiel model. This is particularly true of the Senate for all three measures. It is also particularly true of the cohesion score, which is not surprising. Given that it is a measure across all votes, it reflects the combined effects of divergences from the model's predictions for party unity and bipartisan unity. Finally, it should be noted that Krehbiel's model posits that the mean cohesion and unity scores of the two parties will be the same and need not be reported separately. This is quite justified, if voting is wholly preference based and the distributions of preferences within the parties and cut points from left to right are uniform as the model assumes. For then at the same level of the party vote overall patterns in voting in one party match those in the other because internal divisions within the parties are mirror images of each other at different points along the continuum of cut points. In fact, however, Democratic and Republican scores are not identical, but rather differentiated by a variety of factors, such as irregularities in the distribution of preferences, differential control of cut points, majority or minority status, margin, and divided government, that the preference model does not account for or capture. In presenting the actual data we have accordingly presented both Democratic and Republican scores to indicate more fully how reliance on preference-based theory obscures the complexity of actual behavior. It is, however, not surprising that a theory that discounts the reality of party would be prone not to accord party differences any recognition or importance.

Tables 2 and 3 test a second set of predictions that can be derived from Krehbiel's model (See Appendix B). They present data on predicted versus actual patterns of vote splits on partisan and bipartisan votes in ten Congresses. These Congresses have been chosen so that half reflect a weak partisan era (1967-1977) in which the party vote was low and half a strong partisan era in which the party vote was high (1991-2001). We divide vote splits into five categories on both party and bipartisan votes: dominant, strong, medium, weak, and cross. In both types of votes, these categories measure the percentage of votes on which both parties are united 90 percent or more (dominant); at least 80 percent, but less than 90 percent (strong); at least 70 percent, but less than 80 percent (medium); or less than 70 percent (cross). The weak category consists of votes in which one party is at least 70 percent united, but the other party less than 70 percent. Hence, a dominant partisan vote (dpv) is one in which 90 percent or more of both parties vote against one another and a dominant bipartisan vote (dbv) one in which 90 percent or more of both parties vote together. Again the data in Table 2 reveal significant divergences between actual voting patterns on party votes and what preference theory predicts. In the House the model over-predicts the degree of conflict between the parties at high levels of the party vote and, ironically enough, also errs in one way or another in predicting the degree of conflict at low levels of the party vote. Moreover, across each and every level of the party vote, statistically significant differences exist between the pattern of vote splits predicted and actual results. The same conclusions apply to the Senate, though Senate divergences from predicted patterns appear both more and less extreme than in the House at higher levels of the party vote. In the case of Table 3, here too the predictions of the model are consistently at variance with actual results and to highly statistically significant degrees in each and every case. Although the model does have a sense of the greater degree of stability and regularity in bipartisan voting across levels of the party vote as compared to voting patterns in which party majorities oppose one another, it greatly exaggerates these features. As a result, it under-predicts the degree of accord at the highest levels of bipartisan agreement across all levels of the bipartisan vote and over-predicts it at the lowest levels of accord across all levels of the bipartisan vote. Overall, the results confirm our expectation that a theory that has little sense of the importance of partisanship will also be lacking in its understanding of bipartisanship.

In Figures 1 and 2 we present a test of preference theory that relies on Nominate Scores, not traditional voting scores. In performing this test we have again cast a wide net—the last 132 years of congressional history. In contrast to our tables, these figures provide evidence of the importance of preferences in legislative voting across the two houses. The correlation (r) between the actual score and the predicted score, which for reasons explained earlier is equivalent to the party vote or Condition X, is .67 for the House and .71 for the Senate. The respective R squares are .446 and .498. Nonetheless, not only do these findings obscure the weaknesses of Krehbiel's model with respect to bipartisan voting, they also do not indicate that legislative voting is devoid of substantial party effects. At least half the variance, even in the Senate, cannot be explained by the distribution of preferences as Krehbiel claims. The scatter plots are even more instructive. In individual Houses and Senates there is substantial divergence from the linear relationship Krehbiel presumes. In sum, then, this evidence suggests that both party and preferences are highly influential, with preference effects being somewhat more influential in the Senate—as party theory, but not preference theory, would expect because of differences in institutional setting.

VI. Conclusion

We may conclude, then, that the empirical evidence indicates that Krehbiel's preference-based model serves as a flawed guide to the voting patterns that actually occur. In contrast, the evidence in our tables and figures strongly support our claim that both preferences effects and party effects are important, and that therefore it is a mistake to dichotomize them. Nonetheless, important issues still remain. To start, what is the best research strategy for the further development of party theory? In our view, the defining task of party theory is not to fit party into a framework compatible with neo-classical economics or to occupy itself in winning arguments over the explanation of discrete outcomes or procedures. It is, rather, to deal with several vexing puzzles that still remain.

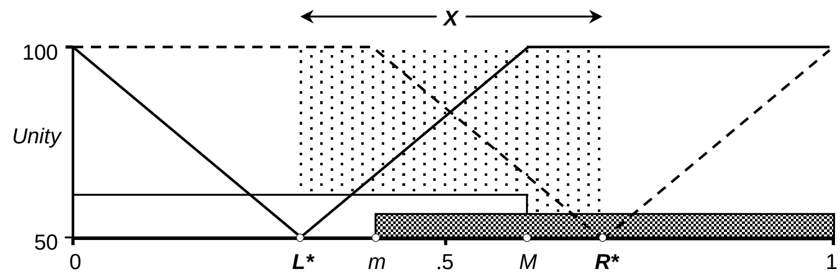
First and foremost, party theory should seek to delineate the conditions and character of the complex patterns of interrelationships that exist between preference effects and party effects at both the legislative and electoral levels. As our framework suggests, this requires improving our ability to delineate and measure the potential for agreement that emerges from the electoral process and the character of the constraints and opportunities that ensue for decision making. This, in turn, requires a more sophisticated analysis of the interaction between political and substantive preferences at all the various levels of decision making and of the role of members, constituents, and party leaders, including the president, in shaping and responding to these incentives. Second, party theory should confront the problem of delineating and measuring coalition patterns that are distinguishable from party. Since party voting is neither perfect nor even the dominant pattern in many cases, any theory of party voting must also acknowledge and define the realms, conditions, and impacts of forms of non-partisan voting, such as bipartisanship and cross partisanship. Whereas preference theory, strictly applied, can only see bipartisan and cross partisan patterns as it sees party voting—that is, as a residue of preference patterns that are of little theoretical value, party theory has no choice but to see them as important puzzles to be solved. Third, party theory should seek to tie down the relationships between institutional context and party strength. Similar levels of party voting in the House and Senate do not have the same effects on structure, outcomes, or leadership style. It is true as well that over time the House is both more partisan and more bipartisan than the Senate.[7] Clearly, the role of institutional setting is more complex than has been previously recognized and poses a number of puzzles that need to be addressed. Fourth and last, party theory should confront the problem of majority size, not as a dependent variable, as is the wont of preference-based theories, but as an independent variable that affects unity and success. Here too, good work has been done, but much remains to be done (Cooper and Young, 2002).

As for preference theory, the problems Krehbiel's model has in predicting actual voting patterns do not necessarily disconfirm his theoretical approach. Quite aside from its underlying methodological justifications, which we shall discuss in closing, it is arguable that the problems lie in its operational assumptions, not its basic assumptions. Indeed, Krehbiel himself raises the question of improving the "robustness" of his model (Krehbiel, 2000). He discusses changing two critical parameters of the model with respect to party—making the definition of a party vote more stringent and not making perfect party voting the boundary between partisan voting and non-partisan voting. In addition, he discusses introducing such factors as multidimensionality, voting with error, and "vote buying". In none of these cases, however, do the prospects for improving the model appear favorable. Given the underlying assumptions of Krehbiel's approach to voting patterns, such as the dichotomy between preference voting and party voting and the manner in which outcomes under proximity voting continue to reflect the rule of the median voter, changing the definition of the party vote still leaves all patterns of voting, except perfect party voting, preference patterns. Similarly, nothing can improve on perfect party voting as the criterion of partisan voting since no other standard exists that is both theoretically sound and empirically viable in terms of his assumptions. As for the other factors discussed, their inclusion would in one way or another acknowledge the significance of the endogenous effects we have discussed, and in so doing make it difficult ultimately not to acknowledge party effects. Krehbiel thus is open only to including "vote buying", though he recognizes that vote buying or any form of bargaining requires a form of spatial analysis at variance with the premises of proximity voting.[8] In sum, then, it will be no easy task to make Krehbiel's model more robust without threatening its theoretical coherence and integrity in terms of a variety of his basic premises.

Finally, as we have implied at several points in our analysis, a prime issue underlying the conflict between the framework we have proposed and Krehbiel's framework is methodological. For Krehbiel (1991 and 1998) and others oriented to applying economic models to politics, the only valid form of theory is theory that satisfies the precepts of universalism and determinism that characterize the covering law model of scientific knowledge (Riker, 1977). Theory that does not satisfy these precepts is not rigorous, not "true" theory, because its results do not establish a claim for causal necessity when verified. Hence, the emphasis these theorists place on simplicity, deductive theorems or modeling, and the search for stable equilibria. In contrast, our approach to theory building is far less restrictive. Since the quest for certainty has been abandoned in modern philosophy and conditioned relationships and continuing change have replaced universal laws and static equilibria as the governing presumptions of modern physics, it rests on an acceptance of contingency, complexity, and change (Toulmin, 2001). Though compatible with mathematical formulation and reliance on data, it does not put a premium on deductive, rather than inductive theory construction, prizes dynamic more than static analysis, and believes that qualitative analysis can also be rigorous and explanatory.

Hence, even if those oriented to an emphasis on preferences and econometric forms of analysis, now seek to integrate, not separate, party and preferences because of the weight of the empirical evidence, the merits of deductive and static approaches to theory building as opposed to inductive and dynamic approaches will continue to be an issue. Our belief is that theory building should be based on experience, complexity, and change. It is this spirit that underlies the current movements toward behavioral research that is sensitive to the realities of cognition and mixed motivation on the one hand and various forms of historical institutionalism on the other. Though far less neat or elegant than an emphasis on theorems or spatial analysis and capable in the end of producing only conditioned knowledge, not inviolate laws, the promise of discovery is far greater.

Appendix A



Krehbiel's spatial model relates levels of party voting to the distribution of preferences. The model involves five basic parameters (M, m, L*, R*, and X). See the figure above. These parameters and the assumptions that underlie them are as follows. (1) Legislators are located within a unidimensional space that ranges from 0 to 1 and is divided into 10 intervals—.1, .2. , and so forth. (2) Legislators belong to the L party (white in our figure) or to the R party (grey) and within each party there is a uniform distribution of legislators across the space or range of ideal points occupied by the party. (3) The outer boundaries of the two parties are fixed at 0 and 1, respectively. Their inner boundaries are defined by *M*, the rightmost member of the L party, and by *m*, the leftmost member of the R party. (4) The two parties vary in their distance from their fixed end points, but such variation involves equal movement in opposite directions across the range of ideal points from 0 to 1 (m=1-M). The parties are thus mirror images of each other in terms of the distributions of preferences. For example, when M is at .6, as in our diagram, m is at .4. If M were at .4, m would be at .6. (5) Since the parties move in opposite directions in an equal manner, the more homogeneous the preference distribution within the parties (the greater the degree of unity), the more heterogeneous the distribution between them (the greater the degree of division) and vice versa. Thus, the more overlap between the parties, for example, M at .9 and m at .1, the more heterogeneity within the parties and homogeneity between them; the more separation, for example, M at .1 and m at .9., the more homogeneity within the parties and heterogeneity between them. (6) The state or condition of party strength is defined by X. Assuming that voting behavior is governed by proximity voting and that cut points are uniformly distributed, X measures the distance between the party means (L* and R*) as M and m vary. *X* thus equals m or 1-M. X or Condition X, as Krehbiel prefers to call it, is equivalent to the party vote when multiplied by 100. In our figure, for example, X is .4, but in terms of the model it can vary from 0 to 1 in .10 point intervals.

Appendix B

Formulas for predicting party and bipartisan unity scores as well as Rice Index of Cohesion at each level of X can be derived from Krehbiel's model. We may note that for every level of X in the model (except 0 and 1) there are two bipartisan vote intervals and one partisan vote interval (white and shaded areas in the figure in Appendix A) as well as distinct levels of unity at each cutpoint for the L and R parties (solid and dashed lines in the figure). These features permit us to determine average unity scores within particular segments of the PV and BV intervals. Having done so, we can multiply each score by the size of the segment, add the results, and divide by the size of the PV or BV interval to provide a mean party or bipartisan unity score for the entire interval. Thus, for example, in our figure, where the PV interval equals .4, average unity in the first segment (with a size of .3) equals 75 and in the second segment (with a size of .1) equals 100. When appropriately multiplied (.3 times 75 and .1 times 100), this provides a total of 32.5, which divided by .4 gives a score of 81.25 percent.

Krehbiel's model, as outlined in Appendix A, can also be used to determine or predict the percentage of vote splits at different levels of party or bipartisan unity. As explained in the text, these levels of unity are divided into five types—dominant, strong, moderate, weak and cross for both party and bipartisan votes. The data is thus organized into 10 categories of vote splits—dpv and dbv, spv and sbv, and so forth. To determine the dimensions of the dpv, spv, and mpv categories of vote splits, we first measured the size or breadth of the interval within the PV interval in which the L and R parties both attain at least 90%, 80% but not 90%, or 70% but not 80% unity.

Next we divided the size or breadth of the intervals in each of these cases by the size or breadth of the PV interval and multiplied that number by 100. The wpv and cpv scores as well as all the bipartisan split vote scores can be identified by applying a similar logic. For the figure in the Appendix (X=.4) the percentages for dpv, spv, mpv, wpv and cpv are 0, 10, 30, 60 and 0. The corresponding percentages of dbv, sbv, mbv, wbv and cbv are 20, 20, 20, 40 and 0. Formula for deriving the predicted scores in our tables are available at <http://jhunix.hcf.jhu.edu/~jcooper>.

Notes

[1] There is controversy as to the number of policy dimensions that characterize congressional voting due to the latent effects of more general policy orientations (Snyder and Groseclose, 2000 and McCarty et al, 2001). However, whatever the merits of the claims and counterclaims, these effects do not control voting on specific bills in any mechanistic or deterministic manner. Rather, the ties are probabilistic and voting on bills remains strategic. The analysis that follows in the text seeks to amplify the case for this claim in line with the insights of Kingdon (1981), March (1994), Hinich and Munger (1994), and Jones (2001).

[2] Our prime intent here is simply to question the notion of convexity. However, a form of spatial analysis, termed directional analysis, exists that challenges the premises of proximity voting (Macdonald et al, 2001). This approach does give intensity and direction a prime role and appears to have application to the legislative level in a manner that can contribute to party theory.

[3] Spatial analysis has long been applied to bargaining and its variants, including logrolling and side payments. These variants have been reconceptualized in recent work as “vote buying”. See Groseclose and Snyder (1996).

[4] The means for managing the conflict are not limited to overt appeals to shared goals and distributions of rewards and penalties. They are covert as well. The leadership can provide members

with cover through the selection and positioning of amendments as well as by allowing them to delay or switch their votes when defeat is assured (King and Zeckhauser, forthcoming).

[5] For discussions of his methodological beliefs see Krehbiel, 1991 and 1998. We may also note that for Krehbiel predictability, not coherence, is the hallmark of a theory's validity and that in his other work he typically does not neglect the need to test his major theoretical claims.

[6] Krehbiel (2000) also applies his model to derive Cox-McCubbins leadership support scores. Indeed, in this case, although it is not clear that his identification of the historical mean for these scores is correct, he treats his derived scores as estimates that in a general sense can be compared to this mean. In this article we do not apply Krehbiel's model to derive and test predictions of Cox-McCubbins scores in individual Houses because of the barriers to doing so. Nonetheless, over time the difference between the mean party unity score, which is included in Table 1, and the mean leadership support score is quite small (Cox and McCubbins, 1991).

[7] If we compare House and Senate voting patterns since 1867 by levels of the party vote in which there are 10 or more cases, the House is more partisan at the .5 and .6 levels, but not at the .4 and .7 levels and more bipartisan at the .4, .5, and .6 levels, but not at the .7 level. These findings suggest that House party leaders restrict their efforts on partisan issues to votes in which they can make a difference and that the House is even more bipartisan than partisan as compared to the Senate. The partisan results, however, do not take account of the greater ability of House party leaders to keep bills off the floor. For an analysis of average scores in four distinct periods from 1867-1999 see Cooper and Young (2002).

[8] Treatments of vote buying are directed to solving a puzzle raised by rational choice theory—the size of winning coalitions. This work acknowledges that the major portion of the coalition arises on other grounds and assumes multidimensionality. Given this, though preference-based, it is at odds with notions of proximity voting (Banks, 2000).

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TABLE 1 Cohesion, Party Unity and Bipartisan Unity in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, 40th-106th Congress
Differences between the Predictions of Krehbiel's Preference-Based Model and Observed Levels of Cohesion and Unity

Condition X			**.3**	**.4**	**.5**	**.6**	**.7**	**.8**	**.9**
Predictions (Preference Model)	*Cohesion*		*65.0*	*70.0*	*75.0*	*80.0*	*85.0*	*90.0*	*95.0*
	Party Unity		*71.4*	*81.3*	*87.5*	*91.7*	*94.6*	*96.9*	*98.6*
	Bipartisan Unity		*87.3*	*87.5*	*87.5*	*87.5*	*87.5*	*87.5*	*87.5*
House	Cohesion	Dem.	2.4	5.7***	7.3***	11.9***	17.5***	15.5***	11.1
		Rep.	-1.1	2.7	4.9**	9.1***	16.3***	10.6*	10.6
	Party Unity	Dem.	.2	4.8***	5.9***	6.9***	9.4***	7.8***	5.6
		Rep.	-2.6	1.9	4.1***	6.4***	8.8***	5.7*	5.7
	Bipartisan Unity	Dem.	1.5	1.7	1.5	4.7**	7.9***	7.0*	6.4
		Rep.	.3	1.1	.8	1.9	7.0**	3.4	1.8
	Cases (N = 67)		2	10	19	16	14	5	1
Senate	Cohesion	Dem.	8.5*	9.2***	16.2***	16.8***	16.9***	16.3***	–
		Rep.	6.3	11.6***	13.5***	19.9***	23.3***	17.6***	–
	Party Unity	Dem.	-1.5	3.5***	9.7***	8.6***	8.6***	7.1***	–
		Rep.	-2.1	5.3***	7.9***	9.9***	12.1***	8.3***	–
	Bipartisan Unity	Dem.	6.2	5.2***	6.5***	8.2***	7.7***	10.8***	–
		Rep.	4.9	6.0***	5.7***	10.2***	10.3***	9.7***	–
	Cases (N = 67)		2	15	13	17	11	9	0

NOTE: A positive sign indicates that Krehbiel's preference-based model overpredicts the observed levels of cohesion, party unity or bipartisan unity. The table reports the results of t-tests: *** significant at the .001 level; ** significant at the .01 level; * significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). Krehbiel's predictions of cohesion at various levels of the party vote are Rice Index of Cohesion Scores. So too are the actual or observed scores applied to establish the differences between actual and predicted results.

TABLE 2 **Vote Splits on Party Votes in the House of Representatives and in the Senate in a Bipartisan and in a Partisan Era, 90th-94th and 102nd-106th Congress – Predictions of Krehbiel's Preference-Based Model and Observed Levels of Dominant, Strong, Medium, Weak and Cross Partisan Votes**

Condition X		**.3**			**.4**				**.5**			**.6**			**.7**	
House	Congress	*Pred.*	91***	92***	*Pred.*	90***	93***	94***	*Pred.*	106***	105***	*Pred.*	102***	103***	*Pred.*	104***
	dpv	*0.0*	1.6	4.0	*0.0*	7.7	3.4	3.2	*20.0*	36.4	34.8	*46.7*	20.6	31.6	*65.7*	35.7
	spv	*0.0*	5.6	9.3	*10.0*	14.8	9.1	12.5	*20.0*	19.9	19.9	*13.3*	19.8	31.3	*8.6*	20.7
	mpv	*6.7*	17.5	24.0	*30.0*	16.6	19.0	22.9	*20.0*	19.9	18.5	*13.3*	25.2	15.5	*8.6*	19.4
	wpv	*93.3*	54.0	47.3	*60.0*	46.7	50.5	48.6	*40.0*	22.7	24.4	*26.7*	32.2	20.9	*17.1*	22.7
	cpv	*0.0*	21.4	15.3	*0.0*	14.2	18.0	12.9	*0.0*	1.1	2.5	*0.0*	2.2	0.7	*0.0*	1.5
	Party Vote	*30.0*	28.9	32.2	*40.0*	35.7	36.1	41.8	*50.0*	45.2	52.5	*60.0*	59.3	63.8	*70.0*	67.4
Senate	Congress	*Pred.*	90***	91***	*Pred.*	92*	94***	93***	*Pred.*	102	105***	*Pred.*	106***	103***	*Pred.*	104***
	dpv	*0.0*	2.5	3.5	*0.0*	5.4	5.4	1.7	*20.0*	14.9	32.0	*46.7*	52.1	31.7	*65.7*	34.9
	spv	*0.0*	8.0	5.7	*10.0*	5.1	7.8	5.8	*20.0*	23.1	24.9	*13.3*	20.5	19.5	*8.6*	24.3
	mpv	*6.7*	21.1	22.6	*30.0*	23.3	16.7	20.5	*20.0*	21.7	19.1	*13.3*	12.1	14.7	*8.6*	17.8
	wpv	*93.3*	46.7	45.2	*60.0*	44.7	55.2	60.1	*40.0*	37.0	21.5	*26.7*	14.5	31.9	*17.1*	22.3
	cpv	*0.0*	21.6	23.0	*0.0*	21.4	14.9	11.9	*0.0*	3.2	2.5	*0.0*	0.8	2.3	*0.0*	0.7
	Party Vote	*30.0*	33.3	34.5	*40.0*	38.6	41.0	41.2	*50.0*	51.5	53.1	*60.0*	56.6	60.2	*70.0*	66.6

KEY: dpv: dominant partisan vote (unity in both parties >=90 percent); spv: strong partisan vote (unity in both parties >=80 percent and <90 percent); mpv: medium partisan vote (unity in both parties >=70 percent and <80 percent); wpv: weak partisan vote (unity in one party >=70 percent, unity in the other party <70 percent); cpv: cross partisan vote (unity in both parties <70 percent). At each level of Condition X, the first column (in italics) shows the predictions for dpv, spv, mpv, wpv and cpv that we derived from Krehbiel's preference-based model. The predictions apply to the 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 percent level of party voting. We matched the ten Congresses to these levels as follows: a party vote score >25% and <=35% equals the .3 level, >35% and <=45% equals the .4 level, etc.

NOTE: The table reports the results of chi-square tests: *** significant at the .001 level; ** significant at the .01 level; * significant at the .05 level. Since the chi square test cannot be applied if any of the expected cell frequencies are zero, we recoded the dpv, spv and cpv categories in cases in which Krehbiel's predictions equal zero. Thus, across all levels of Condition X reported in the table, we combined cpv and wpv; at X=.3 we combined dpv and spv with mpv ; at X=.4 we combined dpv and spv. The total number of party votes for each Congress ranges between 126 and 893.

TABLE 3 **Vote Splits on Bipartisan Votes in the House of Representatives and in the Senate in a Bipartisan and in a Partisan Era, 90th-94th and 102nd-106th Congress – Predictions of Krehbiel's Preference-Based Model and Observed Levels of Dominant, Strong, Medium, Weak and Cross Bipartisan Votes**

Condition X		**.3**			**.4**				**.5**			**.6**			**.7**	
House	Congress	*Pred.*	91***	92***	*Pred.*	90***	93***	94***	*Pred.*	106***	105***	*Pred.*	102***	103***	*Pred.*	104***
	dbv	*20.0*	47.9	41.1	*20.0*	47.7	38.0	38.5	*20.0*	58.5	48.3	*20.0*	41.8	38.8	*20.0*	42.2
	sbv	*20.0*	13.7	14.1	*20.0*	13.0	16.1	13.9	*20.0*	13.2	13.9	*20.0*	11.7	10.4	*20.0*	12.0
	mbv	*20.0*	15.6	10.4	*20.0*	14.0	14.1	15.6	*20.0*	9.8	15.2	*20.0*	14.2	13.5	*20.0*	12.7
	wbv	*40.0*	15.9	27.6	*40.0*	22.7	27.0	27.4	*40.0*	16.2	20.1	*40.0*	29.2	32.2	*40.0*	29.5
	cbv	*0.0*	7.0	6.7	*0.0*	2.6	4.9	4.6	*0.0*	2.3	2.6	*0.0*	3.1	5.1	*0.0*	3.5
	Bipartisan Vote	*70.0*	71.1	67.8	*60.0*	64.3	63.9	58.2	*50.0*	54.8	47.5	*40.0*	41.7	36.2	*30.0*	32.6
Senate	Congress	*Pred.*	90***	91***	*Pred.*	92***	94***	93***	*Pred.*	102***	105***	*Pred.*	106***	103***	*Pred.*	104***
	dbv	*20.0*	33.2	33.5	*20.0*	38.6	30.4	32.2	*20.0*	36.5	54.5	*20.0*	52.1	40.5	*20.0*	49.5
	sbv	*20.0*	13.7	9.0	*20.0*	12.9	11.0	12.6	*20.0*	16.3	10.4	*20.0*	20.5	16.5	*20.0*	9.0
	mbv	*20.0*	12.9	14.9	*20.0*	10.8	11.7	16.1	*20.0*	14.1	8.2	*20.0*	12.1	13.0	*20.0*	12.4
	wbv	*40.0*	29.2	28.5	*40.0*	26.5	39.4	31.9	*40.0*	27.4	25.8	*40.0*	14.5	26.8	*40.0*	23.7
	cbv	*0.0*	11.0	14.2	*0.0*	11.2	7.5	7.1	*0.0*	5.7	1.1	*0.0*	0.8	3.2	*0.0*	5.4
	Bipartisan Vote	*70.0*	66.7	65.5	*60.0*	61.4	59.0	58.8	*50.0*	48.5	46.9	*40.0*	43.4	39.8	*30.0*	33.4

KEY: dbv: dominant bipartisan vote (unity in both parties >=90 percent); sbv: strong bipartisan vote (unity in both parties >=80 percent and <90 percent); mbv: medium bipartisan vote (unity in both parties >=70 percent and <80 percent); wbv: weak bipartisan vote (unity in one party >=70 percent, unity in the other party <70 percent); cbv: cross bipartisan vote (unity in both parties <70 percent). At each level of Condition X, the first column (in italics) shows the predictions for dbv, sbv, mbv, wbv and cbv that we derived from Krehbiel's preference-based model. The predictions apply to the 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 percent level of party voting. We matched the ten Congresses to these levels as follows: a party vote score >25 and <=35 equals the 30 percent level, >35 and <=45 equals the 40 percent level, etc.

NOTE: The table reports the results of chi-square tests: *** significant at the .001 level; ** significant at the .01 level; * significant at the .05 level. Since the chi square test cannot be applied if any of the expected cell frequencies are zero, and given that Krehbiel's predictions for cbv equal zero, we recoded the cbv category. Across all levels of Condition X reported in the table, we combined cbv and wbv into one. The total number of bipartisan votes for each Congress ranges between 263 and 744.

FIGURE 1 Condition X and Polarization Scores in the House of Representatives, 40th to 106th Congress (1867-2001)

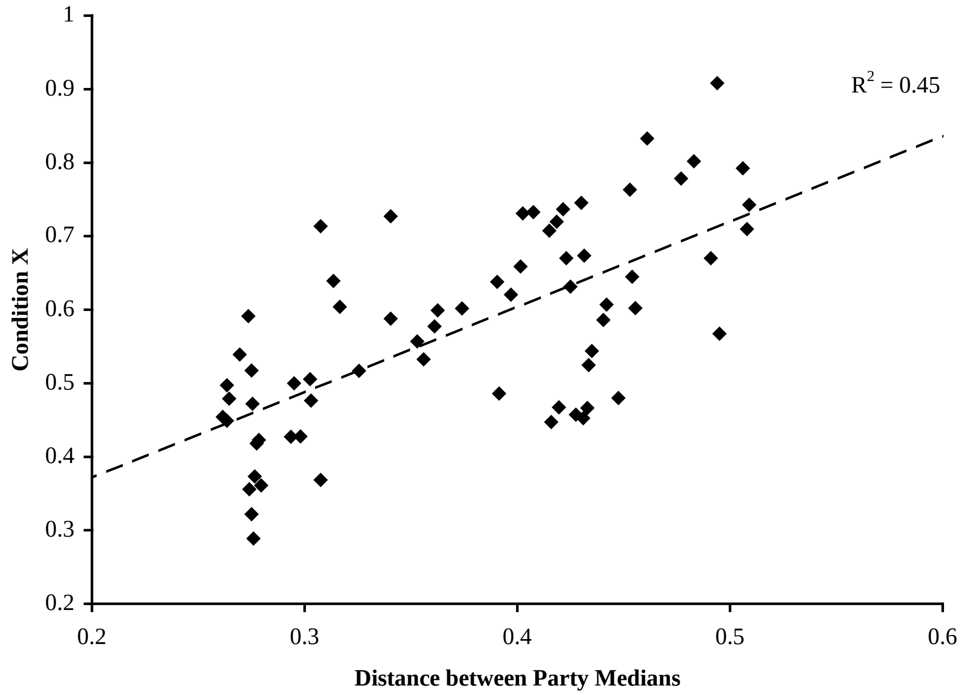

FIGURE 2 Condition X and Polarization Scores in the Senate, 40th to 106th Congress (1867-2001)