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2005

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Link to publication in VU Research Portal

citation for published version (APA)
Ezrow, L. (2005). *Why Pander to the Party?: A Spatial Analysis of Senate Primary and General Elections*. (Working Papers Political Science; No. 2005/03).

Why Pander to the Party?: A Spatial Analysis of Senate Primary and General Elections

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Abstract

Do candidates adopt very similar Left-Right policy positions, i.e. *converge*, under two-party plurality rule elections? If this is indeed the case, what are the logical consequences of primary contests on candidates' policy positioning in general elections? In particular, do *competitive* primary elections lure eventual nominees towards the center of the distribution of their parties' supporters, that is, towards more extreme policy positions than are held by the average voter in the general electorate, which in turn *commits* eventual nominees to take more extreme positions in the general elections? The paper addresses each of these questions, and arrives at three critical findings. First, a candidate increases her chances of victory if she is closer to her constituency's mean citizen position than her competitor, thus supporting the *Relative Convergence Hypothesis*. The second conclusion confirms that divisive primaries do indeed hurt candidates in securing victory in their general elections. However, the third hypothesis only receives limited support, that asserts that divisive primaries harm candidates because they induce candidates to adopt more extreme positions. The Democratic candidates follow this tendency while the Republicans do not. This pattern reflects a temporal feature of the study that during this period "New Democrat" ideology, associated with policy centrism, was rising in influence in the Democratic Party. These findings have implications for our understanding of party strategies and political representation.

1. Introduction

Anthony Downs (1957) developed a parsimonious spatial model that explained what most of the general public in America at the time was observing, namely, that parties and their candidates tended to look similar, in terms of their Left-Right policy views, in two-party electoral competition. This expectation is generally referred to as the convergence prediction. In the wake of Downs's *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, extensive theoretical and empirical research has been dedicated to "fine-tuning" his theory, and testing its central prediction regarding candidate convergence; that is, do candidates under plurality two-party competition *converge* to the median Left-Right voter position in order to win elections?[1]

From a comparative perspective, this survey of close to 100 Senate Elections is a step towards clarifying the relationship between electoral laws and the range of ideological choice that is given to voters by competing parties in a political system. The conventional expectation is that multiparty competition, associated with proportional representation voting systems, allows parties in these systems to take more divergent positions than in the two-party elections, which are associated with plurality voting rules. This connection is acknowledged in an early analysis of voting systems, where F.A. Hermens posits that proportional representation made "it natural that there be a party to represent every shade of political opinion. This means that political differences are not only more clearly expressed, but multiplied and intensified (Hermens, 1941: 19)." To the degree that convergent or divergent behavior is being revealed in the empirical analyses, this will shed empirical light on the relationship between plurality voting rules and the range of ideological choice for voters in these systems.[2]

While a bulk of literature has been written about the convergence hypothesis, it is still worth addressing the issue, namely, because agreement is still lacking regarding its validity. The importance of taking another look at the predictions of the traditional spatial model is that if candidate positioning is unrelated to electoral outcomes then the empirical status of employing this framework to study elections becomes suspect. Thus the

empirical evaluation of any theory that starts from a Downsian framework should invariably test the convergence prediction.

It is interesting to note that many empirical studies do not support the central Downsian prediction of convergence in the American two-party setting. These researchers cite as evidence significant differences in the voting records of legislators from the two major parties in the U.S. (Fiorina, 1974; Poole and Rosenthal, 1984; Bullock and Brady, 1983; Grofman, Griffen and Glazer, 1990; Ansolabehere et al., 2001; Burden, 2001a). In a comparative analysis, Adams & Merrill (2001) study the major candidates' positioning in the 1988 American and French Presidential elections and one of their major findings is "candidates' expected gains from policy moderation would have been quite small (12)." Though, contrary to these findings, in their handbook on spatial modeling Enelow and Hinich (1984) analyze the U.S. Presidential contests from 1976 and 1980 and conclude "that closeness to the center of the predictive space is an asset in two-candidate elections, but one that voters bestow on candidates rather than the other way around (222)."

On the surface, it is difficult to see how the findings in each set of studies are not completely at odds, i.e. how could politicians be rewarded for centrist positioning and still take divergent positions? We present empirical analyses that support exactly this notion. More specifically, there is evidence for the *Relative Convergence Hypothesis*. Under relative convergence candidate proximity is assessed in comparison to the ideological location of her *opponent* in any single given election. The hypothesis posits that candidates are safe taking noncentrist positions insofar as they remains *closer* to the mean voter position than their opponents.

The second central conclusion that emerges here is that divisive primaries hurt nominees in their general election races. In a vacuum, the logic of relative convergence should, after several iterations, lead electoral competition back to an *absolute* converging of political candidates. The third finding explains why this is not the case - that is, nominees' positions polarize if they encounter a competitive primary en route to nomination. This polarizing effect combined with the presence of relative convergence would explain why candidates who endure competitive primaries tend to lose in their general elections. However, we find only the Democratic candidates' ideological positioning to be system-

atically affected by the level of primary competition, and in a later section we briefly explore possible explanations for this finding.

The empirical analysis of primary competition is appealing as it offers a wider testing ground – primaries are elections too. The American National Election Study (NES): Pooled Senate Data from 1988-92 is used to examine the candidate-voter "link" in close to one hundred Senate elections. The study also enables the placement of *challengers* on the same ideological continuum. Another advantage of the NES Pooled Senate study is that it allows us to place candidates on an ideological scale using the perceptions of citizens. Several empirical studies validate the use of respondents' ideological placements from the Pooled Senate Data.[3] Alternative studies employ measures of candidates and/or parties based on: expert-placements (Powell, 2000), roll call voting behavior (Burden, 2001b; Ansolabehere et al., 2001), or the close scrutiny of party manifestos (Budge, 1994). However, if one wishes to uncover the determinants of electoral outcomes, then the use of citizen perceptions appears appropriate, as it is ultimately citizens, not experts, who cast Election-Day votes.

In the next section, the traditional Downsian spatial model is examined, along with its implications for primary competition. Also, an intuitive logic is set forth explaining why divisive primaries will eventually hurt nominees if the convergence prediction holds. The third section employs the NES Pooled Senate Data from 1988-92, and tests the hypotheses concerning convergence. The fourth section concludes.

2. Theory and Predictions

H1: (The Relative Convergence Hypothesis) Candidates occupying an ideological space closer to the mean voter position than their competitors are more likely to win their general elections.
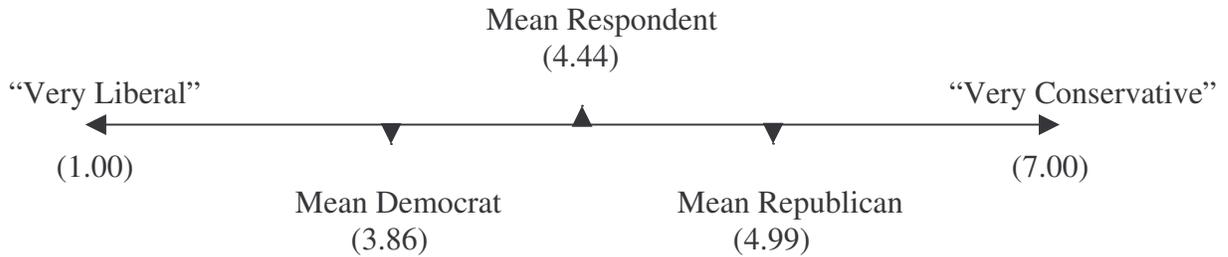
The major tenets of the traditional model of spatial voting have been assumed.[4] In the model, voters cast their ballots for candidates holding policy positions closest to their own, in order to maximize their utilities. These positions are marked along a single "liberal - conservative" ideological dimension. Taken together, politicians are likely to

take policy stances closest to the mean voter position in the electorate. If this is the dominant strategy, then we are likely to see candidates converge at the mean voter position. In the absence of absolute convergence, the slightly more nuanced hypothesis of relative convergence appears – i.e., the candidate closer to the mean voter position is expected to gain more votes than her opponent.

H2: Candidates appeal to the mean voter position in their partisan constituencies when primary contests are competitive.

The second hypothesis is simply an extension of the first to primary competition. If we do not equate the party with the candidate, candidates are more likely to appeal to their partisan constituencies only when there is strong primary competition.[5] This assumes partisans are to the "left" and "right" of the general electorate. Figure 1 is a useful representation of different distributions of potential voters. The distributions of *respondents identifying themselves with each party* are especially significant for the nomination process, as opposed to including just party members and elites. These are the respondents one would expect to vote in primary competitions. Figure 1 shows the mean self-placements of Democratic partisans, of Republican partisans, and of all survey respondents in the NES Pooled Senate Study. The Democratic and Republican partisan means are, respectively, to the left and right of the center of the general population. Note that this assumption is supported empirically by recent research which finds that in all fifty states, the mean positions of Democratic partisans lies to the left of the Republican partisan means; and that the Democratic and Republican partisan means in each state lie to the left and to the right of the mean voter position, respectively (Grofman et al., 1999).

Figure 1: Aggregate Mean Respondent Positions

Mean Respondent
(4.44)

"Very Liberal"   "Very Conservative"

(1.00)   (7.00)

Mean Democrat   Mean Republican
(3.86)   (4.99)

H3: To the extent that H1 and H2 are supported, competitive primaries hurt candidates in general elections because it makes them look more extreme.

After viewing Figure 1, it is natural to jump to a conclusion supporting party-divergence. After all, there is a clear divide between the supporters of each party. However, the data are aggregated at the national level, and they do not reveal the dynamics of specific senate contests. According to the spatial model, if the candidate's first priority is to get elected, then she will position herself ideologically close to the center of the general electorate to maximize her votes. The calculus for the candidate changes when she concerns herself with the nomination of her party. If she fails to receive the nomination, then her chances of victory in the general election are irrelevant. In a competitive primary, the dominant strategy will be to move towards the center of the distribution of the partisans in the party,[6] instead of moving closer to the mean voter position in the general electorate. Doing otherwise will place the nomination in jeopardy.

On the other hand, what if a candidate is assured victory in the primary? In this case, the candidate has the leeway to locate near the mean voter position in the general electorate.[7] In 1996, Bill Clinton had considerable discretion in choosing his platforms during the primary season. Due to advanced polling techniques, he was well-aware that there were no serious threats posed to his candidacy. In this case, why indulge the party? Why would Clinton take positions too far to the left and run the risk of being labeled a

liberal? Asking these questions is, in effect, answering them – Clinton remained in office for two terms as a "New Democrat."

However, potential nominees with credible competitors cannot afford the same discretion in choosing their policy-stances. Candidates who endure competitive primaries must cater to the centers of their parties in order to consolidate support for their nominations. John Aldrich draws attention to the inherent dilemma for candidates, "between appealing for general election support by moving toward the policy center of the whole electorate and appealing for the nomination support by moving toward the center of the party activists (Aldrich, 1995: 190)."

Aldrich pursues the influence of activists, but what about competition during the primary? If party activists hold strong liberal and conservative positions, and politicians are dependent on activists for support, then the claim is correct – activists "pull" candidates away from the mean voter position in the general electorate. If activists do have polarizing effects on parties, under what circumstances do they have more or less influence over the positions of their candidates? For that matter, when do rank and file party supporters, i.e. the kind who vote in primaries, have more or less of an effect on candidate positions? The third hypothesis asserts that the party's pull is stronger when candidates face competitive primaries.[8] Notice this prediction assumes that sincere voting, as opposed to strategic voting, occurs in primary elections - specifically, partisan voters value a candidates' ideological closeness over those which have a higher likelihood of victory in the general election.

A natural response to the above predictions is to posit the simple scenario of candidates pandering to their parties in the primaries, and then switching their positions during the general elections to appeal to broader segments of the electorate. Another built-in assumption of the model is that candidate movement is accompanied by heavy electoral costs. Barry Burden (2001b) alludes to this practice as, "Post-Primary Moderation," and clarifies why this strategy is ultimately self-defeating. If there are interested parties who gain from uncovering discrepancies or dramatic shifts in candidates' positions throughout the duration of their campaigns, then candidates will be less likely to alter their positions. Clearly, the opposition has the most visible interests in doing so. Interest groups and the media are also sources of "whistle-blowing." Position switching hurts candidates' *credi-*

bility with voters (Hinich and Munger, 1994), and it develops *uncertainty* about them (Alvarez, 1996). Thus, Burden (2001b: 111) warns candidates about the "stickiness" of their positions and states, "Candidates face a trade-off between the centripetal logic of the spatial model and the real possibility that moving to the center might lose votes."

In toto, the three hypotheses construct a causal chain linking outcomes in primary competition to the outcomes in general elections. Previous work in this area includes the analysis of Robert Bernstein (1977) of the effects of divisive primaries in Senate races from 1956-1972. Simply, he concludes divisive primaries hurt candidates. The study correlates the *margins of victory* in congressional primaries with the *likelihood of winning* the general election. A primary is considered divisive if the victor's next best opponent came within twenty percentage points. Bernstein controls for "incumbency," "one-party states," "unbalanced state competition," and "two-party states" and in each instance, a candidate is more likely to lose if she is involved in a "divisive" primary.[9] What Bernstein does not explain is *why* divisive primaries hurt candidates in their general elections.[10]

Barry Burden (2001b) suggests an answer – competitive primaries are more likely to involve polarized candidates. Using roll call voting data from the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992, Burden uses the NOMINATE procedure developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1997) to position House members. Based on their records of roll call voting, he finds that House members who face an opponent in their primaries vote more radically on legislation than their counterparts without primary opposition. Though Burden is hesitant to infer a causal relationship, this potentially explains why these candidates do not fare well in general elections – competitive primaries cause candidates to look more extreme by causing them to make appeals to their parties' faithful in order to receive their nominations.

The discussion leaves us then with several intriguing empirical questions: Are candidates rewarded when they take positions closer to - or farther away from the mean voter position? Do competitive primaries polarize candidates? Do competitive primaries hurt candidates in their general elections? Finally, *do competitive primaries hurt candidates in their general elections because they force candidates to appeal to the ideo-*

logical "wings" of their parties? The following section casts empirical light on the above questions. Thus far, the general model looks like:

A) primary divisiveness → B) perceived candidate distance from the mean voter position

→ C) probability of victory in the general election.

3. Data, Methods, and Empirical Findings

A probit equation is developed estimating the links between A & C and B & C (referring to the model above). The data used to test the model was primarily found in the NES Pooled Senate Study from 1988-92. This study enabled us to gather voter perceptions of both competing candidates in ninety-three Senate Elections. The surveys cover approximately seventy respondents in each Senate race. The respondents are asked to place themselves and each of their senate candidates on a seven-point Likert scale, with "1" corresponding to "very liberal," and "7" with "very conservative." After computing the mean positions[11] for the constituencies of each state, and the respondents' mean candidate placements, it is possible to determine how distant a candidate is from her constituency's mean position for each senate race.[12] By computing almost one hundred separate constituency means, these analyses benefit from isolating the dynamics in each individual election. Additionally, senate primary and general election vote returns were collected from *Congressional Quarterly*. In determining the margin of victory in the primary election, the runner-up's percentage of the vote is subtracted from the share of the nominee.

As opposed to merely looking at an individual candidate, and her chances of winning, the analysis accounts for her chances of winning – given her opponent's scores on each of a set of key explanatory factors. The suffix "Diff" is part of the label for each of the three key variables as it is the *differences* between candidate distance (CanDiff), party distance (PartyDiff), and primary divisiveness (MarginDiff) that are central to the calculations.[13] The mean perceived party distance is an additional control to see if voters respond to general party positioning, instead of particular candidate placements. Incumbency effects (Open and RepInc) are also measured. I therefore estimated the following probit equation:

Probability of victory in the general election for the *Republican candidate* = b_1 +

$$b_2 \boxed{(D_d - D_r)} + b_3 \boxed{(M_r - M_d)} + b_4 \boxed{(P_d - P_r)} + b_5 (O_i) + b_6 (R_i) \qquad , \qquad (1)$$

$$\underset{\text{Candiff}}{|} \qquad \underset{\text{MarginDiff}}{|} \qquad \underset{\text{PartyDiff}}{|} \qquad \underset{\text{Open}}{|} \qquad \underset{\text{Republican Incumbent}}{|}$$

where, D_d and D_r represent the distance between the Democratic candidate and the mean voter position, and the distance between the Republican candidate and the mean voter position, respectively. M_r and M_d are the margins of victory in the primary elections for each of the candidates. P_d and P_r are the mean perceived positions of the Democratic and Republican parties. Finally O_i and R_i are binary variables indicating whether or not the contested seat in election i is *open* or held by a Republican Incumbent.[14] The variables are constructed so each coefficient (except for "Open") is expected to be positive.

Column 1, Table 1 presents the estimated parameters for the above probit specification. The relative difference in candidate positions is positive and significant at the .05 level. Translated, Republicans increase their odds of winning the general election if they are closer to their mean constituent positions than their Democratic opponents, thus showing strong support for the Relative Convergence Hypothesis (H1). On the other hand, the coefficient for the difference in mean perceived party positions (PartyDiff) is positive as expected, yet it does not reach statistical significance. Accordingly, we are unable to accept an alternative explanation of general election outcomes that focuses on the perceived positions of parties. In addition, the coefficients for open races and Republican Incumbency are positive and significant at the .01 level.

Column 3, Table 1 reports results for regression analyses based upon the specification identical to equation 1 except that here the dependent variable is the Republican candidate's share of the two-candidate vote. The estimated coefficients for this analysis support substantive conclusions that are identical to those based on the probit analysis reported above.

The advanced specifications convey that relative primary divisiveness is not an explanatory factor. The basic specifications in columns 2 and 4 in Table 1 are presented to address this point - i.e., they show a strong statistical relationship emerges when the incumbency variables are omitted from the equation. This suggests an issue of collinear-

ity exists in the initial specification, and incumbency is marginalizing the effects of divisive primaries. Incumbents endure less primary competition than their eventual challengers in general elections. On average, Democratic and Republican Incumbents, respectively, win their primaries by 24 and 31 percentage points <u>more</u> than their challengers in the general elections.[15] Accordingly, this supports the notion that relative primary divisiveness affects outcomes in the general elections, though filtered through incumbency. One implication of this finding is that part of the advantage of incumbency is a less competitive primary election.

Table 1: Estimating Senate Election Outcomes (for Republican Candidates)

Coefficients	Probit		Regression	
	Advanced (1)	Basic (2)	Advanced (3)	Basic (4)
Constant	-1.49** (.32)	-.38* (.16)	38.67** (1.33)	46.54** (1.16)
Relative Candidate Distance (CanDiff)	**.723*** **(.36)**	**1.12**** **(.30)**	**3.53*** **(1.80)**	**8.46**** **(2.17)**
Relative Primary Divisiveness (MarginDiff)	.002 (.004)	**.01**** **(.003)**	-.004 (.02)	**.08**** **(.02)**
Relative Party Distance (PartyDiff)	.54 (1.21)	.59 (.97)	5.05 (5.78)	6.35 (7.35)
Open	1.56** (.50)		12.74** (2.58)	
Republican Incumbent	2.35** (.46)		18.37** (2.33)	
N	93	93	93	93
Log Likelihood	-31.83	-47.68		
Chi-squared	64.39**	32.68**		
Adjusted R^2			.56	.24

Note: Estimated standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable in the regression analysis is the Republican's vote share of the two-party vote.
*p < .05, **p < .01, two-tailed test.

To this point we have not explored the hypothesis that competitive primaries affect general elections by causing nominees to occupy more extreme positions, i.e., the link between A and B at the end of section 2 still needs to be addressed. The theory predicts an inverse relationship between the divisiveness in primaries and candidate distances. That is, as the margin of victory in the primary decreases, the candidate distance should increase. Table 2, column 1 directly addresses the relationship by regressing the candidate distance to the mean state voter position on the candidate's margin of victory in the primary election. The coefficient is negative and significant at the .05 level.

However, columns 2-5, Table 2 demonstrate that the Democratic Candidates are driving this finding. The coefficient estimates reported in columns 2 and 3, Table 2 display a relationship exists for Democratic candidates, but not for Republicans. Democrats are perceived as taking stances closer to their mean voter positions in the general electorate when they emerge from less contentious primaries. The magnitude of the coefficient almost doubles for Democrats who run opposed in their primaries, as shown in Column 4, Table 2. This evidence is consistent with the theoretical story – Democrats won more elections than the Republicans during the time-period of the study (i.e. in a Waltzian sense, the Democrats are adapting better to their electoral environment than Republicans, and thus are winning more elections). Essentially, Democrats "fit' the general model better than Republicans, and they also tend to win more elections.

Why this dichotomy exists between parties is possibly a temporal feature of the analysis. In the late '80s and early '90s, an increasing number of members of the Democratic Party were influenced by the "New Democrat" ideology that emphasized neo-liberal market ideals, and general policy centrism. As mentioned above, the early '90s Bill Clinton exemplifies New Democrat ideology. Therefore the New Democrats in the Democratic Party adopted centrist positions in general elections if they were fortunate enough to easily emerge from their primary competitions. This observational difference between parties implies more strategic and flexible position-taking by the Democrats - and ideological rigidity on the part of Republicans.

Table 2: Coefficients for Primary Margin of Victory, When Estimating Proximity

				Omitting Unopposed Candidates (Columns 4 & 5)	
Coefficients	All Candidates (1)	Democrats (2)	Republicans (3)	Democrats (4)	Republicans (5)
Constant	.72**	.84**	.57**	.90**	.61**
	(.05)	(.08)	(.07)	(.09)	(.09)
Primary Margin of Victory	**-.0019***	**-.0028***	-.0006	**-.0053***	-.002
	(.0007)	**(.001)**	(.0009)	**(.0017)**	(.002)
N	186	93	93	57	54
Adjusted R^2	.03	.06	0	.12	.003

Note: Estimated standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is the absolute measure of the ideological distances between candidates and their constituency means.

$*p < .05, **p < .01$, two-tailed test.

Table 3 proceeds from the initial probit analysis with a test of "first differences" (King, 1989), which determines the precise effects of the independent variables on the likelihood of a Republican victory. The "baseline" category in Table 3 holds the independent variables at their mean values, and estimates the probabilities of a Republican victory. Changing the values of the independent variables establishes the impact of each explanatory factor on the outcome. As the probability approaches one, the chances of a Republican win increases; and vice-versa, as the probability approaches zero, the probability of a Democratic win increases.

The baseline probabilities predictably indicate incumbency has a strong effect on the likelihood of a Republican victory. Using increments of one half a standard deviation, probabilities are generated for the effects of the independent variables on a Republican victory. Table 3 confirms *Relative candidate distance* has a substantial impact on the outcome. Regardless of the "type of race," Republican candidates increase their likelihood of victory as their relative proximity to the mean constituent position increases.

Regardless of the type of race (i.e. controlling for incumbency), there are profound proximity effects. As the Democratic candidate moves closer to the middle, and the value of relative candidate distance drops one standard deviation below its mean, the Republican's chances of victory drops: by four percent in races with a Democratic incumbent, fourteen percent in open elections, and ten percent in elections where the Republican is an incumbent. The reverse story is true for elections where the Republican candidate is closer to the constituency mean position than her Democratic opponent (i.e. $+\sigma$), where the probabilities for a Republican victory increase by .08 in races with Democratic incumbents, .14 in open races, and .08 in races with Republican incumbents.[16]

Table 3 also reveals that open elections amplify these centripetal tendencies.[17] As the value of relative candidate distance changes, the predicted probabilities of victory radically change. There is an impressive swing (from $-\sigma$ through $+\sigma$) in probabilities for open elections of .28. If open contests are more competitive than those including incumbents, this outcome is to be expected. Competition enhances the incentives to conform to electoral pressures so the effects of the explanatory factors should increase under these circumstances.[18]

Table 3: Effects of Candidate Distance, Primary Margin of Victory, Party Position, and Incumbency on the <u>Probability</u> of a Republican Victory.

	Type of Race (Incumbency)		
Independent	**Democratic**	**Open**	**Republican**
Baseline (all values held at μ)	**.08**	**.57**	**.83**
Candidate Distance *(Democrat – Republican)*			
+ 1 σ	.16	.71	.91
+ ½ σ	.11	.64	.88
- ½ σ	.06	.50	.78
- 1 σ	.04	.43	.73
Difference	**.12**	**.28**	**.18**
Primary Margin *(Republican – Democrat)*			
+ σ	.10	.54	.83
- σ	.07	.61	.81
Difference	.03	**.07**	.02
Party Distance			
+ σ	.10	.60	.85
- σ	.07	.54	.81
Difference	.03	**.06**	.04

4. Conclusion

Candidates perceived as closer than their opponents to the mean policy positions in their constituencies are greatly advantaged in the general elections. There is a moderating influence in senate elections – i.e. *candidates increase their chances of victory if they are perceived as more moderate than their opponents.* This dynamic of senate elections has been referred to here as *relative convergence*.[19]

Divisive primaries are a burden to candidates. Additionally, incumbents benefit from experiencing less competitive primaries than their challengers in their general elections. The re-orienting of the mean voter position in primary elections should induce candidates to take more extreme positions when the primary is competitive. The empirical evidence suggests this is the case, though exclusively for Democratic candidates. Perhaps, this finding could use more exploration to fully understand why Democrats and Republicans are responding differently to the same electoral environment.

There are a few direct implications for the electoral strategies of parties and candidates, although these are possibly unsettling when viewed in light of some of our popular democratic principles. For the party, one of the main tasks is to limit intra-party competition, because the strategy used to win a battle for nomination could very well leave a candidate in a quandary when it comes time to compete in the general election. For the candidate the optimal strategy is keeping a watchful eye on the opponent, expressing non-centrist ideological preferences only to the extent these stances remain less extreme than those of the competition.

Appendix: Variable Construction

Deriving the Components of the Key Variables

- The survey asks each respondent to place him/herself on a seven-point scale. For each election in each state, the **constituency mean** is computed by averaging all of the respondents' self-placement scores.
- Respondents were asked to place the candidates on the same seven-point scale ("1" being the most liberal; and "7"- the most conservative). The **candidate mean** is determined by averaging the responses within each state.
- The **party mean** is developed in a similar fashion. Respondents answer the question on the survey asking them with which party they associate themselves. The mean is computed by averaging self-placement scores for each set of respondents identifying with each party.
- The percentage difference in votes in the primary election between the nominee and the next best challenger is the **margin of victory in the primary**.
- The **margin of victory in the general election** is measured by taking the percentage difference between the winner and the runner-up.
- The absolute value of the difference between the candidate and the constituency mean is the **candidate's distance from the constituency mean**.
- The absolute value of the difference between the party and constituency means is the **party's distance from the constituency mean**.

Key Variables

- **CanDiff** (relative candidate distance) is the Republican's perceived distance from the constituency mean subtracted from the Democrat's perceived distance. A positive result indicates the Democrat is perceived as farther from the mean than the Republican.
- **MarginDiff** (relative primary divisiveness) is the Margin of victory in the Republican candidate's primary minus the margin for the Democratic candidate. Positive values indicate the Republican emerged from her primary with a larger margin of victory than her Democratic counterpart.
- **PartyDiff** (relative party distance) is derived by subtracting the Republican Party's perceived distance from the constituency mean from the Democratic Party's perceived distance. Again, a positive number indicates the Democratic Party is perceived as farther from the constituency mean.

Variables in the Alternative Specification

- **Partisan Advantage** is the proportion of respondents in each state who identify with the Republican Party minus the proportion identifying with the Democrats.
- **Candidate Quality** gauges whether or not the candidate in the general election has held prior office. The score of the Democrat is subtracted from that of the Republican. The possible values are -1, 0, or 1.
- A dichotomous variable identifies **unopposed** candidates in their primaries. Again, the Democrat's score is subtracted from that of the Republican. The possible values are -1, 0, or 1.

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Notes

[1] The "median voter result" is based on deterministic voting in two-candidate elections (Black, 1958). Alternatively, vote choice under probabilistic voting leads to convergence at the *mean* voter position (Enelow and Hinich, 1984).

[2] Furthermore, the study has implications for other democracies that are considering popular primaries (e.g. in Latin America, popular primaries are increasingly being used for candidate selection). To the extent that the selection of candidates is competitive, this study implies that party ideologies will be more extreme than otherwise.

[3] Burden et al (2000) find a strong correlation between respondents' perceptions of candidates' ideological positions - and several other measures of candidate ideology (e.g. roll-call voting analyses, interest group ratings, and legislator and candidate interviews). Furthermore, Gershtenson (2001) validates the measure of respondents' ideological self-placements in relation to their candidate placements.

[4] For general objections to the spatial model, see Green and Shapiro (1994).

[5] Downs (1957: 25-26) characterizes parties as *teams* of men seeking to gain office. Among several reasons to question this assumption, there are three in particular: the parties' decreasing control over resources for campaigns, the candidate-centered nature of media coverage, and popular nomination rules. Candidates are not obligated to exchange with their party leaders, policy positions for campaign-capital (i.e. labor and money). *Popular* primaries induce candidates to cater to the public - not the party - when they run for public office. If there is a discrepancy between the party's ideology, and a more advantageous electoral position, the candidate has the ability to shift towards the latter.

[6] The candidate's spatial strategy for winning the primary election may vary depending on the number of competitive primary candidates. If the candidate faces a single competitive primary opponent – so that the primary is essentially a two-candidate race – then she may have incentives to locate near the mean partisan position. Matters are more complex if the primary features three or more competitive candidates (see, e.g., Cox 1990). Nevertheless, to the extent that the spatial distribution of the party's partisans is significantly different from that of the general electorate, competitive primaries should still pull candidates away from the center of the general election voter distribution.

[7] Though the argument suggests candidates choose moderate positions to maximize their vote shares, it is completely conceivable they would base their platforms on other factors (i.e. sincere preferences). Even if this is the case, ceteris paribus, the winner is more likely to be closer to the mean voter position.

[8] The public perceives divergent policies for both candidates and their parties. Even if we do not see candidates actually converge, we should expect the candidate perceived as closer to the middle to win the general election. Studies of roll call voting in Congress have affirmed that parties do take divergent positions (Aldrich, 1995; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2001).

[9] Bernstein concedes that 20 points is an arbitrary definition of "divisive." Also, in controlling for each of these variables, the number of cases in each category is limited causing a "small n" problem with generalizing the results.

[10] The majority of work in the divisive primary literature focuses on the effects on campaigns and activists in presidential elections (see, e.g. Lengle, 1980, Stone, 1986, 1991; Stone, Atkeson, & Rapoport, 1992). Several studies consider the congressional and gubernatorial levels as well (see, e.g. Bernstein, 1977; Born, 1981; Kenney & Rice, 1984; Ezra, 2001).

[11] The Downsian model predicts candidates converge at the median voter; not the mean voter position. In Melvin Hinich's, "Equilibrium in Spatial Voting: The Median Voter Result Is an Artifact," he validates the use of the mean. In most empirical work, the mean and the median are vir-

tually identical. Several modelers use the mean, instead of the median (Alvarez, 1996; Enelow & Hinich, 1984).

[12] Respondents had a more difficult time placing the candidates on the seven-point scale than just placing themselves on the scale, and accordingly, candidate distances are a result of approximately 25-40 responses.

[13] The measure of relative primary divisiveness is the same as the one used by Kenney and Rice (1987).

[14] The appendix includes descriptions of the variables in this specification.

[15] The "difference in means" test is significant at the .001 level.

[16] Again, relative primary divisiveness does have a considerable impact on election outcomes. When generating a test of first differences that leaves out incumbency, Republicans won an average of 42.6% of the races in the analysis. As the value of relative primary divisiveness increases to one standard deviation above its mean - signifying the candidate is less impeded in obtaining his party's nomination than his competition - the probability of victory increases to 64.8%. Conversely, when the value of relative primary divisiveness drops a standard deviation below its mean, the probability of winning for the Republican candidate plummets to 22.6%.

[17] This terminology is similar to that of Cox (1990), where he refers to moderating factors as *centripetal* incentives.

[18] An alternative specification has also been estimated verifying that the substantive results do not change when additional factors are taken into consideration, such as partisan advantage, candidate quality, and a dichotomous variable controlling for the effects of unopposed candidates in their primary elections. In this specification, the coefficients for relative candidate distance and relative primary divisiveness actually increase in magnitude, and reach statistical significance at the .01 level. Descriptions of these variables are presented in the appendix.

[19] Note, relative convergence does not preclude candidates from *divergent* position-taking.

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