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**Candidacy in Institutional Context:
The Nested Rule System for Seeking Elective Office
in the United States**

by
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The ultimate punishment for being unwilling to assume authority oneself is to be governed by a worse person, and it is fear of this happening, I think, which prompts good men to assume power occasionally. On these occasions, they don't embark upon government with the expectation of gaining some advantage or benefit from it: their attitude is that they have no choice in the matter, in the sense that they haven't been able to find people better than themselves, or even their equals to whom they might entrust the task. - *Plato's Republic, Book 1: 347 c, d* (1993; 2000)

This discussion on the quality of rulers appears early in Plato's *Republic*. Plato's conception of a society governed through enlightened rule has been countered by many political philosophers who suggest the direction for society must spring from the public. But even in a society directed by a diffuse public, some citizens will be selected to direct the machinations of government. A fundamental question on governance springs from this debate: *who* will govern? The excerpt from Plato suggests individuals who fear poor governance by others will step forward to assume authority. But, what are the characteristics of those who step forward for this public service? To understand office holders who are currently directing society, an understanding of those who put themselves forward as *candidates* for public service must be obtained. While political science at one time focused extensively on understanding elite actors and power (Dahl 1957; Dahl 1961), the tides of attention increasingly turned to the electorate or representative-constituent relationships (Gampbell et al. 1960; Erikson 1978; Fenno 1977). Yet, the decisions made by voters are constrained by the individuals who offer themselves as candidates for public service. Understanding who steps forward to serve, and the decision-making process these individuals undertake in order to make the step forward, deserves more systematic attention. To understand how individuals make decisions on candidacy, an understanding of personal characteristics, local environment, political climate, and rules on who may become a candidate must also be achieved. In

other words, decision making on candidacy occurs within a complex institutional system of many interacting variables. While Plato's candidate in the dialogue simply evaluates alternative candidates before taking on the responsibility of governance, in reality, candidates make many more determinations when evaluating and making decisions on candidacy.

Here, in three parts, I address the institutional environment that individuals face when deciding to run for elective office in the United States. First, I argue candidacy must be understood in the context of U.S. federalism. Making a decision to run for office is contextual to the unique features of the local community of the individual and the nature of the office. The existing literature on candidacy will also be reviewed. Second, candidacy will be considered as an institution, and the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework will be used to define the components of the institution. This analysis will describe three linked action arenas in which candidacy decisions are made, and two cases will be used to evaluate the adequacy of the model. Finally, the IAD model of candidacy will be discussed in light of existing research and future research possibilities will be considered. This theoretical inquiry and definitional analysis demonstrates that individual decisions on becoming a candidate for electoral office are made in the context of a federal system. The decisions are made on the basis of rules, community features, features of the physical world, and an evaluation of potential results. Ultimately, each candidacy decision is unique to its local context and its place in the federal system, but can be systematically evaluated using the IAD framework. The goal is a broad framework for developing hypotheses and fostering empirical research to direct attention back to candidacy.

Federalism and Rules on Candidacy

For citizens, voting in elections may involve selecting candidates to serve at local, state and federal levels of government. But, the citizens may not be aware of the complex system of local, state and national rules that shaped the physical ballots before them. Interaction between individuals and rules determines the selection of the names on the ballot. For responsive democracy, we might hope that citizens are able to select the representative closest in policy preferences to their own (Miller and Stokes 1963; Quaile Hill and Hurley 1999), but the names of candidates on the ballot are constrained by a system designed by U.S. federalism. The influence of the federal system is apparent first in the design of the electoral system and second in constitutional and statutory restraints on candidacy.

The design of government in the United States provides the broad framework for electoral and representative interaction. The debate surrounding the adoption of the U.S. Constitution demonstrates the significance of federalism and control of representative institutions. Arguing against the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, antifederalists demonstrated a concern for the power of the states, especially in regard to control of political offices and selection of candidates to serve in a national assembly.

Antifederalist Number 59 articulates fear that the national government might usurp state control of the election of Members of Congress. Indeed, the *Antifederalist Papers* are filled with concerns about over-reaching national power and critical questions on the design of representative institutions in the United States (Borden 1965). The work of Madison, Hamilton and Jay in *The Federalist Papers* is often cited to explain and justify the design of U.S. government. However, more interesting is the debate between the

federalists and the antifederalists. The writing exchange that occurred through the ratification process exhibited great concern on *who* would be elected to the institutions designed to guide the new national government and *how* they would be elected. Would the new government truly consider the interests of the people and of the states?

While citizens were given the power to directly elect representatives to the United States House and were provided equal representation in the House, legislatures were the bodies assigned to select Senators, with each state receiving equal representation by two Senators (V. Ostrom 1971; 146). Vincent Ostrom (1971) addresses the design of U.S. representational institutions in *The Theory of a Compound Republic*. In addition to the significant differences in House and Senate representation, Ostrom explains authority in the federal system at the state and local levels is vital for an understanding of U.S. democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* describes the New England township as a locus of local political participation and self-governance (de Tocqueville 2000). The township was the arena in which citizens gained the skills of self governance, solved conflict through reasoned debate and reached cooperative outcomes. In the mid-nineteenth century, local units were free to watch their own affairs with little state or national intervention. V. Ostrom explains the industrial revolution changed the autonomy of local government units and brought increasing state and national oversight.

The breakdown in federalism did not only come from formal changes in government structures, but also from the development of the political party machine.

Ostrom explains:

When carried through to its fullest potential, political organizers have incentives to slate candidates for all the numerous legislative, executive, and judicial offices in their relevant political jurisdictions; to procure positions on the public payrolls for those assisting in organized efforts to conduct campaigns, canvass votes, and

deliver voters to the polls; to control the decisions made by the public officials elected as a part of the organization's slate' and to receive contributions from those who benefit from the decisions taken. The successful organizer becomes a "boss" in control of the different offices where his candidates have been successful. He has the potential of functioning as a monopolist capable of controlling the relevant governmental decisions to maximize his returns as an entrepreneur (Ostrom 1971; 183).

The resulting "fully integrated system of command" available to the political boss chokes the authority checks normally available in the federal system. Office holders are no longer independent representatives or political entrepreneurs, but indebted to a central control. Writing during the reform era in American politics, Ostrogorski (1910) notes the manner in which machines constrain political candidates. However, his writing also captures the growing strength of the electorate, particularly after party nominations are made.¹

Reform era politics reasserted divisions of authority in the federal system in several respects. Most notably, through home rule legislation, local governments were relieved from state intervention in specifically local affairs. Peppin (1941) provides a legal history of the development of federal structures within the state of California, as court decisions and constitutional change limited the state legislature's interference in local affairs and strengthened the position of local governments. These reform era changes may have articulated state-local relationships, but modern scholars point to grant programs and accompanying regulations as new conditions blurring accountability in intergovernmental relations (see, for example Kettl 1983). Regardless of the current division of electoral responsibility in the federal system, these commentaries on the

¹ For example, see chapter nine on how the role of the party organization changes from the primary campaign to the general election campaign. Chapters eleven and twelve deal specifically with machine politics. Note, these chapter references refer to Ostrogorski's commentary of the party system in the United States, not his larger two volume work.

governmental structures of the United States suggest federalism must be understood first to understand candidacy.

Each level of government in the federal system offers its own constitutional and statutory constraints in which citizen-politicians make decisions on candidacy.² Cofsky (1996) clarifies the legal debate surrounding candidacy in a recent legal comment. Candidacy is first constrained by the United States Constitution. The constitution defines requirements for seeking congressional office and the presidency. These limitations consist primarily of restrictions on age, state residency, and in the case of the president, place of birth. States have not been allowed to limit these requirements further, but through legislation states have set requirements for ballot access.³ Amendments to the Constitution, including the first, fourteenth, fifteenth, nineteenth, twenty-fourth, and twenty-sixth, have been used by the courts to set boundaries on states' ability to limit the rights of citizen-politicians to seek office. However, state requirements for ballot access and the "right" to candidacy vary significantly among states. For example, Lewis-Beck and Squire (1995) explain that diverse state ballot-access requirements allow third parties greater access to presidential primary ballots in some states than in others. Setting access requirements allows states to frame the electoral conflict of party competition by admitting or excluding alternative groups through the use of costly access standards. However, Cofsky argues the legal justification for allowing or annulling state restrictions

² To refer to citizens who contemplate running for office, I will use the term *citizen-politician*. The citizen-politician is an actor more attuned to political events than the citizen alone. The consideration of public matters and the contemplation of increased participation in the political system in the form of candidacy adds an attentive political element to the citizen's position. Referring to these actors a "candidates" might confuse our analysis, as we are trying to define candidacy. In a study of candidacy and decision-making, some citizen-politicians will become candidates and some will not. If this distinction is not helpful, the author would be open to alternatives and suggestions for clarity.

³ Cofsky uses the example of term-limits to exemplify how states have not been allowed to alter qualifications for national office. Court decisions have prevented states from imposing limits on the number of terms national office holders can seek. See Cofsky for a full discussion.

on candidacy have been inconsistent.⁴ Thus, each state has a unique candidacy environment. This argument can be extended to the local level. States either set standards for local office when they grant local charters, or allow local governments to determine local restrictions on and requirements for candidacy. On the basis of candidate-ambition theory, one might expect restrictions on local candidacy to ultimately restrict the supply of candidates available for higher offices—offices like Member of Congress, that fall under other Constitutional access rules. In sum, to understand the decisions citizen-politicians make, one must understand the nested rule structure for seeking office in the United States. Formal rules at many levels of the federal system condition the decision-making process for the institution of candidacy.

We might expect that literature discussing candidacy takes great care to detail the workings of federalism and its influence on candidate decisions. Studies of candidacy might detail the nested national, state, and local rules for seeking office and their impact on candidates in various parts of the nation. In reality, this is not the case. Research on candidacy has taken several directions, which will be detailed below. However, no approach seems to account for the complex personal factors that impact the citizen-politician's decisions to run for office while concomitantly accounting for the federal nature of the U.S. system and the influence of federalism on candidacy.

Candidacy in the United States

Research on candidates for political office in the United States has traditionally concentrated on individual-level social and psychological factors. Herbert Jacob (1962) details a framework on candidacy research and proposes an integrative model.

Reviewing the literature on candidate recruitment, Jacob divides research into elite

⁴ In his comment, Cofskey argues for a system of tiered-scrutiny in the evaluation of ballot access laws.

theory, sociological approaches and psychological approaches. While each category identifies interesting variables, research to date has not theoretically developed connective relationship, argues Jacob. He suggests an integrative model is necessary to describe why some citizens are recruited into political participation as candidates. Beginning with psychological factors, the model identifies individuals' interest in power, prestige, and low need for personal friendships. People with "political personalities" enter careers in which bargaining is a needed skill. Because bargaining is necessary in many professions and not just upper-class professions, Jacob argues candidacy will not necessarily exhibit an upper-class selection bias. These bargainers, or "brokers," will seek the political office "whose esteem corresponds most closely to their own standing in the community" (Jacob 1962; 716). Finally, political structures, like party organizations, will have influence on who enters the political system as a candidate. Jacobs' model is a useful base because it synthesizes disparate variables from various approaches. However, by beginning with psychological conditions and giving secondary recognition to party organizations and rule features that might limit access, the model is not a comprehensive answer to who will run for office.

Despite these limitations, Jacob serves as a useful base for further research. Providing additional theoretical integration, Schlesinger's (1966) articulation of ambition theory added to understanding on candidacy. Evaluating the career paths of politicians, Schlesinger suggests, while in office, office holders behave in away that will meet future electoral objectives, such as developing a base to run for higher office. Levine and Hyde (1977) add to Jacobs by developing a rational-choice calculus to identify when incumbents are likely to pursue ambition and run for higher office. Their research and

extension of ambition theory was not empirically tested due to a lack of data, but the formal model systematically identifies ambition pressures on the incumbent office holder.

Gordon Black's research on local government officials distinguishes officials who think of themselves as politicians and those that think of themselves simply as citizens or local public servants (Black 1970; Black 1972). Black measures electoral risk (the margin of electoral victory) for the local official, and through a survey develops measures of commitment to the current elected position and commitment to seek another office or government positions. Black finds high correlations among elected officials who think of themselves as "politicians," electoral risk, and desire to seek higher office. While the limited statistical techniques in these studies do little to advance causal understanding, Black adds to ambition theory by identifying differences in the attitudes of local elected officials toward their offices. In sum, social and psychological measures have been used to understand candidacy, although the clarity of theory remains problematic.

Summaries of the legal arguments surrounding candidacy constitute a second realm in the literature on candidacy. While defining national, state and local rule structures, these studies do little to connect legal constrictions with candidacy decisions or the functioning of the electoral system. Studies with legal and statutory focus begin with political science's concentration on institutional description in the early twentieth century and continue in legal journals today. For example, Allen (1906) analyzes ballot structure in the states. His study is rich in descriptive detail, including design, layout and graphical representations on ballots. Allen emphasizes the importance of the switch from party-prepared ballot to the "Australian" government-printed ballot. But, the remainder of his study only provides a functional understanding of ballot preparation and leads the

reader to guess about its impact on candidates and elections. Some studies treat the entire election process, but approach the topic from the perspective of a voter, asking questions on registration, voting rights, ballot form and the integrity of the electoral process (Reitman and Davidson 1972; Rogers 1990).

Legal studies of candidacy review questions of candidacy that have been debated in the courts. These studies often do not link back to questions of candidate recruitment, selection, or decisions to run for office. Gordon (1976) asks, does a constitutional right to candidacy exist? She identifies cases that suggest candidacy is a right protected by the Constitution's First Amendment, which provides the right to free speech, and cases that protect voters' rights. Gordon concludes the courts have offered conflicting justifications for candidacy rights. This leaves states and candidates in the difficult position of evaluating states' regulation of ballot access in an ongoing basis. While this literature might continue to determine how ballot access requirements impact candidates' decisions to run, surprisingly little research of this sort has been done. One study measures the impact of filing fees and petition signatures in Congressional primary and general elections across states to determine if states with more restrictive access rules have fewer candidates file for office than states with less stringent requirements (Robeck and Dyer 1982). The authors also account for political factors like incumbency and level of district competition. In the elections studies, variation in the number of petition signatures and the presence of a filing fee is statistically significant in the explanation of the number of candidates seeking office, but the political measures are also significant. The study links legal requirements to the electoral process more clearly than the legal reviews, but is limited by the short time span of elections studied. The authors also do not take into

account many of the factors mentioned in Jacobs' framework, as discussed earlier. Legal restrictions on ballot access and candidacy should be included in our evaluation of candidates' decision to run for office, but legal aspects serve only a partial explanation.

While the focus of this paper is candidacy in U.S. elections, the broader scope of candidacy and election literature must be noted. When discussing electoral systems in comparative context, analysis often turns around the implications of proportional versus plurality, winner-take-all representation. Rae (1967) offers analysis on proportional systems. Blais and Carty (1991) distinguish the mechanical and psychological components of Duverger's Law, which explains the persistence of two-party electoral systems when single-member districts with first-past-the-post elections are in place. The form of electoral systems internationally is important and deserving of continued research, but is necessarily excluded from the evaluation here. As noted, federalism in the United States has sculpted a unique system for public policy and for representation and elections. Focusing on the unique interactions of candidate decisions, state law, U.S. law, and party structure, this paper will be unable to address questions of proportional representation.

Research on candidacy is filled with lamentations on the lack of theory and the absence of a useful framework for research. By sampling the literature, the lack of cohesion is understandable. Drawing from psychological, sociological, and legal backgrounds, political scientists studying candidacy decisions have identified very different variables influencing an individual's decision to participate in the political process as a candidate. Early institutional studies of differences in ballot access and ballot form gave way to behavioral research. The research on election and candidacy law

that has continued in legal journals fails to offer meaningful discussion of the interaction of candidacy decisions and statutory limitations on candidacy.

To provide a full understanding of individual decisions on candidacy, a framework encompassing all of these factors is necessary. Also, the framework must account for the multiple levels of formal rules in the U.S. federal system. Finally, the framework must account for multiple stages in a decision making process. As reviewed, candidacy research encompasses research on individual-specific factors, ballot access factors, and electoral system factors. The decision to become a candidate, then, is actually a process of multiple, linked decisions. To frame research on the complex question of candidacy, we must move beyond thinking of candidacy as a one-step decision.

Candidacy as an Institution

Candidacy is a multifaceted concept, and we should study it in a way that captures its nuances. For theoretical clarity, and to guide future research, I propose that we think of candidacy as an institution. Ostrom (forthcoming) defines institutions as "the prescriptions that humans use to organize all forms of repetitive and structured interactions or situations including those within families, neighborhoods, markets, firms, sports leagues, churches, private associations, and governments at all scales" (chapter 1, page 1). For the purpose of analyzing institutions, Ostrom and colleagues at the Workshop on Political Theory and Policy Analysis have developed the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. This research approach has been applied to numerous studies on common-pool resources and metropolitan organization. The framework can also be applied to the study of representative institutions and decision

making. Therefore, by studying candidacy as an institution, the component decisions of an individual's larger decision to seek elective office can be systematically analyzed. Considering the full institutional decision making system instead of limiting focus to only ballot access laws, ambition, or social context, provides a more complete picture of the process by which citizens make decisions to become candidates.

Use of the IAD framework allows for and requires a depth of definitional clarity. While no empirical hypotheses will be tested here, a definitional understanding of the components of the candidacy decision-making situation will draw a path for my future research on the study of candidates, executive elected officials and the interaction of politics and public policy in the federal system. How do changes in campaign laws impact candidates decision making? Does candidate interest in policy impact decisions to run for different offices? How do political parties at state and federal levels impact candidates' decisions, and do the two party levels act in concert or conflict? None of these questions can be answered by studies of election rules, candidate ambition or social context alone. The definitional categories used in the IAD framework allow us to examine such questions and the interplay of many factors via *one* frame.

The components of the IAD are described in detail in existing literature (see Ostrom forthcoming; Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker 1994). An examination of figure 1 and a brief summary of the framework will make its utility for research on candidacy decisions clear. The framework centers on the *action arena*. Here, we find *actors* in *action situations*. In haste, one might say the candidate is the only actor involved in the decision to run for office, but this would be far from the truth. Many individuals might impact a citizen-politician's decision to run for office. The IAD allows us to consider

numerous actors. Within the action situation, we distinguish the various *positions* that the *participants* will fill. For each stage of the candidacy decision making process, these factors may be different or carry different weight—each will be detailed in the candidacy decision process discussed below.

Three main groups of variables impact the action arena. *Rules-in-use* describe what actors may do, may not do, and must do (see Crawford and Ostrom 1995). These rules may include formal rules, such as constitutional restraints or statutory guidelines. Existing research on petition requirements, registration guidelines or ballot forms exemplifies formal rules. Informal rules that are not codified but have shared meaning in a community or context are also included. One example of an informal rule might be a community's expectation that candidates participate in a debate at a particular place, at a time before the election. Second, *attributes of a community* impact action arenas. Jacob, in his review of the candidacy literature, suggests local political features are important, but he does not operationalize these features. Candidates must face a local political culture that dictates how they might behave in their campaigns. Can the candidate be "partisan?" Can the candidate make significant advertising expenditures? Can the candidate "go negative" and attack opponents? The local political culture has been recognized in the literature, but has not been defined thoroughly. The IAD allows for this definition within the attributes of community category. Third, the attributes of the physical world impact action arenas. Demographic composition of a district's constituency may impact the decision process. As Black (1970; 1972) suggests, the size of the electoral district and the competitiveness of the district influence how candidates perceive their situation. These three factors will impact action arenas, leading to patterns

of interaction and finally *outcomes*. Here, outcomes are decisions on whether or not to become a candidate and to seek elective office.

Again, candidacy is not a single decision, but a series of linked decisions. Ostrom, Gardner and Walker explain, "most of social reality is composed of multiple arenas linked sequentially or simultaneously" (Ostrom, Gardner, Walker 1994; 45). For the purpose of understanding candidacy as an institution, the decision process will be broken down into a sequential chain. First, personal or pre-candidacy decisions are made. Second, candidacy access decisions are made. Finally, formal decisions are made. These three levels of decision-making on candidacy theoretically correspond with the *operational*, *collective-choice* and *constitutional* levels of analysis described by Ostrom, Gardner and Walker (1994; 46). While the work by these authors uses the multiple levels of analysis to distinguish different rules structures, the definition of these three levels is well suited to analyzing decision making in the candidacy institution as well. (See figure 2). For each of the linked action arenas, the relevance of physical world attributes, community attributes and rules may vary. In the process of defining each decision-step or action arena, some of these factors will be emphasized more than others. To aid in this endeavor, the 1968 presidential election will be used as an example to understand candidate access decisions, and Louisiana Congressional election structures will be used to further our understanding of variations in the formal decision arena. Additionally, these decision levels are nested in U.S. federalism. Rules on the constitutional, collective-choice and operational levels will impact each decision level. As we analyze the three decision levels, the significance of federalism in determining candidacy decisions will be apparent.

Operational, Personal or Pre-Candidacy Decision Level

Analysis begins at the individual-level or *operational level* with the citizen-politician. What spurs an individual to run for office? How does the citizen interested in the political process become the citizen-politician who is ready to consider direct participation in public debate and representative institutions? These questions precede the analysis offered by ambition theory. Instead, variables influencing an individual's personal decision to engage in politics are relevant. For answers to these questions, studies on general participation patterns might be referenced, and research on elected officials' backgrounds and interests before serving in elective office point to certain variables. The IAD will be used to approach these questions and variables systematically.

The citizen-politician is the prime participant at the operational level. Here, the citizen-politician is in the position of decision-maker to determine if a candidacy for office will be launched. As the citizen-politician, the citizen has demonstrated some interest in the political process, but now undertakes a preference ordering to determine the desired future level of involvement in politics. Will involvement increase to candidacy, remain the same, or will interest in politics taper off so the citizen-politician can return to being just a citizen with low interest in the political process? Additionally, as Plato's candidate considers alternative futures under poorly performing rules, the citizen-politician evaluates his or her own preference ordering on policies and considers alternatives. Occupational utility must also be calculated—if running for office would require the citizen-politician to sacrifice time or income, will a run for office or maintenance of the current position result in higher utility? The candidate may be

expected to maximize personal utility in terms of policy preferences and occupation, but these evaluations are likely to be made in a system of bounded rationality (see Jones 2001). While the citizen-politician may have limited information to project on potential policy and occupations paths, there are limits to the predictive ability due to uncertainty in the natural environment. Other participants fill the positions of encouragers and discouragers. Research on Congressional candidates suggests family members, close friends and associates may be consulted or offer input during the operational-level decision making process (Jacobson 1997). Community members, active in the political process, may also offer solicited or unsolicited advice on a run. These encouragers and discouragers, classified by the advice they offer the candidate, add to the patterns of interaction in the candidacy institution that will eventually yield an outcome—a decision on whether or not to run for office.

Attributes of the physical world probably have their most notable impact on the operational level of candidacy decision making. The serious citizen-politician will investigate the office he or she is interested in obtaining. The candidate will evaluate time responsibilities involved with the office, location of meetings, and physical and mental demands. The candidates will evaluate the nature of the constituency and the district. Understanding demographics of the district may aid in the decision-making process, and the citizen-politician may also consider potential changes to the district through future redistricting processes (Hamm, Harmel, and Thompson 1981; Lublin and Voss 2000). While physical characteristics may enter decision making at later stages, they are likely to have the most attention at the operational level when the decision to run

is still personal and occurring mainly within the mind and thoughts of the citizen-politician.

Attributes of community may be considered by the citizen-politician and evaluated, but should not be expected to have as heavy a weight as personal calculations. Some information may be available to the citizen-politician about the local political culture, needs of the community, and patterns of support for candidates. However, community attributes will play a larger role at the access or collective-choice decision level. So too, formal rules may be referenced or considered to determine eligibility for office, but the operational level decision will be more heavily influence by informal rules, like community standards on occupation or marital status of candidates. By and large, the operational level decision-making process on candidacy is largely personal and occurs as an internal debate for the citizen-politician with limited evaluation of the outside world and some dependence on the information or utility weighting provided by family and close advisors. When the citizen-politician makes the decision to run for office at this person level, the second state of candidacy decision making is entered.

Collective-Choice or Access Decision Level

Even if the citizen politician determines that a desire to run for office is present, the challenges of formalizing a candidacy still exist. Now, the citizen-politician performs as one actor in a larger action arena. In addition to the position provided for the citizen-politician, the action arena now includes positions for participants in the candidate's organization. Upon deciding to run, the candidate will amass advisors and supporters to aid in the development of the candidacy. The citizen-politician must now interact with participants in gate-keeping positions as well. The key gate-keepers to candidacy in the

collective action or access level are political party organizations and government officials who determine and provide for ballot access. Patterns of interaction, at this level, will determine if the citizen-politician becomes an official candidate by gaining a party label on the ballot and or by gaining access to the official ballot. If the citizen-politician looks ahead to potential events at the collective-action levels and determines that an unfavorable reception might be ahead, the citizen-politician will likely end the exploration of candidacy. However, if these conditions are predicted to be favorable to the citizen-politician, the exploration of the institution may continue.

Features of federalism are vital for an understanding of the collective-choice level in candidacy decision making. First, formal rules at the local, state and national level must be evaluated to determine if the candidate can gain ballot access. If the candidate is running for local office, national law may have little impact, other than requirements on U.S. citizenship. But each local office may have different petition-signature requirements, residency requirements or even professional requirements.⁵ With the help of the candidate organization, the citizen-politician will evaluate these rules and begin the necessary steps to become a formal candidate. Again, each local unit of government may have unique requirements for ballot access. If some candidates deem the requirements cost prohibitive in terms of potential utility, the decision-making process on candidacy may end here, without moving on to formal candidacy.

Community features play an important role at the collective-choice level. The role of political parties is the key element to be considered here. While party rules for candidacy may be considered in the "rule" category, I believe they might also be

⁵ **The county prosecutor is the prime example of a professional license requirement for elected office. While most elected offices require no specialized licenses or training, most U.S. counties require candidates for county prosecutor to have a J.D. and be in good standing with the state bar organization.**

considered under community features. In some way, parties determine who can and who cannot bear the party label as an official candidate. Jewell and Morehouse (2001) describe the role of state political parties in selecting candidates through primary elections or party caucus. *The Book of the States* (2000) details the procedures necessary in each state to become a candidate. Thus, citizen-politicians must understand the procedures in their state and locality to become a party candidate on the general election ballot.

The democratic presidential primaries and convention of 1968 serve as a case to test the definitional model constructed for this level of decision making. First, the 1968 nominations and 1972 Democratic Party rule changes demonstrate the role of rules in candidacy decisions. In the run-up to the 1968 Presidential Election, discontentment with President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam War policy fostered a search for anti-war leadership within the Democratic Party. With support from an anti-war contingent of the party, Senator Eugene McCarthy entered the primaries to challenge Johnson for the Democratic nomination (Hoeh 1994; Wainstock 1988). While the Presidential Primary process in 1968 provided public visibility for candidates and measured popular public support, the primary system was not tightly tied to the nominating procedure at the convention. Delegates and party activists had opportunity at the convention to support alternative candidates (Davis 1997). Thus, when Lyndon Johnson announced he would not seek re-election, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey was able to make symbolic use of the primary system and still obtain the nomination through balloting at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago (Chester, Hodgson, and Page 1969). The primaries played a somewhat unimportant role in the ultimate nomination because the formal rules

provided party activists and key Democratic Party leaders with power to influence the nomination and balloting at the convention. Following discontentment with the 1968 convention, the Democratic Party studied the rules and delegate selection process. The McGovern and Fraser commissions proposed reforms to alter the delegate selection structure (Fraser 1972). The Democratic Party's Commission on Rules and Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection produced a rules report before the 1972 convention that states, "the first and most important reform is the proposal to base all the party's national organs and activities on a roster of enrolled members that is both national and meaningful" (Fraser 1972; introduction by Austin Ranney). The new rules provided an improved system of delegate selection that over time resulted in a meaningful primary process in which electoral results in the states translated into delegate support at the convention. Reforms and changes in the primary system also lead to growth of primaries as more states desired involvement in the primary process (see table 1, Cook 2000; Davis 1997). As table one illustrates, the number of states holding primary elections increased after 1968. More importantly, the proportion of convention delegates selected through the primaries also increased. The 1968 Democratic primaries determined 40.2% of the convention delegates. The 1972 Democratic primaries determined 65.3% of delegates, and in 1996, 81.4% of the Democratic Party's convention delegates were determined by primary election outcomes. A similar pattern exists for the Republican Party. Hubert Humphrey was the last Democratic candidate nominated under the old rule system, and while the rules for delegate selection vary slightly through each presidential election cycle, candidates since Humphrey have been required to run serious primary campaigns to win delegates and obtain their party's nomination.

Changes in community attributes **accompanied** changes in the rules-in-use. As more states became involved in the primary election process, the significance of media coverage in primary elections became increasingly important (Bartels 1988). States, desiring their citizens' votes to "count" in the primary process, engage in calendar alterations to move their primary election to a point in the primary cycle that will obtain media coverage and have the potential to impact the party nomination (Markin 1999). Thus, presidential citizen-politicians must make complex utility calculations to determine if they will be able to run strong campaigns in particular states. Early primaries often serve as indicators for these presidential hopefuls, as many will end the decision process and end candidacy after an early, important defeat (Cook 2000). Collective-choice interaction of party conventions and primaries provide information for candidates in their decision-making process on candidacy. Rules-in-use and community context may alter utility calculations or otherwise impact the decision process. When evaluating the collective-choice level, in 1968 or at other times, candidates make calculations on likely outcomes while interacting with rules and other features identified by the IAD framework. Through these examples, the case for multiple levels of decision making is clear. Decisions on candidacy move beyond candidacy and involve collective-choice calculations involving parties, ballot access opportunities, and a larger number of participants and positions in the action arena.

Through interactions among parties, rules for ballot access, and candidate organizations, an outcome is reached. Here, if the citizen-politician decides through the requirements to gain ballot access, formal candidacy is reached. As the 1968 Democratic Convention and the candidacy of Eugene McCarthy demonstrate, even if a candidate

desires to continue on the path of candidacy, party actors may veto that decision. This example demonstrates the importance of not only examining candidate activity, but also considering rules-in-use and community attributes. Understanding the whole institution of candidacy, the citizen-politician may successfully navigate the collective-choice or access phase of decision-making. Finally, the stage of citizen-politician interaction with the public is reached and formal or constitutional decision-making on candidacy begins.

Constitutional or Formal-Electoral Decision Level

The citizen politician now cedes decision-making power to a larger group of actors. The general public participates in the position of the electorate, ready to evaluate the qualities of the citizen-politician and pass judgment on the candidacy. We might argue that this level of analysis is no longer a part of the decision-making process on candidacy. However, I believe this conclusion would be premature. When citizen-politicians evaluate candidacy, they inevitably consider the potential for success in the election. Even when they have successfully navigated earlier stages of the decision making process, events may occur at the formal level to end their candidacy.⁶ As participants in the candidacy institution, citizen-politicians may evaluate the structures of constitutional-level decision making early in their campaign. Under one set of community attributes, rules and physical world characteristics, the citizen-politician may feel prepared to offer himself or herself for public judgment. This may not be true under different conditions.

Community attributes monitored by the citizen-politician may include evaluations of the economy, public approval of the citizen-politician's party, and public approval of

⁶ The pre-mature departure of Senator Robert Toricelli from the 2002 New Jersey Senate election serves as one example.

the president (Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002). Rule structures and the format of the election process will also influence the decision-making of the citizen-politician in the action arena. The citizen-politician's utility calculations in the decision-making process may be weighted by each of these factors. If at the operational-level, the citizen-politician looks ahead to formal candidacy and the potential outcomes do not look positive, the decision-making process may end with a decision not to run. If the format of the final election is favorable to the citizen-politician, the decision-making process may continue to the phase in which the citizen-politician is presented to the electorate for judgment

The electoral system in the state of Louisiana offers an interesting test for the formal-decision level. While most states in the nation use some type of primary election before the general election to determine party candidates and general election participation, Louisiana employs a different system. Louisiana election code (*LA R.S. 18*) stipulates all candidates for Congressional office (the United States House of Representatives and the Senate) will run in the general election in November. If any candidate fails to receive at least fifty percent of the vote, the top two candidates will face each other in a December run-off election, regardless of their party.

Comparing candidacy institutions in Louisiana and other states, the structures and decision processes facing Louisiana candidates are expected to be significantly different. Citizen-politicians would be forced to down-grade evaluation of the access-level decisions involving the political parties, as all candidates run on the same ballot. Also, instead of initially being presented to an electorate or convention of party voters, candidates are presented directly to the entire electorate in an open primary. This unique

rule structure may lead to different calculations on seeking office, and may place unique pressures on the citizen-politician during the decision-making process.

In sum, the formal candidacy decision is a meta-evaluation by the candidate, based on the first two decision stages and by the citizen-politician's evaluation and weighting of potential election outcomes. While emphasis might be placed on the formal candidacy and interaction with the electorate as the highest stage in the candidacy process, I do not believe a hierarchical perspective would be appropriate. As figure two suggests, and as described, the three levels of decision-making in the candidacy institution are interactive with different elements having various levels of emphasis at different points. However, by splitting the candidacy institution into a three-part decision-making process, thorough evaluation of candidacy decisions can be undertaken.

Implications for Future Research

Candidacy has been presented as an institution with three distinct levels of action or decision-making. Citizen-politicians must evaluate each level to determine if they should or should not decide to run for elective office. When examining candidacy in the U.S. system, federalism plays an important role. Government structures at the national, state and local level may set formal rules for candidacy and ballot access. Community attributes may differ at each level of government and for each elective office. Thus, each decision-making process on candidacy for each elective office in the United States involves a unique, contextual set of calculations. In sum, to understand citizen-politicians, researchers must understand more than their personal preferences or psychological make-up. Researchers must look beyond a legal understanding or a sociological understanding. By modeling candidacy as an institution under the IAD

framework, researchers can begin to ask critical questions on the motivations of candidates at various levels in U.S. governments.

From this model, valuable hypotheses can be developed on the nature of candidacy rules. Legal studies suggest that inconsistency in court decisions on ballot access and candidacy rules leave state governments and candidates guessing on appropriate standards for limiting office seeking. By using the factors described above, research can move forward to systematically determine how the rules influence decision-making and how rule changes might impact candidacy and the number of quality citizen-politicians who put themselves forward for public consideration. Community context might also receive further research attention. Scholars are evaluating the role of party in the organization of legislative bodies and elections (see, for example Schaffher, Streb, and Wright 2001). The components identified with the IAD may be included in research to answer questions on candidacy and elections, especially in reference to the nested nature of rules and election decisions. For example, does the public evaluate political executives at different levels of government (the president, governors, mayors) with the same standards or different standards? Because these citizen-politicians have different constituencies, different districts and run for office under different combinations of rules, are their policy focuses and campaign messages distinct or do certain variables homogenize communication with the public? Studies on districting decisions and the division of representative responsibility in the federal system could also benefit from combined consideration of candidacy and its relations to the physical world.

By developing a broad model of the institution of candidacy, the theoretical significance of federalism and nested rules in the U.S. system of government are

apparent. However, these rules do not operate alone. By using the IAD, an understanding of candidacy as an institution demonstrates that rules combine with community attributes and characteristics of the physical world to impact action arenas. The shared interactions result in outcomes, or decisions by citizen-politicians on whether to seek office, maintain current participation levels in public life, or decrease involvement in the political process.

Conclusions

Through an institutional analysis of candidacy for office in the United States, we can develop an understanding of the decision-making process on running for office that moves beyond the calculations made by individual actors. Decisions on candidacy are made in a larger context that includes rules, attributes of community and characteristics of the physical world. This institutional or structural understanding of candidacy provides a base to answer the fundamental question: *who* will govern? An improved understanding of candidacy also leads to an improved understanding of American democracy. By understanding the utility calculations and considerations of citizens who *might* run for office, the citizen-politicians, a better understanding of officials in office might also come about. Understanding elites and elite relationships is no longer a focus of today's empirical political science. But with the variables identified here, perhaps candidates might be studied more systematically, or they might be studied in a new comparative context. With improved understanding of who runs for office and who is elected, other questions on the quality of representation will also be improved. *Who will govern?* The propositions developed here under the IAD framework may contribute new perspective to answer this important question.

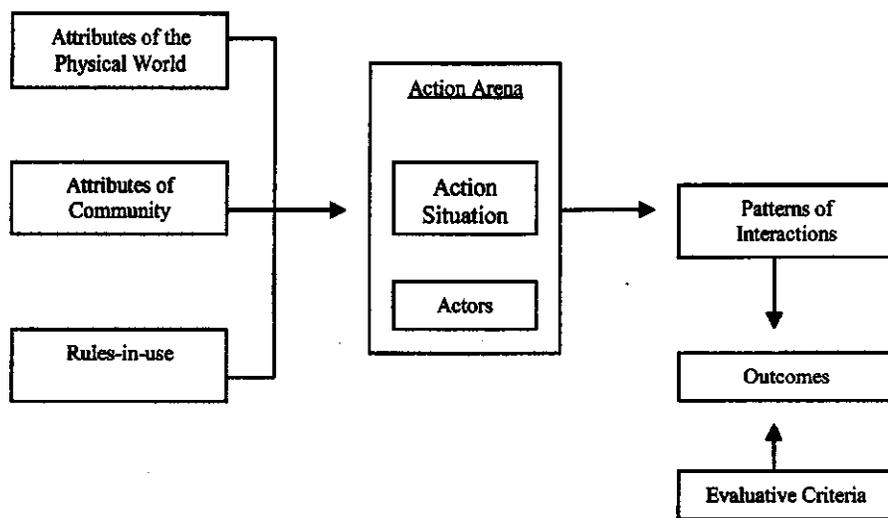


FIGURE 1: Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework
Source: Ostrom, Gardner and Walker 1994; pg. 37

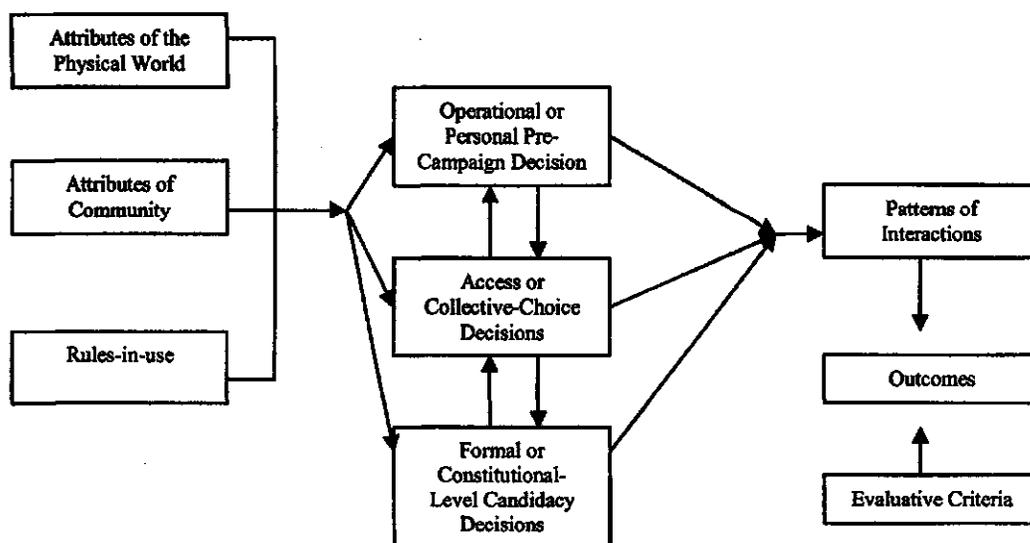


FIGURE 2: Candidacy Institution and Levels of Decision-Making
 Modified from: Ostrom, Gardner and Walker 1994; pg. 37

Table 1: Presidential Primary Elections and Delegate Selection 1968-1996Source: Davis (1997) *U.S. Presidential Primaries and the Caucus Convention System: A Sourcebook*, pg. 173

Party	Year	Number of Primaries	Delegates Selected Through Primaries
R	1968	15	38.1
D	1968	15	40.2
R	1972	20	56.8
D	1972	21	65.3
R	1976	26	71.0
D	1976	27	76.0
R	1980	35	76.0
D	1980	35	71.8
R	1984	25	71.0
D	1984	30	52.4
R	1988	37	76.9
D	1988	37	66.6
R	1992	39	80.4
D	1992	40	78.8
R	1996	40	78.8
D	1996	37	81.4

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