

Retrospective Voting in Presidential Primaries

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The research question of this study was whether voters who participated in presidential primaries cast retrospective votes. This problem was studied with data from CBS News/*New York Times* exit polls for three 1976 Republican primaries and for ten 1980 Democratic primaries. The analysis suggested that ballots cast in the presidential primaries of the party-in-power were primarily retrospective votes. Statistical controls were introduced for candidate image, ideology, issues, electability, party identification, and socioeconomic status. These controls did not alter the basic finding of retrospective voting.

American democracy is government by the consent of the governed. This kind of government depends on leadership and popular consent. Elected leaders take responsibility to govern, to identify and to solve public problems. Citizens are expected "to judge the leaders . . . by the results they have achieved" (Schattschneider 1969, 73). When dissatisfied with a leader's performance, citizens may withhold their consent by supporting someone else (if competition exists) at the next election. When satisfied, they may support an incumbent for another term.

This "working" definition of democracy assumes that citizens cast retrospective votes. Although a fundamental prescription of representative democracy (Schumpeter 1950), it was not until V. O. Key's *The Responsible Electorate* (1966) that a retrospective hypothesis was tested empirically. Key concluded from this study of interelection change that:

The patterns of flow of the major streams of shifting voters graphically reflect the electorate in its great, and perhaps principal, role as an appraiser of past events, past performance, and past actions. It judges retrospectively; it commands prospectively only insofar as it expresses either approval or disapproval of that which has happened (61).

Several studies of presidential elections have confirmed Key's hypothesis (Abramson, Aldrich, & Rohde 1982, 1986, 1990; Fiorina 1981; Miller & Wattenberg 1985), but it has not been tested in presidential primaries. The purpose of this study is to determine whether retrospective voting occurs in presidential primaries. It considers whether voters who participated in 1976 Republican and in 1980 Democratic primaries cast retrospective votes.¹

The results reported here are of interest for several reasons. First, the nomination process determines "the kind of person who [will] occupy the White House" (Ranney 1977, 7). Since presidential primaries are

central to that process, how primary voters decide warrants greater attention than it has received. Second, how primary voters decide may be affected by the contextual differences between in-party and out-party nomination contests (Geer 1989). It is important to know whether these differences affect how primary voters decide. Third, hypothesis validation, though less valuable than hypothesis creation, is a legitimate scientific purpose. This study considers whether Key's hypothesis provides a good explanation of candidate choice in a different electoral setting. Finally, persuasive evidence in support of the retrospective hypothesis could resolve some theoretical anomalies. The literature suggests that presidential primaries are determined either by idiosyncratic factors (Norrande 1986) or by a universal factor called momentum (Bartels 1988). The former argument makes discovering a general theory difficult, if not impossible. The latter hypothesis, which argues that primary voters simply jump on the bandwagon of the apparent winner, seems antithetical to many basic tenets of democratic theory. Retrospective voting could be the missing link, a general factor that is consistent with democratic theory.

Do presidential primary voters vote retrospectively? If so, under what conditions? Primary voters are more likely to vote retrospectively when two conditions are present: (1) an unpopular incumbent is seeking his party's nomination for another term and (2) a viable challenger is trying to block that nomination by criticizing the incumbent's performance. These conditions were present in the 1976 Republican contest between President Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan and in the 1980 Democratic contest between President Jimmy Carter and Senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy (Pomper 1977, 1981).

The Nomination Contests

After Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned in October, 1973 to avoid the publicity of a trial, House Minority Leader Gerald Ford was nominated and confirmed as Nixon's second Vice President. In August, 1974, after Nixon had resigned under threat of impeachment, Ford became the first un-nominated and unelected president. Soon after taking the oath of office, Ford granted Nixon an unconditional pardon. "The obvious conclusion," Witcover (1977) notes, was that "Ford had struck a deal to gain the presidency, that he had agreed before assuming office to pardon Nixon if he would step aside" (43). Ford's approval rating immediately declined from 66 percent to 50 percent. When Reagan officially

announced his challenge in November, 1975, Ford's approval rating had dropped to 41 percent (Gallup 1975).²

Although the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel was a success, Carter's handling of other crises eroded his approval rating. Carter's responses to Soviet aggression in Afghanistan—suspending grain sales, boycotting the Olympic games, reinstating registration for the draft, and deferring Senate action on an arms control treaty—were ineffective and, to some extent, politically unpopular. While Americans endured the economic hardships caused by gasoline shortages and double-digit inflation, unemployment, and interest rates, Carter blamed these problems on a “crisis of confidence.” When Kennedy officially announced his challenge in November, 1979, Carter's approval rating had dropped to 29 percent and Democrats preferred Kennedy by a two-to-one margin (Polsby 1981a). The Iranian hostage crisis, which also began in November, 1979, and Kennedy's personal liabilities and disorganized campaign helped Carter come back against Kennedy.

Both intraparty challenges afforded voters an opportunity to vote retrospectively in a context wherein incumbent performance was at issue, and competitive alternatives were available. In each case, the challengers criticized the incumbents' performance. Reagan maintained after losing the Illinois primary that “the fact that I have won something over forty [percent] of the vote . . . indicates there is major dissatisfaction in our party with the kind of leadership it has been receiving” (Witcover 1977, 408). Soon after Carter's “malaise speech,” Kennedy retorted, “We want action, not excuses . . . leadership that inspires people, not leadership that . . . blames people for malaise” (Germond & Witcover 1981, 55). In the end, Reagan won 46 percent of the two-candidate primary vote and his final delegate total of 1,070 was 95 percent of the total number needed for nomination (Moore and Fraser 1977; Pomper 1977)—the closest re-nomination contest for an incumbent President since 1884 (Keech and Matthews 1977). The 1980 Democratic contest, although not as close, was also competitive. Kennedy got 42 percent of the two-candidate primary vote and his final delegate total of 1,221.8 was 74 percent of the total number needed for nomination (Moore 1981).

Rival Hypotheses and Test Variables

Whether primary voters actually did vote retrospectively in these races requires not only evidence on the relationship between performance variables and votes cast, but also control of rival hypotheses. Aldrich

(1980) and Brams (1978), for example, argue that primary voters cast issue votes. Though a few studies have reported evidence that supports this hypothesis (e.g., Bartels 1985), many more have reported evidence that contradicts it (Abramowitz 1989; Geer 1989; Gopoian 1982; Keeter and Zukin 1983; Marshall 1984; Norrander 1986; Wattier 1983a, 1983b; Williams, Weber, Haaland, Mueller, and Craig 1976). Nevertheless, there are at least two valid reasons to include issues. First, classical democratic theory places such a premium on issue voting that every opportunity to test for it should be taken (Schumpeter 1950, ch. 21). Second, studies of presidential primaries have yet to exhaust all the possible ways of studying issue voting (Asher 1988). RePass (1971), for example, divided his 1960 and 1964 samples of presidential voters into issue publics—different groups of respondents who had expressed an interest in the same issue—which he concluded did not vote on the basis of those issues. This study will thus control for different issue publics.

Jewell (1974) has argued that candidate images, created with sophisticated campaign techniques, determine candidate choice in primary elections:

The structure of the presidential primary system makes it possible for a candidate to win primaries if he has a strong organization, plenty of funds, shrewd advisers, an appealing campaign style, and a good image on television (282).

In fact, subsequent research shows that affective images have had a stronger effect than electability (Norrander 1986; Abramowitz 1987, 1989), a stronger effect than ideology (Marshall 1984; Norrander 1986; Wattier 1983a), and a stronger effect than issues (Marshall 1984; Norrander 1986; Williams et al. 1976). It, therefore, is essential that candidate images be controlled.

Candidate electability, an image trait, could also influence candidate choice (Aldrich 1980). Primary voters may support the candidate who they believe has the best chance of winning the November general election (Abramowitz, McGlennon, & Rapoport 1981; Bartels 1988; Norrander 1986). As Abramowitz (1989) has recently concluded, "In choosing a candidate for their party's nomination, Republican and Democratic primary voters weighed electability in addition to their general evaluations of the candidates seeking the nomination" (988). Electability is, therefore, a theoretically important factor that should be controlled.

Primaries are usually contests among leaders representing different

ideological factions of a party. Reagan's challenge was motivated not only by Ford's poor performance but also by Reagan's support among the GOP's right wing (Witcover 1977). Carter's failure to pursue a liberal policy agenda was one reason Kennedy, the acknowledged leader of the Democrat's left wing, entered the race (White 1982). When parties are divided into ideological factions, each faction's candidate can be expected to make an ideological appeal for votes (Polsby 1981b). Two recent studies have suggested that primary voters respond to those appeals. In the first investigation, Wattier (1983b), who studied four 1980 Republican primaries, concluded, "When primary voters perceive a difference in candidate ideologies, they generally support the candidate closer to their own ideology" (1023-1024). In the second work, Norrander (1988)—who studied primary elections in 1976, 1980, and 1984—reported that ideological voting varies across primaries. Thus, it is necessary to control for voter ideology in the contests examined here.

Most states, as Carr and Scott (1984) have noted, "require voters to state a party affiliation on registration to be eligible to vote in a party primary election" (470). However, lax administration of primary laws, juxtaposed with the dramatic rise in the number of independents since the 1960s, could create variation in the partisanship of primary voters. Although the National Democratic Party had mandated "closed" primaries, some states (e.g., Wisconsin and Montana) were granted exceptions, and some enforce partisan affiliation only by asking voters to publicly request a primary ballot, a procedure that could transform a *de jure* closed primary into a *de facto* open primary (Jewell 1983). Variation could also occur in Republican primaries because the GOP has not required its state parties to close their "primary doors" to independents. Since variation is thus possible, it seems prudent to control for the effects of party identification (Fiorina 1981).³

Marshall's study (1984) of 1980 Democratic and Republican primaries has shown that demographic characteristics also need to be controlled. His discriminant analysis of several variables, including an index of demographic variables, revealed that although candidate-personality emerged as the best single predictor of candidate choice, the demographic index also improved vote predictions as much or more than did ideology, domestic policy issues, and foreign policy issues, among others. Since education and income were included in Marshall's index, socioeconomic status, a concept often measured with these two variables (Conway 1991), is the final test variable in this study.⁴

Data and Measures

The data are from CBS News/*New York Times* exit polls for thirteen presidential primaries: the 1976 Republican primaries in Florida, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire and the 1980 Democratic primaries in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.⁵ Primary voters, chosen randomly just after they had voted, were given a pencil and a questionnaire with roughly fifty closed-ended questions which they were instructed to answer by marking the appropriate boxes of the questionnaire (Levy 1983).⁶

The dependent variable was measured with an item that listed the possible vote choices. In 1976 three choices were listed: "Gerald Ford," "Ronald Reagan," and "Other." In 1980, "Jimmy Carter," "Edward Kennedy," and a few minor candidates (e.g., Edmund Brown and Lyndon LaRouche) were listed. So few votes were cast for minor candidates that those responses were treated as missing data. The dependent variable here is thus dichotomous: a vote for Ford, or for Reagan, in the 1976 primaries; a vote for Carter, or for Kennedy, in the 1980 primaries.

Incumbent performance was measured with two items. CBS News and the *New York Times* measured perceptions of general performance with the standard Gallup question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way _____ is handling his job as president?" This question was asked in the 1976 primaries for Gerald Ford and in the 1980 Florida primary for Jimmy Carter. Specific performance perceptions were measured in 1980 with questions about Carter's handling of the economy, foreign policy, and the Iranian crisis. No specific-performance questions were included in the 1976 polls or in the 1980 Florida poll. No general-performance questions were included in the 1980 polls except for the Florida poll. Thus, in four primaries, three in 1976 and one in 1980, there is a general-performance measure but no specific-performance measures; in nine 1980 primaries there are several specific-performance measures but no general-performance measure. Having different measures of performance makes comparing the effects of the same performance factors across election cycles difficult, if not impossible. The proper analytical focus is, therefore, on the relative effects of performance factors versus other plausible vote determinants in each cycle.⁷

The number and the content of the issue items varied greatly across the thirteen questionnaires. The problem of how to create an equivalent measure from these different protocols was solved with cluster analysis.

Issue publics were operationally defined in separate cluster analyses of the issue items in each questionnaire.⁸ This technique assigned respondents who had similar issue positions to the same cluster (Kachigan 1982, ch. 8). Respondents were divided into three issue publics to avoid the "vanishing-cases" problem. Because of the way it was constructed, each scale only applies to a sample-specific subset of respondents. This characteristic presents no special problems since the analytical focus is on the relative effects of variables within, not between, samples.

Electability and other candidate traits were measured by one item (cf. Norrander 1986). Respondents were asked, "Which of these qualities best describes why you voted for your candidate today?" This item was followed by a list of traits. In most surveys respondents could choose electability: "He has the best chance to win in November." The other traits were classified as either political-role traits (experience, strong leader, etc.) or as personal-style traits (cares, honesty, etc.), following the taxonomy advanced by Nimmo and Savage (1976). Responses to this question were transformed into dummy variables indicating whether electability, political role, or personal style were selected as a reason for a respondent's choice. Creating these test variables thus permits control of respondents' decision criteria.

Voter ideology and party identification were defined operationally with two self-identification items. Each questionnaire asked voters to complete the phrase, "On most political matters do you consider yourself _____" by checking "Liberal" or "Moderate" or "Conservative." Voters were also asked to complete the phrase, "Do you usually think of yourself as _____" by checking "Republican" or "Democrat" or "Independent."

A socioeconomic-status (SES) index was created from respondents' education, income, and occupation for 1976 primaries, and from education and income in 1980 (occupation was not measured in the latter year). Each variable was standardized and then summed, creating an additive index with equal weight given to each variable. The higher the score, the higher the socioeconomic status, and vice versa (see Nie, Verba, and Petrucik 1979).

Results

Evidence to support the hypothesis that ballots cast in 1976 Republican and 1980 Democratic primaries were retrospective votes is presented in Tables 1 through 7. The first five tables display evidence from

bivariate, crosstabulation analyses; the last two, evidence from multivariate, regression and probit analyses. In each analysis the results for general performance are presented before the results for specific performance. The data presentation thus flows from general to specific performance and from bivariate to multivariate analysis.

General Performance

Table 1 displays results for the general-performance variable for three 1976 Republican primaries and for one 1980 Democratic primary. These data show that approximately 88 percent of respondents who approved an incumbent's performance reported voting for an incumbent. The effect of negative performance evaluations seems to vary with the nomination contest. Approximately 95 percent of respondents who disapproved of Ford's performance cast ballots for Reagan. However, only 63 percent of respondents who rated Carter's performance negatively cast votes for Kennedy in the 1980 Florida primary.

TABLE 1. General Performance

	1976 Primaries						1980 Primary	
	FL		MA		NH		FL	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Primary Vote</i>								
<i>Incumbent</i>	83	2	88	6	84	7	95	37
<i>Challenger</i>	17	98	12	94	16	93	5	63
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	251	120	114	46	265	224	402	250
<i>Lambda</i>	.72		.70		.76		.36	

Note: "A" stands for approve; "D" for disapprove. All reported coefficients are significant at the .05 level.

Each of the lambda coefficients for the 1976 Republican primaries—.72, .70, and .76 for Florida, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, respectively—is twice as large as the lambda of .36 for the 1980 Florida Democratic primary. This difference emerges because Republican primary voters were more likely than Democratic primary voters to support a challenger when they disliked an incumbent's record. This difference does not negate the basic finding of retrospective voting. It simply sug-

gests that a challenger's viability may affect the degree to which retrospective voting occurs. Controlling ideology in the 1980 Florida Democratic sample appears to confirm the importance of challenger viability: numerous conservative Floridians could not bring themselves to vote for Kennedy, a northeastern liberal with questions in his past, even though they were displeased with Carter. Among those who disapproved of Carter's performance, only 29 percent of those who were conservatives voted for Kennedy, compared to 92 percent of those who were liberals (and thus were more likely to regard Kennedy as a viable alternative).

Controlling for ideology also illustrated the importance of incumbency. Liberals, moderates, and conservatives who approved of Carter's performance supported the president at rates of 90 percent, 93 percent, and 98 percent, respectively. The dramatically different lambda coefficients—.79, .37, and .00 for liberals, moderates, and conservatives, respectively—also imply that ideology is intertwined with both viability and incumbency. Ideology, then, may be especially relevant when primary voters must decide whether to vote against an unpopular incumbent. For those who disapprove of the president's performance, it probably is easier to vote against him when a challenger is seen as a viable ideological alternative. Without a viable alternative, incumbency and ideology may reinforce a vote for the unpopular incumbent. Finally, the effect of ideology is totally suppressed among those primary voters who approve of the president and believe "one good term deserves another."

Specific Performance

Economic performance. Analysis of voters' evaluations of Carter's economic performance in nine 1980 Democratic primaries yields results that clearly fit the hypothesized pattern. An average of 91 percent of voters who rated Carter's economic performance positively cast ballots for the president, whereas an average of nearly 70 percent of those who disliked the president's economic record registered their disapproval by voting for Senator Kennedy (see Table 2).

The lambda coefficients for these primaries average .42. The only primaries with lambda coefficients well below this average are Illinois and Wisconsin. In both states, approximately 40 percent of the voters who should have been likely to support the challenger, according to the retrospective hypothesis, actually cast votes for Carter. These unexpected findings again seem related to voters' reservations about Senator Kennedy.

TABLE 2. Carter's Handling of the Economy

	CA		IL		MA	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	89	29	92	42	80	16
<i>Kennedy</i>	11	71	8	58	20	84
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	199	623	296	363	227	949
<i>Lambda</i>	.44		.24		.40	
	NH		NJ		NY	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	93	34	91	26	93	24
<i>Kennedy</i>	7	66	9	74	7	76
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	160	333	180	589	250	764
<i>Lambda</i>	.47		.46		.52	
	OH		PA		WI	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	94	35	94	31	95	40
<i>Kennedy</i>	6	65	6	69	5	60
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	228	546	227	561	320	375
<i>Lambda</i>	.44		.52		.32	

Note: "A" stands for approve; "D" for disapprove. All reported coefficients are significant at the .05 level.

Controlling for electability and personal style reveals that only 26 percent of the voters who were dissatisfied with Carter's economic record but based their decisions on electability, and 40 percent of those who were dissatisfied but based their decisions on personal style, cast votes for Kennedy. When voters based their decisions on factors other than electability or personal style, Kennedy got 65 percent of the votes of those who were unhappy with President Carter. One inference is that many Illinois voters did not believe Kennedy possessed the requisite political assets. Another inference is that Carter's personal style and perceived electability or advantage of incumbency were assets which persuaded some Illinois voters to support him despite their reservations about his record. Among those who approved of Carter's economic rec-

ord, nine out of ten supported the president even though electability and personal style were cited as important decision criteria.

As to why some 1980 Wisconsin primary voters who disapproved of Carter's economic performance did not support Kennedy, controlling for other variables reveals that ideology and personal style had the same mitigating effects that were found in the 1980 Florida and Illinois samples, respectively. Eighty-two percent of the liberals who rated Carter's economic record unfavorably cast ballots for Kennedy. Among conservatives, however, only 52 percent of those who disapproved of Carter's record reported voting for Kennedy; and only 56 percent of the moderates who disliked Carter's record cast ballots for Kennedy. In contrast, Wisconsin voters who liked Carter's record supported the president, regardless of their ideology: 87 percent of the liberals, 96 percent of the moderates, and 98 percent of the conservatives who liked his record voted for Carter.

Among Wisconsin voters who based their decisions on personal style, only 38 percent who were dissatisfied with Carter's economic record cast votes for Kennedy. On the other hand, when dissatisfied Wisconsin voters based their voting decisions on other factors, Kennedy was chosen by 69 percent. Among voters who liked Carter's record, 96 percent voted for the president even though the decision criteria reported was personal style.

In short, the pattern observed in the 1980 Florida primary is repeated in both Illinois and Wisconsin. Only when voters evaluate presidential performance negatively, thus summoning the possibility of voting against the incumbent, do other factors seem to enter primary voters' decision calculus.

Foreign Policy Performance. Table 3, which presents results for Carter's handling of foreign policy, provides further support for the retrospective hypothesis. In these six 1980 Democratic primaries an average of 85 percent of the voters who liked Carter's foreign-policy record cast ballots for the president. An average of 81 percent cast primary ballots for Kennedy when Carter's record was disliked.

The lambda coefficients average .59 for these six primaries; the coefficients for Illinois and Massachusetts—.45 and .48, respectively—are well below this average. In Illinois nearly a third of the voters expected to support Kennedy actually supported Carter. On the other hand, in Massachusetts, Kennedy's home state, nearly a third of those expected to support Carter actually supported Kennedy. A partial explanation for these anomalous findings may lie in the differential effects of electability and performance evaluations.

TABLE 3. Carter's Handling of Foreign Policy

	IL		MA		NH	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	90	31	71	9	88	17
<i>Kennedy</i>	10	69	29	91	12	83
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	419	289	394	784	265	241
<i>Lambda</i>	.45		.48		.69	
	NY		PA		WI	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	84	15	87	18	93	24
<i>Kennedy</i>	16	85	13	82	7	76
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	405	636	373	417	420	398
<i>Lambda</i>	.63		.68		.61	

Note: "A" stands for approve; "D" for disapprove. All reported coefficients are significant at the .05 level.

Once again, controlling for electability suggests why some dissatisfied Illinois voters could not support Kennedy in the 1980 primary. Only 39 percent of those who were dissatisfied with Carter but based their decisions on electability cast votes for Kennedy. In contrast, when voters displeased with Carter cited other voting decision criteria, Kennedy received 65 percent of the votes.

Votes cast by Massachusetts voters who took electability into account split as expected: 86 percent who liked Carter's foreign policy supported him; 86 percent who disliked the incumbent's record supported the challenger. What appears to account for the low coefficient between foreign policy performance and the vote in the Massachusetts case is that among voters who based their decisions on other criteria, Kennedy won 32 percent of the ballots cast by voters pleased with Carter's handling of foreign policy. In short, Kennedy's favorite-son status probably works against the retrospective hypothesis in his home state.

Hostage Crisis Performance. The results for Carter's handling of the Iranian hostage crisis are summarized in Table 4. These data show that approximately 80 percent of the voters who approved of Carter's performance during this crisis voted for Carter. Approximately 80 percent

of those who disapproved cast ballots for Kennedy. The average lambda score for these seven primaries is .52; three states—California, Massachusetts, and New York—have coefficients slightly below this average. The unexpected findings of the Massachusetts primary have been explained in terms of Kennedy's home-state advantage. The findings for California and New York, though generally consistent with the retrospective hypothesis, may reflect that certain "defining events" had an effect on these two primaries.

TABLE 4. Carter's Handling of Iran

	CA		MA		NJ		NY	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	76	25	66	8	85	21	74	17
<i>Kennedy</i>	24	75	34	92	15	79	26	83
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	318	517	439	777	261	524	473	581
<i>Lambda</i>	.44		.41		.55		.50	

	OH		PA		WI	
<i>Primary Vote</i>	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Carter</i>	88	26	78	21	93	22
<i>Kennedy</i>	12	74	22	79	7	78
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	328	440	403	398	445	267
<i>Lambda</i>	.58		.57		.62	

Note: "A" stands for approve; "D" for disapprove. All reported coefficients are significant at the .05 level.

The U.S. ambassador's support for a United Nations measure designed to deny Israel authority over Jerusalem may have had such an effect on the New York primary. As White (1982) recounted it:

It was a vote to placate the Third World, but one infuriating to Jews everywhere. Worse, the White House claimed the President had not been informed of the vote; and then, worst of all, he repudiated it. On Thursday and Friday, before New York's [Tuesday] primary, local television displayed the discomfiture of the Secretary of State as he tried to satisfy first a Senate committee, then a House committee, which sought the answer as to just who was making . . . foreign policy. Apparently, no one was in charge (298-299).

Determining whether this event had a direct effect is difficult because the New York exit poll has no questions about the U.N. vote. If, however, we assume that measures of voter perceptions of candidates' political-role traits (e.g., strong leader, experience) tap into citizen concerns about leadership and direction, an indirect test is possible. Controlling for political role shows a dramatic effect. Among voters who liked Carter's record and for whom political role was not a consideration, 84 percent cast votes for Carter. However, among those who liked his hostage-crisis record and for whom political role was important, only 49 percent cast primary ballots for Carter. Thus, although many liked his *past* handling of the hostage crisis, recent events—or the passage of time — may have caused them to question whether the president had the requisite leadership ability to produce positive results in the near future.

Controlling for religion as well as political role further illuminates the effect of the U.N. vote on Jewish voters in New York. For non-Jewish voters who approved of Carter's record on Iran, 27 points separate Carter's vote share among those who voted on the basis of political role and those who did not. Among Jewish voters who approved of Carter's crisis management, this gap grows to 50 percentage points: Carter received 74 percent of the votes of Jewish voters who did not consider political role versus only 24 percent of the vote from those who did. In short, New York voters who were concerned about President Carter's leadership ability, especially Jewish voters, were much less likely to vote retrospectively.

The slightly lower coefficient for California may show that such questions about Carter's leadership were, if anything, heightened following the failed attempt to rescue the hostages on 23 April 1980. The California, New Jersey, and Ohio primaries occurred slightly more than a month after that aborted mission, and since the delegate selection process was nearly complete and few doubts remained as to who would win the nomination, voters in those three states were well situated to express their doubts about Carter's leadership ability.

Controlling for political role makes an indirect test of this hypothesis possible. The results presented in Table 5 suggest partial support for it. Eighty-one percent of California voters who approved of Carter's hostage crisis record and who cited decision criteria other than political role voted for Carter. Slightly higher percentages of like-minded voters in the other two late primaries also gave Carter their support. Voters who liked the president's record and who cited political role as a decision criterion were much less likely to support Carter: 56 percent in California, 76 per-

**Table 5. Carter's Handling of Iran Controlling Political Role
in the 1980 California, New Jersey, and Ohio Primaries**

	California				New Jersey				Ohio			
	Political Role				Political Role				Political Role			
	Not Selected		Selected		Not Selected		Selected		Not Selected		Selected	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
<i>Primary Vote</i>												
<i>Carter</i>	81	31	56	9	88	28	76	9	91	35	74	9
<i>Kennedy</i>	19	69	44	91	12	72	24	91	9	65	26	91
<i>Total %</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	248	382	70	136	193	327	67	198	262	293	66	147
<i>Lambda</i>	.46*		.17*		.55*		.51*		.42*		.51*	

Note: "A" stands for approve; "D" for disapprove.

* $p \leq .05$.

cent in New Jersey, and 74 percent in Ohio. These percentages were lower by 25, 12, and 17 points, respectively, for those states. In short, reservations about Carter's leadership ability seemed to have the most effect in California, but also had some effect, to a lesser but significant degree, in New Jersey and Ohio.

Multivariate Analysis

The presentation of findings thus far has discussed the results for all possible bivariate, performance-vote relationships. Selected test variables have been incorporated only if they seemed to explain either unexpected findings or moderate-to-weak relationships. To determine whether the effects of performance variables persist even after all test variables are controlled, multivariate regression and probit analyses⁹ were conducted. Tables 6 and 7 present these results for general-performance and specific-performance variables, respectively.

TABLE 6. Multivariate Analyses Using General Performance and Controlling for Rival Hypotheses

<i>Predictor Variables</i>	1976 Primaries			1980 Primary
	FL	MA	NH	FL
<i>General Performance</i>	.75*	.77*	.73*	.52*
<i>Issue Publics</i>	.06	-.07	-.21*	.11*
<i>Party</i>	-.07*	-.06	.05	-.04
<i>Ideology</i>	.08*	.03	.12*	.21*
<i>SES</i>	.05	.03	-.04	.03
<i>Electability</i>	-.02	.03	.03	-.15*
<i>Political Role</i>	.12*	.23*	.10*	.17*
<i>Personal Style</i>	-.02	.08	.05	-.12*
<i>R²</i>	.65	.69	.71	.52
<i>S.E. est.</i>	.30	.27	.27	.32
<i>N</i>	297	113	323	317
<i>Percent Predicted Correctly with:</i>				
<i>All Independent Variables</i>	87.8	92.9	90.1	87.1
<i>Only Performance Variables</i>	88.5	91.2	90.1	80.4
<i>Difference</i>	-0.7	1.7	0.0	6.7

* $p \leq .05$.

Table 6 reports multivariate results for three 1976 Republican primaries and for one 1980 Democratic primary for which a general measure of performance was available. The beta weights for general-performance

evaluations in 1976 primaries are .75, .77, and .73 for Florida, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, respectively. Comparing these coefficients to those of the other factors shows that general evaluations of Ford's performance were obviously the most important determinant of votes cast in these 1976 Republican primaries. The effects of performance evaluations seem to have been at least three times greater than the effects of any other vote determinant.

The beta weight for evaluations of Carter's performance in the 1980 Florida primary is .52. Comparing all the beta weights shows that performance was easily the most important correlate of votes cast, and is more than twice as large as the next largest beta weight of .21 for ideology. The only other variable for which the beta weights are statistically significant in all four primaries is political role. In three primaries the beta weights are significant for ideology; in two primaries, for issue publics. In only one primary each are electability and personal style of significant beta weight.

Another way to analyze the effects of these variables is to compare how well they predict votes. Performing two probit analyses—one with all independent variables and a second with only performance variables—makes an interesting comparison possible. Subtracting the percent predicted correctly in the second probit analysis from the percent predicted in the first provides a measure of how much (if any) predictive power non-performance variables have added.

The results of this comparison, reported at the bottom of Table 6, suggest that non-performance factors make varied contributions. In the 1980 Florida Democratic primary non-performance factors improve predictive power by 6.7 percentage points. However, in the 1976 Florida Republican primary these factors lessen predictive power by 0.7 points. In the 1976 Massachusetts primary predictive power is increased by 1.7 points. Finally, in the 1976 New Hampshire primary non-performance factors add nothing to the predictive power achieved solely by the general-performance variable. Thus, in all four analyses most of the predictive power stems from the general-performance variable.

Table 7 presents the results of regression and probit analyses using specific-performance variables. Having several specific-performance measures makes it possible to determine which, if any, area of performance was most important. The beta weights suggest that evaluations of Carter's foreign-policy performance were of more consequence than evaluations of his economic performance in eight primaries. In three primaries, the dominant performance variable was Carter's handling of the

Table 7. Multivariate Analyses Using Specific Performance and Controlling for Rival Hypotheses

Predictor Variables		CA	IL	MA	NH	NJ	NY	OH	PA	WI
<i>Economic</i>	.39*	.21*	.26*	.17*	.25*	.27*	.32*	.24*	.15*	
<i>Foreign</i>	NA	.32*	.33*	.61*	NA	.38*	NA	.45*	.23*	
<i>Iran</i>	.29*	NA	.21*	NA	.43*	.10*	.40*	.10*	.41*	
<i>Issue Publics</i>	-.02	-.01	.06*	.06	-.01	-.02	.08*	.06	-.01	
<i>Party</i>	NA	-.01	-.01	-.08*	.02	-.01	-.05	-.06	-.09*	
<i>Ideology</i>	.08*	.03	.12*	.08*	-.01	.15*	.09*	.04	.14*	
<i>SES</i>	-.02	.02	-.07*	.01	.11*	.05	-.03	.04	-.01	
<i>Electability</i>	-.04	-.42*	-.08*	-.07	-.03	-.09*	-.03	.04	NA	
<i>Political Role</i>	.21*	-.11	.07	.06	.17*	.14*	.23*	.15*	.17*	
<i>Personal Style</i>	.13*	-.39*	.04	-.06	-.04	-.01	.09*	.04	.06	
<i>R²</i>	.40	.42	.54	.64	.46	.56	.46	.53	.59	
<i>S.E. est.</i>	.38	.36	.30	.30	.36	.33	.37	.34	.31	
<i>N</i>	539	324	744	354	491	580	492	484	449	
<i>Percent Predicted Correctly with:</i>										
<i>All Independent Variables</i>	80.4	84.6	88.6	89.2	82.7	87.2	80.3	87.1	89.4	
<i>Only Performance Variables</i>	79.5	79.6	87.5	88.8	80.2	85.8	79.5	87.3	88.8	
<i>Difference</i>	0.9	5.0	1.1	0.4	2.5	1.4	0.8	-0.2	0.6	

Note: "NA" indicates that a variable was not available in the CBS/New York Times survey.

* $p \leq .05$.

Iranian hostage crisis; in five, it was his general handling of foreign policy. Economic performance appears to outweigh a foreign-policy performance concern only in the 1980 California primary.

A comparison of the beta weights shows that a specific performance variable had the strongest effect in every 1980 primary except Illinois, where electability and personal style outweighed two performance variables. That the effect of every specific performance variable in every primary was significant at .05 is additional support for the retrospective hypothesis. The only other variables that were significant in four or more primaries are political role and ideology. Electability and personal style were significant in only three primaries; issue publics, party identification, and SES, in only two primaries.

The comparison of probit models estimated with and without non-performance factors again shows fairly conclusive results (bottom, Table 7). Only in Illinois do non-performance factors add as much as five percentage points in predictive power. In four primaries non-performance factors improve predictive power by something less than one percentage point. In Pennsylvania non-performance factors appear to make predictive power slightly worse. The average improvement for these nine 1980 Democratic primaries is only 1.4 points; the average improvement for all thirteen primaries, only 1.6 points. Thus, if successfully predicting primary votes were the sole objective, non-performance factors could be ignored without impairing the rate of predictability achieved with just performance factors.

Conclusions

The seeds of Ford's 1976 defeat and of Carter's 1980 defeat were planted during their administrations, nurtured in divisive nomination contests, and harvested in general elections. The results reported here and elsewhere (Fiorina 1981) suggest that citizens who participated in 1976 and 1980 primary elections and in the 1976 and 1980 general elections seemed to respond "most markedly and most clearly to those events [they had] experienced"—the incumbents' performance in office (Key 1966, 51). In short, the evidence clearly suggests that primary voters are as likely to cast retrospective votes as are their fellow citizens in general elections.

Voters in general elections are subject to many environmental forces and have many considerations to ponder. Researchers have conceived of some of these inputs as long-term forces because they seem to

have a strong effect in every election. Others have been defined as short-term, election-specific forces because their influence seems to vary from one election to the next (Asher 1988).

Some students of primary elections have argued that candidate electability, a direct consequence of "momentum," is such a long-term or universal factor in presidential primaries (Bartels 1985, 1988). The results of this study, however, suggest that electability is probably a primary-specific factor. Electability was significant in only four of twelve primaries and it had the strongest effect in only one primary.

Rather, the results clearly suggest that performance evaluations are a universal force in nomination contests of the party-in-power. Performance variables were not only significant in every primary but also had, with one exception, the strongest effects in every primary. Their predictive power dramatically exceeded that of all other variables combined.

Moreover, the results show that leadership (i.e., political role) and ideology, although less significant than performance variables, also had significant effects more often than electability: leadership was significant in ten of thirteen primaries; ideology, in nine of thirteen. Since any election is fundamentally an act of leadership selection, it makes sense for citizens who participate in that process to take into account "leadership ability." Ideology may function, like party identification, as a perceptual screen: an ideological identification may provide primary voters a convenient standard with which to judge candidates' policy proposals (Wattier 1983b). In short, the key determinants of candidate choice in the presidential primaries of the party-in-power seem to be evaluations of past performance, perceptions of the candidates' ability to perform (i.e., leadership traits), and expectations about the future direction of performance (i.e., ideology).

The results also suggest that candidate choice is affected by election-specific factors (cf. Norrander 1986). Some plausible determinants of candidate choice—electability, party identification, policy issues, and personal style—are significant in only a few primaries. The results for issues are especially noteworthy because previous studies have found only limited effects for issues. These results, however, suggest that issues do sometimes make a difference, particularly when effects are examined among voters grouped into issue publics. Perhaps these results will encourage other scholars to experiment with different measures of issue voting (cf. Asher 1988, ch. 4). Open-ended questions that probe the saliency of issues and questions designed to measure voters' perceptions of candidate issue positions should be included in future studies. More evi-

dence on the effects of political issues, gathered in different settings with different techniques, is needed.

NOTES

¹This article is a revision of a paper presented at the 1989 annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association. The data were purchased with grants from the Murray State University Committee for Institutional Studies and Research. The initial work on this study was also supported by a Dean's Summer Research Grant.

²Evidence from Patterson's panel study shows that Ford's general image improved during the nomination fight. Yet, impressions of Ford's performance remained decidedly negative (Patterson 1980, 138-142).

³Variation in party identification is evident in the exit-poll data analyzed for this study. These data show that only 66 percent of the voters (n=1,096) who participated in three 1976 Republican primaries were Republican identifiers. The 1980 exit-poll data for nine Democratic primaries show that 75 percent of the voters (n=7,532) were Democratic identifiers. See Hadley (1985), Finkel and Scarrow (1985), and Jewell (1983) for plausible explanations of why partisanship varies in primary elections.

⁴The other variables in Marshall's index were age, race, religion, and sex. No attempt has been made to replicate Marshall's index because its method of construction was only discussed in general terms.

⁵Data with which to test the retrospective model were only available for these primaries. These data are available for secondary analysis either from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research or from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

⁶Each codebook has the following description of the survey methodology:

Respondents were interviewed in person at selected polling places immediately following their votes. Within precincts, respondents were selected on a systematic random basis, over which the interviewer had no control. The precincts were selected with probability proportionate to vote in a recent election after stratification by party vote and geography.

⁷Mutual, two-way causation may exist between performance evaluations and primary votes (Jackson 1975; Markus and Converse 1979; Page and Jones 1979). The retrospective hypothesis assumes that performance evaluations exert a stronger influence on primary votes than vice versa. Yet, given the methodology of exit polling, it is possible for votes to have a stronger effect on evaluations. Having just cast a ballot for or against an incumbent, respondents might rationalize their actions by answering the performance questions accordingly. The extent of this reciprocal causation may be estimated with a non-recursive simultaneous equation model. The key to estimating this model is the hypothesis that some variables determine primary votes but not performance evaluations, while others affect performance evaluations but not primary votes (Hanushek and Jackson 1977). Because each CBS/*New York Times* exit poll focused on vote determinants, in keeping with the news objectives of these organizations, no correlates of performance evaluations that were not also potential vote determinants were measured. Thus, reliable estimates of the extent of reciprocal causation between performance evaluations and primary votes could not be obtained.

⁸The subjects covered in several 1976 Republican exit polls were: abortion, balanced budget, big business, school busing, crime, environment, big government, guaranteed job, race relations, Soviet relations, defense spending, Social Security, and welfare. The subjects included in several 1980 Democratic polls were: the equal rights amendment, balanced budget, gun control, wage and price controls, military draft, nuclear power, race relations, gas rationing, defense and military spending, domestic spending, the Panama Canal treaty, and whether American troops should protect Middle East oil supplies.

⁹Many students of voting behavior argue that probit analysis seems a more appropriate technique than ordinary-least-squares (OLS) regression when the dependent variable is dichotomous (Aldrich and Cnudde 1975; Fiorina 1981). It, therefore, seemed prudent to perform both OLS regression and probit. Standardized regression coefficients (i.e., beta weights) are reported in Tables 6 and 7 because the probit coefficients provided redundant information. Since OLS regression usually underestimates the "true" proportion of variance explained, the percentage of votes correctly predicted by each probit model is also reported (McKelvey and Zavoina 1975). This summary probit statistic is, according to Fiorina (1981), "a quite satisfactory measure of the performance of [a] model" (23).

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