

*From Bumps in the Road to Fatal Blow-Outs:
The State of Party Nomination Politics Since the Reforms*

Randall E. Adkins
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Email: radkins@unomaha.edu

Andrew J. Dowdle
University of Arkansas
Email: adowdle@uark.edu

Wayne P. Steger
DePaul University
Email: wsteger@depaul.edu

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the federal electoral processes, none have been more fluid over time than the presidential nominating process (Ceaser 1979). Periods of relative stability have been separated by periods of instability as a nominating system decays and a new nominating process emerges and stabilizes. The periods of relative stability may be thought of as nominating systems, which are characterized by an institutionalized or widely accepted set of rules, norms, and modes of operation for nominating presidential candidates. It is generally accepted that these “rule of the game” determine the context in which nominations are played out (Aldrich, 1980). Simply put, change the rules and different outcomes are possible, if not likely.

Procedural rules, though important, only tell part of the story. Republican and Democratic nomination aspirants exist in worlds with the same financial and legal structures, similar primary calendars, and an overlapping (if not always identical) mass media apparatus with which to communicate with primary and caucus voters. However their races often exist in somewhat different primary electorate environments that produce somewhat different outcomes. While some of these differences have been attributed to variations in rules such as those procedures involving delegate selection and allocation (Kamarck and Goldstein 1994), this research will explore an alternative argument put forward by Mayer (1996) who suggests that differences between the two nomination electorates are a result of dissimilarity in party unity. Specifically, the existence of “Divided Democrats” means that Democratic frontrunners take longer to emerge, and that a greater portion of the Democratic Party’s nomination process is more highly contested than that of the Republican counterpart.

While this research finds merit in Mayer’s argument, public opinion data from the period of competition before the first primaries and caucuses are held suggests that Democrats may be better characterized both “undecided” as well as “divided.” These “Undecided Democrats” are especially common in contests without a clear frontrunner such as 1976 and 1992. Though that point may seem trivial at first glance, it is important in explaining why Democratic voters so often join the bandwagon of the candidate with momentum generated from performing well in early primaries and caucuses, as opposed to a Republican nomination electorate that often ignores early “bumps in the road” or losses by the frontrunner in early primaries or caucuses.

This paper examines how the reforms of the 1970s altered the rules, norms, and strategies of participation. Next, it will explore the influence of three factors on determining the competitiveness of presidential nominations: endorsements, media, and money. Finally, based on these findings this research will offer an explanation of how these factors might shape the 2008 Democratic and Republican nominations.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

The rules of the game often determine the outcome. The *traditional* nomination strategy that existed before the reforms of the early 1970s relied almost exclusively on garnering the endorsements and organizational support of state and local party officials or bosses that commanded state voting blocs at the national nominating conventions (Price 1984; Epstein 1986, 89-95). Dramatic changes to the rules of the game change the mechanics of the process, affect the outcome, and reflect the values of the system in general. Two important reform efforts in the early 1970s along with later changes in made by the states shaped the current, *textbook*, model of nominating presidential candidates. Reforming the presidential nomination process may take two different forms. First, reforms may be enacted by the political party. Second, reforms may be enacted by the federal or state government by changing either fundamental or statutory law. Of course, changes in rules always affect commonly accepted practice or strategy utilized. In this case, each reform prioritized procedural democratization, increased political participation, and encouraged more candidates to pursue the nomination.

Changes in Party Rules

The first series of reforms followed a very difficult presidential nominating convention in 1968 that resulted in a nominee who had not run in a single primary that year. The Democratic Party chose to set up a Commission to investigate reforming the nomination system chaired by South Dakota Senator George McGovern and Minnesota Congressman Donald Fraser. The McGovern-Fraser Commission made a number of recommendations to the Democratic Party. Foremost among them was that voters should have the maximum opportunity possible in the selection of delegates to the national nominating convention (Shafer 1983). The Commission offered other recommendations, such as those that promoted participation by women and ethnic/racial minorities both in the primaries and at the conventions (e.g., Ranney 1975; Kirkpatrick 1978; Lengle 1981; Price, 1994).

Expanding the number of states using binding primaries and caucuses was an important change because it democratized the nomination process of the parties and offered a greater number of voters the opportunity to participate (Caesar 1979, 1982). Further, expanding the number of primaries and caucuses opened possibilities for candidates to run that lacked support of the traditional party establishment (Crotty 1977; Steger, Hickman and Yohn 2002). By making appeals directly to primary and caucus participants through paid media advertising and free news coverage, candidates could gain sufficient exposure to be competitive for the nomination without having extensive support from the national, state, and local party officials (Patterson 1980; Hunt 1987, 59-60). Encouraging more candidates to run for president also improved the odds of less prominent candidates by dividing the vote among more candidates and allowing primaries to be won with narrower pluralities of support (witness Pat Buchanan in the 1996 New Hampshire primary).

The Democratic Party later adopted new rules for allocating delegates to the convention that also democratized the process and encouraged participation of voters and dark horse candidates. Today, the Democratic Party allocates convention delegates in proportion to

candidates' vote shares within a geographic area.² While these rules were intended to amplify the openness of primaries and caucuses and extend the campaign to include voters in later states, candidates with relatively small vote should find that gaining even a portion of the delegates enabled them to remain in the race. The Republican Party in many states went along with the move to primaries and caucuses, but resisted the proportional method of awarding delegates (Wayne 1997, 100-120; see Price 1984, 156-158 for an alternate view). Instead, the Republicans adopted delegate allocation rules that rewarded winners. State Republican parties employ winner-take-all rules, winner-take-most rules, modified winner-take-all rules (in which state-wide and/or district level delegates are allocated to the candidate with the most votes), and higher qualifying thresholds where proportional allocation exists (Ceaser 1982, 33-41). These rules were intended to allow candidates with the most votes in a geographic area to amass delegates quickly, while more efficiently winnowing from the field candidates who receive fewer votes (Kamarck and Goldstein 1994). In effect, this should allow the Republicans to determine their nominee sooner and provide the nominee with the opportunity to unify the party and direct attacks on the Democrats.

Mayer (1996) tests the influence of different rules between the parties such as delegate allocation and rejects the idea that it produces a more divisive nomination process for the Democrats. To the contrary, Mayer credits proportional representation with actually minimizing disputes by legitimizing the process of selecting delegates as more representative. If the procedural differences are not producing the divisions within the Democratic Party, another force must be at work. He instead argues that Democrats have longer and more divisive nomination campaigns because the party membership (at the elite and mass levels) are relatively more divided than are Republicans, with respect to a number of salient issues – though the specific issues change from nomination to nomination. This difference is evident in the lack of clear frontrunners emerging before the formal nomination process starts in January of the election year. Republicans on the other hand, typically have a clear frontrunner that elites and party identifiers rally around early and continue to support throughout the nomination period (Dowdle, Steger, and Adkins, 2005).

Mayer's explanation for these differences can be traced to a group-based analysis of the two parties. While Republican differences on religion, region, and class exist, Mayer argues these cleavages do not reinforce each other. On the other hand, Democratic group-based distinctions, many of which can be traced back to the New Deal Coalition, are often reinforcing. To unify the party at the national level, the Democratic Party uses group-based appeals that act as a "log-rolling coalition." According to Mayer, this process worked well during the New Deal era when voters maintained strong group-based identities, but those same group-based approaches started to alienate voters in the in the general election as group-based loyalties waned in importance in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The Democratic disadvantage may be diminishing over time. In large part due to presidential candidates like Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton who distanced themselves from the ideology and group-based approach of the New Deal. Some of this change may also be due to divisions with the contemporary Republican Party not considered by Mayer (Shafer, 1997). Finally, many Democrats are beginning to feel, despite Mayer's assurance to the contrary, that divisive presidential primaries are harmful to the electability of party's nominee. This last

explanation may account for the speedy elevation of John Kerry to frontrunner after a victory in the 2004 Iowa caucuses. Burden (2005) credits the support of key groups such as veterans and firefighters, an infusion of \$6.4 million from a personal loan, and problems within the Dean campaign. The momentum from the Kerry victory, combined with the negative coverage given Howard Dean's "I have a scream speech" propelled Kerry into a lead that he never lost. While New Hampshire exit polls showed Kerry trailing among voters selecting their candidate based on issue stances, the most common reason voters gave for supporting Kerry in the first round of primaries following Iowa was *electability* (Adkins and Dowdle, 2005).

Changes in Federal Campaign Finance Rules

A second series of reforms were initiated in Congress and resulted in the Federal Election Campaign Acts of 1971 and the 1974 amendments (FECA). FECA consolidated previous reform efforts to limit the influence of large donors, such as wealthy individuals and interest groups, on the outcome of presidential and congressional elections. FECA also regulated campaign spending and mandated the disclosure of campaign finances. In response to the Watergate scandal, Congress amended FECA in 1974 to limit the contributions of individuals, groups, and parties to a candidate's campaign. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) was charged with the enforcement of FECA and administration of the public funding program for presidential campaigns.

FECA was intended to democratize the process through the regulation of campaign contributions. Limits of \$1,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for political action committees prevented well-known, well-connected candidates from raising funds from a limited number of very influential people. Limiting the amount that one could contribute to a candidate required campaigns to change fundraising strategies. Unless the cost of presidential and congressional campaigns decreased, candidates would need to raise funds from a broader base of donors. Finally, FECA encouraged "outsider" and "ideological" candidates to run (Polsby 1983; Wattenberg 1984, 1991). The matching fund provision required the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to match the first \$250 of contributions made by individuals, which helps candidates who tend to receive smaller contributions rather than the maximum contributions (Corrado 1996, 234). The state-by-state spending limit also helped erase the financial advantages of the better-financed candidates. Although campaigns quickly found methods of bypassing state spending caps by purchasing goods or services in neighboring states, the overall limit still forced the playing field to become more level than it would have otherwise. Lesser known candidates could concentrate resources in early, competitive states in the hope of gaining a break-through victory that would media exposure, increase name recognition, and generate fundraising for later primaries (Wayne 1997, 134-136).

Changes in State Primary Dates

Jimmy Carter's use of "wins" in the early caucuses and primaries to propel his candidacy from relative obscurity to the Democratic nomination in 1976 contributed to candidates concentrating their efforts on the early nominating elections in hopes of gaining momentum.

These events took on greater significance as candidates who failed to live up to expectations tended to be winnowed from the field while those who did well received an important boost to their campaigns (Bartels 1985, 1988). As the frontrunner gained momentum by performing well in early primaries and caucuses, the endorsements, media coverage, and campaign funding of the other candidates declined in comparison. One unintended consequence was that voters in states holding their primaries later in the season tended to have fewer candidates to choose from. Another consequence is that candidates increasingly had to begin their campaigns well before the Iowa Caucuses to gain resources. Since 1980 most eventual nominees were emerging well-before the primaries were over, particularly in the Republican Party.

In response, some states that traditionally held their primaries and caucuses later in the calendar (i.e. April, May, and June) statutorily moved their primary or caucus date to early March. The purpose was to both allow their voters a meaningful choice (other than the frontrunner) and increase the influence of that state in selecting the party’s presidential nominee (Sabato 1997). Where only five states held primaries between mid-February and March 26 in 1976 (Asher 1984, 200), about two-thirds of the convention delegates were selected between mid-February and March 26 in 1996 (Wayne 1997, 106). As Table 1 below shows, the trend towards frontloading has not mitigated since then.

TABLE 1: States Holding Primaries Before March 15, 1976-2004

| | 1976 | 1980 | 1984 | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Primaries Before March 15 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 21 | 14 | 22 | 26 | 23 |
| Total Primaries | 27 | 36 | 30 | 37 | 39 | 42 | 43 | 37 |
| Percent Before March 15 | 15% | 22% | 23% | 57% | 36% | 52% | 60% | 62% |

SOURCES: Primary dates are from Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections (2004). Primary dates from 2004 from www.thegreenpapers.com.

As more states moved their primaries toward the beginning of the primary season, they also created multi-state primaries. In 1996, 27 states held their primaries on the five Tuesdays following the New Hampshire primary. In 2004, 30 states held their primaries or caucuses on the six Tuesdays following the New Hampshire primary—all by March 9th. Multi-state primaries advantage candidates with the financial and organizational resources to campaign in several states simultaneously. Candidates with fewer resources were forced to choose where to compete. The effects are nicely illustrated in the 1996 nomination campaign. The front-runner Bob Dole competed in all of the 1996 Super and Junior Tuesday primaries, while his opponents had to focus on individual states in an attempt to remain viable. Even had Dole not won all the multi-state primaries, scattered victories by his rivals would likely have left Dole a disproportionate share of the delegates.

In theory, the effects of frontloading are debatable. A compressed primary schedule should increase both the risks and rewards of frontrunners, creating greater potential volatility in the nominating campaign. Thus, if front-runners meet or beat expectations in the early elections, then they create an aura of inevitability and roll over their rivals. On the other hand, if front-

runners do not meet expectations in the early elections, then they have less time to develop and implement damage-control strategies. Non-frontrunners may then step into the void and use momentum from winning later primaries and caucuses (Mayer and Busch, 2004).

In reality, however, the potential costs and benefits of frontloading asymmetrically favors frontrunners. When frontrunners meet or beat expectations in early contests, they reduce their rivals' chances of gaining the nomination. Candidates who fail to meet expectations typically receive less media coverage which is more critical; and their fundraising dwindles, even to the point of losing eligibility for matching funds (e.g., Brady and Johnson 1987; Bartels 1988; Patterson 1993; Robinson and Sheehan 1983 Steger 1999). Frontrunners are certainly subject to such adverse effects, but they generally retain name recognition, organizational support, and have cash reserves that enable them to continue competing in the remaining primaries. Their odds may be reduced, but they are certainly not out of the race yet. In contrast, non-frontrunners remain unlikely to win the nomination even if they meet or beat expectations.

Thus, frontloading limits the opportunity of dark-horse candidates to come from behind during the primary season. These candidates typically have less name recognition and resources, and compression of the primary calendar limits the time they have to catch up during the primary season. Even when dark-horse candidates perform better than expected, they cannot raise enough money fast enough to become competitive in the middle and later primaries. Without campaign funds and organizational support, most dark-horse candidates usually withdraw from the race after the first primaries or caucuses. Other candidates are winnowed from the race in spite of better-than-expected performance in early primaries because they lack the resources to compete once a clear frontrunner emerges.

In sum, frontloading and multi-state primaries increase the importance of the pre-primary competition for endorsements, media coverage, and money. Frontrunners emerge as those candidates who performed well in this competition, and who can compete well into the primary season, even if they suffer a setback or two. Non-front runners typically cannot acquire the needed resources that they failed to gain before the primaries began.

Changes in Candidate Behavior

The nature of electoral competition requires that the *textbook* model evolve as candidates adjust strategies to match the new rules of the game and this development took two forms from the 1950s on-ward. One major evolution is that presidential nominations became more candidate-centered (Reiter 1985; Wattenberg 1984). Innovations in communication technologies (e.g., television, computers and direct mail) enabled candidates to compete for presidential nominations outside of traditional party networks, rather than cultivate the support of party bosses as was the traditional route to the nomination. The McGovern-Fraser reforms further weakened the link between the traditional party establishment and those running for the Democratic or Republican presidential nominations (Ranney 1975; Polsby 1983). As the link between candidates and voters participating in binding primaries and caucuses grew stronger, the link between candidates and national, state, and local party organizations naturally grew weaker. Presidential candidates constructed their own campaign organizations from the ground up to

identify, communicate with, and mobilize large numbers of potential primary voters (Wattenberg 1984, 1991). The ensuing professionalization of campaign consultants and campaign technology only reinforced the candidate's ability to communicate directly with potential voters and supporters outside party organizational networks. These changes mean that candidate adaptation to changing rules and a changing political environment have major effects on competition in the nomination campaign.

The qualifications of a winning presidential nominee changed too. Winning nominations in the traditional model was about building coalitions of party leaders who controlled delegates at the national nominating convention (e.g., Key 1964). Winning nominations in this textbook model was about winning the support voters for which delegates at the convention were formally bound to support. While both might require winning the endorsement of public officials prominent in the state or district, winning voters required an ability to raise money and media savvy to do so. In some instances, particularly in the Republican Party, candidates emerged early who held an advantage in all three of these attributes. In the Democratic Party, primaries and caucuses were more influential in determining which of the lesser-known candidates would be most competitive. In fact, candidates with relatively little name recognition, money, or organizational support could gain the media attention necessary to become serious competitors through gaining *momentum* from early victories during the primary season (Patterson 1980; Bartels 1985, 1988).³ Those who did so during early caucuses and primaries received bandwagon press coverage that focused on and presumably contributed to their rise in the polls (Bartels 1988; Patterson 1993, 117-118). Candidates who beat expectations in the nominating elections receive substantial increases in media coverage, which also is relatively free from critical scrutiny (Robinson and Sheehan 1983, 80; Patterson 1980, 43-48; Adams 1985). Greater media coverage increases name recognition for lesser-known candidates and improves public perceptions of a candidate's viability (Patterson 1980; Zukin and Keeler 1983), which in turn may increase a candidate's ability to attract supporters and raise campaign funds (Bartels 1988; Abramson, Paolino, and Rhode 1992; Mutz 1997). Gaining momentum thus gives dark horse candidates a means of gaining name recognition, resources, and ultimately, better odds of winning the nomination.

Further changes in the financial rules and primary schedule compelled further adaptations by candidates, resulting in a nomination system in which the candidates who emerge prior to the caucuses and primaries have an advantage competing for votes during the primaries. The candidates most able to compete during the primaries are those who have support of partisan elites, attract favorable media coverage, raise large sums of money (without spending all of it), and ultimately, who have already gained the support of rank-and-file party identifiers. This model of presidential nominations particularly holds for Republican Party presidential nominations. As we will see, Democratic nominating campaigns remain more competitive and more open to determination by events of the caucus and primary season.

HOW COMPETITIVE ARE THE PRIMARIES?

While the reforms democratized the presidential selection process to include new voters, the openness to dark horse candidates making a meaningful attempt at winning the nomination

declined by the mid-1990s. In determining how “democratic” presidential nominations are, we contend that the key criterion is not that voters are able to choose from among a greater number of candidates, but how many of those candidates are competitive in the primaries and caucuses. Electoral power derives in part from having choices among candidates or parties (Shumpeter, 1942, 281-83). Competition among political organizations and leaders provides people with the opportunity to make a meaningful choice in elections (Schattschneider, 1960, 140-141). Without viable options, voters’ power to choose is substantially reduced (Held, 1987, 154-166). By measuring the number of competitive candidates in presidential primaries, we can assess the effective choices available to voters across primaries in a given year and across election years.

The competition for endorsements, media coverage, and campaign funds have all increased the importance of beginning the campaign long before the first primary or caucus. This research suggests that while campaign resources are necessary, they are not sufficient for winning the nomination. Endorsements, media coverage, and campaign funds alone cannot secure the nomination, but without them candidates cannot gain the exposure necessary to attract voters. Thus, without the means to compete, no candidate, however meritorious, has a realistic chance of winning. Obviously, candidates lacking resources are more likely to be winnowed from the field of candidates because they find it more difficult to reach voters. The distribution of resources among candidates shapes candidates’ relative abilities to compete and their odds of winning the nomination.

One way to measure the openness and competitiveness of a nomination campaign is simply to tabulate the number of candidates on the assumption that more candidates mean more competition (Asher, 1984, 194). But this approach may be misleading as some candidates offer little or no serious competition. Consider two hypothetical primaries: one with five candidates and one with three candidates. If the candidates receive 60%, 20%, 9%, 6%, and 5% of the vote respectively, there is actually little competition and little chance that the dominant candidate would lose the election. In contrast, if the candidates in the three-candidate race receive 35%, 34%, and 31% of the vote respectively, the competition is much stiffer and the outcome more in doubt. Another option would be to set a vote threshold, above which candidates are considered serious competitors.⁴ Thresholds, however, truncate important information about the campaign; candidate strategies, campaign dynamics, and voter choices vary with the number and variety of candidates entering the campaign. Truncated information also introduces bias and error in econometric models (Achen, 1986).

A solution can be found in the work of comparative political scientists who assess the competitiveness of multiparty electoral systems. Comparative political scientists use concentration indices to measure party competition in multi-party electoral systems (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Concentration indices summarize the number of parties in an election along with their respective vote shares. The additional information of vote share makes the measure superior to simply measuring the number of parties in an electoral system. While concentration indices have been used for market and party competition, the measure also works for candidate competition. Hickman (1992) and Steger, Hickman and Yohn (2002) used a modified Hirshman-Herfindahl index to summarize the number of effective candidates in multi-candidate districts. The number of effective candidates, N_c , is calculated by dividing one by the summed squares of each candidate’s percentage share of some variable – such as votes in a primary ($N_c =$

$1/\sum(c_1\%^2 \dots c_n\%^2)$). To illustrate how the measure works, consider the hypothetical primary races described earlier. The vote distribution of 60%, 20%, 9%, 6%, and 5% in the five-candidate race would yield an N_c of 2.41 effective candidates. The vote share distribution of 35%, 34%, and 31% in the three-candidate race would yield an N_c of 2.99 effective candidates. While the five-candidate race appears more competitive using a simple count of candidates, N_c identifies the three-candidate race as the more competitive. N_c thus provides a meaningful summary measure of electoral competition while avoiding the truncation problem associated with an arbitrary threshold.

This research utilizes the Hirshman-Hirfindahl index adapted by Steger, Hickman and Yohn (2002) to measure the competitiveness of candidates along the preceding dimensions – endorsements, network news coverage, support in national Gallup polls, and campaign funds. Each variable is constructed as one divided by the sum of the squared percentage share of the variable in a given time frame (here quarterly or monthly intervals). The resulting measure offers several interpretations. The most straightforward interpretation is that the measure indicates the number of “effective” or competitive candidates on that dimension. The smaller the concentration score, the more the race is narrowed to a few candidates who are able to compete. Larger concentration scores indicate a more wide-open race in which more candidates have strength on that indicator. For presidential nominations, a larger concentration score means a more wide-open, undecided race; whereas smaller scores indicate the likely presence of a dominant candidate and a number of minor candidates.

Endorsements

Steger and Davis (2000) and Cohen, Noel and Zaller (2003, 2004) argue that patterns of endorsement by party elites influence the presidential primary vote for a number of reasons. First, endorsements serve as cues to party activists, contributors and the media as to who are the viable and desirable candidates. Such cues may be important when voters cannot use party labels to differentiate candidates, as in nomination campaigns. Second, elites making endorsements may act as surrogates for candidates at campaign events and by attacking rivals and defending the candidate in the media. Third, some endorsers actively aid the endorsee’s campaign through their own organizations and fundraising networks. There is reason to believe that elite endorsements are more important in the Republican Party than in the Democratic Party. Democratic governors, senators and representatives endorse presidential candidates, on average six to seven months after their Republican counter-parts and ultimately, fewer of these officials on the Democratic side endorse a candidate prior to the primaries (Steger 2002b). Thus, the media, contributors and activists have less indication as to whom they should be supporting in the Democratic nomination race.

Endorsements are an important signal to prospective primary voters. Party elites potentially can influence the selection of the nominee by signaling to their partisan identifiers which of the candidates is viable, electable, and can govern. If party elites concentrate their endorsements around one or two candidates, they send a powerful signal to contributors, activists, the media and primary voters as to which candidates should be paid attention to and supported. If party elites withhold endorsements or spread their endorsements among a number

of candidates, the signal sent to these attentive publics is weaker and less indicative—resulting in a more open and competitive nomination race.

On average, governors, senators and members of the House of Representatives tend to concentrate their endorsements on two presidential candidates across open nomination cycles between 1976 and 2004 (see Tables in Appendix). Republican endorsements are substantially more concentrated among more candidates compared to Democrats, and there is relatively little deviation within or across Republican nomination campaigns. Elite endorsements of Democratic presidential candidates, in contrast, tend to be spread among more candidates such that in most years no candidate dominates the race. The patterns of endorsements also differ between the two parties across time. Republican candidate endorsements tend to become more concentrated in a smaller number of candidates beginning in the second quarter, such that there are effectively only two candidates receiving endorsements by the end of the invisible primary period. The concentration of Democratic candidate endorsements is more variable across the invisible primary. Even at the eve of the presidential primaries, Democratic endorsements are substantially less concentrated than are Republican endorsements of presidential candidates.

Nor is it the case that Democratic endorsement patterns are becoming more like Republicans. Figures 1A and 1B show the concentration of endorsements for each party's presidential candidates by quarter from 1976 to 2004. The concentration indices can be interpreted as indicating the extent to which endorsing elites form a consensus on which candidate should be nominated. In this light, it appears that both parties have had some divisive nominations and some not so divisive. Democratic elites were relatively divided among the candidates in 1976, 1984 and 1988 and were wildly divided in their support for presidential aspirants in 2004, when endorsements were scattered among numerous candidates and no candidate held a dominant position in the field. Most of the candidates seeking the Democratic nomination in 2004 were signaled by elites as being a possibility. Through January of 2004, the race was a toss-up without a clear front-runner. Democratic elites have been relatively unified in only one presidential nomination campaign, when they rallied solidly behind Vice President Al Gore in 2000. Democratic elites did not similarly unite to the same degree behind former Vice President Walter Mondale 1984.

Figure 1A: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Candidate Endorsements by Democratic Governors, Senators & Representatives, 1975-2004

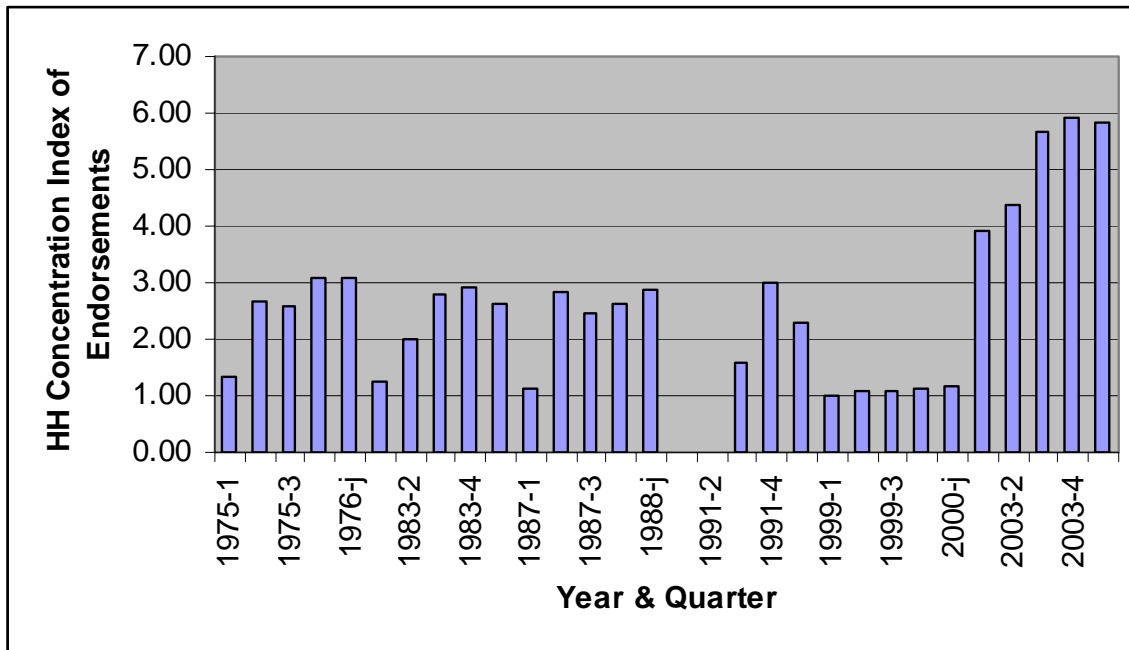
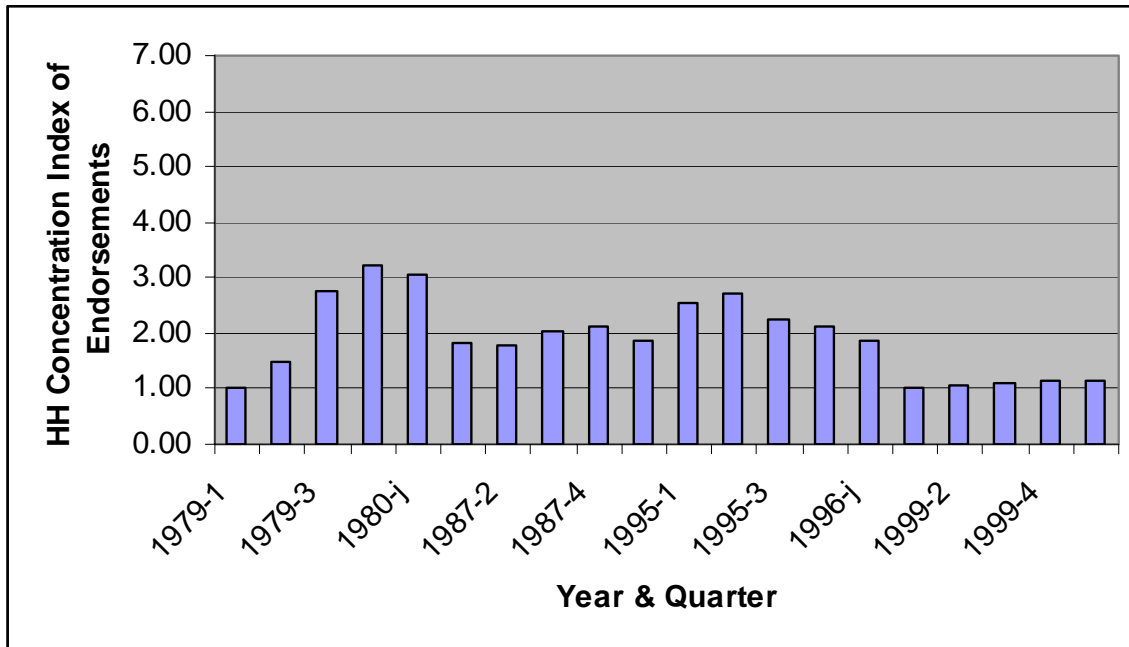


Figure 1B: HH Concentration Index of Candidate Endorsements by Republican Governors, Senators & Representatives, 1975-2004



Republicans, in contrast, have typically been more unified in identifying and supporting a particular presidential candidate. Elected Republican elites were virtually unanimous in their endorsements of then Governor George W. Bush in 2000. Republicans were somewhat less unified in other nomination campaigns, spreading their endorsements similar to Democrats, though not to the same degree. Interestingly, the most divisive Republican presidential nomination was the 1980 campaign, when Republican elites polarized into pro- and anti-Reagan camps. Republican elites in the anti-Reagan camp, however, tended to divide their endorsements among several alternatives – most notably, Senators Howard Baker and Bob Dole who represented the fiscal conservatives of the party.

These results are even more dramatic when we realize that most Democratic office-holders do not endorse a presidential candidate until a strong front-runner emerges during the primaries. Far fewer Democratic elected officials endorse a presidential candidate and they tend to do so six months later, on average, than their Republican counter-parts (Steger and Davis 2002). That so few elected Democratic elites endorse a candidate accounts for much of the dispersed distribution we observe in endorsement patterns in Democratic presidential nominations. The relatively few Democratic elites making endorsements tend to support different candidates so that no clear front-runner emerges. The elite signal to primary voters is both weak and scattered. The signal being sent to Republican primary voters by their most visible elected officials is both stronger (more endorsements) and more concentrated.

These patterns may help account for the two prominent patterns that we observe in rank-and-file partisan support for candidates: 1) Republican identifiers rally around a candidate early in the invisible primary and remain supportive throughout the campaign; 2) Democratic identifiers tend to divide their support more evenly across a number of candidates; and 3) that a sizeable portion of Democratic respondents to national polls remain undecided until after the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary.

Media

Numerous studies hold that presidential nomination campaigns are mass media campaigns (e.g., Patterson 1980; Robinson and Sheehan 1982; Arterton 1984; Lichter and Lichter 1986, 1988). These studies recognize that candidates may be able to take advantage of free exposure on national network news to generate name recognition and support among potential primary voters. Media coverage gives candidates visibility, name recognition, and prestige (Peabody, Ornstein, and Rhode 1976, 243-34). Greater media coverage increases name recognition – especially for lesser-known candidates, which may increase perceptions of a candidate's viability and ability to attract supporters and raise campaign funds (Bartels 1988; Abramson, et al. 1992; Mutz 1997).

Another way to think about candidate coverage can be found in media agenda-setting studies. In this perspective, the media do not tell voters what to think, but what to think about (Cohen 1963). This is accomplished through the volume of attention given by media outlets to certain topics (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Iyengar and Kinder 1987). With respect to policy issues, when news coverage focuses more on a particular issue, people are more likely to cite that

issue as the most important concern facing the nation (Iyengar, et al. 1982). The same principle should apply to candidates. Given the centrality of the horse race in determining the volume of coverage given to candidates, coverage volume will reflect the relative salience of the candidates in the nomination campaign. Further, media coverage of candidates reflects not only their relative position in the race, but also certain intangible aspects like perceptions of candidates' character, experience, etc.

Since most voters get their information from the mass media, the volume of exposure will influence public attention to the candidates. If the agenda-setting approach is correct, it would be the media coverage in a particular period of time that should affect the presidential primary vote, rather than as a cumulative effect as Steger (2000) argues. Operationalizing news media effects as short-term effects is also theoretically more potent because a cumulative effect presupposes continuous audience monitoring of the media with an updating model of human cognition (e.g., Holbrook 1995). Yet we know that much of the public is inattentive to presidential nominations until the primaries near (e.g., Bartels 1988; Popkin 1991). We also know that media effects change over the course of the pre-primary period (Haynes et al 2004). News coverage of candidates near the end of the pre-primary period would be a more valid measure than a variable measuring cumulative media exposure.

The pattern of concentration of network news attention to candidates indicates a quite different picture than expected. The concentration indices indicate that the network news programs do, in fact, cover a range of candidates in each quarter, with very little difference between Democratic and Republican races. While front-runners get more coverage than do other candidates, the news programs do not focus their attention to the same degree that party elites or party identifiers do. The implication of this result is important, because darkhorse candidates rely on free coverage in the media to a much greater extent than do frontrunners. Dark horses typically lack the money to finance paid advertising, so free media becomes one of their main methods of gaining exposure and name recognition.

The aggregate patterns, however, hide some notable differences across nomination campaigns. Figures 2A and 2B show the concentration of network news coverage by quarter in each open nomination campaign from 1976 through 2004. The figures reveal a number of interesting aspects of network news coverage of presidential candidates in nomination campaigns. First, there has been some tendency over time for the media to focus on relatively fewer effective candidates. In part, however, this reflects smaller candidate fields. The 1976 Democratic nomination campaign eventually featured 14 different candidates, though not all were running at the same time. Second, in most but not all years, there is a tendency for the network news programs to concentrate their coverage on fewer candidates as the primaries approach. This also is part of the rhythm of the race in which it becomes relatively more evident which candidates are viable as the primaries near. Third, network news coverage of Democratic presidential candidates appears to be somewhat more diffuse compared to that of Republican candidates. This corresponds to the fact that most of these Democratic nominations have been relatively "up for grabs" compared to those on the Republican side.

Figure 2A: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Democratic Candidate Coverage in Nightly Network News Programs, 1975-2004

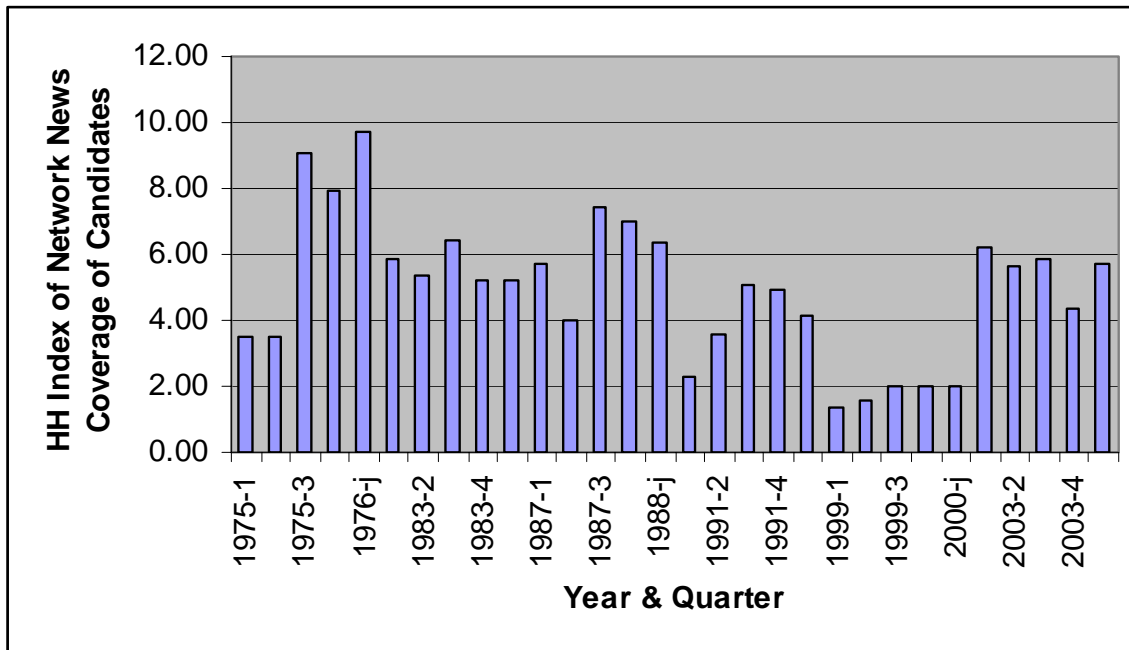
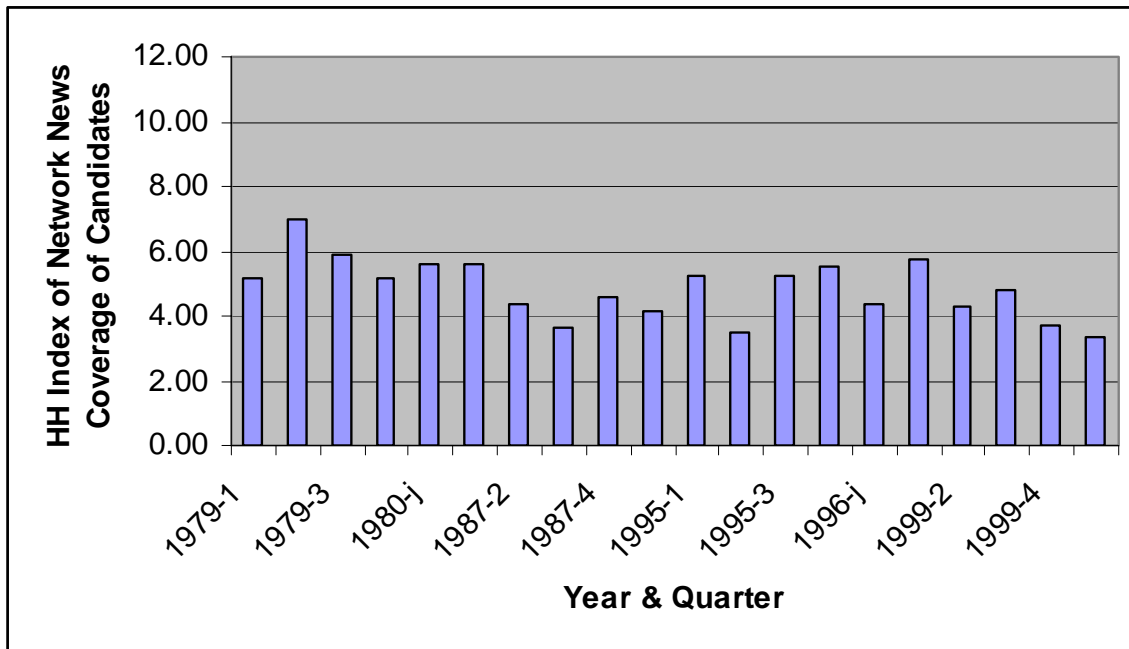


Figure 2B: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Republican Candidate Coverage in Nightly Network News Programs, 1975-2004



Money

The increasing cost of presidential campaigns disadvantages candidates who cannot raise considerable funds before the primaries begin. For example, to be competitive in 1996 candidates needed to raise an estimated \$20 million to \$30 million over the course of the campaign in addition to any matching funds that candidates could claim (Jackson 1997, 229). By January 31, 2004, Howard Dean spent \$40 million, John Kerry \$30 million, and Wesley Clark and John Edwards more than \$22 million. Candidates-centered campaigns operating under FECA have three sources of raising this kind of funding: individual and PAC contributions, loans to the campaign, and matching funds.

The better-financed campaigns typically rely on raising their funds from individual contributors. Most individual contributors who give large sums appear to be strategic, giving money to candidates they perceive as being viable. In the nominating elections between 1980 and 1992 the frontrunner in each cycle received most of his funds from large contributors (Corrado 1996, 224-234). Everyone else, typically obtained the bulk of their money from smaller contributions (Corrado 1996, 233-4). These differences matter for two reasons. First, large contributions add up quicker and the methods used for obtaining large contributions are less expensive. Dark horse candidates often cannot raise large contributions until they demonstrate their viability in or at the polls, and they have a difficult time doing well in or at the polls without the resources needed to organize and publicize. Second, the money that is raised very early in the campaign tends to come in disproportionately larger contributions. Contributors sending smaller checks typically do so later in the primary and caucus season, after the nominee is effectively decided (Campaign Finance Institute, 2005). Rather than devoting time and energy to raising funds for his campaign, one candidate in the post-reform era chose to fund his own campaigns by loaning money to the campaign organization. Steve Forbes entered the Republican primaries in 1996 and 2000, spending over \$40 million in each cycle. Although he proved to be one of the more attractive alternatives to either Bob Dole in 1996 or George Bush in 2000, he was still quickly winnowed from the race.

The system of federal matching funding and spending caps was intended to level the financial playing field. Instead, it has turned into a double-edged sword for dark horse candidates. While it provides resources needed to compete in early primaries, it effectively shuts down the campaign when they fail to perform well. After the 1976 primary season, Congress modified the matching fund rules to cut off candidates who fail to gain 10% of the vote in two consecutive primaries. In order to become eligible again for matching funds, they must gain 20% of the vote in a primary (Corrado 1996, 224). In contrast, frontrunners typically have the financial resources to compete, despite suffering an early set back in Iowa or New Hampshire. Moreover, matching funds often ended up the most money – in absolute terms – to the better known contenders, helping maintain their financial superiority over lesser known challengers (Corrado 1996, 234). In the 2000 and 2004 election cycles George W. Bush and then Howard Dean and John Kerry determined that they could raise more money than the overall spending caps would permit. As a result, they chose to forego the federal matching funds. While this left more money in the matching fund pool for dark horse candidates, the advantage of these candidates over their nearest competitors was considerable. In 2000, George W. Bush raised over \$70 million by January 31 and his closest competitor, John McCain, raised just over \$21

million. To make matters worse for McCain, Bush had over \$20 million in cash reserves and the McCain campaign was operating on just over \$350,000. Needless to say, McCain withdrew from the Republican nomination contest the day after the Super Tuesday primaries.

Campaigns, of course, adapt their strategies to these realities. Lacking substantial resources, darkhorse candidates typically concentrate on winning either Iowa and/or New Hampshire in hopes of gaining momentum and media attention (e.g., Bartels 1988; Wayne 1997, 134). Frontrunners, however, adapt by preparing for a competition of endurance in which they outlast their rivals. Unlike other candidates, frontrunners also organize, advertise, and campaign in the states that follow Iowa and New Hampshire (Polsby and Wildavsky 1996, 72). One consequence of the changes in fundraising strategy since 1980 is that many darkhorse candidates who enter the race eventually recognize the long odds and withdraw before the primaries begin. Thus, the field of candidates is winnowed even before the Iowa caucuses as some candidates decide to avoid the embarrassment of getting thumped at the polls. Obviously, the ability to raise money played a major role in their calculations. In 1995, Republicans Arlen Specter and Pete Wilson aborted their campaigns, primarily because of a lack of money (e.g., Dover 1998, 97-99). In 2000, Lamar Alexander, Elizabeth Dole, John Kasich, and Dan Quayle bowed out left the race before the Republican primaries began. In 2004, Democrats Bob Graham and Carol Moseley Braun did so too.

The three most important factors in fundraising identified in previous research are funds raised, funds spent, and funds remaining in reserve. The extent to which monetary resources are concentrated in the hands of one or a few candidates provides a good indication as to how competitive the nomination campaign is. The concentration indices indicate the effective number of candidates competing in each dimension.

Figures 3A and 3B indicate that fewer Democratic candidates are able to compete effectively in presidential nomination campaigns compared to their Republican counter-parts. Democratic presidential nomination race also are more variable in the extent to which fundraising is concentrated, whereas fundraising in Republican nomination races tends to be fairly consistent from nomination to nomination. What this means is that there typically are more Republican candidates who are able to compete in presidential nomination races, from the standpoint of raising money. This is a major reason why Democratic candidates tend to be differentiated somewhat more in campaign finance – fewer Democratic candidates are able to raise the sums needed to compete effectively.

Figures 3C and 3D indicate that there are relatively more Republican candidates who are competitive spending money compared to candidates in Democratic races. Fund-raising is highly variable through the first and second quarters for both parties, but tends to become less variable for Republicans while Democratic campaign spending continues to vary throughout the nomination process and across nomination races. The figures indicate that campaign spending is not particularly concentrated but diffuse with multiple candidates being competitive in their spending. The relative competitiveness of campaign spending, however, owes in part to the tendency for strong candidates *to raise and not spend* all of their funds prior to the primaries.

Figure 3A: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Democratic Candidates' Percentage Share of Cumulative Funds Raised, 1975-2004

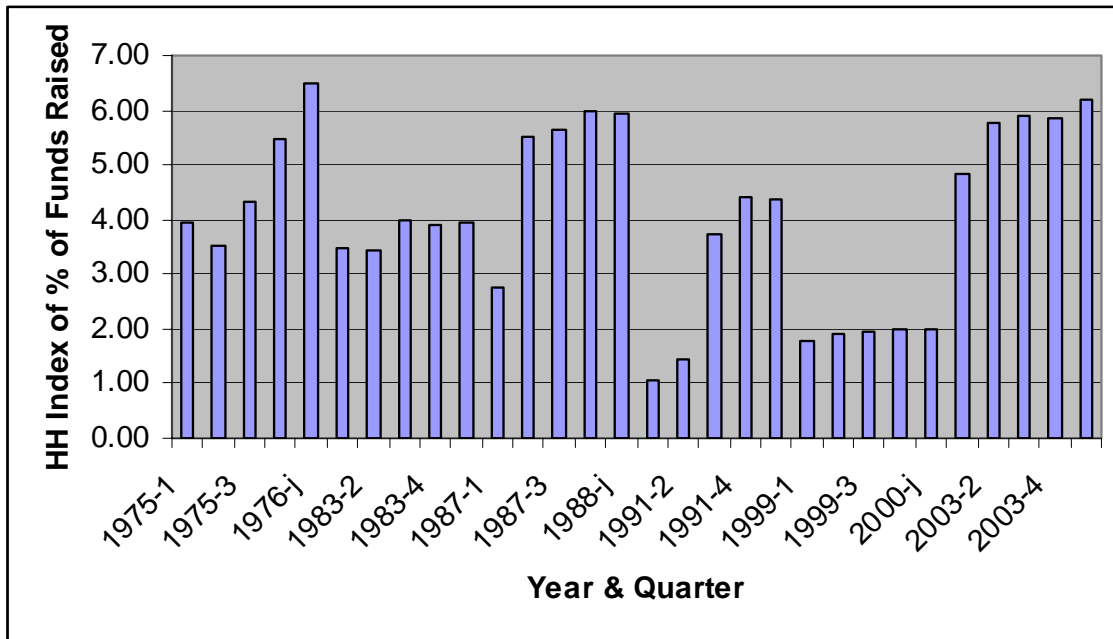


Figure 3B: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Republican Candidates' Percentage Share of Cumulative Funds Raised, 1975-2004

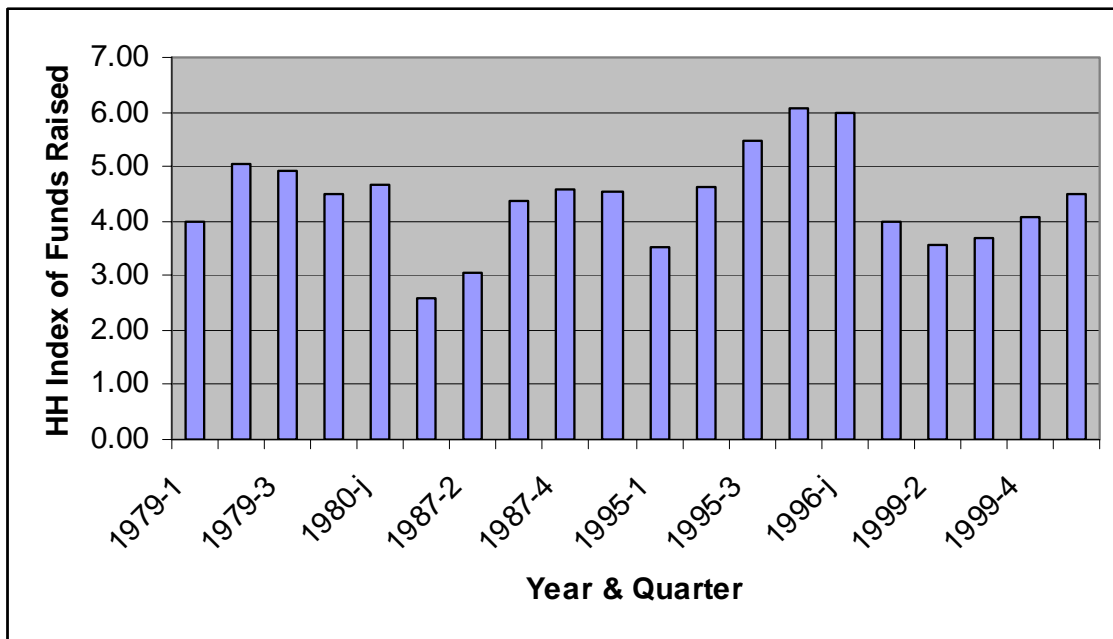


Figure 3C: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Democratic Candidates' Percentage Share of Cumulative Campaign Spending, 1975-2004

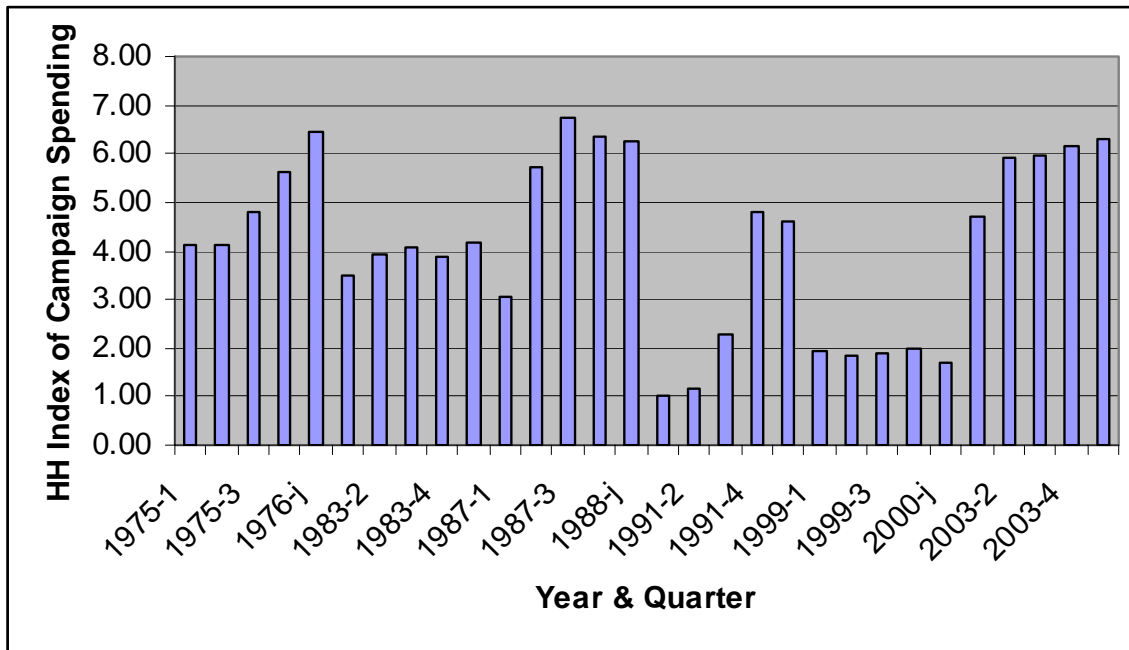
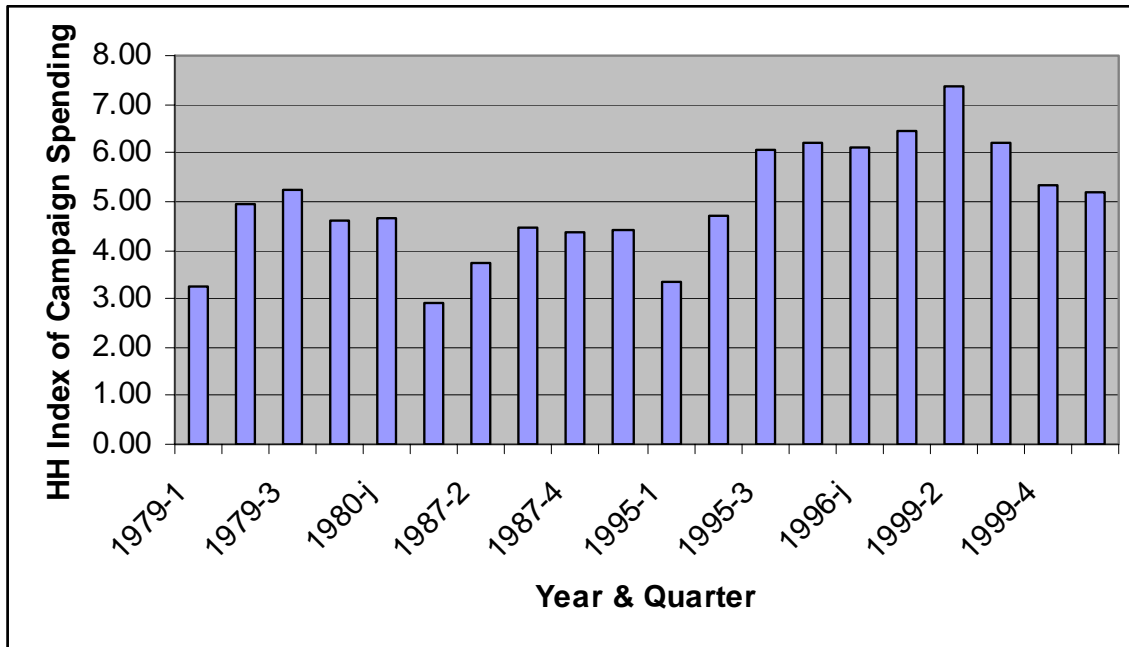


Figure 3D: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Republican Candidates' Percentage Share of Cumulative Campaign Spending, 1975-2004



Finally, cash reserves have been found to be the most important predictor of which candidates compete effectively in the primaries (Adkins and Dowdle 2000; Steger 2000). Candidates who are able to raise money without spending all of it have two distinct advantages over their rivals. First, they have demonstrated that they can raise money while being in the enviable position of not having to spend it. Candidates who spend their money as fast as they raise it are usually struggling to gain traction in the campaign – typically they trail in the polls and spend money as fast as they can to climb. Those candidates who can raise money and hold onto it do so because they are already ahead in the polls. Second, candidates who have cash reserves are able to compete more effectively during the primaries. With increasing front-loading of the primary calendar, there simply isn't enough time to raise the massive quantities of money needed and have the time to use it effectively (through market research, message development and testing, and buying ad spots).

Figures 3E and 3F indicate that cash reserves are similarly concentrated among candidates in the two political parties. First, there tends to be more concentrated patterns of cash reserves – compared to concentrations of fund-raising and campaign spending. This indicates that fewer candidates are able to raise and hold onto effective sums of money. Second, there are similar patterns of variation across election cycles, indicating that the tendency for relatively fewer candidates to have large cash reserves is fairly constant across Democratic and Republican nomination campaigns.

Figure 3E: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Democratic Candidates' Cash Reserves, 1975-2004

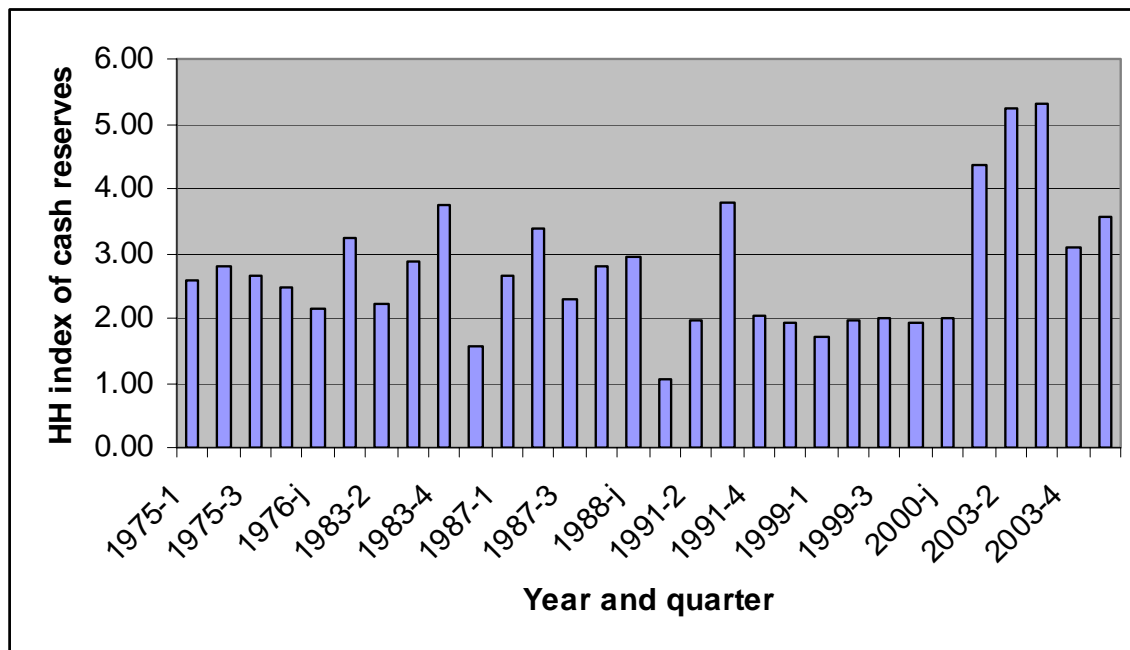
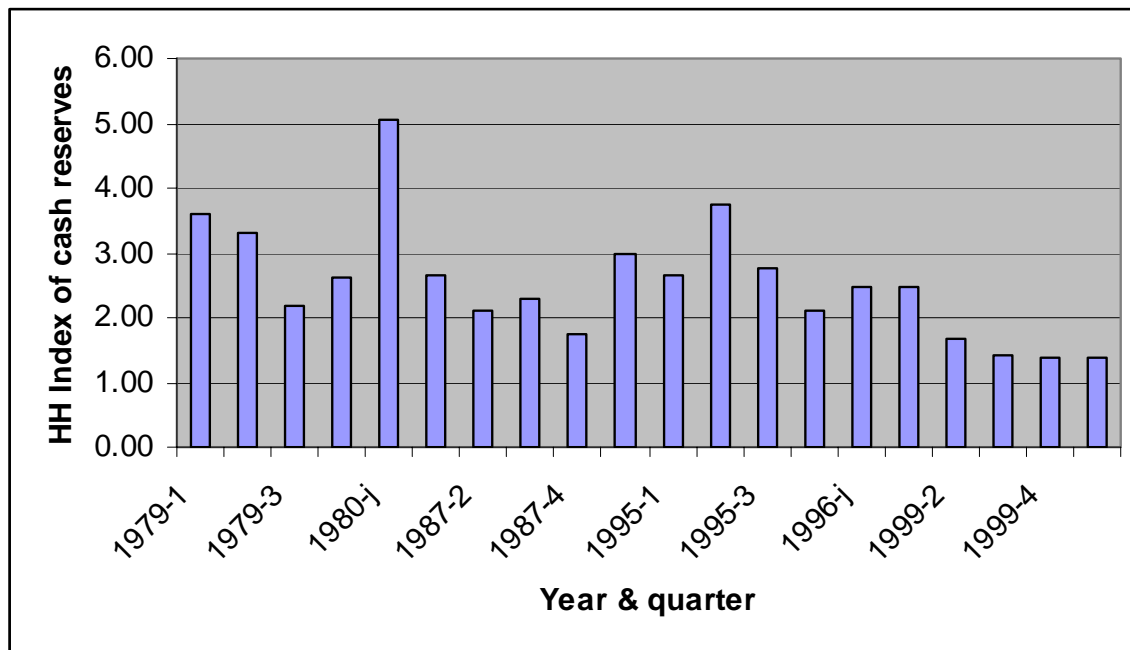


Figure 3F: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Republican Candidates' Cash Reserves, 1975-2004



The volatility of the Democratic Party nominations is evident in Figure 3E, as the number of candidates who have cash reserves varies from quarter to quarter and one nomination year to the next. The 2000 nomination appears to be the least competitive, until we recognize that there were only two candidates in that year. A concentration index score of two indicates that both were highly competitive. The 2004 Democratic nomination cycle stands out as being particularly competitive. Throughout much of 2003 and even through January of 2004, it is evident that there were not one or two candidates who held onto relatively large sums of money. Instead all of the candidates had expended nearly all of the funds they had raised – leaving none in a position of strength on the eve of the Iowa Caucuses and New Hampshire primary. The race was wide open for voters in these early events to winnow the field. Unlike previous candidates who emerged as the front-runner by the end of the invisible primary, Howard Dean had spent his money as fast as he raised it; and had almost nothing left to counter his unexpected set backs in the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary. Reagan, Mondale, Clinton, Dole and G. W. Bush experienced set backs in one or both of these events, but they had the financial reserves to respond in subsequent primaries. Howard Dean could not do so as effectively.

Summary Measures of Public Support

Democratic party identifiers and independent-leaningers responding to various Gallup polls also are more divided in their preferences for presidential candidates, compared to their Republican counter-parts. National polls in Republican nomination races tend to identify a clear front-runner early and that candidate remains in front throughout the invisible primary. There is very little variation in the concentration scores for Gallup poll respondents in Republican

nominations (see standard deviations in column 3). By comparison, Gallup respondents in Democratic nomination races divide their support among more candidates, and their responses are vastly more variable. By the time the primaries begin, Republican respondents have narrowed their preferences to fewer than three effective candidates; whereas Democrats are divided among almost four effective candidates remaining competitive in the race.

Just as Democratic Party elites are divided among candidates, so are Democratic Party identifiers and independent leaners, compared to their Republican counter-parts (See figures 2a and 2b). Republican respondents to national Gallup polls typically divide their support among fewer than three effective candidates. Democratic respondents rarely do. As important, Republican party respondents tend to narrow their preferences as the primaries draw near (as indicated by greater concentration of support among candidates in the 4th quarter of the invisible primary year and January of the election year. Divisions among Democratic respondents actually appear to increase in the 4th quarter of the invisible primary, narrowing somewhat only in a couple of years. Democrats showed relatively unity only in 2000, when there were only two candidates running (which precluded a concentration index score greater than two). The scores for 2000 on the Democratic side indicate relatively strong competition between almost two evenly matched candidates. Figure 4A also indicates that Democratic support was most divided among the candidates in 2004, again showing that the 2004 Democratic nomination was up for grabs on the eve of the Iowa Caucuses. The scores for Republican races show remarkable consistency within and across nomination cycles.

The typical pattern in Republican nominating campaigns is for a dominant candidate to emerge early in the invisible primary and to stay on top in national polls throughout the campaign (Dowdle, Adkins and Steger 2005). The typical pattern in Democratic nominating campaigns is for multiple candidates to emerge and fade as the front-runner during the invisible primary, with no candidate having a majority lead in national polls (Dowdle, Adkins and Steger 2005). Democratic poll respondents divide their support across multiple candidates as Mayer (1996) argues, *and* there usually are a large portion of Democratic respondents who remain undecided until the first nominating contests (Dowdle, Adkins and Steger 2005)

Democratic races tend to feature less concentration of support by party elites and identifiers, media coverage and fund-raising. 2004 stands out as the most wide-open and unpredictable presidential nomination, based on these indicators. There was no clear indication as to who the front-runner was or should have been based on the signal sent by Democratic Party elites. There were almost six effective candidates receiving support in national Gallup polls of Democratic Party identifiers and independent leaners. The national network news divided their coverage among the candidates, giving only a weak signal as to which candidates were the most viable. There was no clear leader in cash reserves – all of the candidates had spent most of their funds, so that none had a decisive advantage going into the primaries. In almost every respect, the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination was the most “wide-open” when Democratic caucus and primary voters began to vote.

Figure 4A: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Democratic Candidate Support in National Gallup Polls, 1975-2004

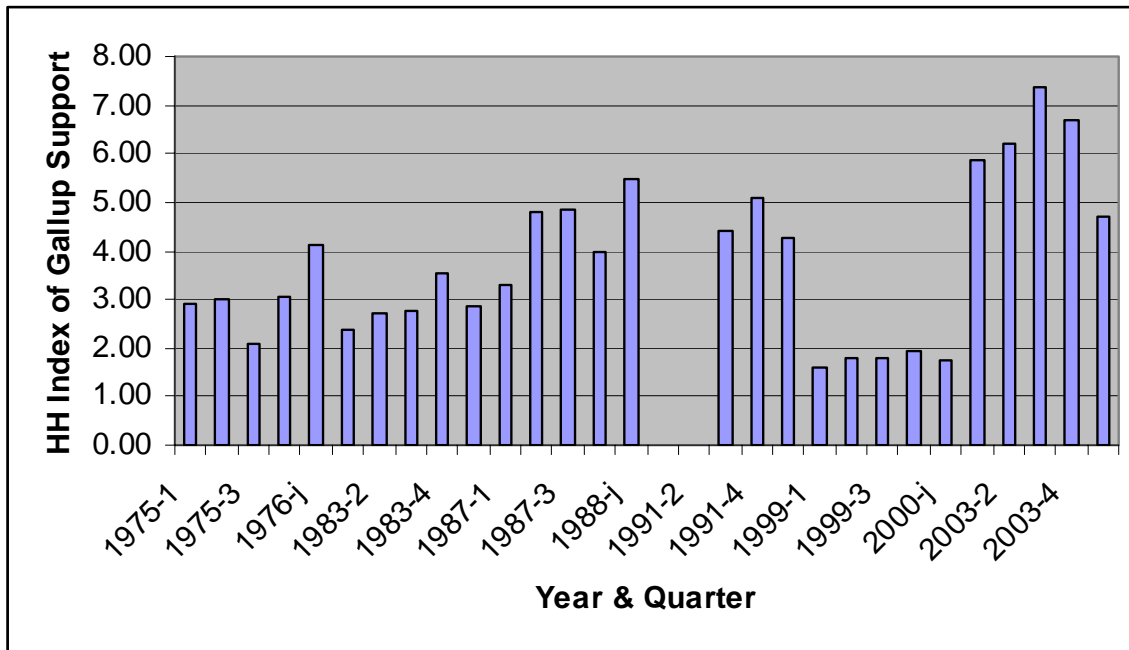
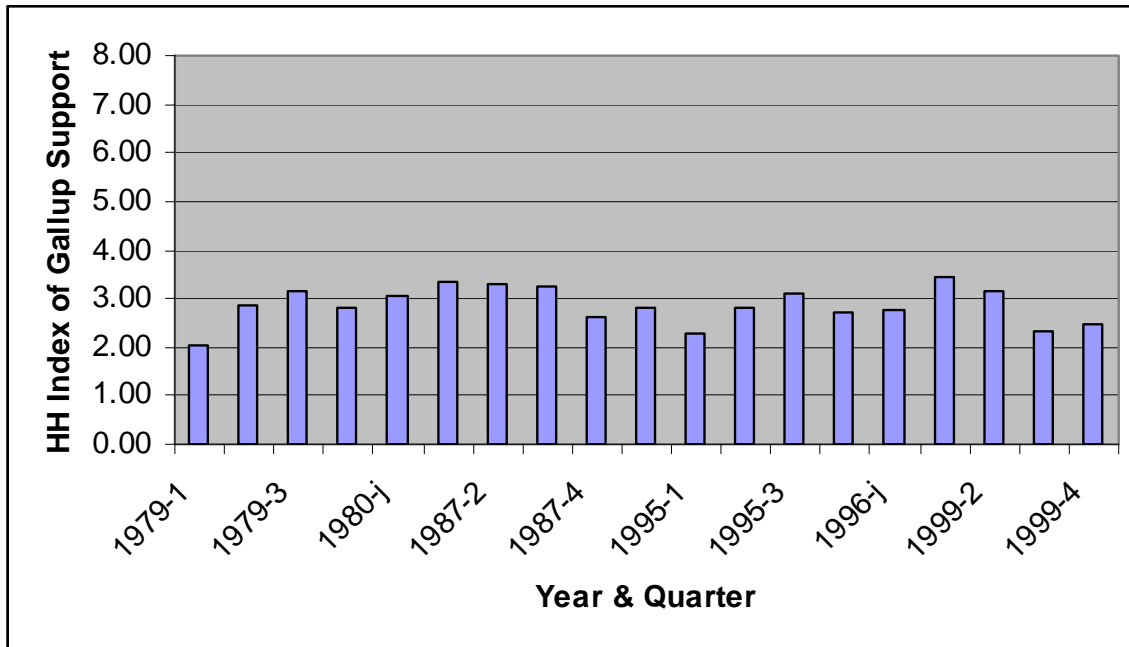


Figure 4B: Modified Hirshman-Hirfindahl Concentration Index of Republican Candidate Support in National Gallup Polls, 1975-2004



Republican presidential nomination contests, by contrast, are relatively less competitive as indicated by the greater concentrations of endorsements, public support, media coverage and cash reserves held by the candidates. Surprisingly, the most contentious Republican nomination since 1976 has been the 1980 nomination. Republican Party elites divided their endorsements more in that year than in other years. While Reagan had a substantial lead in national Gallup polls, a sizable portion of the Republican electorate was not yet sold on him. More candidates than usual (for Republican races) raised substantial sums of money and were able to hold onto it for the critical primary period. The results raise interesting questions about whether the 1980 Republican nomination helped settle intra-party disputes and unified the party in ways that have eluded the Democratic Party. Subsequent Republican races have been less divisive and competitive.

In conclusion, the high costs of candidate-centered campaigns means that candidates who can obtain endorsements, media coverage, and monetary support will be more capable of competing in the primaries. Inequities in candidates' capacities to compete for votes are a major constraint on primary voters' options. Without knowledge of one's options, the power to choose is emasculated. Voters' choices in the primaries are constrained to the extent that endorsements, media coverage, and money concentrate in the hands of a single frontrunner. In extreme cases, patterns of resource concentration create a hierarchical ordering of candidates according to their capacity to compete for votes.

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS IN 2008

Typically the presidential nominating process has evolved continuously in small increments with occasional periods of substantial change. Small changes occur in every election cycle as groups, parties and politicians modify their behavior and perhaps their allegiances in response to the events of the previous election and in anticipation of the next election. Many of these changes are so small as to escape recognition. Less frequent, but more dramatic are changes in the procedures governing who participates and how in the selection of presidential candidates. The more successful candidate candidates adapt to the rules and procedures of these new nomination processes, but ultimately this knowledge diffuses through the entire candidate field after a few nomination cycles (Barilleaux and Adkins, 1993; Steger, Hickman, and Yohn, 2002).

Since the start of the 1970s, the most common institutional reforms have involved changes in the campaign finance regime and the party nomination process itself. These alterations may arise from a variety of factors such new rules from both or either of the political parties, new federal laws and regulations, changes in the interpretations of existing law by the FEC, changes in state laws, or new court rulings campaigning. While recent nomination campaigns have only seen minimal or incremental changes in the rules governing the nomination process itself, the financing of campaign has undergone some significant modifications in recent cycles.

These alterations cover a variety of areas and include some important changes in federal laws and FEC regulations. These modifications, when combined with environmental changes

such as front-loading, the decline in free media, the increasing cost of running for the nomination and the growing resource inequality between campaigns, have also led to new strategic and tactical choices in spending and raising money. The most notable changes in campaign finance involved the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA). Many of the issues surrounding the legislation, and challenges to it, involved issues that were that tend to be tangential to the nomination contests such as regulations and/or bans on raising soft money and electioneering communications.

The legislation did double to \$2,000 the maximum amount that an individual could donate to a primary campaign. The results of the 2004 campaign suggest that the contests for both parties will be strongly influenced by this change because while the rest of BCRA had minimal impact on the nomination race, this change made it easier for candidates to forego public financing (Mabin, forthcoming). In 2000, more than three-quarters of Bradley, Bush, and Gore's contributors had hit the old \$1,000 contribution limit. By contrast, 57 percent of the contributors to the Bush-Cheney 2004 nomination fund exceeded that figure and 44% of Democratic donors had given more than \$1,000. Perhaps surprisingly there is still significant room for many of these donors to give additional money. Forty-three percent of these Democratic "super-donors" and twenty-three percent of their Republican counterparts had not given the full \$2,000 (Wayne, 2005). And for the most part, most of the Bush and Kerry super-donors were not simply old donors from 2000. They were individuals that had not contributed in the prior campaign (Mabin, forthcoming).

One of the other more noticeable changes in the world of campaigning finance that BCRA also spurred was the rise of 527s groups designed to circumvent BCRA's soft money ban (Farrar-Myers, 2005). At first glance, they seemed to play little, if any, role in the nomination process for a number of reasons. Greater ideological difference typically exists between the general election nominees making the November contest usually a more important race for group interest. The uncertainty about the relative viability of the various aspirants in the field also makes any investment of finite resources risky. And when interest groups had tried to wield influences in critical races such as the New Hampshire, the effect has been mixed. Often they have been more successful in sabotaging an unpalatable alternative than promoting their more desirable alternative (Fowler et al., 2005).

The role that 527s played in helping Kerry win the 2004 Democratic nomination process ranged somewhere between minimal to nonexistent. Though they played an important role in getting an early jump in campaigning for Kerry as a general election candidate while it was still late in the nomination calendar, almost all of their support for Kerry came after Super Tuesday when he had already effectively clinched the nomination. However their widespread usage is still a new phenomenon, and the possibility exists that they may still have important indirect effects in future contests. GOTV drives by 527s will probably not equally help all nomination hopefuls and the prospect of increased 527 support in the general election for a particular nomination might boost the nomination electorate's perceptions about that individual's electability (Farrar-Myers, 2005). And candidate 527s were used by most of the 2004 Democratic hopefuls to raise money before they declared their candidacies. The most prominent example was John Edwards who raised \$4.6 million for his campaign through this route (Wayne, 2005).

These changes, when coupled with the growing need for money and new technologies, have made opting out of the old system of public financing system for presidential nominations increasingly desirable. Before 1996, only John Connally had opted out of public financing. However, unlike the general election campaigns, a growing number of individuals within both parties have decided to forego public financing and the limits and rules associated with it. In 1996, a number of Republicans refused public funding because they could afford to finance their own campaigns (i.e., Steve Forbes and Morry Taylor) or on philosophical grounds (i.e., Robert Dornan). The ability of George W. Bush in 2000 to forego matching funds and win the election proved a major turning point in the viability of the public financing system (Corrado and Gouvea, 2004). Since 1996, only Al Gore has won a nomination while continuing to accept public matching funds.

It seems logical to expect that most of the serious contenders for the Democratic and Republican nominations will also opt out in 2008 as well. In 2004, both Howard Dean and John Kerry refused to accept public financing primarily because of concerns that the \$45 million spending ceiling would hinder their ability to counter Bush late in the nomination campaign if they were their party's eventual nominee (Currinder, 2005). At first glance both candidates did well among small donors with 60 percent of the Dean contributors donating and 70 percent of the Kerry contributors making donations less than \$200. This finding is somewhat offset when money raised during the 2003 campaign is examined. While 56 percent of the 2003 Dean contributors fell into that category, only 13 percent of the Kerry donors did. On the hand, 73 percent of the 2003 Kerry donors gave more than \$1,000 while only 22 percent of the early Dean contributors did (Mabin, forthcoming). In a somewhat similar light, both campaigns also used the internet to raise money and rally supporters. However Dean's "outsiders" tended to be ineffective in organizing and campaigning while Kerry's insiders in state and local politics were crucial to his early victories (Currinder, 2005).

While the 2004 nomination contests saw a number of changes on the campaign finance front, the changes in the party nomination process were minor in comparison. The lack of systemic changes preserved a process dominated by front-loading, which elevated the importance of early contests and activities during the invisible primary. This calendar combined with the low amount of "free" resources (e.g. unpaid media coverage of aspects other than the horse race) to lead to a contest that, like the 2000 Republican and Democratic presidential nomination contests, was effectively decided by mid-March.

After the 2004 election however, there seemed to be some calls for changing the nomination process in a significant manner. However these calls were limited to primarily the Democratic Party. Major changes in the presidential nominating process have tended to occur when pressures for reform coincide with an acceptance of the need to change by those effectively controlling the nominating system of a party at a given point in time. Simply put, the GOP nominee had won in 2004 and most factions were relatively happy with the Republican nomination process itself so there has been no call to overhaul their system (Tuohy, 2004).

On the other hand, there was some discontent with the Democratic Party. In that environment, party elites are much more willing to revisit their presidential selection process. An already cited example was the McGovern-Fraser Commission. The panel operated in an

environment where the Democratic Party having won seven of the nine previous elections and still maintained a clear plurality among voters in terms of partisan identification, had lost a close election in 1968 after a highly contentious convention. This same party convention had agreed to the committee as an attempt to conciliate its more liberal wing without understanding what the exact implications were (Cook, 2004). In a similar vein, outgoing DNC Party Chair Terry McAuliffe agreed to a commission prior to the 2008 nomination in exchange for U.S. Senator Carl Levin's promise not to challenge the 2004 process while it was on-going (Balz, 2005a).

Typically proposals for major systemic reform are most likely to succeed when pressure emerges from candidates, groups or parties with significant popular political support seeking access to power, but having limited access to and influence in the existing nominating system. These calls for reform generally come from those people in society whose policy demands are not being satisfied by current institutional arrangements and believe that reforms will increase their chances of electing candidates who will be more responsive to their demands. These conditions reoccur since the demographic, economic and political character of the country change; political cleavages reform around new issues; and the saliency of issues and the public mood are continuously in flux (Burnham 1970; Sundquist 1973; Ceaser 1979, 9). Calls for change also may take the form of a minority party, or a minority faction of the majority party, advocating reforms to attract the support of reform-minded groups directly or as allies for the purpose of increasing their own chances for electoral success. In this manner, Levin and fellow Michigander Debbie Dingell's apprehension about the disproportionate effect of Iowa and New Hampshire at the expense of other states were echoed by concerns of some that the voices of organized labor and ethnic and racial minorities were often missing from the crucial first weeks of the campaign (Balz, 2005b)

Initially it appeared that the reforms might succeed. A number of proposals including regional primaries and rotating states were introduced. However the commission members thought that none of the alternative proposals furthered the goal of increasing group representation while not undermining the early face-to-face, retail politics venue offered by small states such as Iowa and New Hampshire. The most likely change to occur would the addition of some state caucuses in the period between Iowa and New Hampshire (Balz, 2005b). Those in power generally must have rational reasons (i.e., political incentives) to agree to a given set of reforms since changes in the nominating process have followed a weakening of the power of those controlling nominations in the preceding system with the two most prominent rationales being losses of power and/or of legitimacy. In this instance, many members of the Democratic elite including the new DNC Chairman Howard Dean have seemed to conclude that factors others than the party's nomination process were responsible for losses in the 2000 and 2004 general election (Barrick, 2005).

Considering that little in the way of systemic changes is likely to occur, the 2008 races should follow many of the same patterns that previous races have. However many of these trends will be affected by who runs for president. Arguably the 2008 presidential contests for the two parties are the most open at this juncture since 1928.⁵ Predicting the exact composition of the candidate field at this juncture is a difficult enterprise at best. Attempts have been made to use rational choice theory to explain why some individuals run and others do not (Abramson et al.,

1987; Adkins, 2000). No successful attempts to date have made to forecast a nomination field though.

One early indicator may be early polling results for 2008. Somewhat surprisingly the Democrats seemed to have rallied behind an early front-runner in the person of Hillary Clinton who has led her closest competitors, usually John Kerry and John Edwards, by margins of 2:1 or 3:1 (please see Table 1). The Republican nomination electorate by contrast has been split among a number of candidates (please see Table 2) though only Rudy Guiliani and John McCain have consistently polled at more than ten percent of Republicans and Republican leaners.

However, the leader in early opinion polls for open nomination contests, especially in the Democratic field, typically has not run for president. In 2001 and 2002, Al Gore, Hillary Clinton, Tom Daschle and Bill Bradley were at the top of the polls. In 1989 and 1990, Mario Cuomo, Sam Nunn and Bradley also were the early leaders. Ted Kennedy also led during much of the pre-1972 and pre-1976 invisible primaries but elected not to run. While Hillary Clinton looks like the clear Democratic front-runner at this point, the pattern over the last thirty years has been for individuals in her position not to run.

What may be even more interesting is that the GOP field, which appears divided at this stage, actually does not look that dissimilar from Republican polling results at this juncture in contests without a sitting president or vice-president. Republican front-runners may emerge before the invisible primary ends, but they are not anointed three years out. During the summer of 1997, George W. Bush trailed Colin Powell in early Gallup polls. Even when Gallup removed Powell's name in the fall, Bush's support of 22 percent was not close to a majority with Jack Kemp (15 percent), Dan Quayle (10 percent), Steve Forbes (9 percent), and Christine Todd Whitman (9 percent) trailing closely behind. Bob Dole was in a similar position in April 1994 when he polled 20 percent while Powell (13 percent), Ross Perot (12 percent), and Quayle (11 percent). What has typically differentiated the two parties is the Republican front-runners have stayed in the contest while the recent also-rans either have dropped out during the invisible primary or elected not to run at all. On the Democratic side, the early front-runners are more likely to elect not and leave the field to lesser known candidates.

Table 1: Early Support for Possible Democratic Nominees for 2008

| Individual | Level of Support |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Hillary Rodham Clinton | 40 |
| John Kerry | 16 |
| John Edwards | 15 |
| Joe Biden | 9 |
| Wesley Clark | 5 |
| Bill Richardson | 3 |
| Evan Bayh | 3 |
| Mark Warner | 2 |
| None/All/Any/Unsure | 7 |

Source: CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll, August 5-7, Nationwide, N=424 Democratic and Democratic leaners who are registered voters, Margin of error is plus/minus 5 percent.

Table 2: Early Support for Possible Republican Nominees Hopefuls for 2008

| Individual | Level of Support |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Rudy Guiliani | 27 |
| John McCain | 24 |
| Condoleezza Rice | 19 |
| Bill Frist | 9 |
| Mitt Romney | 4 |
| George Pataki | 3 |
| George Allen | 3 |
| Sam Brownback | 2 |
| Chuck Hagel | - |
| None/All/Any/Unsure | 9 |

Source: CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll, August 5-7, Nationwide, N=406 Republicans and Republican leaners who are registered voters, Margin of error is plus/minus 5 percent.

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APPENDIX ONE

Measuring Candidate Endorsements by Party Elites

Endorsements are measured from a content analysis of newspapers in all 50 states. The value of measuring endorsements through newspaper reports of endorsements is that they are public announcements of support. This is important since one of the major theorized effects is cue giving. The level of exposure of a given endorsement varies with the status of the endorsing individual. Gubernatorial, senatorial, and congressional endorsements generally receive widespread attention—repeatedly in the newspapers in a state, and repeatedly in papers in other states. Reporting of endorsements by state and local officials varies tremendously from state to state and cannot be measured reliably. As such I drop these endorsements from the analyses.

Data on candidate endorsements were obtained from two sources. For the nomination campaigns 1988 to 2004, articles were identified through a Lexis-Nexis search of newspapers in four regions from January 1, 1987 through March 31, 2004. A Lexis-Nexis search identified thousands of articles in newspapers in 50 states explicitly focusing on or referring to the endorsement of candidates for the Democratic and Republican presidential nominations. Each article was then read thoroughly, coding the following variables: endorsed candidate, date of story, name of newspaper, date of endorsement (if discernible), endorsing individual or group, position of endorsing individual, state of endorsing individual, and a brief description of the endorsement or endorser. Each endorsement was counted as a separate unit of analysis. Endorser positions were then coded for governor, US Senator, statewide party or elected official, US Representative, state senator, state representative, and local officials, on a scale of one to seven. State and local officials were dropped from the analyses because of inconsistencies in reporting these endorsements from state to state and newspaper to newspaper.

For nominations in 1980 and 1984, we use the measure of endorsements generated by Cohen, Noel and Zaller.⁶ These data differ in several respects. One, there are fewer endorsements recorded in these years. This may be due to either fewer endorsements being made, fewer news reports of endorsements, or to a difference in methodology. As a matter of comparison, I correlated the Cohen, Noel and Zaller measures of endorsements for the years 1988 to 2004 and found the aggregate counts of endorsements to be very highly correlated: $r = 1.0$ for governors, $r = .99$ for senators, and $r = .91$ for US Representatives. Most of the differences relate to the dating of endorsements, which is irrelevant for this study since the variables are measured at the end of the pre-primary period.⁷

To account for differences in the frequency of endorsements across nominations, each candidate's endorsements were converted to a percentage of the endorsements of all candidates running in a particular nomination campaign.

Measuring Network News Coverage

Numerous studies hold that presidential nomination campaigns are mass media campaigns (Patterson 1980; Robinson and Sheehan 1982; Arterton 1984). Candidates' campaign coverage is measured as the frequency of candidate appearances or mentions in campaign stories on nightly national network news programs.⁸ The variable excludes network news stories relating to candidates' governing activities since such coverage is uncorrelated with candidates' standing in the polls or their performance in the polls (Robinson and Sheehan 1982; Steger 2002a).⁹ The Vanderbilt Television Archives were used to generate an event-count of nightly network news stories that referred to or mentioned candidates campaigning for the presidential nomination of one or the other major political parties. These event counts were aggregated to get a daily summary count for each candidate. To obtain a score for January, variable is aggregated for all days in January prior to the Iowa caucuses. Finally, the campaign news variable is calculated as the volume of coverage received by a candidate as percentage of the total coverage received by all candidates in January of the election year (measured prior to the Iowa caucuses in 2000 and 2004).

Measuring Campaign Funding

One of the great anomalies in presidential nomination forecasting is the precise relationship between money raised by a campaign during the exhibition season and future success in primary races. On the surface, the correlation looks strong and positive. All Republican winners of the "money primary" since 1980 with the exception of Pat Robertson in 1988 went on to win the Republican nomination (George Bush surpassed Robertson in fundraising in January of 1988). The relationship seems even stronger for the Democrats since their last nominee who lost the money primary was Jimmy Carter in 1976. Earlier research has utilized funds raised (Mayer, 1996a; Adkins and Dowdle, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; and Steger, 2000), funds dispersed (Adkins and Dowdle, 2005), and cash reserves (Adkins and Dowdle, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; and Steger, 2000; Steger, Dowdle, and Adkins, 2004) as measures.

The data for funds raised, funds dispersed, and cash reserves on hand for each quarterly or monthly observation come from individual presidential candidate "Reports of Receipts and Disbursements" (form 3P) for a particular quarter or month. Raw figures cannot be used because campaigns have become more expensive, creating heteroskedasticity and autocorrelative problems in the models. The problem of growing costs of campaigns is resolved by calculating each candidate's figures as a percentage of the total figure of all candidates in a given quarter. Using percentages has the advantage of controlling for the ever increasing sums of money in presidential nomination campaigns. As such, the variables effectively standardize money across presidential nomination campaigns from the 1970s through 2004.

National Poll Standing

One of the best, if not the strongest, predictor of nomination outcomes has been national preference polls of partisan public opinion (Mutz, 1995; Mayer, 1996a; Hinckley and Green,

1996; Adkins and Dowdle, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Norrander, 2000a, 2000b). National poll results (I use Gallup polls) have a direct and an indirect effect on the process. As a direct effect, polling data represents the level of rank-and-file partisan support for a particular candidate. The indirect effect occurs through the impact of poll reports on media attention and support from activists, contributors and the public (Mutz, 1995; Hinckley and Green, 1996; Adkins and Dowdle, 2002).

The measure used is the candidates' average percentage of national Gallup polls during January (prior to the Iowa caucuses) reported in monthly editions of *The Gallup Report* or annual editions of *The Gallup Poll* from 1976 to 2004. Candidates' shares are those reported in the polls. Some polls include results for candidates not actually in the race (e.g., Kennedy in 1976). Poll support for these non-candidates is treated as undecided, uncommitted or none of the above, and are excluded from the analysis. We do not, as some have done, proportionately redistribute non-candidate support among the other candidates.¹⁰

APPENDIX TWO

Modified Hirhman-Herfindahl index of candidate endorsements by governors, US senators, and US Representatives

| | Both Parties | Democratic races | Republican races |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 st Quarter Average | 1.80 | 1.72 | 1.90 |
| (st. dev.) | (0.96) | 1.23 | 0.66 |
| 2 nd Quarter Average | 2.28 | 2.59 | 1.89 |
| (st. dev.) | (1.00) | 1.22 | 0.57 |
| 3 rd Quarter Average | 2.47 | 2.70 | 2.12 |
| (st. dev.) | (1.26) | 1.59 | 0.52 |
| 4 th Quarter Average | 2.76 | 3.12 | 2.22 |
| (st. dev.) | (1.32) | 1.55 | 0.74 |
| January Average | 2.61 | 2.98 | 2.05 |
| (st. dev.) | (1.32) | 1.56 | 0.71 |
| Average | 1.80 | 2.66 | 2.04 |
| (st. dev.) | 0.96 | (1.43) | (0.59) |

Figures represent the inverse of the cumulative percentage squared across candidates in a given quarter, and are not average number of endorsements.

Modified Hirhman-Herfindahl index of candidate's percentage share of mentions in network news stories, 1976-2004

| | Both Parties | Democratic races | Republican races |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 st Quarter Average | 4.67 | 4.15 | 5.44 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.69 | 2.07 | 0.28 |
| 2 nd Quarter Average | 4.28 | 3.95 | 4.78 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.48 | 1.47 | 1.54 |
| 3 rd Quarter Average | 5.53 | 5.96 | 4.89 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.94 | 2.39 | 0.93 |
| 4 th Quarter Average | 5.04 | 5.24 | 4.74 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.64 | 2.09 | 0.78 |
| January Average | 5.07 | 5.53 | 4.38 |
| (st. dev.) | 2.06 | 2.54 | 0.94 |
| Average | 4.92 | 4.97 | 4.85 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.75 | 2.15 | 0.94 |

The HH index of network news coverage measures concentration of candidates' share of mentions in campaign stories on the nightly network news programs.

Modified Hirhman-Herfindahl index of candidate's percentage share of cumulative funds-raised, cumulative funds spent, and cash reserves by quarter, 1976-2004.

| HH index of candidate share of cumulative funds raised | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Both Parties | Democratic races | Republican races |
| 1 st Quarter Average | 3.19 | 2.97 | 3.52 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.14 | 1.40 | 0.67 |
| 2 nd Quarter Average | 3.79 | 3.60 | 4.07 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.45 | 1.78 | 0.93 |
| 3 rd Quarter Average | 4.41 | 4.26 | 4.62 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.17 | 1.43 | 0.78 |
| 4 th Quarter Average | 4.68 | 4.60 | 4.80 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.24 | 1.52 | 0.87 |
| January Average | 4.86 | 4.82 | 4.92 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.35 | 1.72 | 0.72 |
| Average | 4.19 | 4.05 | 4.39 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.37 | 1.62 | 0.89 |
| HH index of candidate share of cumulative funds spent | | | |
| 1 st Quarter Average | 3.43 | 3.05 | 3.99 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.47 | 1.37 | 1.63 |
| 2 nd Quarter Average | 4.34 | 3.78 | 5.19 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.86 | 1.96 | 1.56 |
| 3 rd Quarter Average | 4.77 | 4.29 | 5.49 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.65 | 1.95 | 0.81 |
| 4 th Quarter Average | 4.94 | 4.81 | 5.13 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.34 | 1.66 | 0.83 |
| January Average | 4.98 | 4.91 | 5.08 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.45 | 1.85 | 0.76 |
| Average | 4.49 | 4.17 | 4.98 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.61 | 1.79 | 1.18 |
| HH index of candidate share of cash reserves | | | |
| 1 st Quarter Average | 2.69 | 2.59 | 2.84 |
| (st. dev.) | 0.92 | 1.15 | 0.50 |
| 2 nd Quarter Average | 2.84 | 2.93 | 2.71 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.10 | 1.26 | 0.97 |
| 3 rd Quarter Average | 2.75 | 3.15 | 2.16 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.09 | 1.22 | 0.55 |
| 4 th Quarter Average | 2.40 | 2.68 | 1.97 |
| (st. dev.) | 0.70 | 0.68 | 0.54 |
| January Average | 2.61 | 2.36 | 2.98 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.09 | 0.75 | 1.53 |
| Average | 2.66 | 2.74 | 2.53 |
| (st. dev.) | 0.96 | 1.01 | 0.90 |

The HH index measures concentration of candidates' share of cumulative funds raised, funds spent and funds held in reserve.

Modified Hirhman-Herfindahl index of candidate's percentage share of support in national Gallup surveys, 1976-2004.

| | Both Parties | Democratic races | Republican races |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 st Quarter Average | 3.01 | 3.21 | 2.76 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.25 | 1.62 | 0.72 |
| 2 nd Quarter Average | 3.40 | 3.70 | 3.03 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.31 | 1.77 | 0.24 |
| 3 rd Quarter Average | 3.51 | 3.88 | 2.96 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.66 | 2.10 | 0.42 |
| 4 th Quarter Average | 3.49 | 4.05 | 2.65 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.43 | 1.66 | 0.14 |
| January Average | 3.38 | 3.86 | 2.65 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.22 | 1.35 | 0.49 |
| Average | 3.36 | 3.76 | 2.81 |
| (st. dev.) | 1.34 | 1.61 | 0.43 |

The HH index of Gallup support measures concentration of candidates' share of support in Gallup polls, as a percentage of respondents indicating preference for a candidate in the field. Measuring candidate support in this way tends to overstate the absolute levels of support. The HH Index is a measure of concentration of support among those running.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The authors are listed by rotation on this and other papers by the authors.
- ² The Mikulski Commission promoted proportional allocation of delegates by banning winner-take-all delegate allocation rules at the state level, though not at the district level (Price 1984, 151-2). After the 1976 election, the Winograd Commission prohibited the winner-take-all rule at the district level, adopting a strictly proportional allocation system with threshold levels set between 15 to 20% of the vote (David and Ceaser 1980; Price 1984, 152-155). The Democratic Party backed away from strict proportional delegate allocation after the 1980 election when the Hunt Commission allowed a bonus delegate for the winner of the vote at the congressional district level, and re-instituted the allowance for winner-take-all rule at the district level (Asher 1984, 199-201). The Democratic Party returned to a strictly proportional delegate allocation system after the 1992 election.
- ³ Momentum is the change in a candidate's position in a caucus or primary relative to the perceptions of the candidate's pre-contest standing.
- ³ Reiter (1985) identified "serious" candidates as those receiving more than 10% of the primary vote. The 10% threshold, however, is problematic when multiple candidates split the vote in a primary. Consider the five-candidate primary just noted. The 10% threshold eliminates three candidates though they collectively account for 20% of the primary voters' preference for someone other than the front-runners.
- ⁵ Assuming that Dick Cheney abides by his decision not to run, 2008 will be only the second presidential election since 1928 without an incumbent or sitting vice-president running as one of the two party nominees. The other exception was the 1952 election but Harry Truman probably considered a re-election bid until he lost the 1952 New Hampshire Primary.
- ⁶ We are grateful to Hans Noel for providing us with this data.
- ⁷ The two datasets differ considerably in the identification of endorsements by state and local officials, former office holders, and interest groups. These sources of incompatibility between the datasets do not affect the current study, however, since endorsements by these kinds of people and groups are omitted from the analysis.
- ⁸ Ideally, a measure of candidates' campaign coverage would include a measure of the tone coverage. Limitations of the Vanderbilt television archives, however, preclude obtaining a reliable measure of coverage tone. The network news abstracts can be obtained from the website at <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu>.
- ⁹ Campaign coverage was defined as a news story that mentioned the candidate in the context of any aspect of the campaign. Candidate views on a policy matter, in which he or she is not directly involved in the unit of government making decisions, were coded as campaign stories.
- ¹⁰ Calculating each candidate's support as a percentage of the support received by only candidates in the race presumes that the support of voters who prefer candidates not in the race and undecided voters will be redistributed proportionately to the candidates remaining in the race. This has the effect of inflating the support of those candidates in the race. To illustrate, consider a poll with five candidates receiving the support of 24, 28, 13, 8 and 5 percent of respondents, respectively. If the person with 28% of support does not enter the race, the recalculation of each candidates support as a percentage of the candidates in the race, would produce the following distribution: 48, 26, 16 and 10%. The candidate with 24% now appears to have the support of nearly a majority when that is clearly not the case.