



## Presidential Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective

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### Introduction

Presidential candidate selection comprises the processes by which political elites, political parties, and/or voters choose presidential candidates from among a larger pool of potential nominees. As Giovanni Sartori and others have noted, the selection of candidates to compete in elections may be the core activity that universally distinguishes parties from other political organizations. This activity is closely related to but analytically distinct from the process of candidate recruitment, which is how potential entrants are enlisted to compete for office. Whereas recruitment defines the pool of potential candidates, selection concerns how candidates are named on a ballot. There are generally two main types of candidate selection as well as a third category that combines elements of the other two: (1) elite nomination, where a national or regional party leader, or a group of party leaders, nominates a fellow leader or otherwise decides on a suitable candidate; (2) primary elections, some type of preliminary election to select a candidate; and (3) the “invisible primary,” the pre-primary stages of presidential nomination campaigns in which party elites and other political actors informally shape nomination outcomes. Although presidential candidate selection is a central element of political parties and the electoral process, the amount of systematic cross-national work on the topic is lacking. There is ample literature on primaries in the United States, but its utility for comparative work is in many regards limited due to the uniqueness of the US two-party system and selection process (e.g., the existence of caucuses, the long-form and sequential nature of the presidential primaries) as well as the literature’s lack of attention to generalizing beyond the US case. However, the expansion of primary elections in other presidential systems—primarily Latin America, where presidential democracies are concentrated but parts of presidential and semi-presidential Africa and Asia as well—has resulted in new and exciting research questions and data with which to answer those questions. To wit, the US literature is largely preoccupied with explaining the effects of one specific type of candidate selection mechanism, primary elections, on things such as voter behavior, candidate qualities and characteristics, and representation. Comparative scholarship on the other hand does not assume a single candidate nomination process and boasts a far greater sample size of cases, affording it the ability to ask how and when countries adopt different candidate selection mechanisms in addition to exploring their various outcomes. The survival and deepening of third wave presidential democracies should allow scholars to develop and more rigorously test novel theories of both the causes and consequences of distinct presidential selection mechanisms.

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### Background and Overview

Until the 2000s, the general candidate selection literature was largely confined to the US case (e.g., Ceaser 1979, Jackson and Crotty 1996). Even nominally comparative accounts focused largely on the United States and leadership selection in established parliamentary systems (Matthews 1973, Gallagher and Marsh 1988). This is due in part to the uneven record of democracy in many presidential systems and their relative unfamiliarity with primary elections as opposed to elite nomination as a candidate selection mechanism. However, candidate nomination elections are increasingly used to select presidential and legislative candidates in new democracies, resulting in a mini-surge of scholarship examining their origin and effects (e.g., Gjerde 2005, Field and Siavelis 2008, Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008, Freidenberg and Alcántara 2009, Hazan and Rahat 2010). The chief contribution of this literature has

been to broaden scholars' understanding of the empirical variation in candidate selection mechanisms and theorization of their origins and consequences. This comparative work is also able to highlight just how much of an outlier the United States is, with its drawn-out primary season for presidential candidates and an array of primary types by state. Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008 presents perhaps the most thorough contribution to cross-national candidate selection to date, presenting a comprehensive theoretical framework and a wide array of case studies. It should be noted that a great deal of candidate selection research focuses specifically on legislative races and contributes to knowledge of presidential party nominations; nonetheless, these works are not included here unless they directly engage *presidential* nomination.

**Ceaser, James W. *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.**

Discusses the theories of presidential selection offered by leading American statesmen from the Founders and Thomas Jefferson to Martin Van Buren and Woodrow Wilson and examines the development of the presidential selection process in the United States.

**Gallagher, Michael, and Michael Marsh. *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE, 1988.**

A collection of nine (mainly parliamentary) country studies that examines candidate selection in Europe and Japan. It describes the methods by which parties select their candidates, analyzes the factors that influence the form of selection used, and considers the consequences of candidate selection.

**Gjerde, Camilla. "Presidential Recruitment. Selection of Presidential Candidates in Africa, Asia, and Latin America." In *National Conference in Political Science*. Bergen, Norway, 2005.**

This conference paper uses comparative presidential recruitment and selection data from Latin America, Africa, and Asia to show that candidate selection has become more inclusive during the past thirty years in all three regions. The article concludes that two determinants of this trend are increasingly institutionalized party systems and a ban on presidential reelection.

**Field, Bonnie N., and Peter Siavelis. "Candidate Selection Procedures in Transitional Polities. A Research Note." *Party Politics* 14.5 (2008): 620–639.**

Despite focusing more on legislative candidate selection, this piece still contributes to the cross-national literature on presidential selection by distinguishing between transitional and institutionalized democracies. Specifically, it explains how and why transitional polities differently constrain the choice of candidate selection procedures compared to institutionalized democracies.

**Freidenberg, Flavia, and Manuel Alcántara. *Selección de candidatos, política partidista y rendimiento democrático en América Latina*. Mexico City: Tribunal Electoral del Distrito Federal, 2009.**

The Spanish-language compendium presents work by the world's top scholars of candidate selection (many of whom contributed to the Siavelis and Morgenstern edited volume). Through a mixture of primarily Latin American case studies and more broadly analytical chapters, the authors explore causes in the empirical variation in nomination mechanisms across Latin America as well as their difference effects on candidates, parties, and democracy.

**Hazan, Reuven Y., and Gideon Rahat. *Democracy Within Parties. Candidate Selection Methods and their Political Consequences*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.**

Conducts an in-depth analysis of the consequences of different candidate selection methods on democracy. The first part delineates

candidate selection methods based on four major dimensions: candidacy, the selectorate, decentralization, and voting versus appointment systems. The second part analyzes the political consequences of different candidate selection methods according to four important aspects of democracy: participation, representation, competition, and responsiveness.

**Jackson, John S., III, and William J. Crotty. *The Politics of Presidential Selection*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.**

This book is aimed at an undergraduate audience. Jackson and Crotty take a broad approach to presidential elections covering the historical nominating process in the United States, the modern nomination process, national party conventions, and the general presidential election process.

**Matthews, Donald R., ed. *Perspectives on Presidential Selection*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1973.**

This is a pioneering collection of seven original articles examining presidential selection, three of which are comparative studies.

**Rahat, Gideon, and Reuven Y. Hazan. "Candidate Selection Methods: An Analytical Framework." *Party Politics* 7.3 (2001): 297–322.**

Part of a special issue on candidate selection, this article presents a comprehensive classification of different candidate selection methods, defines what is meant by their democratization, and offers an analytical framework for cross-national comparisons. It distinguishes four dimensions to classify candidate selection methods: inclusiveness or exclusiveness of candidacy; inclusiveness or exclusiveness of candidacy of party selectorates; level of decentralization; and nature of the voting/appointment systems.

**Siavelis, Peter, and Scott Morgenstern. *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

The most significant comparative politics scholarship examining candidate selection. Contributors use the variety of candidate selection mechanisms across Latin America to examine how they impact the type of candidate nominated and how this structures political behavior. The introductory chapter creates a theoretical framework for the country studies by theorizing how formal institutional rules combine and interact with contextual situations and party-level variables to determine selection processes.

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## Types of Candidate Selection Mechanisms

Scholars consider three major types of candidate selection mechanisms, although the lines between them may blur. The oldest and most common mechanism, by which a national or regional party leader, or a group of party leaders, nominates a fellow leader or otherwise decides on a suitable candidate, is known as elite nomination. A newer but much more studied mechanism is that of primary elections, by which parties hold some type of preliminary election to select candidates. Lastly, the third mechanism is known as the "invisible primary" and refers to the stages of presidential nomination campaigns in which party elites and other political actors informally shape outcomes.

### Elite Nominations

The literature on elite nominations is not commensurate to its use in practice. Prior to the 1920s and even as far along as the early 1970s, candidates in the United States commonly won their party's endorsement in conventions of party officials meeting at the local, state, and national levels with little input by the broader rank-and-file. Outside of the United States, an overwhelming majority of candidates are still chosen by this traditional method of elite arrangement. Nonetheless, perhaps due to its obsolescence in the United

States or opacity in general, elite nomination is a selection mechanism that remains greatly understudied. Comparatively, scholars highlight elite nominations “from above,” as with the Mexican executives anointing their successors under authoritarianism (Camp 1995, Langston 2006), as well as nominations “from below” via subnational political negotiation and regional party conventions (Öhman 2004, de Luca 2008, Power and Mochel 2008). Like the “invisible primary” below, this selection mechanism merits far greater scholarly research.

**Camp, Roderic Ai. *Political Recruitment Across Two Centuries: Mexico, 1884–1991*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.**

In this major contribution to political recruitment theory, Camp draws on an original database to present a definitive account of the paths to power Mexican political leaders pursued from 1884 to 1991. Camp’s research clarifies the patterns of political recruitment in Mexico, showing the consequences of choosing one group over another.

**de Luca, Miguel. “Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Argentina: Presidents and Governors, 1983 to 2006.” In *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. Edited by P. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 189–217. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

Explores how provincial branches of political parties largely control processes of candidate recruitment and selection in Argentina and tend to nominate party insiders or party adherents.

**Langston, Joy. “The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico.” In *Informal Institutions and Democracy. Lessons from Latin America*. Edited by G. Helmke and S. Levitsky, 143–159. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006.**

Studies the *dedazo*, or the imposition of the next president by the outgoing executive in Mexico under the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), as an informal institution. Langston argues that this elite nomination helped the PRI maintain its dominance while avoiding internal rupture.

**Öhman, Magnus. *The Heart and Soul of the Party: Candidate Selection in Ghana and Africa*. Uppsala, Sweden: Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Government, Uppsala University, 2004.**

This monograph uses cross-national data from seventeen African countries to show how the candidate selection process is often more decentralized than general theories about African parties assume. The work focuses more on legislative selection than presidential selection. Still, the author’s argument that regional or local-level clientelistic ties partially explain a greater degree of candidate selection decentralization is also applicable to the presidential level.

**Power, Timothy J., and Marilia G. Mochel. “Political Recruitment in an Executive-Centric System: Presidents, Ministers, and Governors in Brazil.” In *Pathways to Power. Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. Edited by P. M. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 218–240. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

This book chapter gives a broad overview of all levels of candidate recruitment and selection in Brazil. With respect to the presidency, Power and Mochel find that federal legislators and regional elites usually select candidates in national conventions, and that as of 2007, there had been only one party primary in the country’s history.

## Primary Elections

The study of primary elections was a vital component of early-20th-century American political science (e.g., Merriam 1908), yet with the

demise of the Progressive movement, American scholars largely lost interest in exploring the effects of different primary rules (with notable exceptions such as Key 1947 (cited under Conventional Wisdom) and Key 1949). The Democratic Party's adoption of the McGovern-Fraser reforms in 1972 again spurred a flurry of activity in the United States, exploring the results of primaries (e.g., Ranney 1972, cited under Conventional Wisdom, Polsby 1983, Bartels 1985, Bartels 1988, Geer 1989). The third wave of democratization has resulted in the spread of presidential primaries in other places, and with it, comparative scholarship on the topic. This work, best represented by the Sandri, Seddone, and Venturino 2015 and Boatright 2018 edited volumes, is able to make new theoretical and analytical contributions by leveraging differences among these primaries such as the ability of the party to opt in or out of a primary, as well as the competition's degree of openness (e.g., closed primaries, in which only party members can vote; semi-closed primaries, which are similar to closed primaries but also allow unaffiliated voters to participate; semi-open primaries, where voters are not required to declare which party's primary they will vote in before entering the voting booth; and open primaries, in which all voters can take part and may cast votes on a ballot of any party). Despite these advancements, the comparative scholarship on primaries remains ripe for exploration.

**Bartels, Larry M. "Expectations and Preferences in Presidential Nominating Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 79.3 (1985): 804–815.**

Uses survey data to estimate the effect of expectations about who will be nominated on respondents' self-identified preferences. The results confirm the conventional belief that bandwagons play an important role in nominating campaigns, although they also suggest that the bases of candidate choice change systematically with political circumstances (e.g., close, volatile campaigns versus one-sided campaigns).

**Bartels, Larry M. *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.**

Focuses on the nature and impact of "momentum" in the contemporary US nominating system. It asks how fundamental political predispositions influence the behavior of primary voters, how quickly the public learns about new candidates, and under what circumstances primary success generates subsequent primary success in the United States' sequential primaries. Bartels also speculates about alternative primary methods, including a regional primary system and a one-day national primary.

**Boatright, Robert G., ed. *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections*. New York: Routledge, 2018.**

This compilation is divided into five parts: (1) origins of primaries; (2) voters and voting laws; (3) candidates and parties; (4) US presidential primaries; (5) primaries in a comparative perspective; and (6) primary election reform. The comparative politics section includes six different case studies across a range of parliamentary and presidential systems.

**Geer, John G. *Nominating Presidents: An Evaluation of Voters and Primaries*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.**

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Geer finds that US primary voters are not necessarily unrepresentative of their broader population and that they base their votes on candidates' personal characteristics. The book concludes with a call for regional primaries, for a greater role for party leaders, and for some ballot reforms.

**Key, V. O. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Vintage, 1949.**

One of the most influential books ever written about Southern politics. In it (especially chapter 19), Key uses case studies to show how the one-party South increasingly used primaries and primary runoff elections to resolve conflicts between different factions within the Democratic Party.

**Merriam, Charles Edward. *Primary Elections. A Study of the History and Tendencies of Primary Election Legislation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908.**

Builds on Ostrogorski's 1902 pioneering work on political party organization and represents possibly the first scholarly look at primary elections. Traces the development of the legal regulation of party primaries in the United States from 1866 to 1908 and describes general tendencies in the adoption of primary elections and their function. Through a legalistic lens, it summarizes variation and advancements in primary legislation and the movement toward direct primaries beginning in 1899.

**Polsby, Nelson W. *Consequences of Party Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.**

Traces the consequences of campaign finance reform and changes in each party's presidential nomination procedures for political parties, the conduct of presidents while in office, political intermediation, mobilization, and accountability. Among other things, Polsby argues that the nominating reforms have weakened political parties and paved the way for more candidate-centered campaigns.

**Sandri, Giulia, Antonella Seddone, and Fulvio Venturino, eds. *Party Primaries in Comparative Perspective*. Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015.**

This edited volume describes the function and nature of party primary elections and provides a comparative analytical framework to the impact of primaries on the internal and external functioning of political parties. Case studies include European and Asian countries as well as the United States but do not include any pure non-US presidential systems.

**Ware, Alan. *The American Direct Primary: Party Institutionalization and Transformation in the North*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.**

This work marks the first major study of the origins of direct primary elections in the United States since the 1920s. It shows that the direct primary was the result of an attempt, starting in the late 1880s, by mainstream party politicians to subject their previously informal procedures to formal rules. Politicians turned to the direct primary because it proved impossible to make effective changes to the caucus-convention system of nominating candidates.

## The "Invisible Primary"

Hadley 1976 first proposed the concept of the "invisible primary" to refer to the behind-the-scenes method by which party elites, unelected insiders, interest groups, the media, donors, and issue activists attempt to reach a joint accord as to which candidate they should support in the presidential nomination process before the official electoral cycle begins. Studies of the 1970s and 1980s viewed these political party insiders as having little influence on the selection of the presidential nominees. Recent research, however, finds a significant effect for party elite endorsements in presidential nomination campaigns (Cohen, et al. 2008; Steger 2008; Whitby 2014) as well as a number of individual contributions in the edited volume by Mayer and Bernstein 2012. Aside from some studies of Chilean candidate selection (e.g., Altman 2008), the comparative literature has largely overlooked the role of party insiders and elites in the nomination process.

**Altman, David. "Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Chile, 1990–2006: The Executive Branch." In *Pathways to Power. Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. Edited by P. M. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 241–270. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

The chapter describes the shift toward increasing democratization of the candidate selection process in Chile's dominant left-wing coalition, as well as a continued reliance on elite-centered selection mechanisms for the right-wing coalition. Significantly, Altman

cautions that given the complex nature of cross-party power sharing within the left-wing coalition, even candidates nominated via primary may have been previously informally selected to win by coalition elites—hinting at a cross-national version of the United States’ invisible primary.

**Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.**

Despite the prevalent view that voters control presidential nominations in the United States, this book argues that party insiders’ actions during the pre-electoral phase play a hugely important and often decisive role in determining the nominee. Tracing the evolution of presidential nominations since the 1790s, the volume demonstrates how the most consequential contests remain candidates’ fights for prominent endorsements and the support of various interest groups and state party leaders.

**Hadley, Arthur T. *The Invisible Primary. The Inside Story of the Other Presidential Race: The Making of the Candidate*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976.**

This journalistic account of the 1976 US presidential campaign introduced the concept of the “invisible primary,” the early pre-voting stages of presidential nomination campaigns that party elites and other political actors use to shape nomination outcomes.

**Mayer, William G., and Jonathan Bernstein, eds. *The Making of the Presidential Candidates 2012*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.**

The latest in this quadrennial collection of essays, which begins with the 1996 election, presents a broad overview of the US presidential nomination process for the given electoral period.

**Steger, Wayne P. “Interparty Differences in Elite Support for Presidential Nomination Candidates.” *American Politics Research* 36.5 (2008): 724–749.**

This study presents a theory of elite influence in the post-reform presidential nomination system in the United States and analyzes patterns of elite party endorsements to address questions of when and why elites converge on a preferred candidate. Both party- and candidate-centric factors appear to affect elite endorsements of presidential candidates. Elite elected officials are mainly motivated to have a nominee with electoral appeal.

**Whitby, Kenny J. *Strategic Decision-Making in Presidential Nominations: When and Why Party Elites Decide to Support a Candidate*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014.**

This book seeks to understand if it is political parties or candidates and their activities that decide presidential nomination outcomes. Using the 2008 Democratic Party primary process, Whitby argues that superdelegates are strategic actors and their endorsements are a response to a variety of demographic, institutional, and campaign factors.

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## Determinants of Candidate Selection Mechanisms

What causes parties to switch from elite arrangements to party primaries? And in contexts where primaries are not mandated, why do some parties use them to select presidential candidates? Given the variation in use and type of candidate selection mechanisms across presidential democracies, comparative political scientists are uniquely equipped to answer these questions. In the United States,

conventional wisdom holds that movement to direct primaries were an attempt to mitigate inter-party conflict in single-party governments in the South (Key 1949, cited under Primary Elections), while the current primary system emerged in the wake of the disastrous 1968 Democratic Convention amidst calls to democratize party leadership selection. Comparative scholars, on the other hand, have proposed number of competing endogenous and exogenous explanations that complement and sometime contradict this conventional wisdom.

## Party Divisions and Competitiveness

Largely turning to Latin America as their laboratory, a slew of authors argue that the adoption of more democratic nomination tools, such as primaries, reflects divisions within political parties (Kemahlioglu, et al. 2009; Bruhn 2018) or a desire to resolve party rivalries or select more competitive candidates (Buquet and Chasquetti 2008, Serra 2011, Aragón 2014).

**Aragón, Fernando M. “Why do Parties Use Primaries? Political Selection Versus Candidate Incentives.” *Public Choice* 160.1–2 (2014): 205–225.**

This paper develops and tests two possible explanations for the party decision to use primaries: a desire to improve political selection, or a desire to increase political competition—and incentives—among candidates. Estimates this relationship using a panel of dataset of Latin American presidential primaries and finds robust evidence that the incentive effect dominates the selection effect.

**Bruhn, Kathleen. “Party Primaries as a Strategic Choice: The Costs and Benefits of Democratic Candidate Selection.” In *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections*. Edited by R. G. Boatright, 354–368. New York: Routledge, 2018.**

This book chapter asks why parties choose to subject themselves to primary elections and what the consequences are for candidate electability through an examination of primaries in Mexico. It argues that, much as in the United States, the pressure to hold internal elections comes from the desire to resolve party rivalries over desirable candidacies.

**Buquet, Daniel, and Daniel Chasquetti. “Presidential Candidate Selection in Uruguay, 1942 to 2004.” In *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. Edited by P. M. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 316–342. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

Uses the case of Uruguay, with its unique double simultaneous vote (DSV) electoral system prior to 1996, to focus both on the impact of institutional variables on the candidate selection process as well as the effects this mechanism has on the type of candidate elected. Ultimately, they conclude that party- and party-faction-level factors interact with the candidate selection mechanism to explain candidate choice and behavior.

**Kemahlioglu, Ozge, Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, and Shigeo Hirano. “Why Primaries in Latin American Presidential Elections?” *The Journal of Politics* 71.1 (2009): 339–352.**

Advances an argument that the use of primary elections is likely to reflect the existence and intensity of divisions within political parties. Using cross-national data from Latin America, they find that coalitions and large centrist parties are more likely to hold primaries, whereas primaries are less likely in institutional settings that facilitate exit from existing parties.

**Serra, Gilles. “Why Primaries? The Party’s Tradeoff Between Policy and Valence.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 23.1 (2011): 21–51.**

Uses formal theory to study why and when political parties choose to hold competitive primary elections. It finds that primary elections

are more likely to be used when the potential primary voters are neither too moderate nor too extremist. It also concludes that opposition parties and weak parties benefit more from primaries than incumbent parties and strong parties do.

## Party Strength

In contrast to the “party divisions” proponents, other scholars argue that dominant parties rationally choose to democratize candidate selection in an attempt to maintain their hegemony (Martz 1999, Wu 2001, Ichino and Nathan 2012).

**Ichino, Nahomi, and Noah L. Nathan. “Primaries on Demand? Intra-Party Politics and Nominations in Ghana.” *British Journal of Political Science* 42.4 (2012): 769–791.**

Although focused on the legislative level of elections, this study is notable for its focus on the Ghanaian case to advance a theory as to why political party leaders relinquish power over nominations to allow primary elections. The article shows that primaries are more common where nominations attract more aspirants and where the party is more likely to win, counter to predictions in the existing literature.

**Martz, John D. “Political Parties and Candidate Selection in Venezuela and Colombia.” *Political Science Quarterly* 114.4 (1999): 639–659.**

Martz uses the Venezuelan and Colombian experiences to examine the opposing imperatives of internal political party democratization and elite control of the party. He finds that whatever pressures exist for greater and more meaningful voter participation in candidate selection, central party authorities tend to seek measures and mechanisms that do not diminish their hegemonic organizational control.

**Wu, Chung-li. “The Transformation of the Kuomintang’s Candidate Selection System.” *Party Politics* 7 (2001): 103–118.**

This analysis evaluates the long-term decentralization in the Kuomintang (KMT) candidate selection process under semi-presidentialism in Taiwan. Wu argues that as the hegemon in a one-party dominant system, the KMT is likely to open its candidate selection practice in an attempt to perpetuate its dominant position.

## Exogenous Factors

Setting aside questions of political party characteristics and endogenous change, others argue in favor of exogenous factors such as national-level democratization (Camp 2008) or a favorable economic environment (Bob-Milliar and Bob-Milliar 2010) as explanations for changes in candidate nomination systems.

**Bob-Milliar, George M., and Gloria K. Bob-Milliar. “The Economy and Intra-party Competition: Presidential Primaries in the New Patriotic Party of Ghana.” *African Review of Economics and Finance* 1.2 (2010): 51–71.**

Examines the adoption and function of presidential primaries of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Ghana. Linking the candidate selection literature to the topic of economic voting, it argues that the unusually competitive intra-party competition over candidates in the 2007 primary was partially a response to improved macroeconomic conditions.

**Camp, Roderic Ai. “Political Recruitment, Governance, and Leadership in Mexico: How Democracy Has Made a Difference.” In**

***Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America.* Edited by P. M. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 292–315. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

Building on his other work on the evolution of political recruitment in Mexico (1995), Camp argues that Mexico's democratic transformation in the 1980s and 1990s led to a concomitant democratization of recruitment and selection processes. The reason for this is that competitive pluralism emphasizes and rewards different skills from those found in less democratic party system.

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## Consequences of Candidate Selection Mechanisms

The methods by which candidates are nominated have formidable consequences for candidate and party strategy, voter behavior, and politics and policymaking. To a large degree, this literature tends to be Americanist, reflecting the subfield's relative lack of disagreement (or lack of interest?) regarding the emergence of primaries and its intense focus on their effect. Scholars' focus tends to be on the types of candidates that emerge from primaries and how their characteristics may affect their general election electability. Other work studies candidate strategy and voter behavior, as well as the effects of selection mechanisms on representation and democracy.

## Conventional Wisdom

The scholarly literature is dominated by the claim that electorates in presidential primaries are unrepresentative of the party following. Beginning with Key 1947 and later Hacker 1965, specialists have argued that voters in primaries are better paid, better educated, and more ideologically extreme than the party following. As a result, this conventional wisdom argues that primaries produce weaker candidates than other selection mechanisms, either by selecting candidates unappealing to the general electorate (the "extremism hypothesis") or by damaging candidates through the primary process itself (the "divisiveness hypothesis"), or some combination thereof (Ranney 1972; Lingle 1980; Lingle, et al. 1995).

**Hacker, Andrew. "Does a "Divisive" Primary Harm a Candidate's Election Chances?" *American Political Science Review* 59.1 (1965): 105–110.**

This pioneering work helped to set the conventional wisdom that a candidate's experience in a divisive primary is a disadvantage in the general election. Hacker used US gubernatorial and senatorial elections to test this theory, although of course its theoretical reach extends to presidential competitions as well.

**Key, V. O. *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*. Vol. 3. New York: Crowell, 1947.**

This articulated the seminal argument that, in the US context, if the most committed partisans were most likely to participate in primaries, then the primary electorates of both major parties would be unrepresentative of the general electorate and more likely to nominate extremist candidates.

**Lingle, James I. "Divisive Presidential Primaries and Party Electoral Prospects, 1932–1976." *American Politics Research* 8.3 (1980): 261–277.**

Through state-level data from 1932 to 1976 as well as survey data collected in 1972 and 1976, this article examines the impact of divisive presidential primaries on party electoral prospects. It finds that divisive presidential primaries hurt parties' chances of winning those states in the general election and that supporters of losing contenders are likely to defect in general elections.

**Lengle, James I., Diana Owen, and Molly W. Sonner. “Divisive Nominating Mechanisms and Democratic Party Electoral Prospects.” *The Journal of Politics* 57.2 (1995): 370–383.**

Using every presidential primary, caucus, and general election outcome in individual US states from 1932 to 1992, the article shows that divisiveness hurts the Democratic Party’s prospects for winning the general election after controlling for state party orientation and incumbency. Democrats are more likely to lose states that use a divisive nominating mechanism (presidential primary) and win states that use a non-divisive mechanism (caucus).

**Ranney, Austin. “Turnout and Representation in Presidential Primary Elections.” *The American Political Science Review* 66.1 (1972): 21–37.**

This paper uses data from sample surveys to test the representativeness of primary elections. A comparison of the primary participants with non-participants reveals three things: (1) presidential primary electorates are demographically unrepresentative of their nonvoting fellow partisans in age, education, income, and social status; (2) primary participants have no more intense party identifications than do non-participants, and (3) participants hold issue positions more strongly than nonparticipants do and on some issues they even hold positions contrary to those of nonparticipants.

## Challenges to the Conventional Wisdom

A great deal of scholarship challenges the conventional wisdom proposed by the extremism and divisiveness hypotheses and supports the notion that primary elections democratize the candidate selection process and provide a test of candidates’ skills before they reach the general election. A majority of this comes from the American subfield (Geer 1986, Geer 1988, Geer and Shere 1992, Atkeson 1998, Kanthak and Loepp 2018), although Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006 provides a comprehensive test of candidate electability using a natural experiment from Latin America, and others such as Serra 2018 employ formal theory to explain why the conventional wisdom often fails. In other words, Key’s initial analysis has produced substantial research and debate, while his central claim remains contested.

**Atkeson, Lonna Rae. “Divisive Primaries and General Election Outcomes: Another Look at Presidential Campaigns.” *American Journal of Political Science* 42.1 (1998): 256–271.**

This article suggests that the divisiveness hypothesis is overblown and that controlling for election-year context, candidate quality, and the nature of the times should diminish the effect of nomination divisiveness on general election outcomes.

**Carey, John M., and John Polga-Hecimovich. “Primary Elections and Candidate Selection in Latin America.” *Journal of Politics* 68.3 (2006): 530–543.**

Tests whether primaries systematically affect candidate strength by using data from every democratic presidential election in Latin America since the late 1970s. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, they find evidence of a “primary bonus,” whereby primary-selected candidates perform better in general elections than those selected by other procedures. They speculate that this finding could reflect voter preferences in new democracies for parties prioritize openness and internal party democracy.

**Geer, John G. “Rules Governing Presidential Primaries.” *The Journal of Politics* 48.4 (1986): 1006–1025.**

As with Geer’s other work, this challenges the conventional wisdom regarding the impact of direct primaries on candidate extremism by arguing the problem does not lie with the primary itself but with the rules that govern primaries. He argues that if parties allocated

delegates proportionally to candidates, adopted a preference ballot, and allowed independents and “swing” voters to participate, the direct primary would be more likely to nominate candidates with broad support.

**Geer, John G. “Assessing the Representativeness of Electorates in Presidential Primaries.” *American Journal of Political Science* 32.4 (1988): 929–945.**

Geer shows that it is not primary voters, per se, but the “party following” (i.e., potential supporters of the party in general elections) who are better educated, better paid, and more ideologically extreme than the general populace. So, while electorates in primaries may be unrepresentative of the rank and file, Geer suggests that the biases are small enough to have few consequences when selecting candidates.

**Geer, John G., and Mark E. Shere. “Party Competition and the Prisoner’s Dilemma: An Argument for the Direct Primary.” *The Journal of Politics* 54.3 (1992): 741–761.**

Through the prism of a Prisoner’s Dilemma, the authors contradict conventional wisdom by arguing that intraparty competition is an important ingredient for parties to be responsive to the wishes of voters. While they recognize that intraparty competition has costs, they suggest that the benefits outweigh them.

**Kanthak, Kristin, and Eric Loepp. “Strategic Candidate Entry: Primary Type and Candidate Divergence.” In *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections*. Edited by R. G. Boatright, 147–158. New York: Routledge, 2018.**

Asks why more ideologically extreme primary voters do not nominate similarly extreme candidates. In doing so, this chapter explores the question of how ambitious candidates respond to primary type. They find that candidates tend to be more moderate in open and nonpartisan primaries, since this is the type of election where *candidates* tend to be more moderate. Contrary to their expectations they find that semi-open primaries produce more extreme candidates.

**Serra, Gilles. “Should We Expect Primary Elections to Create Polarization? A Robust Median Voter Theorem with Rational Parties.” In *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections*. Edited by R. G. Boatright, 72–94. New York: Routledge, 2018.**

This chapter uses a two-stage formal model to show that that primary elections are not sufficient to create polarization. The main reason is the rationality of primary voters, since they understand the importance of voting strategically by choosing a moderate candidate who can prevent the other party from winning the general election. Instead, for candidates to diverge to the extremes, other behavioral or institutional features must interact with primaries.

## Candidate Strategy and Voter Behavior

Scholars have also examined the effect of candidate selection mechanisms, specifically variation in the openness of primary elections, on candidate strategies (Steger 2000; Meirowitz 2005; Adams and Merrill 2008; Taylor, et al. 2008) and strategic voter behavior (Marshall 1984, Abramowitz 1989, Cherry and Kroll 2003, Hirano and Snyder 2018).

**Abramowitz, Alan I. “Viability, Electability, and Candidate Choice in a Presidential Primary Election: A Test of Competing Models.” *The Journal of Politics* 51.4 (1989): 977–992.**

Using exit poll data from the United States, this paper finds that Republican and Democratic primary voters weighed electability in addition to their general evaluations of the candidates when nominating their party’s presidential candidate. Opinions about electability

were, in turn, strongly influenced by perceptions of candidates' nomination prospects. As a result, the author finds that candidate viability had an important but indirect influence on voter decision making.

**Adams, James, and Samuel Merrill III. "Candidate and Party Strategies in Two-Stage Elections Beginning with a Primary." *American Journal of Political Science* 52.2 (2008): 344–359.**

This article models policy and valence issues for office-seeking candidates facing two-stage elections (such as a primary). It finds that holding a primary is likely to increase a party's chances of winning the general election. Furthermore, the authors find that primary elections are especially likely to benefit parties that expect to be underdogs in the general election.

**Cherry, Todd L., and Stephen Kroll. "Crashing the Party: An Experimental Investigation of Strategic Voting in Primary Elections." *Public Choice* 114.3–4 (2003): 387–420.**

Investigates the effect of primary formats on voting behavior and candidate fortune in a laboratory setting. They find that the rate of strategic voting is generally low, although the rate varies across primary formats and the potential impact on election outcomes differs from conventional perceptions. Results suggest that more open primary systems generate more strategic voting, but contrary to conventional wisdom, more open systems do not necessarily lead to more moderate election winners.

**Hirano, Shigeo, and James M. Snyder Jr. "The Direct Primary and Voting Behavior in U.S. General Elections." In *Routledge Handbook of Primary Elections*. Edited by R. G. Boatright, 161–174. New York: Routledge, 2018.**

Finds that the direct primary is associated with a significant increase in "split-ticket" voting, both across states and within states over time. Second, they discover that general election candidates gather more votes in counties where they received relatively high electoral support in the primaries, even after taking into account election-specific factors and the "normal vote" across counties.

**Marshall, Thomas. "Issues, Personalities, and Presidential Primary Voters." *Social Science Quarterly* 65.3 (1984): 750–760.**

This paper analyzes exit polls from several 1980 Democratic and Republican presidential primaries to evaluate how primary voters choose among potential nominees. A voter's perceptions of the candidates' personal qualities proved to be the strongest predictor of vote choice in both parties and throughout the primary season. A voter's ideology or issue positions on domestic or foreign issues were relatively poor predictors.

**Meirowitz, Adam. "Informational Party Primaries and Strategic Ambiguity." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17.1 (2005): 107–136.**

Through use of formal theory, this paper argues that party primaries serve an informational function in addition to selecting party candidates. In an environment where candidates are uncertain about the preferences of voters, selection of desirable policy platforms can be risky, and candidates have an incentive to remain ambiguous about their policy platforms. Primary elections therefore offer voters an early opportunity to signal their preferences to candidates.

**Steger, Wayne P. "Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate-Centered Campaigns." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30.4 (2000): 727–753.**

This article assesses candidate competition in the United States in pre- and post-reform presidential primaries. It presents evidence that candidate competition initially expanded after the McGovern-Fraser reforms but subsequently declined. Steger finds that money on hand and national poll position prior to primaries are significant predictors of the aggregate primary vote in the post-reform era, while

money raised and prior television news coverage do not significantly affect the primary vote.

**Taylor, Steven L., Felipe Botero Jaramillo, and Brian F. Crisp. “Precandidates, Candidates, and Presidents: Paths to the Colombian Presidency.” In *Pathways to Power: Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. Edited by P. M. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 271–291. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

Uses the Colombian case to show that the formal candidate selection rules parties adopt are not always conducive to explaining the type of pre-candidates that emerge. Since individuals that fail to win a party nomination may seek the presidency as independent candidates outside of the party, party elites may struggle to impose selection procedures that favor their own candidacies.

## Democratic Representation

Lastly, researchers show how choice of candidate selection mechanism may affect representation (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008) and the quality of democracy (Aragón 2013). This literature overlaps with the traditional arguments regarding the representativeness of nominees chosen via primary elections, although its focus tends to be on the type of candidate produced rather than that candidate’s electability in the general election.

**Aragón, Fernando M. “Political Parties, Candidate Selection, and Quality of Government.” *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy* 13.2 (2013): 783–810.**

Explores empirically the relation between political parties’ institutions and quality of government. Using a panel dataset of Latin American countries, Aragón find robust evidence of a positive relation between the use of democratic procedures, such as primaries, and quality of government.

**Cross, William. “Democratic Norms and Party Candidate Selection. Taking Contextual Factors into Account.” *Party Politics* 14.5 (2008): 596–619.**

Argues that the relative significance of party candidate selection processes in influencing representational and policy outcomes varies across countries and parties. Five variables influence these outcomes: the electoral system, the degree of inter-party general election competition, the openness of the system to the election of independent candidates, whether representational demands are accommodated within or among parties, and the role of elected representatives in determining policy outcomes.

**Escobar-Lemmon, Maria, and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson. “How Do Candidate Recruitment and Selection Processes Affect the Representation of Women?” In *Pathways to Power. Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America*. Edited by P. M. Siavelis and S. Morgenstern, 345–368. University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2008.**

This chapter asks whether candidate selection norms affect the representation of women in the legislative and executive branches. At the presidential level, it uses data from six Latin American executive cabinets to examine whether there is a relationship between the four presidential candidate types proposed by Siavelis and Morgenstern and the propensity of presidents to nominate women to their cabinet, and whether women receive high-prestige cabinet posts (where presidential type is partially a function of presidents’ “pathways to power”).

**Kaufmann, Karen M., James G. Gimpel, and Adam H. Hoffman. “A Promise Fulfilled? Open Primaries and Representation.” *The Journal of Politics* 65.2 (2003): 457–476.**

Explores the extent to which open and modified-open primaries attract a more representative electorate than their closed counterparts. Using state-level exit poll data from 1988 through 2000, the article compares the ideological, age, and income representation of primary electorates with general election voters. They find that open primaries result in the ideological convergence of the parties' primary electorates, contingent upon the candidate choices within individual election years.

**Southwell, Priscilla L. "Open Versus Closed Primaries and Candidate Fortunes, 1972–1984." *American Politics Research* 16.3 (1988): 280–295.**

Using data from the American National Election Studies of 1972, 1976, 1980, and 1984, this article estimates how a change in institutional rules from closed to open primaries might have altered primary election results. It finds that the projected outcomes using various open primary types do not significantly differ from those obtained using a closed primary system.

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