Nominations
Session 8

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17.263: American Elections

Roadmap

How Candidates Decide

How Parties Decide

Diversifying the Candidate Pool

How Candidates Decide

Supply and Demand

Carnes distinguishes between supply-side and demand-side factors in the what might be termed the "production" of candidates.

▶ What does he mean by this distinction?

▶ What are examples of each kind of factor?

▶ How do these factors interact? That is, how does the effect of supply-side factors depend on demand-side ones, and vice versa?

Strategic Candidacy

▶ Because both the costs and the potential benefits of running for office are large, we should expect citizens to be both rational (making optimal choices given their information and preferences) and strategic (accounting for the expected actions of other actors).

▶ One way to model the strategic chocie to run is through a so-called citizen-candidate model, which treats every citizen as a potential candidate for office.

A Thought Experiment (inspired by Hall 2019)

A Republican Alice is considering whether to challenge the Democrat Claudia, who is otherwise unopposed. Let:

$$C_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{the cost to A of running for office}$$
$$B_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{the benefits to A of holding office}$$
$$I_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{ideological distance between C and A}$$
$$1 \geq \pi_A \geq 0 \equiv \text{probability that A wins the election}$$

Alice's preferences (U_A) over possible outcomes are:

$$U_A(\text{A doesn't run; C wins}) = -I_A$$
$$U_A(\text{A runs; C wins}) = -I_A - C_A$$
$$U_A(\text{A runs; A wins}) = B_A - C_A$$

Alice's expected utility to running is:

$$EU_A(\text{run}) = -C_A + \pi_A B_A - (1 - \pi_A)I_A$$

Comparative Statics

Alice to run iff her expected value of running exceed that of not running:

$$\overbrace{[-C_A + \pi_A B_A - (1 - \pi_A)I_A]}^{EU_A(\text{run})} - \overbrace{[-I_A]}^{E_A(\text{not run})} > 0 \implies$$
$$\underbrace{-C_A}_{\text{negative}} + \underbrace{\pi_A(B_A + I_A)}_{\text{positive}} > 0.$$

So, Alice's probability of running is:

▶ decreasing in the cost of running (C_A)

▶ increasing in the probability of winning (π_A)

▶ increasing in the benefits of holding office (B_A)

▶ increasing in the ideological distance between A and C (I_A).

What Kind of Candidates Run for Office?

$$\boxed{\text{Calculus of Candidacy: } -C_A + \pi_A(B_A + I_A)}$$

▶ Given the calculus of candidacy, what individual and contextual (or supply- and demand-side) factors affect who runs for office?

    ▶ Costs

    ▶ Benefits

    ▶ Ideology

    ▶ Probability

▶ How might expectations about others affect the strategic calculus?

▶ What about candidates' expectations (beliefs) about themselves?

    ▶ e.g., What if they believe their π to be lower than others'?

How Parties Decide

Parties and Nominations

What purposes do nominations serve?

▶ Office seekers: Increase electoral prospects by coordinating votes.

▶ Benefit seekers: Select broadly acceptable candidates who can be trusted to further their policy goals.

▶ Voters: Potentially allow for democracy *within* parties as well as between them.

Evolving Nomination Procedures

1790s–1820s

- ▶ State/local organizations or "clubs" choose lower-level candidates.
- ▶ Presidential candidates are nominated by congressional caucuses.

1830s–1890s

- ▶ Lower-level candidates are nominated by county/state conventions, though often party bosses decide ahead of time.
- ▶ Presidential candidates are nominated by national conventions attended by local party leaders and activists from around the country.

1890s–1960s

- ▶ Many states adopt the direct primary to select nominees for state offices, as well as convention delegates pledged to candidates.

1970s–present

- ▶ Primary elections become standard for nearly all party nominations.

Benefits and Costs of Primary Elections

Beneficial functions of primaries:

- ▶ Electoral competition in one-party jurisdictions
- ▶ Democratic resolution of intra-party issue conflicts
- ▶ Selection of better-qualified officials

Some potential problems:

- ▶ High information demands on voters
- ▶ Low turnout
- ▶ Unrepresentative (extreme) electorate $\rightarrow$ partisan polarization?

The Invisible Primary

▶ The 1970s reforms were designed to wrest power from (Democratic) party insiders, and in the short term they succeeded.

  ▶ "Outsiders" nominated in 1972 (McGovern) and Carter (1976).

▶ McGovern and especially Carter won by cultivating grass-roots support, particularly in early-voting states such as Iowa, and riding the "momentum" of media coverage to victory in later primaries.

▶ But victories for insider candidates became standard again after 1980, suggesting that parties had found informal ways to retake control over nominations from candidates, voters, and the media (a theory known as "the party decides").

▶ What evidence do Cohen et al. (2008) present for this conclusion?

▶ How well have more recent nominations fit with their theory?

Diversifying the Candidate Pool

Candidates and Democratic Choice

In her Persuall comments on Carnes (2014), Kade Bose made the astute point that one reason working-class citizens are underrepresented is that

voters may be able to remove officials who don't represent them, but the available replacements most likely will take a more similar stance as the official they replaced.

This highlights the more general point that voters' ability to select representatives depends on the pool of candidates who run in the first place. If certain types are in short supply, then voters' choices will be artificially limited.

A Democratic Wave, a Republican Echo?

**Women Nominees for U.S. House**
2016, 2018, and 2020
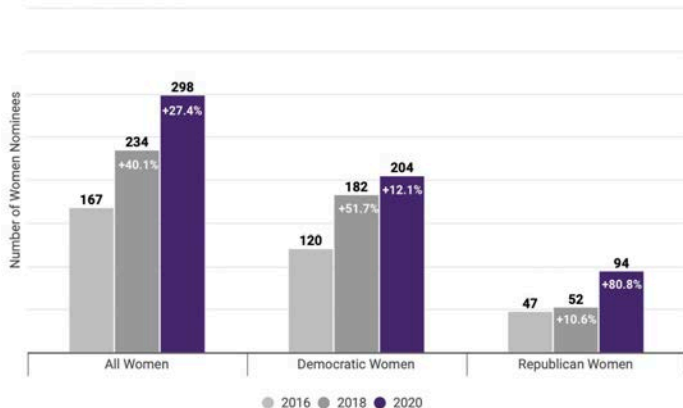
Counts include only major-party nominees and do not include nominees for non-voting positions in the U.S. House. Nominees will be determined in Louisiana on November 3, 2020. Percentages reflect the percentage increase in women's nominations between from the previous election year (column to the left).

The Intersection of Race and Gender

Women of Color as a Percentage of All Women Nominees for U.S. House by Party, 2004-2020
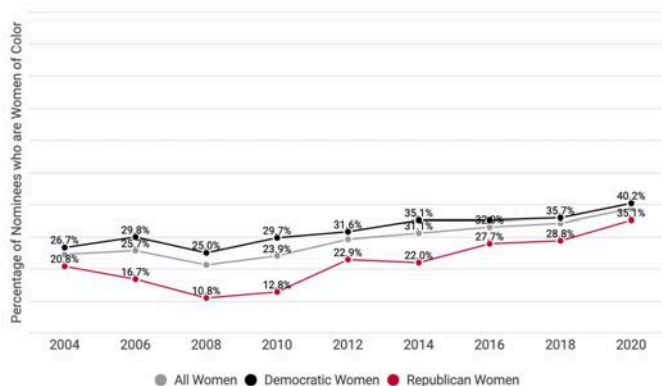
Counts include only major-party nominees and do not include nominees for non-voting positions in the U.S. House. Nominees will be determined in Louisiana on November 3, 2020. Race data relies on candidate self-identification. Women nominees for whom race identification was unavailable ranges from 0 to 4 cases in this time period. Those nominees are included to count percentage of total.

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The Rise of (Mostly Democratic) Women in Congress
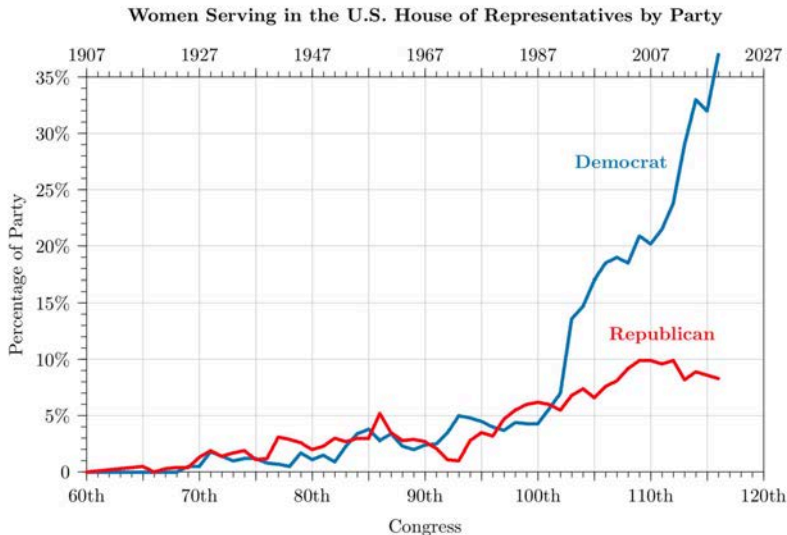
Women Serving in the U.S. House of Representatives by Party

Breakout: Brainstorming Reforms

Relying on evidence from the readings, brainstorm ways to increase the representativeness of the candidate pool in American elections.

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