

Divisive State Primaries, Divided National Parties

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Previous studies of divisive state primaries have reached differing conclusions. That may be the result of testing the hypothesis without sufficient controls or failure to account for a related but more critical factor: divided national parties. We hypothesize that national party division has a greater impact on presidential general election outcomes than divisive state primaries. Melding several research streams including divisive primaries and general election forecasting, we develop a comprehensive model that measures the impact of national and state-level influences on the vote outcomes of states in presidential elections. Although we find some support for the divisive primary hypothesis, we find that national party division exerts greater influence on individual state outcomes than do divisive state primaries. Furthermore, national party division is more consequential because it affects all or most states, whereas the divisive primary effect is generally confined to relatively few states.

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There has long been concern that the presidential nomination process undermines party cohesion -- that the candidate-centered nature of presidential primaries encourages intraparty factionalism. Critics charge that the candidate-centered nature of these races helps individual candidates win the nomination campaign, but the unintended consequence may be the factionalizing of the broad coalition of the party. The degree and longevity of factionalization varies. When one national party is divided and the other party united, the divided party usually loses the presidential election. This pattern seems evident in modern presidential elections. In 1964 and 1976 the national Republican Party was relatively divided, and it lost the presidential election; in 1968, 1972 and 1980 the national Democratic Party was relatively divided, and it lost the election.

In 1980, for example, both parties experienced a series of divisive state primaries, reflecting divisions within the national parties. By choosing George H.W. Bush as his running mate, Ronald Reagan helped to reunite the national Republican Party. In contrast, the divisions in the Democratic Party were highlighted at their national convention and may have motivated some supporters of Senator Ted Kennedy to abstain or to vote for another candidate in the general election. President Jimmy Carter believed that the protracted and hostile character of the nomination fight was a factor in his 1980 reelection loss. He stated that he had to put substantial effort into shoring up Democratic votes (Carter 1982: 531-32). This could apply specifically to those states in which he and Kennedy engaged in a divisive primary struggle, but it could just as well apply to national-level divisions in the party.

Consider how the 1980 election might have been different if Bush had stayed in the race leading to a divisive convention, with Reagan choosing a conservative running mate and moderates in the party feeling defeated and excluded. Furthermore, in this hypothetical scenario,

Kennedy and Carter publicly make amends at their convention, with Kennedy vigorously supporting Carter's reelection. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to expect that fewer Democrats but more Republicans would have defected or abstained, thus increasing Carter's vote vis-à-vis Reagan.

The U.S. has a fragmented, cadre party system. States vary significantly in their party cohesion and party competition levels. Some state primaries, because of intense competition between candidates or factions within the state party electorate or both, are "divisive". For example, in the New Hampshire presidential primary, certain candidates have a greater appeal to elites, while others may attract a more working-class oriented following. Some may attempt to put together a coalition that includes both segments of the Democratic electorate. However, a candidate may create a "storm" in New Hampshire by generating a great deal of support from only one group (Scala 2003). Via several possible mechanisms, this could depress the party's vote in the general election. In addition, a divided national party could magnify this effect.

A divisive national nomination campaign may deplete a party's resources and may provide thematic "ammunition" to the opposition party for the general election. The hostilities that visibly develop between candidates during a contentious intraparty nomination contest may affect voter attitudes toward the party or its nominee. Having developed strong attachment to a losing candidate, activists may be reluctant to contribute or work for their party's nominee (Campbell 2000). Negative attitudes toward the party nominee, developed either in a divisive state primary or more generally from a divided national party, may be difficult to overcome during the general election campaign. State or national party divisions may prevent the eventual nominee from building the necessary coalition or generating the resources to win the general election.

The literature on divisive legislative and gubernatorial primaries posits that there is a linkage between a divisive state primary and the general election outcome *in that state* (Key 1954). Because presidential campaigns are national in scope, what occurs in one state primary may influence general election outcomes in other states. For example, thematic attacks made by intraparty rivals in one state primary may be disseminated nationally by the other party in the general election. More generally, negative impressions of the eventual nominee stemming from one or a few state primaries may influence subsequent national media coverage of that candidate. Supporters of unsuccessful primary candidates may be reluctant to support the winning candidate of their party even if the primary in their state was not divisive. Furthermore, some of the influences of divisive primaries on general election outcomes in congressional and gubernatorial campaigns may, in presidential campaigns, derive not from a divisive state primary but from a divided national party. In a presidential election, the negative image of an internally divided national party may be a more potent cue to general election voters than the corresponding image of a divided state party. Thus we should not necessarily expect that the linkages between divisive primaries and general election outcomes are the same in presidential campaigns as they are in congressional and gubernatorial campaigns.

Divided national parties and divisive state primaries are related but they are not the same phenomena. We believe that, in terms of influencing the outcome of the general election, national party division is much more consequential than the effect of individual divisive state primaries. We say this for two reasons. First, we believe that divisions within a state party based on a divisive primary can be short-lived (Atkeson 1993), especially if the candidates and national party leaders are successful in unifying the party at the national level. Second, divisive

state primaries tend to occur only in a limited number of states whereas national party divisions tend to affect most or all states. Even in nomination campaigns that are hotly contested (such as the Democratic campaigns of 1980 and 1984), there are many primaries that are not divisive.¹ (Some primaries are not even contested because one candidate is far more popular or because they occur after one candidate has effectively won the nomination.)

Divisive Primaries

Previous studies of divisive primaries at the subnational level have reached a confusing variety of conclusions. Part of the explanation for this is that incumbents who are challenged in a primary tend to suffer in the general election while competitive primaries in the out-party tend to help that party in the general election (Lazarus 2005). Nonetheless, the processes by which subnational divisive state primaries affect general election outcomes are only partially applicable to presidential campaigns. In some ways the effects of subnational divisive state primaries are relevant to presidential state primaries; in other ways they are more relevant to divisive national campaigns. Although most studies of divisive presidential primaries have found a negative impact on general election outcomes, these studies have generally failed to differentiate between state-level and national-level effects. Without delineating and controlling for both state- and national-level effects, it is not possible to fully understand and measure the impact of divisive presidential primaries.

Compared to subnational elections, the nature and scope of presidential elections require the incorporation of a larger blanket of factors, some of which do not apply to individual state primaries. Our aim in this paper is to generate a more complete explanation of general election outcomes that captures the variety of factors, including the state of the national party at

the time of the campaign. Attempting to clarify the relationship between divisive primaries and general election outcomes, we first explore the implications of alternative concepts of divisive primaries and the substantive mechanisms by which they may influence state-level and national-level general election outcomes. We then develop a comprehensive model that measures the impact of both long-term and election-specific, national- and state-level influences on the vote outcomes of states in presidential elections. We use this model to measure the impact of divided national parties relative to that of divisive state primaries in presidential elections.

The divisive primary hypothesis was first suggested by V. O. Key (1953) as scholars began to focus on the impact of the direct primary. Key responded to charges that certain negative behaviors existing under the primary system could be attributed to the system itself. This began an examination of the relationship between nomination outcomes and general election outcomes. Research focused primarily on gubernatorial and congressional elections and the results varied given a wide variety of models, methods and time periods examined. Some studies found that divisive primaries negatively affect general election outcomes (Bernstein 1977; Pierson and Smith 1975), some found mixed effects (Born 1981; Kenney and Rice 1984), others found no effect (Hacker 1965), and a few found a positive effect in the out-party (Westlye 1981; Partin 2002). Nonetheless, the general theory, that “hotly contested primaries intensify the conflicts between different elements within the party and this leads to the loss in the general election” (Pierson and Smith 1975), remained the foundation of this body of research.

In general, the research in this area has been building and improving. As theory has developed, researchers have considered better-specified models, some of which have cast further doubt on the hypothesis (see, for example, Kenney 1988). (When factors such as incumbency,

the level of interparty competition and the experience of the opposition were used as controls, the apparent causal relationship sometimes disappeared.) For example, Lazarus (2005), focusing on candidate behavior, found that candidate expectations of victory determine when and where divisive primary elections occur; those expectations explain the correlation between primary divisiveness and general election results. Candidates behave in ways that lead to highly competitive and thus often negative and divisive primaries (Damore 2002; Haynes and Rhine 1998).

In the 1970s, as the presidential nomination reforms went into effect and the number of primaries increased, scholars applied some of the research on state party primaries to the presidential context. Lengle (1980) was the first to apply the divisive primary hypothesis to presidential campaigns. Early studies of presidential primary voters found supporters of a losing nomination candidate more likely to defect or abstain in the subsequent general election (Lengle 1980; Stone 1986; Kenney and Rice 1988; Southwell 1986). This is often referred to as a negative carryover effect. Other individual level studies showed that nomination activists worked at lower rates for the party's general election ticket when they supported a losing candidate in the nomination campaign (Johnson and Gibson 1974; Stone 1984; Buell 1986). These studies appear to support the theory that group conflict created by candidate-centered campaigns produces party division with negative general election consequences for the party's nominee.

However, later research (Stone 1986; Southwell 1994) found that much of the survey evidence connecting primary voting and general election voting using N.E.S. data is contaminated by over-support for the eventual nominee, suggesting that the carryover effect may be much lower than past research suggests (Atkeson 1999). In addition, Stone et al. (1992) found that primary campaign activity for a losing candidate had a mobilizing effect on activists during the general election, suggesting that nomination campaigns may have a *positive* influence on general

elections and party building. Also, Atkeson (1993) found that supporters of losing candidates reevaluated the eventual party nominee during the general election campaign, finding him a much more attractive candidate than they had during the primaries, which suggests that attitudes developed during the nomination campaign are malleable.

We see several possible reasons for the variation in these results. First, previous researchers have operationalized “divisive primaries” in several different ways. Second, most previous aggregate studies of divisive presidential primaries do not fully account for a number of factors, including election-specific contextual factors, that influence state outcomes. We agree with Atkeson (1998) that measuring the effect of divisive state primaries requires controlling for the national context of the election. Third, unlike subnational campaigns, presidential campaigns involve both state- and national-level processes. In a presidential campaign, the impact of a divisive state primary may not be confined to that one state; it may become part of the national competition in the general election. In addition, a divided national party can weaken a state party’s chances in the general election, a phenomenon that should not be attributed to a divisive state primary. We address each of these concerns below.

Because presidential elections are national in scope, the relationship between a divisive state primary and a state-level election result is more complex than it is in a subnational election. Previous studies have suggested that a divisive state primary decreases that party’s vote because supporters of the losing candidate are alienated, because local party elites or activists are discouraged, because the party’s resources are depleted, and because the primary battle provides thematic “ammunition” for the opposing party. The former two processes (alienation of supporters of the losing candidate and discouragement of party elites or activists) may apply to presidential state primaries as well as to subnational state primaries.

In addition, because presidential campaigns receive national media coverage, it is also quite

possible that supporters of losing presidential candidates may be alienated even if there was not a divisive primary in their state. The latter two processes (depletion of party resources and providing thematic “ammunition”) are likely to be national-level rather than state-level phenomena in presidential campaigns. The national campaign will direct resources to whichever states are strategically important but a campaign that divides the national party could leave the national party strapped for cash. Attacks used by intraparty opponents against the eventual nominee are likely to be used nationally, not only in the state in which they originated. Witness Bill Clinton’s national use (in 1992) of Pat Buchanan’s New Hampshire charge that George H.W. Bush had broken the “No new taxes” pledge.

We seek to resolve the controversy over divisive presidential primaries. To do so we will test several alternative operationalizations of divisive primaries, using an updated dataset (through 2004) and controlling for a full set of relevant contextual variables. Our model of state general election vote outcomes includes both national- and state-level variables that generally correspond to the factors that influence individual voting behavior. It includes most of the factors from presidential forecasting models, as well as variables measuring divisive state primaries and divided national parties. The use of state-level data including factors such as partisanship and ideology should provide strong controls to test the divisive primary hypothesis. Beyond that, since we believe that the focus on divisive state primaries ignores the greater impact of divided national parties, we measure and compare the impact of divisive presidential state primaries to that of national party divisiveness on state-level general election outcomes.

Divided National Parties

In some election years there is a clear disparity in party divisiveness. For example,

the elections of 1964, 1972 and 1984 produced resounding losses for a divided party facing a united party. This may partly explain why presidential candidates typically “balance the ticket” by choosing a running mate from another wing of the party. Unified and strongly cohesive parties help the nominee, but parties that are internally divided and lacking cohesion hurt their candidates’ chances for election to the presidency (Campbell 2004). “Not only do divisive party nomination contests absorb resources that might be more productively directed at winning the general election, but intraparty charges of candidates competing against each other can leave the eventual nominee’s reputation bruised.” (Campbell 2000, p.42).

A cohesive national party and a strong party organization generally go hand-in-hand. In such cases, party officials work together as a unit, with little ideological static among them; their electoral and policy goals are relatively clear cut (see Herrera 1993). While there may be many ambitious potential candidates willing to compete for a party’s nomination, cohesive parties are likely to have recognizable favorites who are already well-known to the party’s activists and contributors. Consensus may be more readily reached when organizations are cohesive in nature and engineer rules that facilitate consensus with low transaction costs. National elite party cohesion is more likely to occur when the party is relatively cohesive in the electorate. When organizations are strong and cohesive, when the candidates themselves perform well, and when the base of the party holds, then parties do well. When organizations are weak, often due to internal problems, when the candidates do not perform well, and the base does not hold, then parties do poorly.

The greater the fragmentation in the organization and the electorate, the less likely it is that any one candidate will be seen as the dominant frontrunner in the “invisible primary.” Thus a greater number of ambitious candidates within the party are likely to enter the nomination race, potentially exacerbating party divisions. A popular incumbent is generally able to unite his

party but an unpopular incumbent often finds himself fighting for control of a divided party. Incumbent presidents who govern during poor economic times are likely to generate negatives in the public mind and opportunities for rivals within their own party. A weak economy leads to an electorate that is dissatisfied with the in-party and unlikely to overlook its weaknesses (Tufté 1978; Fiorina 1981; Hibbs 1987; Lewis–Beck 1988). Moreover, this encourages strong political entrepreneurs to take advantage of the situation. While potential candidates are generally unwilling to oppose a popular incumbent, a weak incumbent is more likely to face a strong intraparty challenge (e.g., Ford in 1976 and Carter in 1980).

When there are several competitors in the nomination race, each candidate strives to win voters to his/her camp. Candidates often use negative messages to lure supporters away from other candidates. These negative messages may focus the public's attention not only on the negatives of the candidate in question, but also the party in general. This could depress turnout among partisans and could dissuade swing voters. The out-party is also susceptible to similar effects. When the incumbent is popular and successful, it is more difficult for the out-party to find tractable issues to galvanize the party base or, more importantly, the broader electorate. For example, in 1984 the Democratic Party splintered in face of the strong economic record and personal popularity of President Reagan. A large and diverse field of candidates prohibited Walter Mondale from achieving a swift and decisive nomination victory.

Another factor that may lead to a factionalized party is simply time in office. Each party is a coalition of somewhat diverse elements. The longer a party holds power the more likely party fissures will develop (Campbell 2000). When national party elites are divided, rank and file party members are likely also to be divided and this has implications for the ability of ambitious party members to generate support from a faction of the party that enables them to compete in the party's nomination. According to Mayer (1996) these divisions “are not created

out of thin air, but rather reflect existing divisions within the party.” Latent intraparty divisions can be exacerbated by disputes over policy, organizational concerns, or nomination struggles between candidates who appeal to different factions within the party.

We hypothesize that national party division has a widespread and substantial negative effect on state general election outcomes while the impact of divisive state primaries is relatively minor and limited to only certain states. In this research, we measure the effects of divisive state primaries and national party division on state general election outcomes. To do so, we develop a comprehensive model of state-level voting over time. In the following sections, we specify and justify this model.

A Model of State Electoral Outcomes

Presidential elections are not singular national elections, as they are so often treated, but fifty separate state contests. The influence of state contextual factors typically are not included in national studies. Rabinowitz et al. (1984) analyzed the vote outcomes of the states from 1944 through 1980 and found that U.S. presidential elections are structured by party and ideology (also see Jackson and Carsey 1999). Erikson et al. (1993) examined the states in the 1984 and 1988 elections using mass electoral mood, the liberalism of party elites, and the state partisan balance. To properly measure the impact of divisive state primaries and divided national parties on general election outcomes, we attempted to develop as comprehensive a model of state-level vote outcomes as possible. We sought to include both national and state-level influences. We will apply this model to the set of presidential elections from 1948 through 2004.

Our model measures the effects of divided national parties and divisive state primaries on presidential general election outcomes across space (states) and over time (elections).

The variables, both at the state and the national level, generally correspond to those that influence votes at the individual level. At the individual level, voters are affected by party, issues, candidates (according to a socio-psychological model of voting) and possibly the nature of the times (according to a rational choice model of voting). Previous research shows that at least some of these factors also affect aggregate vote outcomes. We believe that these factors can manifest as state-level and as national-level phenomena. For example, party-oriented voting could be influenced by state-level partisan dispositions and by the relative divisiveness of the two national parties. Similarly, issue-oriented or ideological voting could reflect ideological dispositions across states and it could reflect the relative centrism of the two major party candidates.

If divided national parties exert as much influence on state outcomes as divisive state primaries, then the former is more consequential since a divided national party affects most or all states while divisive state primaries are generally restricted to a handful of states. We hypothesize that the state-level effects of a divided national party are greater than those of divisive state primaries.

Data and Methods

Our study melds several research streams including those of divisive primaries and general election forecasting. Most studies of divisive primaries test only state-level effects. A pooled time-series allows us to test both state-level and national-level effects concurrently. Thus we are able to go a step beyond Atkeson's (1998) study by simultaneously measuring the impact of divisive state primaries and national party division.

Our research differs from the national forecasting models in several important ways.

First, our purpose is explanation not prediction; we do not believe that previous presidential vote outcomes or national trial heat poll results add to the explanatory power of the model.

Second, we chose not to include variables representing “special circumstances” such as Watergate or the presence of a Catholic candidate. We believe it is preferable to specify a model based on factors that occur regularly in presidential elections. Third, we focus on state vote outcomes rather than national outcomes. We are not the first to do so; indeed, previous models of state-level presidential voting (Campbell 1992; Holbrook 1991; Rosenstone 1983) have provided useful guidance.²

We examine state presidential election outcomes from 1948 through 2004. We chose 1948, as our starting date because as the first post-WWII election it in some ways represents the beginning of the modern era of electoral politics and because some of the data we are interested in examining are only available from that point forward.³ In our analysis, we include both primaries and caucuses. Lenge, Owens and Sonner (1995) analyzed the impact of caucuses, divisive primaries and non-divisive primaries on presidential election outcomes. They concluded that a caucus is a “non-divisive mechanism,” that is virtually identical to a non-divisive primary in its impact on the general election. Accordingly, we assigned caucuses a value of zero in terms of primary divisiveness (i.e., no relative advantage to either party).⁴ This substantially reduces the number of missing cases, thus allowing us to obtain more reliable parameter estimates. There are 733 valid cases in the dataset.⁵

We use a time-series cross-sectional design in order to have enough power to generalize about the relationship between nomination campaigns and general elections. Because we observe multiple units in time we need to control for the election year context (Stimson, 1985).

The substantive relevance of the election year is highlighted by Atkeson (1998): “the experience and character party nominees bring to the election contest are constant within any given

election year, but may vary dramatically from one election year to the next... A year that favors one party over another party is not factored in when election years are stacked on top of one another with no controls for election year context. The result is that the variation in the independent variable is between states both within and across presidential election years. Thus, the specific attributes (of the candidates, the issues, or the nature of the times) that push voters toward one party candidate or the other during a particular election year are lost. These factors are crucial to understanding general election outcomes regardless of what happened in the nomination stage of the campaign.”

We believe it is important to explicitly model national effects with actual national-level variables rather than leaving those effects in the “black box” of an election year dummy. Because election year dummies would be perfectly collinear with the national variables that change over time but do not vary across states, we instead employ random effects for time. However, we do use fixed-effects to capture state-level heterogeneity.

More formally, the standard two-way error component panel data model is given by

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + X_{it}\beta + u_{it}$$

where $u_{it} = \mu_i + \lambda_t + v_{it}$

and i indexes units and t indexes time. OLS estimates of this model fail to account for both unit-specific and time-specific unobserved effects, which leads to incorrect standard errors (and potentially biased estimates if either unit- or time-specific effects are correlated with the independent variables).⁶ We estimate this model via maximum likelihood using fixed effects for states (to explicitly model unit-specific effects) and random effects for time (as fixed effects

for time prohibit the estimation of coefficients on variables that vary over time but not across states, like divided national parties). A Wald test shows that the state-specific effects are jointly significant ($p < .001$), and a likelihood ratio test against a model without random effects for time shows that the unrestricted model fits the data better than the restricted model ($p < .001$).

The Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the *OUTCOME*, the proportion of the state vote won by the Democratic Party in the general election. Research focusing on the impact of the economy on presidential elections often use the proportion of the vote won by the incumbent party as the dependent variable. Since our focus is party-specific, the impact of divisive state primaries and divided national parties on the vote for that party, it is more appropriate to use the vote for one of the major parties as the dependent variable. In terms of the analysis, these two alternatives are equivalent. In our model, we create interactive variables so that economic factors are keyed to the incumbent party.

A major concern here is how to divide votes for *THIRD parties* and independent candidates. Several researchers simply use the major party votes. Using major party vote, in effect, assigns third party votes in proportion to the votes actually received by the major parties. Rabinowitz et al. (1984) assigned third party votes according to N.E.S. respondents' feeling thermometers comparing the two major party candidates. Both of these approaches, though appropriate for other research questions, fail to capture the impact of third party voting in response to divisive state primaries or divided national parties. An alternative, used by Kenney and Rice (1987) and Atkeson (1998), is to include third party votes as an independent variable. For the purpose of explaining national vote outcomes, the differences between these alternatives

is minor. However, they are not always minor at the state level. For this research, we believe that including third party votes as a control variable is the most reasonable approach.⁷

Divisive State Primaries

Westlye (1991) describes a divisive primary as a primary contest with “the potential to alienate, or lessen the support of, a portion of the various individuals and groups -- party workers, contributors, voters -- that are essential to the party’s success.” There is a lack of consensus on how best to operationalize *DIVISIVE state primaries*. Born (1981) suggests that the focus ought to be on the proportion of the vote received by candidates other than the nominee. Bernstein (1977) points out that in a multi-candidate primary, the winner may receive a relatively small proportion of the vote even though the primary is not “divisive.” Some studies measure divisiveness as the margin of victory in the primary (Lengle 1980; Lengle, Owen and Sonner 1995). This is sometimes operationalized as a dummy variable (e.g., less than 20% margin of victory). Some studies focus only on one party’s primaries. Kenney and Rice (1987) argue that the proportion of the state primary vote received by the eventual Democratic nominee minus the corresponding proportion received by the eventual Republican nominee is the best measure of state primary divisiveness (Mayer 1996; Atkeson 1998). We agree with Kenney and Rice that the impact of divisive primaries ought to be a relative measure (i.e., comparing the divisiveness of the two parties’ primaries); nonetheless, we acknowledge the controversy over how best to operationalize divisiveness. We will show that although different measures imply different substantive meanings of “divisiveness,” the impact of divisive state primaries is relatively unaffected by the way the variable is operationalized.

Divineness can be conceptualized, and thus operationalized, in several ways. A divisive

state primary can be thought of as a primary in which the state party electorate generally prefers a candidate or candidates other than the nominee. This implies that there is a large pool of voters who may be inclined to abstain or defect. This concept of divisiveness is appropriately measured by the proportion of the vote for candidates other than the eventual nominee (or, equivalently, 1 minus the proportion for the nominee). The major alternative focuses on the competitiveness of the primary. A close, hard-fought primary may lead some voters to harbor intense negative feelings about the eventual nominee. This concept of divisiveness is appropriately measured by the vote margin between the two leading candidates in the primary. Note that the former focuses on the proportion of primary voters who supported the nominee while the latter focuses on the competitiveness of the primary regardless of the proportion of the vote for the nominee. We want to dispel any suspicion that our results are a statistical artifact of the way we operationalize divisive primaries. Thus, we examine the way previous studies operationalized divisive primaries, test each one within our model and dataset, and report the results. We hope that this, combined with our findings regarding divided national parties, will resolve the controversy over the impact of divisive primaries in presidential elections.

National-level Variables

We measure relative *NATIONAL party division* in a manner similar to the way that divisive state primaries are measured: the proportion of delegate votes received by the Democratic nominee (on the first ballot) at the convention minus the corresponding proportion for the Republican nominee. We believe that this is a reasonable measure of national party division. Other measures such as the eventual nominee's vote share in the New Hampshire primary (Norpoth, 2001) or his proportion of the national primary vote were considered. The changes in

the nomination since the early 1970s and the overlap with the measure of the dependent variable render these measures less appropriate for this study. Delegate votes for the nominee seems to reflect relative unity or division of the national parties. Winning candidates typically receive overwhelming support on the convention ballot. The exceptions to this tend to correspond to campaigns in which the national party was divided. The Republican Party was internally divided in 1964 and 1976 and the first-ballot votes in those years were relatively close; the same is true for the Democratic Party in 1968, 1972 and 1980. Another reason for looking at the convention ballot is that much changes over the course of the nomination campaign and delegates who are not bound to a particular candidate, or who have been released from their commitment, can show more unity or more disunity at the convention depending on how they feel about the presumptive nominee.

Political scientists who attempt to forecast presidential elections have identified several factors that influence national vote outcomes. The performance of these models in the 2000 election, all of them overestimating Al Gore's popular vote margin, has led to a healthy reconsideration of the way these models are specified. Despite controversy over how to best quantify it, there is general agreement that the national *ECONOMY* has a powerful impact on national election outcomes. Five of the models include *APPROVAL* ratings of the president and three include the number of *TERMS* that the incumbent party has held the presidency (Campbell 2001). In addition, Campbell includes a Labor Day trial heat poll while Lewis-Beck and Tien include a measure of peace and prosperity.

Some of these researchers and some of their critics suggest that other variables should also be included or that the current variables should be operationalized differently. In particular, measures of the national economy vary; they include prospective and retrospective evaluations as well as long- and short-term changes in gross domestic product. Bartels and Zaller (2001)

argue that change in real disposable income (RDI) is superior to change in GDP as a predictor of election outcomes. We agree, and we believe that RDI more closely corresponds to people's perception of the economy than does GDP. We operationalize the national economy as the annual change in RDI. Since our dependent variable is Democratic vote share, this variable is multiplied by -1 when the incumbent president is Republican. Thus, credit or blame for the economy is directed at the incumbent president, regardless of party.

Several studies have suggested that the apparent effect of divisive primaries may be spurious (see Jacobson and Kernell 1981; Kenney 1988; Mayer 1996; Atkeson 1998; Lazarus 2005): weak incumbents attract strong challengers leading to both divisive primaries and weak general election performance. Similarly, an unpopular incumbent could exacerbate existing divisions in the national party. This argument is supported, directly or indirectly, by numerous studies of subnational primaries (see, for example, Hacker 1965; Partin 2002). Unpopular incumbents are more likely to face intraparty challenges and strong interparty opponents, and are more likely to be defeated than are their more popular counterparts. Lazarus (2005) shows that in U.S. House races, the higher their expected probability of winning, the more challengers will emerge, thus dividing the party and causing lower general election outcomes.

We see reasons to doubt the applicability of this argument to presidential campaigns. History demonstrates that in presidential campaigns, there are generally five to ten legitimate challengers in the out-party regardless of the strength of the incumbent. The situation in the in-party may be more sensitive to the strength of the incumbent president. It is reasonable to attribute the divisive state primaries and the national party divisions in the 1976 Republican Party and the 1980 Democratic Party, for example, to the unpopularity of the incumbent president. In such cases, however, divisiveness varies substantially across states. In addition,

there are often divisive primaries in some states even when the national party is not divided (e.g., New Hampshire and South Carolina in the 2000 Republican campaign). In the analysis below, we control for the possibility that the apparent effects of divisive state primaries and divided national parties are artifacts of unpopular incumbency.

Our model controls for the national economy, terms (incumbency fatigue), and presidential approval. If the incumbent president is unpopular or if conditions are unfavorable to his party, that will be reflected and accounted for by these control variables. We measure presidential approval as the Gallup presidential approval rating in January of the election year (Atkeson 1998). We chose January to get a measurement before the primaries start. (Results are substantively similar if we use July approval ratings.) We control for the number of terms, or “incumbency fatigue,” the same way that several of the forecasters do. If the incumbent party has been in office for only one term (as was the case in 1956, 1964, 1980, 1984, 1996 and 2004), this variable has a value of zero; if it has been in office for two or more terms, this variable has a value of one. In addition, we include a separate dummy variable indicating whether or not the *INCUMBENT president* is running.

The relative ideological positions of the candidates may be influential in some elections. This variable is only loosely related to individual-level issue-voting. However, in the aggregate, ideological voting tends to work against more extreme candidates. Typically, the major parties nominate relatively centrist candidates but occasionally one party nominates a relative extremist. The overwhelming defeats of Goldwater (in 1964) and McGovern (in 1972) seem to support this notion, though Reagan’s 1980 victory seems to contradict it. Nonetheless, there is some evidence to support it in the context of presidential elections so it makes sense to include it as a control variable. We include a measure of relative ideological *EXTREMISM* operationalized as did Bartels and Zaller (2001), updating it through 2004.⁸

There is some moderate to high multicollinearity among the national-level variables. In particular, the national economy is correlated at .72 with incumbency and .68 with national party division. Research has shown that when a president is running for reelection, he takes certain actions to pump up the economy. When the economy is weak, presidents tend to be unpopular and are thus more likely to be challenged for the nomination, leaving their party divided. It is not at all surprising that we find significant correlations among incumbency, national economy, and national party division. We believe that all three variables are theoretically relevant and thus should be included in the model.

State-level Variables

Previous studies of divisive primaries have employed relatively few state-level control variables. Most of these studies have controlled for state-level effects by including one or more previous presidential election results (Lengle 1980; Kenney and Rice 1987; Lengle, Owens and Sonner 1995; Mayer 1996; Atkeson 1998). Kenney and Rice (1987) include a regional variable for the South. Mayer (1996) includes a variety of control variables specific to individual elections (e.g., West region in 1976, 1980 and 1988, percent Southern Baptist in 1980 and 1988, percent living on farms in 1992). We account for state-level effects by controlling for state partisanship, state ideology, and home state.

Research at the individual level, at the state level, and at the national level, has shown that political parties exert substantial influence in presidential general elections. Divisive state primaries and divided national parties represent components of this influence. Rabinowitz et al. (1984) found that state partisanship and ideology were the major factors structuring state-level presidential elections. We measure state *PARTISANSHIP*, a normal vote measure, as the average

of the most recent statewide votes for Governor, Senator and U.S. House of Representatives.⁹

We do not include the previous presidential vote since that might reflect national factors involving previous presidential politics rather than underlying state-level partisanship.

We expect state partisanship to have a significant positive effect on state general election outcomes.

Rather than choose individual issues for each election, we use two measures of state ideology: a general left-right scale and a civil rights scale. Although a general measure of *IDEOLOGY* will fail to capture some salient issues, it will reflect many of the issue-oriented differences across state populations. Furthermore, we believe that one cluster of issues, *CIVIL rights*, ought to be included as a separate variable. Civil rights (and related issues such as integration, busing, and voting rights) has been a powerful issue over many elections and, critical to the current study, its impact has been regional, affecting states differently. We measure both ideological variables, the general left-right dimension and the more specific civil rights dimension, as the mean NOMINATE roll call data scores for the U.S. House delegation in each state in the term prior to the presidential election (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997). Rabinowitz et al. (1984) found that ideology was one of two major factors structuring state-level presidential elections, and the most important factor in the elections of 1964-72. We expect the general ideology variable to have a substantial effect on state general election outcomes. We expect the civil rights variable, operationalized as votes against civil rights, to have a negative effect on voting for the Democratic party.

We also control for the impact of war on vote outcomes. Wars such as Viet Nam have the capacity to divide parties and affect the decisions of candidates and voters. Because of our focus on state vote outcomes, we measure this variable as the number of *COMBAT fatalities* in a state as a proportion of the state population. Nonetheless, the variations over time (from election to

election) are greater than those across states.

Candidate evaluation is the most difficult factor to measure at the state level. Polls often ask for individuals' evaluations of the candidates. Unfortunately, such polls do not consistently ask the same questions, and they are not available for each state in each election. Thus, we include only the *HOME state* of the presidential and *VICE presidential* candidates as measures of state-level candidate evaluation. Presidential candidates tend to do better in their home *REGION* than in other parts of the country and both presidential and vice presidential candidates tend to do well in their home states. Each of these variables can take on values of -1, 0 or +1 (e.g., the Republican candidate's home state has a value of -1), although 0 is by far the most common.¹⁰

Results

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1.¹¹ The results indicate that, in individual states, the impact of divided national parties is generally greater than that of divisive state primaries. Only in the most extreme cases would a divisive state primary lead to a loss of 2% in the general election. In a more typical case, if in a certain state, one party is unified with its eventual nominee receiving 90% of the primary vote but the other party's primary is divisive, with the eventual nominee receiving only 40% , the latter would lose only 1% in the general election. In comparison, smaller differences in national party division tend to lead to greater differences in the general election. If the nominee of one party receives 90% of the vote at his/her national convention while the nominee of the other party receives 70%, then the latter would lose 2% in the general election. In a more extreme example, in which an incumbent

president is unopposed, winning 100% of the delegates, while the other party's nominee is supported by only 60% of the delegates, the latter would lose 4% in the general election. Thus, according to these results, a divisive state primary generally leads to a decrease in a state's general election vote of less than 2%, while a divided national party often leads to a decrease of more than 2%. Recall that the impact of divisive state primaries is limited to a subset of states while the impact of a divided national party applies to all states.

Because different measures of divisiveness imply different substantive meanings, we examined the way previous studies operationalized divisive primaries and tested each one. The results reported above measure divisiveness as the per cent of the vote for eventual Democratic nominee minus the per cent for the eventual Republican nominee (see Kenney and Rice 1987; Mayer 1996; Atkeson 1998). Born (1981) focused the proportion of the vote received by candidates other than the nominee. We tested this as a percentage of the vote and as a dummy variable (other candidates receiving more than 40%). Lingle (1980) and Lingle, Owen and Sonner (1995) measured divisiveness as the margin of victory in the primary. Again, we tested this as a percentage of the vote and as a dummy variable (margin of victory less than 20%). In all cases, results were substantively the same. These results indicate that the impact of divisive state primaries is relatively unaffected by the way the variable is operationalized. This demonstrates that our results are not a statistical artifact of the way we operationalize divisive primaries.

*** Table 1 about here ***

Divisive state primary was not among the more influential independent variables. Although it is statistically significant, its impact is relatively minor. Even in the most

extreme cases, where one party's candidate received 100% of the primary vote while his opponent received 0%, the impact on the general election vote is only 2%. At the state level, state partisanship, state ideology and candidates' home states appear generally to have a greater impact. This confirms our expectation that divisive state primaries have a small negative effect on electoral outcomes. On the other hand, national party division is one of the more influential independent variables. Although less influential than the national economy, it appears to have a greater impact than most of the other variables. This result supports our hypothesis that national party division has a substantial negative effect on state-level electoral outcomes. During the 1948-2004 period, national party division ranged from -46.2 to 32.5 (negative values indicate greater division in the Democratic Party). Taking this range into account, the coefficient of .101 indicates that the effect of relative national party division on the Democratic vote varied from -4.67% to 3.28%. Since this is a national-level variable, its impact extends to all states. Taken together, these results confirm our general thesis that the overall negative impact of a divided national party is greater than that of divisive state primaries.

Effects of National and State Factors

Although our focus is on the effects of divisive primaries and national party division, the results of this analysis reveal several important aspects of state vote outcomes in presidential elections. The analyses show that state general election outcomes are influenced by both long- and short-term factors and by both national- and state-level factors. Several of the national variables were statistically significant and exerted a moderate to strong effect on state general election outcomes. Not surprisingly, the national economy had the greatest impact. The coefficient (1.18) indicates that for each 1% increase in real per capita disposable income,

the incumbent party gains a little more than 1% of the presidential vote across states. A booming economy can boost the incumbent party's vote by over 8%. Another influential national variable was "incumbency fatigue". Similar to the findings of the national forecasts, our analysis indicates that a party that has controlled the White House for two or more terms tends to lose 2.3% compared to what would otherwise be expected. During the period, the greatest candidate extremism scores were 1.44 for Barry Goldwater and 1.81 for George McGovern. The results suggest that their respective parties lost 2.83% and 3.56% in the general election. Presidential approval and incumbency failed to achieve statistical significance.

Among the long-term state-level factors, state partisanship and both state ideology variables were statistically significant. A state in which the average congressional and gubernatorial Democratic vote was 67%, for example, would tend to have a 3.1% higher presidential vote than a state with 50% congressional and gubernatorial Democratic vote. The difference in the presidential vote between a "moderate" state and a state with the most extreme general ideology score would be 8.1%. The civil rights ideology the difference would be 2.5%. The election-specific state-level factors, candidates' home state/region, also exerted a statistically significant effect on state general election outcomes. A presidential candidate tends to receive about 4.1% more in his home state, and 1.0% more in his home region than would otherwise be expected. A vice-presidential candidate tends to receive about 2.0% more in his home state than would otherwise be expected.

Conclusion

Based on these results, we can draw the following conclusions: a) divisive state primaries have a small negative effect on general election outcomes, b) national party division has a

negative effect on general election outcomes, and c) the effect of a divided national party on the vote outcome in an individual state tends to be greater than that of a divisive state primary.

The results support our contention that national party division is more consequential because it affects all states whereas the individual state effect is generally smaller and confined to relatively few states.

We hope that this study puts to rest the controversy over the impact of divisive presidential primaries. Although we have not addressed the individual-level process, we have shown that divisive state primaries do have a negative, albeit small, effect on state vote outcomes in the general election. Because we control for both national- and state-level influences, we can rule out the possibility that this relationship is spurious, a statistical artifact of weak economies, incumbency or the partisan or ideological predispositions of state electorates.

One implication for the parties is clear: in terms of winning the presidency, a divided national party does more damage than a set of divisive state primaries. The results of the analysis indicate that a divisive state primary will decrease the party's general election vote in that state, typically by less than 2%. In comparison, a divided national party will decrease the party's general election vote across all states, sometimes by 3% or more. Although we see little benefit from further study of the effects of divisive presidential primaries, we see much that can be gained by investigating the causes and consequences of divided national parties. What causes the underlying long-term divisions within the parties? Under which circumstances do presidential nomination campaigns exacerbate such divisions? What can candidates do during the campaign to unite their party? And what can the parties do between elections to diminish the chances that divisions will intensify during the next campaign cycle?

Although this research has focused on the relative impact of divisive state primaries and divided national parties, the model of state vote outcomes we have developed sheds light on the

vote outcomes of states in presidential general elections. Our analysis indicates that short-term national factors, including changes in the national economic situation and incumbency fatigue, appear to be more critical in understanding general election outcomes than the effects of state division that occur during a primary campaign. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that long-term state-level factors, such as ideology, play a major role in state-level behavior.

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Table 1 -- Impact of State and National Factors on state vote OUTCOME

Two-way error component model via maximum likelihood;
fixed-effects for states, random effects for years

<u>Variable</u>	<u>coefficient</u>	<u>standard error</u>	<u>probability</u>
<i>Party divisiveness</i>			
DIVISIVE state primary	0.0215**	0.0076	.005
NATIONAL party division	0.101**	0.026	<.001
<i>National-level factors</i>			
ECONOMY (R.D.I. change)	1.183**	0.296	<.001
TERMS (incumbency fatigue)	-2.299*	1.182	.052
INCUMBENT president	0.997	1.307	.445
APPROVAL ratings	-0.0444	0.0278	.110
EXTREMISM	-1.967**	0.847	.020
<i>State-level factors</i>			
PARTISANSHIP	0.182**	0.026	<.001
IDEOLOGY (general)	8.127**	1.272	<.001
CIVIL rights	-2.483**	0.998	.013
THIRD parties	-0.398**	0.044	<.001
COMBAT fatalities	0.0192	0.0680	.777
HOME state (presidential candidate)	4.059**	1.024	<.001
VICE presidential (home state)	1.962*	1.014	.053
REGION (home region, presidential candidate)	0.969*	0.514	.059
Intercept	39.339**		

n = 733

$X^2 = 1025.75$; $p < .001$

Log restricted-likelihood = -2154.43

Note: * denotes $p < .05$, one-tailed; ** denotes $p < .05$, two-tailed

Estimates of fixed effects not shown

Notes

1 - In the 1980 example, there were a number of states that did not experience a divisive primary but where the Democratic vote may have been depressed by the obvious divisions at the national level.

2 - Our model includes some variables not included in the state general election forecasting models, and we exclude some variables that those models include. Like Campbell, Rosenstone, and Holbrook, we include measures of the national economy, home state/region, and incumbency. We attempt to capture each state's ideological leanings by including two measures, one for general ideology and one for civil rights. Campbell and Holbrook use only a general ideological measure. Rosenstone includes nine ideology variables, each specific to certain elections, regions or issue clusters (e.g., racial issues in the South in 1956 and 1960). Like the others, we include a measure of state partisanship based on previous vote outcomes. Like Holbrook, we use the change in per capita R.D.I. as our measure of the state economy, though we key our measure to the party of the governor as well as the president. We also include a dummy variable indicating if the incumbent party has held the White House for two or more terms and a measure of relative ideological extremism. (Holbrook operationalizes the latter by creating an interactive dummy variable for 1964 and 1972.) Like Campbell, we include a total of 16 independent variables; Holbrook had 14 and Rosenstone had 25.

3 - Our dataset does not go as far back as some of the other analyses. Although analysis of all presidential primaries (i.e., beginning in 1912) is useful, our study focuses on modern campaigns, which are more relevant to current electoral politics.

4 - Candidates spend less time and money in caucus states (Gurian 1993); except for Iowa, caucuses are low-profile events, thus they have less impact on most voters.

5 - One case was excluded because of the third party vote was so substantial: George Wallace's home state of Alabama in 1968. Two cases were excluded because neither the Democratic candidate nor electors pledged to that candidate appeared on the ballot (Mississippi in 1960 and Alabama in 1964). One case was excluded because it was an extreme outlier (President Johnson received less than 13% in Mississippi in 1964). An extreme outlier has the potential to bias the parameter estimates. As Achen (1992) explains, it is better to obtain "a meaningful description of 95% of the data than a foolish description of all of them."

6 - There is such great change in the electoral context from year to year, much of which is captured by our model, that we are not particularly concerned about serial correlation. Nevertheless, to account for the possibility of serial correlation we also estimated our model two other estimators designed to deal with serial correlation: Baltagi and Wu's (1999) GLS estimator for AR(1) panel data and OLS with a lagged dependent variable and Panel Corrected Standard Errors (Beck and Katz 1996). Both yield substantively similar results.

7 - With few exceptions, the alternative measures would produce very similar results at the state level. In nine of the elections under consideration, independent and minor party candidates received no more than 1% of the national vote. Any of the above methods of handling these votes would lead to essentially the same result. N.E.S. respondents who voted for John Anderson (in 1980) and Ross Perot (in 1992 and 1996) reported roughly equal second-choice preferences among the major party candidates. The alternative measures would all be within about 1% of one another at the national level and this discrepancy would not tend to vary much across states. However, voters who chose Wallace (in 1968) or Nader (in 2000) may have lopsidedly preferred one of the major party candidates over the other and those voters were *not* evenly dispersed across the states.

In 2000, the alternative measures would be within about 1% of one another at the national level but there is reason to expect that the discrepancy would be considerably more in certain states. The 2000 Nader vote was noticeably greater in some states (such as California, Wisconsin and Vermont) than in others. By substantial margins, Nader voters expressed a preference for Gore over Bush. The potential discrepancy is even greater in the 1968 election. According to the N.E.S. survey, 68.5% of Wallace voters reported higher thermometer ratings for Nixon than for Humphrey. Since Wallace received a plurality of votes in six states that year, the different ways of accounting for third party votes could produce substantially different results.

8 - Bartels and Zaller combined expert ratings of candidates 1948-1980 (Rosenstone 1983) with NES data 1984–1996. We used the same approach for 2000 and 2004. Greater relative extremism is indicated by higher absolute values.

9 - This measure is similar to David's Composite B.

10 - A candidate's home state is usually (though not always) obvious. There are various ways, however, to define a candidate's home region. Campbell and Rosenstone both operationalize the presidential candidate's home region as South/non-South. We chose instead to operationalize a candidate's home region as all states adjacent to a candidate's home state. For example, in 1988 Michael Dukakis' home region included all the states bordering Massachusetts (Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Vermont and New Hampshire).

11 - As a robustness check, we have also run the model with a two-way random effects model, a GLS estimator for panel data with AR(1) serial correlation (Baltagi and Wu 1999), Panel Corrected Standard Errors (both with and without a lagged dependent variable), and a mixed model that adds a random effect on the third party vote percent coefficient, effectively allowing it to vary across elections (while maintaining the fixed-effects for states). Regardless of the specifics of the techniques, we find substantively similar results.