

3-1-2019

Making it Visible: Presidential Endorsement Decisions of Members of Congress in the Invisible Primary, 1996-2016

David L. Wiltse
South Dakota State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/nejps>

Recommended Citation

Wiltse, David L. (2019) "Making it Visible: Presidential Endorsement Decisions of Members of Congress in the Invisible Primary, 1996-2016," *New England Journal of Political Science*: Vol. 11: No. 1, Article 3. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/nejps/vol11/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in New England Journal of Political Science by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

**Making it Visible: Presidential Endorsement Decisions
of Members of Congress in the Invisible Primary, 1996-2016**

David L. Wiltse
South Dakota State University

Abstract

After the reforms of the presidential nomination system that took place in the 1970s, the political parties developed a set of informal norms that restored a great deal of their influence in steering the nomination towards a favored candidate prior to the Iowa caucuses. This process, dubbed the “invisible primary,” actively sought a candidate that was a reliable policy partner, stitched together the major party factions, and signaled viability for the general elections. A critical set of players in this process are sitting members of Congress (MCs) and the endorsements they make early in the nomination season. Using endorsement data on MCs, this article finds that some sharp differences have evolved between Democratic and Republican MCs’ decision to endorse, and that MCs of the two parties see potential political costs of participation coming from different quarters of the electorate. Moreover, the invisible primary amongst Republicans has undergone serious disruptions in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 elections that may be indicative of a partial collapse of this important party function.

Acknowledgments: I would like to extend thanks to Sanne Rijkhoff, David Damore, Matthew Jarvis, Seth Masket, Ray La Raja, David Davis, and Lisa Hager. Bill Mayer made a very important suggestion and assisted with locating data. Special thanks to my undergraduate data team Ariel Hammerquist, Jessica Johnson, and Florencia Magni.

Introduction

The 2016 presidential elections have brought about a great deal of soul searching amongst political scientists due to several apparent “failures” in established theories of political behavior. One of the first to be questioned, was the work of Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller’s *The Party Decides* (2008). Cohen et al. have best described the central role that elite endorsements have in the nomination process before a single vote has been cast in the Iowa caucuses or New Hampshire primaries. To them, and a growing number of other researchers, this is taken as evidence that the nomination is the result of a years-long conversation that takes place across an interconnected network of activists who actively seek a strong candidate to field in the general election. To win the invisible primary, the candidate must display potential electability in the general election, all the while showing a credible commitment to the most salient policy goals of the various factions of their respective parties.

However, the 2016 nomination contests were wildly divergent in the manner in which these pre-Iowa endorsements were awarded between the parties; as were the political fortunes of the “winners” of their respective invisible primaries. In many respects, the Democratic contest was the perfect example of how a party network could take command of the nomination. Early endorsements poured in for Hillary Clinton, and relatively few challengers emerged. The Democratic party quickly reached consensus as if they were reading *The Party Decides* as an instruction manual. Though the contest was extended by the insurgence of Bernard Sanders from outside the party, Democratic party regulars had clearly landed upon Clinton as the party’s choice, and her nomination was eventually secured. Meanwhile, the pre-Iowa machinations of the Republican party were as disorderly as the Democrats’ were orderly. The wide field of over a dozen candidates failed to winnow down as it had in years past as Iowa and New Hampshire

approached and at no point prior to Iowa was there clear a “focal point” candidate that the party network was landing upon. Because of this breakdown, pre-Iowa endorsements amongst Republican office holders were coming at the one of the slowest paces in the post-reform era (second only to 2012). Even after Iowa, as endorsements began to aggregate, there was a lingering question of just who amongst the field represented the demands of the Republican “establishment.” In what some scholars regard as desperate attempt to prevent Donald Trump’s nomination, elite endorsements briefly flowed to Marco Rubio and then to Ted Cruz; but the effort was too late to derail Trump’s nomination (Galdieri and Parsneau 2017). Most importantly however, with the ultimate nomination of a candidate who failed to win a *single* endorsement prior to the Iowa caucuses from a sitting US Representative or Senator, a rethinking of Cohen and colleagues’ theory seems perfectly apropos.

This article focuses on the behavior of a key group of players within the party networks: members of Congress (MCs) and their pre-Iowa endorsements. Though the role of MC endorsements is not determinative of the outcome, it is clear from past campaigns that they have a heavy hand in shaping the direction of the nomination. As central a role as this cast of potential endorsers play in the invisible primary, researchers have only recently begun to describe just *how* this decision is taken at the individual level (Ryan 2011; Anderson 2013; Whitby 2014). This article takes a step in engaging this question amongst this small, critical party elite that normally take part in the endorsement process; and attempts to answer an important question raised by Galdieri and Parsneau (2017) of how the invisible primary endorsement decision differs between Democrats and Republicans.

For the bulk of the nominations between 1980 and 2004, Republicans were more likely to participate in the invisible primary than their Democratic counterparts (Steger 2008). Since then,

there has been a drop in Republican MC participation in the invisible primary. In fact, for the 2008, 2012, and 2016 election cycles, a majority of Republican MCs essentially chose to abstain (see Table 1). This begs some obvious questions, many of which have the potential to undermine the underlying thesis of *The Party Decides*. Why did MCs abdicate this important function? Were the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Republican nominations aberrant, or have the informal norms of the nomination process changed in some fundamental way?

Table 1 Percentage of MCs Making
Invisible Endorsements, 1996 - 2016

	Democrats	Republicans
1996		51.5
2000	55.8	73.0
2004	53.5	
2008	50.9	47.0
2012		30.8
2016	76.9	40.4

To answer these questions, it is useful to frame the decision to make an early endorsement as something akin to a collective action problem. Sitting MCs are undoubtedly aware of the positive impact their participation has on their party's fortunes, yet there is the potential for real political costs to be incurred for an early endorsement should an MC "back the wrong horse." This article delves into the decision MCs make to endorse prior to the Iowa caucuses at the individual level. Upon a review of the literature that examines the role of elite endorsements in the pre-primary period, I theorize that the incentive structures that impel MCs to make an invisible primary endorsement are different between the parties due in large part to how Democrats and Republicans perceive potential costs of making an early endorsement. Empirical evidence is presented of the significant differences between Democrats and Republicans in every contested nomination between 1996 and 2016. Finally, the consequences of these findings that

help explain the abstention of Republicans in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 invisible primaries are discussed, and how the invisible primary process may have changed substantially for Republicans, but not as much for Democrats.

The Role of the Elite Endorsements in Presidential Nominations

The literature studying the role of party elites in the nomination process has perhaps undergone as dramatic of convulsions as any other topic within political science in recent decades. Between the 1970s and 1990s, death knells of the party and the crumbling influence they had in shaping nominations rang throughout the discipline. Looking back upon the reforms in the aftermath of the 1968 election, principally the McGovern-Fraser Commission, political scientists were in a state of palpable despair. The sentiments expressed in the various post-reform editions of Polsby and Wildavsky's classic text, *Presidential Elections*, are typical of the era. As their work was revised through the years, the very language they choose to open their chapter on the nomination process became increasingly more dramatic as they describe progressively weaker party structures in the post-reform era. Ranney (1978) posited that the new nomination process was, "approaching a no party system," whilst Crotty (1995) went so far as to claim that the party organization's ability to control its nominating system had indeed "collapsed." Perhaps most presciently, Polsby (1983) feared that the post-reform parties lacked the consensus building mechanisms to prevent the nomination being taken by a candidate with an intense factional or personal following. The takeaway lesson of the literature of the era was that by handing the power of nomination over to the masses, the process was increasingly anarchic and left to the whims of warring factions within the electorate that were no longer checked by party leadership or norms of party behavior.

However, while political science research was focusing on dramatic changes in the formal structures of delegate allocation, nominating convention rules, powers of local party chairs and the like, the parties' elite were busy reworking the *informal* roles that they played in the nomination. They devised ways to steer the nomination towards a preferred candidate during the pre-primary process. Though the party networks certainly showed some confusion in the wake of the reforms, their general resilience and adaptability to new structures has been remarkable. Even in the "darkness" of the 1980s, the party elite managed to restore their dominant role in nominations. *The Party Decides* is an explicit attempt to give some solace to Polsby and those who shared his lament of party decline in nomination powers, arguing that the party elite was able to largely restore and then maintain a dominant position in the nomination process of the post-reform era by triangulating on a candidate that is acceptable to most party factions.

One of the best indicators that we have on assessing where a party is at in this triangulation process, are the public endorsements that MCs make. Cohen et al. (2008) find that racking up early endorsements is a far better indicator of eventual success in the invisible primary than polls, money, or media attention. Steger (2007) and Dowdle et al. (2009) find the same. While the pre-Iowa endorsements of MCs are not necessarily determinative of the nomination, they do offer good indications of how the party "conversation" on a candidate is shaping up. Dowdle et al. (2009) sum up the role of elite endorsements nicely: "When party elites unify behind a candidate, they collectively send a signal to the news media, contributors, activists and aligned groups about which candidate is viable, electable, and preferable." (88-89) In most nomination contests, the electorate then responds to those cues, generally choosing the invisible primary winner.

As the most visible party actors, MCs must weigh these endorsement decisions in a more careful manner than other endorsers in the party network (e.g. faction leaders, interest group leaders, etc.), since the potential costs of a hasty endorsement by an elected official could have dire electoral consequences. Yet, they are quite aware that there is real demand from the party and electorate for these cues to be given. Activists within the party network are a clear source of this demand. If one accepts the premise of the extant literature that the invisible primary is largely a party-centric phenomenon, it stands to reason that those in the party networks are actively listening to one another and taking cues amongst themselves throughout the pre-primary period. As they triangulate on candidates that are sympathetic to their policy priorities, endorsements are a clear indication of which candidates have a broad base of support, particularly when endorsements come from outside of the faction a candidate is most associated with (Cohen et al. 2008). Thus, when endorsements begin to break the bounds of the party factions, the “focal point” candidates begin to emerge.

Another important source of “endorsement demand” is the partisan electorate. As Steger (2007) notes, there is a strong correlation between pre-Iowa endorsements and the primary votes of partisans. In low-information environments voters are known to go through great lengths to form impressions of candidates to comport with their preferences and utilize any information shortcuts they may have to evaluate candidates in the absence of sharp inter-party policy distinctions (Aldrich 1980, Bartels 1985, Kenney 1993). This is particularly true of the partisans that dominate the process in the early primary states (Brady and Johnston 1987). Hence, the “aura” that develops around the insider favorite is interpreted by voters as an indication that the party network is coming to consensus and they usually act upon such cues (Cohen et al. 2008, 299).

As much as we have come to recognize the importance of endorsements in the nomination fight, we are only beginning to understand why MCs and other party elites decide to make an invisible primary endorsement in the first instance. Steger (2008) explores several of the differences between the endorsement behavior of the Democratic and Republican parties using aggregate data. Hasecke et al. (2013) analyze the 2008 Democratic nomination contest and find that in addition to individual goals of MCs, the decision to endorse hinges largely on an interplay between national electoral and constituency concerns of the MCs. As important as these works are, they do not fully address MC's roles in the invisible primary since both of the pieces track endorsement behavior throughout the primary season and not the invisible primary separately. This article attempts to fill the gap in our understanding of which in the political elite are choosing to participate in this important pre-primary behavior by modeling the likelihood of an MC making an endorsement prior to the Iowa caucuses.

Understanding the determinants of pre-Iowa endorsements by MCs has importance beyond our narrow interests of more fully understanding this non-legislative decision or the predictive power of endorsements concerning nomination. The motivations of potential endorsers speak to our broader understanding of how our parties organize themselves and take collective decisions that have serious consequences to their success in presidential elections. Moreover, a better understanding of this decision will give insights into how MCs, and perhaps others in the party networks, balance the needs of their party against their personal political concerns.

To date, the modeling of the early endorsement decision has been explicitly examined in only a few instances. Yet, there is consensus that an early endorsement is a very strategic and purposive decision. Ryan (2011) builds and empirically tests a formal model of 2008 Democratic

“superdelegates.” He found that they were particularly attentive to their constituents in both the timing of and the recipient of their endorsement. Whitby (2014), also examining 2008 Democratic superdelegate endorsements, found that the endorsements came earlier from the home states of the two candidates, and that African American delegates were more likely to endorse prior to the Iowa caucuses. Anderson (2013) broadened the scope inquiry as he modeled the endorsement decision in all open nominations in the years spanning 1996 and 2008, though he focuses on the decisions of members of the U. S. House of Representatives. He deftly describes the stake of studying this behavior as such:

[T]he theoretical contribution is the members of the extended party have their own strategic considerations—along with the collective incentive to protect party orthodoxy and nominate a viable general elections candidate—when choosing to participate in the nomination process (61).

Put differently, MCs recognize the consequences and weighty implications of participating in this critical aspect of the invisible primary, both for themselves and their parties, yet not all choose to participate as they must weigh the potential costs to their personal political ambitions and the benefits to their parties.

In trying to answer the question of why only a portion MCs take a leading role in the nomination process, Anderson weighs House members’ electoral considerations, policy activity, institutional positioning, future ambitions, and ideology. To briefly summarize his findings, House members are particularly attuned to their own electoral safety, but not terribly concerned with presidential election results; and they are increasingly likely to endorse when they are more deeply embedded in the policy process. Though his analysis confirms the general consensus in the literature at that time, that Republican MCs are more likely to participate (by the inclusion of

an indicator for party), we find little suggestion as to why this is the case. As the invisible primary is above all a *party-centric* affair, it would seem logical to expect that the incentives and disincentives that factor in an MC's decision to participate in it would be different between the two major parties since the norms of the parties in the post-reform era developed on discrete parallel tracks. To precis the findings here, the decision to endorse prior to the Iowa caucuses is largely determined by the cost side of the MC's calculus, and that Democratic and Republican MCs have differing perceptions of those costs.

The Partisan Differences in Invisible Primary Endorsements

Ryan, Anderson, and Whitby's works points researchers in several important directions when attempting to understand the pre-Iowa endorsement decision. It is well established in the literature that there is an important blend of individual and collective concerns that MCs consider in this choice. Given the extant literature, it is reasonable to suspect that this blend is highly dependent upon the partisan affiliation of the MC as the constituencies and cost perceptions of endorsing are likely different between Democrats and Republicans. Steger (2008) noted that Republican and Democratic elected officials have decidedly different *patterns* of endorsement behavior throughout the entirety of the nomination process.¹ Additionally, Anderson hinted at party differences in pre-Iowa endorsements by including a partisan indicator that proved to be statistically significant. However, partisan distinctions in the invisible primary endorsements cannot be properly accounted for in either work since neither modeled the parties separately in the pre-Iowa phase of the nomination using individual level data. Galdieri and Parsneau's (2017) work on endorsements in the 2004-2016 election cycles notes that Republicans have recently begun to put off the decision to endorse as long as possible relative to Democrats. While their

aggregate analysis does not allow for a full empirical test of this claim, they forcefully and effectively argue that this is rooted in MCs' concerns with their own electoral goals.

In many respects, the decision to make an invisible primary endorsement is a typical collective action problem. There is little doubt that MCs understand the importance, weight, and consequences of their early endorsements, as both Ryan (2011) and Whitby (2014) demonstrate. Landing on a nominee in an orderly fashion has payoffs at both collective and individual levels. Collectively, a smooth nomination and strong candidate will help protect the party's "branding image," their policy goals will be easier to come by, and the various constituent groups will be kept happy. Individually, an MC's institutional ambitions, constituent service, and policy initiatives will typically be better served with a successful presidential bid. However, individual level costs will muddy the decision making process. In a cost-free environment, virtually all MCs would participate in the invisible primary, but the nomination decision does not take place in a political vacuum. MCs will undoubtedly see potential harm to their own political wellbeing in a hasty or ill-conceived invisible primary endorsement that could place them on the wrong side of their various constituencies. For a variety of structural, political, and contextual reasons elaborated upon below, the differing cost perceptions go a long way in explaining those distinctions between the two major parties.

MC Electoral Safety.

The electoral safety of MCs must be taken into account. It is widely recognized that despite the trend of vanishing marginals (Mayhew 1974), MCs remain rather tightly bound to the political currents of their constituencies and are loath to take their reelections for granted (Fenno 1977, 1978). Should they depart too far from their constituencies' preferences on either legislative or non-legislative decisions they take, electoral punishment can be swift and decisive

(Ansolabehere et al. 1992, Canes-Wrone et al. 2002). MCs that are willing to make a pre-Iowa endorsement are raising the possibility that they will loudly broadcast a deviation from their constituents; something electorally vulnerable MCs are hesitant to do (Anderson 2013).

The possibility of getting “primaried” may also weigh heavily on this decision. Though there is scholarly evidence that this threat is not affecting MC behavior on a systematic basis in all matters, it is almost certainly present in their minds (Boatright 2013). Given that assumption, it must be accounted for here since this is a highly visible choice that figures in the minds of those that could fuel a primary challenge—party activists and ideological contributors.

MCs of the different parties might also be sensitive to one of these levels of competition relative to the other. Boatright (2013) demonstrates that Democrats are more likely to be “primaried” than Republicans, and that it is easier to predict the instances of a Democratic primary challenge than it is for Republicans—Democrats straying too far away from their general electorates. However, some recent high profile cases of prominent Republican MCs being “clipped” from the right has led to the popular perception that this is also a serious problem for Republicans, perhaps more so (Galdieri and Parsneau 2017). Additionally, there is evidence that in more general terms, Democrats pay greater attention to their general electorates, and Republicans pay particular heed to their primary base (Barker and Carmen 2012). Complicating matters for Republicans is the increasing factionalization of their party (Olsen and Scala 2016). As such, Republican MCs are more likely to be sensitive to their prospects of renomination than their prospects in the general election relative to Democrats. For those worried about their renomination, there is no clearer an indicator available than their own past performance. These considerations lead to the following:

- H_{1a}:** MCs with higher margins of victory in their latest general election will be more likely to endorse prior to the Iowa caucuses than those with lower margins of victory.
- H_{1b}:** The effects of the margin of victory in an MC's latest general election on making a pre-Iowa endorsement will be stronger amongst Democrats than it is for Republicans.
- H_{2a}:** MCs with higher margins of victory or no challengers in their previous primary election will be more likely to endorse prior to the Iowa caucuses than MCs with low margins of victory in their last primary.
- H_{2b}:** The effect of the margin of victory in an MC's latest primary election on making a pre-Iowa endorsement will be stronger amongst Republicans than it is for Democrats.

Ideology

While Anderson (2013) theorized that ideological proximity to the party mean was driving endorsement behavior (which proved to be null), there is reason to suspect that there is an importance nuance missed here. It would be logical to contend that MCs that are closer to the party primary and caucus electorates (i.e. more extreme) are more likely to endorse early. When MCs are in closer ideological proximity to their party's base, they would likely feel greater safety in the decision to participate in this important role. Those who are farther away from the party base would be more likely to shirk this responsibility.

- H₃:** MCs with more extreme ideological positions will be more likely to endorse prior to Iowa's caucuses than moderate ones.

Establishment versus Outsider Posture

Additionally, an MC's apparent "establishment" versus "outsider" status within his or her party caucus would also be of importance. MCs that are associated with their party "establishment" are more likely to be pressed by their congressional colleagues and party networks to participate in the early selection process to steer the nomination towards a candidate who is a reliable policy partner. Meanwhile, MCs that take on "outsider" postures, will see less value in participating this party centered process, as their political fortunes are staked in remaining more ideologically pure, as opposed to taking a central role in policy making. In many respects, Polsby (2004) described these general fault lines, particularly within the Republican party prior to the inception of the Tea Party. He saw that these insurgent Republicans were largely in congruence on policy matters with "insiders," but that this intra-party conflict largely stems from matters of process, compromise, and the importance of ideological purity above all else.

Even when there are clear policy divisions within a party that appear to be factionalizing the nomination process, these are not necessarily disrupting party coordination in the same manner that this "establishment-insurgent" dynamic may be.² Amongst the frontrunners in the 2004 Democratic contest, a rather clear anti-war bloc emerged, with Howard Dean being the primary beneficiary. Yet, this disruption did not cause John Kerry's nomination path to depart from the party's norm (Bergenn 2007) and Democrats did not show new signs of long-term factionalism resulting from the nomination (Yang et al. 2015). However, durable factions amongst the Republican elite became apparent in 2008, leading Yang and his colleagues (2015) to conclude that the Democrats were becoming more cohesive than their Republican counterparts. The advent of the Tea Party in 2010 gave additional structure to this factional

trend, and may have fundamentally altered the calculus of early nominations for Republican MCs.

H₄: MCs with clear “establishment” associations are more likely to endorse prior to Iowa’s caucuses than those with more “outsider” predispositions.

The Popular Appeal of Candidates:

One of the most important dynamics between any given election cycle is the field of candidates that are being considered amongst the party elite as potential nominees (Ryan 2011; Whitby 2014). The ease with which a party can triangulate upon a focal point is largely conditioned by the relative unity or disunity of the party and the popularity of potential nominees in a given election cycle (Steger 2015, 2016). The 2016 election cycle is a story of extremes. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton maintained a strong lead throughout almost the entirety of the pre-primary season amongst the party rank-and-file. Not only did this help clear the field of most potential rivals, it made triangulation relatively easy due to the weakness of the other candidates who remained in the race. Meanwhile, the Republicans had a large field, and relatively few of the potential nominees bowed out prior to the Iowa caucuses. Though “Jeb” Bush benefited the most amongst those MCs that endorsed early, endorsements came slowly since there was a glut of candidates that were potential standard bearers for the party’s establishment. The uncertainty created by the extended field of candidates may have driven up potential costs to an MC of “backing the wrong horse” to a level that overwhelmed any collective benefit to the party. As such, it is imperative that a measure of candidate appeal be placed within the model.

H₅: MCs are more likely to make an endorsement prior to the Iowa caucuses in elections with fewer appealing candidates than in an election with more numerous appealing candidates.

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses on invisible primary endorsements, data was collected on every contested presidential nomination between 1996 and 2016. At no point in this series of presidential election cycles did any sitting president face real opposition from within his party's ranks. In total, nine nominations are considered: Democrats in 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2016; and Republicans in 1996, 2000, 2008, 2012, and 2016. All sitting Democratic and Republican Representatives and Senators are included with the exception of those actively seeking the nomination.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is a binary indicator of a pre-Iowa endorsement. Endorsement information was obtained from three sources: the replication data released by Hans Noel upon the publication of *The Party Decides* (1996-2004),³ Eric Appleman's Democracy in Action website housed at George Washington University (2013) and FiveThirtyEight (Bycoffe 2016).

Independent Variables

Poole and Rosenthal's first dimension ideal points are employed to test the effects of ideological extremity (DW-NOMINATE "Common Space").⁴ Since the two parties are modeled separately, folding the scale is unnecessary. Measuring an MC's insider-outsider disposition requires a greater degree of explanation. Anderson employed a battery of variables towards a similar end including: number of bills introduced, bills cosponsored, bills passed into law, and contributions to other candidates. To simplify for our purposes here and to better capture the

concept, Poole and Rosenthal's second dimension Common Space scores are placed in their stead.

Dimension two scores capture secondary divisions within the parties. For several decades from the formation of the New Deal coalition to the 1970s, there was a distinct division on dimension two scores between MCs reflective of civil rights positions. This has since been largely absorbed by the first dimension. Poole, Rosenthal, and Hare (2015, 2016) have suggested that dimension two is currently, "tapping into establishment vs. outsider division in both parties," that has been pitting leadership and insurgent rank-and-file on several key votes. In the most recent years, such outsiders in the Republican party have been associated with the Tea Party or House Freedom Caucus. Noel (2016) describes the second dimension as a measure of a willingness to compromise, reflective of a cleavage between party "regulars" and "ideologues." The issues associated with high dimension two scores like the debt ceiling and government funding bills, regularly pit the parties' need to govern versus those who value ideological purity over all else. As Noel ultimately characterizes the second dimension, "it captures the degree to which one favors his/her ideology over the procedural demands of the party." (173) This speaks directly to the willingness of MCs to be "team players," and the degree to which they ultimately value their own individual needs, over the collective concerns of the party. We would expect to see a negative correlation with dimension two and the likelihood to endorse in both parties (party leadership routinely have negative scores, while "outsiders" have positive scores).

The various measures of political competition are very straight forward. Electoral security is simply accounted for in two variables: the margin of victory in an MC's previous primary and the margin in the MC's last general election. The appeal of candidates is measured by the number of candidates that were polling at five percent or more in Gallup's poll of

partisans in the November prior to the Iowa caucus. A party with an overwhelming favorite would have a low number of candidates above five percent, and a party that lacked consensus would have greater numbers of candidates above five percent.⁵ Yearly indicators have been excluded from the model. Typically, those indicators are used in circumstances where various idiosyncrasies cannot be accounted for properly. In this case, preliminary modeling clearly showed that the most important time-variant factor was the number of viable candidates in the race.

Finally, some controls must be employed. Since both chambers are being modeled simultaneously, a binary indicator for senators has been included. Relatedly, given the staggering of senatorial elections, it is important to differentiate between senators that are up for reelection in the present cycle from those who are not with a simple indicator. The potential electoral costs as outlined above would be all the more relevant to those senators facing reelection in a presidential election year, whereas those whose elections are farther in the future may be more willing to make a public endorsement well-ahead of the rest of their congressional peers.

The calendar placement of a primary or caucus in an MC's state has been shown to affect the likelihood of an early endorsement (Anderson 2013). Not only will MCs with early caucus or primary contests be subject to greater "endorsement demand" from their parties and constituents, but they will also have better information regarding their constituent's preferences in candidates due to greater media attention and polling. A variable was encoded that simply numbers the week in the primary process that a state's caucus or primary was held starting with Iowa as week one.⁶

The anticipated level of competition in the presidential contest may well be central to an MC's decision to endorse early as this speaks to collective interests of the MC's party (Anderson

2013). The decision of whether or not to take the lead in the nomination of a presidential candidate would be made in the context of the party's stake and candidates under offer in the current cycle. MCs that anticipate a close margin in the presidential election in their home state may err on the side of caution, making them less willing to get ahead of their constituents until those preferences are better known. Presidential election results are included as the absolute value of the difference between the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates in the MC's state in the cycle the endorsement is made.

The presence of a presidential candidate from one's home state in the primary or caucus contests must be accounted for, as it also relates to cost perceptions of MCs. Having a favorite son or daughter in the running will prompt many MCs to endorse who otherwise would have been content to sit out the endorsement process until later in the calendar (Anderson 2013; Whitby 2014). This speaks directly to the safety that a home-grown candidate brings to an MC whilst weighing this decision. Making a pre-Iowa endorsement could carry a degree electoral risk should the MC choose the "wrong" candidate. It stands to reason then that MCs are actively seeking any sign that consensus on a candidate is developing; in other words, clarity on the preferences of various party actors on a nominee. Perhaps no other factor will bring as much clarity to these factional preferences within state party networks as a favorite son or daughter.

Another structure that must be accounted for is the type of nomination system. MCs from caucus states might feel more "endorsement demand" than MCs from primary states given that a caucus is a more party-centric activity than a primary election that is typically run by states. A simple indicator for caucus states is included. Also, an MC's age and tenure (both in years) are important controls.⁷ Young and less established MCs may likely be hesitant to endorse for a cycle or two, but will become increasingly likely to endorse as their careers progress and as they

become embedded in their respective parties' networks. The biographical and electoral data on MCs were gleaned from Barone's biennial *The Almanac of American Politics*. Since the dependent variable is categorical, binary logistic regression is employed (Long and Freese 2014). Separate pooled logistic regression models are estimated for each political party.

Results

Table 2 presents the results of the logistic regressions, utilizing robust standard errors clustered on the member. A cursory glance at the results indicates that the over-arching claim of this article, that the invisible primary endorsement decision is different for Republicans than it is for Democrats, is indeed the case. The various individual and collective factors that drive an invisible primary endorsement are working in distinctively different ways for Democrats and Republicans.

Perhaps the most significant distinction between the parties is the differing effects of political competition on the likelihood of an invisible primary endorsement. Amongst Democrats, hypothesis 1a is supported, as they were quite sensitive to their general election margin of victory. The predicted probability of an early endorsement for a Democrat with a 44-point margin in their previous election (the Democratic mean) was 0.624. A Democrat with a "close" electoral margin of 5 points, had a predicted probability of 0.510. For Republicans, an MC's general election margin of victory was a non-factor, lending empirical support for hypothesis 1b. However, for Republican MCs their margin of victory in the primary was strongly associated with an early endorsement in accord with hypothesis 2a. The predicted probability of an early endorsement was 0.504 amongst Republicans who had no primary challenge as opposed to 0.400 if their primary margin was 15 points. For Democrats, primary margins failed to reach statistical significance, in congruence with hypothesis 2b. Despite the fact that Democrats get

Table 2 Logistic Regressions of an Invisible Primary Endorsement

	Democrats	Republicans
	(b/se)	(b/se)
General Election Margin	0.012*** (0.003)	-0.002 (0.002)
Primary Election Margin	0.002 (0.003)	0.005* (0.002)
DW-NOMINATE Dimension 1	-1.545* (0.686)	-1.120** (0.393)
DW-NOMINATE Dimension 2	-0.296 (0.263)	-0.684*** (0.193)
Candidates Above 4%	-0.133*** (0.036)	-0.307*** (0.050)
Primary Week	-0.048** (0.015)	-0.016 (0.012)
Presidential Vote Margin - State	0.010 (0.008)	0.011 (0.006)
Favorite Daughter or Son	2.202*** (0.350)	0.490*** (0.132)
Caucus	-0.214 (0.200)	-0.037 (0.154)
Age	-0.009 (0.009)	-0.013* (0.006)
Years in Office	-0.002 (0.008)	0.009 (0.008)
Senator	0.242 (0.208)	0.169 (0.189)
Senator Facing Election	-0.858* (0.362)	-0.323 (0.305)
Constant	0.331 (0.566)	1.907*** (0.477)
Number of Cases	994	1349
Pseudo R ²	0.1215	0.0607

p|z|<.05 two-tailed *, p|z|<.01 two-tailed **, p|z|<.001 two-tailed ***.
Robust standard errors are reported, clustered on members.

“primaried” more frequently than Republicans (Boatright 2013), it is Republicans who display more sensitivity to it here. The results show that Democrats and Republicans take this decision

with some very personal factors in mind, but with eyes towards different types of electoral security. Republicans see potential costs manifest themselves in the form of being “primaried,” whilst Democrats associate potential costs in their general election bids.

Hypotheses 3 concerning the ideological placement of an MC on the traditional left-right continuum, finds a degree of support in this analysis. As hypothesized, a liberal Democratic MC with a dimension one score at the 10th percentile (-0.526) has a probability of 0.689 of making an early endorsement, while a more centrist Democrat at the 90th percentile (-0.187) has a probability of 0.567. Meanwhile, Republican MCs behaved in the directly opposite manner of the hypothesis. Conservative MCs were less likely to endorse than their moderate colleagues. A Republican MC with a Dimension One score of 0.236 (the 10th percentile) had a pre-Iowa endorsement probability of 0.527, whereas a strongly conservative MC with a score of 0.637 (the 90th percentile) had a probability of 0.414. Rather than seeing a close proximity to the ideological core of the party as a “shelter” of security from which to take the lead in shaping the nomination, the most conservative Republicans either see some risk in broadcasting early preferences in the presidential nomination, or they do not see any particular value in participating in this important partisan function.

Hypothesis 4 finds strong support within the models amongst Republicans, but not Democrats. The “insider versus outsider cleavage” that Poole, Rosenthal, and Hare, as well as Noel have attributed to dimension two DW-NOMINATE scores, has a profound effect on the likelihood of an endorsement in the hypothesized direction for the GOP. Amongst Republicans, those with “outsider” dispositions (positive dimension two scores) were significantly less likely to take the lead in the nomination process. The probability of making a pre-Iowa endorsement for an MC at the 10th percentile of dimension two scores is 0.549, whereas those at the 90th

percentile (the “outsider” end of the spectrum) was 0.407. When both ideological dimensions are taken together amongst Republicans, it strongly suggests that MCs that those who are sympathetic to the Tea Party movement are simply less interested in the collective motives of the party. As for Democrats, the non-relationship suggests that both “insider” and “outsider” MCs recognize the collective benefit to the party and play their parts equally, holding other factors constant; and that Democrats are becoming more cohesive than the GOP in several ways (Yang et al. 2015; Galdieri and Parsneau 2017).

Hypothesis 5 also finds support amongst both parties. It is patent that fewer candidates with popular appeal in the invisible primary field make the process of triangulation easier and that the party is more likely to be unified in its preferences. With fewer possible endorsees, the typical MC is simply less likely to “back the wrong horse” and potentially suffer some unknown electoral consequences. In the elections examined herein, the Democrats had between two and six candidates polling at five percent or more in the November prior to the Iowa caucuses. The probability of an invisible primary endorsement ranged from 0.694 to 0.571 respectively. Republicans ranged from three to six, and their pre-Iowa endorsement probabilities were between 0.566 and 0.342 respectively. Not only does this speak to the ability of the party elite to more easily settle on a candidate deserving of the nomination, it shows that the mass electorate has a role in shaping the dynamics of the invisible primary in a profound way; just as both Ryan (2011) and Whitby (2014) demonstrated in their modeling of 2008 Democratic superdelegates. Precisely untangling this two-way causality, though, is beyond the scope of this article.

Some of the results for the controls are noteworthy. First, the presence of a “favorite” son or daughter in the race was significant for both parties, but especially profound for Democrats. Democratic MCs that had no in-state candidate had a 0.564 probability of endorsing early,

whereas those with an in-state candidate had a whopping 0.921 probability. Respective Republican probabilities were 0.441 and 0.562. For the most part, senators were statistically indistinguishable from their colleagues. The one exception to this were Democratic senators that were facing reelection in the presidential cycle. The predicted probability of an early endorsement for those up for reelection was 0.429, whereas Democratic senators who were not facing election was 0.639. This lends additional support to overarching theory that Democratic MCs are particularly sensitive to their personal electoral safety when making an endorsement decision. Additionally, age mattered for Republicans, but not Democrats; with older Republican MCs being less likely to endorse during the invisible primary. Finally, the effects of calendar placement were significant for Democrats, but not Republicans.

Discussion

The preceding analysis makes it clear that Democratic and Republican MCs weigh the invisible primary decision rather differently from one another, and it points to some reasons of why that is so. The extant literature has shown us that the decision to make an early endorsement factors both individual and collective motives. These results suggest that MCs of the two parties are most sensitive to individual motives, and that these motives are heavily shaped by different assessments of the potential costs of making an invisible primary endorsement.

The perceptions of costs amongst Democrats are heavily focused on forces from outside the party, yet they do pay attention to collective concerns as well. Their sensitivity to the primary calendar shows that they respond to the “endorsement demand” of voters and other party activists. The fact that their “inside-outside” status has no bearing in the early endorsement decision also suggests that Democrats of both “establishment” and “outsider” status recognize and act upon the collective stake the party has in the nomination process. Yet, Democratic MCs

are particularly sensitive to their personal electoral safety. They are keenly attentive to their previous general election results, and are increasingly likely to abdicate their invisible primary role as their perceived general election safety dwindles.

For Republicans, the results here suggest that they see the highest potential costs of making a pre-Iowa endorsement from forces within their own party, particularly from the right wing. Perhaps irrationally so, Republican MCs deeply fear the prospect of getting primaried – challenged from their right in future elections. Any hint of a primary challenge in their previous election makes them hesitant to pull the trigger on an early endorsement in following presidential cycle. Though they will begin to jump on the bandwagon once the preferences of the party elite and voters become increasingly clear, the perceived electoral costs are simply too high to endorse prior to their constituents speaking.

The results of the ideological factors reveal an important dynamic amongst the GOP. The most conservative and most “insurgent” Republican MCs, the very qualities we associate with the Tea Party, are the MCs who tend to be shirking their invisible primary responsibilities. Above all, the invisible primary is a process embedded in strong norms that have developed parallel to one another in both parties since the electoral reforms of the 1970s. Both party networks saw these informal means of participation as ways to steer the nomination towards a candidate that best served each parties’ MCs, factions, and interests. It is no accident that after a cycle or two of development, both parties were able to restore their central roles in nominations, as the parties’ collective interests were well served through the development of these structures. What the Republican party network was unprepared for was the disruptive effects that their increasing factionalization (Olsen and Scala 2016) would have on this informal decision making process, even in years predating the emergence of the Tea Party. Not only do we see these new

insurgent, conservative MCs refusing to play their invisible primary roles, the unleashing of these activists within the Republican network has created all kinds of uncertainties for more traditional Republican MCs. Given these uncertainties, greater numbers of Republican MCs will simply default to inaction, holding off on an endorsement until the party currents are better understood and the MC can take shelter in the safety of numbers.

Table 3 Logistic Regressions of an Invisible Primary Endorsement

	1996-2004		2008-2016	
	Democrats (b/se)	Republicans (b/se)	Democrats (b/se)	Republicans (b/se)
General Election Margin	0.005 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.012* (0.005)	-0.001 (0.003)
Primary Election Margin	0.002 (0.004)	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.004)	0.009*** (0.003)
DW-NOMINATE Dimension 1	-0.758 (1.022)	-0.774 (0.708)	-2.519* (1.009)	-0.964 (0.529)
DW-NOMINATE Dimension 2	-0.432 (0.352)	-0.602 (0.347)	-0.125 (0.411)	-0.560* (0.283)
Candidates Above 4%	-0.003 (0.051)	-0.553*** (0.096)	-0.296*** (0.068)	-0.142* (0.065)
Primary Week	-0.060** (0.021)	-0.050* (0.022)	-0.043 (0.022)	-0.018 (0.015)
Presidential Vote Margin - State	0.026* (0.013)	0.003 (0.012)	0.003 (0.012)	0.020* (0.008)
Favorite Daughter or Son	2.135*** (0.427)	0.362 (0.199)	2.622*** (0.498)	0.554** (0.184)
Caucus	-0.696** (0.250)	0.260 (0.231)	0.279 (0.302)	-0.420 (0.245)
Age	-0.008 (0.012)	-0.003 (0.012)	-0.014 (0.012)	-0.010 (0.008)
Years in Office	0.007 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.008 (0.011)	0.015 (0.008)
Senator	-0.016 (0.331)	0.428 (0.321)	0.354 (0.327)	-0.001 (0.254)
Senator Facing Election	-1.274* (0.577)	0.278 (0.609)	-0.442 (0.568)	-0.547 (0.406)
Constant	0.334	3.120***	1.031	0.218

	(0.795)	(0.868)	(0.941)	(0.649)
Number of Cases	484	532	510	817
Pseudo R ²	0.0974	0.0750	0.1877	0.0591

p|z|<.05 two-tailed *, p|z|<.01 two-tailed **, p|z|<.001 two-tailed ***

Robust standard errors are reported, clustered on members.

The 2008 nomination was in many respects a harbinger of a shift in nomination norms. As Table 1 shows, the overall probability of a Republican MC making a pre-Iowa endorsement went below 50 percent for the first time. Up until that cycle, Republicans consistently participated in the invisible primary more than their Democratic counterparts. That norm has now flipped in the Democrats' favor. We also see some important shifts in the decision making processes for both parties. Table 3 presents logistic regression estimates with the pool split between the 1996 to 2004 and 2008 to 2016 election cycles. What is most significant between the two time periods is the manner in which MCs react to their own electoral safety. As in the previous models, Democrats were most sensitive to their general election base, and Republicans most sensitive to their primary base, *but only in the last three cycles*. Electoral security was apparently of no real concern for MCs in either party in the decision to endorse early prior to 2008. However, in the last three cycles, an invisible primary endorsement is largely contingent upon an MC's sense of electoral security. The clear difference between the parties is where they see potential costs. For Democrats the threat seems to be external to the party (the general electorate), for Republicans it is internal (the primary electorate).

We must also consider these changing norms against the backdrop of important shifts in how citizens self-perceive in regards to partisan identity and behavior. Abramowitz and Webster (2016) have described something of a paradox in terms of partisan identification, namely that Americans are increasingly less likely to identify with a political party, but are simultaneously displaying a sharp increase in partisan loyalty in voting up and down the ticket. The net effect for

both parties is that politics is becoming increasingly nationalized, where the ticket splitting of decades past has become increasingly rare. They attribute this sharp rise in partisan loyalty to “negative partisanship”—where feelings about the opposing party have become much more negative since the 2000 election. Citizens are simply viewing the opposing party in increasingly hostile terms. This paradox has serious consequences in the efforts parties make, particularly in the informal mechanisms such as the invisible primary.

Azari (2016) describes the state of parties and partisanship in America as “weak parties, with strong partisanship,” and that the relationship between parties and partisanship are mutually undermining. In this environment, party organizations are increasingly seen as corrupt and suspect. This dynamic is leading to a general trend of both voters and office holders being less receptive to the signaling of the party elite in the pre-Iowa coordination. As citizens become less inclined to identify with either party and are more distrustful of partisan institutions, the incentives for any given MC to participate in this highly visible partisan activity will likely diminish since primary voters are less inclined to take elite cues. Put differently, with less endorsement demand from citizens, MCs will be increasingly less likely to take the risk of an early endorsement unless there is ample sign of an early consensus building around a single candidate. The findings here suggest that this dynamic is especially strong amongst Republicans.

By the time the Republicans began the 2016 invisible primary, the disruptive force of the Tea Party continued amidst growing polarization and negative partisanship. This was only complicated by Republican nominee Donald Trump being widely, almost uniformly, rejected by the party elite due to several sharp breaks from party orthodoxy both on policy and his campaign rhetoric (Cohen et al. 2016). Though pre-Iowa endorsements rebounded somewhat for Republicans in 2016, it remained low relative to the pre-2008 norm, and there was no clear

consensus candidate emerging (Galdieri and Parsneau 2017). The frontrunner and eventual nominee was completely shunned by MCs prior to Iowa, and at no point did a focal point candidate unambiguously emerge within the remainder of the Republican field.

When these three recent elections are taken together, it would seem that the Tea Party's institutionalization within the party electorate and the various factions in Congress could serve to change the norms of Republican MC behavior by reinforcing certain qualities associated with non-participation in the invisible primary—conservative outsiders eschewing this traditional party function.⁸ In many respects, a deeply troubling pattern of behavior has set in: Republican MCs are refusing to play a responsible role within the party, since they fear being actively punished by their electorates for playing those responsible roles. Despite the partial rebound of participation in the last presidential election cycle, the decision calculus for Republican MCs may have been permanently altered. Only systematic evaluation of future elections will give us a complete picture. Democratic norms have likely shifted in a similar, but perhaps in a less dramatic fashion; with their fears rooted in upsetting the general electorate.

What is perhaps the most important conclusion is that the role of the invisible primary has come under some assault by forces outside the major parties' elite. In their post-mortem of the 2016 nomination, the authors of *The Party Decides* concluded that in some respects they understated the fragility of the informal mechanisms at play in the invisible primary, and that while focusing on the incentives that drew factions together in the pre-primary phase of the elections, they underestimated the forces that may drive the factions apart (Cohen et al. 2016). While this does not necessarily upend the core findings of *The Party Decides*, it certainly gives additional empirical support to the central claim Steeger (2016) makes that the party elite's

ability to steer the nomination is conditional on intra-party factional stability and candidate appeal.

Conclusion

This article is an important step in modeling the decision of MCs in making pre-Iowa endorsements, and presents some findings that are of importance to our understanding of the dynamics in the invisible primary. It emphasizes the various cross pressures between individual and collective factors that tug at MCs during the invisible primary as they contemplate the possibility of an early endorsement. Though we tend to think of the pre-Iowa phase of the nomination process as a very party-centric process, it is patent that individual motives loom large for MCs during this phase of the nomination and that the electorate shapes MCs' decisions to make early endorsements. Despite the widely acknowledged importance and prominence of MCs in the invisible primary process, it has been shown that MCs are very sensitive to potential electoral costs that could come from taking this decision prior to the clarification of preferences within the greater party network. Though prior research has suggested that there are distinctions in invisible primary endorsement behavior between the parties, this work lays those differences bare. The differing perceptions of potential costs between the Democrats and Republicans fold neatly into this narrative of the invisible primary that Steger (2008), Ryan (2011), Hasecke et al. (2013), Anderson (2013), Whitby (2014), and Galdieri and Parsneau (2017) have forwarded.

In the years following the presidential nomination reforms, the parties engaged in a flurry of informal institution building. Both parties rather quickly established various means to steer the nominations towards candidates that were acceptable to the major factions within their networks. In many respects, the parties used the same tools as one another, no doubt due to the similarity of their nomination reforms. However, this research has shown, that the parallel institution building

took the parties down some different paths in terms of MC behavior due to structural and political differences. Though some differences in party norms have been present throughout the post-reform era, those differences became most apparent in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Republican nominations, where the invisible primary process nearly became undone.

While these findings do not necessarily undermine the principle thesis of *The Party Decides*—that the party networks actively steer the nomination towards a preferred candidate prior to the first public plebiscite—they delineate some of the bounds that MCs of both parties face to engage in that task. The most obvious boundary is the perceived electoral costs of individual MCs. Though the threat perception is different between the parties, the dynamic is quite similar—MCs of both parties show sensitivity to the electorates that they feel will pose a potential threat to their reelection. This research also shows that the parties appear to be developing a distinct set of norms in how they go about vetting presidential candidates. For the Republicans, this process may well be on the verge of collapse. Unfortunately, the incentive structures at present seem to be punishing collective responsibility and rewarding the neglect of this vital party function.

Appendix: Descriptive Statistics of All Variables

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max
Invisible Primary Endorsement	0.52	0.49	0	1
General Election Margin	42.35	27.31	0	100
Primary Election Margin	77.31	31.01	0	100
DW-NOMINATE Dimension 1	0.09	0.42	-0.709	0.913
DW-NOMINATE Dimension 2	-0.01	0.33	-0.996	1
Candidates Above 4%	4.16	1.58	2	6
Primary Week	9.33	0.49	1	27
Presidential Vote Margin - State	13.65	9.54	0	48
Favorite Daughter or Son	0.20	0.40	0	1
Caucus	0.18	0.39	0	1
Age	57.27	10.41	30	98
Years in Office	10.87	8.75	1	58
Senator	0.18	0.38	0	1
Senator Facing Election	0.04	0.21	0	1
Number of Cases		2343		

References

- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Steven Webster. 2016. "The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U. S. Elections in the 21st Century." *Electoral Studies* 41 (March): 12-22.
- Aldrich, John. 1980. *Before the Convention: Strategies and Choices in Presidential Nominations*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Anderson, Christopher L. 2013. "Which Party Elites Choose to Lead the Nomination Process?" *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (March):61-76.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, David Brady, and Morris Fiorina. 1992. "The Vanishing Marginals and Electoral Responsiveness." *British Journal of Political Science* 22 (January):21-38.
- Ansolabehere, S & Hersh, E (2013). Gender, Race, Age and Voting: A Research Note. *Politics and Governance*, 1, 132-137.
- Appleman, Eric M. 2013. "P2012." *Democracy in Action*.
<http://www.p2012.org/about/siteindex.html>.
- Azari, Julia. 2016. "Weak Parties and Strong Partisanship Are a Bad Combination. The Mischiefs of Faction." *Vox Blog*. November 3. <https://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction/2016/11/3/13512362/weak-parties-strong-partisanship-bad-combination> (5 February 2019).
- Barker, David C., and Christopher Jan Carman. 2012. *Representing Red and Blue: How the Culture Wars Change the Way Citizens Speak and Politicians Listen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bartels, Larry. 1985. "Expectations and Preferences in Presidential Nominating Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 79 (September):804-15.

- Bergen, D. Jason. 2007. "Two Parties, Two Types of Nominees, Two Paths to Winning a Presidential Nomination, 1972-2004." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37 (June):203-27.
- Brady, Henry E., and Richard Johnston. 1987. "What's the Primary Message: Horse Race or Issue Journalism?" In *Media and Momentum*, eds. Gary R. Orren and Nelson W. Polsby. Chatham NJ: Chatham House, 127-86.
- Boatright, Robert G. 2013. *Getting Primaried: The Changing Politics of Congressional Primary Challenges*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Bycoffe, Aaron. 2016. "The Endorsement Primary." *FiveThirtyEight*.
<https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-endorsement-primary/>.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96 (1): 127-40.
- Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2016. "Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System." *Political Science and Politics* 49 (4):701-8.
- Crotty, William. 1985. *The Party Game*. New York: WH Freeman.
- Dowdle, Andrew J., Randall E. Adkins, and Wayne P. Steger. 2009. "The Viability Primary: Modeling Candidate Support Before the Primaries." *Political Research Quarterly* 62 (March):77-91.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. New York: Harper Collins.

- Fenno, Richard F. 1977. "U. S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *The American Political Science Review* 71 (September):883-917.
- Galdieri, Christopher, and Kevin Parsneau. 2017. "The Party Stands Aside: Elite Party Actor Endorsements during Presidential Primary and Caucus Voting, 2004-2016." *New England Journal of Political Science* 9:47-73.
- Gurian, Paul-Henri, and Audrey A. Haynes. 2003. "Presidential Nomination Campaigns: Toward 2004." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36 (April):175-80.
- Hasecke, Edward B., Scott R. Meinke, and Kevin M. Scott. 2013. "Congressional Endorsements in the Presidential Nomination Process: Democratic Superdelegates in the 2008 Election." *American Politics Research* 41 (January):99-121.
- Kenney, Patrick J. 1993. "An Examination of How Voters Form Impressions of Candidates' Issue Positions During the Nomination Campaign." *Political Behavior* 315 (September):265-88.
- Long, J. Scott, and Jeremy Freese. 2014. *Regression Models for Categorical and Dependent Variables Using Stata*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.
- Mayer, William G. (2003). "The Basic Dynamics of the Presidential Nomination Process: Putting the 2000 Races in Perspective." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33 (March):72-100.
- Mayhew, David. 1974. "Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals." *Polity* 6 (April):295-317.
- Mayhew, David. 1986. *Placing Parties in American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Noel, Hans. 2016. "Ideological Factions in the Republican and Democratic Parties." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667 (September):166-88.
- Olsen, Henry, and Dante Scala. 2016. *The Four Faces of the Republican Party: The Fight for the 2016 Presidential Nomination*. New York: Palgrave.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1983. *Consequences of Party Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Polsby, Nelson. 2004. *How Congress Evolves*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Poole, Keith, Howard Rosenthal, and Christopher Hare. 2015. "House: Vote on Clean DHS Funding Bill." *Voteview Blog*, March 6. <https://voteviewblog.com/page/7/> (13 February 2019).
- Poole, Keith, Howard Rosenthal, and Christopher Hare. 2016. "Multidimensional Scaling of Feeling Thermometers from the 2015 CCES and 2016 ANES Pilot Study." *Voteview Blog*, March 14. <https://voteviewblog.com/page/2/> (13 February 2019).
- Ranney, Austin. 1978. "The Political Parties: Reform and Decline." In *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 213-47.
- Ryan, Josh M. 2011. "Is the Democratic Party's Superdelegate System Unfair to Voters?" *Electoral Studies* 30 (December):756-70.
- Steger, Wayne P. 2007. "Who Wins Nominations and Why?" *Political Research Quarterly* 60 (March):91-99.
- Steger, Wayne P. 2008. "Interparty Differences in Elite Support for Presidential Nomination Candidates." *American Politics Research* 36 (September):724-29.

- Steger, Wayne P. 2015. *A Citizen's Guide to Presidential Nominations: The Competition for Leadership*. New York: Routledge Press.
- Steger, Wayne P. 2016. "Conditional Arbiters: The Limits of Political Party Influence in Presidential Nominations." *Political Science and Politics* 49 (October):709-15.
- Whitby, Kenny J. 2014. *Strategic Decision Making in Presidential Nominations: When and Why Party Elites Decide to Support a Candidate*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Yang, Song, Scott Limbocker, Andrew Dowdle, Patrick A. Stewart, and Karen Sebold. 2015. "Party Cohesion in Presidential Races: Applying Social Network Theory to the Preprimary Multiple Donor Networks of 2004 and 2008." *Party Politics* 21 (July):638-48.

¹ One factor Steger points to is how the rules of the Democratic party that give an elevated role to MCs as "superdelegates." They were conceived of by the Hunt Commission to act as a stabilizing force in the convention comprising about 15 - 20% of the delegates. Initially they were to be uncommitted to any candidate to act as kingmakers in particularly divisive conventions. This norm of neutrality, relative to Republicans (who have no functional equivalent to superdelegates), once predisposed Democrats to forego an invisible primary endorsement. However, it only took two or three competitive nomination contests for superdelegates to begin breaching this norm *en masse*, to the point where today the norm has been obliterated. As such, we can rule out the possibility that this rule is driving down invisible primary participation amongst Democrats in the nomination contests examined here.

² The 1996 Republican contest was dominated by Bob Dole in terms of endorsements, and did not show the insider-outsider dynamic of later contests (Gurian & Haynes 2003). Despite the turbulence of Bill Clinton's second term of office, neither of the parties' 2000 nomination contests were unduly factionalized; in fact, they were seen as rather smooth "by the book" examples of the invisible primary at work (Cohen et al. 2008; Mayer 2003).

³ As of this writing, the data at Noel's site has been removed.

⁴ "Common Space" scores are used as MC ideal points can be directly compared across chambers and time.

⁵ In preliminary models, the number of national candidates that appeared on the ballot in the Iowa caucus was also used to measure the relative unity or disunity of a party. The results were very similar between the measures, and the parameters and significance levels for other independent variables were robust between models.

⁶ In the few instances where states hold so-called "beauty contests" (public votes that amount to nothing but a preference poll), care was taken to ensure that the date of the preference polls were excluded in favor of the date of the actual delegate-awarding event (generally a caucus).

⁷ As it is the case for several other forms of political participation, I included non-linear terms for age in preliminary models (Ansolabehere & Hersh, 2013). No such relationship was found.

⁸ The coefficient for DW-NOMINATE dimension 1 attains statistical significance for Republicans in the 2008 to 2016 cycles in a one-tail test, and it is in the hypothesized direction.