

PARTY ANIMAL:
THE FRONT-RUNNER IN THE PRESIDENTIAL INVISIBLE PRIMARY

By

JOSEPH C. JACKSON

(Under the direction of Dr. Paul Gurian)

ABSTRACT

The presidential invisible primary has become an increasingly important battleground since the electoral reforms of the 1970s. In the invisible primary, one candidate will usually begin to dominate all the others. This candidate, referred to as the front-runner, almost always wins the subsequent primary elections and the party presidential nomination. This paper seeks to explain how a particular candidate becomes the front runner during the invisible primary. It does this through the use of voter polls, electoral records, and fundraising record from 1980 to 2000. It demonstrates that front-runners develop an early lead based on positive name recognition. The front-runner can then use that early lead to demonstrate the electability that party voters desire in a candidate. In the rare case that there is no front-runner, other factors determine who wins the invisible primary. Particularly influential is fundraising ability and electoral prospects in the first primary in New Hampshire.

INDEX WORDS: Invisible primary, Presidential elections, Primary elections,
Pre-primary, Presidential nominations

PARTY ANIMAL:
THE FRONT-RUNNER IN THE PRESIDENTIAL INVISIBLE PRIMARY

by

JOSEPH C. JACKSON

B.A., University of Southern Mississippi, 2000

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2002

© 2002

Joseph C. Jackson

All Rights Reserved

PARTY ANIMAL:
THE FRONT-RUNNER IN THE PRESIDENTIAL INVISIBLE PRIMARY

by

JOSEPH C. JACKSON

Approved:

Major Professor: Paul Gurian

Committee: Audrey Haynes
Arnold Fleischmann

Electronic Version Approved:

Gordhan L. Patel
Dean of the Graduate School
University of Georgia
August 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SECTION	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
The Invisible Primary.....	6
The Candidates.....	9
The Rules.....	13
Fundraising.....	14
Voter Behavior.....	16
The Central Questions.....	19
3. THEORY.....	20
4. HYPOTHESES.....	24
5. DATA AND METHODS.....	25
6. FINDINGS.....	28
Invisible Primary Regression Models.....	29
Pre-primary Case Studies.....	33
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	42
NOTES.....	45

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Emblazoned across the front of the April 29, 2002, issue of *US News and World Report* is the question, “Who Can Beat Bush?” Underneath the headline is a photo of presidential aspirant John Edwards talking to some prospective voters. With the general election still over two years away, Edwards and the other potential Democratic candidates are already out on the campaign trail shaking hands, smiling, and generally making nuisances of themselves. (Simon 2002) Welcome to the 2004 invisible primary.

The United States uses a complex series of elections to determine who will be chosen to be the next president. The final and most visible of these is the general election in which the candidates from the two major parties and any minor party candidates are pitted against each other. The general election is only the last and most publicized election on the road to the White House. The candidates for the general election must be chosen first. Before 1972, the parties chose their candidates at a national convention where party leaders would gather and bargain. After the 1968 election, the Democratic Party implemented a system in which the presidential nominees are chosen in a more democratic fashion, through primary elections. Since those reforms, the spring before the general election has witnessed the two parties’ long nomination campaigns. The two major parties, and occasionally a minor one, carry out a series of primary elections in which the voters of each state decide who of the often many aspiring presidential candidates should represent that party in the November elections. Before the primaries begin there is a time and a process that can be described as the “invisible primary”

(Hadley 1976, Buell 1996a). The invisible primary takes place between the end of the last general election and the beginning of the next primary sequence, when most candidates, and all serious ones, begin their campaign for the presidency. Since the 1968 reforms, the invisible primary has progressively become more influential. It has become a key battleground in the fight over the hearts and pocketbooks of party activists and the voting public.

Let me begin by describing the flow of events and what I believe to be influential. Most candidates will have announced their candidacies by the beginning of the summer before the primaries. In this time period a year before the primaries, the only assets a candidate might have are good connections with other party personnel, personal wealth, government experience, and a publicly recognized name. Over the course of the years leading up to the primaries, the candidates try to gather support. They attempt to raise funds, procure the support of other elected officials (endorsements) and party activists, court the favor of agents in the press, and generally increase their name recognition. Toward the end of the invisible primary, the candidates begin to campaign actively in New Hampshire and Iowa. During this time, viability becomes important, especially how the candidates are polling in Iowa and New Hampshire. If there is no dominant front-runner yet, the leading candidate in the early Iowa or New Hampshire polls will often take the lead in national polls.

Since 1980 the five undisputed front-runners were all well known national political figures with public records. Walter Mondale was vice-president under Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush was vice-president under Reagan, Robert Dole was Senate majority leader, Al Gore was Clinton's vice-president, and George W. Bush was

governor of Texas and the son of a recent president. All of them were very well known before the elections began. All of them raised more money than their competitors, and all of them won the party nomination with moderate to little opposition (except Mondale). Ronald Reagan was not a clear front-runner, as he trailed Connally in fundraising before the 1980 primaries, but Reagan had a substantial lead in party preference polls and only trailed Connally by a small amount in fundraising. Each of these candidates was considered the front-runner early in the process. I consider these six candidates to be undisputed front-runners because they had a majority, or near a majority (40% or more), of the preference poll support early in the process.

The other three front-runners had a more complex rise to the top. President Jimmy Carter in 1980 (and Ford in 1976, but that is outside this study) is unique because he is the only incumbent in this study to be challenged seriously from within his own party. As such, his campaign was subject to different forces than the others; particularly important were public perceptions of how well he was doing as president. Democratic voters, instead of considering how well known or liked a prospective candidate was, actually had Carter's performance to consider. Democrats could consider that their potential nominee, Carter, was not doing a good job as president and was not well liked by the public as a whole. Many Democrats felt that an unpopular president would not be reelected. While fewer than thirty-five percent of the public approved of Carter's performance, Senator Edward Kennedy had a thirty point lead in preference polls. When Carter's approval rates started to climb, mainly due to the Iran hostage crisis, so did his share in preference polls. By January, over fifty percent of the public approved of Carter's job performance and he

had an eight point advantage over Kennedy in the polls. Carter's job approval numbers remained strong and he easily clinched the nomination.

The failed and nominal front-runners are the most interesting of the lot. Hart in 1988 and Cuomo in 1992 both talked about entering the race and both were the favorites of their party. Hart entered the race briefly before leaving due to the threat of a scandal. Both were well known and appeared to have a strong following in the party. Neither truly entered the race (though Hart jumped back in shortly before the New Hampshire primary before bowing out permanently). Besides Hart in 1988, Jesse Jackson (a failed front-runner) led a pack of relatively unknown Democratic candidates. Jackson was by far the most recognized, but he lost his slight lead in the preference polls to Dukakis in the pre-primary. It is perhaps telling that Dukakis had a significant advantage in fundraising. Dukakis consistently ran second to Jackson in preference polls before the pre-primary, and his standing in New Hampshire gave him the slight boost to get into the lead in the national polls.

Bill Clinton likewise took advantage of an absent favorite (Cuomo) to rise from obscurity to a late (December/January), but dominating, lead over his rivals in the pre-primary. He never received more than six percent of the preference polls until late in the pre-primary. His lead in the December and January New Hampshire polls allowed him to vault into the lead with over forty percent of the preference poll share before a series of scandals started damaging him. The 1988 and particularly the 1992 campaigns show the effects of momentum can be effective in the absence of a dominant front-runner. As the primary elections draw close, the media begins to report how a candidate is polling in

New Hampshire. In these two cases, without a dominant front-runner, the public can key on the leaders of this first lap of the horse race.

The invisible primary had received little scholarly attention. Likewise, it receives little media attention. It is a time period lacking in hard data and extensive studies. Electoral research up to this point has been concerned mainly with individual voting decisions, election outcomes, the structure of the race, or strategic candidate behavior in the primaries or general election. The limited literature concerning the invisible primary has focused on its effect on the subsequent primary election or candidates' behavior as they prepare for the beginning of the primaries. The invisible primary literature's major contribution to political science is the idea that the "front-runner," a candidate who leads hisⁱ competitors at the end of the invisible primary, will eventually win the nomination of the party. (Buell 1996a and 1996b, Mayer 1996)

In all but one of the nine contested (when two or more candidates sought the nomination) presidential elections since 1980, the front-runner at the end of the invisible primary season won the nomination a few months later.ⁱⁱ These front-runners almost always win their party's presidential nomination. However, little research has focused on what attributes constitute a front-runner and how a particular candidate becomes the front-runner. This paper will attempt to do that. I will attempt to begin the foundation for the study of the invisible primary and discover how a candidate "wins" the invisible primary. How does a candidate become the front-runner?

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The presidential campaign literature highlights a variety of factors that influence elections. The ones crucial to an understanding of the invisible primary are those associated with the candidates themselves, the impact of the rules, the dynamics of fundraising, and the behavior of voters. These four factors set the stage for the invisible primary. They dictate how it progresses and what effects it will have. First, we should examine the stage.

The Invisible Primary. The invisible primary, as stated earlier, is the long period of time after the previous general election but before the beginning of the next primary season. It generally would last from election Tuesday in November of a presidential election year until the New Hampshire primaries and Iowa caucuses four years later. However, the invisible primary has no absolute beginning date because some candidates begin to plan many years in advance for a campaign. The ostensible end is the first election of the primary season, usually the New Hampshire primary and Iowa caucuses, but even that is disputed.

The invisible primary is not widely studied, though often referenced. Emmett Buell (1996a) is one of the few scholars examining its effects. His work focuses on how the invisible primary affects the primary season that follows, particularly if the primary winner can be forecast by the end of the invisible primary. Most of his work goes toward refuting Hadley's statement that "the race was over before we paid our money to watch,

or reporters and TV crews pulled on their galoshes and headed for the New Hampshire Snows.” (Hadley 1976, 2) Buell utilizes data from the end of the invisible primary in his study. He focuses on campaign finances, national poll standings, straw polls, and news media exposure to determine if the candidates’ performance in the invisible primary determines the eventual nominee (Buell 1996a). He finds strong correlations between strong fundraising ability and winning the nomination. Preference poll results are the next best indicator of nomination campaign success. Straw poll results correlate poorly with the primary winners. Interestingly, invisible primary media coverage correlates strongly with preference poll standings, but does not correlate as well with the winning the nomination. This is because, “[n]ews media coverage faithfully reflected national poll standings. Clear inequalities in the polls correlated with unequal coverage of Democratic aspirants in the 1984 invisible primary... Likewise, unclear polls foretold inconsistent coverage of Democratic aspirants during the early days of the 1988 and 1992 races.” (1996a, 36) The media appears to reflect change in the invisible primary, not cause it. Buell concludes by saying, “what happens in an invisible primary is important to the rest of the nominating process but not to the point that actual primaries become mere affirmations of what the invisible primary has already decided.” (1996a, 37)

In a follow-up piece, Buell (1996b) updates his account of the invisible primary to include the 1996 campaign. Buell states that the new evidence does not refute any of his previous hypotheses. The 1996 campaign supports the idea that the leader in the invisible primary will eventually become the nominee, but that is the limit of its predictive power.

William G. Mayer (1996) developed a model to predict primary vote share based on data from the invisible primary. He focuses on campaign finances and poll standings

to construct his model. The model then successfully predicts five of the six nominees in the years 1980-1992 and accounts for about seventy percent of the variation in primary vote share. His independent variables are operationalized as follows. “The first is the percentage of party identifiers who supported each candidate in the last national Gallup poll taken before the start of delegate selection activities... The second is the total amount of money each candidate raised before the election year, divided by the largest amount of money raised by any candidate in the party’s nomination race.” (1996, 49-50)

The invisible primary literature leaves us with a rough conception of the character and forces at play during the invisible primary. We see that there is an important period of time before the primaries begin. We also see that candidates who “win” the invisible primary tend to win the nomination. However, these few articles focus on the last month before the primaries and do not address the effects of what came before. It tells us that at the very end of the invisible primary, the candidate with the most money and the most voter support will probably win the nomination. It does not tell us how that candidate secures the most money or support.

Exactly when the invisible primary ends is subject to some question. Many political scientists consider the primary race (as opposed to the invisible primary) to have begun before Iowa or New Hampshire. I will take this one step further and divide the invisible primary into two different stages. The first and longest stage I will continue to call the invisible primary. The new stage I refer to is the pre-primary. It is the months just prior to the New Hampshire primary and the Iowa caucuses, when the media begin to focus on the candidates and the campaign activities begin to pick up pace. This assertion is supported by several recent pieces on media influence in the invisible primary and

early primaries. Haynes et al. (2000) find that the factors which dominate candidate exit decisions change from media attention early in the invisible primary to competitiveness later in the process. Haynes and Flowers (2002) find that candidate messaging strategies change over the course of the invisible primary. Of particular relevance, they find that the amount of competitive positioning increases as the primaries near. Competitive positioning refers to candidates comparing themselves to other candidates in terms of fundraising, endorsements, or poll standings. These papers suggest that the actions of the candidates and the media change as the primaries near.

The term “invisible” does not seem to apply to the final months of the invisible primary because of the increased public attention. Additionally, it is my belief that the pre-primary is different from the invisible primary and more similar to the primary campaign, with momentum and the effects of horse race coverage becoming predominant. In the invisible primary, most of the important events take place in the final year before the primaries, when the candidates begin to step up their activities and announce their candidacies. This paper will focus on that last year, approximately January a year before the primaries to the January just before the New Hampshire primary.

The Candidates. What characteristics will the front-runner most likely have? Aldrich (1980) states that there are several general constraints on those who would be presidential contenders. The candidate must be a member of one of the two major parties, except for well-known and popular military figures (war heroes). He must be a white, male, and Christian. He must have relatively mainstream political beliefs. Aldrich also says that most presidential contenders are governors, senators, or vice-presidents because they run

from a “strong electoral base.” These criteria give us the beginning of a standard to measure potential candidates. If they do not fulfill these minimal criteria, they probably will not be a front-runner, if even a candidate. Aldrich incorporates the work of two other political scientists in his account of political candidates. Schlesinger (1966) states that political offices can be ordered on the basis of their attractiveness to politicians, with the presidency being the most attractive. Presidential candidates have “progressive ambition” because, if given the option, they would prefer to hold “higher office”. Rohde (1979) elaborates on this concept with three important points. First: it is possible to identify politicians who desire higher office. Second: politicians are rational; they choose the outcome that provides the highest expected utility (benefits outweigh risks). Third: some politicians are risk takers and are more likely to attempt to run for president despite disadvantages in the expected utility calculus.

Aldrich’s calculus of candidacy includes a list of liabilities. They relate to youth, length of service, region, reelection status, and renomination status. Length of service refers to how long an individual has served in public office. Candidates who have only held office for a short time are considered at a disadvantage. Reelection status refers to the office a candidate occupies at the time of the presidential election. Aldrich suggested that a candidate who had to run for two offices simultaneously would be disadvantaged relative to a candidate who could focus on one election. A Democratic candidate who had been nominated before, but lost the general election, was also considered to be at a disadvantage. (Aldrich 1980) Of the six, region is no longer important. When Aldrich wrote this book in 1980, Southern candidates were unlikely to win either nomination or the White House. In recent years, that has been proven not to be the case as three out of

the last four presidents were from the South. Reelection status has also shown to be less inhibiting as sitting governors and senators have won presidential nominations.

Front-runners are the most important subset of candidates. The idea of a front-runner is generally more a media concept than a political science term, but it is a useful label for the individual candidate in the lead. In its simplest meaning, the term refers to the candidate who appears to most likely to win the nomination. Political junkies and the media devise much more elaborate schemes to determine the front-runner. ABC News has developed its own tracking poll (a poll that is updated periodically to generate “horse race” type coverage of the campaign) of the 2004 presidential primary campaign’s invisible primary. They include a multitude of criteria to determine the relative rankings of the prospective candidates, such as fundraising potential, campaign style, and the mysterious “Clinton factor”. (ABC News, 2002) Many of these criteria, like the “Clinton Factor”, have very obscure meanings and are difficult to describe. They only highlight the confusion and uncertainty that surround the invisible primary.

Mayer (1996) and Buell (1996) both looked at what I call the pre-primary phase of the invisible primary. They saw clear front-runners in almost all the races based on preference polls and fundraising as illustrated by the last two columns in table 1 (updated to 2000). Though Buell and Mayer were able to label eight of the nine eventual nominees based on the final pre-primary preference polls alone, earlier approval polls are not as accurate. Polls from early fall of the year before the election predict only six of the nine eventual nominees. So, in two of the nine campaigns, the leading candidate changed during the invisible primary or pre-primary. An important question is what caused that change.

Table 1 – Invisible Primary Statistics

Candidate	Name Recognition Spring - Summer		Preference Polls		Total Invisible Primary Receipts
		Positive Perception	August	Final Pre- Primary	
(In Percentages)					
1980 Rep					
* Reagan	94	---	40	41	\$7,210,951
Baker	64	---	15	14	3,084,617
Connally	79	---	14	13	9,159,737
Bush	46	---	3	9	4,455,095
Anderson	---	---	---	4	505,989
1980 Dem					
* Carter	99	---	21	51	\$5,751,579
Kennedy	95	---	53	37	3,893,375
1984 Dem					
* Mondale	91	---	41	49	\$11,448,262
Glenn	76	---	25	13	6,417,718
Jackson	---	---	---	13	358,415
McGovern	79	---	---	5	249,827
Cranston	42	---	7	3	4,715,995
Hart	27	---	4	3	1,874,083
Askew	32	---	2	2	2,191,786
Hollings	17	---	2	1	1,626,384
1988 Rep					
* Bush	96	---	40	45	\$19,058,415
Dole	79	---	18	30	14,314,121
Kemp	65	---	10	5	10,206,670
Haig	85	---	7	2	1,355,058
Robertson	79	---	5	8	16,406,966
Du Pont	31	---	3	2	5,537,436
1988 Dem					
Hart	83	---	---	23	\$2,301,247
* Dukakis	46	---	13	16	10,371,229
Jackson	94	---	17	15	1,403,094
Gephardt	39	---	3	9	5,902,763
Simon	45	---	7	9	6,056,829
Gore	46	---	8	6	3,941,887
Babbitt	36	---	2	4	2,446,219
1992 Dem					
* Clinton	47	21	3	42	\$3,304,020
Brown	81	36	11	16	1,034,474
Harkin	52	24	5	9	2,182,070
Kerrey	50	22	4	10	1,945,313
Tsongas	48	20	2	9	2,629,892
Cuomo	79	50	31	---	---

1996 Rep					
* Dole	95	63	46	47	\$31,988,345
Forbes	---	---	---	16	25,440,564
Gramm	62	27	9	8	25,715,538
Buchanan	89	27	10	7	10,731,288
Alexander	51	12	4	3	12,535,861
Lugar	---	---	2	3	7,367,800
Dornan	---	---	1	1	288,444
Keyes	---	---	2	1	2,083,545
2000 Rep					
* Bush	95	68	59	65	\$66,854,082
McCain	56	27	5	15	13,522,750
Quayle	99	46	6	---	4,131,489
Bauer	39	14	2	2	6,185,187
Keyes	---	---	---	4	3,557,811
Forbes	84	49	6	7	34,150,952
E. Dole	94	75	8	---	5,055,031
2000 Dem					
* Gore	99	61	64	67	\$27,845,861
Bradley	67	38	28	21	27,152,923

* - Eventual Nominee

The Rules. Since the 1970s reforms, changing rules have altered the face of presidential elections. Of particular relevance, they have changed the dynamics of the primary season and increased the importance of the invisible primary. Hagen and Mayer (2000) point to three consequences of the reforms. First is the advent of the plebiscitary primary elections. The McGovern-Fraser Commission's insistence on democratic processes took decision-making power away from party elites. It made the nomination contest dependent upon winning support from the activists and voters who participate in primaries and caucuses. Second is the advent of the extended presidential election campaign, which begins a year or more before the conventions. They estimate that the average date of announcement has moved back from 230 days before the convention in 1972 to 475 days before the convention in 1996. Third, "[i]t produced a system characterized by an extraordinary rush to judgment." (8) The last point refers to the phenomenon known as

“front loading.” Front loading is the trend of many states moving their primaries closer to the front of the primary calendar, causing the campaign to become more compressed. It has the effect of forcing candidates out of the race shortly after it has begun and limiting the amount of time voters have to consider the candidates. Morris Udall, one of the candidates for the 1976 Democratic nomination has a colorful description of how the new primary system worked:

It’s like a football game, in which you say to the first team that makes a first down with ten yards, ‘Hereafter your team has a special rule. Your first downs are five yards. And if you make three of those you get a two-yard first down. And we’re going to let your first touchdown count twenty-one points. Now the rest of you bastards play catch-up under the regular rules. (quoted by Witcover 1977, 693)

Front loading also increases the amount of money needed to compete effectively. Busch (2000) reports that the Republicans considered “both a well known name and a \$20 million war chest a virtual prerequisite for any serious candidacy” in 1996. (61)

Fundraising. After the scandals surrounding Richard Nixon’s resignation from office, the U.S. Congress reformed the system of campaign finance. The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1974 put limits on contributions and made disclosure of sources mandatory. Where earlier candidates could continue an election by securing the support of a few wealthy donors, now any candidate who wanted to compete had to raise millions of dollars in \$1000 bites. Front loading combined with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) limits have made early fundraising essential; the candidates no longer have the time during the primaries to raise the needed level of funds. Implied by the earlier

fundraising efforts of the candidates is the idea that activists and donors also have to commit earlier.

The importance of early fundraising is highlighted by Norrander's (1993) discussion of the impact of rule changes on the primaries. She finds that the front-loaded calendar has increased the need for massive funds early in the campaign. The large multi-state Super Tuesday primaries have minimized the opportunities for a momentum candidate to capitalize on early victories and raise funds. The momentum candidate does not have enough time between the first primary in New Hampshire and the Super Tuesday primaries to raise a lot of funds. Without those funds, a candidate that does not already have deep pockets can not afford to campaign in all the states holding Super Tuesday election. A momentum candidate is simply overwhelmed. Front-runners can afford to campaign across the country. The large financial and recognition advantages they have allow them to overcome early stumbles and win the nomination.

A second point on the importance of early fundraising comes from Hinckley and Green (1996). They theorize that fundraising does not exclusively follow the momentum-based model discussed in previous literature. They propose and find evidence of an alternative theory of fundraising based on organizational strength. Fundraising success in the primaries is based on the organization that is built during the invisible primary. They point out that their theory does call into question the 'zero-sum fundraising' envisioned by earlier political scientists such as Aldrich (1980). Unlike vote shares, one candidate's gain in fundraising is not necessarily another candidate's loss. Hinckley and Green find that in most cases the candidates have relatively independent sources of funds. The

candidates' access to those funds depends as much on organizational strength as electoral ability.

Voter Behavior. Bartels (1987) gives a good example of how important the concept of the front-runner is to political science. In his discussion of the effects of momentum on voter choice, he includes only two variables, perceptions of the alternative's chances and *predispositions toward the front-runner*. According to Bartels, the front-runner defines the race and the other candidates become the alternatives. The point of Bartels's argument, however, is that perceptions of viability are very important in a primary campaign. Any candidate, but particularly those other than the front-runner, must be perceived as having a real chance to win if they are to receive support.

Bartels (1988) expands on his discussion by describing some of the factors that primary voters consider when making decisions. Key among them, especially early in the primary campaign, is recognition. "In electoral politics mere public familiarity, although far from sufficient to ensure a candidate's success, does appear necessary. Primary voters do not cast their ballots for candidates they do not know, at least superficially." (57) The 1984 NES survey shows that less than one-half of one percent of Democratic identifiers voted for a candidate whom they did not feel capable of rating on a feeling thermometer. In the invisible primary, when most of the candidates are unknown to the public, the one who is most recognized will receive the most support. He will receive the most support because voters do not know the other candidates, not necessarily because voters prefer him to the other candidates. "[V]oters prefer the devil they know more about to the devil they know less about." (78-79)

Once the candidates are known to the public, viability and electability become important to voters (Bartels 1987). Is electability the only motivation for voters? Do primary voters support the candidate they consider most likely to win no matter the candidate's ideological persuasion? The Purist–Amateur model (Polsby & Wildavsky 1980, Wilson 1962, Kirkpatrick 1976) would say no. The purist model stipulates that political activists (essentially any primary or caucus participant) are mainly political amateurs; they are interested in politics for purposive reasons. Purist activists desire to use the system to enact their preferred policies, and they care less about winning office if it requires compromising those policies. The purist model predicts that political activists would choose potential candidates based on ideological reasons instead of simple electoral considerations. Consequently, we might see an early front-runner with a high level of support, but once other ideologically distinct candidates began to emerge, party activists would switch their support to the most ideologically pleasing candidate. The result of this type of system would be divisive primaries with large fields of candidates.

Abramowitz and Stone (1984) among others (Aldrich 1980, Coleman 1972, Abramson et al. 1992) have developed an alternative model of political activists. The Rationalist model stipulates that activists are educated and sophisticated and they do not neglect general election concerns. A rational political activist attempts to meld ideological interest with a pragmatic desire to win. If confronted with a situation where there are multiple candidates, a rational actor will choose the candidate who presents the best combination of ideological attractiveness with electability. Abramowitz and Stone (1984) find that activists take electability into consideration but do not connect electability and moderation. They find that activists do not necessarily believe that the

most ideologically moderate candidate is the one with the most electability. Activists could, though do not always, consider an extremist candidate to be the most electable. This contrasts with one of the tenets of the widely held median voter theory, specifically that ideological moderates are palatable to a larger number of people, and therefore, more electable. Abramowitz and Stone find that voters are most likely to support the most viable candidate no matter the candidate's ideology. Then the activists equate viability in the nomination with electability in the general election. Abramowitz and Stone state, "The most important reason why Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan were victorious in these 11 caucus-convention states is that the delegates attending the party convention viewed them as more electable than their opponents." (131)

Bartels (1987 and 1988) explains that sophisticated voters respond to changes in candidates electoral chances. When a candidate does well in a primary his support in the electorate goes up. This is due to more voters believing that the candidate has a chance of winning the election. Voters need a measure of viability to support a long-shot candidate. They do not wish to "throw away" their vote. Abramson et al. (1992) support this finding with their discussion of "sophisticated" voting. They find that "[v]ote preferences changed dramatically, more in line with changing perceptions of viability than candidate evaluations." (67)

To sum up, since the 1970s the primaries have gotten shorter while the invisible primary has gotten longer. Frontloading has compressed the amount of time candidates have. Especially crucial to candidates that wish to survive the compressed calendar is recognition, organization, and funding. If they do not have time to secure these goods during the primary they must do it earlier, during the invisible primary. Recent history

shows us that the candidate who does the best job in the invisible primary usually wins the primaries. The voters are not absent from this process. The events of the invisible primary are, on the whole, under the radar of typical voters. If asked which candidate they support they generally respond in favor of the candidate they recognize best. As public knowledge of the race increases, partisan voters support the candidate who appears to have the best chance of winning the general election.

The Central Questions. The invisible primary sets up all presidential election events that follow. It is similar to a race that allows the racers to start in different positions.

Throughout the invisible primary, certain candidates, particularly front-runners, inch (or perhaps sprint) forward. When the gun goes off, the front-runner is already in the lead. All the other candidates must not only run the race, but also must catch up to the front-runner. Despite the commonly recognized head start of the front-runner (Mayer 1996, Bartels 1987, Norrander 1993), political science has rarely examined what factors determine who will be the front-runner. What characteristics must a candidate have to be the front-runner? How does a candidate establish and solidify a lead before the official race even begins? Why do some early front-runners stumble and why do some emerge very late? This paper will attempt to answer these three questions and develop a coherent model of the invisible primary.

SECTION 3: THEORY

The thread that ties the dominant front-runners, nominal front-runners, and failed front-runners together is electability. While Carter seemed unpopular, his party did not support him. When his popularity improved (and Kennedy self destructed) Carter gained the support of the party. Jesse Jackson (1988) and Jerry Brown (1992) could never prove their electability; though they had very high name recognition, they also had high negative approval ratings (many people knew about them and did not like them). Dukakis and Clinton had the strongest fundraising organizations in their respective classes and led in early polls in New Hampshire. Reagan had proved his viability in 1976 when he nearly defeated a sitting president, and as Abramowitz and Stone (1984) pointed out, activists connect viability and electability. The front-runners all had large early preference poll leads to which they could point as evidence of their electability.

A dominant front-runner like Mondale or George W. Bush establishes an early lead on the basis of widespread recognition and perceptions of electability. Electability in these early days can be as simple as being well known, not disliked, and somewhat respected. Early preference poll respondents do not have much information, so when asked who they support; they will usually choose that person most familiar to them. Their choice is not based on ideology, outside of broad ideology encompassed by the party label, or on issue positions. These early polls measure mostly public recognition, but fame is not only positive. While it is good to be famous, being infamous is not as helpful.

If a candidate is widely known but is poorly thought of, his fame is likely to hurt more than help his place in the polls.

Once a candidate gains an early lead in the invisible primary and becomes the “front-runner” he is in a strong position. As Bartels (1988) stated, the front-runner is the default choice of party members, and other candidates are alternatives. A dominant front-runner is established based on name recognition. The front-runner has the luxury of not having to prove that he has a chance to win, he has been winning (in the polls, fundraising, best known etc.) from the beginning. The early lead due to simple name recognition gives the front-runner a late lead based on perceptions of electability.

A dominant invisible primary front-runner can often parley this early advantage into financial support; after all, he is the one “in the lead.” If he convinces the party to support him, he will gain the financial resources to wage the ever more expensive media campaign, particularly resources necessary with the increasing compression of the primary schedule. The financial resources also reinforce perceptions of their electability. Several candidates in 2000, including Elizabeth Dole, saw Bush’s massive campaign chest and concluded there was no way to beat him. Well known candidates who do not convince the party of their electability, like Jerry Brown or Jesse Jackson, also have weaker fundraising. Party supporters are unlikely to give money to a candidate who does not have a serious chance of winning (Aldrich 1980). This too is reinforcing. When the campaign begins in earnest they will not have the funds to compete and will fall by the wayside, to be overtaken by another candidate who appears to have a better chance and more money.

Once the invisible primary shifts into the pre-primary, the media begin to become critically important in shaping the race. They begin to report the condition of the race in New Hampshire. New Hampshire receives an inordinate amount of media coverage because it holds the first primary in the nation. The horse race there has serious implications for the rest of the primary season, but candidate performance in New Hampshire is often unrelated to earlier national performances. New Hampshire voters are subject to different influences than the rest of the country. In the lead up to the first primary, candidates engage in a great deal of “retail campaigning” in New Hampshire. They travel across the state meeting people and attending debates, rallies, and meetings. New Hampshire voters have a much more immediate knowledge of the candidates than the rest of the nation. In the low-information pre-primary and early primary seasons, the rest of the nation will take cues from the behavior of New Hampshire voters. If New Hampshire likes a candidate, his stock will rise in the rest of the nation.

New Hampshire’s effect is particularly pronounced if there is no dominant front-runner. The national public does not know whom to support if all the candidates are relatively unknown. Generally the media will reflect a mixed field with a low level of coverage (Buell 1996a). The candidate that does well in New Hampshire will receive the double boon of increased media coverage and increased perceptions of viability. In a race without a dominant front-runner a nominal front-runner will emerge in the pre-primary, usually based on performance in New Hampshire. New Hampshire is the first big news event surrounding the presidential contest, and the last chance a candidate has to “win” the invisible primary (pre-primary). The nominal pre-primary front-runner does not have the same advantages as the dominant front-runner. He has held the lead only a short time

and does not reap the same financial bounty as a dominant front-runner. He also has a less imposing lead. The primary races following a close pre-primary are often much more competitive than those after a one-sided invisible primary.

SECTION 4: HYPOTHESES

1. In the early phases of the invisible primary, higher positive name recognition causes higher levels of voter support.
2. Throughout the invisible primary, the front-runner will enjoy an advantage in fundraising.
3. During the pre-primary, if there is no dominant front-runner then the lead candidate in early New Hampshire polls will emerge as the front-runner.

SECTION 5: DATA AND METHODS

Front-runner status is a label given to that candidate who seems to be in the lead and seems most likely to win the nomination. Each person who talks about the front-runner can define him in a different way, but I believe that the most appropriate measure is to use preference polls as the indicator of front-runners. Preference polls have the advantage of being straightforward and easy to measure. Preference polls are asked of likely voters (in the Democratic or Republican primaries) before the election is held. The pollsters ask the respondent which of the several candidates the respondent would prefer to be the party's presidential nominee. Preference polls are a good indicator because they illustrate the level of support a candidate has in the primary electorate.ⁱⁱⁱ Preference polls are better than other conceptions of front-runners. Fundraising strength, for instance, is widely regarded as an important characteristic of a front-runner. I also regard it as important, but money does not equal electoral strength. It is very difficult for money to make an unpopular or poorly regarded candidate popular, as John Connally and Steve Forbes discovered. In many primary campaigns the fundraising runner-up, the candidate with the second most money, performs poorly while a candidate with little money does well. Some candidates, like Connally and Forbes, are self-financed so it is questionable if their finances are comparable to a candidate who raised funds the traditional way. I want to avoid any of these ambiguities and tap how a candidate stands with the mass public. Preference polls are a straightforward measure of how a candidate would fare if the election were held that day.

The invisible primary takes place in the months and years preceding an election. The media does not extensively cover the candidates' actions that early, and most Americans do not have the time or inclination to do their own research on the candidates. Consequently, when asked their preference, most citizens respond in favor of the candidate whom they recognize. Name recognition clues us into how well known a person is. It is a useful shortcut through many of the effects of the media. Instead of having to examine how much the media reports on a candidate, we can cut right to the final result: is the candidate well known or not? Fame, however, is not always beneficial; a well-known candidate who has more negatives associated with him cannot count on getting as much support as one who does not have such negatives. An example of this would be Jerry Brown in 1992. He was well known by voters, but the media portrayed him as a flake and unsuitable for higher office. Another example would be Pat Buchanan, who is well known and disliked by moderates and liberals. The number of people who have both heard about the candidate and feel positive toward the candidate captures this notion of fame and infamy.

Aldrich's (1980) criteria of traits a candidate must have to be viable are useful control variables. Though his criteria may be dated (he compiled his list in the late 1970s) there still appear to be some traits a candidate must have. Aldrich proposes that all successful candidates must be Caucasian, male, and Christian. They must have a relatively mainstream ideology and have held a significant political office such as senator, governor, or vice-president.

If two candidates have the same preference poll numbers, the best indicator of viability, or the ability to win the nomination, is money. The candidate with the most

money can buy air time to get his name and message out to voters, he can hold party events like get-out-the-vote drives, and he can raise more money. As the acronym for EMILY's list states, "early money is like yeast (it makes the dough rise)." A well-financed candidate, all things being equal, can better survive trouble than a poor candidate and is better able to capitalize on victories.

I have proposed that the invisible primary can be divided into two stages, the invisible primary proper and the pre-primary. In the analysis I am going to treat them as such. First, I want to establish what factors determine who will be the front-runner early in the invisible primary. Name recognition, financial strength, and personal attributes have all been thought to contribute to front-runner status. Accordingly I will run several regression analyses to determine which of these factors affect preference poll standing (my dependent variable) and with what degree of influence. Unlike earlier studies, I am going to try to trace the course of the invisible primary over the entire year preceding the primaries.

Second, I want to determine how the pre-primary influences the race. The pre-primary appears different from the invisible primary, and I want to explore the forces that cause a weak front-runner to fall and allow another candidate to capture the lead. Unfortunately we only have two cases where this happened, the 1988 and 1992 Democratic invisible primaries. To make up for this small number of cases I will perform a case study of these two invisible primaries and compare them to two 'typical' invisible primaries of the 1984 and 2000 Democratic races. I will emphasize the lack of a strong front-runner and how Dukakis and Clinton's early performance in New Hampshire contributed to their emergence.

SECTION 6: FINDINGS

This study uses data from Gallup poll surveys and FEC data from 1979 to 2000. It focuses primarily on presidential job approval, presidential nominee preference polls, and name recognition polls. This study includes the 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 2000 Democratic presidential primaries, and the 1980, 1988, 1996, and 2000 Republican primaries. First, I must demonstrate the relative merit of simple name recognition versus perceptions of the candidate (affection). A bivariate regression of name recognition on preference poll standings shows a strong correlation between recognition and poll standing, but it is by no means perfect. The midyear (August–September before the primary season) preference poll leader is the also the best known candidate in six of the nine campaigns. The other three front-runners are only slightly less well known than their more familiar rivals but have substantial leads in the preference polls. This is shown in Model 1 of Table 2. The model does appear to have a high level of heteroscedasticity due to the presence of well-known candidates who poll very low. An examination of the residuals confirms this fear. I have theoretical reasons to believe simple name recognition is not the best indicator of popularity, so a second model was prepared based on poll respondent perceptions of the candidate instead of pure name recognition.

Model 2 presents a much stronger model: the R-square increases while the level of significance is similar, unfortunately model 2 only includes cases from 1992 to the present because data was not available for earlier periods. Model 2 does show one pronounced outlier; Elizabeth Dole in 2000 was well known and well liked but had low

preference poll numbers. This is due to some questionable measurements; she had announced her withdrawal from the race during the survey period. If Dole is removed from the pool, the model improves still more as shown by model 3.

Table 2 – Name Recognition versus Voter Perception’s Effect on Preference Poll Standings

Model Number	Variable	R-square	b-score	t stat
1	Name recognition	.407	.405	5.863***
2	Voter Perception of Candidate (Affection)	.534	.703	5.138***
3	Model 2 w/o E. Dole	.743	.937	7.980***

Note: *** Denotes significance at the .01 level

Table 2 shows that pure name recognition is not as accurate a predictor of how strongly a candidate will poll early in the invisible primary as some notion of how the public evaluates a candidate. The formation of candidate preference appears to go from basic familiarity to evaluation to a choice of preference. Including the control variables, fundraising and personal characteristics, into the analysis allows us to examine all the theoretically relevant factors.

Invisible Primary Regression Models. Table 3 presents the results of a regression analysis with data from the spring before the primary season, a little more than ten months before the start of delegate selection. The dependent variable, preference polls, lags the independent variables by at least a week throughout the next section. The regression shows some multicollinearity and little heteroscedasticity. The multicollinearity particularly affects the fundraising variable, leading to its significance being reduced. As it is a control variable, no further actions appeared warranted. One potentially important

problem inherent in the study of the presidency is the small number of cases. To avoid a “small-n” problem, I have excluded idiosyncratic variables (i.e., year dummy variables) from the models. This has the added advantage of keeping the models parsimonious and allows me to generalize from the findings. The small number of cases might not accurately represent the “presidential primary process,” but it does at least represent the process as we have seen it. I would hesitate to use these data to predict future elections, but it should be more than adequate to explain past contests.

Table 3 – Early Invisible Primary Preference Poll Model
Dependent Variable: Preference Poll Standing

Variable	B	Beta weight	Standard Error	t-statistic
April Model 4				
Affection	1.000	1.076	.110	9.054***
Fundraising/Receipts	9.065	.111	9.232	.982
Gender	15.978	.212	9.577	1.668
Previous Office	25.657	.644	7.622	3.366***
Moderate Ideology	27.291	.581	8.546	3.193**
Race	7.208	.096	8.129	.887
Adjusted R ²	.890			
S.E.	6.46			
N=	14			

Note: *** Denotes significance at the .01 level, ** Denotes significance at the .05 level.

In this model of the earliest days of the invisible primary, positive name recognition is the most powerful predictor of front-runner status. It has the strongest level of significance and the highest beta weight, indicating that it contributes the most to explaining the variation in preference poll results. Aldrich’s criteria also appear to strongly influence the regression equation.^{iv} A previous elected office and a moderate ideological stance appear to be very important for any candidate to poll well in the early invisible primary. Race, gender, and fundraising all failed to reach statistical significance. The importance of early fundraising is masked somewhat by the other variables. A

bivariate regression of fundraising on preference polls shows a moderate correlation of .482, which is statistically significant. Race and gender both fail to reach significance, but this might be due to the low variance in these two factors, with only one woman and two black men in this sample.

If I advance the time period forward, later in the invisible primary and closer to the beginning of the primary season, the influence of fundraising on preference polls becomes more pronounced, though still not statistically significant. Fundraising also starts to correlate more strongly with affection. Table 4 shows a synopsis of models of August, November, and just before the New Hampshire primary.^v Table 4 shows that each model is significant, but the variables lose significance as the time period is advanced. This series of models shows two things, first that name recognition, particularly positive name recognition, and personal characteristics both influence preference polls, with name recognition being more influential early in the invisible primary. Second, these models start to lose some predictive power as the primary season nears. Models 4, 5, and 6 explain around 85% of the variation in the preference polls, but model 7, the end of the pre-primary, shows over a 20% drop in explanatory power. This indicates that some other variables might gain strength late in the invisible primary.

Table 4 – Mid-Invisible Primary and Pre-Primary Preference Poll Models
 Dependent Variable: Preference Polls

Variable	B	Beta weight	Standard Error	t-statistic
August	Model 5			
Affection	.959	.944	.135	7.085***
Receipts	16.737	.187	11.738	1.426
Previous Office	36.309	.830	8.226	4.414***
Moderate Ideology	37.642	.724	8.757	4.298***
Adjusted R ²	.894			
f-statistic	22.444***			
N=	15			
November	Model 6			
Affection	.787	.747	.157	5.001***
Receipts	29.974	.263	19.236	1.558
Previous Office	13.562	.317	5.801	2.338**
Moderate Ideology	10.439	.244	6.446	1.619
Adjusted R ²	.842			
f-statistic	18.288***			
N=	17			
Final	Model 7			
Affection	.539	.445	.310	1.740
Receipts	67.355	.476	42.612	1.581
Previous Office	15.639	.292	10.095	1.549
Moderate Ideology	12.215	.228	12.215	1.043
Adjusted R ²	.678			
f-statistic	8.373***			
N=	13			

Note: *** Denotes significance at the .01 level, ** Denotes significance at the .05 level.

The substantive character of the main independent variable shows some interesting trends. In model 4, the regression coefficient of the “affection” variable is 1.00. This indicates that early in the invisible primary an increase of 1% in the number of poll respondents who recognize and feel positive toward the candidate, holding the other variables constant, equals a 1% increase in preference poll standing. However, in models 5 and 6, the “affection” regression coefficient declines to 0.96 and 0.79, respectively. The purchasing power of a 1% increase in affection declines over the course of the invisible primary. By the end of the pre-primary, that 1% buys half (if we take model 7’s

coefficient to be near enough to significance to indicate any reliability) of what it bought less than a year earlier.

Fundraising never seems to attain statistical significance in explaining preference polls, though it does gain in strength as the invisible primary progresses. One reason is that as the time period nears the beginning of the primary season, fundraising and positive name recognition become increasingly correlated. They start at a low correlation in April but increase to a moderately high level in November and just before the primaries. Bivariate regressions of fundraising on preference polls also show the increasing influence of money as the invisible primary nears its end. If the fundraising statistic is deleted from the models, they lose from one sixth to one quarter of their explanatory strength. So, although the above models show little evidence that money is influencing preference polls, one should not discount its importance.

Pre-primary Case Studies. The three cases that are contrary to models 4-7 are the Democratic invisible primaries of 1980, 1988, and 1992. The 1980 Democratic race, as previously stated, is unique in this sample because it is the only one where an incumbent was seriously challenged from within his own party, so I will address it first. With an incumbent there are slightly different forces at work than in a typical invisible primary. Electability is still the paramount concern, but for the incumbent name recognition is not the key variable. Since most people know who the president is, the public's feelings become a better indicator, much as the well-known but disliked presidential nominees discussed earlier. In an attempt to get at that public sentiment, I examined presidential job approval scores for Jimmy Carter and compared them to the Democratic Party preference

polls (see table 5). These numbers are from the same poll and are not lagged. Also, Carter's job approval is a sample of the entire nation; the preference polls are just of Democratic identifiers. There appears to be a correlation between Carter's job approval and the Democratic preference. When Carter's job approval scores climbed, so too did his support in the Democratic Party. While there are undoubtedly idiosyncratic reasons why Kennedy's campaign faltered, I find the parallel between Carter's numbers to be very suggestive of a link outside the peculiarities of the campaign. Carter faced a serious challenger because Democrats were afraid he could not win a second term. Once his job approval scores climbed, due in large part to the Iran hostage crisis, he appeared to have a better chance of winning in November and support for him grew.

Table 5 – President Carter Job Approval and the 1980 Democratic Invisible Primary

Date	Carter Job Approval	Carter Preference	Kennedy Preference
June 1979	29	17	52
August 1979	33	21	53
November 1979	38	32	54
December 1979	52	48	40

The 1988 and the 1992 Democratic races form the center of the analysis of the pre-primary. Compare the 1984, 1988, 1992, and 2000 races. In each invisible primary, there was a party favorite who had a large measure of party support. In 1983 it was Walter Mondale, the former vice-president, who had 32% of the Democratic Party behind him over a year before the beginning of the primaries. In 1987, Mondale's principal opponent, Gary Hart, was the party favorite with 37% of the party's support. Mario Cuomo in 1991 did not have as large a lead, but he significantly outpolled his opponents with 23% of the party's support. Vice-President Al Gore is by far the most impressive early front-runner, with 47% of the preference poll in 1999. These races started the same

way, but one major difference occurred: in 1987 Hart dropped out of the race and in 1991 Cuomo never entered. Their withdrawals removed the most popular candidate from the field with no other well-known candidate to take his place. Figure 6 presents the “typical” invisible primary of 1984. Notice that Mondale never relinquishes the lead and none of the other candidates make much upward progress.

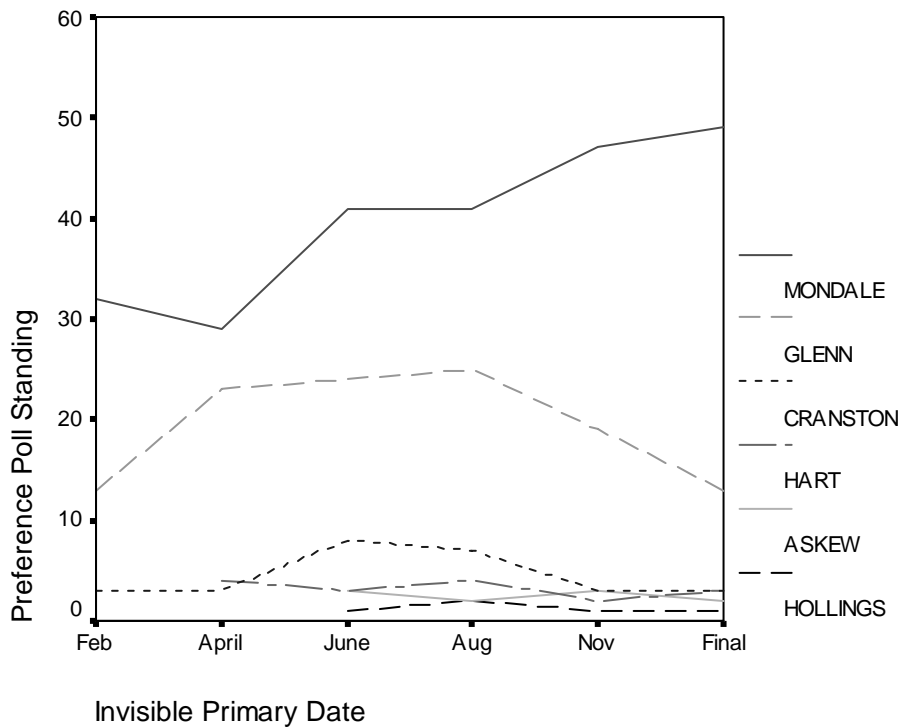


Figure 6 – Preference Polls in the 1984 Invisible Primary

Jesse Jackson became the de facto front-runner of the 1987 invisible primary. He was the best known of the “seven dwarfs,” but like Grumpy, he was not well liked and was widely regarded as unelectable because of his liberalism and his race. His share of the preference polls rarely exceeded 20% and his fundraising organization was anemic;

by the end of the invisible primary he had raised less than 1.5 million dollars. Jerry Brown was in a similar position in 1991. Cuomo wavered before finally announcing that he would not run, and all the other Democratic big shots sat on the sidelines for fear of President Bush's stellar job approval ratings. Brown was left as the best known of a decidedly second tier group of candidates. Like Jackson, Brown's support rarely topped 20% and he raised even less money, barely reaching 1 million dollars before the end of the invisible primary.

Dukakis in 1987 was a clear runner-up to Jackson during the invisible primary, but the position of runner-up does not foretell success in the primaries. Of the second place finishers in the invisible primary, most have faltered early on the primaries and gone nowhere. Connally in 1980, Glenn in 1984, and Gramm in 1996 are examples of faded runner-ups. Each one of these three finished the invisible primary in a strong position. Connally had the most money in 1980, Glenn was second in both fundraising and poll standings, and Gramm set the "minimum to play" in 1996. Though Dukakis at first appears to be no different than his less successful peers there are a few crucial differences. He is notable because he had the strongest fundraising skills of any candidate in his class, as did Connally. The difference between them is that Connally (like Steve Forbes) was self-financed, Dukakis was not. Most importantly, Connally, Glenn, and Gramm all faced popular front-runners; Dukakis faced a much weaker poll leader in Jesse Jackson.

Perhaps the most influential factor in Dukakis's and particularly Clinton's rise is their performance in New Hampshire. Most media outlets perform several polls in New Hampshire days and weeks before the primary begins. The New Hampshire polls receive

more coverage than the Iowa caucuses because primaries are easier to follow than caucuses. Both Dukakis and Clinton led these pre-primary New Hampshire preference polls with over thirty percent of the vote. It was after these polls came out that Dukakis and Clinton gained popularity in the entire nation. Figure 7 presents a graph of preference poll positions in the 1992 invisible primary. Before Cuomo announced that he was not going to run, he led the pack in a manner very similar to Mondale in 1984. Only after Cuomo withdrew was there much motion among the other candidates.

Many candidates have used New Hampshire to get a boost in the polls, but in a field bereft of a dominant front-runner, the boost can put a challenger in the lead. Dukakis's performance in New Hampshire might have been discounted because he was from Massachusetts, practically a favorite son. He was already the first runner-up in the national race and did not need to increase his numbers substantially to capture the lead. Bill Clinton, on the other hand, was one of many little-known candidates before he began to excel in New Hampshire. Clinton did see his preference poll numbers slide after he was beset by a wave of scandalous accusations. Before then, he held the lead in the New Hampshire polls for enough time to gain the lead nationally. He climbed from the status of "also ran" in November to the front-runner in January.

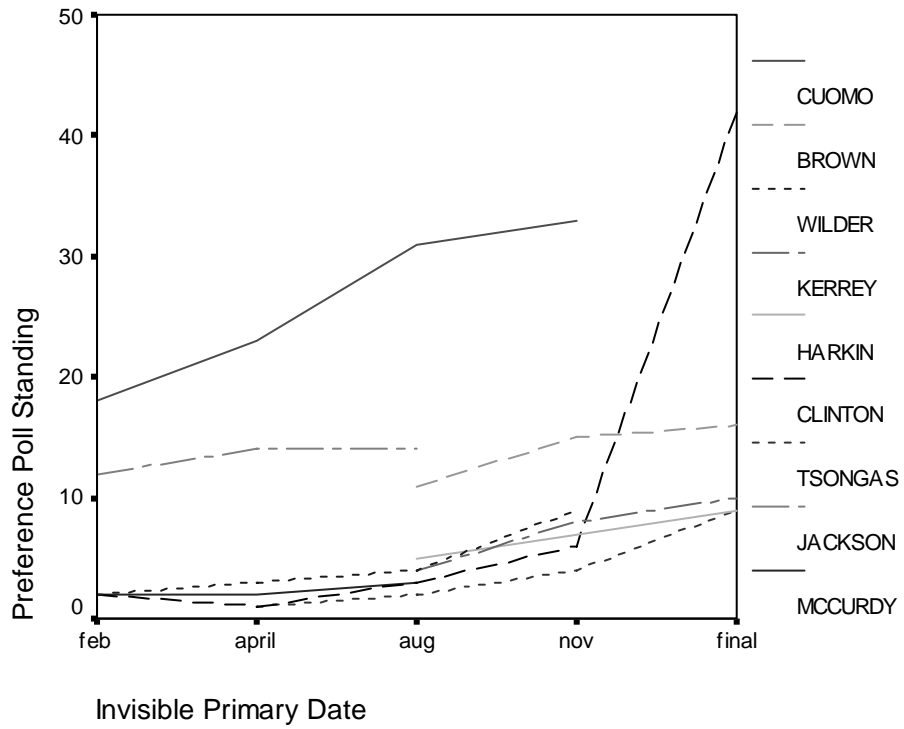


Figure 7 – Preference Polls in the 1992 Invisible Primary.

SECTION 7: CONCLUSIONS

The steps of the invisible primary, like all things, are very dependent on what comes before. At each juncture, there are options which will determine the nature of the following steps. Early in the invisible primary, there is either a well-known, popular figure in the party who is interested in becoming president, or there is not. If he enters the race, the popular figure will become the front-runner and the rest of the invisible primary, pre-primary, and primaries play out very simply. The popular figure can use his popularity to raise more funds and secure more support than any of his competitors. His early lead allows him to get a head start that has, since 1980, been insurmountable to other candidates.

If there is not a dominant popular figure, either because of a total absence or because he does not seek the presidency, then the other candidates have a chance. The dynamics of an electoral race will begin to take effect. The party looks to the early races and fundraising to determine who has the best chance of winning the primary elections. The candidate in the lead of those two races will become the pre-primary leader and will have a limited amount of time to capitalize on this lead. Because his lead is so late in the process, he will not be able to build up as large a lead as an invisible primary front-runner. These effects are shown in the competitive primary races of 1988 and 1992.

The invisible primary has not been extensively studied and there is a wealth of paths further research could explore. Research on the invisible primary should focus on three different veins. First, it should examine how the factors I have addressed have

changed over time; both from the beginning of the modern election system, and over time in a single election. Has name recognition always been important, or has fundraising ability become more important in light of the massive amounts of cash in the 2000 race?

A second interesting question would further examine how voters behave in the invisible primary. How is candidate evaluation established early in the invisible primary? George W. Bush was the front-runner early in the 2000 race, but how much did the typical voter know about him? Though he was widely recognized, very few people were familiar with his record, and yet he managed to have very high positive name recognition. It would be interesting to see how and why Bush was able to accomplish this feat. Also, what effect does the type of voter have on the invisible primary? Are purists more likely to stick to an ideologically similar candidate, even in the early invisible primary?

The final important area of research is the impact of the media on the invisible primary. The media frame the messages from the candidates to the voters. They particularly control the fate of pre-primary nominal front-runners who win their lead late in the process. They are the gate keepers to the national public. Haynes and her colleagues (Haynes et al. 2000, Haynes and Flowers 2000) have begun to fruitfully explore this area.

The McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill is another potential source for new research on the invisible primary. Will the elimination of the soft-money loophole make candidates who can raise large amounts of “hard” donations even more dominating? Without soft-money, how much more important do large hard-money donations become for the November general election? How will that affect voter’s perceptions of candidates?

I would like to make a final note on the evolution of the invisible primary. In 1976, before this study begins, there was almost no invisible primary. The eventual nominee won the election during the primary race. The 2000 race was almost the complete opposite. It appeared to be a foregone conclusion that the invisible primary winners would win the nomination. In that time, from 1976 to 2000, the nature of the race has changed. The invisible primary has become the principal battlefield, the place where the election is won or lost. But this is not an irreversible trend. The importance of the invisible primary is based on the rules of the election. Primary elections and the compression of the primary schedule have created the invisible primary. But the rules are changing and the current round of election reform is very likely to alter drastically the shape of the invisible primary. The invisible primary came into being because it served the interest of ambitious politicians. It came about because of the desire to win and the pressure to compete. Whatever changes occur, that desire will not change and so the needs that drive the invisible primary, electability and viability, will not have changed either. The new system will be driven by the same ambition as the old.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abramowitz, Alan I. and Walter J. Stone. 1984. *Nomination Politics: Party Activists and Presidential Choice*. New York: Praeger publishers.

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, Phil Paolino, and David W. Rohde. 1992.

“‘Sophisticated’ Voting in the 1988 Presidential Primaries.” *American Political Science Review*. 86(1).

Aldrich, John H. 1980. *Before the Convention*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bartels, Larry M. 1987. “Candidate Choice and the Dynamics of the Presidential Nominating Process.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 31(1).

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

Buell, Emmett H. Jr. 1996a. “The Invisible Primary”, *In Pursuit of the White House*, William G. Mayer, Ed. New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.

Buell, Emmett H. Jr. 1996b. “The ‘Invisible Primary’ Revisited”. Presented at the SPSA Conference, Atlanta.

Busch, Andrew E. 2000. “New Features of the 2000 Presidential Nominating Process: Republican Reforms, Front-Loading’s Second Wind, and Early Voting.” *In Pursuit of the White House*, William G. Mayer, Ed. New York: Chatham House Publishers.

- Corrado, Anthony J. 1996. "The Changing Environment of Presidential Campaign Finance." *In Pursuit of the White House*, William G. Mayer, Ed. New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.
- Hadley, Arthur T. 1976. *The Invisible Primary*. Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Hagen, Michael G. and William Mayer. 2000. "The Modern Politics of Presidential Selection: How Changing the Rules Really Did Change the Game." *In Pursuit of the White House*, William G. Mayer, Ed. New York: Chatham House Publishers.
- Haynes, Audrey A., Paul-Henri Gurian, Christopher Zorn, and Michael H. Crespin. 2000. "Winnowing: A Longitudinal Examination of Candidate Drop-Out Rates in the Post-Reform Nomination Campaign." Presented at the APSA Conference, Atlanta.
- Haynes, Audrey A. and Julianne Flowers. 2002. "News Norms and Strategic Timing and Content of Candidate Messages." *Journal of Political Marketing*, forthcoming.
- Haynes, Audrey A., Julianne Flowers, and Paul-Henri Gurian. 2002. "Getting the Word Out Early: Candidate Messaging Strategy During the Invisible Primary." *Political Research Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- Hinckley, Katherine A. & John C. Green. 1996. "Fund-Raising in Presidential Nomination Campaigns: the Primary Lessons of 1988." *Political Research Quarterly*. 49 (4).
- Kirkpatrick, Jeane J. 1976. *The New Presidential Elite: Men and Women in National Politics*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mayer, William G. 1996. "Forecasting Presidential Nominations." *In Pursuit of the White House*, William G. Mayer, Ed. New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.

- Norrander, Barbara. 1993. "Nomination Choices: Caucus and Primary Outcomes, 1976-1988." *American Journal of Political Science*. 37(2).
- Norrander, Barbara. 2000. "The End Game in Post-Reform Presidential Nominations." *Journal of Politics*, 62(4).
- Polsby, Nelson W. and Aaron Wildavsky. 1980. *Presidential Elections: Strategies of American Electoral Politics*. New York: Scribner's Publishing.
- Rohde, David W. 1997. "Risk Bearing and Progressive Ambition: The Case of Members of the United States House of Representatives." *American Journal of Political Science*. 23(1).
- Schlesinger, Joseph. 1966. *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Simon, Roger. 2002. "Who Can Beat Bush?" *U.S. News and World Report*. 123(14). April 29.
- Wilcox, Clyde 1991. "Financing the 1988 Pre-nomination Campaign." *Nominating the President*, Emmett H. Buell, Ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Wilson, James Q. 1962. *The Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Witcover, Jules. 1977. *Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency 1972-1976*. New York: New America Library.

NOTES

ⁱ I apologize for the use of the masculine tense throughout this paper but the presidential election game, up to this point, has been a men only club. The one serious female candidate, Elizabeth Dole, left the race before the primaries even began.

ⁱⁱ Mayer (1996) describes the 1972 and 1976 elections as ‘transitional’. Not all the candidates understood the new rules and the rules themselves were changing, sometimes drastically. He does not consider the modern primary system to have begun until 1980.

ⁱⁱⁱ Preference Polls have the drawback of being very dependent on the interviewer. Respondents do not often choose names other than those listed by the interviewer. In that regard, the interviewer frames the possible responses.

^{iv} Aldrich’s criterion of religion was constant across the time period used. They were all (professed) Christians.

^v Gender and race were dropped from models 5, 6, and 7 to allow comparison across the models. If included, gender is significant in model 5 but not models 6 and 7. Race never becomes significant.