EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN ON ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

by

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(Under the Direction of Jamie L. Carson)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation contains three essays that examine how institutional design—independent of the behavior of political actors—influences electoral outcomes. First, during the late nineteenth century, research has shown that existing norms and rules governing the redistricting process gave state legislatures enormous discretion in the timing and manner in which they redrew congressional boundaries. However, the Supreme Court rulings during the 1960s altered these redistricting rules. As such, a process that once fostered great competition and turnover now centers on maintaining partisan control within states. I seek to understand how representatives respond to changes in their districts in the modern era. Utilizing an experimental approach, I find that certain redistricting plans lead members of the House to move towards the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum. Second, studies of congressional elections often overlook an important component of the process—primary elections. Given the overwhelming partisanship of a large proportion of districts, many elections are essentially decided well before November. Additionally, primary election laws are not uniform across states as are those governing general elections. Therefore, I seek to understand how certain primary election laws can influence who runs and ultimately wins House primary elections. I find that imposing term

limits on state legislators and increasing the diversity of who can participate in a primary produce systematic differences in quality challenger emergence and the distribution of votes among candidates. I also find substantial differences between Democratic and Republican candidates in terms of their performance and success. Third, previous research on the effect of disaster declarations on electoral politics has produced conflicting results. I attempt to reconcile these inconsistencies by reconsidering the theoretical framework used to understand disaster assistance and using unique and innovative data to test the effects of electoral value on aid received as well as the effect of assistance on the public's opinion of the president. I find that disaster declarations differ meaningfully from other actions described as unilateral powers, presidents do not consider electoral value when providing relief, and respondents' evaluations of presidential actions are almost entirely driven by partisanship.

INDEX WORDS: representation, elections, congress, presidency

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Democratic representation is one of the hallmarks of the United States system of government. The debate over what system could best provide an adequately representative and responsive government was the topic of James Madison's Federalist No. 10. Here, he argued that the proposed republican form of government was the only way to defend against tyranny. The number and diversity of factions within government would force members to compromise, therefore giving power to minority opinions and making government responsive to the people. Inherent in this discussion is the question of how has representation—broadly defined—changed in response to the changes in the design of government? In this vein, this dissertation examines a variety of institutional factors and how they influence which candidates run for office, who ultimately wins, and how they behave once in office. Specifically, the rules and principles governing the redistricting process have changed since the 1960s. Similarly, direct congressional primaries were implemented in all states by the 1920s and have evolved greatly since that time. Lastly, the role of the president in dealing with crises has increased steadily since the 1950s. Each of these developments bears consequences for the outcome of elections and the actions of the politicians who win those elections.

The theory employed in each of the following chapters rests on a number of basic assumptions. The first is that representation is not static. Furthermore, changes in who represents a given constituency and how they do so occur in predictable ways based on the institutional framework they operate within. Stimson et al. (1995) defined dynamic representation as public

policy responding to changes in public opinion. They also define two mechanisms through which policy can be altered. The first of which is that elections can change the composition of those in government, which can then result in new or revised policies. Second, those in power can try to increase their probability of winning their next bid for reelection by altering policy in such a way that protects them from any negative ramifications.

Mayhew (1974) famously characterized members of Congress as "single-minded seekers of reelection." Though they may be concerned with other goals, such as creating good policy and obtaining more prestigious positions within government (per Fenno 1973), none of these goals can be accomplished without first winning reelection. Therefore, winning reelection is the proximate as well as most important goal. Empirical evaluations of this electoral connection have been performed at a variety of instances in time. For example, some of the earliest historical examples of this can be found in Bianco, Spence, and Wilkerson (1996) and Carson and Engstrom (2005). The former demonstrates that vulnerable members were less likely to support the Compensation Act of 1816, and those that did support it were less likely to seek reelection. The latter shows that those who represented districts that favored Andrew Jackson in the presidential election of 1824 but voted for John Quincy Adams suffered considerable decreases in votes in the following election. Later that century, Katz and Sala (1996) found that committee assignments became substantially more stable following the nationwide adoption of the Australian ballot, due largely to the increase in the "personal vote" afforded by the new secret ballot. Though Carson and Sievert (2015) later refute this finding, they do find that the Australian ballot led members of Congress to vote against their party more often given the new uncertainty surrounding what was the "right" position to adopt. More recently in history, Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) demonstrate that members leaving Congress between 1991 and

1996 would sometimes change their voting behavior. They speculate that one reason for this is the discrepancy that exists between personal and electorally induced ideology.[1]

Finally, Fenno (1978) describes members of Congress as having multiple, different constituencies. Representatives employ a different strategy in each of the geographic, reelection, primary, and personal constituencies in order to gain voters' trust and ultimately win reelection. The largest of these groups is the geographic constituency, which includes everyone in his or her district. The next largest is the reelection constituency, or those seen as likely to vote for him or her. Next, the primary constituency consists of those who are willing to work for the representative. Finally, the smallest of these groups is the personal constituency, and is composed of family, friends, and advisors. He dubs this behavior "home style," and it is composed of three components—presentation of self, allocation of resources, and explanation of Washington activity. However, home styles are somewhat different for senators because of the much larger constituency and the considerably longer time between elections. Maintaining a home style is important when considering the results offered by Ansolabehere and Jones (2010: 583) who claim, "the American electorate responds strongly to substantive representation."

Each of these works demonstrates the importance of examining the electoral institutions in place in order to fully understand to what degree politicians will be responsive to the desires of their constituents. An extension of this is that politicians must then respond to changes in their environment or else put themselves at risk of experiencing electoral defeat. This then would result in their failure to accomplish any other goals. Providing a greater understanding of the implications that institutional design have on electoral outcomes and therefore representation is the focus of the remainder of this work.

[1] For an alternative perspective, see Carson et al. (2004).

The organization of this dissertation is as follows. In the first chapter, I examine the effects of redistricting on the ideology of House members. During the late nineteenth century, research has shown that existing norms and rules governing the redistricting process gave state legislatures enormous discretion in the timing and manner in which they redrew congressional boundaries. However, the Supreme Court rulings in *Baker v. Carr* and *Wesberry v. Sanders* altered these redistricting practices. As such, a process that once fostered great competition and turnover now centers on maintaining partisan control within states. Here, I seek to understand how representatives respond to changes in their districts in the modern era. Utilizing an experimental approach, I find that legislative-drawn plans result in members having more extreme ideological scores, as opposed to districts created by an extra-legislative body, which lead to member's ideological score remaining relatively stagnant.

This allows me to evaluate the responsiveness of House members to changes in their constituency. If districts are become more extreme, it should follow that the member representing those districts should also become more extreme. However, previous scholarship has contended that members do not necessarily undergo ideological change while in Congress (Poole 2007). Conversely, incumbents are regularly reelected to their office (Jacobson and Carson 2016) and have demonstrate a willingness to adjust their roll call behavior after redistricting (Crespin 2010). I therefore also seek to reconcile some competing narratives surrounding this topic. Furthermore, this chapter will provide added nuance to the role of redistricting in congressional elections by considering the method employed.

In the second chapter, I exploit differences in states' primary election laws to evaluate the effects of institutional design on election outcomes. Specifically, I am interested in how rules governing voter participation and term limits for state legislators influence candidate emergence

(in terms of quality challengers as well as the volume of challengers) and the competitiveness of elections (measured using the proportion of uncontested races as well as candidate vote share). I find that certain institutional setups do, in fact, produce substantively and statistically different primary election outcomes. Specifically, I find that term limits at the state level do elicit greater numbers of quality challengers, but that does not translate into increased competition necessarily. Also, I find that more open voting rules produce more competitive elections. I then conclude with a discussion of how these findings bear significant implications for representative democracy as well as reform-minded groups and citizens.

This allows me to assess the accountability of members to their constituencies. If a set of conditions exist that allow incumbents to win reelection without facing serious—if any—opposition, it is possible that they are not being held accountable for the job they are doing on Capitol Hill. Therefore, this chapter provides a test of which election laws are most likely to induce increased accountability among members of the House, which at least theoretically produces better representation for those districts.

In the third chapter, I examine the effect of disaster declarations on electoral politics. As previous research has produced conflicting results, I attempt to reconcile these inconsistencies by reconsidering the theoretical framework used to understand disaster assistance. I also utilize unique survey data to test the effects of electoral value on aid received as well as the effect of assistance on the public's opinion of the president. I find that disaster declarations differ meaningfully from other actions described as unilateral powers; presidents do consider electoral value when providing relief (but not to the same extent as previously suggested), and respondents' evaluations of presidential actions are almost entirely driven by partisanship. Again, I conclude with a discussion of how these results relate to representation and policy outcomes.

This allows me to assess the responsiveness of presidents. Ideally, each president would adhere to the narrative of serving the entire country and not just those who hold similar beliefs. If the president is indeed deferential to a particular subset of citizens or states, it becomes important to understand who stands to win in these situations as well as what remedies or alternatives are available to those more likely to lose. Furthermore, understanding what institutional constraints do or do not exist are also helpful in predicting future actions. I therefore offer a new perspective on this relationship and challenge the conclusions reached in prior works in this area.

These topics were specifically chosen for a variety of reasons. First, they all represent relatively new and understudied areas of political science. Redistricting has been studied rather extensively, but only recently have enough states adopted independent redistricting commissions to make them a worthy and capable of systematic analysis. Primary elections have only recently received substantial attention, and there is therefore much to be learned about their role in American politics. Previous studies have focused on candidate specific issues such as ideology and spending, but the research on the institutional framework within each state is scant at best. Disaster declarations have also gained increased attention in political science literature only recently, and the role they play in presidential politics has not been fully investigated.

Second, these three issues all bear implications for academics, practitioners, and casual observers alike. The use of redistricting commissions has grown in importance in recent years. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Arizona's use of an independent redistricting commission. Furthermore, over thirty states are currently considering legislation that would create or enhance the state's use of a redistricting commission.[2] Additionally, given the lack of partisan competition

[2] Per Edwards et al. (2017: 722), "Redistricting commissions have recently been proposed by legislators in thirty states (AL, CT, DE, FL, GA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NC, NE, NH, NM, NY, OH, OR, PA, SC, TN, UT, VA, WV, and WI). Voters in three states

within most congressional districts, primary elections have become much more important in determining who will serve in the House of Representatives. In this historically polarized era, members find themselves more concerned with facing a primary challenger than an opponent in the general election. Also, the issuance of disaster declarations has increased with each new administration. This trend will likely continue as weather patterns become more erratic and unpredictable. Knowing how the president evaluates affected areas also speaks to the statehood debates in America's unincorporated territories like Guam and Puerto Rico.

Finally, these issues all speak directly to the relationship between a politician and his or her constituency. Knowing if and how incumbents modify their behavior to appeal to new constituencies is important in understanding whether or not they are indeed responsive to voters or if they feel they can pursue their own legislative agendas. If one were to normatively declare the latter as less preferable, one would also need to know what remedies exist to disincentivize such behavior. Similarly, understanding the factors that may contribute to greater competition, or at least multi-candidate participation, in primary elections could also serve to provide voters with greater means of holding members of Congress accountable for their actions while on the Hill. Finally, knowing if presidents are more particularistic or universalistic when allocating disaster relief is paramount to a state being able to cope with the devastation that follows a natural disaster.

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have advanced ballot initiatives (CO, IL, SD). California legislation would expand the authority of its Citizens Redistricting Commission. The types of commissions proposed vary in terms of authority and selection procedures."

CHAPTER 2

ESTIMATING THE EFFECT OF REDISTRICTING ON IDEOLOGY IN THE POST-WESBERRY ERA

In 2011, the Republican-controlled state legislature of Wisconsin began the decennial redistricting process. Like many other states, their goal was to bolster the party's chances of maintaining power in future elections by creating overwhelmingly partisan districts. The plan produced the intended results as the 2012 election cycle witnessed Republican state legislators win 60 percent of Assembly seats while simultaneously receiving less than 50 percent of the vote statewide. However, this plan came under scrutiny as Bill Whitford alleged that the map violated his First Amendment freedom of association and the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause as it was so favorable to Republicans that it discriminated against Democratic voters. A District Court ruling in *Whitford v. Nichol* later declared that the map was indeed an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander. The state has appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court.

Wisconsin is not exceptional in this regard. Thirty-seven states allow state legislatures to draw their own district boundaries. The process varies considerably across the country, but only six states explicitly forbid elected officials from participating in the construction of maps following the decennial census. This had resulted in accusations of a system that provides for "politicians to choose their voters"[3] and a "distressing lack of confidence in state government."[4]

[3] http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/opinion/readers/2015/09/13/wisconsin-politicians-choose-voters/72202330/

[4] http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/opinion/ct-sta-berg-voters-st-0513-20160512-story.html

Numerous previous works have sought to understand the consequences of allowing state legislatures to construct district maps since the 1970 cycle. For example, Carson and Crespin (2004) and Carson et al. (2014) demonstrate that state legislative plans result in less competitive House elections. Edwards et al. (2017) conclude that legislators are less likely to adhere to traditional redistricting practices such as compactness and respect for existing political boundaries. Results from each of these are reaffirmed in Edwards et al. (2016). Additionally, scholars have investigated what effect redistricting has on polarization. Many contend that polarization is increasing in arenas outside of the influence of redistricting (such as the US Senate), and it therefore other factors must be considered instead. Indeed, McCarty et al. (2009: 666) explicitly state there is "little evidence for such a link" between redistricting and increasing polarization. However, Carson et al. (2007: 878) conclude, "although there is an overall trend of increasing polarization, districts that have undergone significant changes as a result of redistricting have become even more polarized."

I contribute to this line of research by evaluating the effect of redistricting—specifically different redistricting plans—on incumbent ideology, which bears implications for polarization more broadly. I begin with a discussion of the landmark Supreme Court cases that have come to govern the redistricting process. I then describe the data used to test the following question: Do different redistricting bodies produce House members with significantly different ideologies? Utilizing a quasi-experimental approach, I find that the redistricting process leads members of the House to move towards the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum. Additionally, of the members who have been redistricted, those serving in districts that were redrawn by the state legislature similarly move away from the more moderate end of the political spectrum. I conclude with a discussion of how these results could inform previous elections and

policymaking as well as the potential impact of the Supreme Court's adoption of a justiciable standard for evaluating redistricting plans.

The Role of the Supreme Court in Governing Redistricting

During the late nineteenth century, research has shown that existing norms and rules governing the redistricting process gave state legislatures enormous discretion in the timing and manner in which they redrew congressional boundaries. Article 1 Section 2 of the Constitution created enough ambiguity that states found themselves redrawing districts multiple times between censuses while others did not do so for multiple decades. While some states considered the letter of the law when creating congressional boundaries and elected House members from each district with comparably-sized constituencies, others took a more abstract approach and simply elected some representatives at-large instead of drawing new districts (Engstrom 2013).

However, the Supreme Court rulings in *Baker v. Carr* and *Wesberry v. Sanders* altered these redistricting rules. In *Baker v. Carr*, Tennessee's state constitution dictated that General Assembly districts be redrawn every ten years in response to the census and that these districts be constructed with roughly equal populations. However, the state had simply neglected to redraw these boundaries since 1901 despite changes brought on by economic development and population shifts. Charles Baker and other residents of Tennessee argued that because of this inaction in the face of change, some residents' votes had a significantly smaller impact on election outcomes than others, which violated the Equal Protection Clause. Indeed, the population in which Baker resided contained almost ten times as many residents as other districts in the state. The state of Tennessee contended that it was a political question and therefore should not be decided by the courts, but in 1962, the Supreme Court ruled that it was indeed a justiciable issue and it could intervene on matters of reapportionment.

This opened the door for a second case, *Wesberry v. Sanders*, two years later. Here, James Wesberry filed a suit again Georgia Governor Carl Sanders in response to the state's reapportionment plan. Georgia had historically relied on geography when crafting congressional districts at the expense of population shifts, which created great imbalances in the number of voters within each district. Indeed, the fifth district, in which Wesberry resided, contained two to three times more constituents than others within the state. He posed a similar argument to Baker in that this redistricting plan diminished the impact of his vote and therefore violated the Equal Protection Clause. The Supreme Court ultimately ruled 6-3 that Wesberry's right to vote was indeed being diluted because his district's population was considerably larger than those around it. Therefore, in order to prevent such discrimination from occurring in the future, states would be required to create congressional districts in such a way that their populations are at least approximately equal.

The Supreme Court issued a decision in a similar case out of Alabama. The redistricting process prescribed by the state constitution dictated that each county would have at least one representative regardless of population size. This lead to population discrepancies as large as 41-to-1 in the state senate. M.O. Sims challenged the plan in court in 1961, eventually reaching the Supreme Court in 1964. In *Reynolds v. Sims*, the Court ruled 8-1 that state legislative maps—for both lower and upper chambers—were to be constructed with roughly equal populations on the basis of the "one person, one vote" principle.

These cases introduced a more standardized process to redistricting, therefore representing a fundamental change in the timing and manner in which states could redraw their congressional boundaries. Though the cases exclusively originated in the Deep South, the rulings also bore consequences for states throughout the country. Companion cases in Colorado, New

York, Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware had arisen as states had neglected urbanization and population movement when crafting new districts.

Additionally, these cases also induced a change in state legislatures and the way they drew districts. Formerly, states would prioritize winning seats and increasing their party's representation at the state and federal level. Over time however, states began to prioritize incumbency. Redistricting plans began to maximize partisan support within certain districts, with either party conceding defeat in some areas for the sake of maintaining power within others. For example, following the 2000 redistricting cycle, the California state legislature created a bipartisan plan so favorable to sitting members that pundits dubbed it the "Incumbent Protection Plan."[5] Here, each district had at least an eight-point partisan advantage. This in turn served as one of the primary motivations for the state's adoption of a citizen-based redistricting commission, which directly states, "Districts shall not be drawn to favor or discriminate against an incumbent, candidate, or political party."[6]

California is not the only state to adopt a commission when crafting new boundaries. Arizona also adopted a redistricting commission in 2000 via Proposition 106. In addition to the Constitutional and legal standards set forth in the aforementioned cases as well as the Voting Rights Act, the commission requires plans to consider "district shape, geographical features, respect for communities of interest and potential competitiveness."[7] This plan came under scrutiny as members of the state legislature alleged that having a commission draw district maps was unconstitutional. They argued that the Elections Clause of the US Constitution required that a state's elections be governed by "each Legislature thereof." However, in *Arizona State*

[5] http://articles.latimes.com/2002/feb/09/local/me-cong9
[6] http://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/faq.html
[7] http://azredistricting.org/

Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission, the Supreme Court upheld the use of the commission. In a 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that the term "legislature" as it was used in the Constitution was not limited to the institution of the state legislature, and instead should be interpreted to include the lawmaking process within a state as well. Given that the commission was established through the referendum process, it could therefore continue as the body responsible for redistricting.

Redistricting and Ideology

Previous literature has argued that legislators "adopt a consistent ideological position and maintain it over time" (Poole 2007: 435). To be clear, I do not disagree with this argument. However, I do posit that it is at least plausible for members to alter their revealed preferences in such a way to make them appear marginally more ideologically extreme when it is in their best electoral interest. This can be accomplished through roll call votes in Congress, through a shift in campaign rhetoric, or a variety of other ways. Regardless, if the median voter within a representative's district becomes more conservative or liberal by the creation of a more homogeneous district, then he or she must consider doing something to appeal to that new median. One of the easiest ways to do so is through position taking. Congressional roll call votes then become an attractive means by which members can demonstrate their ideological congruity with their constituents. For example, if a member represents a district that is unfavorable towards the Affordable Care Act on partisan grounds, that member can then cast a vote to repeal the measure despite knowing such a bill would never pass, as happened numerous times during the 112th and 113th Congresses. This then provides the representative with a low cost, high reward vote that he or she can use to campaign on for reelection. Failing to do so could result in that member experiencing a serious challenger in the next primary election. This example illustrates a

situation in which it is at least possible that the redistricting process produced a more ideologically homogenous district, which caused the representative within that district to slightly alter his or her revealed preferences in order to maximize his or her probability of winning that seat again in the future. This idea is consistent with existing work as Crespin (2010: 850) demonstrates that following a redistricting cycle "representatives adjust their roll call behavior to fit their new districts" on specific votes.

Furthermore, my argument is not that redistricting is driving polarization or that it is even a primary contributor. However, I do contend that there exists a set of circumstances that could potentially induce marginal increases in the polarization of members whose districts have been redrawn to bolster the incumbent party's chances of success. Furthermore, the argument that redistricting has no effect on polarization carries with it the implicit—and previously untested—assumption that all redistricting plans have the same effect on candidates and elections. Previous research on different types of redistricting plans demonstrates that this is not the case. Given the different motivations behind legislative and commission-based plans as well as the previous evidence suggesting there are meaningful differences between the two, it is worth testing what the specific effect could be on ideology.

This work builds on other works regarding congressional elections as well. Carson et al. (2011) and Carson et al. (2012) show that state legislators are more likely to run for a seat in the U.S. House in the general and primary elections if the constituency of that district closely resembles their previous constituency. This can be explained by ideological agreement with one's constituents or greater name recognition. After redistricting, if the new district has changed too much, the representative may strategically retire or suffer defeat. Crespin and Edwards (2016) demonstrate that redistricting can change the contribution patterns of donors as well.

Put simply, there is theoretical, anecdotal, and empirical evidence to suggest that redistricting at least has the potential to alter the ideological positioning of members who have been redistricted. By moving the median voter within a district towards the more conservative or liberal end of the spectrum, mapmakers effectively also alter the behavior that must be exhibited by the incumbent member in order to retain his or her seat in that district. However, this will be more evident in states in which the legislature were responsible for constructing new maps. Therefore, I test the following hypothesis:

> H_1: *Incumbents serving in districts that have been drawn by state legislatures will become more ideologically extreme*.

Data and Methods

To test this hypothesis and in order to isolate the effects of redistricting on ideology, I employ a difference-in-differences OLS regression. This approach mimics an experiment in that I construct treatment and control groups and have a pre- and post-treatment effect. In this case, the treatment group includes states that must redraw their congressional boundaries while the control group consists of states that only have one congressional district (Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming).[8] Years immediately before redistricting (those ending in 0) represent the pre-treatment effect, while years occurring immediately after a redistricting cycle (those ending in 2) serve as the post-treatment group.[9] The

[8] For purposes of this design, I also include states with only two congressional districts in the control (Hawaii, Idaho, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maine, and select others at different points in history). Theoretically, states with so few districts cannot drastically alter their boundaries from one election to the next without enormous shifts in their populations. Methodologically, this creates balance between the treatment and control groups, and has the added benefit of biasing against finding an effect, which would add robustness to any significant effects.

[9] The data range from 1980 to 2012. Ideally, I would include data on every election immediately before and after a redistricting cycle, but some the data necessary for this estimation are not available prior to 1980.

variable of interest in the difference-in-differences model then is the interaction between these two variables. This essentially creates a counterfactual by which I can compare the treatment group to, which then allows me to assess the effect of redistricting on ideology directly.[10] More specifically, a positive and significant coefficient would indicate that legislative redistricting is, in fact, pushing members of Congress toward the extreme flanks of their respective parties.

To measure ideology, I utilize Adam Bonica's DIME dataset. These estimates (campaign-finance scores or cfscores abbreviated) serve as my dependent variable. They are generated using data from over 100 million contribution records from state and federal elections (Bonica 2014). This allows for ideal point estimates for incumbents as well as non-incumbents, unlike roll call based estimations. The prevalent metric for estimating this model would be DW-NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 1997), but the Bonica measure allows for slightly more ideological movement. That is not to say that DW-NOMINATE does not vary, but it is, by design, more constrained comparatively speaking.[11]

Furthermore, I estimate the absolute value of legislator's dynamic cfscores so that I may speak in terms of moderates versus extremists instead of liberals versus conservatives. These dynamic scores allow for comparisons across time. Therefore, a value of 0 represents the most "moderate" (or least "extreme") a member can be, and increased values represent increased extremism, regardless of a member's ideological preferences.

Lastly, this model includes a number of control variables. The first of these is the absolute value of each district's ideological score. I expect there to be a positive relationship between member ideology and district ideology irrespective of other factors, as candidates whose

[10] For a more detailed discussion of this method, see Morgan and Winship (2012).
[11] The campaign finance based ideal points and roll call based ideal points correlate at well over 0.9, thus mitigating potential concerns about comparability.

ideology appeals to the majority of voters are commonly more likely to represent them in Congress. That is not to say that members and districts cannot move towards the center of the ideological spectrum. I simply posit that given the increase in polarization over time and the motives of line-drawers, districts will become more extreme, on average. Next, I control for each legislator's party identification and gender. Here, Democrats are coded 1 and Republicans as 0. Given the evidence suggesting polarization is asymmetric due to Republicans becoming more conservative, I expect this value to be negative as Democrats have less room to move towards the extreme end of the ideological spectrum. Female legislators are coded 1 and males as 0. I do not have expectations for this variable, but it will allow me to assess any gender-based differences in ideology. Also, consistent with previous works, I include an indicator variable for southern states. This variable is coded 1 for representatives serving in any of the eleven secession states and 0 otherwise. [12] I expected this variable to be positive and significant given the distinct political culture of the south. Lastly, I include fixed effects for each year to account for any unobserved heterogeneity brought on by changes in national tides.

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
CF Score	0.673	0.315	0.002	1.590
Post-Redistricting	0.500	0.500	0	1
Redrawn District	0.964	0.187	0	1
District Ideology	0.740	0.638	0.003	5.683
Party ID	0.549	0.498	0	1
Gender	0.096	0.294	0	1
South	0.311	0.471	0	1

Finally, I limit the analysis to only include instances in which the same legislator served in the same district before and after a redistricting cycle. This prohibits the results to be driven by

[12] These include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

member replacement, and therefore biases against my hypothesis. The resulting sample size is over 2,200. A further description of each of the variables can be found in Table 1.1.

Results

To compare the effect of legislative versus non-legislative drawn plans, I subset the data between these two groups. Table 1.2 presents the results from the difference-in-differences OLS estimates. Here we see the interaction is significant and in the expected direction. For Hypothesis 1, I can reject the null hypothesis of no causal relationship between redistricting and ideology, and conclude that states that allowed their legislature to redraw their congressional lines between 1980 and the present did so in such a way that resulted in legislators becoming more ideologically extreme, on average and holding all else equal.

Table 1.2: Differences-In-Differences OLS Estimates of Ideological Scores

	Legislative Plans	**Non-Legislative Plans**
Post-Redistricting	**0.136**	**0.144**
	(0.046)	**(0.055)**
Redrawn District	0.055	-0.162
	(0.100)	(0.087)
Post-Redistricting x	**0.191**	-0.018
Redrawn District	**(0.096)**	(0.104)
District Ideology	**-0.034**	0.010
	(0.012)	(0.020)
Candidate Partisanship	**-0.280**	**-0.181**
	(0.027)	**(0.039)**
Candidate Gender	0.065	0.097
	(0.042)	(0.059)
Southern State	**-0.105**	**-0.077**
	(0.021)	**(0.040)**
Intercept	**0.743**	**0.888**
	(0.100)	**(0.090)**
N	1437	771
R^2	0.31	0.23

Coefficients presented with robust standard errors in parentheses.
Standard errors clustered by Representative.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.
Year fixed effects estimated but not presented.

Meanwhile, those states that had a court-drawn or commission-based plan did not witness the same increase in the ideological extremity of its representatives. Though this effect is relatively small in terms of substance, it is exactly what one would expect. Conventional wisdom dictates that legislators are not going to evolve from being notoriously centrist to being representatives of the extreme flank of their party.

This model also produces a negative and significant coefficient for the Democratic candidate indicator, providing further evidence to the fact that Republicans are contributing to the increases in polarization more than their Democratic counterparts. Furthermore, there do not appear to be any differences between candidates' ideologies based on gender. Given the political and cultural distinctiveness of the region, the southern state indicator produces consistently different results likely brought on by southern realignment, which still influenced legislators well into the twenty-first century.[13]

These results are graphically depicted in Figure 1. The left panel illustrates the difference in ideological scores before and after a redistricting cycle for the control group. As expected, this line is flat indicating no change wrought on by redistricting. The panel on the right depicts a different relationship though. In states where the legislature redrew congressional boundaries,

[13] Diagnostic tests were performed for collinearity and endogeneity. First, the variance inflation factors were calculated for these models. Collinearity will always be present when using interaction terms and cannot be avoided. Therefore, the only potentially problematic measures were the southern state indicators in either model. These variables were dropped from the analysis and the model then reestimated. No substantive differences emerged from this new specification. I also tested for endogeneity. Theoretically, it is not sensible to believe that the ideology of members of the House of Representatives is driving redistricting, given the rules governing redistricting mentioned previously. Therefore, I do not suspect that simultaneity is an issue. However, it is possible that the relationship between these variables of interest is non-linear. To evaluate this, I perform Ramsey's RESET Test. This tests whether non-linear measures of the fitted values provide additional explanatory power. If the squared or cubed terms are significant, then the model is mis-specified. This analysis then revealed that non-linearity is not a concern.

members of the House experienced a 1.25 percent increase in their ideological score. Though the effect is small, this is precisely what one would expect. Legislators do not make leaps along the ideological spectrum. Instead, they adapt incrementally to their new constituencies.

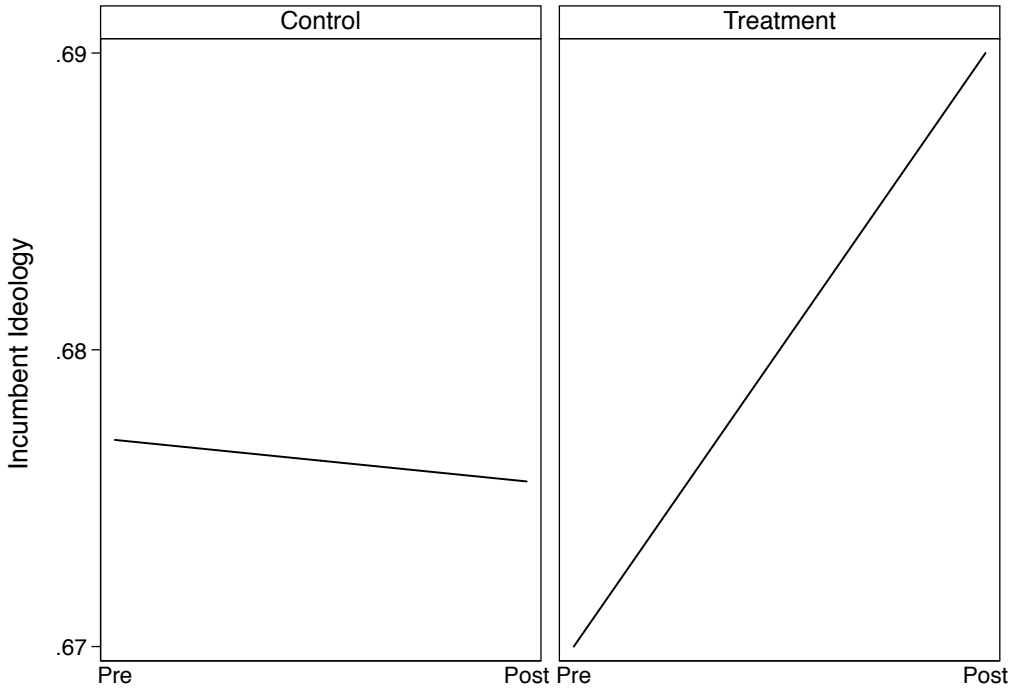

Figure 1.1: Effect of Redistricting on Incumbent Ideology

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results presented here provide evidence demonstrating that redistricting can indeed contribute to increases in the ideological extremity of members of Congress. However, they also demonstrate that the relationship is more nuanced than that. The effect is contingent on the type of redistricting plan employed by states. State legislative-based plans that focus on shoring up partisan support within a district lead to incumbents altering their behavior in such a way to appeal to a more homogeneous constituency. Again, this does not necessarily stand in contrast with the works of Poole (2007) and McCarty et al. (2009). Members typically do not undergo tremendous changes in ideology, nor is gerrymandering an immense force behind

the historically high levels of polarization seen today. However, redistricting can lead to discernible increases in member preferences. Furthermore, it can exacerbate, rather than mitigate, the increased polarization wrought on by other factors.

Additionally, though these results may not be especially encouraging to those concerned with the current polarized state of American politics, they do hold normatively positive implications for those concerned with a government that is responsive to its citizens. Though they may be motivated by their desire to retain their seat in Congress, representatives must be cognizant of and responsive to the ideological needs of their constituents in order to meet that goal. Failing to do so might result in electoral defeat.

Therefore, though some may lament the redistricting process as disproportionately favorable to incumbent members, the fact remains that the institution itself still serves a valuable purpose of providing constituents with a member who will, at least theoretically, be willing to represent their needs in Congress. However, electing a member who will represent a constituency's interests does not necessary result in legislative success. By pushing members of both parties towards the ideological extremes, legislating becomes increasingly more difficult. Understanding what impact changes to this institution can have on representation will be particularly informative to those considering alternative means of drawing districts.

These results are especially critical given the pending case of *Whitford v. Gill*. Here, Wisconsin's redistricting plan was challenged on the grounds of violating Democratic voters' and candidates' Equal Protection and Freedom of Association rights, and was therefore struck down as an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander. The Supreme Court has long held the belief that excessive partisan gerrymandering violates the Constitution, but has also failed to provide a viable test of what an excessive partisan gerrymander is. One potential standard that has arisen

from this case is the “efficiency gap” (Stephanopoulos and McGhee 2015). This measure calculates the number of votes that are cast for losing candidate as well as votes cast for the winning candidate beyond what is needed to win an election. These votes are considered “wasted.” The net wasted vote by either party is then divided by the number of votes cast in the election. The authors then propose establishing a threshold by which to evaluate the constitutionality of a plan.

If this is formalized as a justiciable standard for evaluating redistricting plans, states may be required to redraw their districts with considerably less partisan homogeneity. Though the intent of such a standard would be insure the voting rights of citizens in both state and federal legislative elections, the results presented here indicate that such a practice could also serve to reverse the trend of increasing polarization—or at least keep redistricting from further contributing to it.

CHAPTER 3

House Primary Elections and Their Institutional Influences

Despite the oft-repeated narrative in the media, the 2016 congressional elections were marked by incredibly low levels of turnover among members seeking reelection. Leading up to the election, countless articles across a broad range of outlets discussed the negative effect Trump's candidacy could have on down-ballot races. For example, with respect to Darrell Issa, (R-CA) the *New York Times* stated, "Mr. Issa finds himself suddenly in danger of defeat, a prognosis worsened by his decision to embrace Donald J. Trump."[14] Though the outcome on Election Day was close, Issa did ultimately prevail in his reelection bid. On a larger scale, despite the Republican Party holding its largest majority in almost 100 years, the *Washington Post* ran a headline declaring, "It might be time for Republicans to start worrying about their House majority."[15] After the results were finalized, the GOP did indeed witness its majority shrink—a net loss of six seats. Though there were other factors at play, the fact still exists that a mere eight incumbents lost in the general election.

The ability of incumbent members of Congress to win election after election has spurred immense discussion in the congressional elections literature. Explanations range from the ability to advertise one's self, take positions on issues, and claim credit for helping constituents (Mayhew 1974), to exploitation of the franking privilege (Cover and Brumberg 1982), to the rise of the bureaucracy (Fiorina 1977). A debate then began within the literature concerning the

[14] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/us/politics/darrell-issa-california.html
[15] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/16/it-might-be-time-for-republicans-to-start-worrying-about-their-house-majority/?utm_term=.cd9a0e7ab315

effects of redistricting (Ansolabehere et al. 2000, Carson et al. 2014), money (Kim and Leveck 2013), and strategic entrance and exit (Stone et al. 2010). The resulting conclusion has been that no *single* effect can sufficiently explain the numerous advantages accruing to incumbents.[16]

However, one explanation does a particularly good job of accounting for the variation in the incumbency advantage—the ability of incumbents to discourage quality opponents from running. Despite this, previous scholarship has produced varying estimates of just how much of the incumbency advantage is driven by this scare-off effect. For example, Cox and Katz (1996: 493) argue that "the bulk of the increase in the overall incumbency advantage... can be traced to increases in the quality effect" and therefore cannot necessarily be explained by deterring quality challengers. However, more recently Hall and Snyder utilize a regression discontinuity design to estimate the party incumbency advantage in federal and statewide elections. They contend, "scare-off can account for only 5-7% of the incumbency advantage across the House, statewide offices, and state senates (2015: 3)."

I argue that these works are ignoring a key component of the electoral process though—primary elections. Little work has been done to shed light on the role incumbency plays at this critical juncture. Thus, I utilize the relatively immense amount of variation within state election laws to determine how they influence the emergence of quality challengers as well as election outcomes. Specifically, I am interested in two institutional features that vary across the states: the type of primary employed by each state and whether a state imposes term limits on its state legislators.

[16] For a somewhat differing perspective, see Jacobson (2015). Here, the author suggests that the recent decline in the incumbency advantage suggests that the weakening partisan ties in the 1960s was the primary reason for the growth in the incumbency advantage over the next few decades. Now that partisanship has witnessed a broad resurgence, the consequence has been a decline in the (partisan) incumbency advantage since the 1990s.

The organization of this chapter is as follows. I begin with a discussion of the importance of primary elections before turning to a brief overview of the relevant literature on congressional elections. From there, I describe the data and data collection process used in this work before estimating a series of models predicting quality emergence, unopposed races, and competitive elections. I conclude with a discussion of the substantive impact of these results as well as ideas for future research.

Growing Importance of Primary Elections

Primary elections have become increasingly important in recent elections. As polarization and district homogeneity increase to historically high levels, two-party competition within districts becomes increasingly rare. Instead, many districts know which candidate will be sent to the House of Representatives after the Democratic or Republican primary. As such, primary elections have become the main venue for holding incumbents accountable.

Despite this, political science literature has largely focused on understanding and explaining the influences and outcomes of general elections. Furthermore, much of what is known about general elections cannot be readily applied to enhance our understanding of primary elections. General elections typically feature one Democrat, one Republican, and occur on the same day, which means they are occurring under many of the same conditions. Primaries, conversely, typically feature candidates from the same party, can witness many more than two candidates, and can occur months before or after primaries in other states.

Also, states have applied uniform procedures for conducting general elections, but such uniformity does not exist in primaries. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore how these differing factors can produce different outcomes, which is especially important in light of the growing relevance and visibility of primary elections.

State Election Laws and Primary Elections

Scholars have often debated the effects of challenger quality, spending, institutional rules, ideology, and incumbency. However, as previously stated, these works often neglect the primary election phase of the electoral process. Though there is a new literature on the topic (Boatright 2013; Hall 2015; Branton 2008; Ansolabehere et al. 2007 for example) there is still much work to be done. As districts become increasingly homogeneous, bipartisan competition almost becomes a thing of the past for House races. Much like in the South during the early to mid-twentieth century, real competition often only exists in one party's primary. Winners are all but formally declared long before the general election is held. This makes primary elections arguably more important than general elections in many respects.

With respect to the importance of studying primary elections, Brady et al. (2007) demonstrate that members of Congress face a dilemma when seeking reelection. Is it more advantageous to appeal to one's primary constituency, or should the incumbent be more concerned with positioning him or herself with general election voters in mind? They argue that members will more commonly align themselves closer to the former than the latter for two main reasons. First, the low turnout rates commonly seen in primary elections foster an environment in which a small number of ideologically extreme voters can sway the outcome in favor of the candidate closest to them (98). Therefore, it is in the best interest of the incumbent to try to be that candidate. Second, ideologically moderate incumbents are more likely to draw a primary challenger (99). As previously alluded to, the simplest way to win reelection is to compel potential challengers to stay out of the race, which again creates an incentive for incumbents to not moderate their ideologies.

However, Hall (2015) offers a different conclusion by contending that general election voters "punish the nomination of extreme candidates from contested primaries, on average" (32). In fact, the extent of the punishment is so severe that there is an observable ideological shift in the subsequent roll-call behavior in the opposition party's favor (i.e. "when a more extreme Democrat is nominated, the district's roll-call voting in the next Congress becomes more conservative, and vice versa when a more extreme Republican is nominated" (19)).[17] This is due to the fact voters seem to prefer *electable* candidates from within their own party to potentially more ideological ones. For example, having a moderate Republican candidate in a close district is more important to Republican voters than having an extreme Republican because the Election Day result is more likely to favor the Democratic candidate. Furthermore, given the incumbency advantage enjoyed by House members, in addition to the prospect of losing the seat in the immediate election, losing that seat could have long term, negative consequences in future elections as well.

Boatright (2013) was among the first to systematically analyze House and Senate primary elections. He provides an in-depth look at several factors related to primary campaigns. He demonstrates that primary challenges are quite rare, and successful ones even more so. This stands in stark contrast to the common narrative found in the media that primaries are pushing members of Congress to be more ideological, which then increases political polarization. Though some may discount primary elections as worth studying due to the relative ease with which incumbents win, the same can be said for general elections. Incumbents are routinely reelected to their positions in excess of 90 percent since World War II.

[17] It is important to point out that this effect likely does not apply to "safe" districts in which voters will likely support one party's candidate regardless of his or her ideological leanings.

Despite his immense contribution, there is still much we do not know about primary elections. For example, Boatright's analyses do not control for the presence of quality challengers in his examination of primary elections. But in the 2014 primaries, over 20 percent of all challengers held some sort of elected office prior to running for a House seat. The importance of this is compounded by the results presented in Jacobson and Carson (2016), wherein quality challengers are shown to receive a statistically significant larger share of the vote than non-quality challengers in general elections. I therefore believe that the effect of quality challengers in primary races must be systematically addressed, considering the relevance it holds in the extant literature on the general election.

Boatright also limits his analysis to races in which there were only two candidates. This is problematic as the 2014 primary season saw nearly as many races with more than two candidates (21 percent of all races) as races with only two candidates (26 percent including runoffs). The number of candidates can range from three (10 percent of all races in 2014) to as many as eighteen candidates in one instance (California's 33rd in 2014). Ignoring all races with more than two candidates reduces the generalizability of his results and possibly overstates the importance of his covariates.

Furthermore, Boatright argues that we can never know if incumbents actually scare off challengers because it is impossible to model a non-event. Though this may be true, we can still evaluate scenarios in which quality candidates are more or less likely to emerge.[18] Understanding when a challenger is likely to emerge is critically important to electoral accountability. Without any sort of a foil, voters are likely to be unaware of any inconsistencies in the incumbent's

[18] See, for instance, Banks and Kiewiet (1989) who conduct this very analysis in the context of the 1980, 1982, and 1984 congressional primary elections.

rhetoric or behavior. It is easy to assume that the lack of any challengers signals to the constituency that the incumbent is doing a suitable job, whether or not that is actually the case. However, having to face competition in the primary could likely force incumbents to be more responsive and accountable to his or her constituents. One cannot sit idly by when there is an imminent threat to his or her reelection bid. And if they can and still win, then the voters are the ones who ultimately lose.

Another institutional feature whose effect on who runs and wins congressional elections is not entirely known is the implementation of term limits on state legislators. Carey et al. (1998) and Carey et al. (2006) demonstrate that term limits do not have an effect on the composition of the legislature, decrease the amount of time legislators devote to securing particularized benefits for their districts, increase legislator attentiveness to the needs of the state as opposed to their district, and increase the power of the governor and legislative staff at the expense of party leaders. Furthermore, Maestas (2000: 685) concludes, "term limits would have very different effects on institutions that foster different types of ambition." These pieces make important contributions to our understanding of the intentional—and potentially unintentional—consequences of state election laws. However, these effects have only been considered at the state level when they also stand to influence the U.S. Congress and federal elections—specifically candidate entry and success in primary elections.

Additionally, much work has been devoted to the study of strategic entry of candidates (Jacobson and Kernell 1983, Jacobson 1989, Carson 2005, Carson et al. 2006). Candidates with progressive ambition, a la Maestas et al. (2006), are likely to seek a House seat after gaining experience at the state level. Though open seats are the most likely to host quality challengers, term limits can force state legislators to enter races prematurely. Given how partisan most

districts are, these candidates are likely to compete in the primary race, as opposed to the general election races. It is useful therefore to investigate the relationship between candidate emergence and term limits. In 2014, over 40 percent of all quality challengers had previously served as state representatives or state senators, which provides additional motivation for this hypothesis. This seems sensible as one of the main reasons a candidate would decide not to seek higher office would be because it would mean forfeiting his or her current seat. If that legislator is forced to give up that seat due to institutional design, in contrast, then the incentive to wait for an open seat disappears.

Another factor entering the calculus of a state legislator is constituency congruency. An increase in the overlap between a state legislative district and the federal congressional district results in a similar increase in the probability a state legislator emerges in that congressional district's primary (Carson et al. 2012). Again, however, term limits may confound a legislator's ability to exercise such strategic decision-making, which could have meaningful consequences on the outcome of the election. As Ansolabehere and Snyder (2004: 507) state, "professionally oriented politicians may only abandon their offices and their careers when they must." Therefore, understanding the role of term limits is necessary to explaining primary elections.

McGhee et al. (2013) examine the openness of primaries and conclude that this is not related to the ideology of candidates that are elected. In fact, their data seem to show that increased openness produces the exact opposite intended effect—increased openness in primaries leads to more extreme candidates emerging from party primaries in state legislatures.[19] However, they go on to state, "we believe our findings generally fail to reject the null hypothesis of no effect from primary systems" (347). Therefore, previous literature does not provide a definitive

[19] Boatright (2013) finds a similar effect in his discussion of congressional primary elections.

answer on what effect primary systems can have on election outcomes. Yet, given the great amount of variance in primary elections rules at the House level—as opposed to the relative uniformity of general election rules—it is important to understand how the state specific institutions can influence national politics.[20]

Case Studies in the Effect of Primary Election Laws on Outcomes

To illustrate how electoral rules can shape primary election outcomes, I now turn to a number of examples from recent elections. In Iowa's 2014 primary election for the 3rd congressional district, no candidate received more than 35 percent of the vote in the Republican primary election. In most states, the candidate with the greatest number of votes would have been declared the winner. In many others, the top two vote getters would proceed to a runoff. However, in Iowa, each candidate for a particular office participates in a caucus style election where the last place candidate is removed from the ballot and votes are recast until there are only two candidates left. The candidate that receives a majority between those two is then declared the winner. In this particular instance, David Young, who finished fifth initially and therefore would have lost or not even been given a chance to compete in a runoff, would eventually win the party's nomination for that seat before going on to win the general election as well.[21]

In Washington's 4th district during the 2014 primary election cycle, moderate Republican candidate Dan Newhouse finished second behind the more conservative Republican Clint Didier, with the leading Democratic candidate finishing far behind. Given the district's affinity for Republican candidates, Didier would have soundly defeated a Democratic opponent. However, Democrats and moderate Republicans alike provided enough support for Newhouse to win the

[20] This variation at the primary stage also provides me with additional leverage in understanding election outcomes in ways that general elections cannot given their similarities across states.
[21] http://theiowarepublican.com/2014/live-blog-third-district-special-nominating-convention/

general election. This led one reporter to declare this instance as possibly "the clearest evidence yet that a top-two primary system can work to marginalize, rather than incentivize, the political fringe."[22] These same series of events transpired in the 2016 primary and general election as well. Though measuring the effect of rules on ideological placement is outside the scope of this chapter, this example still demonstrates that the institutions in place can have a profound impact on who competes in and wins primary elections.

More directly related to the focus on this work, the 2014 Mississippi Senate race between Republican incumbent Thad Cochran and his challenger, Tea Party supported State Senator Chris McDaniel, was ultimately decided by Mississippi's voting rules. McDaniel received approximately 49.5 percent of the vote compared to Cochran's 49.0. However, Mississippi laws dictate that a runoff will be held if no candidate receives at least 50 percent of the vote. Additionally, Mississippi utilizes an open voting system in which all registered voters are able to decide on the day of the election which party's primary they would like to compete in. Therefore, as long as a voter did not participate in the Democratic primary, he or she could participate in the Republican primary runoff. Cochran exploited this by successfully persuading Democrats to support him in large enough numbers to retain his seat.[23]

Though these may seem like extreme examples, it becomes more apparent that idiosyncrasies in institutional design can influence electoral outcomes. States can have open primaries where any registered voter can participate. They may utilize closed primaries where voters must register with the party before participating in the primary. A less popular method is the top-two or jungle primary utilized by California and Washington, where all candidates for a

[22] http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-washington-state-can-teach-us-about-gridlock-in-the-other-washington/
[23] http://www.politico.com/story/2014/06/primary-election-2014-108258

particular office appear on the ballot and the two candidates with the largest vote shares proceed to the general election regardless of partisanship. The systems employed by Utah and Virginia are equally as uncommon. Here, the state party apparatus holds a nominating convention before the primary election to decide which candidates will appear on the ballot. Though a standard election eventually takes place, many outcomes have already been decided as the party only lists one candidate's name on the ticket.

Additionally, the nine states that do have runoffs have different criteria for what requires another vote (Boatright 2013). Further still, in Louisiana, there simply are no primary elections. If any candidate fails to receive a majority in the general election, the top two candidates proceed to a runoff. Given this wide variation, it is important to understand which factors, if any, encourage greater quality challenger participation and competition, which therefore could increase accountability and responsiveness from incumbents.

To further demonstrate the uniqueness of primary elections across states, I outline some of the key sources of variation. As can be seen in Table 2.1, there is substantial variation in which rules are adopted by the states. The most common method is open with top-two being the least common. Closed and semi-open races account for a comparable number of races. Another interesting trend emerges from these data—states regularly change the rules governing who can vote in primary elections between elections.[24] For example, seven states allow political parties to choose whether to allow unaffiliated voters to participate in each election. Furthermore, these rules are not uniform across the two major parties. It is not uncommon for the Democrats to

[24] No clear explanation for this phenomenon currently exists. The simplest explanation is that the party feels a certain change will result in a more desirable outcome from their perspective. Alternatively, change could also be the result of a successful ballot initiative or outside campaign. Future research should endeavor to understand which conditions are most likely to generate a change in rules.

employ one set of rules while the Republicans in the same state use different rules.

Table 2.1: Primary Election Voting Laws by State-Year

State	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
AL	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
AK	C/O	SO	SO	O/SO	O/SO	O/SO	O/SO	SO
AZ	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	C	SO	SO
AR	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO	O
CA	TT	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	TT	TT
CO	SO	SO	SO	*	*	C	SO	SO
CT	*	*	*	*	*	C	C	SO
DE	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
FL	C	C	C/O	C	C	C	C	C
GA	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
HI	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
ID	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
IL	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
IN	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
IA	O	O	O	*	*	C	SO	SO
KS	*	*	*	SO	SO	C	SO	C
KY	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
LA	TT	TT	TT	TT	C/SO	C	TT	TT
ME	C	C	C	*	*	C	SO	C
MD	C/SO	C	C	C	C	C	C	SO
MA	*	*	*	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO
MI	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
MN	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
MS	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
MO	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
MT	O	O	O	O	O	C/O	O	O
NE	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	C	SO	SO
NV	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
NH	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO
NJ	*	*	*	*	*	*	SO	C
NM	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
NY	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
NC	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	C	SO	SO
ND	O	O	O	C	O	O	O	O
OH	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
OK	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	SO
OR	C/SO	C/SO	C	C	C	C	C	SO
PA	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
RI	*	*	*	O	*	C	SO	SO
SC	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
SD	C	C	C	C	C	C	C/SO	SO
TN	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
TX	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	SO
UT	*	*	*	*	*	*	SO	SO
VT	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
VA	*	*	*	*	*	*	O	SO
WA	*	TT	O	O	*	*	TT	TT
WV	C/SO	C/SO	C/SO	C/SO	SO	C/O	SO	SO
WI	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
WY	O	O	O	*	O	C	SO	C

C=closed, O=open, SO=semi-open, TT=top-two; Source: Compiled by author

Another source of variation that can potentially influence primary election outcomes is the presence of term limits on state legislators. A detailed list of which states employed some form of term limits and in what years they were in effect is provided in Table 2.2. It is also important to point out that the definition of "term-limited" varies by state. Some states only prohibit consecutive limits, which would then allow members of the state legislature to sit out one term before trying to win their seat back. Others place a lifetime limit of years members are eligible to serve. Once a member reaches that limit, he or she is no longer eligible to serve in that position ever again. However, some states break this up by chamber, allowing members to serve the maximum number of years in both the House and Senate, while others count time spent in either chamber against the limit. Furthermore, other systems only impose limits on one of their chambers.[25]

Table 2.2: List of States with Term Limited State Legislators

State	Year of Impact	State	Year of Impact
Arizona	2000	Missouri	2000
Arkansas	1998	Montana	2000
California	1996	Nebraska	2006
Colorado	1998	Nevada	2010
Florida	2000	Ohio	2000
Louisiana	2007	Oklahoma	2004
Maine	1996	South Dakota	2000
Michigan	1998(H), 2000(S)		

Theory and Hypotheses

I first evaluate the effects of differing primary election laws. There are four possibilities: open, closed, semi-open, and top-two. An open primary is one in which voters are not required to

[25] A number of states enacted term limits only to see them repealed before they had an impact on who could run for reelection. These are not included in Table 2. These data were collected from the following website (http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/chart-of-term-limits-states.aspx), which also has additional information on term limits for state legislatures.

register as a member of either party before participating in their primary. As one might assume, a closed primary is simply the opposite—voters must register as a Democrat or Republican before the election in order to participate in the respective primary. Rules regarding the ability to vote of those who are registered as Independents vary by state. Semi-open primaries are a hybrid of these two. Registered voters must formally identify with either party before voting, just like in closed primaries, but are able to change which party they are registered with on the day of the election should they decide to do so. Finally, the top-two system (also known as the jungle primary) is one in which all candidates for a given office—regardless of party affiliation—appear on one ballot. Afterwards, the two candidates who received the most votes proceed to the general election. This means that voters could potentially be deciding between two Democrats or two Republicans in the general election, which is not uncommon. For example, the 2016 California general election featured seven House races pitting two Democrats against each other (the 17th, 29th, 32nd, 34th, 37th, 44th, and 46th districts). Similarly, two of Washington's ten congressional races featured co-partisans competing for a seat in the House (Republicans Clint Didier and Dan Newhouse in the 4th and Democrats Pramila Jayapal and Brady Walkinshaw in the 7th). Furthermore, every state that employed a jungle primary system witnessed this phenomenon in 2016 as fellow Republicans Scott Angelle and Clay Higgins squared off in Lousiana's 3rd district runoff.

To further demonstrate the theoretical effect of primary election laws on candidate emergence, I include Figure 2.1 below. Both panels represent a hypothetical distribution of voter's ideological preferences within a district. In the top panel, it is evident that there are fewer opportunities for viable challengers to emerge if the incumbent represents the median voter. However, in the bottom panel, even if the incumbent represents the median voter, there are

considerable opportunities for both moderate and extreme candidates to emerge. Furthermore, if the incumbent were to try to preempt a successful bid from a more extreme candidate by appealing to those on that end of the ideological spectrum, that would therefore increase the chances for a more moderate candidate to succeed, and vice versa. As such, given the expectation that candidates are more likely to emerge when there is a greater chance of success, closed primary systems should typically result in fewer candidates relative to more open systems.

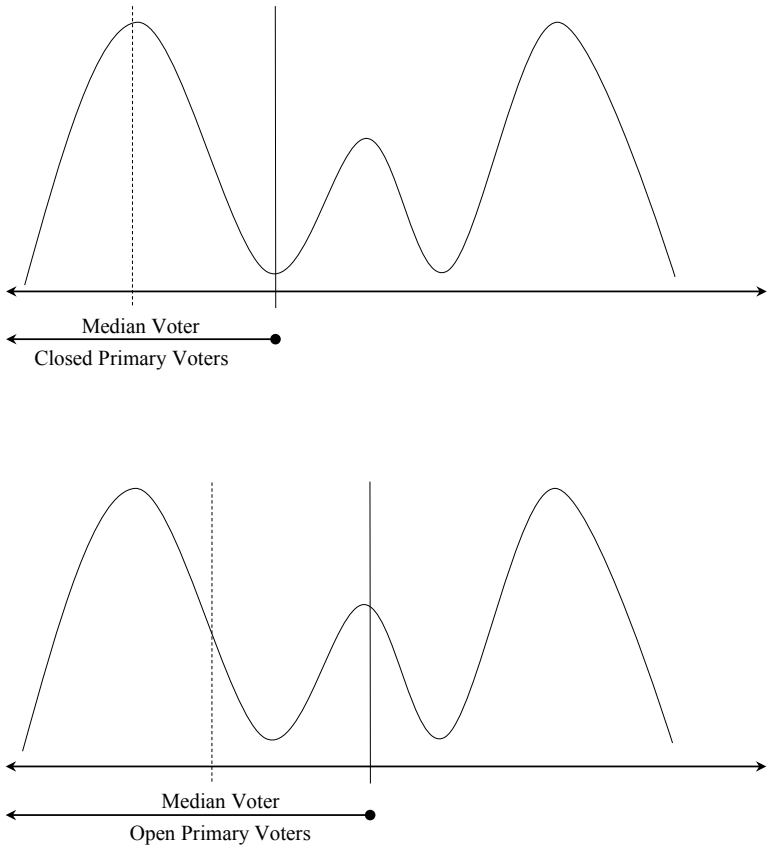

Figure 2.1. Theoretical Median Voter Under Closed and Open Primaries

Based on this variation, I have derived the following hypotheses:

H_1: *States with less restrictive primary election laws will witness (a) greater proportions of quality challengers, (b) fewer unopposed races, (c) more candidates competing for the nomination, (d) higher levels of competition, and (e) lower vote shares.*

The logic here relies heavily on the median voter theorem. By contracting the ideological range of voters through employing something more like a closed than an open primary, the range of candidates who can conceivably win, or at least be competitive, is also reduced. In essence, systems that are more restrictive have moved the median away from what we might expect to be the optimal location for fostering greater competition. Therefore, not only will races be more one-sided, but fewer challengers (especially those with previous experience) will be inclined to enter said races.

Additionally, there is another institutional feature that could influence the outcomes of House primary elections—imposing term limits on state legislators. Currently, fifteen states employ varying restrictions on how long a member of the state legislature can serve (see Table 2). The accompanying hypotheses are as follows:

H_2: *States that impose term limits on the legislators will witness (a) greater proportions of quality challengers, (b) fewer unopposed races, (c) more candidates competing for the nomination, (d) higher levels of competition, and (e) lower vote shares.*

The theory of this argument draws from Rohde's (1979) work on progressive ambition. If members have reached their maximum number of terms in the state legislature, it is fair to assume they have interest in maintaining elective office. The seemingly natural next step would be a federal legislative seat. Therefore, once a member has been term-limited out of state office, he or she will be more likely to enter a House primary election. This in turn increases both the

number of candidates and quality candidates that emerge. This added competition should, at a minimum, become evident in the share of votes won by the incumbent.

Before undergoing more rigorous investigation, I first examine some descriptive trends over time to demonstrate systematic differences across primary election types. Figure 2.1 depicts the difference in the proportion of uncontested races by primary election type. Unsurprisingly, top-two races are almost always contested since they were re-implemented.[26] Also consistent with theoretical expectations is the fact that closed races are consistently less likely to be contested than open races. Imagine two districts that lean heavily towards the Republican Party. The first district is in a state with closed voting rules, and the second is in a state with open voting rules. Therefore, only registered Republicans can vote in the first race, making the ideological distribution of voters relatively narrow and more conservative than in the second district where Democrats and Independents are eligible to participate. These non-Republicans are likely to participate in this primary given the fact that this race will likely decide who will represent that district in Congress. This then creates an incentive for a more moderate candidate to enter the race. Put simply, by constricting the ideological spectrum of voters, lawmakers also restrict the number of candidates who can conceivably appeal to enough voters to win.

[26] This system was initially implemented in California and Washington around the turn of the century. It was shortly thereafter challenged as violating the First Amendment freedom of association and ruled unconstitutional. It was later revised and reimplemented.

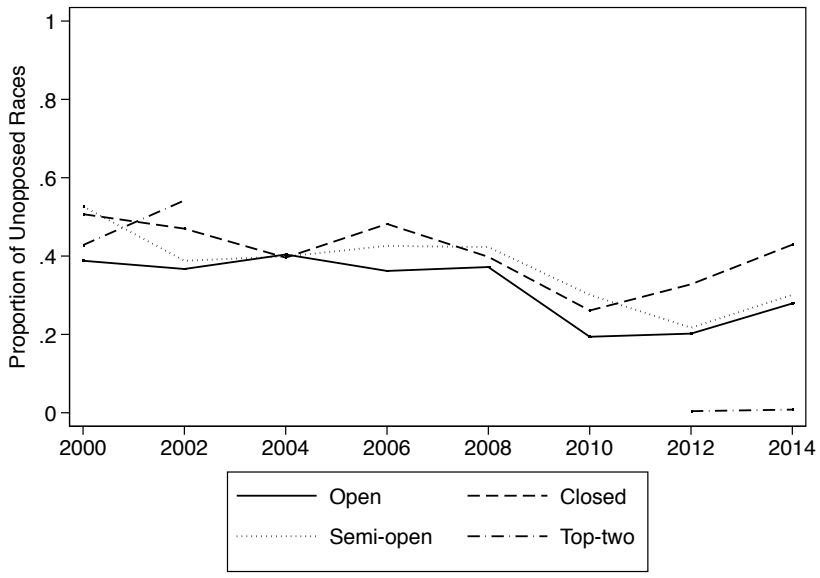

Figure 2.2: Proportion of Uncontested Races by Primary Election Type

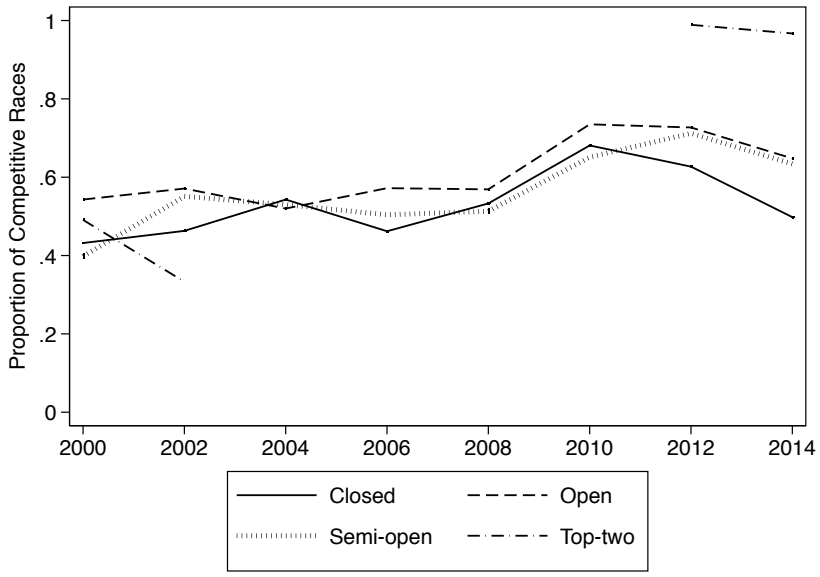

Figure 2.3: Proportion of Competitive Races by Primary Election Type

Figure 2.2 depicts the proportion of competitive races by primary election type. Here, competitive is defined as whether or not the second-place finisher was within 10 percentage points of the winning candidate. This is simply an extension of the traditional measure of competitiveness (winner receives 55 percent of less), but allows for races with more than two

candidates to be evaluated. Given the larger average number of candidates, top-two winners rarely receive more than 10 percentage points more than the competition. Furthermore, not only are closed races more likely to be uncontested than open races, but they are less likely to be competitive when they are opposed.

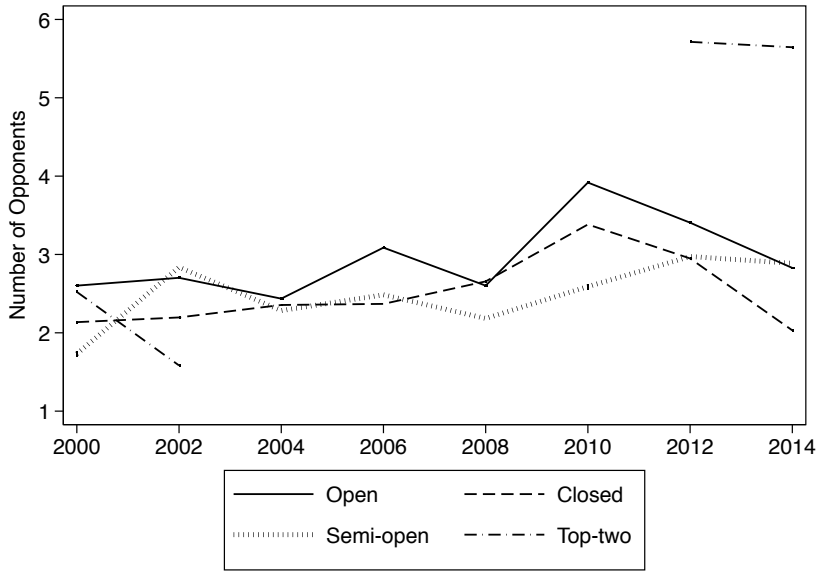

Figure 2.4: Average Number of Candidates by Primary Election Type

Figure 2.3 depicts the relationship between primary voting rules and the average number of candidates in each race. Having a viable alternative is important for holding incumbent members accountable for their actions. Despite how displeased a constituency may be with their representative, they cannot demonstrate that displeasure if there is not another candidate on the ballot. This figure demonstrates that races with open voting rules consistently witness a larger number of candidates competing for their party's nomination than those in closed voting districts.

Furthermore, the results in Figure 2.4 coincide with the results on the previous figures. Candidates in closed races typically win higher vote shares given the lack of competition they are faced with. Open voting rules produce winners with smaller margins of victory. Given the large number of candidates in top-two districts, candidates have significantly smaller vote shares.

Across all figures, semi-open races do not appear to coincide more closely with open or closed rules, truly justifying its title.

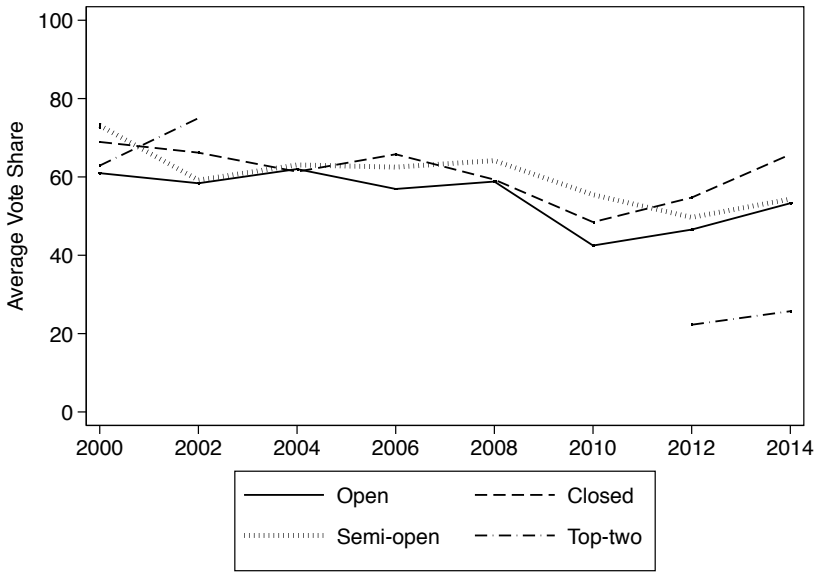

Figure 2.5: Average Candidate Vote Share by Primary Election Type

Figure 2.5 illustrates the effect of term limits the proportion of incumbents running unopposed. Somewhat surprisingly, only the 2012 and 2014 elections witnessed incumbents facing challengers more often. However, this could be a reflection of the strategic behavior of experienced politicians. Though there is an abstract, yet finite, window of opportunity for a potential challenger to capitalize on his or her previous experience in representing the state, he or she may still choose to wait for either an open seat or a vulnerable incumbent to enter the race. Perhaps newly redrawn districts, a presidential election, and higher nationalization in 2012 provided enough of an incentive to elicit participation from experienced and inexperienced candidates alike.

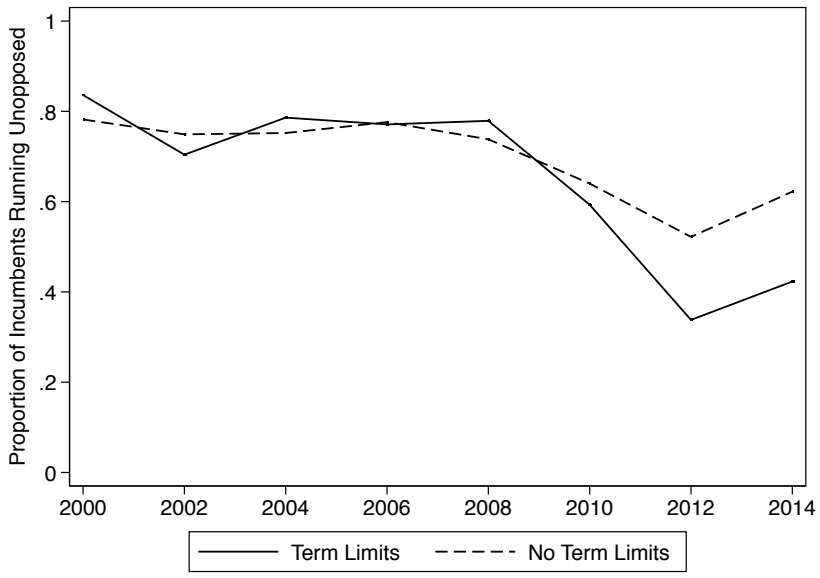

Figure 2.6: Proportion of Uncontested Primary Races by Term Limit Presence

Building off that notion, Figures 2.6 and 2.7 depict the proportion of competitive races and average candidate vote share respectively. The 2012 and 2014 elections not only saw more contested primary elections, but they appear to have been contested by viable enough candidates to make those elections competitive as well. States that impose term limits on their state legislators hosted nearly twice as many competitive elections than states that allow members to serve indefinitely. As a result of this, the average candidate vote share sharply declined in the 2012 elections. It then increased in 2014 but remained substantially less than those in states without term limits.

Taken together, these figures illustrate that the electoral institutions within each state can and do shape who runs and how they ultimately fair in congressional primaries. Open primaries elicit more competitive elections than closed primaries. Similarly, term limits at the state level seem to produce more competitive races at the federal level in recent election cycles. Testing the relationship between institutional design and election outcomes as well as assessing the substance of this dynamic is the focus on the remainder of this chapter.

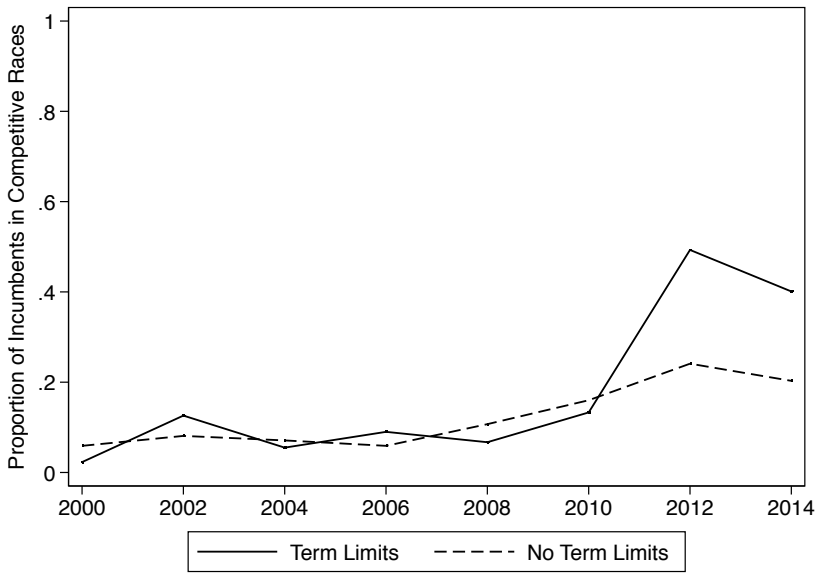

Figure 2.7: Proportion of Competitive Primary Races by Term Limit Presence

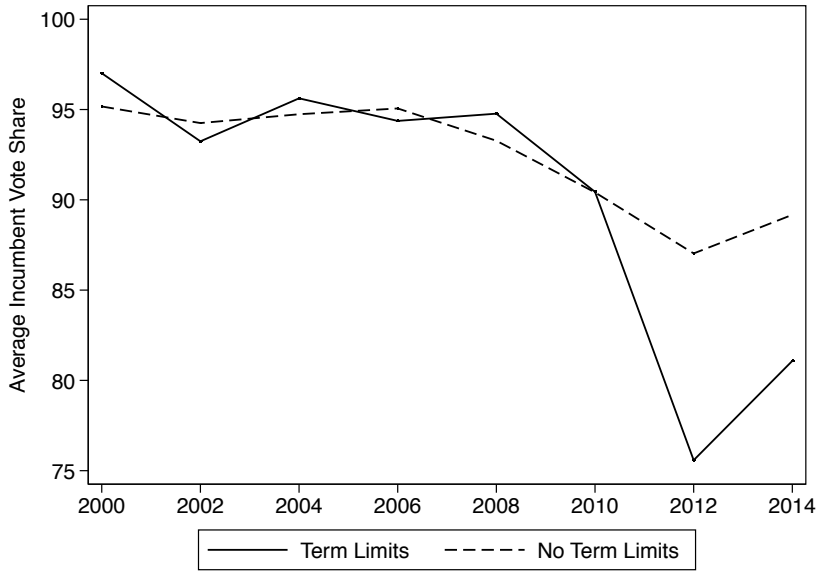

Figure 2.8: Average Candidate Vote Share in Primary Election by Term Limit Presence

Data and Methods

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, I estimate three separate models. The first model predicts the emergence of a quality challenger. Here the dependent variable is a dichotomous measure indicating whether a challenger in a primary election had previously held elective office. The models are separated by the partisanship of the primary being held to account for the structural advantage enjoyed by Republicans (Jacobson 2015) as well as the discrepancy in the available crop of candidates to recruit for higher office.[27] Furthermore, I include a measure capturing the available pool of quality candidates in a state by dividing the number of state legislators by the number of federal congressional districts within the state. States with greater numbers of experienced candidates per congressional district are likely to witness greater quality challenger emergence. To account for the risk associated with leaving office, I also include a five-point scale of the professionalization level of the state legislature.[28] A seat in a more professionalized legislature gives a representative greater resource, power, and exposure, which leaves these members better equipped to run for higher office and therefore reducing the risk they must take.

There are two main explanatory variables. The first is a series of indicators denoting what set of rules are in place dictating who can vote in a state's primary.[29] The second main independent variable is a measure of term limits. If a state has passed legislation disallowing

[27] For example, Republican state legislators currently outnumber Democratic state legislators by almost 700 members.
[28] The coding scheme was taken from the National Conference of State Legislatures here: http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/full-and-part-time-legislatures.aspx. The categories include: Part Time/Low Pay/Small Staff, Part Time "Lite," Hybrid, Full Time "Lite," and Full Time/Well Paid/Large Staff.
[29] Top-two primaries are included in both estimations as they feature candidates from both political parties.

members of the state legislature to seek reelection after serving a certain number of terms, those running in that state are coded 1. If such legislation does not exist, that state is coded zero. Additionally, these rules are not applied retroactively. Therefore, if a state passes legislation in 2000 declaring that members cannot serve more than 4 terms in either chamber, that legislation does not take effect until 2008. Furthermore, some states initially passed legislation imposing term limits on its members, but later had that legislation overturned by either the state courts or future members of the legislative body. After taking these factors into account, over one-third of challengers included in these models ran in districts subject to term limits.[30]

I also include a number of control variables. The first is an indicator variable for open seat races. Candidates are coded 1 if they are running in an open seat and 0 if they are competing against an incumbent. The research on congressional elections demonstrates that quality challengers are strategic in their decision-making and seek to maximize their chances of winning by avoiding running against incumbents (Banks and Kiewiet 1989; Jacobson 1989). Therefore, I expect quality challengers to compete in open seat elections more often than against incumbents, resulting in a positive coefficient for this variable. Similarly, I include a measure of state competitiveness to account for the overall level of partisan competition. This measure was constructed using the Democratic share of the two-party presidential vote in the most recent

[30] As far as which districts are not included in the analysis, Connecticut, Louisiana, Virginia, and Utah each have rules that set them apart from the other states. Louisiana does not actually hold primary elections. They employ a jungle primary system similar to that in California and Washington (but for the general election) and hold a runoff in the event that no candidate receives a majority. Connecticut, Virginia, and Utah each hold conventions in which both parties nominate candidates. If a candidate receives enough votes here, he or she becomes the only candidate in that race. A primary election is only held if no candidate for a particular district reaches a predetermined number of votes from the party delegates. In this case, the top two vote getters proceed to a traditional primary election. This greatly increases the probability that races will be uncontested, and in many states uncontested elections do not even appear on the ballot.

election.[31] States that offered less than 47.5 percent of the vote to the Democratic presidential candidate are coded as favoring Republicans, states that offered more than 52.5 percent of the vote for the Democratic presidential candidate are coded as favoring Democrats, and all other states are coded as competitive. Again, given the strategic nature of quality candidates, I expect them to be more likely to emerge in more competitive electoral environments. Finally, I include yearly fixed effects to account for any unobserved heterogeneity over time in the data that may influence these elections (such as national tides).

Results

The results of these first estimations are included in Table 2.3. From this analysis, it appears that quality challengers emerge at comparable rates between open, closed, and semi-open primaries. Interestingly, top-two rules seem to dissuade quality challengers from entering. This is likely due to the large number of candidates that are typically present in this system. Since candidates do not have to actually "win" in the traditional sense in order to be placed on the general election ballot, amateurs are not facing the same deterrents they would be facing in an open or closed system, which in turn makes a quality challenger's entrance riskier and therefore less likely. As such, this leads me to believe that top-two systems are not necessarily discouraging quality candidates from entering, but they are encouraging greater numbers of political amateurs to participate, which then yields this negative coefficient. Though this does not offer direct support for H_1, it does support the notion that different rules produce meaningfully different electoral environments.

[31] The presidential vote was used in order to employ a more exogenous measure of a state's partisan preferences.

Table 2.3: Logit Estimates of Quality Challenger Presence, 2000-2014

	Democratic Primaries	Republican Primaries
Open Primaries	0.06	0.01
	(0.18)	(0.14)
Semi-open Primaries	0.03	-0.22
	(0.18)	(0.16)
Top-two Primaries	-0.42	**-0.55**
	(0.29)	**(0.28)**
Competitive	-0.06	0.12
	(0.15)	(0.11)
District Partisanship	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Term Limits	0.09	**0.41**
	(0.14)	**(0.13)**
Part Time Lite	**2.17**	0.03
	(0.75)	(0.76)
Hybrid	**1.84**	0.04
	(0.84)	(0.81)
Full Time Lite	**1.99**	0.12
	(0.85)	(0.87)
Full Time	**1.92**	-0.06
	(0.90)	(0.89)
Pool of Quality Candidates	0.01*	0.01
	(0.005)	(0.003)
Open Seats	**1.62**	**1.46**
	(0.12)	**(0.10)**
Intercept	**-4.65**	**-2.97**
	(1.07)	**(0.90)**
N	2962	3786
Log-likelihood	-1248.57	-1609.77
% Correctly Classified	80.96	80.49

Coefficients presented with robust standard errors in parentheses.
Standard errors clustered by congressional district.
Yearly fixed effects estimated but not presented.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.
*indicates entries are significant at $p<0.10$.

In contrast, these results do offer support for the term limits hypothesis, at least in Republican primaries. It appears that states with term limits witness a greater number of experienced candidates running in House elections than those where legislators can theoretically serve indefinitely, all else equal. Though most races will not bear witness to quality participation, forcing legislators to make an attempt at obtaining higher offices or remove themselves from politics entirely, even if for a short time, does influence who competes in primary elections.

Furthermore, as expected, quality challengers are more likely to emerge when an incumbent is not seeking reelection. Additionally, Democratic quality challengers are more likely to emerge in states with higher levels of partisan competition while quality Republicans are statistically likely to emerge at comparable levels irrespective of competitiveness. This is likely due to the relative dearth of eligible candidates for the Democratic Party to recruit, therefore forcing the party to concentrate only on those races they are most likely to succeed in, while the Republican Party can field candidates in a broader range of races.[32]

If certain institutional factors lead to more quality challengers running in the primaries, the question then becomes are these new candidates randomly distributed across races? Or are there discernible patterns to which races are uncontested versus which ones are not? To answer this question, I estimate another logistic regression in which I predict whether or not a candidate ran unopposed or not. I again include controls for the type of primary election held, whether or not a state imposes term limits, the partisan competition of the state, and each candidate's level of experience. Partisan competition should have a differential effect across parties within a state. For solidly Democratic states, given the comparative value and cost of the seat being sought, I

[32] However, it should be noted that the competitiveness variable achieves statistical significance only when using a one-tailed test.

expect fewer unopposed Democratic primaries and more unopposed Republican primaries, and vice versa. Given the popularity of some incumbents within their districts and the ability of others to deter opponents, I expect incumbents to be much more likely to run unopposed. Also, given the strategic nature of quality candidates and the out-party within a district attempting to put its best candidate forward, I expect quality challengers to also be more likely than amateurs to run unopposed. The results of this model are presented in Table 2.4.

First, term limits do not seem to have an independent effect on the probability of a candidate running unopposed in a primary election. However, from these estimates, a number of other interesting patterns emerge. As expected, given the unique nature of the top-two primary system, states employing that system are considerably less likely to witness candidates run unopposed. Additionally, expanding the population of who is eligible to participate in primary elections reduces the probability of a candidate running unopposed, although this appears to only be true for Republican races.

Also as expected, incumbents from both parties are considerably more likely than non-incumbents to run unopposed. However, Democratic amateurs and quality challengers do not differ significantly in this regard, and Democratic candidates in general appear to be randomly distributed across districts in terms of competitiveness. Republican candidates appear to be much more strategic on the other hand. Quality challengers are less likely to run unopposed than amateurs, which makes intuitive sense. If amateurs are running unopposed, it is likely because the prospects of that party ultimately winning the seat are minimal. The races in which quality challengers are most likely to emerge are the ones that are likely to feature other candidates, whether they be other challengers or a vulnerable incumbent.

Table 2.4: Logit Estimates of Unopposed Races, 2000-2014

	Democratic Primaries	Republican Primaries
Open Primaries	-0.11	-0.22
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Semi-open Primaries	-0.08	-0.21
	(0.15)	(0.18)
Top-two Primaries	**-1.90**	**-2.16**
	(0.24)	**(0.29)**
District Partisanship	**-0.05**	**0.03**
	(0.01)	**(0.01)**
Term Limits	-0.02	**-0.35**
	(0.14)	**(0.15)**
Part Time Lite	-0.001	-0.18
	(0.80)	(0.97)
Hybrid	-0.05	-0.50
	(0.91)	(1.02)
Full Time Lite	0.60	0.23
	(1.01)	(1.06)
Full Time	0.93	0.75
	(1.04)	(1.10)
Pool of Quality	-0.001	-0.003
Candidates	(0.01)	(0.01)
Quality Challengers	-0.01	**-0.34**
	(0.12)	**(0.14)**
Incumbents	**2.00**	**2.44**
	(0.09)	**(0.12)**
Intercept	**1.32**	**-0.96**
	(0.95)	**(0.21)**
N	4809	5453
Log-likelihood	-2618.60	-2329.98
% Correctly Classified	73.93	79.28

Coefficients presented with robust standard errors in parentheses.
Standard errors clustered by congressional district.
Yearly fixed effects estimated but not presented.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.
*indicates entries are significant at $p<0.10$.

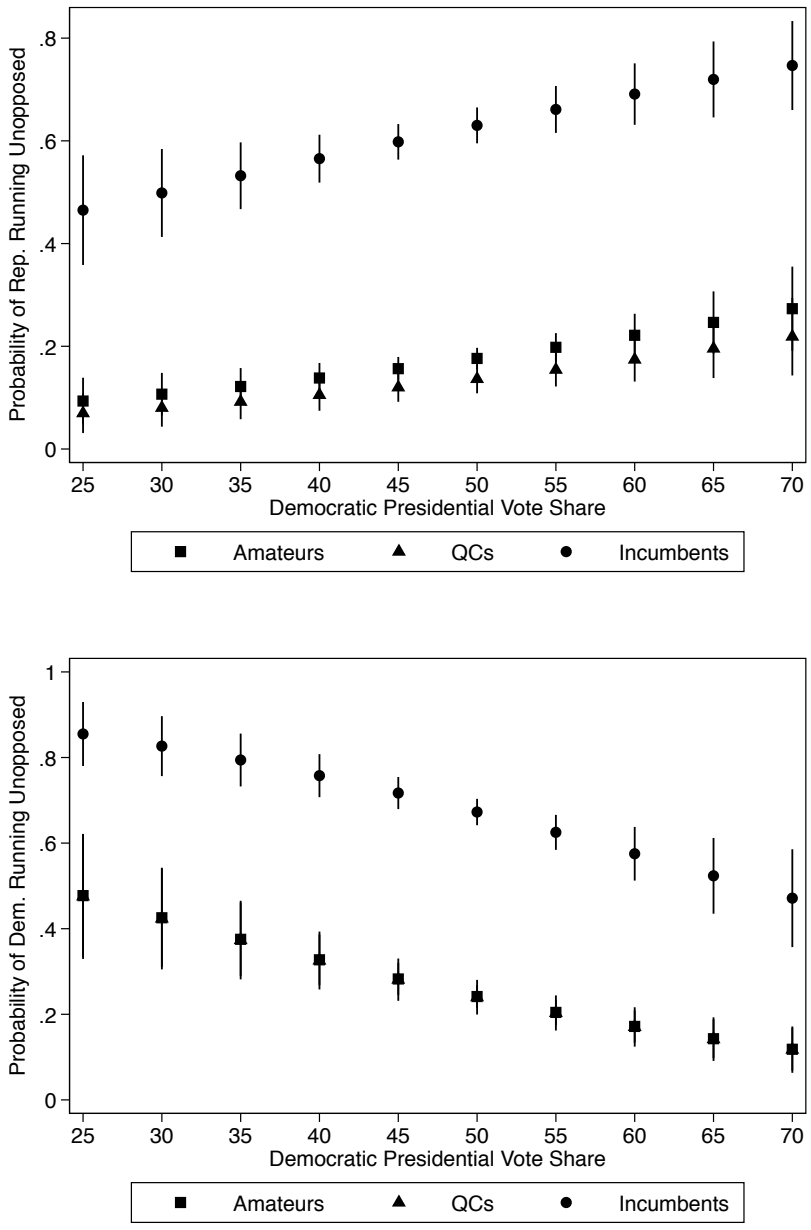

Figure 2.9: Probability of Running Unopposed by Experience and District Partisanship

Similarly, states with a greater demonstrated affinity for the Republican party are likely to see fewer unopposed Republican primaries. As the state becomes less friendly towards the GOP though, the likelihood of a Republican representing that district decreases, which therefore leads to Republican candidates running unopposed more often. This discrepancy between the

two parties, candidate's level of experience, and elecotral competitiveness is displayed in Figure 2.9.

Next, if different rules are influencing challenger behavior, are they also influencing the outcome of elections? To answer this, I estimate a third logistic regression predicting whether a primary race was competitive. For general elections, competitiveness is defined as the winning candidate receiving less than 55 percent of the vote. This definition only applies to primaries where two candidates competed, which only accounts for a minority of races as previously mentioned. Therefore, I apply the same logic to elections in which more than two candidates ran by coding any competitor as 1 if the winner received fewer than 10 percentage points more than the second place finisher. For example, if three candidates ran in a primary election and received 45, 35, and 20 percent of the vote respectively, then that election is coded as competitive. I again include the same variables as the previous model. Additionally, I included another control variable measuring the number of candidates in each election given the direct effect this can have on vote distributions among candidates. The results are presented in Table 2.5.

As with the first two specifications, there are substantive differences between the results for Democrats and Republicans. As expected though, incumbents in either party are significantly less likely than non-incumbents to experience competition. Additionally, increasing the number of candidates campaigning for the seat increases the probability of competitiveness. There are no differences across levels of partisan competition within the state for either party.

Table 2.5: Logit Estimates of Competitive Races, 2000-2014

	Democratic Primaries	Republican Primaries
Open Primaries	-0.28	0.08
	(0.23)	(0.23)
Semi-open Primaries	**-0.61**	0.44*
	(0.29)	(0.24)
Top-two Primaries	**-1.07**	-0.36
	(0.50)	(0.42)
Competitive	-0.36	0.23
	(0.28)	(0.24)
Democratic	-0.13	-0.03
	(0.22)	(0.23)
Term Limits	0.24	-0.26
	(0.21)	(0.18)
Quality Challengers	-0.14	0.16
	(0.16)	(0.11)
Incumbents	**-1.71**	**-1.97**
	(0.22)	**(0.22)**
Number of Candidates	**0.35**	**0.36**
	(0.05)	**(0.05)**
Intercept	**-2.23**	**-2.32**
	(0.34)	**(0.38)**
N	4807	5453
Log-likelihood	-1553.15	-2166.71
% Correctly Classified	83.98	79.20

Coefficients presented with robust standard errors in parentheses.
Standard errors clustered by congressional district.
Yearly fixed effects estimated but not presented.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.
*indicates entries are significant at $p<0.10$.

Inconsistent with expectations, there is no evidence of systematic differences in levels of competition across different primary election laws. This is likely a function of the strategic nature of candidates—especially incumbents—trumping the effect of existing rules. Though primaries are increasing in importance, incumbent losses are incredibly rare, as depicted in Table

2.6. For the years included in this analysis, the largest number of incumbent defeats came in 2012 as thirteen representatives did not successfully reach the general election ballot.[33]

Only looking at incumbent defeats is overly simplistic though. Members of Congress are typically highly cognizant of the political environment, at least in their own district. If national tides are not in their party's favor or they are individually vulnerable for some other reason, they may consider retiring from politics or seeking a different office. These numbers are included in the final column of the table below. Considering an average of 34 incumbents retire from the House each election between 2000 and 2014, it is at least somewhat surprising we also regularly witness incumbent lose their seat to a member of the same party.

Table 2.6: Number of Departing House Incumbents

Year	Primary	General	Retirements
2000	2	6	30
2002	6	8	36
2004	3	7	28
2006	2	22	27
2008	4	19	33
2010	4	54	37
2012	13	27	40
2014	4	13	38

Referring back to the estimates presented in Table 2.5, states with term limits are not any more likely to see competitive primaries. This is somewhat surprising at first glance given that previous models indicated that quality challengers are more likely to emerge in states with term limits while also being significantly less likely to run unopposed than other candidates. Though this does not support the original hypothesis, it indeed makes intuitive sense. Quality challengers

[33] This should come as no surprise though as eight of these losses were a result of redistricting pitting two incumbents against each other.

are generally competitive because they possess the political savvy to compete in elections that they are more likely to win (against a vulnerable incumbent or in an open seat, for example). However, imposing term limits on state legislators reduces the opportunity for these politicians to utilize such a strategy. If a state legislator does have the ambition to seek a federal congressional seat, then she will avoid pursuing that goal if the odds of success are low since she would have to give up her current seat and risk being labeled as someone who cannot win (Rohde 1979). But if she has exhausted her time in state office, she then has no choice but to run under less-than-ideal circumstances or wait while out of office. Once out of office however, she risks losing name recognition among constituents as well as the ability to point to legislative accomplishments, which could severely diminish her chances of success.

Though these estimates do not seem to make elections more competitive, they could still serve to influence the distribution of votes among candidates. To determine this, I estimate a linear model predicting each candidate's vote share. The dependent variable is a continuous measure of each candidate's percentage of the vote received, and I include all of the same independent variables as the previous specification. The results of this estimation are presented in Table 2.7.

As expected, there are some components that are consistent across parties, increased experience in seeking elective office results in higher vote shares among candidates, all else equal. Conversely, the predicted vote share of candidates decreases with each additional challenger. The variable measuring the overall level of partisan competition within a state also produces predictable results. Increased affinity for one party reduces the vote share of candidates competing in that party's primary given the fact that these seats are more likely to be contested.

Table 2.7: OLS Estimates of Candidate Vote Shares, 2000-2014

	Democratic Primaries	Republican Primaries
Open Primaries	0.06	-1.58
	(1.34)	(1.30)
Semi-open Primaries	-1.50	-1.11
	(1.29)	(1.51)
Top-two Primaries	0.66	**-6.82**
	(2.93)	**(2.52)**
Competitive	-0.60	**3.06**
	(1.22)	**(1.35)**
Democratic	**-3.98**	**7.94**
	(1.40)	**(1.34)**
Term Limits	1.42	-1.90*
	(1.12)	(1.10)
Quality Challengers	**12.47**	**10.07**
	(1.45)	**(1.07)**
Incumbents	**33.64**	**37.69**
	(1.74)	**(1.23)**
Number of Candidates	**-10.42**	**-7.34**
	(1.19)	**(0.49)**
Intercept	**76.47**	**68.92**
	(3.19)	**(2.49)**
N	4809	5453
R^2	0.61	0.66

Coefficients presented with robust standard errors in parentheses.
Standard errors clustered by congressional district.
Yearly fixed effects estimated but not presented.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.
*indicates entries are significant at $p<0.10$.

Once again though, there are meaningful differences across parties. The institutional rules in place do not influence the vote shares in Democratic primaries, but top-two systems yield decreased vote shares for Republicans even after controlling for the number of candidates competing in the race. Similarly, term limits have no effect on Democratic primaries, but the variable performs as expected for Republicans running in those states. Running in a state that imposes term limits on its state legislators reduces a candidate's vote share by almost two

percentage points, all else equal. Though somewhat small, this still has the potential to change the outcome of a marginal race. For example, in the timespan observed here, nearly five percent of elections featuring two candidates were decided by two percentage points or fewer. Over two-thirds of such elections occurred in states without term limits for state legislators. Therefore, the outcomes of several Republican primaries at least theoretically were directly influenced by a state's term limit legislation, or its lack thereof.

Table 2.8: Zero Inflated Poisson Estimates of Opponent Count, 2000-2014

	Democratic Primaries	Republican Primaries
Open Primaries	0.16	0.04
	(0.10)	(0.08)
Semi-open Primaries	-0.12	0.05
	(0.10)	(0.10)
Top-two Primaries	**0.85**	**0.97**
	(0.14)	**(0.17)**
Competitive	-0.05	-0.18*
	(0.12)	(0.09)
Democratic	0.02	**-0.53**
	(0.11)	**(0.11)**
Term Limits	-0.04	**-0.15**
	(0.09)	**(0.07)**
Quality Challengers	**0.25**	**0.22**
	(0.06)	**(0.04)**
Incumbents	**-1.15**	**-1.49**
	(0.07)	**(0.07)**
Intercept	**0.32**	**0.92**
	(0.15)	**(0.19)**
N	4809	5453
Wald χ^2	496.02	794.84

Coefficients presented with robust standard errors in parentheses.
Standard errors clustered by congressional district.
Yearly fixed effects estimated but not presented.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.
*indicates entries are significant at $p<0.10$.

Finally, it is important to understand which systems are more likely to garner a greater number of challengers for any given seat. Previous estimations have demonstrated that an increase in the number of candidates increases the probability of competitiveness and reduces average vote shares. Theoretically, having an alternative is also important for accountability. Winning an overwhelming majority of votes can occur in two ways for incumbents: she is performing admirably in office and is therefore well-liked by her constituents or her constituents simply have no one else to vote for regardless of how unsatisfied they may be. As such, Table 2.8 presents the results of a zero-inflated Poisson model predicting the number of challengers one must compete against.[34]

These estimates reveal that top-two primaries solicit significantly greater numbers of challengers looking to hold that seat, holding all else constant. This substantial effect is depicted in Figure 2.9. Moving from any other primary system to a top-two system generates nearly twice as many candidates competing in the election. Furthermore, the level of partisan competition in a state does not have an effect on the number of Democratic candidates that emerge, but it does have a significant effect on the decision of Republicans to run or not. The more favorable a state is to the Republican Party, the more challengers will emerge in primary elections. Consistent with previous models, incumbents face less competition. In this case, they can expect to face two fewer challengers than quality challengers. Relative to amateurs, quality challengers are significantly more likely to compete in races with increased participation. This again speaks to the strategic nature of these politics. The same factors that lead quality challengers to emerge in primary elections (open seats, vulnerable incumbents, favorable national tides), are likely to lead

[34] Given the preceding discussion, I utilize the *inflate* command in Stata using an open seat indicator to model excess zeros in the data.

amateurs to sit out (Banks and Kiewiet 1989). Meanwhile, the factors contributing to amateur candidate emergence (namely a dearth of other candidates in response to a strong incumbent or unfavorable national tides) lead quality challengers to sit out.

Term limits do not have an effect on Democrats, but they do depress the number of Republicans seeking office. In isolation, this seems counterintuitive, but considered in conjunction with previous models it better stands to reason. Quality challengers are more likely to emerge when states impose term limits on their state legislators. The presence of a quality challenger in turn decreases the likelihood of an amateur candidate running, given the strategic calculus of inexperienced candidates previously discussed. They would instead elect to compete against no one or other inexperienced candidates. Therefore, the presence of term limits indirectly decreases the number of candidates running through increasing quality challenger emergence.

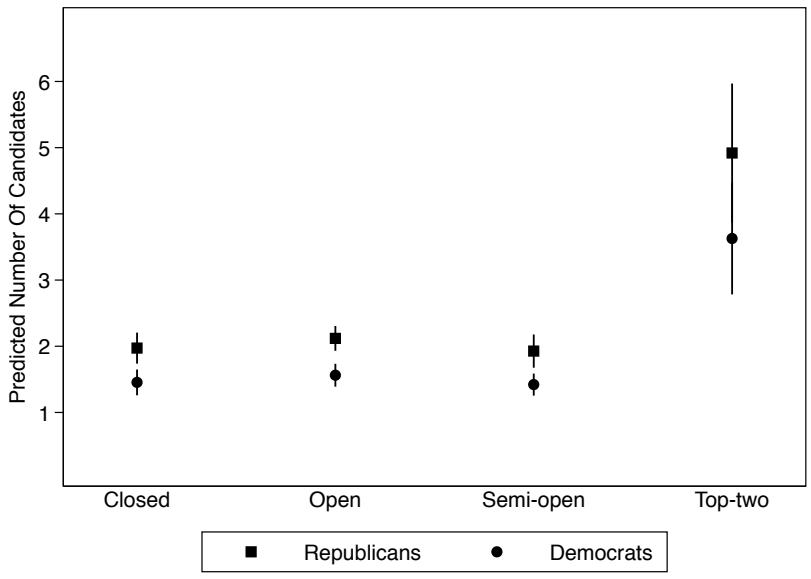

Figure 2.10: Predicted Number of Candidates by Primary Election Type

Conclusion

In conclusion, though these models do not produce robust support for each hypothesis, a number of patterns emerge demonstrating the importance of different institutions. First, term limits do indeed lead to increase quality challenger emergence. However, this does not result in more competitive primary elections or greater participation more broadly. Instead, by forcing experienced candidates out of their seats at a predetermined time, these politicians are unable to engage in the strategic decision making that would result in increased success in these elections. Additionally, their presence in turn leads inexperienced candidates to sit out or possibly seek another office.

With respect to laws governing voter participation, there do not appear to be consistent differences between open, closed, and semi-open systems. However, top-two systems regularly result in races featuring more alternatives to voters. Even though this does not seem to have an effect on the competitiveness of an election, it again is still preferable from a representational standpoint. By not allowing incumbents to coast to reelection, they must remain more responsive to voters. Additionally, if the incumbent somehow becomes vulnerable or otherwise viewed as unfit for office between the filing deadline and the date of the election, without anyone else to vote for he or she may still progress to the general election. And given the increasingly partisan nature of districts, he or she may continue to hold a seat in Congress. From an accountability standpoint, challengers bring attention to the records of their opponent, and prohibiting incumbents from running unopposed means forcing them to defend the job they have done, which allows voters to make more informed decisions.

These results also demonstrate significant differences between parties during this time. Institutional factors seem to be contributing more significantly to the outcomes in Republican

primaries. This is possibly due to structural advantages enjoyed by Republicans, the strategies employed by the Democratic and Republican national campaign committees, the distribution of available candidates across the country, or some combination of these. Future research should endeavor to systemically explore these differences.

The research presented here also expands our understanding of the similarities between primary and general elections. Much like what can be found in general election scholarship, incumbents do not regularly face competition of any sort, and quality candidates fair considerably better than their amateur counterparts. Additionally, the overall level of partisan competition within a state plays a significant factor in deciding who runs and ultimately wins congressional elections. This research also represents a shift away from studying primary elections from a behavioral perspective in favor or a more institutionalist focus. Future research should endeavor to consider making similar contributions.

CHAPTER 4

RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF DISASTER DECLARATIONS IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

On May 2, 1953, following a tornado that took the lives of 14 Georgians and left many others injured, Dwight Eisenhower issued the nation's first disaster declaration. He would issue 12 more that year and an additional 93 during his tenure as president. Since then, the American presidency has witnessed a steady increase in the number of disaster declarations issued each year. This increase was later aided by the passage of the 1988 amendment to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, which gave presidents more discretion in the issuance and execution of disaster declarations. This trajectory continued with each subsequent administration averaging more issuances than his predecessor, eventually culminating in Barack Obama granting nearly as many disaster declarations in 2011 (99) than Eisenhower during his entire time in office (106).

This increase in issuing disaster relief has culminated in (at least the perception of) presidents exploiting this responsibility to their electoral gain. For example, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy in October of 2012, President Barack Obama granted New Jersey Republican Governor Chris Christie's request for a 15-million-dollar relief package. The governor then offered lavish praise of the President and was regularly seen with him helping and consoling those who had been most affected by the storm. This left many Republicans livid, especially those working with the opposing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney. One *New York*

Times article reported "'Christie,' a Romney adviser said, 'allowed Obama to be president, not a politician.'"[35]

Not surprisingly, these and other actions have lead scholars to investigate the electoral implications of disaster declarations. Presidents are clearly willing to play politics with disaster relief, but to what extent and to what end? Some more specific questions include: Do voters hold elected officials responsible for policy decisions (Healy and Malhotra 2009)? How do voters respond to being recipients of government spending (Chen and Healy N.d.)? And is the president more particularistic or universalistic when providing disaster relief (Reeves 2011; Kriner and Reeves 2015a; Kriner and Reeves 2015b)? Though the findings in these works are robust and informative, some of the conclusions are inconsistent with other aspects of the literature. In an attempt to reconcile these differences, I reconsider the role of disaster declarations in electoral and legislative politics utilizing previously unused data and methods as well as unique survey data provided by the Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

Understanding how presidents deal with natural disaster and the resulting electoral implications not only increases our understanding of presidential powers and election outcomes, but it yields considerable policy implications as well. Billions of dollars are routinely spent by both the state and federal governments in response to natural disasters. This alone can influence what other policies can be pursued. Additionally, if there are "winners" and "losers" following the management (or mismanagement) of a catastrophic event, disasters can therefore enhance or weaken a politician's political capital, which will in turn influence the type of policies that can be pursued.

[35] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/us/politics/after-embrace-of-obama-chris-christie-woos-a-wary-gop.html

The organization of this chapter is as follows: beginning with an explanation of what disaster declarations are and how they come into being, I outline some of the inconsistencies in the existing literature on disaster declarations. Then, utilizing an innovate research design in which I treat unincorporated territories (such as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) as counterfactuals, I estimate the effects of electoral value on the number of disaster declarations received as well as the amount of public assistance attached to those declarations. Next, I incorporate a survey experiment using unique data from the 2014 Cooperate Congressional Election Study to measure the effect of presidential issuances of disaster assistance on citizens' approval and vote choice. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the results and their implications for the unilateral presidency, democratic accountability, and disaster policy, before mentioning avenues for future research.

What is a Disaster Declaration?

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, disaster declarations as they exist today are made possible by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, passed in 1988 as an amended version of the Disaster Relief Act of 1974. This legislation provides states with an opportunity to request that the president provide additional funding, beyond state and local resources, to assist in disaster relief. For purposes of this legislation, a state classified as not only the 48 contiguous states, Alaska, and Hawaii, but also includes the District of Columbia as well as Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

In order for any of these states to receive federal assistance, a governor must first submit a request through one of the ten regional FEMA offices they have been assigned to. This request

must include a preliminary damage assessment report in which the governor demonstrates that the extent of the damage is such that state and local entities cannot sufficiently or effectively respond to the needs of the affected people and places both public and private. This preliminary damage assessment must also include the type and monetary amount needed under the Stafford Act. However, the governor must first have followed all state and local protocols for dealing with such emergencies and have outlined how many resources already have and will be allocated to addressing the issue.

There are three types of disasters for which states are eligible to request assistance---emergency disasters, fire management, and major disasters. Emergency declarations must be submitted by the governor of the affected area within 30 days of the occurrence, and the funds are to be used for "the protection of lives, property, public health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe." However, a governor may also request an emergency declaration in anticipation of an incident.

The second type of disaster pertains to fire management. Declarations granted in this vein are "for the mitigation, management, and control of fires on publicly or privately owned forests or grasslands, which threaten such destruction as would constitute a major disaster." This process is unlike that of the others in that it is handled in an expedited manner and processed in less than one day. Additionally, through the Fire Management Assistance Grant Program, the federal government covers 75 percent of the costs while the affected state pays the remaining 25 percent.

Finally, major disasters are defined as "any natural event, including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, drought, or, regardless of cause, fire, flood, or explosion." Like the emergency declaration, major disaster declarations must be submitted

within 30 days of the incident. Should the president grant a request for a major disaster declaration, states become eligible for numerous types of assistance including public and individual assistance as well as emergency and permanent work. This is the most comprehensive of the three as not all of these programs are available to other declarations.

Disaster Declarations and Particularism

The notion of presidents utilizing disaster declarations in such a way that benefits are distributed to some citizens more than others is predicated on the assumption that he has sole discretion over the distribution of resources. Although the president ultimately decides whether disaster relief will be given to a needy state, he is not the first mover in this situation. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, following an incident, a state must exhaust its available resources first. Then, the state and FEMA conduct a preliminary damage assessment in order to decide approximately how much money will be needed and for what purposes. The governor of the affected state then reviews the preliminary damage assessment before deciding whether to solicit help from the president. If the governor does pursue federal assistance, the FEMA Regional Director makes a recommendation to the FEMA Director, who then coordinates with the president before a disaster declaration is formally issued.

This process undermines the idea that the president is acting on his own accord in an effort to secure his or his party's electoral fortunes. He is immediately constrained in his ability to grant relief to competitive states by the fact that the governor of a competitive state must first come to him seeking assistance. Additionally, he is not making this decision on his own. He is working with the recommendations of other, more knowledgeable people. In fact, there have even been instances of presidents formally allowing others to make decisions on the allocation of relief. The 1971 Federal Disaster Assistance Program Handbook draws attention to the fact that

Richard Nixon did precisely that with executive order 11575. The handbook states that it "reserved to the president the authority to declare a 'major disaster' [while] all other provisions vested in the president by the [Disaster Relief Act of 1970] were delegated to the Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness" (v-vi).

Though this consideration does not completely undermine the notion that electoral value somehow factors into the issuance of disaster declarations, it does demonstrate the immense difficulty accompanying any attempt to engage in particularistic behavior on the president's part. For instance, he would have to count on a natural disaster occurring in a competitive state and that disaster would have to be large enough to overwhelm the capacity of the state. The governor of that state would then have to declare a state of emergency and request disaster assistance. The FEMA Regional Director would then have to give a positive recommendation to the FEMA Director, who would then also provide a positive recommendation to the president.

Furthermore, if the state was deemed electorally uncompetitive, the implication is that the president may feel less inclined to issue a disaster declaration. However, that decision comes with potentially damning political consequences. Failing to address a disaster that has overwhelmed the resources of a state could leave the president looking ineffective, uncaring, and overtly partisan in the eyes of citizens. This could then result in decreased approval and trust in his ability to govern, which would in turn negatively impact his and his party's electoral chances in competitive states. As such, clear theoretical reasons exist that help us understand why the president may be more universalistic than particularistic when allocating disaster relief.

Disaster Declarations and the Unilateral Presidency

Studies of presidential power and success are not a new phenomenon. Neustadt (1960: 11) first famously argued, "presidential power is the power to persuade." Presidential success

was characterized by the ability (or inability) of the president to bargain with Congress, as well as others within government. Later, Moe and Howell (1999) would demonstrate that presidents could derive power from capitalizing on ambiguities in the Constitution and even make law on their own. In the time since these works were written, numerous others have sought to increase our understanding of the unitary executive.

One of the most influential of these comes from Howell (2003), who demonstrates that certain powers—executive orders in this case—are more commonly utilized under certain conditions. For example, when a president's favorability ratings are relatively low, the incentive to pass an executive order is greater due to the fact that his favorability cannot fall much further. Additionally, more executive orders are signed during periods of unified government than under divided government. Congress was designed to be a deliberative body, but to overcome this, the president can pass an executive order and Congress can simply solidify his actions with a law of its own at a later time, provided the two branches are in agreement, as would likely be the case during unified government.

In a similar vein, Bailey and Rottinghaus (2014: 495) conclude, "unilateral orders are not uniformly used for one selective purpose or the other, nor are all orders subject to the same type of political events." They demonstrate that unilateral power is a more refined, ever-evolving tool. More specifically, presidents will alter the basis of their exercise (proclamations and executive orders in this case) with respect to the political and policy environment they find themselves in at the time. For example, presidents are more likely to rely on their own authority when they feel less constrained, whereas they are more likely to cite statute when they feel more constrained, either politically or institutionally. Young (2013: 328) furthers this argument when she states "a president suffering from institutional constraints or lacking in skill and will has the ability to

increase his power whenever a foreign policy crisis occurs." Collectively these works teach us that unilateral power is conditioned on the political and institutional constraints present as well as the ability of, and opportunities granted to, certain executives.

Somewhat similarly to Howell (2003), Reeves and Rogowski (2015) argue that supporters of the president are more likely to favor his use of presidential powers. Therefore, presidents with higher approval ratings can use their popularity to expand the powers available to them. However, in a subsequent piece, Reeves and Rogowski (2016) demonstrate that this does not necessarily translate to the president's use of unilateral powers. They find relatively low and stable approval for unilateral actions, though opinion on these actions is shaped by presidential approval and beliefs in the rule of law.

Furthermore, some actions may be perceived as unilateral powers on the surface, but fundamentally are not. Per Black et al. (2007), certain conditions must be met in order for an action to be considered an exercise in unilateral action. These include the following:

- The president manipulates ambiguities in the Constitution.
- The president must use the power first and use it alone, putting the legislature and courts in a position such that they must react to the president's action.
- The president's action must affect policy.

After reevaluating what exactly constitutes a unilateral power, scholars began to challenge the conventional wisdom and narrative surrounding some presidential actions. For example, after using content analysis of all signing statements between 1977 and 2010, Ostrander and Sievert (2013a: 58) contend that signing statements are better thought of as "a continuation of interbranch dialogue" rather than as a unilateral power functionally equivalent to line-item vetoes. These authors also find that "presidents are likely to issue constitutional signing statements on bills traditionally falling under the president's purview" (Ostrander and Sievert, 2013b: 141). Another instance of this can be found in Rottinghaus and Maier (2007: 338) as they

show that “presidential proclamations involve presidential authority under congressionally delegated powers of international trade.” Though he may operate largely independent of Congress, and therefore at times, perhaps, against the will of Congress, this does not mean the president is necessarily acting unilaterally.

Finally, Reeves (2011) provides one of the first comprehensive analyses that consider disaster declarations as unilateral powers. Here, he contends that presidents can use disaster declarations to improve their own electoral fortunes. Specifically, voters will reward a president for providing disaster assistance by voting for him in the next election. For this reason, Reeves argues the presidents are more likely to be particularistic when allocating disaster relief. Therefore, electorally competitive states are more likely to receive a disaster declaration than their uncompetitive counterparts.

Additionally, Healy and Malhotra (2009) discover that voters reward the incumbent presidential party for providing disaster relief. The conclusions reached in these works fit well into the context of existing literature on politicians and disasters. Achen and Bartels (2004) and Arceneaux and Stein (2006) demonstrate that incumbents are generally held accountable for things that may be out of their hands, such as drought, floods, and influenza outbreaks. This then creates an incentive for executives to be proactive in their responses so as to avoid declines in favorability. Reeves' (2011) argument also fits nicely into the larger narrative that presidents use unilateral powers in such a way to gain electoral favor. Furthermore, Chen and Healy (N.d.) also investigate the electoral effects of disaster declarations. They find that providing disaster relief does not elicit a uniform positive response from voters. Instead, “distributive aid's electoral impact depends on the deservedness of that spending” (29). Therefore, presidents are constrained

in their ability to garner additional electoral favor by voters' propensity to weigh the merits of the benefits received.

Given that research on disaster declarations, with respect to electoral politics, is less developed and therefore less understood than other presidential powers (such as executive orders) some disconnects and inconsistencies are present. First, disaster declarations have never been vetted against established criteria for a presidential action to be considered unilateral, nor has their use and effect been compared to those of other presidential powers. Second, as previously mentioned, the extant literature suggests that voters reward the incumbent party for providing disaster aid, but at the same time, support for unilateral powers is generally low, voters weigh the merits of aid received, and voters' partisanship shape their opinion of the president and their interpretation of his actions. Third, though it is reasonable to assume that presidents are held accountable for almost everything that happens in the United States regardless of their role in the matter, American voters are notoriously ignorant of, or at least ambivalent to, politics. Finally, some of the results that provide the foundation for this literature are not robust to alternative model specifications.[36] Filling these gaps, reconciling these differences, and providing more robust estimates are therefore the focus of the remainder of this work.

As such, Figure 3.1 depicts the number of major disaster declarations issued in each year between their origin in 1953 and 2015. The solid line depicts the number of declarations issued in the United States while the dashed line shows the number for unincorporated territories. These include the seven listed above as well as Alaska and Hawaii until they were granted statehood in

[36] For instance, Reeves (2011) argues that presidents reward more electorally competitive states with disaster assistance. However, estimating his model with yearly fixed effects instead of presidential administration fixed effects causes the competitiveness variable to become non-significant. This undermines his theoretical argument and calls his conclusions into question.

1959. From this, we see that the number of presidential disaster declarations has increased steadily over time. This coincides with the increase in the size of the national government as well as the growth of the unitary executive.

However, though disaster declarations have been characterized as unilateral powers, their use has not been considered in the context of meeting any predetermined conditions to be considered as such. Therefore, defining and treating them as such may not be theoretically appropriate. As previously mentioned, Black et al. (2007) provide three such criteria to be considered when determining whether an action is unilateral in nature. These are particularly useful in that they are broad enough to be applied to any presidential action as well as exhaustive enough to delineate between known unilateral powers and other presidential actions. Failure to meet any of these suggests that a president's actions are not abuses or expansions of power, nor are they unilateral in nature, though they may appear to be.

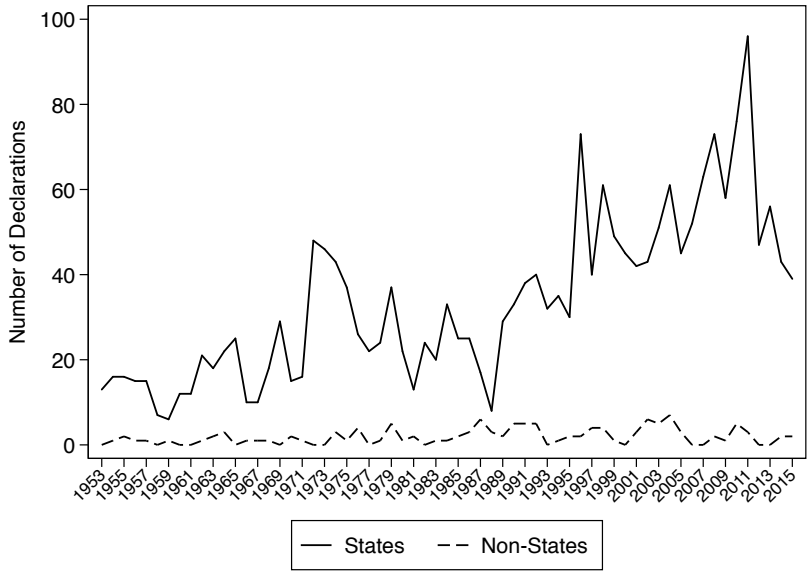

Figure 3.1: Major Disaster Declarations Issued

To clarify, consider an example. Utilizing a Senate recess to appoint a senior federal official to a new post is an example of a unilateral power in that the president has avoided Senate

confirmation for that nominee. However, there are other positions that are filled by presidential appointments that do not require Senate confirmation, such as the White House Chief of Staff. Therefore, not all presidential appointments that forgo confirmation by the Senate are exercises in unilateral power.

The first criterion dictates that the president must manipulate ambiguities in the Constitution. Executive orders circumvent the constitutionally defined means of passing a law. Recess appointments undermine the check on presidential power afforded by Senate confirmation. However, no such constitutional authority exists for disaster declarations. In contrast, Congress explicitly granted the president the power to issue these declarations. The presidency did not seek this power out. Even using the Stafford Act as a proxy for the Constitution, it becomes difficult to observe any manipulations of the law on the president's part. Title I of the 1988 Stafford Act states that " 'Emergency' means any occasion or instance for which, in the determination of the President, Federal assistance is needed to supplement State and local efforts and capabilities to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in any part of the United States." This clearly gives the president the power to determine when a natural disaster or other emergency warrants federal assistance. Furthermore, Title IV states that "In any major disaster, the President may direct any Federal agency, with or without reimbursement, to utilize its authorities and the resources granted to it under Federal law (including personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, and managerial, technical, and advisory services) in support of State and local assistance response and recovery efforts, including precautionary evacuations..." Here, it becomes clear that the president has the power to allocate funds as he deems necessary to states in need. It

would not appear that the president is manipulating the Constitution, the Congress, the law, or the system of checks and balances in any way when providing disaster relief.

The second criterion states that the president must act first, and this action must result in the legislative and judicial branches being forced to react in some way. As Title IV of the Stafford Act states, "All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected State." Here, the governor is the first mover, and the president is simply responding to a request for emergency assistance, per his job description. Even if this were considered the first move, the president is not acting alone but in conjunction with the executive of a given state. This is incredibly crucial as the mere presence of a separate actor that could determine the issuance of a disaster declaration greatly undermines the notion that this power is a unilateral one. Furthermore, there is no reasonable method or need for Congress to respond following a disaster declaration. More directly, the relationship is not akin to that of an executive order. If the president makes a law, Congress must decide to affirm its creation or take measures to nullify it. The same cannot be said in relation to disaster relief.

The final criterion states that the president's action must affect policy in some way. With executive orders, a law has been implemented that would potentially not exist otherwise. For recess appointments, an individual has been appointed to a position in government when the Senate may not have confirmed him or her. It is not clear how issuing a disaster declaration directly affects policy in any way. According to the Stafford Act, a presidential issuance of a disaster declaration is simply the continuation of ongoing policy. With respect to state policy, one might argue that receiving federal dollars to support disaster recovery could free up funds for other projects, but in many states the yearly budget is set at the beginning of the fiscal year. This

dictates that any policy changes would come during the subsequent fiscal year, and would be at the discretion of the governor and not the president.

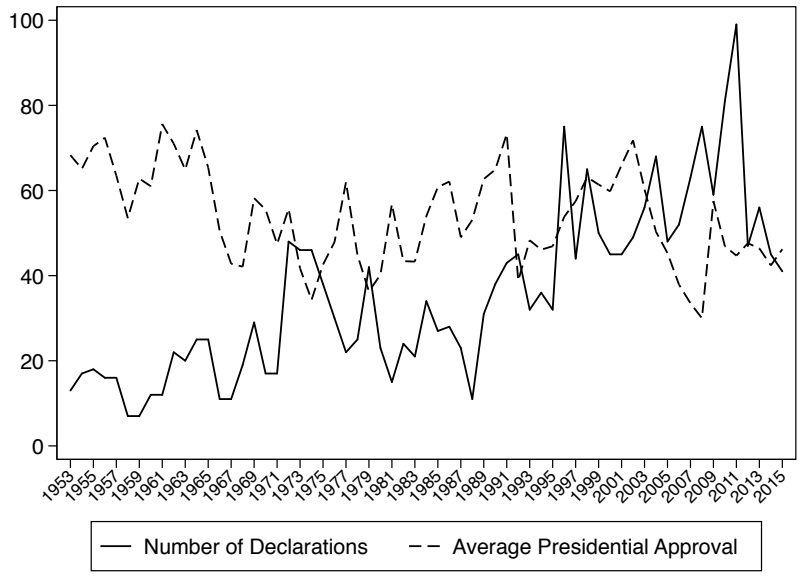

Figure 3.2: Average Approval Versus Declarations Issued

Disaster declarations also do not follow similar patterns observed in other unilateral powers. For example, Howell (2003) finds that presidents are more likely to issue executive orders when a president's approval rating is relatively low. Here, the president feels he cannot fall much further and is free to take more drastic, unconventional actions to increase support. The same does not seem to hold in regard to disaster declarations. To illustrate this, Figure 3.2 graphs the number of major disaster declarations against each president's yearly average approval rating as reported by Gallup. If the existing conceptualization holds, then lower approval should be met with higher numbers of disaster declarations, and vice versa. This only seems to be true for the pre-Nixon presidents, namely Eisenhower and Kennedy. However, these executives could be classified as outliers both in the relatively high approval they enjoyed and the relatively few declarations they issued. Additionally, the simple correlation between these two is -0.33, but

again the first two presidents in the series largely drive this result. Removing both Eisenhower and Kennedy results in a correlation of only -0.14.

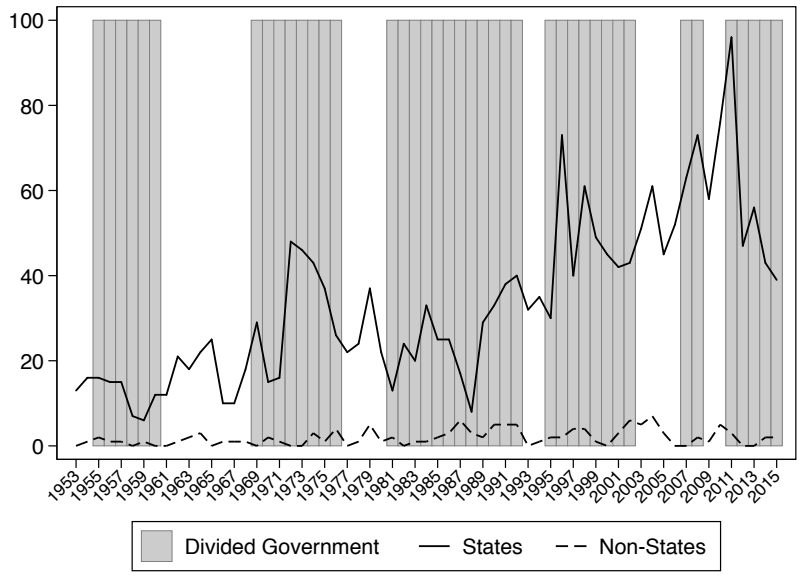

Figure 3.3: Divided Government Versus Declarations Issued

Similarly, Howell (2003) demonstrates that the president should be more inclined to issue executive orders when his party is in control of Congress. This is done in the name of efficiency. If the bill is likely to be passed, the president can act more quickly and Congress can solidify his actions later. Again, if disaster declarations reflect exercises in unilateral power, they should follow a similar pattern. In this case, it may cost the president less capital to grant a disaster declaration under unified government. Figure 3.3 graphs the same number of disaster declarations issued against periods of unified government. The average number of declarations issued during periods of unified government is 33, while the average number of issuances during divided government is 37, though a difference of means test revealed that this difference is statistically significant. These results do not seem to support the notion that presidents are acting unilaterally when providing relief.

Based on theoretical expectations, it does not appear that disaster declarations represent an exercise in unilateral powers. They do not meet any criteria to be considered unilateral actions, and they do not mimic any of the trends found in other such powers. However, that is not to say that they cannot be used to gain electoral favor. Additionally, even if the president does not issue these declarations with electoral considerations in mind, it is still possible that voters react in such a way that it appears so. Therefore, understanding the relationship between disaster relief and election outcomes is the focus of the remainder of this work.

The Electoral Effects of Disaster Declarations

Figure 3.4 depicts the total number of major disaster declarations in each state (black bars) and non-states (grey bars) between 1953 and 2015. An interesting pattern emerges. The two states that have received the most disaster declarations are Texas and California, which currently are the two most populated states as well as two of the biggest states in terms of land mass. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Utah, Wyoming, and Rhode Island have received the fewest disaster declarations. These three are some of the least populated states in the country, and Rhode Island is the smallest in terms of land mass. Based on these facts, it would appear that population and infrastructure are critical in determining the number of disaster declarations a state receives historically. Put simply, larger states are more likely to be the location of a natural disaster based on chance. Additionally, more populated states require more infrastructure, which then creates a greater opportunity for damage to that infrastructure from a natural disaster.

Furthermore, there is scant evidence that suggests presidents consider electoral value when providing disaster relief. Texas and California provide a large number of Electoral College votes, which could explain their large number of declarations. However, these two have become two of the most predictable states in terms of which candidate will win its electoral votes, which

would negate any incentive for dissimilarly partisan presidents to show deference to them. Also, although Puerto Rico holds no electoral value whatsoever, it has received more disaster declarations than twelve states and the District of Columbia.

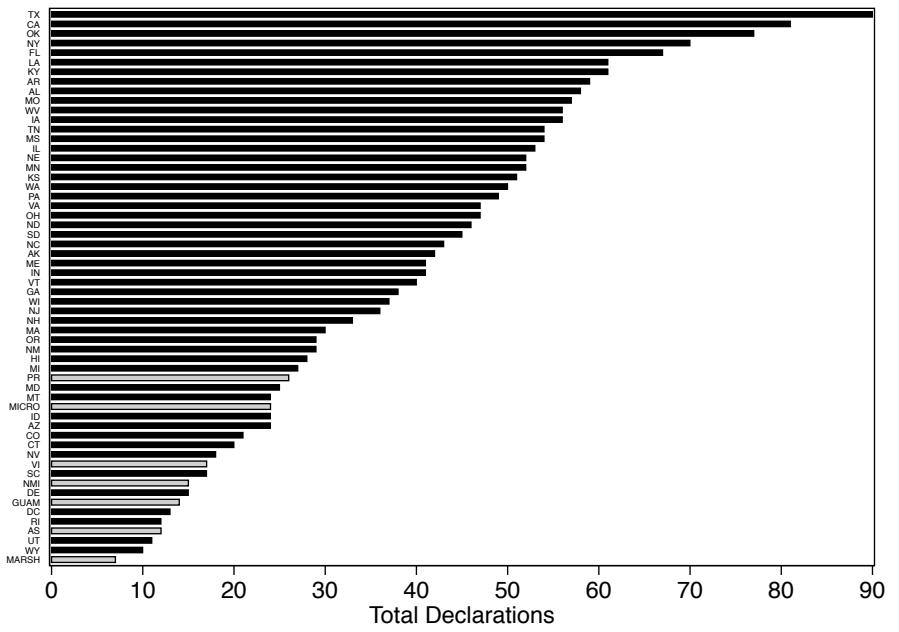

Figure 3.4: Disaster Declarations Issued by State, 1953-2015

This discrepancy is likely explained by the relationship depicted in Figure 3.5. This graphs the total number of declarations received by each state against its population in 2015. States with larger populations receive significantly more disaster declarations than states with smaller populations. Though it would be sensible to claim that presidents are more likely to issue relief to larger states because they are more potential voters to win over, this same relationship exist in non-states. The correlation between population size and number of declarations for states stands at 0.62 while the same correlation for non-states is 0.66. This leads me to believe that population, not political motives, is at least partially driving this relationship.

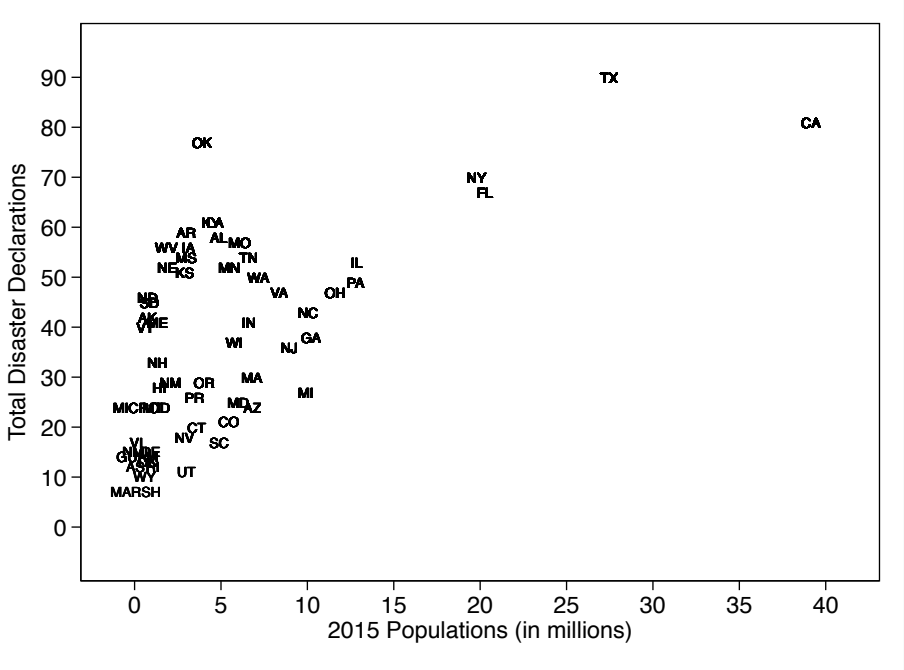

Figure 3.5: Disaster Declarations Issued by Population, 1953-2015

Data and Methods

In order to determine whether or not presidents reward more competitive states, previous works have used measures of competitiveness to predict the probability of a state receiving a disaster declaration. However, the probability of any state receiving a declaration is relatively high. This makes intuitive sense as it could be risky for a president to not grant relief to a state, therefore leaving the door open for his opponents to criticize him as being too overly partisan or a weak leader. Therefore, I employ a more nuanced dependent variable---the dollar amount attached to a disaster declaration. This also has the added benefit of enabling me to speak to how much competitiveness is worth in real dollars. The specific hypothesis being tested is as follows:

H_1: *In an attempt to gain electoral favor, the dollar amount attached to a disaster declaration will be larger in more competitive states, all else equal.*

As previously mentioned, the dependent variable of interest is the amount of public assistance received by a state after a disaster declaration has been issued. These data were gathered by reading each disaster report in FEMA's digital archives. However, these data are not currently available prior to 1998.[37] After collecting these figures, I adjusted for inflation by setting all values equal to 2015 dollars. I then rescaled these amounts for ease of interpretation. The values reported below are in millions of dollars. These data range from less than one million dollars to more than 150 million dollars.[38]

Table 3.1 details the other variables employed. The main explanatory variable is the measure of electoral value. I include indicators for competitive states, non-competitive states, and non-states. A state is coded competitive if it offered the winning presidential candidate less than 55 percent of the two-party vote in the most recent election, and as non-competitive if the winning presidential candidate received greater than 55 percent of the two-party vote. Finally, unincorporated territories, which have no Electoral College votes, are coded non-states. By including unincorporated territories in the analysis, I am able to have a counterfactual of sorts. If presidents are concerned with rewarding states that have greater electoral value, then competitive states should receive more money than non-competitive states, which should then receive more than non-states. However, if the president is not targeting specific states, there should be no discernible difference between these three groups.

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[37] Despite the truncated time frame, this model is still appropriate given that Reeves finds that this effect is most pronounced after the 1988 passage of the Stafford Act. Therefore, including earlier data may bias the results towards finding no effect.

[38] The median amount of aid received for all available declarations is about 9 million dollars. However, given the extraordinary circumstances surrounding some disasters (such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana), I have excluded the greatest five percent of cases. These events are substantively different from the less salient natural disasters as well as strong outliers, which leads me to believe that their exclusion is theoretically and methodologically justified.

Table 3.1: Summary Statistics for Data Employed

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Public Assistance	18.584	25.861	0.163	151.619	871
Competitive States	0.360	0.480	0	1	1031
Non-Competitive States	0.597	0.491	0	1	1031
Non-States	0.043	0.202	0	1	1031
Population	6.749	7.596	0	1	1031
Partisanship	0.558	0.497	0	1	1031
Approval Rating	49.687	11.193	30	71.8	1031
Divided Government	0.565	0.496	0	1	1031
Election Year	0.226	0.418	0	1	1031

I also include a number of control variables. The first is a continuous measure of the population in each state and unincorporated territory. Again, states with larger populations are generally larger in size and contain more infrastructures. This means that they are more likely to be affected by some sort of disaster and to be affected to a greater extent than smaller, less populous states. For ease of interpretation, this measure has been rescaled to denote millions of residents. I also include an indicator variable for the partisanship of the president. This variable is coded 1 for Democratic presidents, and 0 for Republicans. Given the ideological differences between the two parties regarding government spending, one could expect that Democrats are more likely to allocate larger sums of disaster relief. Next, I include a measure of presidential approval. These values are taken from Gallup and represent the yearly average approval for each president. Given that presidents are more likely to engage in certain activities when their approval is low, it stands to reason that they may offer more aid when they are viewed more poorly in an attempt to regain favorability.[39] I also include an indicator variable for divided

[39] Although this measure has some noise in it, it is still useful in determining how "good" or "bad" that year has been for the president. Also, aggregating the data has the added benefit of providing more reliable estimates of approval earlier in the series when polling was far less reliable and conducted much less often.

government. This variable is coded 1 when the same party controls the House, Senate, and White House, and 0 otherwise. Allocating larger sums of money during divided government may strain the president's relationship with Congress, making legislating in the future more difficult. This could therefore discourage him from providing as much assistance as he might prefer. Finally, I include an indicator variable for whether or not a declaration was issued in an election year. If a president is seeking to gain electoral favor, it would make the most sense to do so closer to election time.

Results

I then use these data to estimate an Ordinary Least Squares regression, the results of which are presented in Table 3.2 below.[40] There is no statistical difference between the amount of money received across different levels of electoral value after controlling for population and a variety of presidential factors. Consistent with expectations, however, larger populations receive greater sums of disaster relief. An additional one million citizens result in over one million more dollars per disaster declaration, all else equal. Also consistent with expectations, there is a negative relationship between public assistance and presidential approval. Holding all other factors constant, a one percentage point increase in favorability leads presidents to issue 163,000 dollars less per declaration, on average. Furthermore, there are no discernible differences between the amount of relief given by Democratic and Republican presidents or during unified and divided government. Finally, contrary to expectations, presidents seem to allocate less

[40] As mentioned previously, these data currently only exist between 1998 and 2015. Ideally, I would have data since 1953. The biggest concern with the truncated window is generalizability. However, I do not believe that is an issue in this case. In this 18 year time span, all 50 states and the District of Columbia are included, as well as six of the seven unincorporated territories. Additionally, these years witnessed both parties gain control of the White House, where they experienced periods of both unified and divided government and first and second term administrations.

during election years. However, this could be explained by the president issuing more money through more declarations, which would potentially decrease the amount attached to each one.

Table 3.2. OLS Estimates of Public Assistance Distributed, 1998-2015

	Coefficient (Rob. Std. Err.)
Non-Competitive States	-2.880
	(1.876)
Non-States	-0.658
	(3.784)
Population	**1.169**
	(0.164)
Partisanship	-2.534
	(2.213)
Approval Rating	**-0.163**
	(0.091)
Divided Government	0.536
	(2.265)
Election Year	**-5.251**
	(1.728)
Intercept	**23.681**
	(5.208)
N	871
R^2	0.111

Standard Errors clustered by state-year.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.10$

In an additional attempt to identify any political motives for issuing disaster declarations, I estimate the total number of disaster declarations received by a state since 1953.[41] To do so, in line with previous studies, I estimate a Poisson regression using the data in Table 3.3.

[41] Previous studies only investigate this relationship between 1981 and 2004. Updating and expanding the time frame therefore serves to provide a broader understanding of this relationship and more generalizable results.

Table 3.3: Summary Statistics for Data Employed

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Number of Declarations	0.624	0.897	0	6	3591
Competitive States	0.323	0.468	0	1	3591
Non-Competitive States	0.549	0.498	0	1	3591
Non-States	0.126	0.332	0	1	3591
Population	5.697	6.986	0.045	39.145	3591
Partisanship	0.435	0.496	0	1	3591
Approval Rating	53.681	11.247	0	1	3591
Divided Government	0.661	0.473	0	1	3591
Election Year	0.242	0.428	0	1	3591
Stafford Passage	0.451	0.498	0	1	3591

The dependent variable is the number of disaster declarations received by a state or unincorporated territory in a given year. The primary independent variable is the same measure of electoral value used in the previous model. I again include controls for presidential partisanship, presidential approval, divided government, and election years. I also add an indicator variable for passage of the amendment to the Stafford Act. As previously mentioned, this 1989 amendment was passed in order to "[broaden] the scope of existing disaster relief programs." Therefore, the variable is coded 1 for all years after 1989 and 0 before. I also include state fixed effects to account for the differences in each state's likelihood of being struck by a natural disaster as well as their ability to respond to it. To evaluate the competitiveness argument, I test the following hypothesis:

H_2: *More electorally competitive states are more likely to receive a disaster declaration and will therefore accrue a larger number of declarations over time.*

The estimates in Table 3.4 suggest that presidents are not motivated by electoral concerns. There is no discernible difference between the number of declarations received by competitive, non-competitive, and unincorporated states. Population seems to be the primary

factor influence disaster declaration issuance. Similar to the results presented in Table 3.2, there are no differences between the number of declarations issued by Democratic and Republican presidents or unified and divided government. Also consistent with the previous model, increased approval decreases the number of disaster declarations issued. Unlike the relationship depicted in Table 3.2 though, election years do not seem to elicit more declarations. Finally, it appears the Stafford Act met its goal in generating greater support for disasters.

Electoral value does not appear to play a role in presidential issuances of disaster declarations. Even if a state is a consistently ardent supporter of the president's opposition party, he cannot simply neglect the needs of that state. Failing to do so could result in his being perceived as uncaring and too partisan, which could have a negative impact in more competitive states. At the same time, satisfying the needs of a state, regardless of its competitiveness, presents him with the opportunity to "look presidential" as well as caring and effective, which could have a positive influence on those in more competitive states.

Meanwhile, unincorporated territories represent much more isolated cases, both literally and figuratively. These are generally small areas many hundreds of miles away from the United States. Therefore, the lack of an adjoining border reduces the chances of any spillover effect in terms of public opinion. Additionally, even if the affected residents feel they have not been helped swiftly or effectively, they have no real recourse. Those with Electoral College votes can potentially punish the president with their vote in the next election—a remedy unavailable to those without such voting powers.

To summarize, electoral value does appear to be a small component of the disaster declaration calculus though it has no effect on non-competitive states. When comparing these with areas that the president is responsible for, yet not accountable to, we see that the effect is

diminished. Therefore, the president is constrained in his ability to target areas that are advantageous to him. Though this may preclude the president from benefiting himself on his own terms, these findings do not preclude the notion that he could position himself to gain favor from a receptive citizenry.

Table 3.4: Poisson Estimates of Disaster Declarations Issued, 1953-2015

	Coefficient (Rob. Std. Err.)
Non-Competitive States	-0.005
	(0.049)
Non-States	0.323
	(0.348)
Logged Population	**6.107**
	(1.419)
Partisanship	0.046
	(0.046)
Approval Rating	**-0.012**
	(0.002)
Divided Government	0.045
	(0.049)
Election Year	0.023
	(0.051)
Stafford Passage	**0.731**
	(0.046)
Intercept	**1.609**
	(0.543)
N	3591
Log-likelihood	-3425.868

Standard Errors clustered by state.
Bolded Entries are significant at $p<0.05$

Disaster Declarations and the Presidential Vote

Even if presidents are unable or unwilling to be deferential towards more electorally valuable states, which does not mean that providing disaster relief does not serve to create additional electoral support or favorability. Therefore, I gauge citizens' knowledge of and attitude toward presidential issuances of disaster declarations. To do so, I included four unique survey items in the 2014 Cooperative Congressional Elections Study. These items ask (1) if respondents

think presidents are influenced by political motives when allocating disaster relief, (2) how much money they think their state has received in disaster relief, (3) if providing disaster relief to the respondent's state would make him or her more favorable of the president, and (4) if providing disaster relief to the respondent's state would make him or her more likely to vote for the president.[42]

Based on the previous results, it appears that the president is constrained in his ability to elicit greater favorability by issuing disaster declarations in more competitive states. Though he may be unable to "buy" votes, dealing with crises following any natural disaster grants him the opportunity to "look" presidential, which could potentially woo voters. Given this, I use unique survey data to estimate the effect of disaster relief on citizens' attitude toward the president. Specifically, I test the following hypothesis:

H_3: *Citizens will reward the president with additional support if their state receives disaster relief.*

To answer this, I primarily rely on two survey items I included in the 2014 CCES survey. These questions ask respondents how their approval and vote choice would be affected if their states received assistance after a major disaster. Though the question explicitly states that the situation is a hypothetical one, I randomized detailing the president as Democratic or Republican in order to capture any sort of partisan bias in respondent evaluations. The responses to these questions are provided in Table 5. From this, we see that the majority of respondents are unmoved in their opinion of and decision to vote for the president. However, respondents do

[42] The full wording of the questions and response options can be found in the Appendix.

seem much more likely to reward the president than punish him for providing disaster relief, which would conform to the expectations of Hypothesis 3.

Table 3.5: Responses to Receiving Disaster Assistance

	Approval of President	Vote for President
Much More Likely	13.78	12.93
Somewhat More Likely	23.21	20.50
No Change	58.16	58.73
Somewhat Less Likely	2.55	3.85
Much Less Likely	2.30	3.99

Cell entries represent percent of respondents.

Party identification is comprised of five categories ranging from Democrats to Independents to Republicans with leaners in between. The inclusion of this variable is important as evaluations of presidential actions are viewed through partisan lenses, especially during times of crises (Bisgaard 2015, Fox 2009). I also include controls for income, education, ethnicity, gender, and age. Income is divided into four quartiles with larger values denoting higher levels of income. Education is a six-category variable containing no high school, high school graduate, some college, 2-year degree, 4-year degree, and post-graduate degree with larger values representing higher levels of education. The race variable is an indicator denoting white and non-white citizens. Respondents classifying themselves as White were coded 1 while respondents classifying themselves as Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern, Mixed, or Other were coded 0. Next, I include a variable representing each respondent's gender. Those identifying as Female were coded 1 while those identifying as Male were coded 0. Finally, I include a measure of age generated from respondents providing their birth year. This variable ranges from 18 to 89.

Table 3.6: Summary Statistics for Survey Controls

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Approval	2.564	0.843	1	5	784
Vote Choice	2.655	0.896	1	5	727
Partisanship	2.802	1.531	1	5	732
Income	2.496	1.123	1	4	881
Education	3.606	1.452	1	6	1000
Race	0.740	0.439	0	1	1000
Gender	0.535	0.499	0	1	1000
Age	50.684	16.556	18	89	1000

I then use the data described in the previous two tables to estimate an ordered logistic regression. For columns one and two, possible outcomes include less favorable, no change, and more favorable.[43] For columns three and four, possible outcomes include less likely to vote for the president, no change, and more likely to vote for the president.[44] For both variables, larger values represent increased support for the president. The results of these models are presented in Table 3.7.

[43] Though the survey question contains five categories, a logistic regression using all five categories did not produce statistically significant cut points between each group. Therefore, for the sake of parsimony and ease of presentation of results, I collapsed "much more favorable" and "somewhat more favorable" into one category denoting increased favorability and "much less favorable" and "somewhat less favorable" into one category denoting decreased favorability. The "no change" category remained the same.

[44] Again, though the survey question contains five categories, a logistic regression using all five categories did not produce statistically significant cut points between each group. Therefore, for the sake of parsimony and ease of presentation of results, I collapsed "much more likely" and "somewhat more likely" into one category denoting increased likelihood of voting for the president and "much less likely" and "somewhat less likely" into one category denoting decreased likelihood of voting for the president. The "no change" category remained the same.

Table 3.7: Ordered Logistic Regression Estimates of Respondent Choices

	Approval		Vote Choice	
	Dem. Pres.	Rep. Pres	Dem. Pres.	Rep. Pres
Dem. Leaners	-0.352	0.523	0.292	0.381
	(0.418)	(0.393)	(0.444)	(0.402)
Independents	**-0.919**	0.454	-0.197	**1.078**
	(0.398)	(0.355)	(0.410)	**(0.381)**
Rep. Leaners	**-1.809**	0.578	-0.789	0.807
	(0.460)	(0.378)	(0.406)	(0.426)
Republicans	**-1.904**	0.199	**-1.145**	0.254
	(0.407)	(0.363)	**(0.390)**	(0.380)
Income	-0.155	0.076	0.079	-0.062
	(0.133)	(0.121)	(0.131)	(0.129)
Education	0.100	-0.050	0.106	-0.151
	(0.104)	(0.091)	(0.105)	(0.097)
Race	-0.184	0.448	0.256	-0.038
	(0.329)	(0.314)	(0.333)	(0.334)
Gender	0.129	0.253	**0.842**	0.083
	(0.282)	(0.314)	**(0.285)**	(0.272)
Age	0.010	-0.003	0.009	-0.002
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)
N	243	284	248	245
Log-likelihood	-185.844	-228.553	-192.761	-211.425

Coefficients presented with standard errors in parentheses.
Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.

Figure 3.6 presents the substantive story underlying the results in Table 3.7. From these estimates, interesting patterns emerge. Citizens seem eager to reward the president for providing disaster relief, but only if he is a member of the same political party. For example, compare changes in the approval of those identifying as Democrats across Democratic and Republican hypothetical presidents. These respondents are considerably more likely to express additional support for the president following the issuance of a disaster declaration if that president is also a Democrat. The same is true for Republicans. Those identifying as members of the GOP are more likely than any other respondents to offer less support for the president after receiving disaster assistance if he is a Democrat. However, they are significantly more likely to reward a

Republican president for taking the same action than they are to punish him. Meanwhile, Independents are more likely to reward the president—regardless of partisanship—than they are to punish him, but they are equally likely to be unmoved by his actions.

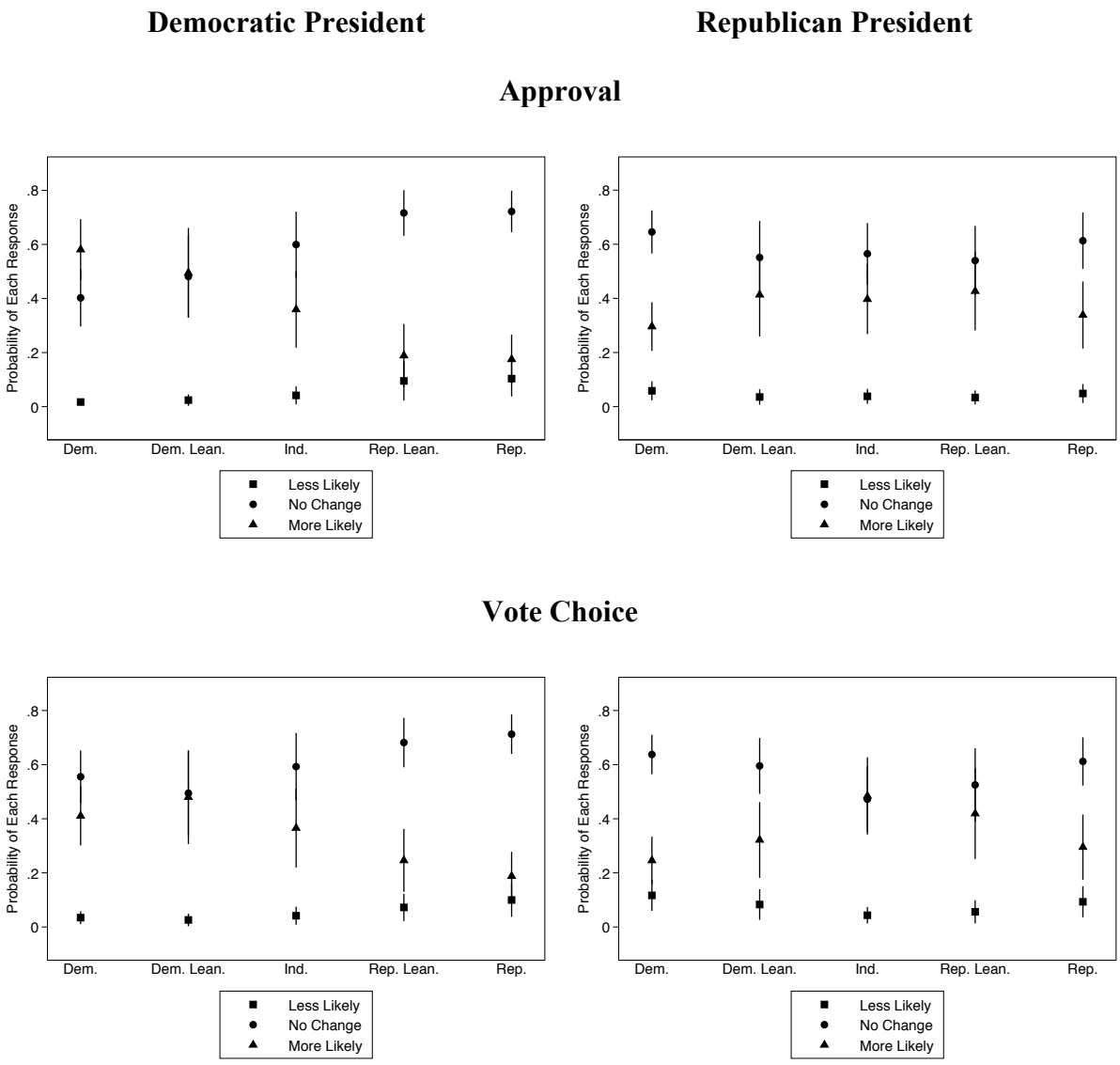

Figure 3.6: Marginal Effects of Respondent Changes in Attitudes with 95% CIs

The same relationship is true for changes in respondents' vote choice. Strong partisans are more likely to offer additional support for the president than they are to punish him or remain indifferent, but only if he is of the same party. Furthermore, Independents will not punish the

president, but they are not necessarily going to reward him either. As such, I can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that issuing disaster declarations can result in increased support for the president, in terms of both approval and vote choice, all else equal. However, I can only do so with the important caveat that increased approval only comes from within the president's party. Though independents and members of the opposite party are not likely to punish the president for his actions, it appears that mere maintenance of the status quo is the best-case scenario.

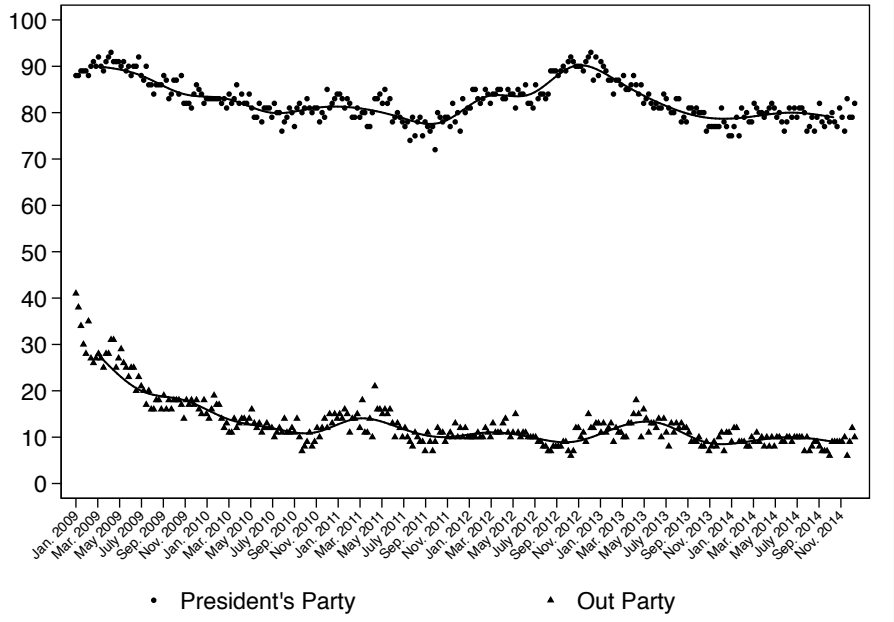

Figure 3.7: Average Approval for President Obama

Though previous literature suggests that presidents can garner electoral favor through the issuances of disaster declarations, the results presented here add an important qualification. *The citizens who are most likely to be wooed by the president's actions are those who were already likely to support him*. This should come as no surprise for a variety of reasons. First, as previously mentioned, voters commonly view political events and the actions of political actors with a partisan bias. Second, in an era of record polarization, opinions of the president are not easily changed. As an example, Figure 3.7 depicts the Gallup three-day rolling average of

approval for Barack Obama from the beginning of his tenure until when the survey used here was administered. Once separated by partisanship, we see that members of the president's party offer strong and stable support for him. Conversely, members of the opposite party offer weak and stable support.

Third, voters are largely ignorant of the extent of disaster relief. When asked how much money they believed their state received from the federal government to assist in dealing with natural disasters, less than 30 percent of respondents correctly approximated an answer when given four categories to choose from. I therefore estimated a logistic regression to estimate the probability of correctly estimating the amount of aid received. I include the same controls for income, education, ethnicity, gender, and age as the previous model. The only difference in this estimation is that I have collapsed the party identification variable into a three-category measure of partisanship. Independents are coded 1, Weak Partisans as 2, and Strong Partisans as 3. The results are presented in Table 3.8.

From these results, it appears that Independents are significantly more knowledgeable on the subject than partisan identifiers. This is potentially encouraging from the perspective of the president in that the segment of society he can most reasonably win over for additional support is paying the most attention to his actions. However, from the previous analysis, it also appears that Independents are not especially likely to let disaster declarations change their opinion of him. Furthermore, when asked if presidents are influenced by political motives when allocating disaster relief, a plurality of respondents answered that presidents are “greatly influenced” by political motives. I then estimated an ordered logistic regression predicting the degree to which respondents think the president is motivated by politics when issuing a disaster declaration. Once

again I include measures of partisanship, income, education, ethnicity, gender, and age. The results of this model are presented in Table 3.9.

Table 3.8: Logistic Regression Estimates of Correct Responses

	Coefficient (Std. Err.)
Weak Partisans	**-0.803**
	(0.278)
Strong Partisans	**-0.697**
	(0.246)
Income	0.095
	(0.094)
Education	**0.193**
	(0.072)
Race	-0.340
	(0.227)
Gender	**-0.750**
	(0.200)
Age	**0.015**
	(0.007)
Intercept	**-1.395**
	(0.530)
N	564
Log-likelihood	-323.802

Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.

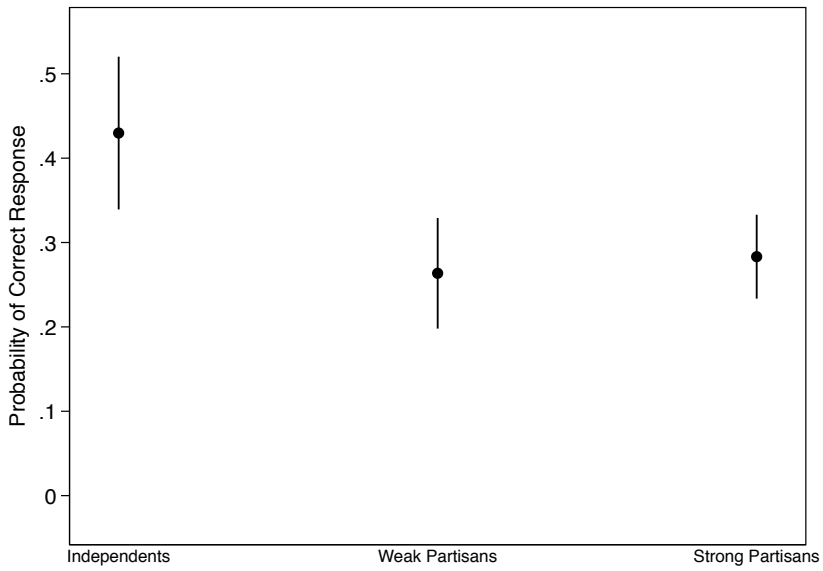

Figure 3.8: Marginal Effects of Correct Response with 95% Confidence Intervals

Figure 3.9 depicts the probability of each response by partisanship. From this, Independents demonstrate greater skepticism of the motivations behind the issuance of disaster relief while strong partisans seem to believe the president is motivated by altruistic reasons or is simply fulfilling one of the duties of his office. Regardless of his actual motivations, one could argue that it is difficult to win over voters who are skeptical of the motivations guiding your actions. This problem is then compounded when comparing the results of the two previous models. Those who are most likely to be familiar with the president's response to a natural disaster--and therefore are in the best position to offer additional support for him--are also the most likely to believe that he is acting politically. This cynical interpretation of presidential action could then serve undermine his intentions.

Table 3.9: Ordered Logistic Regression Estimates of Responses

	Coefficient (Std. Err.)
Weak Partisans	**-0.581**
	(0.221)
Strong Partisans	**-0.760**
	(0.230)
Income	-0.027
	(0.069)
Education	-0.072
	(0.051)
Race	0.081
	(0.176)
Gender	-0.198
	(0.146)
Age	-0.003
	(0.005)
N	696
Log-likelihood	-732.262

Bolded entries are significant at $p<0.05$.

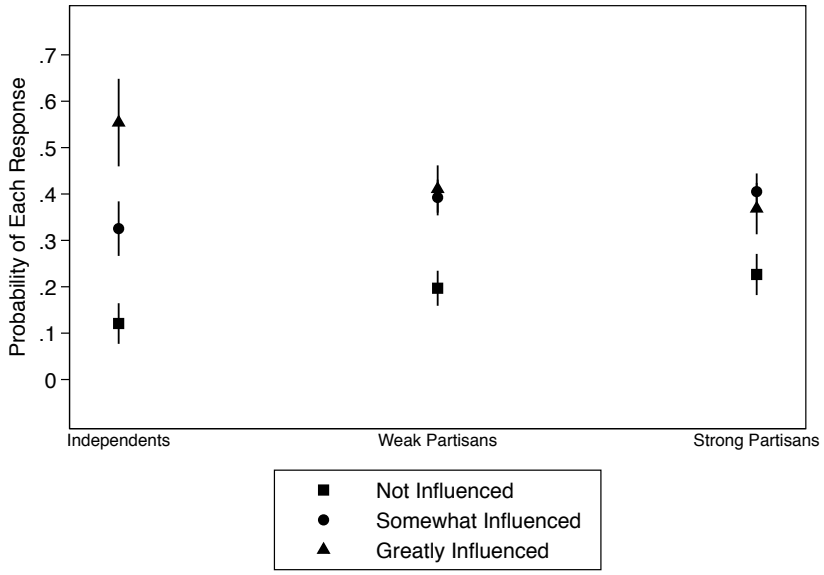

Figure 3.9. Marginal Effects of Responses by Partisanship with 95% CIs

Conclusion

Previous studies of disaster declarations have demonstrated effects on both presidential decisions to issue them as well as voters' responses to them. However, some lingering questions remain. Are disaster declarations an exercise in unilateral action? Can presidents afford to be deferential to more competitive states? How can voters hold the president responsible if they are uninformed about disaster relief? I have sought to fill these voids by viewing disasters through a different theoretical framework, offering an alternative model specification, and adding robustness through a survey experiment.

Doing so has lead to the following conclusions. First, disaster declarations do not appear to be one of the president's unilateral powers. Though they mimic the pattern of other such powers in that they are more likely to occur when approval is low and their use is increasing steadily over time, they do not meet any of the theoretical expectations laid out here. The president is simply acting within the confines of his congressionally delegated power to work with the governor of each state to provide aid to areas in need. Although he is constrained in his ability to reward more competitive states, that does not preclude him from including electoral value in his decision calculus, especially with respect to unincorporated territories.

Second, competition does not play a role in disaster relief allocation. Unincorporated territories receive comparable numbers of disaster declarations than do any of the fifty states, after controlling for other factors. This is unsurprising given that the president must be cognizant of his image when dealing with such things as natural disasters. Acting swiftly and effectively provides him with an opportunity to demonstrate his leadership skills, which could have an effect on competitive states. Put simply, though he stands to gain little from assisting non-competitive states, he could lose a great amount of favor and trust by not responding appropriately.

Finally, given the highly polarized nature of American politics, the effect of issuing disaster relief on voters' opinion of the president only exaggerates existing opinions of him. Members of the president's party grow even more favorable while members of the opposite party remain neutral at best. Though independents could be wooed by the president's actions, it is unlikely to happen, at least to an appreciable degree, as they are significantly more cynical and skeptical of the motives behind the president's decision to provide aid.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

A 2015 *New York Times*/CBS poll revealed that 84 percent of respondents "regardless of their political affiliation, agree that money has too much influence on elections."[45] At its core, this frustration is born of the idea that members of Congress and other elected officials are not accountable or responsive to the needs of the people who voted for them. Instead, "the concerns of the country's wealthiest people absorb the time and attention of office-holders."[46] This demonstrates that voters expect politicians to maintain a certain level of responsiveness. However, the ability of elected officials to meet those demands very depending on the institution within which they operate. As such, it becomes important to understand how institutions shape behavior as well as what behaviors politicians engage in to cope with their political environment.

First, for House members, it appears that state legislators' attempts to create safe districts are causing the members who serve in those districts before and after a redistricting cycle to adopt ideological positions further away from the center. In this analysis, I have limited the model to only include successful incumbents. Future work should endeavor to include unsuccessful bids for reelections, strategic retirements, and other means of leaving office. I suspect that doing so will produce an even larger effect for redistricting on ideology. It might also be fruitful to investigate the effect of redistricting on ideology at the state level. Comparable results would add robustness to the ones provided here, while divergent results would raise

[45] https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/02/us/politics/money-in-politics-poll.html
[46] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2016/11/03/how-to-fix-congress-make-representatives-accountable-to-voters/?utm_term=.3818cf1172b5

interesting questions about the difference between state and federal representation. Furthermore, given the challenge that facing a new constituency poses, research should be conducted that investigates the relationship between redistricting practices and turnover in Congress. Providing an answer to these and related questions will hopefully help shape the debate over the potentially greater use of redistricting commissions.

Second, previous literature on primary elections has largely focused on the candidate. However, as I have demonstrated, it is equally important to examine the election laws in place to determine the outcome of primary elections. In this regard, future potential questions to explore include: What effect do different primary election laws have on voter turnout? In the same vein of McGhee et al. (2013), what effect do different primary election laws have on the ideology of the winning candidate? More specifically, what effect do ballot access laws have on who runs and ultimately wins? Similarly, what effect do different filing deadlines have on election outcomes? These rules vary considerably across states with some being overtly cited as unduly strict. For example, an independent candidate in Georgia must obtain the signatures of five percent of registered voters in the jurisdiction the candidate seeks to represent—potentially tens of thousands of signatures—in order to appear on the ballot for a U.S. House race. With such a high threshold, no independent candidate has successfully made the ballot since 1964, and no minor party candidate has complied with the measure since it was first implemented in 1943 (Gray et al. 2012). In contrast, a candidate seeking a U.S. House seat in New Hampshire need only obtain 1,500 signatures to appear on the ballot.

Additionally, as previously stated, internal party structures can—and often do—change the rules governing participation in primaries rather easily and discretely. What conditions are most likely to generate changes to these and other rules? In light of increasing levels of

polarization in Congress, could these changes be partly a function of more extreme candidates running and occasionally winning nomination, only to go on and lose in the general election? Providing answers to these and related questions bear consequences for representation and congressional politics at large. They also speak to reform-oriented individuals who seek to increase competition and accountability in elections.

I also think it would be a worthwhile venture to extend the analysis further back in time. Though this would be quite an undertaking in terms of data collection, observing trends during different eras could provide valuable insights into our understanding of congressional elections. Furthermore, there is a rich literature on the effect of spending on election outcomes (Jacobson 1978, 1990; Green and Krasno 1988; Fouirnaies and Hall 2014). However, due to the difficulty of parsing out primary spending from general election spending, the effect of spending in primary elections is not well known. Future iterations of this work will attempt to overcome this problem. Finally, conducting the same analyses using Senate data would increase the generalizability of the results and possibly make primary elections more predictable.

Practically speaking, perhaps a more nuanced understanding of different primary election rules will make upsets like then House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's less surprising. Given Virginia's party convention system, the fact that Cantor faced a challenger at all while many others ran unopposed may have been a signal that his defeat was possible, if not imminent. Uncovering this type of information would serve to greatly increase our understanding of primary election outcomes and make for more reliable election predictions.

Lastly, I have provide evidence to suggest that presidents are more universalistic when providing relief for states that have been affected by natural disasters. Instead of using disaster declarations as a unilateral power to gain electoral favor, presidents have greater incentives to

“look presidential” whenever possible as well as a responsibility to be responsive to the needs of all their constituents, not just the ones residing in politically advantageous areas. As seen with George W. Bush during Hurricane Katrina, failure to swiftly and adequate address certain disasters could result in a severe backlash and punishment from citizens. Also, in the current polarized environment, presidents are highly unlikely to move voters in any substantial way. Put simply, presidents have little to gain from providing disaster aid, but they have much to lose in failing to do so.

These results also bear important implications for democratic accountability. Contrary to other works, it would seem that the presidency is more universalistic when providing disaster relief, which is encouraging from a normative perspective in that the simple idea of a backlash, rather than an actual one, suffices to discourage the executive from engaging in deferential resource allocation. Furthermore, in addition to not wanting to risk blemishing his own reputation, a president would not be willing to risk harming the chances of his party's nominee in the next election should he not run again. Further still, being seen as too partisan or ineffective could not only tarnish his image, but jeopardize the chances of success for member's of his party in House and Senate elections.

Answering these important questions raises new ones. Governors also play a vital role in responding to natural disasters within their own states. As such, how do their actions affect their favorability and electoral situation, if at all? Additionally, if presidents cannot win over non-identifiers or members of the other party, can his actions mobilize members of his own party? Does the probability of showing up to support the president increase upon a state receiving aid? Also, the Stafford Act did lead to more disaster declarations, but each successive administration

demonstrates a greater propensity to provide aid. Do other factors contribute to the increased issuance of major disaster declarations?

The results presented here also have implications for countries outside of the United States, especially other democracies. In order to fully understand the relationship between election outcomes and federal provisions, it would be fruitful to study how and to what extent other elected officials respond to natural disasters, and how their constituencies meet those responses. Answering these and other questions will serve to greatly increase our understanding of not only the role federal assistance plays in elections but in public opinion as well as executive powers more broadly.

Again, this dissertation has sought to increase the understanding of how institutional factors influence the behavior of certain political actors and electoral outcomes in an effort to assess the means by which accountability and responsiveness can be enhanced. From these results, I have demonstrated that certain electoral choices elicit predictably different outcomes in terms of ideology, competition, and electoral outcomes. However, more work is to be done before we can definitely declare that our republican form of government is as responsive as Madison argued it could be.

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APPENDIX

CCES Question Wording and Response Options

If a hypothetical (Democratic/ Republican) president were to agree to provide enough financial assistance to your state to help with recovery after some major natural disaster (like a tornado or hurricane), how would this influence your general opinion of him?

- It would be much more favorable
- It would be somewhat more favorable
- It would not change
- It would be somewhat less favorable
- It would be much less favorable
- Don't know

If a hypothetical (Democratic/ Republican) president were to agree to provide enough financial assistance to your state to help with recovery after some major natural disaster (like a tornado or hurricane), how would this influence your decision to vote for him in the future?

- I would be much more likely
- I would be somewhat more likely
- I would be indifferent
- I would be somewhat less likely
- I would be much less likely
- Don't know

In the past 2 years, about how much money do you think your state has received from the federal government to assist in tasks like rebuilding infrastructure and cleaning debris following some sort of major natural disaster (a hurricane or tornado, for example)?

- less than 1 million
- between 1 million and 5 million
- between 5 million and 10 million
- over 10 million

Each president since the 1950s has been called upon to provide disaster relief to states affected by some sort of natural disaster (such as an earthquake or tornado). Which of the following statements most closely reflects your view of this process?

- Presidents are not influenced by political motives when allocating disaster relief
- Presidents are only somewhat influenced by political motives when allocating disaster relief
- Presidents are greatly influenced by political motives when allocating disaster relief
- Don't know/ Prefer not to answer