

INCUMBENCY AND COMPETITION:  
AN ANALYSIS OF STATE PARTY POLITICS

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
MARK SAGE HYDE  
1972

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## ABSTRACT

### INCUMBENCY AND COMPETITION: AN ANALYSIS OF STATE PARTY POLITICS

BY

Mark Sage Hyde

The two hypotheses under examination in this dissertation are:

- (A) The level of inter-party competition in state politics is an inverse function of (1) the number of candidacies for reelection by incumbent state legislators (2) the candidacy of an incumbent governor for reelection.
- (B) The decisions of incumbent state legislators and an incumbent governor to seek reelection are a direct function of the level of inter-party competition.

The relevant theoretical and empirical literature with respect to the two hypotheses is reviewed, and operational definitions of the variables of incumbency and competition are explained and described.

The hypotheses are tested using parametric statistical techniques with data collected for approximately a 50 year period on all gubernatorial and state legislative races in four states: Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, and Ohio. A model of the interaction of the variables of incumbency and competition over time, based on the two



propositions above, is developed.

The model is examined in light of the empirical findings with respect to the two hypotheses, and these empirical findings are related to theoretical formulations and empirical studies in the area of political recruitment.

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AN ANALYSIS OF STATE PARTY POLITICS**

**By**

**Mark Sage Hyde**

**A THESIS**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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**1972**



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TO MARCIA...

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great number of people contributed to this work and I am grateful to all of them.

First, I must thank my dissertation committee. Professor Paul Conn, my chairman, always gave me enough freedom to develop my own ideas, to make and learn from my own mistakes, and in general, to feel that the work I was doing was my own. On the other hand, his guidance in every facet of the work is clear to me and greatly appreciated. Professor David Meltz mixed exactly the right quantities of criticism and praise to get the most work from a harried graduate student. For his voluminous work on my writing style, David Meltz probably deserves to be listed as a ghost writer. Professor Joseph Schlesinger provided a great deal of substantive criticism of this work; a short paragraph of his criticism usually contained enough substance to keep me busy for an extended period.

Other faculty members also made substantial contributions to this study. Liz Powell wrote the program that organized and made sense out of mounds of raw data; she also provided help with mathematical problems. Susan Lawther provided substantive comment on the work, but more important, she listened.

My fellow students Al Arkley, Paul Hain, and David Klingman all contributed in various ways. Paul and I had many discussions concerning ambition theory and its possibilities for generating testable hypotheses. David did a considerable amount of work of my computer program, while Al produced some much needed money at a crucial point. Undergraduates Tim Reynolds and Harry Barman helped in collecting and coding the data; Mrs. John Stinchfield not only produced a well typed, but a well edited manuscript.

Finally, I express my greatest appreciation to Marcia and Jennifer. They watched without complaint as my role of graduate student and doctoral candidate came to more and more dominate my role and responsibilities as husband and father. They adapted to the circumstances better than I--they have contributed much to this work.

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1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.

2. It then goes on to describe the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

3. The next section presents the results of the study, showing that there is a significant correlation between the variables being studied.

4. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the implications of the findings and suggesting areas for further research.

5. The authors also provide a list of references and a summary of the key points of the study.

6. The paper is well-written and easy to read, with clear headings and subheadings.

7. The data is presented in a clear and concise manner, making it easy to understand.

8. The conclusions are well-supported by the data and provide a clear picture of the findings.

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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of a solution of the system of equations (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . It is shown that the system (1) has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  if and only if the condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is satisfied. In this case the solution is unique and is given by the formula

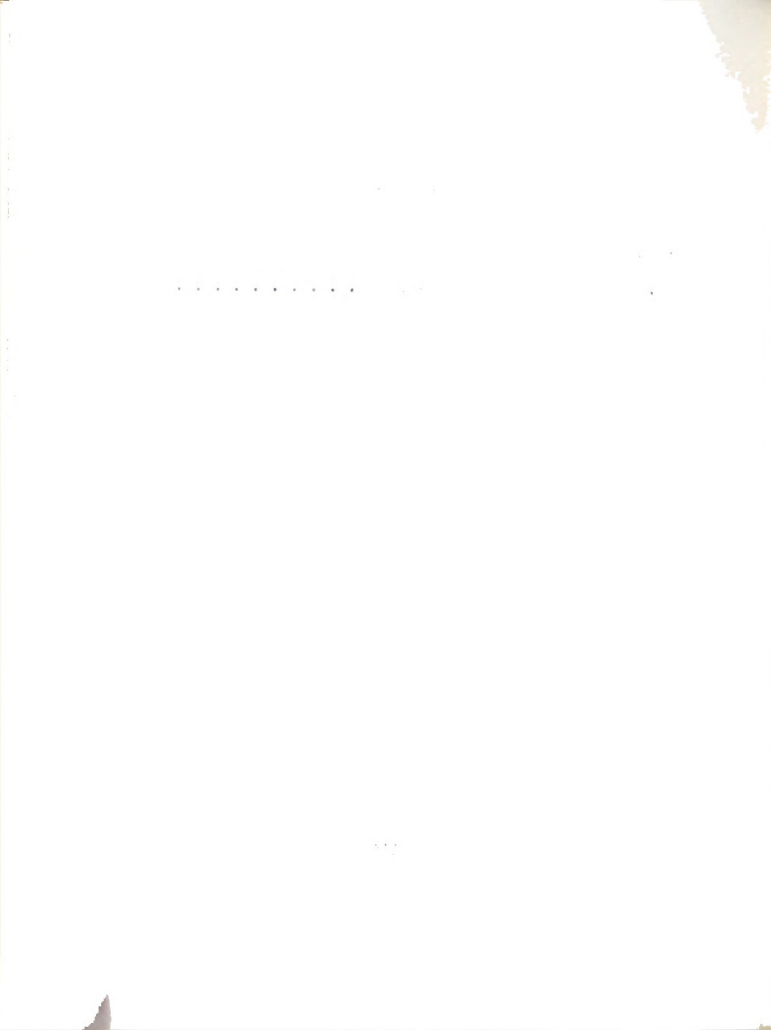
$$x = \frac{1}{\alpha + \beta} \left( \alpha x_1 + \beta x_2 \right)$$

where  $x_1$  and  $x_2$  are the solutions of the system of equations (1) for  $\alpha = 1$  and  $\beta = 0$  and for  $\alpha = 0$  and  $\beta = 1$  respectively.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INCUMBENCY AND COMPETITION

A substantial body of literature has accumulated within the discipline of political science that may be roughly classified under the heading of "political recruitment." These studies have attempted to isolate the psychological, social, and political variables that induce or inhibit men to run for public office.

The study of recruitment is of substantial interest to the political scientist who seeks to understand (explain) why an individual chooses to run for office rather than merely vote, contribute money to a campaign, or actively work to see a candidate other than himself elected. We should note that the answer to this and related questions has important normative implications. Some of the very early empirical work in political science was directed, for normative purposes, to the study of the decision to run for and remain in elective office. Writing in 1938 with data gathered from eight states, Charles Hyneman attempted to explain the high turnover rate in state legislative bodies.<sup>1</sup> He was deeply concerned with the common pattern of transient membership in legislatures that prevented the emergence of a stable,





experienced, and therefore more capable, group of leaders.

One of the most noted political scientists who studied American political parties, V. O. Key, Jr., stated that one of the functions a party should perform is the recruitment of candidates for public office. Key points out:

A prime function in the achievement of party purpose consists of the recruitment, development, and support of candidates for public office. In the governance of large and complex societies, parties provide a means for sifting from the available candidates behind whom support can be amassed in campaigns for office. Obviously, this operation of veto, of cajoling, of trial, of choice lies close to the heart of the governing process.<sup>2</sup>

According to Herbert Jacob, modern investigations of political recruitment can be grouped in three categories:

1. elite theories
2. studies of social backgrounds
3. psychological theories.<sup>3</sup>

The cumulative result of these approaches provides the following information. A pool of potential candidates for elective office, characterized by common social backgrounds and political socialization patterns, can be identified. Within this pool, it is possible to predict which individuals will want to run for office on the basis of psychological variables. But between the pool of potential candidates and the holding of elective office lies politics, the process determining which members of the group will be selected to run and which will be finally elected to office.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of a solution of the system of equations (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . It is shown that the system has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  if and only if the condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is satisfied. In this case the solution is unique and is given by the formula

$$x = \frac{1}{\alpha + \beta} \left( \alpha \frac{1}{1 - \alpha} + \beta \frac{1}{1 - \beta} \right) \quad (2)$$

where  $x$  is the value of the function  $y$  at the point  $x = 1$ . The condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is satisfied for all values of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  for which the system (1) has a solution. Therefore, the condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a solution of the system (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ .

2. In the second part of the paper we consider the problem of the existence of a solution of the system (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  if the condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is not satisfied. It is shown that the system has a solution for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  if and only if the condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is satisfied. In this case the solution is unique and is given by the formula

$$x = \frac{1}{\alpha + \beta} \left( \alpha \frac{1}{1 - \alpha} + \beta \frac{1}{1 - \beta} \right) \quad (3)$$

where  $x$  is the value of the function  $y$  at the point  $x = 1$ . The condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is satisfied for all values of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  for which the system (1) has a solution. Therefore, the condition  $\alpha + \beta = 1$  is a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a solution of the system (1) for arbitrary values of the parameters  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ .

An alternative approach to the above three is to examine those political variables which influence the selection of leaders in the American political system. This approach, unlike the previous ones, places emphasis upon the politics of recruitment, i.e., the identification, description, and measurement of political variables that, in the context of political theory, are believed to affect decisions to seek either initial or later career offices. Representative of this approach is Joseph Schlesinger.

Schlesinger's major work, Ambition and Politics, is a detailed study of the careers of a large sample of politicians in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Schlesinger recognized the emphasis on social and psychological research in the field of political recruitment and commented:

A wealth of data exists about the backgrounds of political leaders...yet, despite the industry which has gone into the accumulation of these data, they have been notably fruitless in producing predictive propositions in relating data to behavior. And this failure has been due primarily to the lack of a useful political theory. Theory there is, but it is generally social or psychological.<sup>5</sup>

The sample under consideration in elite, social, or psychological studies is, in general, the entire population of the United States (or some other unified political system), and those who choose to seek elective office are identified by some set of characteristics that differentiate them from the general population. Most of the recruitment literature has been concerned with the initial

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decision to run for office, concentrating largely on newcomers to the political scene. But the sample changes when the group under examination becomes those who have actually attained elective office. The researcher is no longer trying to pick and choose from among a general population of those who will run for office, but rather is now working with a sample of individuals who are already a subset of the general population, officeholders. These people are apparently differentiated in at least one respect from the larger sample; they respond more readily to political stimuli. Office holding, and therefore politics, plays a large, perhaps a dominant role in a politician's public life. Unless the politician has what Schlesinger calls "discrete ambitions" (the desire to hold an office for one term and then retire from politics), he will respond to political stimuli as the businessman responds to economic stimuli. There has been very little research on the conditions under which those politicians holding a particular office will choose to run for that same office again. This would seem to be a fruitful area of research for political scientists, and emphasis on political variables seems especially appropriate for this specialized sample. The study of the electoral behavior of incumbent officeholders is a valuable undertaking whether, like Hyneman, one prefers, in a normative sense, the development of an experienced leadership at several levels of government, or on the other hand, if one's



interest is purely theoretical, i.e., measuring the factors that lead to rapid or slow turnover in public office.

Now let us examine more closely the first three approaches mentioned above, detailing the general criticisms that have been made.

Elite theories range over analysis as diverse as Marx and Lasswell, who both emphasized the importance of elites in political affairs. Marx, of course, perceived an elite ruling class based upon economic power, suggesting that those who control the means of production enjoy political as well as the economic power in the state. For Lasswell, the elite are those who get the most of what there is to get; they are the "influential" who have more of such representative values as deference, income, and safety.<sup>6</sup> Gaetano Mosca concentrated upon showing the dominance of social positions in a political system, while Vilfredo Pareto contended the ruling class had psychological traits which enabled them to dominate the community.<sup>7</sup>

Many important empirical studies of political leadership begin with elitist assumptions. C. Wright Mills identifies certain elite groupings which he claims have dominant political, economic, and social power in American society.<sup>8</sup> Floyd Hunter, one of the first to investigate power structures at the local level, finds elite groups holding the dominant positions in this stratum of society.<sup>9</sup> Political scientists such as Robert Dahl and Robert Prethus have attempted to overcome some of the

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of a solution of the system of equations

$$\frac{dx}{dt} = A(x)u, \quad \frac{dy}{dt} = B(x)y, \quad (1)$$

where  $A(x)$  and  $B(x)$  are  $n \times n$  matrices,  $x$  and  $y$  are  $n$ -dimensional vectors, and  $u$  is a scalar function.

It is assumed that the matrices  $A(x)$  and  $B(x)$  are continuous and bounded in the domain  $G$  of the variables  $x$  and  $y$ .

It is also assumed that the matrix  $B(x)$  is nonsingular in the domain  $G$ .

It is required to find a solution of the system (1) which satisfies the initial conditions

$$x(0) = x_0, \quad y(0) = y_0, \quad (2)$$

where  $x_0$  and  $y_0$  are given  $n$ -dimensional vectors.

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simplifications of the earlier studies and argue that several elite groups share power at the community level.<sup>10</sup>

Studies of the social characteristics of decision-makers have been the most frequently used approach in the analysis of political recruitment. In two books, Donald Matthews demonstrated that United States Senators and other high level politicians in the country "...normally come from upper-status occupations, have a better than average occupation, are predominantly Protestant, white, and native born."<sup>11</sup> Earlier writings in political science described the social origins of the machine politicians of Chicago in the 1920's and early 1930's.<sup>12</sup> Other authors employ the concept of political socialization in exploring the background of political decision-makers. They isolate variables such as father's orientation toward politics that are part of the overall socialization process of an individual and may be useful predictors of future political activities.<sup>13</sup>

As Schlesinger indicates in his criticism of the lack of political theory, the difficulty common to these two approaches to the study of political recruitment is that neither of them say much about recruitment or politics. The elitist and sociological approaches do little more than estimate some socio-economic status parameters of American political officeholders. These studies, with varying degrees of precision, are limited to defining the pool of potential candidates for political office. Their



focus is generally at the macro-level and does nothing more than identify sub-groups within the social, economic, and political sub-systems that have provided the majority of leaders in the country. The lack of any theoretical framework in such a book as Matthews', The Social Background of Political Decision-Makers, for example, leaves the reader with a great deal of data to which he can assign little or no significance.<sup>14</sup>

The psychological approach goes one step further. These researchers, rather than trying to define the social and economic backgrounds from which particular individuals come, have attempted to determine what psychological drives motivate them to run for elective office. The emphasis here is on isolating personality traits; given a pool of potential candidates (those who satisfy the appropriate background and socialization criteria discussed above), this approach attempts to determine why some individuals within the pool seek elective office and why others do not. Working with the individual rather than the group as the unit of analysis, they attempt to determine the relationship between personality traits and the decision to run for office.

In a series of articles, Rufus Browning has concluded that two variables are characteristic of those who seek elective office

1. They are marked by high power and achievement motivation, and
2. By relatively low affiliative concerns.<sup>15</sup>



Those individuals who entered politics by accepting the recruitment requests of party leaders (rather than actively seeking candidacy) "...were distinguished only by high levels of affiliative motivation," i.e., empathy for other people. The reason for the difference between those who openly seek candidacy and those who simply accept an offer will become clear in the discussion of Lester Seligman's work below.

We should note, however, that the emphasis in this psychological approach is on volunteerism and psychological drives and not on recruitment or politics per se. The question to which research of this type is directed is: Which people are motivated to seek political office, and, as such, usually overlook the crucial political variables that may be systematically related to the process by which a party seeks a candidate or prevents a motivated person from attaining a nomination.

Joseph Schlesinger, who is representative of the approach to political recruitment emphasizing political variables, provides a sound theoretical base in his "ambition theory."<sup>17</sup> Rather than asking how one advanced in politics, Schlesinger's theoretical perspective leads him to seek an answer to the question: Who will want to advance and under what political circumstances? The primary assumption of his ambition theory is that a politician's behavior is a response to his office goals, and that these goals or ambitions are related to the specific situation



confronting the politician. His analysis begins where the psychological approach ends by assuming that politicians are more or less ambitious, and that these ambitions are nurtured or constrained by the political opportunities available to him. Articulating this theory with data on political careers, Schlesinger maps out what he terms the "political opportunity structure" in the United States and then proceeds to analyze the relationship between this structure and such variables as party organization and inter-party competition.<sup>18</sup>

Lester Seligman has also concentrated closely on a systematic investigation of political variables influencing recruitment. In one of his studies, Seligman divided recruiting into two stages:

1. Certification, the social screening and political channeling that results in eligibility for candidacy, and
2. Selection, the actual choice of candidates.<sup>19</sup>

He selected four Oregon state legislative districts on the basis of their respective levels of inter-party competition and examined candidate entry into the primary race. Two of the districts were competitive; one was Republican dominated, and the last Democratic dominated. While admitting that he is working with an extremely small sample that may be biased by local factors, Seligman arrives at some interesting generalizations. In one party dominated areas, officials of the majority party were least active in instigating or supporting candidates.





The political marketplace was relatively accessible to "self-starters" and interest groups. In competitive districts, the candidate marketplace was "wide open"; in these areas a direct relationship was found between party competition and recruitment diffusion. In districts safe for one party, the minority party had to actually conscript candidates. Seligman concludes that when a party is in this "hopeless minority" position, "...only in this setting was fully centralized party recruitment to be found."<sup>20</sup>

Seligman's generalizations shed some light on the findings of Browning, discussed above. Browning found that those who actually sought candidacy were marked by high power and achievement motivation and low affiliative concerns, and that those individuals who entered politics at the request of party leaders scored high on affiliative concerns. Seligman has hypothesized that the only time party leaders request people to run for office, i.e., the only time they have centralized control over recruitment, is when the party is a hopeless minority. It is understandable that the person who agrees to run for office when he has virtually no chance of winning rates high on affiliative concern. He accepts the overtures of party leaders as a favor for a friend or because he wants to help an organization which faces possible extinction. Conversely, in situations of majority party dominance or high competition, when the marketplace for candidates is



more open, the type of person attracted to run for office is either the self-starter or the representative of special interests, both of whom seem likely to rate high on power and/or achievement motivation, but not show great empathy for their potential constituents.

Within the approach concentrating on political variables, Schlesinger and Heinz Eulau have at least approached the topic of incumbents' electoral behavior. Schlesinger talks about incumbency in general terms, while Eulau has specifically formulated a series of propositions with respect to the office of state legislator. Schlesinger points out that the rate of turnover of personnel (rather than party) in an elective office is greatly affected by the structure of political opportunities. The more often an office is vacated by an incumbent (for whatever reason), the greater is the opportunity for someone else to run for that office, i.e., the larger is the opportunity structure. If there is a large number of ambitious newcomers to the lower levels of elected office-holders, there will be a greater demand for rapid turnover of personnel in higher offices to provide opportunities for these newcomers. Schlesinger comments:

...there is evidence that, where parties face increasing competition, they value incumbents more highly for their proven vote-getting abilities....In a competitive situation, what might be considered the instinctive demand of other politicians for rapid turnover in high office is counteracted by the need for partisan politicians to subdue their personal office ambitions in order to reap the benefits accruing to their party from continued control of the state's principal office....<sup>21</sup>

There is a large number of small islands in the bay.

In a few places the water is very shallow.

The land is very fertile and the crops are good.

The people are very friendly and the climate is warm.

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Schlesinger is arguing that incumbents may prove to be better candidates for the office they already hold than either newcomers to the political scene or a politician from another office, because the incumbent has proven a winner with that particular constituency. When a party faces stiff competition, some politicians may be forced to subdue their ambitions for higher office by permitting incumbents to hold the fortress when the battle gets rough. Similarly, those at the higher levels of office holding may have to postpone their movement up the career ladder in order to run as an incumbent at the lower level against a severe challenge. While in this instance (high level of competition) a particular politician's office goals may be sacrificed, party control of an office or set of offices may be retained.

A politician might sacrifice his personal career goals for the sake of overall party success under several conditions. He might see his long run personal goals closely tied to the success of the party, and in this instance, what is beneficial to the party is beneficial for the individual politician. On the other hand, when party and personal goals are clearly at odds, the party might offer the incentive of support for future, attractive nominations for higher office if the politician would presently put off his conflicting career goals. Obviously, the party cannot continue this delaying tactic for any extended period of time.



Heinz Eulau, in The Legislative System, discusses the relation between inter-party competition at the state level and the decision of incumbent state legislators to return to their seats.<sup>22</sup> Eulau and his co-authors had interviewed state legislators in four states: California, Ohio, Tennessee, and New Jersey. He summarized the data on competition and incumbency this way:

In order to determine just how committed our respondents were to the legislative office they were occupying, we asked them whether they expected to run again for the state legislature.../and/ the data show a consistent inter-state pattern. It appears that the more competitive the party system of a state, the greater is the proportion of legislators who expect to run again for their legislative seat....In general,...the data suggest that politicians in more competitive situations seem to be more inclined to see their legislative career as a continuing enterprise than do legislators in less competitive situations.<sup>23</sup>

Eulau concludes with the following proposition:

The more competitive the structure of the political party system, the more likely it is that state legislators will be committed to their legislative career by planning to run for their present seat again.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond stating that politicians in competitive situations seem more committed to a legislative career as a continuing enterprise, no explanation is offered along with the predictive proposition. There is a short discussion of "...the consequences of the difference between competitive and non-competitive systems on career commitment..." indicating that it is likely to affect legislative deliberation and action, but as for an explanation of why legislators in competitive situations say they will choose to run again, Eulau has little to say. Pointing

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out that the project is concerned with the analysis of state legislatures as role systems and that the discussion of legislators' political careers is only peripheral to the study, he leaves further exploration and fuller explanation to future researchers.

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to provide a systematic test and satisfactory explanation of the relation between the independent variable of level of inter-party competition and the dependent variable of the proportion of state legislators seeking reelection. The major hypothesis, following Eulau, is that a high level of competition will lead to a greater likelihood of incumbent state legislators and an incumbent governor seeking reelection.

The theoretical defense of the hypothesis is focused more upon Schlesinger's contention that incumbents may provide continued party control of a particular office, or set of offices, and less upon Eulau's argument that legislators in a competitive situation are more committed to their seats. That is, based on Schlesinger's ambition theory and nuclear unit theory of party organization, an incumbent will be viewed as responding to pressure from the party to seek reelection in a competitive situation. However, an important point must be made here. In his statement concerning the reasons that incumbents may be induced to seek reelection, Schlesinger assumes that incumbents will win elections more often than



non-incumbents. This is a critical assumption for the major hypothesis of this dissertation, and therefore, it will be put in proposition form and subjected to empirical verification. This is our first task; the political effect of incumbency decision to seek reelection must be determined before we can predict when incumbents will choose, or be induced, to seek reelection. The predicted effects are set forth in the following proposition:

The level of inter-party competition in state politics is an inverse function of (1) the number of candidacies for reelection by incumbent state legislators, and (2) the candidacy of an incumbent governor for reelection.

Before we discuss incumbency advantage at the state level, let us turn to an examination of legislators at the national level, where a substantial amount of work has been done in determining the success of incumbent Congressmen and Senators. Although there are obvious differences between state and national legislators (e.g., size and makeup of constituency, prestige, income, substantive issues, etc.), they are enough alike that parallels in behavior patterns may be found. In a legal, formalistic sense the U. S. Congress is a state dual legislature writ large.

The most comprehensive work on the fate and effect of Congressmen seeking reelection has been done by Milton Cummings.<sup>26</sup> Cummings analyzed election returns for the period 1924-1964 for both the House of Representatives and President in an attempt to pinpoint the voting patterns of



American citizens. In a general appraisal of the electoral advantage held by incumbent Congressmen, Cummings classified legislative districts with respect to how the Presidential candidate of the incumbent's party ran in those districts. It would be expected that the advantage enjoyed by an incumbent Congressman would appear not only in districts where the Presidential candidate of his party ran well, but especially in a situation where the Presidential candidate of his party ran poorly, offering him no electoral help. Cummings found that the incumbent had a marked advantage in both situations. From 1924 to 1964, only 18 incumbents were defeated in districts where incumbent candidates of the same party as the winning President were running, and in which the winning President carried the district.<sup>27</sup> Cummings concluded that, "In districts carried by the winning President, even those where he won by a narrow margin, the House candidates of his party who were already in Congress were nearly invincible."<sup>28</sup>

For Congressional candidates who faced an opposition victory for the Presidency both at the nationwide and district level, incumbency was a crucial variable. Cummings says, "...at practically every level of opposition presidential strength, incumbent House nominees of the party that lost the presidency did better than their non-incumbent fellow partisans."<sup>29</sup> The outlook for non-incumbent House Candidates was indeed bleak; in districts where the winning President's margin climbed over 52%

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"...the chances that a non-incumbent House candidate could be elected dropped steadily until they were virtually nil."<sup>30</sup>

The advantage of Senate incumbents at the national level has also been documented. Lewis Froman, Jr., presents an 85% success figure for Senate incumbents.<sup>31</sup> Barbara Hinckley has used Senate incumbency as one independent variable in explaining deviations from expected party-line voter in Senate elections.<sup>32</sup> Her conclusions are that incumbency and the Presidential vote can explain 64% of Senate voting fluctuation.

At least at the national level, then, there is abundant evidence that incumbent legislators of both houses have a distinct electoral advantage. However, systematic explanations of this advantage are not offered by these authors. Cummings focuses on some of the relationships between Congressional and presidential voting, without offering any explanation for incumbency advantage. Froman presents his figures on incumbency success and concludes the Senate and House have fairly stable membership, but again no explanation is forthcoming. Hinckley suggests two alternative possibilities for incumbency advantage--"recognition" explanation and the "experience" explanation posited by Joseph Schlesinger.

These two alternatives both have merit for explaining the advantage of a particular legislative incumbent when he enters the electoral arena, at either the





state or national level. The "recognition" explanation is based simply upon the assumption that an incumbent is more widely known than his opponent. With generally low levels of voter interest and information about issues, voters will choose the more familiar (or as Hinckley points out, the less unfamiliar) name. Schlesinger's explanation is that legislators, during their years of office holding, accumulate experience and seniority which can be used to build electoral support.<sup>33</sup> In comparison, an executive officeholder accumulates grievances, rather than electoral support, as a consequence of his seniority. The executive office is more visible, and the voter finds it less difficult to assign governmental responsibility to one executive rather than numerous legislators, and orders his voting preferences accordingly. Also, the legislator's constituency (especially at the state level) is likely to be more homogeneous and less pluralistic than that of statewide officeholders.

An explanation of incumbency advantage as it affects the level of statewide inter-party competition (as stated in the above hypothesis) is slightly different than an explanation of a particular incumbent's advantage. Of equal importance to presenting an explanation for the incumbency advantage enjoyed by both governors and state legislators is the necessity to explain in what way the decision of incumbents to run again for their offices affects other candidates in other races. That is, in



addition to explaining why incumbents have greater success than non-incumbents in a particular race, it is necessary to also explain that a generally lower level of competition in other offices is produced. As Schlesinger suggests, party organization and success are determined in large part by the interaction between party candidates and factions. An explanation of the finding that an incumbent's decision to run depresses the level of inter-party competition in office races (other than his alone) would necessarily have to take account of the relationship between these several offices. What follows is a theoretical defense of the first hypothesis, combining both the recognition and seniority explanations, and taking into account the relationship between what Schlesinger calls "nuclear units."

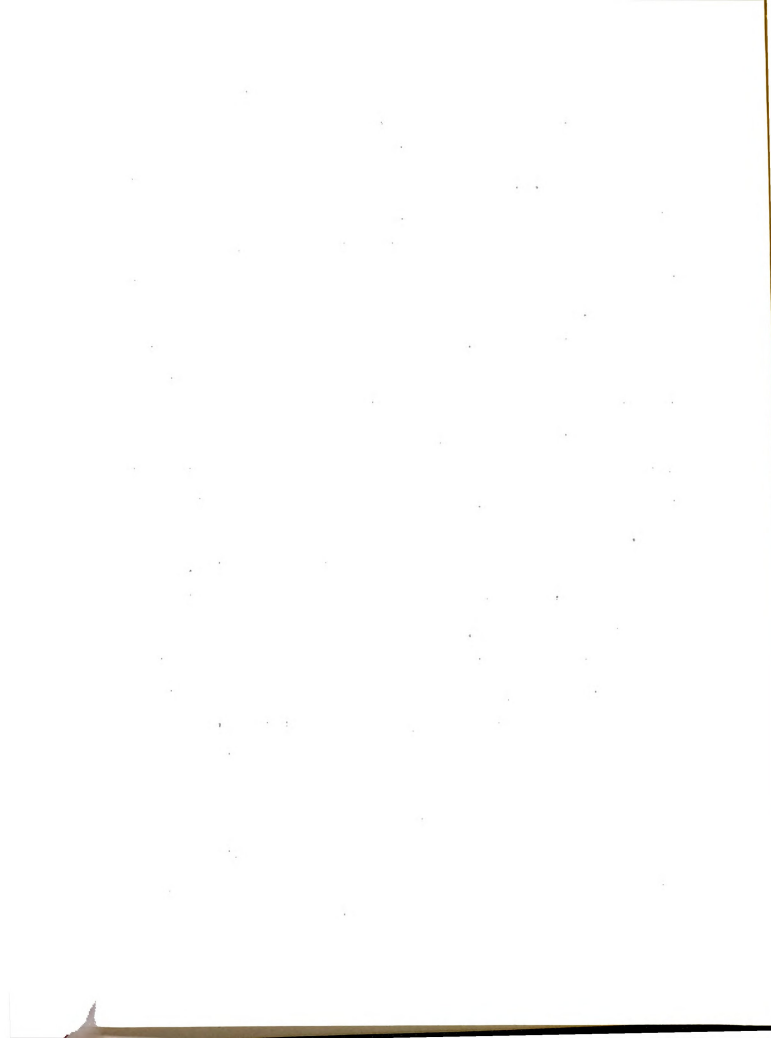
Schlesinger contends that a party consists of politicians seeking election to specific public offices and that the form or structure of a party depends upon the relationship between the efforts of these individuals and their supporters. In terms of party organization, Schlesinger introduces the concept of "party nucleus." A nucleus is the "...basic unit of party organization [and] is the collective effort devoted to the capture of a single public office."<sup>34</sup> In other words, a nuclear organization is built around a single candidate for elective office. The major problem of political party organization becomes the relation of these nuclei to each other, and

the fundamental factor relating party nuclei, according to Schlesinger, is the electorate.

There are three possible relationships between electorates (i.e., constituencies) and their party nuclei; electorates may be congruent, disjoint, or enclaved. If the set of voters for two offices is the same, for example those of United States Senator and Governor of a particular state, the constituencies are congruent; if there are no overlapping voters, the constituencies are disjoint. Finally, one constituency may be a subset of another, and in this case, the smaller constituency is said to be enclaved within the larger. An example of an enclaved constituency would be the electorate of a state legislator to that of the governor, the relationship under examination here.<sup>35</sup>

It is in this sense that political parties, and an officeholder's relation to the party, will be considered throughout this study. The level of cooperation among these officeholders is largely determined by the sharing of constituencies, the level of inter-party competition within these constituencies, and the politician's response to the opportunities (or lack thereof) with which he is confronted.

First, an explanation of why incumbent governors and state legislators win more often than non-incumbents will be presented; then, the effect of legislative races upon gubernatorial elections and vice versa, will be



discussed. An incumbent legislator starts with the advantage of a recognizable name within the constituency.

Assuming low voter interest for races at the state legislative level, the voter may cast his lot with a name that is recognizable, and an incumbent's name would be recognizable in a political context. Furthermore, the incumbent has had an opportunity to use patronage payoffs in his district to build direct electoral support and maintain at least a small, informal organization (or nuclear unit).

Even if the assumption of low voter interest and information is not strictly held, it is difficult to imagine a challenger unseating an incumbent by an attack on the "issues." The responsibility of a legislative body is so diffused among its many members that pinning failure of a popular measure or passage of an unpopular one to a single legislator is a difficult task for an opposition candidate. The legislator, unlike the governor, is not held responsible for the implementation of entire legislative programs, and consequently, he is not held personally (i.e., electorally) responsible for unpopular developments in state government. As Schlesinger points out, he can hide in the "group atmosphere" of legislative politics.

An incumbent governor has several advantages over a non-incumbent challenger, but accumulated liabilities may outweigh the advantages after several terms in office. Anthony Downs addresses himself to a situation of



accumulated liabilities in this theoretical work, An Economic Theory of Democracy. In a discussion of how a party might unseat an incumbent, Downs describes several strategies open to the challenger, including that of building a "coalition of minorities."<sup>36</sup> When no majority of voters reaches a consensus on all issues, the challenging party can attempt to build a winning coalition across several issues, i.e., forging a majority from several separate, distinct minority groupings. Individually, each group does not have the strength to upset the incumbent, but their allied strength may provide at least a minimum winning coalition. However, at least the one term incumbent governor is probably in an advantaged position. As the chief executive of the state he will gain wide publicity in the news media, and this gives him a headstart in terms of voter recognition on most nominees that might oppose him.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the incumbent governor may not need a successful record of solving state problems to maintain voter support. Murray Edelman claims a leader must show a willingness to cope with problems, but he is not held responsible for successfully solving those problems.<sup>38</sup> He quotes George Gallup in a discussion of opinion polls:

People tend to judge a man by his goals, by what he's trying to do, and not necessarily by what he accomplished or by how well he succeeds. People used to tell us over and over again about all the things that Roosevelt did wrong and then they would say, "I'm all for him, though, because his heart is in the right place; he is trying."...If people are convinced you



are trying to meet problems and that you are aware of their problems and are trying to do something about them, they don't hold you responsible for 100 percent success. Nor do you have to have any great ideas on how to accomplish the ends.<sup>39</sup>

Another advantage for the incumbent is the governor's role (perhaps in concert with a U. S. Senator) as titular head of the party in his state. As such, he wields a large amount of patronage power, and an effective use of patronage during his tenure in office can provide a strong electoral base from which to begin his campaign. Because the incumbent has these electoral advantages, and has proven his vote getting ability, finding an attractive opposition candidate may be difficult. The potential electoral strength of an incumbent may inhibit an ambitious politician of the opposite party from mounting a challenge. Few ambitious politicians will enter a race if they feel the chance of electoral success is marginal; if possible, under the limitations of time and age, they will choose to wait for a better opportunity. An incumbent governor without major political liabilities may find himself confronted with only a weak challenge from a "sacrificial lamb."<sup>40</sup> As pointed out in the discussion of minority coalitions above, these advantages held by an incumbent governor may decrease over time; the publicity and responsibility of the governor's office illuminate mistakes and liabilities, as well as positive characteristics.

David Leuthold has argued that incumbency



advantage is due largely to the ability to raise and wisely employ the resources needed by any candidate.<sup>41</sup> In a study of Congressional campaigns, he found incumbents easily acquired necessary resources, while for non-incumbents "...the acquisition of resources was one long series of requests and pleas."<sup>42</sup> In addition, non-incumbents who could secure resources reduced the number of requests because a losing effort in the race would mean several years of repaying financial and social debts incurred in their campaigns. Leuthold also found that incumbents had more experience in using the available resources, citing several instances in which newcomers used expensive campaign tactics which the incumbent knew from previous elections were ineffective.

The decision of state legislative incumbents to seek reelection has ramifications for the gubernatorial race, and the candidacy of an incumbent governor has a direct effect on legislative races. The candidacies of state legislators will provide organizational strength for the gubernatorial candidate at the district level, where direct voter contact occurs. A gubernatorial candidate (incumbent or non-incumbent) will need an effective statewide organization to meet any serious challenge, and the nuclear units of his party's incumbent state legislators provide bases around the state on which to build his campaign. Instead of attempting to build a statewide organization of his own for the race, the gubernatorial

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candidate can rely on district organizations of legislative incumbents to help campaign in certain areas. The nuclear organization of an incumbent legislator is already in existence and functioning at the start of a campaign; a non-incumbent hopeful usually must build his unit from scratch and cannot expend much effort on behalf of those higher on the ticket. Furthermore, an incumbent legislator has a decided electoral advantage, as well as an organized nuclear unit, giving him and his organization even more time to contribute to those at the top of the ticket.

The candidacy of an incumbent governor also provides electoral benefits for the legislative candidates of that party. With a strong candidate at the head of the ticket, many legislative aspirants may ride into office on the "coattails" of the governor. If those who vote a straight party ticket on the basis of the governor's race are sufficiently impressed with the gubernatorial candidate, the legislative candidates of that party will be simultaneous benefactors in the voting returns. This coattail effect has been documented at the national level (Presidential--lower offices), and there is no reason to believe that it does not operate at the state level as well.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the sharing of constituencies places the candidates of the enclaved and larger electorate in a mutually dependent situation. The gubernatorial candidate's need for statewide organization strength is partially met



by incumbent legislative candidates, and the coattail effect of an attractive candidate heading the ticket polls votes for legislative candidates. The following chapter is devoted to developing the research design used to test this first hypothesis and also analyzing the relevant data with respect to that hypothesis. The chapter concludes with a short section on the implications of these findings for the electoral strategies of state parties. In Chapter 3, the major hypothesis is developed, which predicts the decisions of incumbents to seek reelection as a function of inter-party competition. Also, a model of the interaction between incumbency and competition is presented. The final chapter is devoted to an examination and evaluation of this model and the empirical findings of the study.





## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Charles S. Hyneman, "Tenure and Turnover of Legislative Personnel," The Annals, Vol. 195, 1938, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>V. O. Key, Jr., American State Politics: An Introduction (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1956), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>See Herbert Jacob, "Initial Recruitment of Elected Officials in the United States--A Model," Journal of Politics, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1962, p. 704.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>6</sup>See for example, Harold O. Lasswell, et al., The Comparative Study of Elites (Palo Alto: Hoover Institute Studies, 1962) and Harold Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (New York: World Publishing Company, 1958).

<sup>7</sup>Gaetano Mosca, The Ruling Class (New York: McGraw Hill, 1939); Vilfredo Pareto, The Mind and Society (New York: Dover Publications, 1935).

<sup>8</sup>C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

<sup>9</sup>Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

<sup>10</sup>Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), and Robert Presthus, Men at the Top (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>11</sup>The quote is from Jacob, op. cit., p. 705. See Donald Matthews, The Social Background of Political Decision-Makers (New York: Random House, 1954), especially pp. 20-32. Also, by the same author, U. S. Senators and Their World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), especially pp. 11-67.

<sup>12</sup>See Harold Gosnell, Machine Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937).

<sup>13</sup>For example, Kenneth Prewitt, et al., "Political Socialization and Political Roles," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 30, 1966, p. 91.

<sup>14</sup>Matthews, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Rufus P. Browning, Businessmen in Politics: Motivation and Circumstance in the Rise to Power, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1960; "The Interaction of Personality and Political System in Decisions to Run for Office: Some Data and a Simulation Technique," Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 24, 1968, p. 93; "Hypotheses About Political Party Recruitment: A Partially Data Based Computer Simulation," in William D. Coplin, Simulation in the Study of Politics (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1968), p. 303; with Herbert Jacob, "Power Motivation and Political Personality," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 28, 1964, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup>Browning in Coplin, Simulation, op. cit., p. 308.

<sup>17</sup>See Schlesinger, Ambition, op. cit., especially Chapter 1.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

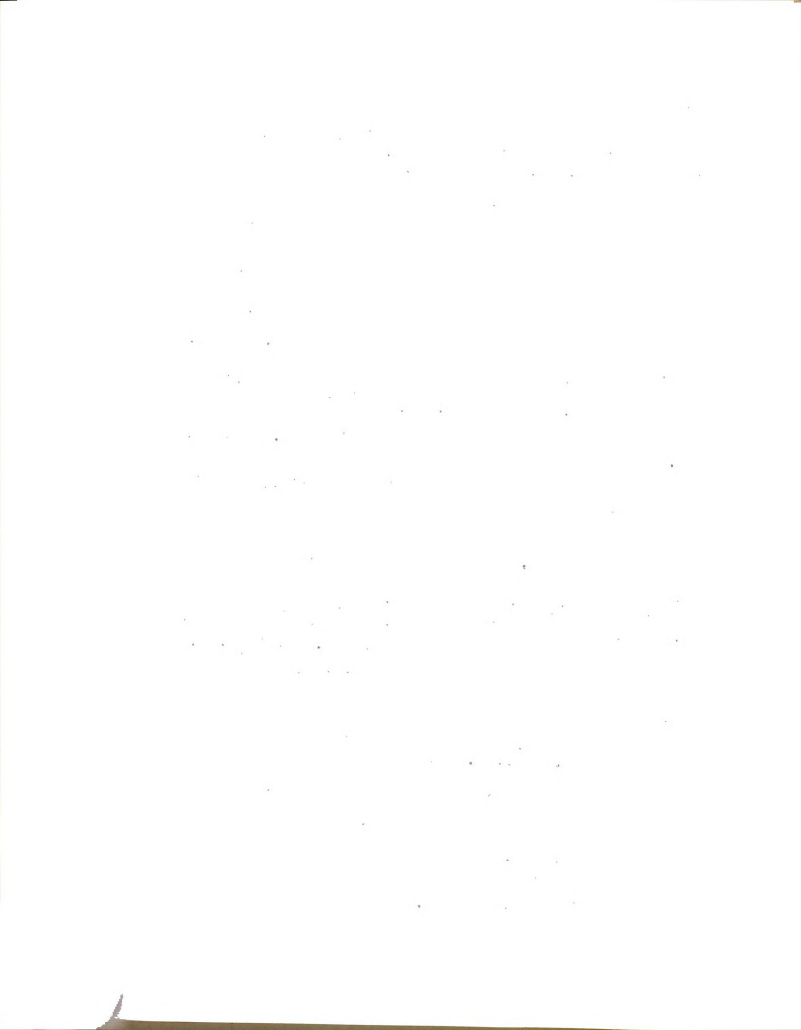
<sup>19</sup>Seligman's main works on recruitment are: "Political Recruitment and Party Structure," American Political Science Review, Vol. 55, 1961, p. 77; "Party Roles and Political Recruitment," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 11, 1958, p. 361; "Leader Selection in the Oregon Legislature," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 12, 1959, p. 67; "Political Parties and the Recruitment of Political Leaders," in Lewis Edinger (ed.) Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967).

<sup>20</sup>Seligman, "Political Recruitment and Party Structure," op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>21</sup>Schlesinger, Ambition, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>22</sup>John Wahlke, Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, Leroy Ferguson, The Legislative System (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962). See especially Chapter 6, drafted by Eulau.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 121-122.



<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Milton Cummings, Congressmen and the Electorate, Elections for the U. S. House of Representatives and President, 1920-1964 (Free Press: New York, 1966).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Lewis A. Froman, Jr., The Long Process (Little, Brown and Company: Boston, 1967), p. 170.

<sup>32</sup>Barbara Hinckley, "Incumbency and the Presidential Vote in Senate Elections: Defining Parameters of Sub-Presidential Voting," American Political Science Review, Vol. LXIV, No. 3, September, 1970, p. 836.

<sup>33</sup>Schlesinger, Ambition, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup>Joseph Schlesinger, "Political Party Organization" in James G. March (ed.), Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), p. 784.

The concept of the party nucleus is intuitively very satisfying, or in technical terms, has a lot of face validity. A Democratic Party professional is quoted as saying that the Republicans attempt to run Congressional campaigns from the top of the party (i.e., trying to force cooperation between units), but "...we [the Democrats] try to get a candidate who matches his district. In effect we run 435 separate campaigns." As quoted by A. P. writer John Beckler in Michigan State News, March 9, 1970, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>For a discussion of enclaved disjoint, and congruent electorates, see ibid., pp. 787-793.

<sup>36</sup>Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), see pp. 55-60.

<sup>37</sup>The data from this study (latest returns, 1950) are not affected by what might presently be an important variable for building voter recognition--television. Large amounts of money spent on television by a relatively unknown may overcome the advantage of candidates that rate higher on voter recognition. For example, in the Democratic primary for U. S. Senator in Ohio in 1970, a relatively obscure businessman, Howard Metzenbaum, defeated a

national hero, former astronaut John Glenn; both men attributed Metzenbaum's success to an effective and expensive use of television.

<sup>38</sup>Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1964), especially Chapter 4.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79. From Opinion Polls: Interviews by Donald McDonald with Elmo Roper and George Gallup (Santa Barbara, California, 1962), pp. 34-35.

<sup>40</sup>Of course, electoral success can never be assumed. In 1968, while the Republicans were winning the Presidency, incumbent Republican Governor John Chafee of Rhode Island lost to just such a sacrificial lam--circuit court Judge Frank Licht, a candidate conscripted by the Democrats who thought they were the "hopeless minority."

<sup>41</sup>David Leuthold, Electioneering in a Democracy: Campaigns for Congress (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968).

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>43</sup>For a discussion of the "coattail" effect see Milton Cummings, op. cit., especially Chapters 1-3; V. O. Key, Jr., Parties, Politics, and Pressure Groups, 5th ed. (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1964); Barbara Hinckley, "Interpreting House Mid-Term Elections: Toward a Measurement of the In-Party's 'Expected' Loss of Seats," American Political Science Review (September, 1967), p. 694; Charles Press, "Voting Statistics and Presidential Coattails," American Political Science Review (December, 1958), p. 1041, and "Presidential Coattails and Party Cohesion," Midwest Journal of Political Science (November 1964), p. 320; Warren E. Miller, "Presidential Coattails: A Study in Political Myth and Methodology," Public Opinion Quarterly (Winter, 1955-1956); Angus Campbell and Warren E. Miller, "The Motivational Basis of Straight and Split Ticket Voting," American Political Science Review (June, 1957), p. 293.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE EFFECT OF INCUMBENCY ON ELECTORAL COMPETITION: THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The hypothesis to be tested in this chapter is as follows:

The level of inter-party competition in state politics is an inverse function of (1) the number of candidacies for reelection by incumbent state legislators, and (2) the candidacy of an incumbent governor for reelection.

The independent variable of incumbency decision to seek reelection is divided into two parts: decisions by legislators and the decision by the governor. The operational definition and measurement of this variable is straightforward. For the legislators it is simply the percentage of the elected legislature at time  $t$  who choose to run in the next regular election, time  $t + 1$ . The percentage was calculated by dividing the number of incumbent legislators running at time  $t + 1$  by the total number of legislators elected at time  $t$ , making the rate of incumbency decision to run for the legislature a continuous variable. In the governor's case, incumbency decision to seek reelection is a dichotomous variable; that is, either the governor does or does not seek reelection. The governor's decision to seek reelection was assigned a value of 1; a negative

decision by the governor was given a value of 0.

The operational definition and measurement of the independent variable, inter-party competition, is a bit more complex. For the governor's office, the level of competition is defined as the difference between the percentage vote of the two top parties, and subtracting that value from 1, the result is a measure of competition that ranges from .001 (lowest level of competition) to .999 (perfect competition).<sup>1</sup>

The measure of competition for the lower house was devised by aggregating separate figures for each legislative race. This measure, with three slight modifications, was adopted directly from the doctoral dissertation written by David B. Meltz.<sup>2</sup> Meltz needed a long term measure of competition for a time study analysis of cohesion in state legislatures. He had found the initial idea for the measure in a dissertation written by Mark Stern, who had developed a competition index to study two party competition in townships over several years. The Meltz measure is a continuous variable (meaning parametric statistical analysis can be employed), measures perceived competition, and in an elegant touch by Meltz, ranges between zero and one. The final equation for the measure ( $\mathcal{C}$ ) is as follows



$$\Omega = (1 - \frac{\text{Log } x+1}{2})_r, \text{ where } x = \frac{\mu_i - .5}{\sigma_i}, \text{ and}$$

$i$  = political unit under study  
 $r$  = number of observations  
 $\mu_i$  = mean division of the party vote  
 over  $r$  years

As Meltz points out,  $\Omega$  can be used to measure two party competition in any voting unit--electoral, legislative, or committee. For the derivation and a more complete explanation of the measure see the Appendix at the end of this volume.<sup>3</sup>

In constructing his measure, Meltz experimented with assigning differing weights to each legislative session's partisan division in computing  $\mu_i$  and  $\sigma_i$ , arguing quite correctly that assignment of equal weights to each of their sessions was as arbitrary as any other. Positing that current parameters affect present behavior more than events longer in the past, he assigned weights first in arithmetic, and then in geometric, progression from the first to the last session under analysis.

For the purpose of this study, a measure of long term competition is not needed, but the Meltz measure can be readily adapted for our purposes. The need is for a measure that will aggregate all state legislative races in one election year into a statewide measure of electoral competition for legislative seats in that year. First, the mean division of the two party vote was computed across all districts as a whole for each election year,

rather than over a time period of  $n$  years. In this way,  $\Omega$  becomes a spatial rather than a temporal measure.

Meltz' procedure of weighting relatively more important events is also employed in the adaptation of his measure. Many of the state legislative districts under analysis each have two, three, or more representatives. In fact, one Ohio state legislative district has 18 representatives elected at large.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in computing the mean and standard deviation of the division of the two party vote, weights were assigned to the districts equal to the number of representatives elected from that district. Single member districts received a weight of 1, dual member districts, 2, and so on. By this procedure, the relatively greater importance of districts electing more than one representative is taken into account. Needless to say, the weight for any particular district was changed as its number of representatives was reapportioned.

There was one other difficulty encountered in adapting the  $\Omega$  index to the present study. In collecting the data for each district race, the vote of each party was calculated as a percentage of the total vote cast, and the percentage figures of the two top parties did not total 100% if candidates of more than two parties received votes in the general election. The limit of .5 in computing the value of  $x$  becomes meaningless for these districts. A new value called "winning latitude" (WL) was defined such that:

$$WL = \frac{\sum \% \text{ of Democratic vote} + \sum \% \text{ of Republican votes}}{\frac{\text{Number of Districts}}{2}}$$

Using this new value WL in place of .5 renders the measure applicable to a three (or more) party situation, when only two of the parties are considered. If WL is calculated for a two party situation, in which the percentage votes of the two necessarily total 100%, the value of WL is of course equal to that in Meltz' original equation, .5.<sup>5</sup>

We now have operational definitions and description of measurement procedures for both the independent and dependent variables. In order to test the association between the variables, the following statistical analysis was performed. Pearson product moment correlations were run between the independent variable of percentage of legislative incumbents seeking reelection and the dependent variable of measures of competition for governor and legislative races, for each year under analysis. Then two variables were employed as controls; first, the correlation was calculated for only those years in which an incumbent governor was running, and second, the correlation was calculated for only non-presidential years. Finally, correlations were calculated employing both control variables.

The hypothesis was tested using data from four states: Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, and Ohio. These states were chosen for three reasons. First, the returns

were readily available, having been included in an analysis of state politics done by V. O. Key, Jr.<sup>6</sup> Second, a systematic tabulation of incumbents seeking re-election required that district changes over time be kept to a minimum. In three of the states; Ohio, Kansas, and Iowa, there were no additions to, deletions from, or boundary changes in the number or makeup of state legislative districts in the time period under study. All three elected state representatives from counties rather than from specially drawn districts. Connecticut, on the other hand, elects their general assembly from towns rather than counties. In the 50 year period under analysis in Connecticut, two towns disappeared from and two other simultaneously appeared on the roll of municipalities who had representation in the general assembly. These four towns are completely left out of the data.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the four states display diversity along at least two dimensions. Kansas is one of only six states that elect all state legislators from single member districts, while Connecticut has all single or dual member districts. Iowa and Ohio both have a significant portion of multi-member districts. In addition, the four states provide a fairly diverse geographic distribution.

The time period under analysis for each of the states is Connecticut, 1900-1948; Iowa, 1906-1946; Kansas, 1912-1950; and Ohio, 1908-1948. These data include a total of 13,815 separate legislative races and the

election of 86 governors.<sup>8</sup>

We must first compare the success rate of incumbent candidates by state officeholders to the level of success of those at the national level, discussed in Chapter 1. It will be remembered that Cummings, Froman, Hinckley, and Leuthold all found that incumbents had a marked electoral advantage over non-incumbent opponents, and the same is true at the state level.<sup>9</sup> Table 2.1 clearly demonstrates that incumbents win more elections than would be expected by chance.

Table 2.1 Percentage of Time That Parties Retain Offices Running Incumbent and Non-Incumbent Candidates

<u>STATE</u>	<u>WITH INCUMBENTS</u>		<u>WITHOUT INCUMBENTS</u>	
	<u>Leg.</u>	<u>Gov.</u>	<u>Leg.</u>	<u>Gov.</u>
Conn.	82.2	72.7	62.9	57.1
Iowa	80.9	79.3	75.3	66.7
Kansas	80.5	63.6	70.7	57.1
Ohio	75.5	61.5	63.0	28.6

It should be noted that Schlesinger's contention that legislators benefit from incumbency more than executive officeholders holds true. While incumbent gubernatorial candidates show an advantage over non-incumbent opponents, they do not win as often as incumbent state legislators. The main point, however, is that both state legislative and gubernatorial incumbents win more often than non-incumbents.<sup>10</sup>

We must now turn from an examination of the simple dichotomous variable of winning-losing to the effect of incumbent legislator candidacies upon the level of inter-party competition for both legislative seats and the office of governor. Table 2.2 shows this effect.

Table 2.2 Effect of Incumbent Legislators Seeking Reelection upon Party Competition for Legislative Seats and Office of Governor\*

<u>% OF LEGISLATURE SEEKING REELECTION</u>			
	<u>STATE</u>	<u>LEGISLATURE</u>	<u>GOVERNOR</u>
	Connecticut	-.038	.296 (N=24)
Level of Inter-Party Competition	Iowa	-.088	-.184 (N=19)
	Kansas	-.329	.107 (N=18)
	Ohio	-.280	-.109 (N=18)
* Product-Moment Correlations			

The data in Table 2.2 show mixed results. In each of the four states the relationship between incumbent candidacies and competition for legislative seats is in the predicted direction--competition is an inverse function of the number of legislators seeking reelection. However, the relationship is very weak, and in no case does the correlation ever reach a level of .4. In the case of competition for the governor's chair, the data from Iowa and Ohio show a very weak relationship in the predicted direction, but the other two states show a weak relationship opposite to that predicted.

The deviating states are Connecticut and Kansas, and they have two common structural elements that may explain the unexpected findings. Both states, in relation to Iowa and Ohio, have a relatively large number of state legislative districts, and Kansas elects all representatives from single member districts while Connecticut combines only single and dual member districts. In addition, as mentioned above, Connecticut elects its 188 assemblymen from towns rather than counties, as in the other three states. With a large number of districts and only one or two representatives elected from each district, the problem of communication and cooperation at election time is likely greater in these states. The predicted relationship between the number of legislative incumbents seeking reelection and competition for the office of governor was based upon a certain level of cooperation between these nuclear units. If lack of cooperation caused by a large number of separate legislative races undermines this joint effort, it is not surprising that the predicted relationship does not hold.

The findings presented in Table 2.2 measure the effect of legislative incumbents seeking reelection upon competition for legislative seats and the governor's race, but the hypothesis being tested also predicts competition as an inverse function of an incumbent governor seeking reelection. Thus, we must next discover the additive effect of an incumbent governor seeking reelection upon

competition for the governor's office and legislative seats (coattail effect). That is, Table 2.2 does not get at the interaction effect between the governor's race and races for the legislature. Table 2.3 presents the relationship between the percentage of legislative incumbents seeking reelection and the level of competition, controlled for years when an incumbent governor is running.

Table 2.3 Effect of Incumbent Legislators Seeking Reelection Upon Inter-Party Competition for Legislative Seats and Office of Governor-Incumbent Governor Seeking Reelection\*

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<u>PERCENTAGE OF INCUMBENT LEGISLATURE SEEKING REELECTION</u>				
	<u>STATE</u>	<u>LEGISLATURE</u>	<u>GOVERNOR</u>	
	Connecticut	-.542	.223	(N=11)
Level of Competition	Iowa	-.361	-.291	(N=13)
	Kansas	-.515	-.167	(N=11)
	Ohio	-.533	-.655	(N=10)

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\* Product-Moment Correlations

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It can be seen immediately that the relation is greatly strengthened when the control variable of incumbent governor seeking reelection is employed. This is especially true for inter-party competition for legislative seats; while in Table 2.2 there was only one  $r$  value above the .3 level, now there is only one value below .5. The predicted coattail effect is clearly shown in this table; the decision of the incumbent governor to seek



reelection greatly aided the candidacies of state legislative candidates. The relationship for the governor's races is also strengthened, with Kansas now displaying results in the predicted direction. Only Connecticut shows results opposite to those predicted, but less so than in Table 2.2.

Another control variable employed was that of isolating non-presidential election years. As suggested by V. O. Key, Jr., the tides of national politics greatly affect political events in the several states, and thus the data from the four states were analyzed for only non-presidential election years.<sup>11</sup> The results are shown in Table 2.4

Table 2.4 Effect of Incumbent Legislators Seeking Reelection Upon Inter-Party Competition for Legislative Seats and Office of Governor--Non-Presidential Years\*

<u>PERCENTAGE OF INCUMBENT LEGISLATURE SEEKING REELECTION</u>				
	<u>STATE</u>	<u>LEGISLATURE</u>	<u>GOVERNOR</u>	
Level of Competition	Connecticut	-.455	.140	(N=12)
	Iowa	-.522	-.555	(N=10)
	Kansas	-.054	.331	(N=10)
	Ohio	-.629	-.643	(N=10)
* Product-Moment Correlations				

Once again the relationship (with the exception of Kansas) is strengthened over treating the data as a whole

in Table 2.2. The absence of a presidential race makes it more likely that state electoral politics will follow the pattern predicted in the hypothesis. The various state nuclear units can interact in a "normal" manner, without worrying about either relying upon or defensively reacting to the national ticket of either party. Again, Connecticut and Kansas show weaker relationships than Iowa and Ohio. In fact, Ohio and Iowa have a stronger relationship between the variables when the control variable of non-presidential years is employed than when the data are controlled for the candidacy of an incumbent governor. This is another indication that fewer total districts with more multi-member districts provides a political structure more conducive to cooperation between legislative and the gubernatorial nuclear units. In the absence of the unifying force of a nationwide election, these states have parties that can put forth a cooperative electoral effort.

Finally, both variables of candidacy of incumbent governor and non-presidential election years were controlled, and the results are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Effect of Incumbent Legislators Seeking Reelection Upon Inter-Party Competition for Legislative Seats and Office of Governor--Incumbent Governor Seeking Reelection in Non-Presidential Years\*

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<u>PERCENTAGE OF INCUMBENT LEGISLATURE SEEKING REELECTION</u>			
	<u>STATE</u>	<u>LEGISLATURE</u>	<u>GOVERNOR</u>
	Connecticut	-.609	.472 (N=4)
Level of Inter-Party Competition	Iowa	-.464	-.510 (N=7)
	Kansas	-.742	.147 (N=4)
	Ohio	-.560	-.754 (N=7)

\* Product-Moment Correlations

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The results in this table are mixed, probably due to the small number of cases under analysis. The pattern of results in the predicted direction, with the exceptions of governors' races in Connecticut and Kansas, holds again, but, for example, the high correlations in Kansas legislative races (-.742) and Ohio gubernatorial races (-.754) are clearly suspect.

In general, the results indicate that incumbent candidacies indeed have a negative effect on competition; i.e., inter-party competition is an inverse function of incumbent legislative candidacies and the candidacy of an incumbent governor, and the hypothesis is supported. However, the relationship is more clearly defined for states that elect representatives from a relatively smaller number of districts, at least some of which are multi-member.

The crucial distinction is probably fewer number of districts, making organization of a collective electoral effort less difficult. The existence of multi-member districts is most likely a result of having fewer total districts, some of which are populous enough to have more than one representative. And multi-member districts may be a further advantage to a cooperative effort. Because all multi-member districts included in the data elected representatives at large, cooperation within districts was forced upon candidates. On the whole, the data showed that multi-member districts usually elected an entire slate of party candidates, rather than splitting the vote between candidates of different parties. In other words, state legislative candidates of one party from a multi-member district usually had their electoral fate decided as a whole. Promising young candidates, such as Robert Taft of Ohio, were the notable exceptions to this rule.

The implications of these findings in relation to the value of incumbent candidates for state parties is clear; incumbents win more often and provide electoral support for other party candidates. The critical assumption, mentioned in Chapter 1, upon which the theoretical argument for the major hypothesis is based has proven valid. We can now move to a preliminary discussion of the electoral strategy of state parties with regard to incumbent candidacies. Rather than assuming the benefits of incumbents seeking reelection, (this having been

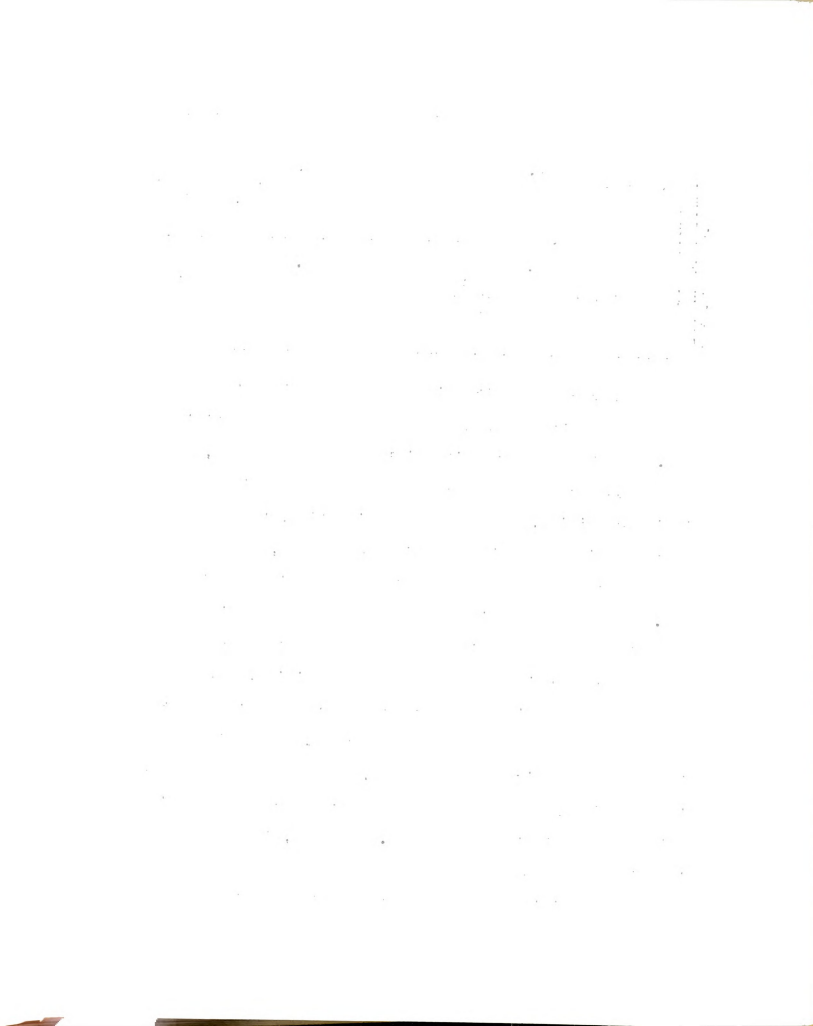
demonstrated in the above hypotheses), we must now only assume that the parties are aware of them. The advantages of incumbents running for office clearly exists; the assumption is that the party perceives these benefits.

While it is doubtful that any state party has undertaken a systematic study of incumbency electoral advantage, it seems unlikely that party officials and candidates, based upon direct experience in electoral politics, would be unaware of these advantages.

The recognition of incumbency advantage leads to the following electoral strategy, as suggested by Schlesinger. In periods of intense competition, the party (officeholders and their nuclear units) will rely on incumbents to assure party control of the governor's chair and the state legislature as a whole. The direction of reliance of one nuclear unit upon another, in the case of an enclaved-larger constituency set as that of state legislator-governor, is dependent upon the level of competition in the separate constituencies. Schlesinger provides the following table to explain the dependency of one nuclear unit on the other, or the interdependency of both.

		<u>LARGER CONSTITUENCY</u>	
		Competitive	Non-Competitive
<u>Smaller (enclaved) Constituency</u>	Competitive	1. Interdependent	2. Smaller Dependent on larger
	Not Competitive	3. Larger Dependent on smaller	4. No Interdependence

In the first situation, candidates in both the larger and enclaved electorates are facing a competitive race. The two nuclear units will be interdependent, each relying on the other to help build at least a minimum winning coalition. In the second situation, the state legislator is faced with a serious challenge, while the gubernatorial candidate is fairly sure of winning his race. The enclaved unit of the state legislator is then in the dependent situation; he needs the help of the larger nuclear unit to face serious opposition, while the gubernatorial candidate can probably win regardless of the performance of the enclaved nuclear unit. The third situation is precisely the reverse; the gubernatorial candidate is in electoral trouble while the state legislative aspirant needs little or no help. Finally, in the fourth situation, the electoral outlook for both nuclear units is either so promising or so bleak that neither unit offers



help to the other.

We would expect, then, that parties facing intense competition at either level (or both) would attempt to induce, or coerce, incumbents to run. The following chapter will develop the major hypothesis of the dissertation, based upon the empirical findings presented above. The research design used to test the hypothesis, and the findings with respect to that hypothesis, are also included in Chapter 3.





## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The percentage figures were calculated in such a way that they totaled .9999..., instead of 1.0. Thus the measure ranges from .001 to .999 rather than from 0 to 1.0.

<sup>2</sup>David B. Meltz, Competition and Cohesion: A Model of Majority Party Legislative Bargaining (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Rochester, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-56. Meltz developed his index as a measure of perceived competition, to be used in measuring the independent variable. However, the index is open to other interpretations. In this instance,  $\Omega$  is used to measure the dependent variable of inter-party competition and is interpreted simply as a closer approximation of reality than, for example, a simple percentage difference. The measure, by use of the logarithmic transformation, accounts for the decreasing marginal utility of X as X increases. In other words, the politician cares more about increasing his vote total by 1% when he is confident of gaining 50% of the vote than when he is confident of gaining 90% of the vote. However, the case can be made that there is an objective as well as perceived difference in such situations. When the index is used in the next chapter to measure the independent variable, it will be interpreted as measuring perceived competition.

<sup>4</sup>The district is Cuyahoga County.

<sup>5</sup>I wish to thank Miss A. Elizabeth Powell for help in overcoming the problem of dealing with party votes calculated as a percentage of the total vote.

<sup>6</sup>See V. O. Key, Jr., American State Politics: An Introduction (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1956).

<sup>7</sup>The Connecticut towns left out of the data are Chatham, East Hampton, Huntington, and Shelton.

<sup>8</sup>Several years of the Ohio election returns were missing from the Key data and were supplied by the State Library of Ohio at Columbus.

<sup>9</sup>See Chapter 1, pp.

<sup>10</sup>The rate of success for holding onto offices with or without incumbent candidates is somewhat different for the majority and minority parties. Although the returns were not controlled for party in the original analysis of the data, a spot check of the raw figures indicates a party clearly in the majority can be highly successful with either type of candidate. However, the conclusion to be drawn from the data in Table 2.1 remains the same--incumbents win more often than non-incumbents. Furthermore, the basic thrust of the chapter is to measure the effect of incumbent candidacies upon the level of inter-party competition, not upon the simple won-loss dichotomy. That is, we are more interested in the margin of victory and the relationship between offices than in which party won or lost a particular election.

<sup>11</sup>Key, op. cit.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE EFFECT OF ELECTORAL COMPETITION: THE INCUMBENT'S DECISION

In Chapter 2, we examined the effect of incumbent candidacies upon the level of inter-party competition and found that 1) incumbent state legislators and governors are more likely than non-incumbents to win elections, and 2) incumbent candidacies generally produce lower levels of inter-party competition both for the incumbent's own race and for those of his party involved in an enclaved or congruent relationship with him. Based on this information, the attempt will be made in this chapter to predict when incumbents will choose to seek reelection. The following hypothesis will be tested.

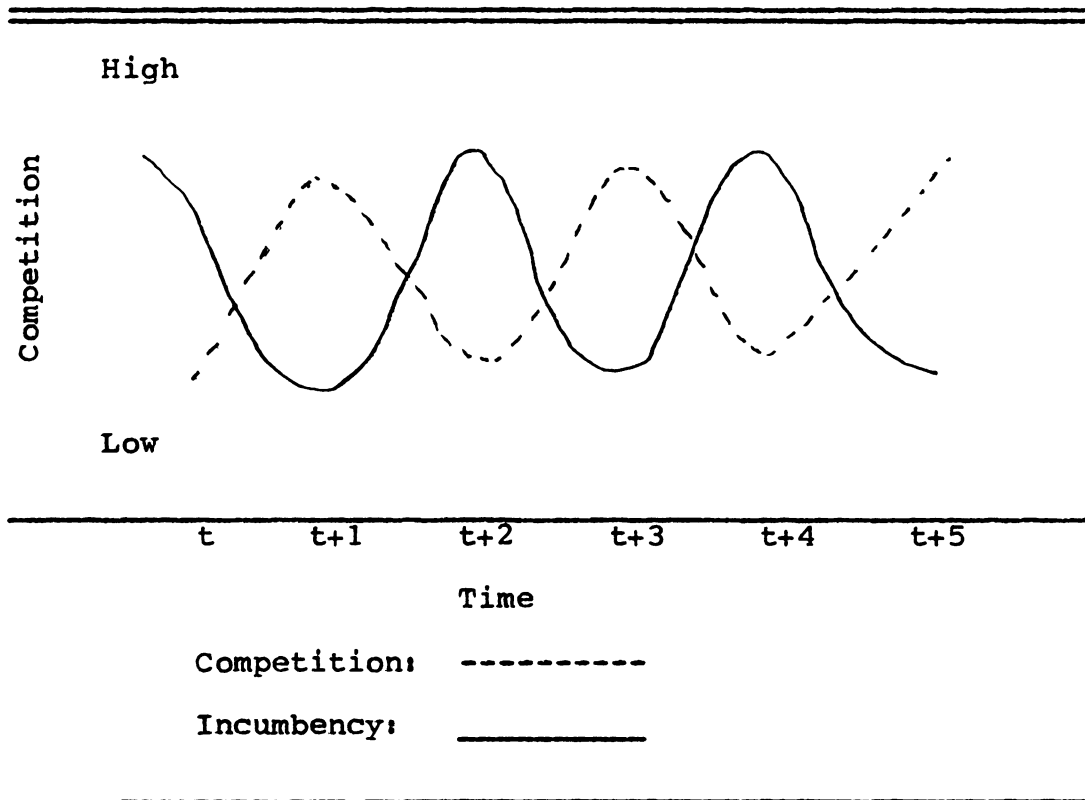
The decisions of incumbent state legislators and an incumbent governor to seek reelection are a direct function of the level of inter-party competition.

The two variables of the first hypothesis have been reversed; competition is now the independent variable, while an incumbent's decision to seek reelection is the dependent variable. For this second hypothesis, the relationship is conceived of as involving a time lag effect. The proposition will be tested with data for contiguous electoral years within the four states under

analysis; incumbency decision to seek reelection (dependent variable) at time  $t + 1$  is predicted to vary as a result of the level of inter-party competition (independent variable) at time  $t$ . For example, competition in 1940 is predicted to have certain effects upon the number of incumbents running in 1942, in turn, the level of competition in 1942 would influence the number of incumbents running in 1944, etc.

The two hypotheses of the study considered together present a theoretical statement of an ongoing relationship over time between competition and the decision of incumbent state legislators to seek reelection. The relationship is predicted to be of the following order: a large number of incumbent candidacies produce a low level of competition in that election year; the low level of competition will lead to fewer incumbent candidacies in the following year which, as shown in Chapter 2, produces a high level of inter-party competition; the high level of inter-party competition leads to a large number of incumbent candidacies in the next election, and the cycle begins to repeat itself. In graph form (with the curve smoothed out between data points), the relationship would appear as intersecting sine curves.

Figure 3.1 COMPETITION AND INCUMBENCY



This predicted relationship of Incumbency and Competition over time is obviously dependent upon the second hypothesis being substantiated, and further discussion of this model must await a discussion of that proposition.

There are both methodological and substantive problems that make testing the second hypothesis difficult; some of these difficulties were foreseen from the outset of the study while others developed in the analysis of the data. The first, and most obvious, problem is switching the independent and dependent variables from the first to the second hypothesis. The two propositions, despite the introduction of a one election time lag in testing the second, may be contradictory: if more

incumbents running lowers the level of competition in that election year, then demonstrating that the greater the competition, the more incumbents will run in the next election year may prove impossible. However, the relationship between competition and incumbency may occur over longer periods of time than one election.

Second, the primary statistical tool of data analysis is once again the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. It was recognized at the very initial stages of the study that low level correlations would produce an ambiguous situation in interpreting the data. Low correlations may indicate either a lack of relationship between the level of competition and the decisions of incumbents to seek reelection, or opposite behavioral tendencies among a fairly equal number of incumbent legislators which would balance each other and disguise any relationship. The distinction is crucial as the interpretation of no relationship might force us into a Type II error, accepting the null hypothesis when in fact it should be rejected.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the office of governor and state legislator may not be strictly comparable in the context of this study. Legislator's behavior is considered in the aggregate (the percentage of a legislature seeking reelection) while the behavior of a governor is examined individually; individual idiosyncrasies will show up much more readily in the behavior of the governors. Second, sample size for state legislators is much more than 1,000

times as great as that for governors. Both these factors will make explanation and prediction of gubernatorial behavior more difficult than that of state legislators.

Although there are expected differences in electoral behavior on the part of majority and minority party candidates, both parties view incumbent candidacies in a favorable light. The advantages to either party, majority or minority, of having incumbents run is clear cut. A political party, it will be remembered, is defined as a group of aspiring candidates and elected officeholders and their respective nuclear organizations involved in a more or less cooperative effort to gain election to specific public offices. The basis for cooperation is the desire for political success (the fulfillment of political ambition) on the part of individual candidates. Schlesinger argues that in a competitive situation involving enclaved electorates, parties will look to improve the quality of all candidates on the ticket because the careers of candidates in this type of relationship are closely tied together.

...a party which is competitive for statewide office will attempt to find and improve upon its candidates for the state legislature and Congress, even when there is no expectation that they can win, because their activities will assist the state candidacies. Similarly, legislative candidates in competitive districts will want an attractive gubernatorial candidate even if he cannot win, because of the marginal benefits to them.<sup>2</sup>

We can conclude, in general, that parties (especially at a time of intense competition) will attempt to nominate an



entire slate of attractive candidates, and based on the success rates and effects on competition of incumbent candidates shown in Chapter 2, we will argue that incumbents are the most attractive and most available candidates for a party to have on the ticket.

We will now spell out more specifically the advantages of incumbent candidacies and then discuss distinctions between majority and minority electoral positions which might lead to behavioral differences among the party incumbents.

#### A. Governor

Along with a United States Senator, the gubernatorial candidate leads his party's ticket in the state. It was shown in Chapter 2 that an incumbent governor is more likely to win an election than a non-incumbent, and more important, provides powerful coattails for the state legislators of his party, especially in non-presidential years. Thus, when an incumbent governor seeks reelection the party has a greater opportunity to hold onto the state's highest elective office and secure a maximum number of seats in the legislature. The rewards for electoral success at the gubernatorial level produce opportunities and resources for additional later successes.

The ability of a party to enact a systematic program of party bills (including the pet bills of individual legislators) during a legislative session is

greatly enhanced by the incumbent governor seeking reelection--they are more likely to have a friendly face in the governor's mansion and a majority in the legislature. Those legislators who expect to be in positions of legislative leadership need the gubernatorial coattails to assure a majority for their party in the legislature in order to gain or retain the leadership positions. In addition to providing coattails on election day, the decision by the governor to seek reelection may convince some legislators to seek reelection when under other conditions they would not, and encourage attractive non-incumbent candidates to fill posts in legislative districts where the party has no incumbent or in which the incumbent does not seek reelection. Finally, the reelection of an incumbent governor insures the continued flow of patronage from the governor's office to those lower on the political ladder. All these direct and potential benefits occurring to the party (i.e., other officeholders and candidates) from an incumbent candidacy at the top of the ticket will lead to pressure on the incumbent governor to seek reelection at a time of increasing or intense inter-party competition.

#### B. Legislature

An incumbent governor will normally attempt to convince state legislators of his party to seek reelection, especially if the governor is running for more than

...of the ...  
...and ...  
...the ...

his second term. There is some evidence that an executive officeholder, after a certain point in time, becomes more vulnerable the longer that he holds office.<sup>3</sup> As pointed out in the previous chapter, the executive cannot veil his actions in the group atmosphere of legislative politics, and it is easier for the individual voter to assign governmental responsibility, and orient his voting behavior accordingly, with respect to a single executive than to a large group of legislators. In order to aid his campaign, the incumbent governor will work toward organizational strength at the legislative district level, where more direct voter contact occurs. At that local level, incumbent state legislators would have at least the rudiments of a nuclear organization.

A non-incumbent gubernatorial candidate will need both the organizational strength at the local level and the publicity and endorsements provided by elected official lower on the ticket. Either an incumbent or non-incumbent gubernatorial candidate will urge state legislative incumbents of his party to such reelection in order to assure a majority in the legislative body, thereby paving the way for the governor to enact a legislative program that will enhance his image for future career goals.

As the state legislature becomes more competitive, the value of incumbents as successful candidates increases markedly. Minority legislators will retain the hope of

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becoming part of the majority and the majority legislators will fear losing their dominant position. Both sets of attitudes will lead to pressure on incumbents to seek reelection.

### C. Majority - Minority Differences

Although there will be pressure on both majority and minority party incumbents to seek reelection at times of intense inter-party competition, the majority party will probably be more successful in its efforts. It must be noted that increasing competition is perceived quite differently by the two parties--for the minority it means the opening up of the political opportunity structure and possible control of key offices, while for the majority it means the blocking of political opportunity and possible loss of control of the office of governor and of the state legislature.

From these differing perspectives of increasing competition might develop different attitudes concerning the decision to seek reelection. A major assumption of Schlesinger's ambition theory is that a politician's ambitions are formed by the opportunities confronting him.<sup>4</sup> As statewide electoral competition intensifies, i.e., as available electoral offices are more closely contested by the minority party, the structure of opportunity for the minority party politician opens up and fosters political ambitions. On the other hand, the political ambitions of



the majority party politicians are somewhat tempered as his opportunity for advancement is blocked.

The minority party is confronted with the task of convincing incumbents to seek reelection just when political ambitions are being fostered. Party leaders will be hard pressed to control the officeholders and parcel out nominations in a way that the party can present its strongest challenge. As Lester Seligman has pointed out, as inter-party competition increases, the political marketplace opens up and party leaders have less control over nominations.<sup>5</sup> Inter-party competition over the limited number of nominations that mean career advancement might lead to a breakdown in established patterns of intra-party decision-making, including the question of nominations.

The majority party, however, does not have to contend with ambitious politicians jumping on the bandwagon. As inter-party competition increases, the opportunity structure for the party and development of political ambitions among its officeholders are both blunted, and the holding of offices by running incumbents for reelection would be perceived as an appropriate strategy by both the party as a whole and individual officeholders. It is when competition is decreasing, i.e., when the opportunity structure of the majority party is opening up, that majority politicians would seek career advancement nominations. In sum, we would expect the hypothesis under examination to be a more accurate description of majority



party behavior, and while the hypothesis will be tested with data encompassing all incumbents, the majority - minority distinction must be kept in mind as a possible control variable.

The principal test of the hypothesis is to examine the relationship between changes in the level of competition and the decisions of incumbents to seek reelection from one election to the next within individual states. However, an overview of all the states, comparing them on the two variables, will give us the broad outline of the relationship. The data were analyzed across states; the mean level of competition for legislative seats as measured by the adapted Meltz  $\Omega$  index and average percentage of legislative incumbents seeking reelection over the entire time period under study were calculated and paired for each state. These values, shown in Table 3.1, indicate a positive relationship between level of competition and the number of incumbents seeking reelection. The data were not collected with an inter-state comparison in mind, and the sample of only four states is extremely small. However, the time period under examination (c. 1900-1950) and the number of elections within that period are substantial. The four states scale perfectly on competition and percentage of incumbents seeking reelection, and the  $r$  value between the variables is .755. In the rather gross figures of Table 3.1, there is some evidence that higher levels of competition leads to a large percentage of



Table 3.1 Mean Level of Competition and Mean Percentage of Incumbents Running--All Years

	<u>Mean Level of Competition</u>	<u>Mean Percentage of Incumbents Running</u>
Conn.	.592	36.9
Iowa	.652	59.6
Kansas	.648	59.2
Ohio	.769	62.7

legislative incumbents seeking reelection. Now we must focus our analysis on the individual states and examine the variable on an election to election basis.

The individual state analyses use the same measurement procedures employed in Chapter 2, with one additional measure of competition. The now dependent variable of incumbency decision to seek reelection remains the same; the decisions of state legislators to seek reelection is measured by the percentage of legislative incumbents running, while the decision of the incumbent governor is assigned a value of 1 for seeking reelection and 0 for not doing so. The independent variable of inter-party competition is measured for legislative seats by the Meltz  $\Omega$  index, as adapted, and for governor by the same simple percentage difference.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, an additional measure of competition is employed in testing this proposition. Several points made in the theoretical discussion of the hypothesis rest upon competition as measured

by the number of seats in the legislature won by the two major parties. Competition within the legislative body itself, as distinct from the electoral competition leading to the makeup of the body, is defined as the percentage difference between the number of seats held by the two major parties. As in the index of competition for the office of governor, the percentage difference is subtracted from 1, resulting in an index of competition that ranges from .001 (lowest level of competition) to .999 (perfect competition).

In order to test the degree of relationship between the three measures of competition and the percentage of incumbent legislators seeking reelection, Pearson product-moment correlations were used once again. As noted above, pairs of values for contiguous electoral years were compared; competition at time  $t$  was paired with incumbency decision to seek reelection at time  $t + 1$ . The result is a set of paired values appropriate for correlation analysis.

Testing the relationship between the three measures of competition and the decision of the incumbent governor involved the comparison of interval scale data with a simple dichotomous variable. Due to the dichotomous variable, the Pearson  $r$  was useless in this instance. A statistical technique which does provide a measure of association between a continuous variable and a dichotomous variable is the point biserial correlation. This

statistic "...is a product-moment correlation...and can always be interpreted as a measure of the degree to which the continuous variable differentiates, or discriminates, between the two categories of the dichotomous variable."<sup>7</sup> The paired sets of values were set up in the same way as in dealing with the legislature; competition at time  $t$  was paired with incumbency decision by the governor at time  $t + 1$ .

Table 3.2 presents the data with respect to the level of competition and the decision of incumbent legislators to seek reelection.

Table 3.2 Inter-Party Competition and Incumbency Decision to Seek Reelection--State Legislators\*

	<u>Level of Competition</u>			
	<u>for Governor</u>	<u>for Legislative Seats</u>	<u>within Legislature</u>	
% of Incumbents Running	Conn. .124	-.086	.059	(N=23)
	Iowa -.088	.126	-.045	(N=19)
	Kansas .060	.030	-.003	(N=19)
	Ohio -.032	-.315	-.181	(N=20)
* Pearson Product-Moment Correlations				

The relationships are weak; only one  $t$  value reaches the level of 2, and that is opposite in direction to that predicted in the hypothesis. The other correlations are quite low; eight of the twelve values presented in the table are at the 0 level. Because the values are

so low, we need not consider the direction of the relationships.

The relationship between competition and the decision of incumbent governors to seek reelection is not much stronger. (See Table 3.3.)

Table 3.3 Inter-Party Competition and Incumbency Decision to Seek Reelection--Office of Governor\*

	<u>Level of Competition</u>			
	<u>for Governor</u>	<u>for Legislative Seats</u>	<u>within Legislature</u>	
Governor's Decision To Seek Reelection				
Conn.	.441	.381	.424	(N=23)
Iowa	-.141	-.110	-.029	(N=19)
Kansas	.217	.144	.121	(N=19)
Ohio	.001	.194	.283	(N=20)
* Point-Biserial Correlations				

Except for Connecticut, the correlations show little if any relationship between the variables. Connecticut, at least in comparison to the other states, shows a relatively strong relationship in the predicted direction.

As was pointed out earlier in this chapter, low level correlations are difficult to interpret. The first impulse is to accept the low correlations at face value and reject the hypothesis; certainly, under most conditions, the correlation values in Table 3.2 and 3.3 would be justification for abandoning the analysis. However, two factors may be operating that are disguising or

masking the relationship--1. as in the first hypothesis, national elections may be influencing elections in the several states, or 2. as mentioned above, there may be opposite behavioral tendencies among certain types of legislators that disguise any relationship.

In order to control for the effect of national elections on elections in the states, the correlations were computed for non-presidential election years only, just as we did in the analysis of the data with respect to the first hypothesis. By isolating state from national elections, the relationship may come more clearly into focus. Second, one of the cleavages on which opposite tendencies of legislators to seek reelection may divide is the majority-minority split, and the data were analyzed with the dependent variable controlled for minority versus majority party.

Table 3.4 presents the data with respect to the level of inter-party competition and decisions of incumbents to seek reelection, considered for non-presidential years.

Table 3.4 Inter-Party Competition and Incumbency Decision to Seek Reelection, for Non-Presidential Years--State Legislators\*

	<u>Level of Competition</u>			
	<u>for Governor</u>	<u>for Legislative Seats</u>	<u>within Legislature</u>	
% of Incumbents Running				
Conn.	-.124	-.438	-.235	(N=12)
Iowa	.067	.249	.051	(N=10)
Kansas	-.015	-.546	-.632	(N=10)
Ohio	-.143	-.553	-.424	(N=10)
* Pearson Product-Moment Correlation				

Because the paired sets of values in the correlations are for contiguous electoral years, the level of competition is for non-presidential years, while the decision to seek reelection is for presidential years. The independent, rather than the dependent, variable was isolated for non-presidential years for two reasons. It was assumed first that competition within a state could be better read by politicians in non-presidential years, and second, that a politician would act on factual electoral information (i.e., the previous election) before he would base his behavior on a hypothetical future (i.e., who the presidential candidate might be and how he might run within the politician's own constituency).

The relationship for non-presidential years is much stronger and has implications for supporting or disproving the hypothesis. Competition for governor is once



again a poor predictor of whether incumbent legislators will seek reelection. Evidently, a gubernatorial candidate facing a competitive challenge can do little about convincing state legislators to join him on the ticket. However, competition for legislative seats and within the elected legislature show a much stronger relationship in this Table. Excepting Iowa, there is a definite pattern of incumbency decision not to seek reelection when competition stiffens. According to these figures, neither party can induce or coerce incumbent state legislators to run again if they are faced with a serious challenge. Legislators, perceiving this challenge, may decide to forego competitive politics. State legislators especially have little incentive to expend much time, effort, or money on a relatively unattractive political position, and would not readily respond to pleas for another candidacy in order to help others on the ticket.

The data for the office of governor (Table 3.5) are not as clear, but in part this may relate to the nature of measurement, i.e., individual vs. aggregate behavior and the size of the sample.

Table 3.5 Inter-Party Competition and Incumbency Decision to Seek Reelection, for Non-Presidential Election Years--Office of Governor\*

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Governor's Decision To Seek Reelection	<u>Level of Competition</u>			
	<u>for</u> <u>Governor</u>	<u>for</u> <u>Legislative Seats</u>	<u>within</u> <u>Legislature</u>	
	Conn.	.462	.066	.109 (N=12)
	Iowa	-.347	-.244	-.059 (N=10)
	Kansas	-.038	-.494	-.482 (N=10)
	Ohio	.259	.156	.037 (N=10)
* Point-Biserial Correlation				

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Connecticut and Ohio both show an extremely weak relationship in the predicted direction, while Iowa and Kansas show a somewhat stronger relationship opposite to that predicted. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the difficulty in finding any strong relationship or definite pattern with respect to the behavior of governors lies partially in the size of the sample. The number of legislative races included in the data is more than 1,000 times as great as the number of gubernatorial elections. There is a greater likelihood of personal idiosyncrasies and extraneous variables affecting the data on gubernatorial behavior than that concerned with legislative behavior. In short, in a particular electoral year we are examining legislative behavior in the aggregate (percentage of the elected body seeking reelection), while focusing on individual behavior in relation to the office

of governor (the decision of one man to seek reelection).

In order to assess the total impact of competition upon the incumbent's decision to seek reelection, rather than competition for governor, within the legislature, and for legislative seats considered separately, multiple and partial correlations were employed. Multiple correlations were calculated both for all the data and for non-presidential election years only. One of the problems in using multiple correlation is that of multicollinearity, i.e., working with independent variables that are highly correlated with each other. This problem was immediately evident in the relationship between competition for legislative seats and competition within the legislature itself. Competition as measured by the party split in the legislature was employed to cover the unlikely situation of a great number of highly competitive legislative races all won by the same party. A hypothetical example of such a situation would be Republicans capturing all 125 seats in the Kansas legislature with each candidate winning by a 50.1% to 49.9% margin. On the other hand, the situation might have been exactly reversed; the two parties might have equally split the total number of legislative seats, but each winning candidate faced no opposition in the general election. Nothing even remotely approaching this situation occurred and the two measures of competition were highly correlated, ranging from a low of .880 in Ohio to a high of .936 in Connecticut. It was assumed that the

two measures were in essence measuring the same thing; the legislative split index was dropped, and the multiple correlations were run with only two independent variables, 1) competition for governor, and 2) competition for legislative seats.

Next, the possibility of high correlations between the two remaining measures of competition had to be explored. Before the multiple correlations between the two measures of competition and incumbency decision to seek reelection were calculated, partial correlations were calculated for each independent variable, controlling for the other measure of competition. These partials were calculated for all years and for non-presidential election years only. Except for the state of Connecticut, where considered only for non-presidential election years, the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable was not substantially altered by controlling for the second independent variable. The result for non-presidential election years in Connecticut was expected, as the correlation between the two independent variables in that state for non-presidential years was .717. For the other three states, the correlation between competition for governor and competition for legislative seats ranged from a low of .119 (Ohio for non-presidential years) to a high of .661 (Iowa across all years). Except for the particular case of Connecticut in non-presidential years (and possibly Iowa), the possibility of

multicollinearity producing unreliable multiple correlations is minimal.

Multiple correlations can tell the researcher nothing about the direction of relationships. The correlation always takes on a positive value and is interpreted as indicating how much of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the multiple impact of more than one independent variable. The percentage of the variance explained is equal to the square of the multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ). The dual impact of the two independent variables still explained less than 10% of the variance for the state legislature; in only one state, Connecticut, could more than 10% of the variance in the dependent variable be explained by the level of competition.

Multiple R's were also calculated for non-presidential election years only. These values indicated a somewhat stronger relationship, explaining up to 34% of the variance in state legislators' decisions to seek reelection. The multiple R's for the office of governor, calculated only for non-presidential years, could still explain only about 10% of the variance.

At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned the possibility of contradictory hypotheses. The very similar results in the analysis of the data with respect to the hypotheses is a strong indication that the two are in fact measuring the same thing, and negative findings

for the second hypothesis are almost inevitable. However, there are two more controls which must be put on the data. As mentioned above, the dependent variable will be divided as to majority and minority party, but first we will examine the data for increases in competition rather than static levels of a low competition.

The test of the second hypothesis employed a one election (two year) time lag for competition to have an effect on the behavior of incumbents, which was an attempt to overcome the tendency toward contradictory propositions. Because there is a tendency in American politics for competition to shift slowly over relatively long periods of time, a one election time lag may not be sufficient to measure the effect of competition upon incumbency behavior. Therefore, the data were examined for years in which there was an increase in competition over the previous election; and compared to years in which a decrease in competition was recorded. Increased competition from time  $t$  to time  $t + 1$  was predicted to have an effect on the number of incumbents at time  $t + 2$ .<sup>8</sup> For example, if competition in 1944 showed an increase from the previous election (1942), a relatively large percentage of incumbents should run in 1946.

Increasing competition, rather than static levels of high or low competition, seems to be a definite factor in the decision of incumbent governors to seek reelection. Table 3.6 shows how often incumbent governors choose to

run when competition for the office of governor itself, legislative seats, or both, was either increasing or decreasing.

Table 3.6 Decision of Incumbent Governor to Seek Reelection as a Function of Changes in the Level of Competition

		<u>Level of Competition Increasing</u>					
% of time that Incumbent Governor seeks reelection		<u>for Governor</u>		<u>for Legislative Seats</u>		<u>for Both</u>	
		%	N*	%	N	%	N
	Conn.	53.9	(13)	54.5	(11)	57.1	(7)
	Iowa	57.1	( 7)	57.1	( 7)	80.0	(5)
	Kansas	83.3	( 6)	83.3	( 6)	100.0	(4)
	Ohio	87.5	( 8)	87.8	( 9)	85.7	(7)
		<u>Level of Competition Decreasing</u>					
% of time that Incumbent Governor seeks reelection	Conn.	44.4	( 9)	45.4	(11)	40.0	(5)
	Iowa	50.0	(10)	50.0	(10)	60.0	(5)
	Kansas	36.4	(11)	36.4	(11)	33.3	(9)
	Ohio	50.0	(10)	22.9	( 9)	42.9	(7)
* N = total number of cases falling in that category							

This is without doubt a rather crude attempt to measure increasing competition. However, even this limited attempt demonstrates that politicians respond immediately to mounting opposition at the gubernatorial level. In all four states, incumbent governors more often choose to run when competition is increasing, and in all states but

Ohio, run most often when competition for both legislative seats and office of governor is increasing. However, the data do not support the hypothesis that incumbent legislators, of either the majority or minority party, respond as quickly. In all four states under analysis, there was never more than an 8% difference in either party between the number of incumbents running when competition was increasing or decreasing as measured for legislative seats, governor, or both. But this finding is not surprising. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, the office of governor is the highest elective office in the state and crucial for the coattail effect; politicians would respond more readily to threats upon this office than to the larger, relatively less important group of state legislators.

However, based on our discussion of the differences in the electoral positions of minority and majority party politicians at a time of intense competition, we would expect to find some relationship between competition and incumbency decision to seek reelection for the majority party legislators. The relationship between static levels of competition at time  $t$  and the percentage of incumbents seeking reelection at time  $t + 1$ , is presented in Table 3.7.





Table 3.7 Competition for Legislative Seats and Incumbency Decision to Seek Reelection, Controlled for Party--State Legislators\*

		<u>Competition for Legislative Seats</u>			
% of Incumbents Running		<u>Conn.</u>	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>Kansas</u>	<u>Ohio</u>
	Maj. Party	-.111	.319	.044	.289
	Min. Party	-.162	.112	-.115	.107
* Pearson Product-Moment Correlations					

The Table shows consistent positive results in only two states--Iowa and Ohio. In these two states, at least for the majority party, there is weak evidence that a high level of competition leads to a greater number of incumbents running. The evidence becomes more convincing when all four states are contrasted as to the average level of competition for the entire time period under study (see Table 3.1); Iowa and Ohio have consistently been more competitive in state legislative races than either Connecticut or Kansas.

The data analysis with respect to the second hypothesis leaves us without firm conclusions. The negative findings when the data were examined only for non-presidential years are questionable because of methodological difficulties. The weak positive results when the data were examined for increasing competition and minority-majority party differences, coupled with the inter-state data from Table 3.1, are some indication that

the hypothesis is at least partially supported. If we accept the premise that the negative findings are due to methodology and not substantive relationships, we can conclude that the evidence leans very slightly toward rejection of the null hypothesis.

In the next Chapter, we will examine the relationship over time of the two variables of incumbency and competition to see if our model of intersecting sine curves has any validity whatever.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For discussion of Type I and Type II errors, see George Ferguson, Statistical Analysis in Psychology and Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Schlesinger, "Political Party Organization" in James G. March (ed.), Handbook of Organization (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), p. 789.

<sup>3</sup>This point may seem contradictory after demonstrating how valuable an incumbent governor is for his coattail effect. However, there is some evidence that an incumbent governor's marginal benefits to those lower on the ticket decreases each time he runs as an incumbent. Unfortunately, there were not enough instances of extended tenure in the office of governor to systematically test this hypothesis.

<sup>4</sup>See Joseph Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>Lester Seligman, "Political Recruitment and Party Structure," American Political Science Review, Vol. 55, 1961, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup>The measure for governor is the percentage vote for the losing candidate subtracted from the percentage for the winning candidate, with that value subtracted from 1. The result is an index of competition that ranges from .001 to .999.

<sup>7</sup>Ferguson, op. cit., pp. 240-241.

<sup>8</sup>The author would have liked to examine increases in competition over a longer period of time, but no such pattern of increasing competition appeared in the data. Competition for the legislature increased two elections in succession only 11 times in all the states, and only 9 times for the office of governor. In general, there was no pattern of increasing competition to follow.

## CHAPTER 4

### INCUMBENCY: SOME CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter we examine the status of the model suggested in Chapter 3, examine possibilities for further research concerning incumbency behavior, and discuss both the normative and empirical implications of the findings with respect to the two hypotheses.

#### I. Status of the Model

The empirical evidence only weakly supports the second hypothesis of the model. The lack of empirical support may be as much a result of weak methodology as lack of a true substantive relationship; the problems mentioned in the previous chapter--the possibility of contradictory hypotheses, the alternative interpretations of a zero level correlation, differences in sample size--may be masking a much stronger relationship than that which the data suggest. We will, however, limit our discussion primarily to the empirical findings; we do not attempt to attribute more to the data than the methodology, however limited, permits.

It can be concluded from the data that incumbent

candidacies lower the level of competition, but the contention that high levels of competition necessarily lead incumbents to seek reelection is not supported. A substantive problem related to this latter contention may be the researcher's choice of offices. The office of state legislator is a relatively unattractive position, and is generally considered less prestigious than the state senate, for example, which could have been the focus of this study. We examined the lower house rather than the senate precisely because it is an unattractive position. The major proposition of the study is that the level of competition is a key variable in the decision of incumbents to seek reelection; if the hypothesis could be validated for the lowly position of state legislator, it would probably hold for other, more attractive offices. On the other hand, testing the hypothesis for more prestigious offices severely limits our ability to generalize to more mundane positions. Furthermore, the choice of the lower house has a more pragmatic basis--the sample of officeholders is considerably larger than it is for other offices.

There is some indication that the model (and specifically the second hypothesis) might be a more powerful explanatory device for the behavior of state senate incumbents. The distinction between lower and upper houses is largely in the size of the two bodies and the resulting size of individual constituencies. There is

no reason to believe that the electoral advantage enjoyed by incumbents, and the resulting lower level of inter-party competition which a large percentage of incumbents seeking reelection brings about, is at all different for the senate than for the lower house. Because the senate is a smaller body and each officeholder represents a larger constituency, however, the office would be perceived as relatively more important by the party hierarchy and the gubernatorial candidate. It follows that the pressure on incumbents to seek reelection at times of intense inter-party competition might be greater for senators than for house members. The large size of the general assembly in Connecticut (279 members), for example, diminishes the importance of an individual seat within the body. If the party and the politician both view a seat in the senate as preferable to one in the house, the second hypothesis of the model might better predict political behavior in this contest.

There is some available literature based upon cost-benefit analyses which provides a possible explanation for the negative findings with respect to the second hypothesis.

Gordon Black, following James Q. Wilson, attempts to delineate the professional from the amateur politician.<sup>1</sup> According to Black, "Professionalization...refers to the assimilation of the standards and values prevalent in a given situation."<sup>2</sup> In the context of Schlesinger's



ambition theory, a professional politician is one whose behavior is a function of attaining a particular office, now or in the future, i.e., a politician's behavior is a response to his office goals. Black agrees with Schlesinger, commenting,

...we suggest that the presence or absence of ambition itself is the critical intervening factor between an individual's political past and his political future and between his initial political values and those of the professional politician....<sup>3</sup>

Black suggests that the professional politician has a commitment at two levels: 1) commitment to the position he presently holds, and 2) commitment to seek other positions.<sup>4</sup> One measure of commitment to the office, according to Black, is the set of investment costs associated with that office, and one of these costs is the level of inter-party competition. An incumbent state legislator, usually a part-time politician and perhaps not completely "professionalized," may refuse to pay the investment costs of retaining his position when faced with a serious challenge.

Frolich, Oppenheim, and Young also approach the decision to seek office (election or reelection) from a cost-benefit approach.<sup>5</sup> In a tightly argued theoretical work, they provide the following definition of a politician.

Any individual who acts to supply a collective good without providing all of the resources himself we will call a political leader or political entrepreneur. Such an individual will only find this role valuable when the total resources he can collect as a leader exceed his costs, thereby producing a leader's surplus.<sup>6</sup>

The authors point out that one of the costs borne by a political leader is that of providing a "collective organization," in Schlesinger's terms forming and maintaining a nuclear unit that will assure election of a candidate. When a state legislator faces mounting political opposition, the costs of maintaining that collective organization may be greater than the resources he can collect as a leader, thereby producing a shortage rather than a surplus. Under such conditions, the political entrepreneur will prefer to leave the marketplace.

Alfred O. Hirschman specifically talks about the "exit option" available to members of varied organizations.<sup>7</sup> While Hirschman's analysis of political organization is mainly devoted to the voter option of choosing among parties, elements of his analysis are of value in explaining incumbency behavior. Hirschman argues that the response to decline in organizations may take several forms, including "voice" (verbal protest of some sort) or "exit" (leaving the organization). The exit option becomes less likely the stronger the commitment to the organization. As already pointed out, the position of state legislator is usually low-paying, part-time and relatively non-prestigious, hardly qualities that lead to loyalty to or the ability to be heard in the party. Hirschman's analysis would lead us to conclude that the state legislator would choose the "exit option" when faced with serious electoral opposition.

## II. Suggestions for Future Research

In addition to examining the variables of incumbency and competition in differing contexts, research on the impact of incumbency upon electoral behavior and party organization should proceed in three important areas. Two of these are theoretical and one is methodological.

In Chapter 2, we describe and combine two explanations for incumbency advantage--the recognition or visibility theory posited by Barbara Hinckley and the experience or seniority explanation offered by Joseph Schlesinger.<sup>8</sup> The recognition theory assumes low voter interest and information, while the Schlesinger explanation assumes a more active, informed voter. There is need for more research to measure the relative value of these two explanatory propositions.

Schlesinger argues that seniority builds political experience and expertise that are invaluable in election campaigns. To be successful, however, an incumbent should not be so visible as to be quickly identified and held responsible for political mistakes; this particular disadvantage plagues highly visible executive offices such as mayor and governor. On the other hand, the visibility explanation credits incumbency success to the visibility of one or more terms in office.

We may test the visibility explanation by ranking several offices with respect to the level of visibility and by then measuring the rate of incumbency success.

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The ranking could be done by surveying voters, tapping their information level concerning particular offices and/or officeholders. If the recognition theory is valid, the two rankings of visibility and incumbency success should show a positive correlation.

In this study, we have taken a preliminary step in this direction. The rate of incumbency success for the offices of governor and state legislator were compared with the rate for candidates for the U. S. House of Representatives for the same years in the same states.<sup>9</sup> The offices were arbitrarily ranked by the author from more to less visible in the following order: governor, congressman, state legislator. No clear pattern emerged, but initial results show that incumbency success may in fact be inversely related to visibility. The greater success rates of both congressman and state legislators in relation to governors in winning reelection is taken as preliminary evidence supporting the Schlesinger explanation.

Such a study leads to another, rather complex, empirical problem that plagues all research on incumbency. How much of incumbent's performance at the polls can be attributed to party identification rather than the incumbency of the candidate? In short, how can one separate party from person? A first step in this direction is made in Chapter 2 when the success rate of incumbents is compared to the success rate of non-incumbent candidates for

the same office over a specified period of time. It can be argued that the difference between the rates is directly attributable to the variable of incumbency.

One way to further isolate the importance of incumbent candidacies is to more carefully control for the effects of party and incumbency. Further, we must assume that the effect of other variables is random. The investigator would first chart the rate of party turnover for an office when no incumbent was running, preferably over an extended time period. This calculation provides a measure of the base strength of the two (or more) major parties in the political system. Then we would calculate the rate at which the parties held onto the office when they ran incumbents with varying lengths of tenure. A comparison of the figures would measure the relative advantage of incumbents in general, and indicate the strength of more experienced officeholders for a particular office. It would also partially indicate whether incumbents are more valuable for the majority or minority party. Furthermore, by ranking incumbents as to length of tenure, a test of Schlesinger's seniority thesis would result.

Research on the explanation of incumbents' behavior (as well as other areas) would be greatly stimulated by more work on the measurement of competition. This is a methodological concern. The construct of competition is important in maintaining democracy because democracy

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requires a healthy opposition party. It is also a powerful independent variable in empirical theory. There is an urgent need for a measure of change in levels of competition in order to test hypotheses which incorporate the variables of increasing and decreasing competition. The crucial problem is the assigning of weights to the same percentage change occurring at varying distances from the critical 50% + 1 minimum winning coalition. The problem becomes even more complex when one moves beyond a simple two party dichotomy.  $\Omega$  was adapted for this study to apply to a three party situation whereby two parties are considered at the same time, but even this static measure of competition has yet to be fully adapted to the three or more party system.

### III. Implications of the Findings

Various findings of this study are substantively, theoretically, and normatively significant. We examine each area separately and indicate how this study has contributed to each.

The most important, substantive finding of the study concerns the relationship between the office of governor and that of state legislator. We have shown that the coattail effect, demonstrated by such people as Press and Cummings at the national level, operates about as strongly at the state level.<sup>10</sup> An incumbent governor, running at the head of a ticket, is a great bonus to the



state legislative candidates of his party. The analagous relationship of governor and legislator at the state level to president and congressman at the national level was most immediately evident in the non-presidential election years, i.e., when the state electoral systems are not directly influenced by national political candidates and issues. In these years, each state operates on a fairly independent basis, and the long coattails of an incumbent governor are evident in every state we analyzed.

The hypotheses in this study were derived directly from Schlesinger's ambition theory and the derivative theory of political party organization. In short, the theoretical basis of the work rests primarily on Schlesinger's formulations. The evidence which supports the first hypothesis further indicates the value of Schlesinger's theories for generating hypotheses and providing explanation for important areas of political behavior. Given that the decision to enter a political race has been made, it is clear that we have substantiated the basic tenet of his party organization theory, i.e., that cooperation between nuclear units is dependent upon the level of competition within the districts of those units, for the offices of state legislator and governor. Cooperation between units prior to the decision to seek election (or in this case reelection) was not evident; cooperative behavior in the form of incumbents seeking reelection at times of intense inter-party competition was

not observed. To repeat, the fault may lie not in the theory, but in the method. Furthermore, Schlesinger's explanation of incumbency advantage--experience and a low profile--seems to have greater validity than the more parsimonious visibility hypothesis. To summarize, this study demonstrates the value of using Schlesinger's formulations in further research on party and electoral politics.

Another aspect of the work that has some significance is the use of competition as a dependent variable. As mentioned previously, competition has been used in the study of American politics as a powerful independent variable in empirical theory, and has been identified as a key element of democracy (the existence of a viable opposition) in normative theory. While being recognized by both normative and empirical theorists as an important variable, there has been little empirical work done on defining the conditions under which competition will flourish. This study has indicated that one set of conditions, incumbents seeking reelection, sharply reduces the level of party competition. This finding has important implications for contemporary electoral politics in America.

The most strongly supported conclusion in this study is that, ceteris paribus, an incumbent candidate for governor or state legislator will defeat a non-incumbent candidate most of the time. If two opposing candidates conduct campaigns for the state legislature with roughly

equal resources at their disposal, and no unique handicaps evident for either candidate, the incumbent has between a .8 and .9 probability of reelection. If he wants to win, a challenger to an incumbent must find a way to overcome the advantage of incumbency enjoyed by his opponent. A traditional answer has been to outspend the incumbent, with the result that money, especially for mass media advertising, has become an important variable in determining the outcome of American elections.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress that would limit the amount of money spent on political campaigns.<sup>11</sup> With the cost of electioneering so high, it is argued that the costs of running for office excludes all but the rich or makes candidates too dependent upon large contributors to the campaign. However, this study indicates that any attempt to equalize the resources of the candidates will work directly for the advantage of the incumbent. Incumbents already win a convincing number of elections and to place a limit on the amount of money a challenger may spend to unseat an incumbent only increases the probability of an incumbent victory. We make no value judgment on the desirability of incumbency advantage but feel that decision-makers should be cognizant of this factor when considering the issue of campaign spending.

#### IV. Conclusion

The main hypothesis of this study was not

validated, but as described above, we believe this work has made contributions to the discipline along several dimensions and has opened possibilities for further research.

We believe the study of incumbency behavior has normative importance for the politics of America. Writing 35 years ago, Charles Hyneman used empirical methods attempting to solve the normative problem of high turnover rates in state legislatures, preventing the emergence of a stable legislative leadership. This study has indicated that incumbents have such electoral strength that the normative problem may now be reversed--lack of legislative turnover may lead to a stagnant leadership.

We feel the normative and empirical questions raised in this work are important enough that the effort expended in producing this study was well directed.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Gordon Black, "A Theory of Professionalization in Politics," American Political Science Review V. LXIV, No. 3, p. 865; Also see James Q. Wilson, The Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 865.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 867.

<sup>4</sup>Black's discussion of different levels of commitment closely parallels Schlesinger's ideas on varying levels of ambition.

<sup>5</sup>Norman Frolich, Joe A. Oppenheimer, Oran R. Young, Political Leadership and Collective Goods (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup>Barbara Hinckley, "Incumbency and the Presidential Vote in Senate Elections: Defining Parameters of Sub-Presidential Voting," American Political Science Review, V. LXIV, No. 3, p. 836, and Joseph Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

<sup>9</sup>The data on Congressional races was provided by Professor Neil Romans, Department of Political Science, Providence College.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Press, "Voting Statistics and Presidential Coattails," American Political Science Review (December, 1958), p. 1041, and "Presidential Coattails and Party Cohesion," Midwest Journal of Political Science (November, 1964), p. 320; Milton Cummings, Congressmen and the Electorate, Elections for the U. S. House of Representatives and President, 1920-1964 (New York: Free Press, 1966).

<sup>11</sup>See Time, May 17, 1971, "Campaign Cash: Floor,  
Not Ceiling."



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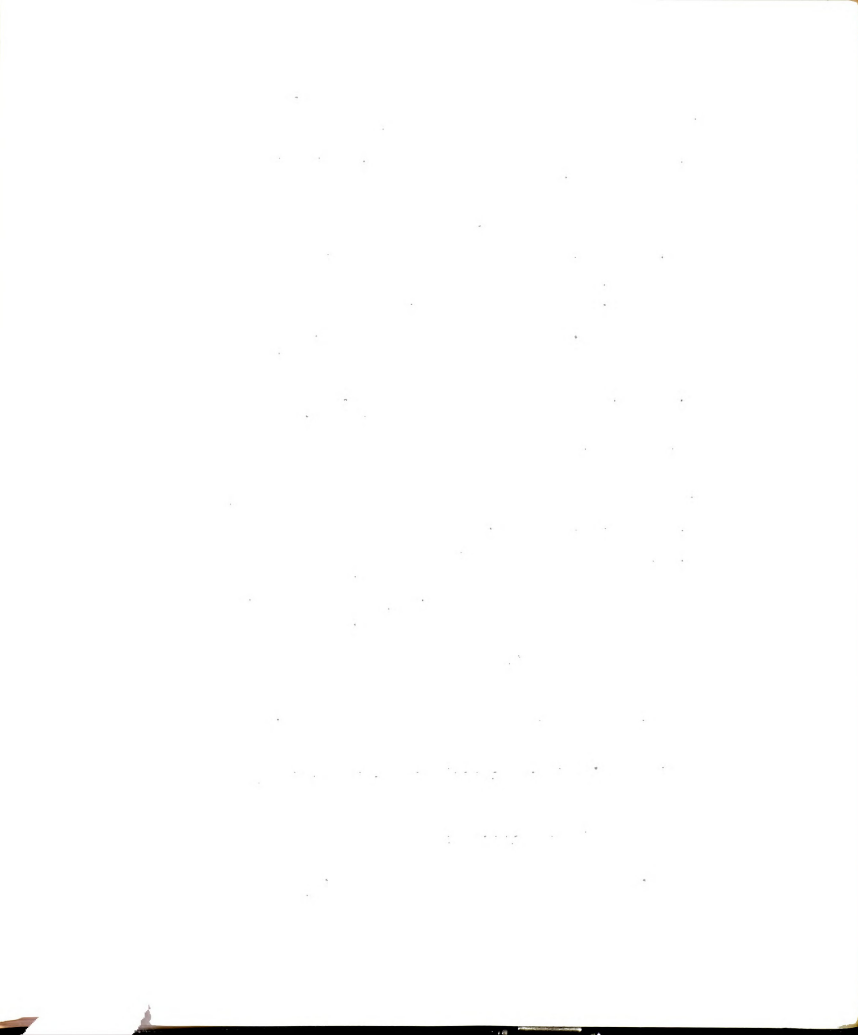




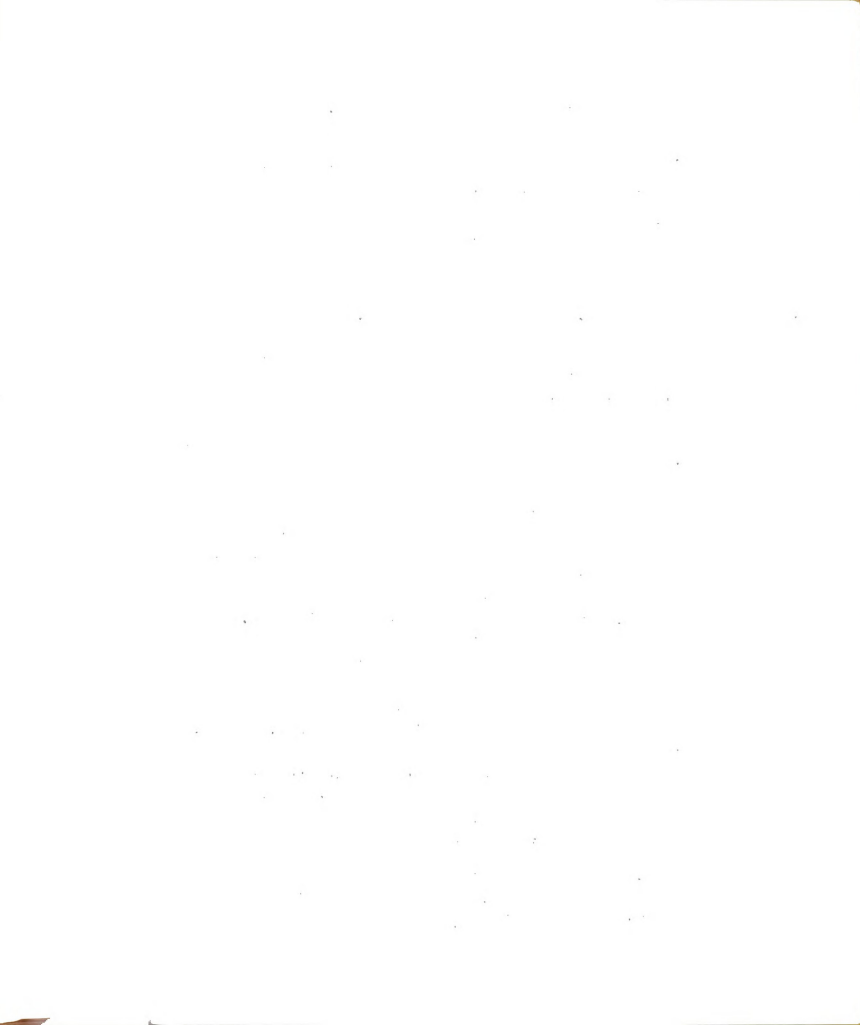
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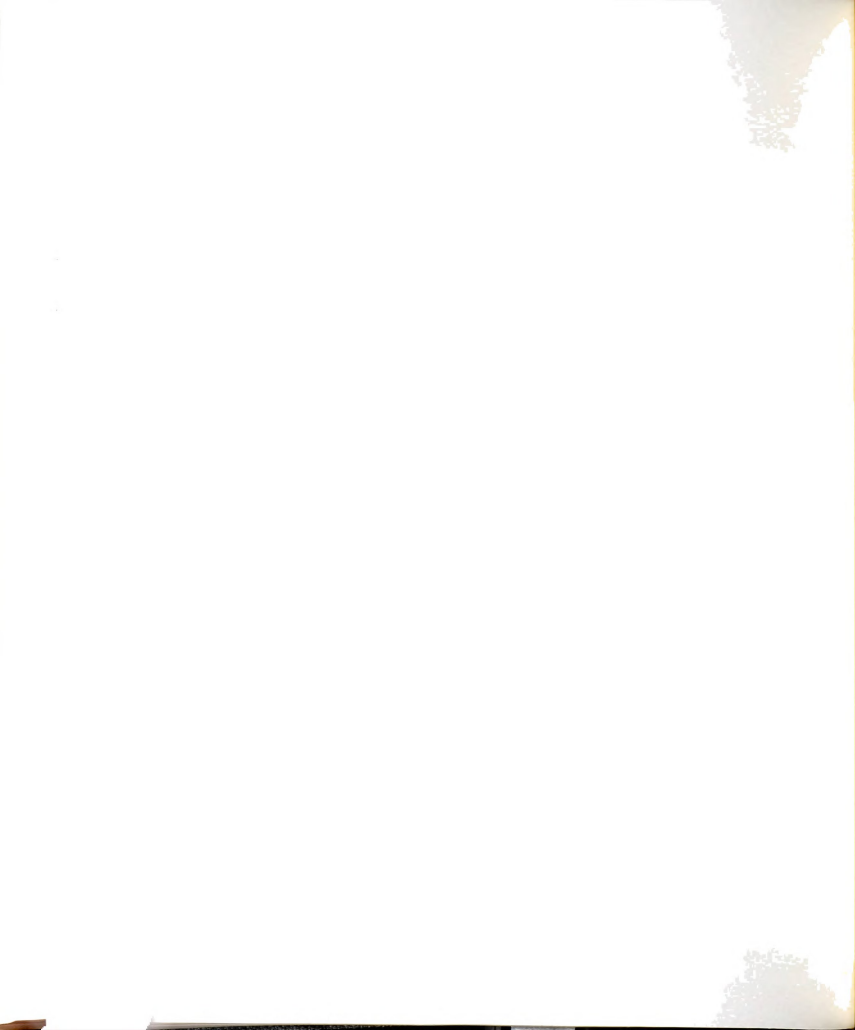
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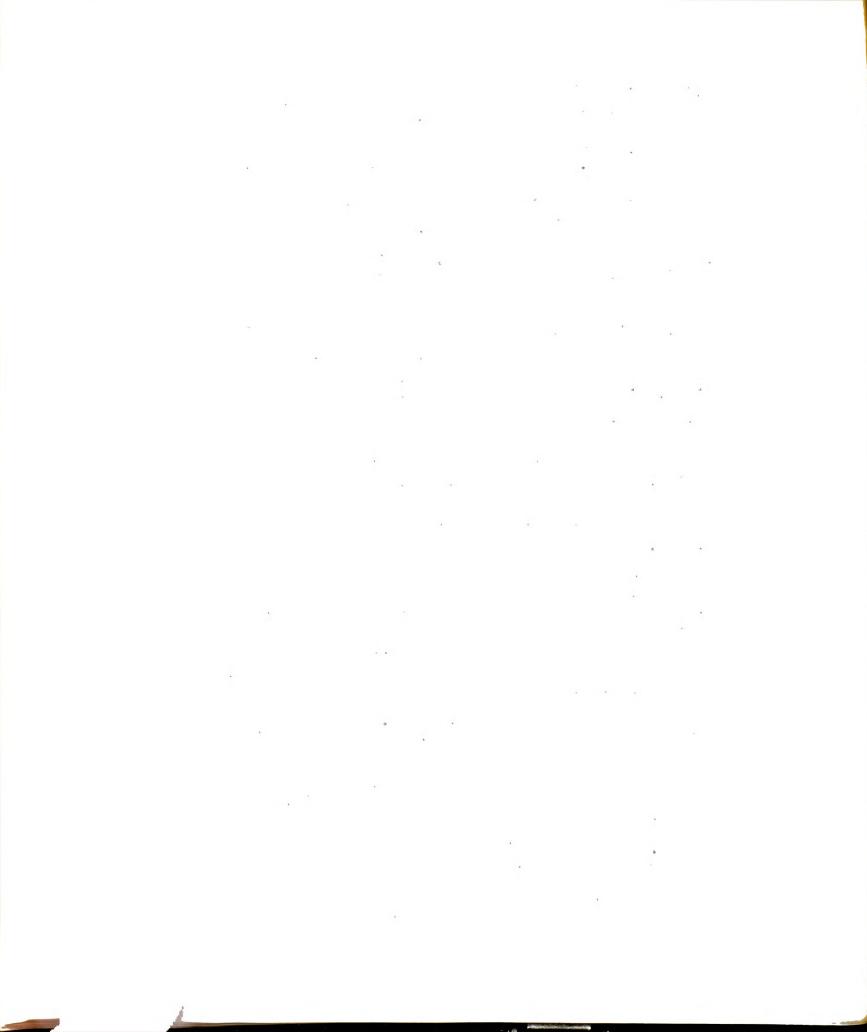
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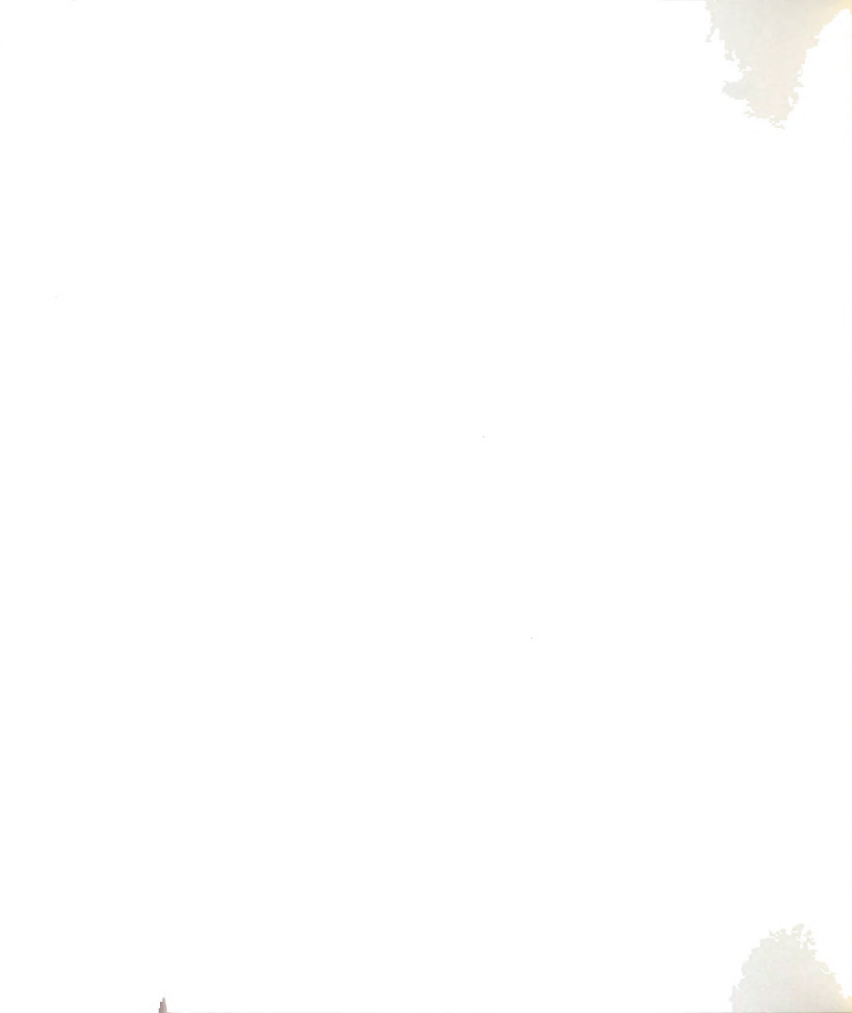
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## **APPENDIX**



## APPENDIX A

### Description and Explanation of $\Omega$ Measure

quoted from:

David B. Meltz, Competition and Cohesion: A Model of Majority Party Legislative Bargaining (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1970), pp. 55-56.

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## THE MELTZ $\Omega$ MEASURE

He [Stern] computed for every town the mean  $[\mu]$  division of the two party vote for a period of ten years. He then defined the majority party as the party having the higher mean vote over time. He computed for the majority party the standard deviation  $[\sigma]$  of its vote and developed the following taxonomy: if for town  $i$ ,

1.  $\mu_i - 2\sigma_i > 50\%$  then  $i$  is a "safe" town
2.  $\mu_i - \sigma_i < 50\%$  then  $i$  is a competitive town
3.  $\mu_i - 2\sigma_i < 50\% < \mu_i - \sigma_i$  then  $i$  is a marginal town

While this index is quite ingenious and represents a significant advance over previous measures, it appears inadequate for the purpose of this study. Stern's index lacks sophistication because his use of one and two standard deviations as representing, in some way, meaningful substantive cutoff points is really indefensible. Furthermore, a continuous variable is not only substantively more interesting but, unlike Stern's taxonomy, is amenable to parametric statistical analysis. In order to transform Stern's index into a continuous variable, the following was done:

define a value where

$$\mu_i - X\sigma_i = .5$$

solving for X

$$X = \left( \frac{\mu_i - .5}{\sigma_i} \right)_r$$

r = number of legislative sessions

In order to satisfy the requirement the index be a measure of perceived safeness a mathematical technique which would take into account the decreasing marginal utility for X as X increases...is the logarithmic transformation. Define a new value, say  $\xi$  (eta) as  $\log X$ ....In order to satisfy our other requirements that the proposed index lies between zero and one, we perform another transformation. Define  $\Omega = \frac{\xi+1}{2}$  or  $\Omega = \frac{\log x+1}{2}$ . Mathematically, this transformation insures that for all values of x between .1 and 10  $\Omega$  lies between zero and one. Finally, in order to create an index of competition rather than one of safeness, we define the value  $\omega$  (omega) which is equal to  $1-\xi$ .

$$\omega = \left( 1 - \left( \frac{\log x+1}{2} \right) \right)_r \quad X = \frac{i - .5}{\sigma_i}$$

r = number of years considered.

Thus  $\omega$  is continuous, ranges between zero and one, and explicitly measures perceived competitiveness....It is

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worth noting that  $\Omega$  ...can be used as a measure of two party competition for any voting body, be it electoral, legislative, committee, and so forth.











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