

Beyond the Party's Realm-
The Consequences of Variation in
Candidate Selection

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The cover depicts a water drop falling into a larger body of water, symbolizing how (small) changes have effects beyond the entity within which the initial change occurs.

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For all those who always believe in me.

Abstract

In the last two decades, Western European parties have introduced various methods to select candidates for executive public office. A process that before was mainly the privilege of a narrow elite was opened to party members in several parties. While research extensively investigated the effects of variation in candidate selection on parties, little is known about the effects that variation in candidate selection has on voters and whether the effects are gendered. The dissertation argues that candidate selection has consequences beyond the party and explores in four research articles how variation in candidate selection affects voters' corruption perceptions, their evaluations of candidate quality, female representation, and gendered effects of evaluations of corruptibility. Overall, the results suggest that the consequences of variation in candidate selection are far-reaching, highlighting the importance of considering the impact of candidate selection and intraparty democracy more generally on outcomes beyond the party. The research articles in the dissertation demonstrate that candidate selection can affect corruption perceptions, evaluations of valence, and female representation. Not only does this dissertation demonstrate the need to consider the effects of intraparty dynamics on factors outside of the party, but it also illustrates how previous literature on each of the outcomes investigated in the dissertation fell short of considering intraparty democracy as an explanatory factor. Given the results of this dissertation, future research should thus focus more strongly theoretically and empirically on the effects of intraparty dynamics.

Sammanfattning på svenska

Under de senaste två decennierna har västeuropeiska partier infört olika metoder för att välja kandidater till exekutiva offentliga ämbeten. En process som tidigare främst var ett privilegium för en smal elit har öppnats till partimedlemmar i flera fall. Medan omfattande forskning har undersökt effekterna av variation i kandidaturval på partier är det lite känt om effekterna på väljare och om de är könsrelaterade. Avhandlingen argumenterar för att kandidaturvalet har konsekvenser bortom partierna och utforska i fyra forskningsartiklar hur variationen i kandidaturval påverkar väljarnas uppfattningar om korruption, deras utvärdering av kandidaternas kvalitet, kvinnlig representation och könsrelaterade effekter på bedömningar av korruptibilitet. Sammantaget tyder resultatet på att variation i kandidaturval har en bredare räckvidd och betonar vikten av att beakta påverkan av kandidaturval och intrapartidemokrati mer generellt på utfall utanför partiet. På så sätt visar forskningsartiklarna i avhandlingen att kandidaturvalet kan påverka uppfattningar om korruption inom den offentliga sektorn, utvärderingar av kompetens och kvinnlig representation. Denna avhandling visar inte bara behovet av att beakta effekterna av intrapartidynamik på faktorer utanför partiet, utan illustrerar också hur tidigare litteratur om varje utfall som undersöks här har brustit i att överväga intrapartidemokrati som en förklarande faktor. Med hänsyn till resultaten i denna avhandling bör framtida forskning fokusera starkare teoretiskt och empiriskt på effekterna av intrapartidynamik.

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1 Introduction

"If a party is not democratic on the inside, how can it act democratic on the outside?" (Respondent 846 in Schwenk, 2023). This quote, given as an answer to the question, "Why would you like your party to hold more primaries?" reflects the initial puzzle this dissertation seeks to address. While Michels (1915) argued that parties have to be oligarchically organized to be effective, voters seem to have a preference for parties to be internally democratically organized, especially when it comes to how candidates for public office are selected (Shomer et al. 2016). Voters seem to express a preference for transparent and democratic selections as opposed to discussions that happen in "smoke-filled backrooms" when given an opportunity to choose (Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006; Ramiro 2016; Wauters and Kern 2021), and intraparty democracy has been argued to increase the legitimacy of the states in which parties compete for power (Scarrow 2005; Ignazi 2020). Thus, one might expect that more inclusive and transparent means of selecting candidates should result in a better evaluation of candidates and the political systems in which they operate.

However, qualitative accounts of party primary competitions, in which all party members or voters get to select a candidate, reported clientelism and vote-buying to dominate the process of selecting candidates (Baum and Robinson 1995; Scherlis 2008), as well as dominance of party leaderships in the process (Carty 2013; Pilet and Cross 2014). Thus, the idea of fair competition in intraparty competitions could be undermined by manipulation. Given this tension between the ideal of intraparty democratic selection of

candidates and reports of violations of this ideal, in this dissertation, I investigate how variation in candidate selection affects voters' perceptions of corruption and candidates' quality and how it affects female representation.

Candidate selection has been recognized for decades as a key function of parties and as one of their most defining characteristics (Key 1958; Kirchheimer 1966; Michels 1915; Sartori 1976; Schlesinger 1991). By selecting candidates, parties pre-structure voters' electoral choices by presenting them with a subset of politically ambitious citizens (Pesonen 1968). Despite its importance, candidate selection remained the "secret garden of politics" (Gallagher 1988, 1) for a long time in political science, with little research investigating candidate selection and the potential effects of variation in candidate selection (Cross and Pilet 2015; Gallagher 1988). As noted before, research seemed to conclude that parties do best being organized oligarchically to be effective (Michels 1915), with the privilege of nomination of candidates laying in the hands of a narrow party elite, while voters might have lacked knowledge about how candidates were selected or agree with the selection procedures in place.

However, with the turn of the century, parties experienced unprecedented losses in membership, and many Western European parties increased intraparty democracy to attempt to counteract this development (Poguntke et al. 2017; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010; Van Biezen et al. 2012). With the introduction of intraparty democracy, some parties also changed the procedures through which candidates are selected, giving rank-and-file members more power in nominating candidates, in an adaptation of what is known as U.S.-style primaries. While primaries used to be a defining and near-unique feature of the U.S. political system, primaries have spread to Latin American and European countries in the past decade. As illustrated by Figure 1, which shows countries where at least one party in the last ten years held a primary election to select a legislative candidate, primaries have become more common in several countries, effectively increasing variation in candidate selection.

Primaries across the World



Figure 1: Primaries across the World.

Notes: Countries are shown to have held primaries if at least one party between 2010 and 2021 held primaries for legislative candidates. Own depiction based on the V-Party dataset.

What are the consequences of this variation in candidate selection? Previous literature on candidate selection has primarily focused on consequences for the party itself, such as the party elite’s representativeness and responsiveness, as well as participation in and competitiveness of intraparty competitions (Hazan and Rahat 2010), while little research was conducted on outcomes that lay beyond the party. This dissertation attempts to address this lacuna by investigating how candidate selection affects voters’ institutional corruption perceptions, evaluations of candidates, and whether variation in candidate selection can affect the hindrance that women face in reaching public office.

While many outcomes would be interesting to study, in this dissertation, I mainly focus on corruption perceptions, valence evaluations, and female representation. Each of the outcomes studied here is important in its own merit: Corruption perceptions affect political participation (Agerberg 2019; Chong et al. 2015), societies’ ability to solve collective action problems (Persson et al. 2013), trust (Morris and Klesner 2010; Rothstein 2013), and satisfaction with democracy and life satisfaction (Helliwell and Huang 2006), while

valence evaluations have been shown to affect turnout (Lo Prete and Revelli 2017). Female representation has been shown to affect perceptions of institutional legitimacy (Clayton et al. 2019), political participation (Atkeson 2003), and political knowledge (Verba et al. 1997). All three outcomes are also interconnected: Corruption has been argued to hinder female representation (Grimes and Wängnerud 2018; Stockemer and Sundström 2019b), while female representation, in turn, reduces corruption (Bauhr et al. 2019; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2018; Goetz 2007), and corruptibility is a key valence issue (Curini 2018; Stokes 1963), on which women tend to perform better (Barnes and Beaulieu 2019; Kahn 1994; Thomas and Petrow 2021).

In the dissertation, I develop four research questions that are addressed in four research articles. In the first study, I ask how candidate selection affects voters' corruption perceptions of their local institutions, namely healthcare, education, and law enforcement (Paper 1; Charron and Schwenk, 2023). Second, I address whether candidate selection affects voters' evaluations of candidates' valence, measured as their corruptibility, competence, and experience (Paper 2; Schwenk, 2023). Turning to gendered effects in Papers 3 and 4, I first ask how candidate selection affects female representation in high corruption contexts in Paper 3 (Schwenk 2022). Lastly, I address the question of whether voters' evaluations of female candidates' corruptibility vary by how they were selected in Paper 4.

Building on arguments in the literature on candidate selection and female representation, as well as procedural fairness theory, I develop arguments on how candidate selection could affect each of these outcomes (corruption perceptions, evaluations of candidates' valence, female representation, and corruptibility evaluations of female candidates) in an explorative manner. While research has argued that primaries should lead through their transparent procedures to better candidates (Adams and Merrill 2013; Serra 2011), other research has pointed out that primaries are often rigged by clientelism and vote-buying and suffer from leadership dominance (Ascencio 2021; Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Baum and Robinson 1995; Scherlis 2008). Given these contradictory expectations, I develop arguments on how variation in candidate selection might affect corruption perceptions and voters' evaluations of candidates, as well as influence the number of female can-

didates, and voters' perception of them in my four research articles. Empirically, I test these questions on the sub-national level in two main cases, Italy and Spain. In both cases, I am able to exploit interesting variation in candidate selection not only across parties but even within parties across regions and municipalities, and in the case of Spain, over time. For both cases, I underwent extensive data collection efforts. These data collection efforts resulted in two large datasets, covering 1 300 Italian mayoral candidates in 2014, and 266 regional candidate selections between 2010 and 2021 in Spain. The two datasets form the empirical base of Paper 1 and Paper 3, while Paper 2 and Paper 4 rely on experimental data I collected. In combination, the studies use observational and experimental data in quantitative applications, while Paper 2 also employs qualitative evidence collected via an open-ended survey question.

The findings of this dissertation come together in an interesting picture: In Paper 1, primaries, compared to leadership selections, increase corruption perceptions of local institutions for voters of parties that use them, an effect that becomes weaker between 2013 and 2021. In contrast, Paper 2 finds that voters evaluate candidates selected via primaries as less corrupt. While the findings are, at first glance, seemingly contradicting, the two studies investigate different outcomes (corruption perceptions of local institutions vs. corruptibility of politicians) and study different time frames (2013-2021 and 2022). The difference in findings might thus result from methodological choices and the difference in the sample (Boas et al. 2019; Incerti 2020) or could point towards a change in the effect of primaries over time. However, based on the two studies conducted for this dissertation, any such theoretical exploration would be purely speculative. Nonetheless, while Paper 2 highlights that voters believe candidates selected via primaries to be less corrupt compared to those selected by a regional leadership, the effect of primaries on voters' evaluations of candidates is not uniquely positive, as voters believe primary candidates also to be less experienced and competent than elite selected candidates. Generally speaking, voters believe that primaries result in political outsider candidates who lack the ties and experience to be perceived as competent. However, as candidates resulting out of primaries become more experienced, their outsider status gets weaker, resulting in being increasingly evaluated as corrupt, as shown in Paper 4. The outsider

status that primary candidates enjoy also does not benefit women in particular. While women have been argued to be outsiders to corrupt networks (Bauhr et al. 2019; Dollar et al. 2001; Goetz 2007), women do not benefit in a multiplicative manner from being outsiders based on their gender and by selection method. However, female candidates are less affected by becoming more experienced than male candidates in corruptibility evaluations, suggesting that voters' evaluations of female candidates are not solely based on their outsider status. Finally, while primaries do neither hurt nor benefit women in being selected, variation in candidate selection matters particularly in high corruption contexts, such that high-level elites are less likely to select a female candidate in the local context when corruption is high (Paper 3).

With this dissertation, I make several contributions, theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, I contribute to each research field addressed in the individual studies: candidate selection, corruption perceptions, valence perceptions, and female representation. I contribute to the literature on candidate selection by broadening the scope of outcomes studied, as previous research mainly focused on the effects of candidate selection on parties. By focusing on outcomes beyond the party, I show that the effects of candidate selection are not confined to parties but are further reaching. As such, the dissertation demonstrates the need for more research that goes beyond the party's realm in studying the effects of variation in candidate selection. Regarding the literature on corruption perceptions, valence perceptions, and female representation, my main theoretical contribution lies in adding a new explanatory factor: While previous research on female representation includes candidate selection, little is known about how candidate selection might interact with contextual factors, such as corruption, an issue addressed in Paper 3. To the best of my knowledge, the literature on valence perceptions and corruption perceptions has focused relatively little on the effects of intraparty competitions and candidate selection, a lacuna I address in Paper 1 and Paper 2. Given its wide-reaching implications, this dissertation highlights the importance of investigating candidate selection as an explanatory factor in various research fields. Finally, previous research on voters' stereotyping of female candidates has not taken into consideration what factors might exacerbate or negate voters' evaluations of women. This

issue is addressed in Paper 4. Finally, by developing arguments on how candidate selection affects each of these outcomes on the sub-national level and for executive office, this dissertation contributes theoretically to our understanding of female representation and corruption perceptions, as well as candidate selections on the regional and local level, arenas of politics that are often neglected in research.

Empirically, I aim to contribute with this dissertation to research by employing new data I collected in each of the individual studies. By collecting data on Italian mayoral elections, regional elections in Spain, and experimental data in Spain, I hope to broaden the data availability for future studies. Additionally, by employing causal- and non-causal research designs, my theoretical arguments are put to a thorough test, and highlight the applicability of (quasi-) experimental and observational designs in the field of candidate selection.

I also hope to create awareness of the intended and unintended consequences of changes in candidate selection, explicitly trying to highlight that introducing primaries might increase corruption perceptions briefly but might, in the long run, be beneficial to counteract beliefs that politicians are corrupt.

2 Background

2.1 Corruption (perceptions), candidate quality and female representation

Extensive literature has focused on the effect of institutions on various outcomes, including corruption and female representation. This literature highlighted the importance of the electoral system (Bernauer et al. 2015; Chang and Golden 2007; Davidson-Schmich 2014; Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman 2005; Luhiste 2015; Persson and Tabellini 2005), the horizontal and vertical division of power (Gerring et al. 2009; Tavits 2007; Treisman 2000, 2007), as well as the party system and the legislative rules (Caul 1999; Davis et al. 2004; Reynolds 1999; Schleiter and Voznaya 2014; Verge and Wiesehomeier 2019), such as, e.g. gender quotas (Aldrich 2020; Eder et al. 2016; Lilliefeldt 2012). Similarly, extensive literature investigated voters' preferences and behavior in regards to corruption (c.f. e.g. Chang and Kerr 2017; Ecker et al. 2016; Klačnja 2017), quality of candidates (Kirkland and Coppock 2018; Crowder-Meyer et al. 2020; Ono and Burden 2019) and female representation (Kahn 1992; McDermott 1998; Ono and Burden 2019; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

Thus, a large body of research has focused both on the macro-level (institutional) factors and the micro-level (individual) factors that affect corruption and female representation, as well as the quality of candidates.

While the outcomes investigated here have been investigated independently, they are also interconnected. First, corruptibility is a valence issue in itself, such that voters prefer honest candidates over corrupt ones (Curini 2018; Franchino and Zucchini 2015; Stokes 1963). However, not only is corruptibility a valence issue, but voters' perceptions of corruptibility are also gendered, such that women tend to be stereotyped as less corrupt by voters (Barnes and Beaulieu 2019; Kahn 1994, 1992; McDermott 1998; Smith et al. 2017; Thomas and Petrow 2021). Finally, a large body of literature also studied the interconnection between corruption and female representation, finding them heavily intertwined. The literature has at large argued that women reduce corruption in office (Bauhr et al. 2019; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2018; Goetz 2007), but that corruption reduces women's chances to reach public office (Grimes and Wängnerud 2018; Stockemer and Sundström 2019a; Sundström and Wängnerud 2016), creating a vicious cycle.

The literature has put forward several reasons why women reduce corruption in office, such as that women are more risk-averse than men and refrain from engaging in illicit activities and that women are socialized into more pro-social behavior, which translates to less corrupt action (Dollar et al. 2001; Swamy et al. 2001), that women tend to improve the quality of public services in office as they are more affected by them (Bauhr et al. 2019; Espírito-Santo et al. 2020; Xydias 2007), campaign more often on anticorruption platforms (Alexander and Bågenholm 2018), and that women as political outsiders are offered fewer chances to engage in corruption (Wiesehomeier and Verge 2021). Women's status as political outsiders to corrupt "boys' networks" is cited as the primary mechanism keeping women from reaching public office in high-corruption contexts (Bjarnegård 2013, 2018). Corruption requires stable networks and predictable behavior of all network actors, often based on shared identities such as gender. This makes women disadvantaged, as their gender qualifies them as outsiders to male-dominated networks.

As was highlighted above, the literature that investigates corruption, candidate quality, and female representation as outcomes has been based on explanations of several individual- and institutional factors. While research on female representation has investigated the role of candidate selection (Hazan

and Raĥat 2010; Luhiste 2015; Matland 2006; Verge and Astudillo 2019), interactions between corruption and candidate selection in affecting female representation have not been extensively explored, and little is known about what affects voters' evaluations of female candidates. As for the literature on corruption and candidate quality, an exploration of the effects of parties and their internal organization still needs to be added to the literature, as the role that parties play has largely been forgotten.

2.2 Parties in democracies

Parties are integral to democracies, performing (supposedly) a wide array of functions. Among these functions are structuring the vote by maximizing voters education about competition and policy positions (Epstein 1967; King 1969; Neumann 1990), aggregating opinions and integrating them (Duverger 1990; Linz and Stepan 1996) and linking a state with its citizens (Stokes 1999), as well as selecting candidates that compete for public office (Jupp 1968; Katz 2001; Kirchheimer 1966; Sartori 1976).

With the turn of the century, parties experienced an unprecedented loss in membership numbers (Scarrow and Gezgor 2010; Van Biezen et al. 2012), which research attributed in part to the evolution of parties towards cartel- and catch-all parties (Katz and Mair 1995; Kirchheimer 1966; Sartori 2005). Research argued that such a loss in membership numbers threatened parties representative functions and legitimacy, as they would become less representative of their electorates (Ignazi 2020; Mair 2006; Sartori 2005; Webb 2000). To counteract this loss, parties increased intraparty democracy to attract new members (Faucher 2015; Gauja 2015; Poguntke et al. 2017; Young 2013).

Increases in intraparty democracy varied strongly across countries (Gauja 2015; Poguntke et al. 2016). While in some countries, the definition of what constitutes a party membership was relaxed in all or most parties, in other countries, parties focused more on reforming the selection of the party leadership and increasing the power of the party base in affecting political platforms. The reasons for such changes and particularly changes to more inclusive candidate selection methods will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.1.

Regarding parties' goals to increase the representativeness of parties and ideological congruence between parties and their supporters, research agreed that a general increase in intraparty democracy did not result in either of the two, and party elites continued to be unrepresentative of their base (Achury et al. 2018; Faucher 2015; Gomez and Ramiro 2019; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kölln and Polk 2017; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010). One might thus question whether parties can fulfill their functions of interest aggregation and representation and function as a link between society and the state (Flanagan and Dalton 1990; King 1969; Kirchheimer 1966). However, a key function that parties still largely fulfill is the recruitment of political personnel and selection of candidates to compete for public office (Diamond and Gunther 2001).

The centrality of candidate selection to parties has been highlighted extensively by previous research, with the power of selecting candidates sometimes being cited as the minimal definition of parties, or candidate selection being identified as a critical feature of what constitutes a party (Jupp 1968, 58; Katz 2001, 278; Kirchheimer 1966, 198; Sartori 1976, 6). Further, as illustrated by Schattschneider (1942, 64)'s statement that "the nature of the nominating procedure determines the nature of the party; he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party" not only is candidate selection a central feature of parties, it is also a defining feature of power distributions within the party organization and defines how parties are perceived.

While much was written on the importance of candidate selection for parties, little empirical research was developed in earlier years of party research¹. One potential reason for the lack of empirically motivated research is that selection used to be relatively stable for a long time, as the privilege of elites, with delegates and party members taking on mostly approving roles (Obler 1974). While some variation in candidate selection could be

¹An important exception of this is Ranney (1981)'s investigation of candidate selection in 24 countries, including an analysis which traits parties value in candidates.

found across countries, selection procedures were largely uniform and little variation could be found across parties.

However, with the shift towards intraparty democracy, several parties also shifted towards more inclusive candidate selection methods to select candidates for executive and legislative office, giving their rank-and-file members or even all their supporters more say in who should be nominated as candidates.

This change in candidate selection has wide-reaching implications for parties themselves and democracy and society (Bille 2001). While voters take the ultimate decision on election day for whom they vote, voters get only presented with a small subset of the potential candidates, or as Pesonen (1968, 348) eloquently phrased it: “the nomination stage eliminates 99.96 percent of all eligible people. The voters choose only 0.04 percent”. Thus, the pre-selection stage that candidate selection poses has far-reaching consequences for voters and potential candidates. Further, as candidates become members of the legislative and the executive, they directly impact the political system and policy outcomes, and therefore, a country’s democracy (Gallagher 1988).

The selection of executive candidates deserves special attention here, given the visibility of executive candidates and the potential costs parties encounter in selecting executive candidates and replacing incumbents. Executive candidate selection is usually the selection of a single candidate; thus, parties face a zero-sum game in selecting a candidate. It is, therefore, central to understanding the consequences of such changes, illustrated in this dissertation on the examples of voters’ corruption perceptions, evaluations of candidates, and female representation.

Before investigating these consequences, I define the key concept of candidate selection and summarize the literature on the causes and consequences of variation in candidate selection, highlighting the gap this dissertation aims to address. Before I develop the overarching theoretical arguments of this dissertation, I clarify the scope conditions and the case selection. After

outlining the theoretical framework, I describe the available data to investigate the effects of candidate selection and the data I collected myself before turning to the research designs developed for this thesis. I summarize the articles that are part of this dissertation and conclude by highlighting the limitations and contributions of this dissertation.

2.3 What is candidate selection?

The process in which politically ambitious citizens and party members become politicians in legislative and executive offices is a multistage one. Figure 2, adapted from Norris and Lovenduski (1995, 16), illustrates the stages that an aspiring candidate has to go through to reach public office.

Illustrating this in the case of Great Britain, Norris and Lovenduski (1995) explain that only a few are recruited to apply for candidacy from the pool of party voters or party supporters that could become candidates. From there, out of a pool of applicants, candidates are selected before voters decide on the ballot who gets elected into public office. The stages of the process can be assumed to be interdependent, such that the rules that govern the selection of candidates affect who is recruited to the pool of applicants and that electoral systems affect whom party selectorates nominate as candidates, and formal and informal rules dominate all stages of the process.

To reiterate, generally speaking, the process of becoming a candidate starts with recruitment, either as potential candidates recruit themselves, if the application process is open, or are approached by recruiters of the party. The hurdles a candidate has to cross to be recruited can vary across parties and time, from a minimum requirement of being a party member to having shown active participation in party activities, pledging loyalty to the party, or collecting signatures of party supporters. Based on data from the Political Party Database, Figure 3 shows how recruitment requirements vary across parties in 19 Western democratic countries. As becomes evident from Figure 3, most parties require aspiring candidates to be members of their party, but several parties also impose more demanding requirements. These requirements and the variation between parties will likely affect who is recruited by the party and who is forthcoming as a candidate.

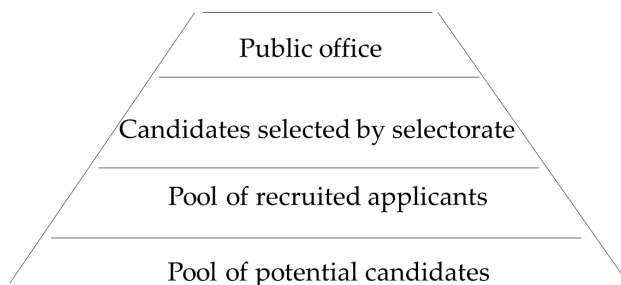


Figure 2: The process from potential candidates to elected officials.

Notes: Adopted from Norris and Lovenduski (1995, 16), changes made for generalizability.

Research has also shown that traditional recruitment by party gatekeepers who approach potential candidates affects who gets recruited as a candidate, notably that the gender and training of the recruiter ultimately affect the gender distribution amongst candidates (Crowder-Meyer et al. 2020; Niven 1998; Pruyssers and Blais 2019; Ruf 2019)².

The next step in the process of eligible citizens becoming public office holders, candidate selection, is the focus of this dissertation. Undeniably, recruitment practices shape who is competing as a potential candidate during the candidate selection stage, but candidate selection also shapes re-

²While investigating the effect of eligibility criteria is interesting in its own merit, this dissertation does not focus on eligibility requirements. Data for eligibility criteria is even scarcer than for candidate selection, and comparability across cases is difficult. Further, few parties specify clear formal eligibility criteria for executive candidates that go beyond the requirements of the legal electoral system.

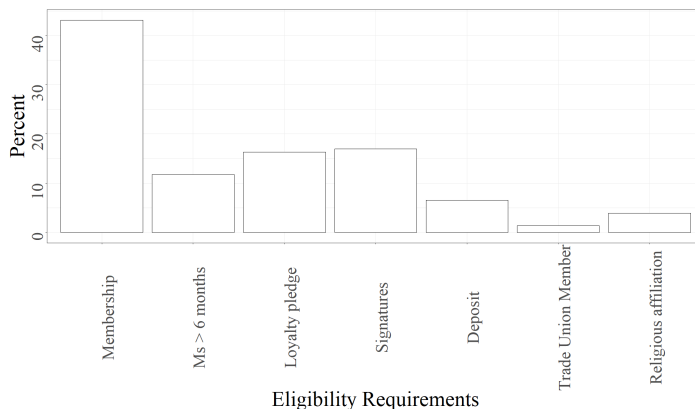


Figure 3: Eligibility requirements for legislative candidates across parties in 19 countries.

Notes: Based on Political Party Database data. Parties can be represented in multiple categories. Every party in the sample imposes at least one requirement for eligibility as a candidate.

cruitment. Depending on which selectorate candidates face in this stage, politically ambitious individuals might resist being recruited or refrain from self-recruitment, while others might perceive their chances heightened. To illustrate this point, a political outsider might not even attempt to become recruited as a candidate if the formal selection mechanism by the party is through a party elite, as they anticipate that the party elite will strongly value commitment to the party and networks within the party (Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Rehmert 2020a). If the candidate selection is through primaries, an outsider candidate might run as a competitor, as they perceive their chances of convincing a larger party base or party supporters of their merit as higher. That is not to say that party elites give up control by shifting the selectorate to a broader audience, as quite the contrary has been argued in the literature. Several studies have shown that party leaders are quick to restrict competition and ensure the selection of their favorite candidates, not least through demands on being able to compete in primaries, such as extensive numbers of signatures from supporters. This effectively ensures party leaders' "ability to manipulate a formally popular

decision-making process, by ensuring that members' choices are constrained and limited to alternatives acceptable to the existing elite" (Carty 2013, 19) (c.f. also Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Hassell 2016; Hazan and Rahat 2010). However, the candidate selection methods could still affect the initial motivation for recruitment.

Regarding the systematic investigation of candidate selection, research has relied mainly on the seminar work by Hazan and Rahat (2010). Hazan and Rahat (2010) propose to distinguish candidate selection among two dimensions: Centralization and inclusiveness. Centralization refers to the location on which a decision is taken, i.e., whether decisions are taken on the local, regional, or national level on candidacies, while inclusiveness refers to the size of the electorate. The most exclusive electorate would be a single party leader making decisions about candidates. In contrast, the most inclusive electorate would be every registered voter being allowed to vote in what is widely called an open primary selection. Figure 4 displays the continuum of inclusiveness of candidate selection, adapted from Cross et al. (2016, 24).

While candidate selection is argued to be a continuum in which different electorates can play a role, many studies capture candidate selection as a categorical concept to allow for easier data collection and comparison. In this dissertation, since much of it focuses on the effect of selection on individuals' perceptions, I follow this categorical distinction. That is to say; I conceptualize candidate selection as clear-cut categories based on the dominant candidate selection form (Kenig et al. 2015). This means that candidate selection is conceptualized, e.g., as "regional leadership selection", "local leadership selection", or "primaries". For the articles in this dissertation concerned with the effect of candidate selection on corruption perception and evaluations of candidate quality, it can be assumed that the perception of candidate selection is more important than the complexity of the underlying selection. This means that, for voters' systemic perception of corruption and their perception of candidates' quality, it should matter more whether they believe a candidate was selected via primaries or not rather than whether a party leadership had a formal final nomination right after a primary or not. I address this issue empirically by coding candidate

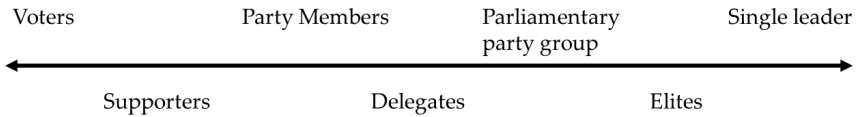


Figure 4: Continuum of Inclusiveness.

Notes: Adapted from Cross et al. (2016, 24).

selection via newspaper coverage or explicitly stating it in an experimental setting. A detailed discussion of conceptualizing candidate selection as a continuum and a further justification of my choice of a categorical approach is taken up in the data section of this introductory chapter.

2.4 Variation in candidate selection

2.4.1 Why do parties change candidate selection procedures?

As variation in candidate selection is not randomly assigned across cases, and this dissertation partially builds on observational data, a brief review of where variation in candidate selection stems from is in order. Most literature on the changes in candidate selection considers changes to more inclusive modes of candidate selection, such as primaries. Primaries are commonly argued to be a selection in which all party members or supporters, or even all voters, get to select a candidate. So far, less research has been conducted on why parties revert to more exclusive methods. Thus, the following discussion

also primarily revolves around changes to more inclusive methods.

Changes in candidate selection can be broadly classified as motivated among three levels, according to Barnea and Rahat (2007): changes in the political system, changes in the party system, and intraparty changes.

The first, changes in the political system, stem from changes in the norms or legislation of a political system, such as new legislation prescribing how candidates are to be selected or a cultural change, in which voters demand more democratic selection methods. As for the changes in parties in Western Europe, as was highlighted before, one of the most common explanations for an increase in intraparty democracy generally and democratic candidate selection more specifically is attributed to parties' loss of members at the turn of the century (Faucher 2015; Gauja 2015; Poguntke et al. 2017; Young 2013). In an attempt to bring members back, parties democratized internally and responded to a change in the political system.

The second layer, changes in the party system, refers to changes in parties' competition, including electoral defeats or scandals. As for systemic changes in competition, the emergence of new-left parties has been one of the main drivers of candidate selection (Cordero et al. 2016; Debus and Navarrete 2018; Oriols and Cordero 2016; Young and Cross 2002). Many new-left parties entering party systems in Western European democracies made inclusive candidate selection and intraparty democracy core pillars of their party identity. In Spain, the emergence of the Catalanian regional party Ciudadanos in 2006 and the left party Podemos in 2014 changed the narrative of primaries. While primaries were previously mostly viewed as a tool to resolve intraparty conflicts, these new-left parties changed the perception of primaries towards a tool of responsiveness, accountability, and representation (Cordero et al. 2016; Debus and Navarrete 2018; Oriols and Cordero 2016). Similarly, in Italy, primaries were used only sporadically by the major parties such as the Partito Democratico (Democratic Party, PD), however, after the Movimento 5 Stelle (5 Star Movement) entered the political stage with inclusive candidate selection as one of its core identifiers, primaries became more widely used across the political spectrum.

Changes in candidate selection, especially changes towards more inclusive selection methods, are also quite common among parties that recently experienced an electoral defeat or entered opposition (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Barnea and Rahat 2007; Chiru et al. 2015; Cross and Blais 2012; Cross and Pilet 2015). Parties try to regather support and mobilize their voters by offering them a chance to have a say in the selection of candidates and signal transparency to their electorate.

The intraparty level finally refers to how actors within a party use windows of opportunities that are opened through, e.g., electoral defeats, entering opposition, or changes in the political system (Barnea and Rahat 2007). Party leaders can try to initiate change to a more inclusive selectorate to free themselves of pressure by activists or specific groups within the party (Katz 2001), a notion that Astudillo and Detterbeck (2020) corroborate who show that changes in candidate selection are mainly elite-driven. It has also been argued that changes in candidate selection towards more inclusive selection methods can be used by parties to resolve intraparty conflicts and to unify the party behind a single candidate or programmatic platform (Chiru et al. 2015; Cross and Blais 2012).

While initial reforms of candidate selection are most certainly driven by one or more of these factors, it remains unclear why parties sometimes choose not to implement more inclusive or decentralized candidate selection measures after reforms were introduced. While, for example, the Spanish Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE) formally introduced primaries on the regional level in 2010, the party leadership also included possibilities for the leadership not to hold primaries if a single candidate competes or the national leadership sees reason not to hold them (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020). The party statute also foresees that primaries can be suspended if an incumbent regional government leader wants to run again as a candidate. In practice, this means that while there is a formal possibility of primaries being held, they are not always used. The reasons for this uneven implementation of primaries largely remain unclear (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020), as are reasons why parties abolish primaries again.

2.4.2 Variation across countries and levels of government

Having given an introduction to the sources of variation in candidate selection, reviewing variation in European countries regarding candidate selection methods is interesting.

Considering that only very few countries, such as Germany, dictate or restrict how parties can select their candidates, it is surprising that we do not observe more variation in candidate selection across countries in Western Europe. Figure 5 illustrates this by depicting the variation in candidate selection for legislative national candidates across European countries since 2010³. As Figure 5 shows, in most countries, parties only employ one or two candidate selection methods and often rely on either party leadership or delegate selection. In Luxembourg, legislative candidates are, for example, exclusively selected by delegates, while in Sweden, legislative candidates are either selected by delegates or party leaders. Only in seven countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom) have parties used more than two selection methods in the past decade, such that in Spain, parties selected legislative candidates between 2010 and 2021 via closed primaries, delegates, and party leaders.

While variation in national legislative candidate selection is still relatively low, one can observe stronger variation in some countries on the sub-national level and for executive candidates. Spain, for example, has high variation in candidate selection methods to select the leading candidates for regional elections (which would become the regional Prime Minister) (Charon and Schwenk 2023; Debus and Navarrete 2018). Candidate selection on the sub-national level does not only vary across parties but also within parties across regions in both Italy and Spain (c.f. Figure 6 for an example of how candidate selection varies across regions in Spain).

³Comparative data on executive candidate selection is still rare; therefore I rely here on data for legislative candidate selection to illustrate candidate selection in Europe.

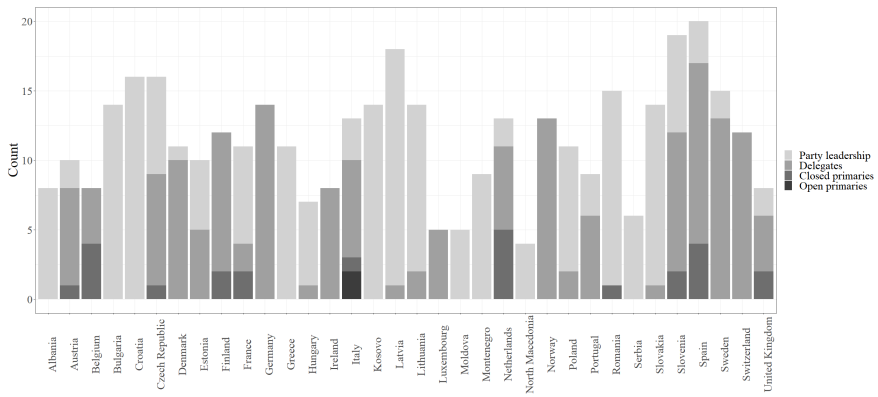


Figure 5: Variation of candidate selection for legislative candidates across European countries

Notes: Depicts the variation of candidate selection by country since 2010. Based on the V-Party dataset.

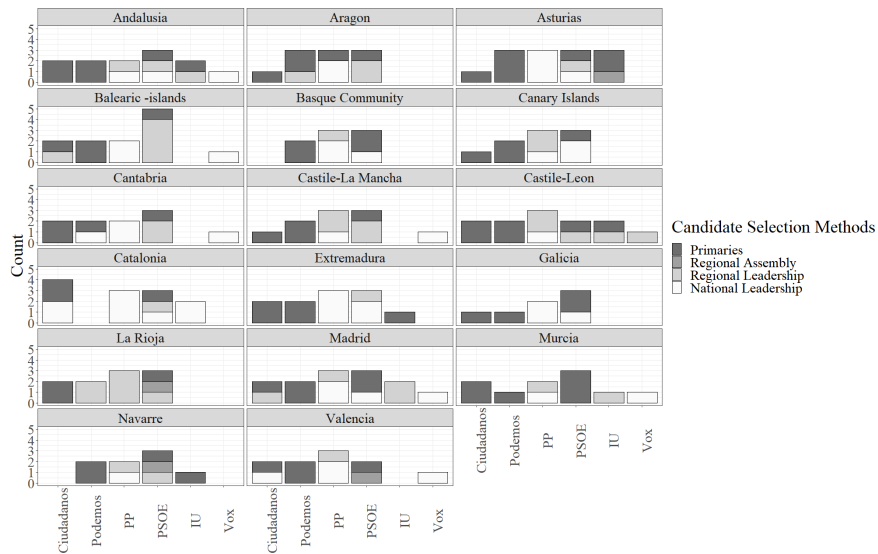


Figure 6: Variation of candidate selection across parties and regions in Spain. *Notes: Depicts the variation in candidate selection methods used by parties to select the leading candidate/executive candidate in Spanish regions between 2010-2021. Based on own data collection efforts. Data was collected for Study 1, on the effects of inclusive candidate selection on corruption perceptions, data is based on newspaper coverage of candidate selection, please refer to the Data section of this introductory chapter for more information or to Study 1, Charron and Schwenk (2023)*

2.5 The consequences of variation

Research on variation in candidate selection has primarily focused on the effects of candidate selection changes on parties. To reiterate, such changes are often changes to more inclusive candidate selection methods, such as primaries, meaning that most of the research reviewed below focuses on the effect of primaries in contrast to other selection modes. The theoretical arguments in this literature have clustered along four dimensions of the effects of candidate selection, as outlined by Hazan and Rahat (2010): Responsiveness, competitiveness, representativeness, and participation.

Responsiveness is probably the most widely studied factor of the above-named, referring broadly to the question to whom candidates are responsive once elected. Fiorina (1974) writes that politicians will be responsive to the entity that has the strongest influence over whether they will get reelected. Concerning candidate selection, this means that politicians will not only be responsive to their electorate but also to their selectorate within the party. When the power to select candidates is transferred from a narrow party leadership to a wider selectorate, as in, e.g., primaries, candidates should become more responsive to the demands of that wider selectorate rather than reacting to what the party leadership demands. Research on the U.S. system has argued on this matter that candidates become largely detached from the leadership and become "untouchable" for leaders (Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018, 103). Further, as the party base is often perceived as ideologically more extreme than the median voter and the leadership, it has been argued that inclusive selection would more likely result in a more ideologically extreme candidate and that candidates have incentives to present themselves as more extreme (Debus and Navarrete 2018).

When looking at inclusive candidate selection outside the U.S., research has found mixed results on whether primaries result in more extreme candidates. Bruhn (2013) finds that in Mexico, candidates selected via inclusive methods are not more extreme than candidates selected via centralized selection, as do Indridason and Kristinsson (2015) in Iceland. In a study of roll-call votes in the European Parliament, Faas (2003) even finds that centralized

selection results more likely in defiance from the party line⁴. Opposing this are the theoretical expectations formulated by Hazan and Rahat (2006) and Pennings and Hazan (2001), that inclusive candidate selection results in more ideologically extreme candidates, that are empirically tested in Hazan (1999) 's study on the Israeli Knesset.

Moderating between the two sides, Shomer (2017) argues that the effect of candidate selection is dependent on the electoral system, such that electoral systems that highlight candidates rather than parties (such as majoritarian electoral systems) increase the independence of inclusively selected candidates from the party leadership. Party-centered electoral systems, such as proportional systems, are less affected by variation in candidate selection.

Regarding competitiveness, Hazan and Rahat (2010) argue that the relationship between the inclusiveness of candidate selection and intraparty competitiveness is not linear. Instead, they propose that while selection by delegates will increase competitiveness, using primaries will not result in more candidates competing in intraparty competitions. Indridason and Kristinsson (2015) and Kristijansson (1998) do not find that primaries result in less intraparty competition compared with other selection methods in Iceland. However, Indridason and Kristinsson (2015) caution that party leaders could strategically use the implementation of primaries in cases where they are confident that their preferred candidate will win, similarly suggested by Astudillo and Detterbeck (2020) in the context of the selection of regional leading candidates in Spain and German party leader contests.

Looking at participation, Hazan and Rahat (2010) anticipate a negative effect of very inclusive candidate selection mechanisms on both identification with the party and on the process of primaries themselves. Hazan and Rahat (2010) argue that primaries open up the possibility to intraparty electoral fraud through mass registrations, i.e., a peak in enrollments shortly before

⁴It should, however, be noted that this might also be due to the unique nature of European Parliament "factions".

a primary election, followed by many new members leaving the party afterward. This short-term party membership could indicate that new party members enrolled only to vote in the primary. A second concern regarding the misuse of primaries brought forward by Hazan and Rahat (2010) is that primaries could allow party activists to strategically capture primaries if turnout in primaries is low, as party activists would vote for a more ideologically extreme candidate.

Regarding empirical research on participation in primaries, Hazan and Rahat (2010) themselves show through reviewing several studies from varying countries (Belgium, Finland, Canada, Ireland, Taiwan) on turnout in intraparty primaries that turnout averages around 50%. Sandri and Venturino (2016) report similar turnout levels for mayoral primaries in Italy (average turnout rate 49.8%), although turnout rates vary across time, with a tendency to lower turnout rates over time. Based on my own data collection efforts on candidate selection for Spanish regional executive candidates between 2010-2021, participation rates vary strongly across parties and across time between 29% and 81%. However, the average value is quite similar to the one reported in previous studies (54.6%)⁵.

While it is still an open question what drives turnout in primaries, research has started to investigate how primaries affect membership numbers and attitudes of party members on intraparty democracy. Indridason and Kristinsson (2015) does not find a sustained negative effect of primaries on membership in their study of Iceland, while Seddone and Sandri (2021) find that Italian party members value the possibility to participate in primaries and perceive it as a renewed possibility to participate in the party, although this effect varies across parties. Adding to this Bernardi et al. (2017) show that attitudes towards primaries also vary by whether members are longstanding or new members.

⁵In a more extensive recent data collection effort Villaplana et al. (2023) find an average participation rate in Spanish party primaries of 42.91% for 27 parties and a total of 252 primary competitions between 1991 and 2022.

Representativeness, the final aspect investigated by Hazan and Rahat (2010), can be conceptualized as both ideological and descriptive representation of party members in terms of female representation and regional and socio-economic class representation.

While initially, parties hoped to increase their membership base and therefore reduce extremism, research widely agrees that the introduction of intra-party democracy and primaries did not result in more ideological congruence between party members and supporters (Achury et al. 2018; Faucher 2015; Gomez and Ramiro 2019; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010). As was highlighted in the paragraphs on responsiveness, primaries did not result in ideologically more extreme candidates who would, in turn, represent the party base better from an ideological point of view, under the assumption that the party base is more ideologically extreme.

As for female representation, U.S. research has argued that women are no less likely to win or lose primaries than men (Bullock and Maggiotto 2003; Burrell 1992), or might even enjoy a slight advantage (Lawless and Pearson 2008). However, research also found that women are less likely to run in the first place (Lawless and Fox 2005) and that they are more often subjected to more negative evaluation by the media than men (Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Kahn 1996; Phillips 2021). Further, women are held to a higher standard than men by voters and party leaderships, such that women have to achieve more than male candidates to be selected as a candidate (Lawless and Fox 2005; Niven 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Teele et al. 2018).

Research on other contexts than the U.S. system is largely focused on the selection of legislative candidates and presented mixed results so far. Research largely agrees that centralized selection by a national leadership generally favors female candidates more than decentralized exclusive selection by local party leaders (Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015; Luhiste 2015). In a cross-country study, Caul (1999) argues that a centralized leadership can react quicker to intraparty and extra-party pressures demanding more female representation than local leaderships (c.f. also Kittilson 2006). Somewhat in contrast to that, Folke and Rickne (2016a) argue, based on the case of municipal elections in Sweden, that decentralized procedures in which, e.g., party factions get to influence nomination to benefit female representation, but finds this to be the case mainly in the context of strong competition.

As for inclusiveness, research is more divided on its effects. While Verge and Astudillo (2019) argue that primaries should lead to fragmentation and name recognition that benefit male candidates more than female candidates, they do not find empirical evidence for their argument in a study of executive candidates for regional office in four Western European democracies. In a recent study of eight Western European democracies, Astudillo and Paneque (2022) find that women fare worse in primaries for party leadership than male candidates. Further, they argue this is not due to a "supply issue" of weak female candidates running but rather to primary voters preferring male candidates.

Contradicting claims of a negative effect of higher inclusiveness on female representation, several authors argue that higher inclusiveness in combination with higher decentralization allows women to rely on their local networks and to cultivate a personal vote (Baldez 2007; Elder 2012; Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015). In a study of legislative candidates in Iceland, Indridason and Kristinsson (2015) also do not find evidence that women are less likely to emerge as candidates out of primaries compared to an exclusive selection by leaders.

While this research on candidate selection and female representation has contributed to our understanding of female representation, most research is focused on the national legislative office. Comparatively little research has investigated how candidate selection affects women's ability to reach candidacy for public offices on the sub-national level and how it affects their ability to reach executive office.

While the four themes outlined by Hazan and Rahaç (2010) have been studied in relation to parties themselves, relatively little is still known about the effect of variation in candidate selection on voters' attitudes. A starting point of such research is the literature on the electoral consequences of primaries for parties, investigating whether parties benefit electorally from primaries.

Research outside the U.S. on the electoral benefits of primaries has primarily found a positive or no effect of primaries on electoral performance. Carey and Polga-Hecimovich (2006) and Ramiro (2016) find that primaries have a positive effect on electoral results in Latin America and Spain, attributing

it to voters' valuing the transparency of the selection process vis-à-vis the more traditional selection by leaders. However, Pedersen and Schumacher (2015) do not find such an effect in their panel study of 111 parties in fifteen countries between 1965-2012. Other studies suggested that the effect of primaries is conditional on other factors, such as participation rates and competitiveness of primaries (De Luca and Venturino 2017) and whether other parties used primaries to select their candidates (Astudillo and Lago 2021). While one can interpret this literature as addressing an outcome beyond the party, i.e., competition between parties, it still focuses mainly on the parties, investigating their electoral gains and losses, rather than directly focusing on voters' evaluations.

This dissertation aims to broaden the investigation of outcomes that are affected by candidate selection beyond the party by investigating how candidate selection affects corruption perceptions, evaluations of candidate quality, and female representation, and, as such, contributes to the literature on candidate selection. The outcomes investigated in this dissertation are important in their own virtue and merit an investigation. First, corruption perceptions have dire consequences for life satisfaction (Helliwell and Huang 2006), participation in politics (Agerberg 2019; Chong et al. 2015; Dahlberg and Solevid 2016), collective action (Persson et al. 2013; Sharafutdinova 2010), and trust (Morris and Klesner 2010; Rothstein 2013).

The literature on corruption has largely focused on individual- and institutional-level factors that affect corruption. However, it has yet to be investigated how parties and their internal workings, specifically candidate selection, affect corruption perceptions. This lacuna is addressed in Paper 1 and Paper 2 of this dissertation. Paper 2 even goes beyond the focus on corruption perceptions and focuses more broadly on the effects of candidate selection on the evaluation of candidates' quality, operationalized as corruptibility, competence, and experience.

Second, female representation increases perceptions of institutional legitimacy (Clayton et al. 2019), political participation (Atkeson 2003; Karp and Banducci 2008; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012), and political knowledge (Verba et al. 1997), however, in most Western European democracies,

women continue to be underrepresented, especially in executive office (Folke and Rickne 2016b).

While research has investigated the effect of candidate selection on the presence of female candidates, as outlined before, little is known about how voters *perceive* female candidates that come out of primaries and whether the process of primaries affects voters' evaluations of women candidates. This question is taken up in Paper 4 of this dissertation.

Finally, female representation and corruption are also interconnected, as was laid out earlier in this introductory chapter. Research has established that corruption and female representation are connected in a virtuous (vicious) cycle, such that higher levels of female representation reduce corruption (Bauhr et al. 2019; Dollar et al. 2001; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2018; Goetz 2007), but that corruption reduces female representation (Grimes and Wängnerud 2018; Stockemer and Sundström 2019a; Sundström and Wängnerud 2016). While the research on female representation has investigated the effects of candidate selection on female representation, this literature does not consider the hindering effect of corruption. In contrast, the literature on corruption and female representation has largely neglected the effect of candidate selection. I contribute to these strands of literature in this dissertation by connecting the arguments of this research, by investigating how corruption and candidate selection affect female representation among candidates, and by investigating how candidate selection affects corruptibility evaluations of women. Finally, most previous research focuses on legislative and/or national-level offices. Executive office, however, even on the sub-national level, comes with higher visibility of candidates and therefore could be especially of interest for female candidates. Research also argued that, while citizens often lack formal knowledge of national politics, local politics allows citizens more access to and monitoring of public officials (Choudhury and Stacey 2014) because of its proximity. Furthermore, given the importance of sub-national office as a stepping stone for higher-level office (Niven 1998; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Rehmert 2020b), it is relevant to investigate the effects of candidate selection on sub-national levels.

3 Scope conditions and case selection

The variation in executive candidate selection motivates this dissertation's scope conditions. As the study of the effect of candidate selection is limited by the variation in candidate selection, as shown in Figure 5, the number of countries that can be studied is limited. Second, this dissertation is concerned with the effect of variation in candidate selection in Western European democracies. Western European democracies have a unique political history, and variation in candidate selection and its effects are likely to differ in other political contexts, such as Israel and Taiwan, which also exhibit variation in candidate selection. Third, as candidate selection is an intra-party affair, it is challenging to conduct cross-national analysis or to compare different political systems (Barnea and Rahat 2007). sub-national studies allow researchers to hold several factors constant, such as the electoral system, the vertical and horizontal division of power, and a country's political culture, all factors shown by previous research to affect the outcomes under study here. This factor, in conjunction with the lack of comprehensive data on candidate selection, motivates the sub-national focus of this dissertation. Fourth, given the importance of executive office for candidates and parties, I investigate the effect of candidate selection for executive office rather than legislative office in this dissertation. Several parties have dabbled with variations of inclusive candidate selection for executive candidates on the national level, such as in the French presidential elections in several years.

However, these selection procedures do not lend themselves well to a systematic quantitative evaluation of their outcomes, as only a few candidates are selected in each electoral cycle. A sub-national investigation of the effects of primaries thus has the advantage of broadening the number of selected candidates while not having to concern oneself with potential country-level confounding factors. Finally, the importance of sub-national office should not be diminished: Holding sub-national office is often a pre-requisite for a political career in higher echelons of government (Crowder-Meyer et al. 2020; Luhiste 2015; Niven 1998; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Rehmert 2020a) and executive sub-national office is sometimes perceived as more important and influential than legislative national office (Franceschet and Piscopo 2014).

The variation of candidate selection highlighted here has been identified for this dissertation in two cases. The first case is Spain, specifically regional elections in Spain. In the last two decades, Spanish parties have, at the regional level, unequally implemented primaries (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Charron and Schwenk 2023; Debus and Navarrete 2018). While most parties mention the theoretical possibility of holding primaries to select leading candidates (i.e., candidates that will become the regional prime minister if the party wins the office) at the regional level, the use of primaries varies not only across parties but also within parties across regions and time (as illustrated also in Figure 6). This unique variation makes Spain an excellent case to investigate. To be able to answer questions about corruption and female representation, variation in these outcomes is also needed. Again, Spain poses as an ideal case: Spain ranks consistently among the most corrupt countries in Western Europe and is amongst the countries with the highest variation in corruption in Western Europe (Charron and Annoni 2021; Charron et al. 2014; Costas-Pérez et al. 2012). Spain also underwent considerable efforts to increase female representation in office on all levels of government by introducing extensive gender quotas, from which executive office remains exempt (Verge 2012; Verge and Espírito-Santo 2016).

The second case investigated in this dissertation is mayoral elections in Italy. Italy, like Spain, has struggled with the prevalence of corruption, not least on the local level, and has high levels of sub-national variation in corruption (Charron et al. 2014, 2015; Daniele and Giommoni 2021). Similarly,

3 SCOPE CONDITIONS AND CASE SELECTION

candidate selection and the implementation of primaries vary largely across parties and within parties across contexts. Finally, while Italy, like Spain, has undergone efforts to increase female representation in office by introducing legislative quotas, executive offices, such as mayor offices, are not subject to these rules. Thus, Italy was selected as the second case to be investigated in this dissertation. The focus on regional elections in Spain and municipal elections in Italy also allows studying more than one tier of sub-national government, broadening the understanding of effects on multiple levels of government.

While Spain and Italy were identified as ideal cases for this dissertation, this is not to say that other cases do not also have interesting variation in candidate selection, corruption, or female representation, but rather that the unique variation on all of these concepts have been identified for the purpose of this dissertation in the cases of Spain and Italy. I acknowledge the uniqueness of the contexts and potential issues with generalizability that may result from it but believe that similar results could be found in other cases with similar corruption contexts (e.g., Greece). In contrast, the findings regarding corruption are less likely to travel well to cases in which corruption is lower and less salient (e.g., Belgium).

The following section gives an overview of the theoretical framework that underlies the dissertation in its sum, as well as the individual research articles.

4 Theory

While parties are a fundamental aspect of democracy, they have not uniformly been argued to be a positive feature of democracy. Madison (1787) famously warned about the particularistic nature of parties, which diametrically opposes the idea of an impartial distribution of public goods. Similarly, Downs (1957) highlighted that parties have no inherent interest in policies that allow for better public goods provision but rather see policies as a means to win office. Finally, Adler (1939, 72f.) argues that the party, as an institution is “essentially vicious, which means contrary to the public good”, as in its very base, “the concept of the party is that of partisanship, as opposed to *impartiality*” (emphasis in original).

Further work institutionalized the idea that parties are not impartial towards society as a whole but primarily serve their electorate. As such, parties would be violating the idea of impartiality, which is the base of quality of government and the opposite of institutional fairness (Rothstein 2013). Instead, parties were argued to be the driver of clientelistic politics and machine politics, as well as patronage (Diamond and Gunther 2001; Kopecky and Mair 2012; Paltiel 1981; Pomper 1992; Stokes 2005).

In the following, I outline the theoretical arguments for how different modes of candidate selection might potentially exacerbate or mitigate parties’ problematic tendencies in voters’ perceptions, as illustrated by corruption perceptions and the quality of candidates, and how it might have

consequences for female representation. It should be noted that the theory does not necessarily build on the reality of candidate selection or objective outcomes, such as real changes in corruption. Rather, the theory is built upon what voters *perceive* to be the dominant selection method and how they perceive the selection process. This perception, in turn, is argued to affect voters' perception of corruption and candidate quality rather than the objective change in corruption levels (e.g., fewer corruption scandals/abuse of power) or candidate quality (e.g., candidates that counteract corruption or are more competent). Ultimately, I believe voters act upon their perception of these outcomes rather than the objective reality.

While I theorize how perceptions could be affected by actual changes in the outcome (e.g., less corrupt candidates) or could reveal information about candidates and parties, I do not put to the test whether there are actual changes and do not see the different mechanisms as rivaling each other. The exception to this is the presence of female candidates investigated in Paper 3, which arguably studies the effects of variation in candidate selection on an objective outcome rather than the perception thereof.

Similar to not studying the potential underlying mechanisms, the motivations of the different selectorates (e.g., vote-seeking vs. policy-seeking motivations of the party base and elites) and their differences are not addressed, as they are assumed to play a subordinate role in voters' perceptions of candidate selection. Again, an exception is posed by Paper 3, which investigates the presence of female candidates based on candidate selection and corruption context, for which detailed arguments on different selectorates' motivations and intentions are developed.

To reiterate the definition of primaries employed in this dissertation, a candidate selection is conceptualized as a primary if either all party members, supporters, or all voters can participate in the candidate selection, and this mode of selection is likely to be perceived as the dominant one by voters (Kenig et al. 2015, 152).

4.1 Primaries and corruption perceptions

Corruption, the abuse of public office for private gains, remains a sticky issue in many developed democracies. While corruption in and of itself has dire

consequences for countries, by hindering economic development (Lambsdorff 2003; Mauro 1995) and human development (Kaufmann et al. 1999), high corruption perceptions by voters are problematic on their own: High corruption perceptions have been shown to have negative consequences on life satisfaction (Helliwell and Huang 2006), trust in institutions (Morris and Klesner 2010), political participation (Agerberg 2020), and the likelihood to engage in collective action problem-solving (Persson and Tabellini 2005; Sharafutdinova 2010).

Research has investigated several macro- and micro-level factors that affect corruption, such as horizontal and vertical division of power (Gerring et al. 2009; Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman 2005; Tavits 2007), the electoral system (Chang and Golden 2007) and the freedom of the press (Brunetti and Weder di Mauro 2003). On the micro-level, research has argued that voters need credible information that they trust (Botero et al. 2015; Muñoz et al. 2016; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013), as well as a clean alternative that is ideologically close to them (Agerberg 2019; Charron et al. 2016; Ecker et al. 2016; Pavão 2018). However, to this point, research on corruption so far has left out the meso-level that parties and their organization pose. This is surprising, given the importance of parties in political systems and, precisely, candidate selection's role in shaping political outcomes.

Parties' role in corruption, and especially the organization of parties, have mainly been implicitly studied in research on corruption. Namely, it has been investigated how parties financing strategies affect corruption (Rhodes 1997; Roper 2002), how the institutionalization of party systems matters to quality of government (De Sousa 2001; Schleiter and Voznaya 2014, 2018) and how electoral systems and the intraparty competition that comes with them affects corruption (Carey and Shugart 1995; Chang 2005; Chang and Golden 2007).

While these factors are unquestionably of interest, it does not allude much to the internal workings of parties. On the role of internal party organization, della Porta (2004) developed several hypotheses on how the internal organization of parties could affect corruption, including that the internal competition between candidates should increase corruption as candidates

turn to illicit means to finance their campaigns in intraparty competitions. Changes in candidate selection also create such internal competition, as more inclusive selection methods lead to candidates competing for a nomination among a broader party base (Carey and Shugart 1995).

As highlighted before, research has so far focused mainly on the effect that variation in candidate selection has on parties rather than on voters or their perception of primaries. That being said, research has argued that primaries are often used by parties to reinforce the image of an internally democratic organization and transparency (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Chiru et al. 2015; Cross and Blais 2012) and that partisans whose parties use primaries report satisfaction with the primary process (Bernardi et al. 2017), and higher levels of satisfaction with democracy overall (Shomer et al. 2016).

Furthermore, Serra (2011) argues that primaries should result in higher quality candidates since primaries act as a pre-test for actual elections, as candidates have to prove their character to a larger audience (Adams and Merrill 2013). Especially when taking into account that party leaders have been shown to only deselect corrupt candidates if the saliency of corruption is high (Asquer et al. 2019), inclusive candidate selection could become an important means for voters to take back control over politics and select candidates that are clean and generally of higher quality. Focusing on the process of primaries instead of the outcomes of the competition, Wauters and Kern (2021) argue that primaries for leadership selection should increase the perceived trustworthiness of parties through the logic of procedural fairness. Procedural fairness theory proposes that individuals are more likely to accept and trust an outcome of a decision-making process if the process is transparent and allows individuals to participate in it (Erlingsson et al. 2014; Grimes 2006; Tyler 1990).

As primaries follow the principle of one-member-one-vote and are transparent in who is competing and who wins the competition based on clear rules, primaries could be perceived to follow the logic of procedural fairness if voters perceive them accordingly (Wauters and Kern 2021).

In combination with the possibility of participation for voters in the decision-making process, perceptions of fairness should increase citizens'

trust (Erlingsson et al. 2014; Grimes 2006; Tyler 1990). Perceptions of procedural fairness and trust, in turn, are intimately connected with corruption perceptions (Donovan and Karp 2017; Grimes 2017; Linde and Erlingsson 2013; Rothstein 2013). Transferring this argumentation to my line of argument, voters who perceive primaries to follow the principle of procedural fairness could perceive candidates resulting out of them as of higher quality and generally less corrupt.

Based on the previous literature, one could thus expect that primaries lower voters' perceptions of corruption, either due to being presented with more transparency in the selection process and being given the possibility to select a clean candidate or as primaries actually result in better candidates that engage less in corruption.

However, primaries have also been linked to lower levels of trust in institutions and heightened polarization (Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018) by increasing the personalization and “presidentialization” of politics (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Thus, the competition of primaries might have negative effects based on three mechanisms. First, research on primaries outside the U.S. context highlighted how the transfer of selection power is also often more cosmetic than real, with party leaders reinforcing their grip on the party by restricting competition in primaries (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Schumacher and Giger 2017; Sulley 2021). This restriction in primary competitions often results in “coronations”, in which a single candidate that is supported by the party elite gets confirmed by party supporters as a candidate in a primary election. While this gives candidates a democratic image, it likely leaves party supporters disappointed and frustrated with a process that did not result in the decision-making competition they might have envisioned. Second, primaries have been reported to be rigged by mass registrations of primary voters, vote-buying, and clientelistic practices (Baum and Robinson 1995; Carty and Cross 2006; Malloy 2003; Scherlis 2008). This could affect corruption perceptions in two ways: First, voters are confronted with the pathologies of their parties, which in turn could be extrapolated as information about how the parties and candidates act when in office. To elaborate, if voters believe that candidates that result out of primaries have engaged in clientelism and vote-buying to win their primary

election, they could also believe these candidates to engage in clientelism and corruption once they are in office. Second, the disappointment with the process of primaries, which voters expect to be transparent and fair, could lead to a backlash against politics as a whole, resulting in higher corruption perceptions as a symptom of disappointment with politics, as even these pre-election processes are not working as intended. While one could argue that conceptually, primary selections that are rigged are no longer primary selections in their true sense and, therefore, should be conceptually also classified as different procedures, I do not believe that voters distinguish between “true” or clean primaries and manipulated primaries, when they hear the term primary. Instead, I expect that voters’ idea of primaries is dominated by how they perceive the process. Thus, if voters perceive primary competitions to be dominated by illicit means, their association with the term primaries will be a rigged competition. Conversely, if they perceive primary competitions as fair, they will associate democracy and fairness with the term primary.

As a final mechanism through which primaries could increase corruption perceptions, I argue that the platforms on which candidates campaign could lead to higher corruption perceptions. As primaries offer outsiders to the party elite an opportunity to run for nomination, these outsiders are incentivized to reinforce their status through campaigning on anti-elite platforms and anti-corruption, similar to new parties (Bågenholm and Charron 2014; Engler 2020). Especially given that candidates within intraparty competitions campaign in a narrow ideological policy space, candidates have to emphasize other aspects of their identity or character to distinguish themselves from each other, which could result in anti-corruption and anti-elitism campaigns. This campaigning might benefit the candidate in becoming nominated but will likely increase the salience of corruption and corruption perceptions among voters.

All these aspects will likely result in party supporters perceiving higher levels of corruption, meriting a more detailed theoretical and empirical discussion in this dissertation.

The discussion of potential negative and positive effects of primaries is taken up in Paper 1 and Paper 2 of this dissertation. In Paper 1, my co-author Nicholas Charron and I show that primaries increase corruption perceptions among supporters of parties that use them but that the effect fades over time. In Paper 2, I investigate this connection more directly in an experimental study investigating the effect of candidate selection on evaluations of candidates' corruptibility, competence, and experience, thus broadening the outcome investigated from corruption perceptions to the quality of candidates. Moreover, through an open-ended question, I gain insights into what voters think about when prompted with the term "primaries". This analysis helps to understand whether voters' perception of the term primaries is based on manipulated or clean primaries. The findings of Paper 2 suggest that primaries affect voters' evaluations of candidates but not uniformly negatively or positively, as candidates selected via primaries are perceived as less corrupt but also less competent and experienced. Furthermore, respondents overwhelmingly see primaries as a democratic, fair, and transparent tool and candidates resulting out of them as of higher quality, but also as outsider candidates.

4.2 Candidate selection and female representation

While I, in the first instance, mainly investigate how candidate selection affects corruption perceptions in general terms, I then dive into whether candidate selection affects women differently than men. In this section, I argue that variation in candidate selection has a gendered effect on both the likelihood of a candidate being selected and voters' perception of said candidate.

Research has long established that parties in and of themselves are gendered institutions (Franceschet and Piscopo 2014; Verge and Claveria 2018) and that parties can and do affect female representation through their recruitment strategies and gender quotas (Aldrich 2020; Brunetti and Weder di Mauro 2003; Davidson-Schmich 2014; Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015; Lilliefeldt 2012). As for candidate selection strategies, research has put forward inconclusive arguments whether inclusive or exclusive candidate selection strategies and centralized or decentralized selection benefit

female representation more (Caul 1999; Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015; Folke and Rickne 2016a; Kittilson 2006; Luhiste 2015; Matland 1998; Ruf 2019; Verge and Wiesehomeier 2019).

Another factor that has been argued to affect gender equal representation is corruption. The literature on female representation has argued that in high corruption contexts, women are purposefully excluded from politics (Grimes and Wängnerud 2018; Stockemer and Sundström 2019a; Sundström and Wängnerud 2016). This exclusion is based on the perception that women are “outsiders” based on their gender, as male party gatekeepers prefer to recruit candidates based on their homosocial capital, a type of bonding capital that is based on the shared gender of recruiter and candidate (Bjarnegård 2018). The exclusion of women can also be based on the findings that women tend to reduce corruption if they reach office (Bauhr and Charron 2020). Little research has investigated how varying candidate selection strategies can enforce or weaken these tendencies. In contrast, the literature on candidate selection has mainly left out potential moderating factors such as corruption, when investigating its effects on female representation.

Specifically, the question that arises is, if one looks at who the party gatekeepers are and what happens if they vary through, e.g., the introduction of more inclusive selection methods, how does that affect women’s chances to become candidates? Valdini (2019) argues that her finding that high-level leaders are more likely to select a female legislative candidate in high corruption contexts to signal transparency to voters should also translate to other selectorates, as all selectors share the intention to win elections. Her argument is based on the assumption that voters will stereotype women as less corrupt and more honest and that party leaders and gatekeepers, in general, will anticipate such stereotyping to win elections. However, not all selectors might agree upon what makes a winning candidate. Local-level leaders have been cited to hold more conservative views than high-level leaders towards women (Niven 1998) and might not consider a female candidate as a “winning choice”. Suppose these leaders also feel threatened in their rent extraction by female candidates. In that case, they should be even more motivated to increase their efforts to exclude female

candidates from public office, especially if that woman would be running for a critical executive position, such as mayor (Franceschet and Piscopo 2014).

Turning to inclusiveness, primaries could allow women to campaign on their outsider status with a broader audience and circumvent the traditional elite networks (Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015). Additionally, if a woman, who is an outsider to the (corrupt) political networks to begin with, wins nomination through a selection procedure that is argued to produce outsider candidates (Adams and Merrill 2013; Schwenk 2023; Serra 2011), a woman could benefit in a multiplicative sense from this outsider status.

The questions of whether candidate selection and corruption interact in affecting female representation and if candidate selection affects voters' evaluation of female candidates differently than male candidates are explored in Papers 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

Table 1 provides an overview of which study assumes which theoretical mechanism outlined in the previous pages, including information on how the independent and dependent variables were conceptualized. The discussion of the measurement will follow in more detail in the next section. To reiterate, Paper 1 and Paper 2 test the effect of candidate selection, especially primaries in contrast to leader selection, on corruption perceptions and evaluations of candidate quality, whereas Paper 3 and Paper 4 focus on the potential gendered effects of different forms of candidate selection. Paper 3 investigates whether selectorates' incentives to select a female candidate vary across corruption contexts. Paper 4 investigates explicitly whether selection by primaries, in contrast to leadership selections, benefits perceptions of women as less corrupt.

	RQ	Mechanism	IV	DV
Paper I (With Nicholas Charron), <i>West European Politics</i>	How do primaries affect corruption perceptions?	Leadership dominance, clientelism, and anti-corruption campaigns increase corruption perceptions (not tested)	Binary: primaries vs. all other types of selection	Corruption perceptions (of institutions; individual-level data)
Paper II <i>Party Politics</i>	How do primaries affect evaluations of candidates' quality?	Procedural fairness improves, evaluations of quality of candidates and violations of it deteriorate evaluations	Binary: primaries vs. leadership selection	Corruptibility, competence, experience (of candidates) individual-level data)
Paper III <i>Electoral Studies</i>	How does candidate selection affect female representation in high corruption contexts?	Different selectorates have varying incentives to select female candidates. Corruption affects these incentives in varying ways	Candidate selection of mayoral candidates; regional corruption	Gender of mayoral candidates
Paper IV	Is the effect of primaries on the evaluations of candidates' corruptibility gendered?	Primaries can exaggerate women's outsider status, leading to lower corruptibility evaluations of female candidates	Binary: primaries vs. leadership selection; gender of candidates	Corruption perceptions (of candidates; individual-level data)

Table 1: Overview of assumed mechanisms in the four studies.

5 Data and Research Designs

In this section, I briefly discuss the data and methods used in the research papers in this dissertation. A more detailed description of the data and research designs can be found in the individual papers.

5.1 Data

As elaborated before, candidate selection for a long time remained an aspect of parties mostly theoretically referred to (Gallagher 1988). However, in the last two decades, several extensive data collection efforts have been undertaken to accommodate the growing academic interest in candidate selection. Recent data collection efforts in the field include the development of three cross-country datasets: the Political Party Database (PPDB) by Poguntke et al. (2020), the V-Party dataset by Lindberg et al. (2022), as well as the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS) by Lutz et al. (2018).

The Political Party Database covers in its first round 146 parties in 25 countries between 2010-2016. It includes, amongst others, detailed questions about eligibility criteria and the role of various selectorates in selecting candidates, with coding based on expert surveys. In its second round, published in March 2022, the dataset covers 288 parties in 51 countries for 2016-2019. The V-Party dataset also relies on expert coding, covering 3 467 political

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parties in 178 countries in 3 151 elections between 1970 and 2019, including questions about the dominant mode of candidate selection, while the CCS includes data on 26 elections in 20 countries between 2013 and 2019 and is based on surveys of political candidates.

While all datasets have impressive coverage of parties across time, the expert coding used in PPDB and V-Party has recently been criticized for not representing the reality of candidate selections (Meserve et al. 2018). The CCS dataset circumvents this issue by asking candidates how they were selected. This method is not without flaws either, as it does not seem that candidates are aware of the differences between the categories with which they were presented. To illustrate, while several candidates selected for the party lists for the German national parliamentary election in 2013 answered that they were selected via “primaries” (as described as open primaries (all voters can vote) and closed primaries(selection by supporters of the party)), the German electoral law prescribes that candidates for the parliamentary election have to be selected by a delegate or member assembly (Bundeswahlgesetz §21). It is possible to explain that a local or national leadership was perceived to be the most influential in selecting a candidate due to informal influence. However, it is difficult to explain how a candidate could perceive all party supporters or registered voters as the most influential in their selection. While some might argue that a membership assembly to select a candidate is similar to a closed primary election, two crucial points must be made here. First, the answer category coded as “closed primary” here identifies *party supporters* as the relevant selectorate, which is different from the category of *all local party members*, with which respondents are also provided. Second, primaries have a unique competition and campaigning feature, such that candidates try to actively convince potential voters of their merit. Such campaigning can take traditional forms, such as canvassing and leafleting, or more unconventional forms, such as running a half-marathon (Alexandre-Collier 2016; McSweeney 2010), but an element of campaigning should be present. A membership assembly does, in contrast, usually not foresee formal campaigning activity of competing candidates outside the assembly.

Another area for improvement with these datasets is that only selections for national legislative candidates are considered, disregarding the importance of both sub-national level selection as a stepping-stone for political careers in higher offices (Luhiste 2015; Norris and Lovenduski 1995) and the importance of executive candidate selection. Parties in Italy, Spain, and France have increasingly used primaries to select executive candidates for regional and mayoral elections as well as presidential elections (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Astudillo and Lago 2021; De Luca and Venturino 2017; Sandri and Seddone 2015; Sandri and Venturino 2016). However, data that can be used to assess the effect of primaries compared to other forms of candidate selection is still scarce.

Addressing both issues, in this dissertation, I develop two novel datasets on sub-national candidate selection. The first dataset I created covers the selection of leading candidates in Spanish regional elections. Upon winning the election, these candidates would become the regional prime minister. As a starting point, I received a dataset by Debus and Navarrete (2018), covering 150 candidate selections between 2003 and 2015. I extended said dataset to cover the period until 2021, and categorized the selection of candidates not selected via primaries. I also introduced a new variable indicating primaries in which only a single candidate competed (so-called “coronations”). The coding of candidate selection was based mainly on news coverage, allowing me to identify the dominant selection method as perceived by voters. The final dataset covers information on 263 candidates competing in regional elections between 2010-2021, including information on how they were selected, when they were nominated, participation rates in the primary election, if applicable, the vote share of the candidate in the primary competition, the number of candidates if the candidate was selected via primaries and information on the candidates’ previous position in the party (e.g. whether a candidate is the incumbent government leader, the party leader or held a different position in the government).

The second dataset developed covers mayoral candidates in Italy in 2014. The coding was based on a dataset on primary elections provided by the Italian Standing Group on Leaderships and Parties and on my own data collection efforts based on newspaper reports and party statutes to cover

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non-primary selections. This coding effort also resulted in a categorical measurement of candidate selection. The final dataset covers the selection of 1 345 candidates for mayoral elections in 2014, including information on candidate selection, as well as information on the candidates' age, occupation, and membership in the municipal council before their selection. The dataset also includes information on the competitiveness of the election, the number of female candidates, as well as vote-shares and turnout rates in the mayoral election, and municipal-level characteristics, such as the population size and whether the municipality hosts a university.

Candidate selection was coded as a categorical variable in both datasets I developed. However, there are compelling arguments in the literature that candidate selection should be conceptualized as a continuum rather than clear-cut categories because of the varying influences of different selectorates in the process (Kenig and Pruysers 2018; Tuttnauer and Rahat 2023). To illustrate, the Italian Fratelli d'Italia writes in their 2014 party statute on the selection of regional and provincial candidates that “The regional coordination proposes to the national direction the programs and lists for the election of the president of the region and the regional council, as well as the mayoral candidates in the provincial capital municipalities. It ratifies the lists proposed by the provincial coordination for the election of the provincial capital municipalities. (The regional coordination) ratifies the lists proposed by provincial coordination for the election of the provincial council.” (Art. 17). Hence, while lower-level elites (i.e., the provincial coordination) have the right to propose candidates, higher-level authorities (i.e., the regional coordination) have to confirm them, an interconnectivity that can be observed in many contexts (Kenig and Pruysers 2018).

Tuttnauer and Rahat (2023) are the first to formally suggest a way to conceptualize this continuum. Tuttnauer and Rahat (2023) develop a measure in which they suggest calculating the inclusiveness of selectorates based on a formula capturing both the multistage nature and different weights of the process. They propose to calculate the weight of each selectorate i by summing up the number of roles j it plays and then multiplying it by the level of inclusiveness X_{ij} . Tuttnauer and Rahat (2023) propose three levels of inclusiveness with different values attached: inclusive selectorates that

include all members and supporters get assigned a value of 1, selectorates that include party organs on various levels of government are assigned a value of 0.5, and the most exclusive selectorate consisting only of the party leader a 0. This value should then be divided by the number of roles all selectorates play.

Formally, they suggest that inclusiveness should be measured by:

$$Inclusiveness = \frac{\Sigma_i * \Sigma_j * X_{ij}}{N}$$

In the example of the Fratelli d'Italia, this would mean that the level of inclusiveness for selecting provincial candidates is based on the provincial coordination having one role (1) and the regional coordination having one role (1). As the level of inclusiveness are selectorates that include party-organs on various levels of government, the level of inclusiveness is 0.5. Thus, for the Fratelli d'Italia, the inclusiveness would be calculated as:

$$Inclusiveness_{(Fratellid'Italia)} = \frac{1 * 1 * 0.5}{2} = 0.25$$

While an interesting and important contribution, Tuttnauer and Rahat (2023) acknowledge that with the current data available, their measure only applies to data collected by the Political Party Database, as systematic, detailed information on candidate selection is still sparse.

Furthermore, their coding also potentially results in nearly infinitely many possible combinations of inclusiveness and centralizations based on the powers of selectorates to suggest, screen, select, and veto or confirm candidates. The fact that there are so many possible combinations makes it difficult for researchers to employ continuous measures in relatively small n-quantitative studies, such as the sub-national studies conducted in this dissertation.

Other research has addressed this issue mainly by emphasizing the importance of the dominant selectorate as the deciding one, an approach followed in this dissertation. Kenig et al. (2015, 152), e.g., suggest that primaries are “those selection methods in which the cumulative weight of influence of party members, supporters and/or voters is equal to or greater than all other more exclusive selectorate(s) combined”. Transferring this once again to the example of the Italian Fratelli d'Italia, one would categorize the selection for provincial mayoral candidates to be “regional leadership” for candidates

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for president of the region and regional council, as well as for mayoral candidates in provincial capital municipalities, as the regional leadership gets to “pre-select” candidates and the national direction can be assumed to confirm their selection mostly.

Another reason why, in this dissertation, I relied on a categorical rather than continuous coding is because much of the research conducted in this dissertation is based on the perception of candidate selection that affects corruption perceptions and the perception of candidates as corrupt, rather than the actual selection. As was outlined in the theory section of this introductory chapter, voters can be assumed not to be invested in the detailed selection mechanisms of parties but instead to rely on easy cues. Such cues can come, e.g., from newspaper coverages, which highlight a single selection mechanism (e.g., “the party leadership announced that Candidate A is the leading candidate for the regional election” or “the winner of the primary election in party X is Candidate B”). Thus, while I do not negate the complex reality of candidate selection, this thesis aims primarily to investigate the effects of candidate selection on voters’ perceptions, making a categorical measurement appropriate.

For a similar reason, I do not distinguish in my dissertation between “open” (all voters can vote) and “closed” primaries (only members/affiliates) (Kenig and Pruyers 2018) or different primary procedures (e.g., two-stage processes of selection, different electoral rules). While there may be differences between open and closed primary elections, given that open primaries are very infrequently used in Italy and Spain, voters are unlikely to distinguish between open and closed primaries in their assessment of primaries. Empirically, distinguishing between the two types of primaries also does not result in a meaningful number of observations that would allow for the testing of hypotheses. The choice to not distinguish between different types of primaries is also in line with previous literature, which has argued that the differences in democratic implications and conceptions are marginal between these selection methods (Cross and Katz 2013; Pilet and Cross 2014; Sandri and Seddone 2015).

As for the dependent variables investigated in this dissertation, corruption perception, female representation, and quality of candidates, in Paper 1, my co-author Nicholas Charron and I relied on data collected by Charron et al. (2019) in the European Quality of Government Index survey (EQI). We employed corruption perception rather than actual corruption in our study, as corruption perception has been shown to affect political participation (Agerberg 2019), life satisfaction (Helliwell and Huang 2006), and trust in institutions (Morris and Klesner 2010) and ultimately, perception is what shapes these outcomes rather than the objective reality of corruption. For the outcomes of quality of candidates, female representation, and corruptibility evaluations of female candidates, in Papers 2, 3, and 4, I relied on my own data collection efforts through coding of gender in the dataset on mayoral candidates in Italy and on experimental data to assess quality evaluations.

5.2 Research Designs

Much research on candidate selection has relied on observational data to map the effect that changes in candidate selection have on various outcomes. This can be partially attributed to the newness of variation and lack of data on candidate selection, but also to the fact that manipulating candidate selection outside of survey- and lab experiments is difficult if not impossible and unethical for researchers. Even in the context of experiments, manipulating the perception of candidate selection as a way of capturing variation in voters' perception of selection, is still constrained by the empirical reality of how parties select their candidates, i.e., an experiment varying candidate selection methods in a country without real variation would be challenging to justify in terms of external validity.

In line with this, the first and third paper of this dissertation rely on observational data. In the first research article of this dissertation, co-authored with Nicholas Charron, we exploit the rich variation in candidate selection in parties and corruption perceptions in Spanish regions over time and conduct a difference-in-difference design, tracing the causal effect of the introduction of primaries on corruption perceptions of partisans. In this paper, we make use of a natural experiment based on the introduction of primaries over time.

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As parties in some regions introduced primaries in the period we investigate (2013-2021) while continuing not to use primaries in others, we can compare the partisans whose parties introduced primaries in their region with those that never experienced primaries to make causal inferences.

While observational data traditionally does not lend itself well to establishing causal claims, natural experiments such as the one cited above help to alleviate concerns of endogeneity and confounding factors at least partially. Difference-in-difference designs allow researchers to compare treated and untreated units before and after treatment and, given that the assumptions of parallel trends and strict endogeneity hold, to estimate a causal effect by calculating the difference between treated units before and after treatment to the difference between untreated units before and after treatment.

While DiD and other natural experiments are valuable tools for identification with observational data, they are only sometimes applicable given data availability and situation.

In the third paper, using data I collected myself on mayoral elections in Italy in 2014, I thus investigate in a cross-sectional regression design the effect that variation in candidate selection has in combination with regional corruption on female representation. The advantage of this approach of using observational data is that it captures actual variation on the sub-national level and explores high-quality data on different sub-national levels: regional, municipal, and individual. While corruption is measured at the regional level, candidate selection and gender are individual-level components. Several controls at the municipal level are also taken into account in this study.

However, while in the first paper, causality can be approached by making use of the difference-in-difference design, I refrain from making any causal claims in the third paper. Strong assumptions are needed to make causal claims based on observational data, which is difficult to achieve in settings where large parts of variation are hard to control. Specifically, I cannot rule out that confounding factors on any level (regional, municipal, individual) are present that would render the relationship insignificant, nor can I rule out that endogeneity might be shaping the relationship. Instead, I argue

that the pattern I observe in the case of Italy is an interesting starting point for future research investigating the effect of candidate selection on female representation in executive office on the sub-national level.

For the second and fourth papers, I develop a conjoint experiment that I conducted in Spain. Conjoint experiments are handy tools to investigate sensitive topics, such as gendered preferences for candidates (Crowder-Meyer et al. 2020; Doherty et al. 2019; Ono and Burden 2019; Teele et al. 2018) or immigration attitudes (Bansak et al. 2016; Hainmueller et al. 2015; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015), as they reduce social desirability bias. Conjoint experiments have also become increasingly popular, specifically in the literature on candidate selection, where they were employed in several instances to investigate elite preferences (Berz and Jankowski 2022; Doherty et al. 2019; Rehmer 2020b). In the case at hand, the conjoint design does thus help to avoid respondents feeling pressured to indicate that they prefer a female candidate or a candidate being selected by seemingly more democratic means (i.e., primaries). Another advantage of conjoint experiments is that they allow for powered analysis with fewer participants while emulating real-life choices by giving respondents several attributes to rate, e.g., candidates. In the case of the experiment that was conducted for this dissertation, candidate selection, and gender were among other attributes such as education, political experience, and ideological position in the party that were randomized and presented to respondents to disentangle the effect of partisanship on perceptions of candidates' quality and to investigate whether the effect of candidates selection on corruptibility evaluations differs by candidate gender.

In Paper 2, in addition to the insights gained from the experimental design, I leverage evidence collected in an open-ended question to explore how respondents perceive primaries systematically. The answers to the question "Why would you like your party to hold more primaries to select candidates?" are coded in an explorative and inductive manner, thus adding a qualitative dimension to the otherwise quantitative research designs.

Conjoint experiments (as any experimental study) do not suffer as much as observational data from causality concerns and allow us to make bolder

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claims about a causal connection between an assumed cause and effect. However, as single-country experimental studies, they come with a shortcoming in terms of spatial and temporal generalizability.

I believe that Papers 2 and 4, together with the other studies mentioned here, highlight how conjoint experiments can be valuable in investigating the consequences of candidate selection. Conjoint experiments have great potential in future research on candidate selection, as has also shown impressively by Rehmert (2020b) and Berz and Jankowski (2022) in investigating the preferences of party delegates and leaders in selecting candidates. To overcome challenges of causality in more general terms, I believe research on candidate selection should make more frequent use of settings that lend themselves to natural experiments as well as drawing on (conjoint) experimental designs to investigate the effect of candidate selection on fairness and fairness perceptions while simultaneously increasing the data available for such studies.

Table 2 presents an overview of the papers' cases, data, and methodology.

	RQ	IV	DV	Case	Data	Method
Paper I (With Nicholas Charron), <i>West Euro- pean Politics</i>	How do primaries affect corruption perceptions?	Binary: primaries vs. all other types of selection	Corruption perceptions (of institutions; individual-level data)	Regional elections in Spain	Obser- vational	Statistical analysis, DiD
Paper II <i>Party Politics</i>	How do primaries affect evaluations of candidates' quality?	Binary: primaries vs. leadership selection	Corruptibility, competence, experience (of candidates) individual-level data)	Spain	Experi- mental	Mixed methods, conjoint ex- periment and open-ended ques- tion
Paper III <i>Electorals Studies</i>	How does candi- date selection affect female representation in high corruption contexts?	Candidate selection of mayoral candidates; regional cor- ruption	Gender of may- oral candidates	Mayoral elec- tions in Italy	Obser- vational	Statistical analysis, Logit
Paper IV	Is the effect of primaries on the evaluations of candidates' corruptibility gendered?	Binary: primaries vs. Leadership selection; gender of candidates	Corruption perceptions (of candidates; indi- vidual level data)	Spain	Experi- mental	Conjoint experi- ment analysis

Table 2: Summary of the research designs of the articles included in the dissertation.

6 Papers in brief

6.1 Study 1: Inclusive Candidate Selection and Corruption Perceptions – Evidence from Spanish Regions

The first paper of this dissertation, Charron and Schwenk (2023), looks at the effect of primaries on corruption perceptions in the sub-national context. The paper is motivated by the increase of inclusive candidate selection methods in the past decades in Western Europe and specifically in regional elections in Spain. While previous research investigated why parties introduced primaries in Spanish regions and how this affected the behavior of elected Members of Parliament, the effects of candidate selection on voters' perceptions of their institutions have remained largely understudied. This paper aims to answer the question, "How does inclusive candidate selection affect corruption perceptions?"

One might expect that the transparency and openness of the primary process, as well as the increased accountability of parties' candidates to their base (Adams and Merrill 2013; Serra 2011), decreases the perceptions of corruption amongst voters of parties that use them. However, based on previous literature on candidate selection, we develop three mechanisms through which the increase in intraparty competition introduced by primaries could result in higher corruption perceptions.

The first mechanism, which we call “window-dressing”, suggests that the power transfer in primaries is merely superficial. While the party base is formally granted the power to select candidates, party leaders introduce hurdles for candidates to enter primaries and restrict actual competition to exercise control over selection (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Ford 1909; Hazan and Rahat 2010).

The second and third mechanisms are based on the competitiveness of primaries. In our second mechanism, we theorize that primaries attract candidates outside the traditional party elite (Serra 2011), that could aim to campaign on their outsider status and emphasize anti-elitist and anti-corruption platforms (Bågenholm and Charron 2014; Engler 2020).

The third mechanism is based on records of vote-buying and mass-registrations in primaries (Ascencio 2021; Baum and Robinson 1995; Carty 2004; Carty and Cross 2006; Malloy 2003; Scherlis 2008). Parties lack the will and means to prevent such illicit methods (Kenig and Pruyssers 2018). At the same time, candidates have much to win by engaging in these methods and gaining a nomination and little to lose, as they are unlikely to be prosecuted for doing so.

We assume that all three mechanisms would result in higher corruption perceptions, as party supporters who observe such tactics will most likely become disillusioned with the system and perceive it as more corrupt (Bacchus and Boulding 2021; Singer 2009).

We test the claim that primaries increase party supporters’ perceptions of corruption using a natural experiment in Spain between 2010 and 2021. Primaries are unevenly implemented by Spanish parties across parties but also within parties across regions. This variation allows us to compare individuals whose party has never used a primary in their region with individuals whose party has switched from another selection mode to primaries over time. The information about primary elections was coded based on a dataset shared by Debus and Navarrete (2018) that was extended to include i.a. information about primaries that happened past 2015 and to include “coronations”, i.e., primaries in which a single candidate competed and was selected. Our dependent variable measurement, corruption perceptions, comes from the

European Quality of Government Index dataset (EQI) and includes information on respondents' perceptions of their local institutions as corrupt.

Our results suggest that party supporters whose party introduced primaries have higher corruption perceptions, a result that is robust to several tests we conduct. The effect is modest in strength but significant. The mechanism seems to be primarily driven by competitive primaries, thus leading us to conclude that the process of primaries (e.g., campaigning of candidates or engagement in illicit means to win) is increasing corruption perceptions. However, given the lack of data on candidates' campaigning strategies (Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020) and vote-buying in primaries, we have to refrain from making strong claims about potential mechanisms in this paper.

We further find that the negative effect of primaries on corruption perceptions decreases over time, which could indicate an institutionalization effect, similar to the institutionalization of party systems, which leads to more programmatic rather than clientelistic competition. As primaries become more regularly used, the iterated interaction between primary voters and candidates could foster programmatic linkages (Keefer 2007) and decrease the appeal of campaigning on anti-corruption and anti-elite competitions. However, based on our data and study alone, we cannot make a statement as to what is the driving factor in the reduced effect of primaries on corruption perceptions over time.

This article contributes to the literature on candidate selection and corruption. By investigating how primaries affect corruption perceptions, we add a new outcome to the growing literature on the effect of primaries on individuals' attitudes. In doing so, we show that primaries have an effect beyond the party and affect voters' attitudes. This highlights the need for more research on the effects of intraparty organizations beyond the party. In addition, as the results suggest that corruption perceptions increase due to primaries, this study also encourages future research to specifically focus on the underlying (untested) mechanisms that are proposed, namely campaigning and potential clientelism in party primaries.

Second, by showing how primaries affect voters' corruption perceptions, we

demonstrate how important it is for corruption research to consider parties and intraparty dynamics. We show that intraparty processes, such as primaries, affect corruption perceptions, adding a meso-level factor to the literature on corruption that has previously focused mainly on institutional and individual determinants. Finally, with this article, we make an empirical contribution by introducing a novel and extensive dataset on candidate selection and exploring the potential long-term effects of primaries.

6.2 Study 2: The Effect of Primaries on Voters' Evaluation of Candidates' Quality – Experimental Evidence

While in the first study of this dissertation, we show that there is a plausible causal effect between primaries and higher corruption perceptions, we are neither able to test the theoretical mechanisms outlined in our paper nor are we able to exclude the possibility that other factors were indeed driving heightened corruption perceptions. In the second article included in this dissertation, Schwenk (2023), I aim to show that candidate selection matters to voters by testing whether candidate selection is employed as a heuristic by voters to evaluate candidates' quality, similar to other factors such as gender, age, and political experience of candidates (Doherty et al. 2019; Enelow and Hinich 1982; Kirkland and Coppock 2018; Ono and Burden 2019; Rehmert 2020a). As such, this paper employs a different methodology and dependent variable compared to Paper 1.

This study is not only motivated by the findings and shortcomings of Paper 1, but also by the mixed findings of studies on the electoral benefits of primaries. While some studies outside the U.S. context found that primaries result in a higher vote share for parties that use them (Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006; Ramiro 2016; Young and Cross 2002), other studies did not find such a result (Astudillo and Lago 2021; De Luca and Venturino 2017; Pedersen and Schumacher 2015). An important caveat and potential

explanation of the mixed findings is that the main predicting factor of voting decisions is partisanship (Bauer 2015; Gooch et al. 2021; Kirkland and Coppock 2018; Rahn 1993). Thus, voters might still prefer one candidate selection method over another, but this preference might not find expression in a voting decision and, therefore, might be less apparent by assessing parties' vote shares.

Instead, in this study, I argue that candidate selection can be employed by voters as a cue to learn about potential candidates, just as voters make inferences about candidates based on their gender, age, ethnicity and education (Doherty et al. 2019; Enelow and Hinich 1982; Kirkland and Coppock 2018; Ono and Burden 2019; Rehmert 2020a). Drawing on procedural fairness theory (Erlingsson et al. 2014; Grimes 2006; Tyler 1990), I argue that candidate selection can serve as a procedural cue, such that voters could infer from the transparency and openness of the process that the candidate selected must be of better character and general quality (Serra 2011).

However, as cited in Paper 1 in this dissertation, if primaries do not hold the promise of transparency and increased accountability, voters might believe candidates resulting out of primaries to be worse candidates, as the logic of procedural fairness gets inversed. Now, this is not to make an argument about the actual quality of the candidate. It is rather about how voters perceive that candidate. That is to say, the same candidate could be perceived differently by voters depending on how they were selected as a candidate. If primaries are indeed perceived as being rigged by illicit means (Baum and Robinson 1995; Carty 2004; Carty and Cross 2006; Malloy 2003; Scherlis 2008), then a candidate having won a primary could be assumed to have engaged in vote-buying themselves to win the nomination. This could result in the candidate being perceived as being of worse quality.

I test these contradicting arguments using a conjoint experiment employed in Spain. As noted above, Spain is an interesting case to test arguments about primaries because of the variation in selection methods employed. Using a conjoint experiment, the study models a situation in which voters have to choose between two candidates with varying characteristics and are asked to decide which candidate they believe to be more likely to act corrupt,

to be more competent and experienced. In the experiment, the respondent is provided with two hypothetical profiles of candidates of their party with six randomly selected traits and attributes. The key attribute of interest, candidate selection, is randomly varied between selection via primaries and selection by a regional leader. The experimental results suggest that voters perceive candidates who come out of primaries to be less corrupt but also less competent and less experienced.

To investigate the underlying causal mechanism, in a second step, I analyze the responses to an open-ended question of why respondents would prefer their party to use more primaries. The answers reveal that respondents' perceptions of primaries broadly align with the arguments of procedural fairness, such that they perceive primaries as a means to increase transparency, democracy, and accountability within the party and beyond it, as well as leading to renewal of the party in terms of political personal. The emphasis of respondents that primaries do not allow for "hand-picking" of candidates, as well as their references to primaries producing less corrupt candidates because candidates lack elite ties, highlight that respondents perceive candidates as outsiders to political elites. This outsider status is simultaneously beneficial and hurtful to candidates: While candidates are perceived as less corrupt, given that they are not embedded in the (corrupt) party network if selected via primaries, the same lack of embeddedness in the network leads to candidates being perceived as less competent and less experienced.

The main contribution of this paper lies in its novel design, which allows to explore how voters perceive candidates that result out of primaries. While previous literature has investigated the electoral benefits of primaries for parties, we know relatively little about how voters perceive candidates who come out of primaries. As such, this paper demonstrates that primaries directly affect voters, a novel finding. It also highlights that primaries result in different outcomes in terms of evaluations of candidates. They do not uniformly increase the perception of candidates' quality but rather lead to candidates being perceived as less corrupt but also less experienced and less competent. As such, this paper also demonstrates the need for nuanced studies of voters' attitudes towards variation in candidate selection and intraparty dynamics, as, e.g., a study on vote-choice would not have captured

the underlying variation in voters' evaluations of candidates. By exploring voters' perceptions of the primary process, the paper also adds to our understanding of the underlying theoretical mechanisms that drive voters' evaluations. Furthermore, this paper contributes to a growing literature on candidate evaluations more generally, which in large parts has been centered around the U.S. system, by broadening the universe of cases studied and showing the applicability of theories on U.S. voters' preferences in the European context.

6.3 Study 3: Candidate Selection and Female Representation in the Context of High Corruption: The Case of Italy's 2014 Mayor Elections

In the third paper, Schwenk (2022), I focus on the effect of candidate selection on female representation in high corruption contexts, thus turning to the second theme of this dissertation, the gendered effects of candidate selection. Paper 3 departs from the common finding that corruption hinders female representation (Grimes and Wängnerud 2018; Stockemer and Sundström 2019a; Stockemer et al. 2020; Sundström and Wängnerud 2016) and the findings by Valdini (2019) and Funk et al. (2019) that high-level leaders appropriate female stereotypes in high corruption contexts to signal transparency and honesty to voters.

In this paper, I develop this argumentation further to extend to the sub-national context and executive office. I argue that while high-level leaders are likely to anticipate voters' stereotyping of female candidates as more honest (Barnes and Beaulieu 2019; Thomas and Petrow 2021; Valdini 2019), low-level leaders will feel threatened in their local rent-extraction by a female mayoral candidate and will double-down on their efforts to exclude women from office. While selectors share the goal of winning elections, low-level leaders are also assumed to hold more negative stereotypes against women and not to see them as viable candidates for executive office (Niven 1998;

Ruf 2019).

Primaries, I argue in this study, could allow women to circumvent this local corrupt elite and build on their status as community leaders to become candidates (Baldez 2007; Elder 2012; Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015).

Paper 3 tests the empirical implications by combining data from the Italian mayoral elections in 2014 that I collected myself with regional data on corruption by the EQI. Using logistic regression, the results suggest that high-level leaders are less likely to select a female candidate in high corruption contexts for executive office, contradicting the theoretical expectations formulated. The effect found is rather strong in magnitude but only significant at a lower level of statistical confidence and should be interpreted with caution. In the paper, I provide several potential explanations for this finding, which contradicts recent national legislative selection literature (Valdini 2019; Funk et al. 2019). First, the executive nature of mayor offices may change the motivations of high-level leaders in a way that has yet to be theorized. As selection for candidacy for executive office is a zero-sum game, high-level leaders potentially have to put more effort into satisfying male local leaders when selecting a mayoral candidate to secure their survival. Especially given that the “high-level leadership” category consists mainly of regional leadership, they may depend more on local leaders’ support than national leaders. Second, it is also possible that regional leaders feel threatened in their rent extraction by female mayors who could aim for a future career in the regional office.

Primaries are found to be neither detrimental nor beneficial to female representation. In the paper, I further explore potential reasons why women are not more likely to result as candidates out of primaries and find that women are neither avoiding competing in primaries nor being outcompeted by strong incumbents.

Building on the work of Valdini (2019) and Funk et al. (2019), this paper combines literature on corruption and female representation with arguments on candidate selection. Its novelty lies in developing distinct arguments on how corruption shapes the motivations of varying selectorates and the focus on executive office on the sub-national level. Much of the literature on candidate selection but also corruption and female representation focuses on

legislative office on the national level. However, holding a sub-national office is an important stepping stone for national-level careers (Niven 1998; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Rehmert 2020a). Additionally, even locally, executive office is more important and influential, especially for rent extraction, than legislative office (Franceschet and Piscopo 2014). As such, this paper contributes to the literature on candidate selection and female representation by changing the focus on the level of government and demonstrates that theories developed for national and legislative offices are not easily transferable to the sub-national level, motivating future studies on lower levels of government. Secondly, this paper addresses an empirical puzzle: Despite Italy adopting gender quotas for subnational elections, we large variation in the percentage of female councillors and mayors can be observed across municipalities. This paper helps us understand how two sources of variation, candidate selection and corruption, interact. Empirically, this paper contributes to the data available for investigating female representation and candidate selection on the local level, including an extensive database on the characteristics of the candidates selected as well as the candidate selection method.

6.4 Study 4: Who’s the Outsider Now? The Effects of Candidate Selection and Experience on Gendered Evaluations of Corruptibility

The fourth study investigates whether candidate selection affects voters’ perceptions of female candidates as less corrupt. While research has investigated whether primaries lead to more (Baldez 2007; Elder 2012; Fortin-Rittberger and Rittberger 2015) or less female representation (Hazan and Rahat 2010; Hennings and Urbatsch 2016; Verge and Wiesehomeier 2019), we know little about how voters perceive women that come out of primary elections and how the process of primaries might affect voters’ evaluation of women’s corruptibility.

Starting from the argument that women are outsiders to potentially corrupt networks, in this article, I argue that women's outsider status could be reinforced if they are selected via a method that voters believe produces outsiders. A woman, who is an outsider, selected via an outsider-producing method, could thus benefit in a multiplicative manner regarding corruptibility evaluations. In comparison, a woman selected by an elite would be perceived as more of a political insider who already has ties to the leadership. In contrast, a male candidate selected via primaries would only benefit from the primary bonus of being an outsider. Thus, I argue that primaries could exacerbate the evaluation of women as less corrupt. In the second step, I develop arguments on how political experience would negate the outsider status of women and primary candidates, as more experience signals a political insider status.

The expectations briefly outlined here are tested with the same conjoint experiment outlined in Paper 2, including interaction effects for gender and selection, gender and experience, and selection and experience. The results show that being selected via primaries and being a female candidate, as well as having less experience, independently leads to lower evaluations of the corruptibility of candidates, on average. However, female candidates selected via primaries do not benefit "double" from being a woman and selected via a method that highlights an outsider status. Additionally, while primary candidates suffer in terms of their corruptibility evaluations when political experience increases, experience does not affect gendered evaluations of corruptibility to the same extent. Instead, even a woman with much seniority (two terms in parliament) is still perceived as less corrupt than any male newcomer candidate. This indicates that women are more than "just outsiders" in voters' perceptions, whereas primary candidates mainly benefit from a newcomer bonus.

This study contributes to several research strands. First, it contributes to the literature on gender and stereotyping by investigating how candidate selection and experience could affect the stereotypes employed by voters. It demonstrates that candidate selection does not affect voters' corruptibility evaluations of female candidates. However, it also shows that experience does affect evaluations gendered evaluations of candidates. Given the find-

ing that women are less hurt by experience than male candidates, this paper also provides indicative evidence on another debate: Whether voters perceive women as outsiders or more honest. As even experienced women are less likely to be perceived as corrupt than male newcomers, the findings suggest that women might benefit from voters believing them to be more honest rather than perceiving them as outsiders to corrupt networks. As such, this paper can motivate future research that contrasts these two mechanisms more clearly. Second, the paper adds to the literature on corruption perceptions and valence, as it shows that, in general, candidates' corruptibility evaluations worsen with experience - this could indicate that experience, which is generally seen as favorable, comes at a valence cost in terms of corruptibility evaluations. This paper thus opens new avenues to research whether political seniority comes with a cost regarding integrity perceptions.

7 Discussion

7.1 Summary

This dissertation explores the effect of candidate selection on corruption perceptions and female representation. It starts from the puzzle that while inclusive candidate selection is theoretically characterized by procedural fairness and transparency (Adams and Merrill 2013; Serra 2011; Wauters and Kern 2021), instances of vote-buying and leadership domination of the process undermine this idea (Ascencio 2021; Astudillo and Detterbeck 2020; Baum and Robinson 1995; Scherlis 2008). In this chapter, I have argued that candidate selection can affect voters' corruption perceptions, evaluations of candidates, and female representation. Candidate selection methods affect voters' perception of the broader political system they live in, as candidates later become politicians. However, open selection procedures such as primaries also reveal information about the inner workings of parties to voters. The results of the first paper suggest that primaries can negatively affect voters' perception of corruption in local institutions, and the effect becomes weaker over time. While it is impossible, based on the work of this dissertation, to clarify which of the mechanisms studied in Paper 1 is driving this effect, a potential theoretical explanation lies in that primaries get institutionalized, i.e., similar to the institutionalization of party systems, competition could shift from clientelism to programmatic competition. However, to theoretically ground such arguments, there is a need for more systematic long-term studies of the effects of primaries on voters' per-

ceptions of institutional fairness. The results of the second study, however, suggest that voters believe that candidates resulting out of primaries are less corrupt, a contrasting finding that could be attributed to the difference in dependent variable employed and the difference in methods and the period studied.

Additionally, primaries do not unequivocally benefit voters' evaluations of candidates. However, primary candidates are also evaluated as less competent and experienced than candidates selected by party elites, as voters believe them to be political outsiders. In regards to gendered effects, while the selection of female candidates in high corruption contexts is to a certain extent affected by candidate selection, corruptibility evaluations of female candidates by voters are not affected by whether a candidate was selected via primaries or elites.

The articles out of which this dissertation consists contribute to several subfields: the literature on corruption is addressed in multiple forms; in the first study, co-authored with Nicholas Charron, we show how primaries, especially in the early onset, affect corruption perceptions among party supporters whose parties use them, while the second study investigates how voters evaluate the candidates that result out of different candidate selection methods more directly, and explores voters' evaluation of primaries. Taken together, Paper 1 and Paper 2 highlight the need for research on corruption and valence perceptions to focus on intraparty democracy and party organizations more broadly. At the same time, the papers taken together also illustrate the possible differences between 'normative preferences' (expressed in the hypothetical experiment) and 'real world behavior' (expressed in the observational study), which also apply to other research fields like corruption-voting (Incerti 2020).

Paper 3 and Paper 4 address corruption from a gendered perspective, simultaneously addressing the literature on corruption and female representation. In Paper 3, I explore how candidate selection affects female representation and how the effect is moderated by corruption, taking a different angle on both issues compared to previous research by focusing on the sub-national level and executive office. Both holding executive office and the sub-national level are largely understudied in the literature on corruption and female representation. Additionally, while the literature on candidate selection has fo-

cused on female representation on the sub-national level, previous research has not considered moderating effects of corruption. As such, the study contributes theoretically to this literature by combining previously not combined arguments and transferring them to a different level of government. Paper 4 follows the line of gendered effects of candidate selection and investigates how voters' evaluation of candidates' corruptibility based on selection method is gendered.

By developing arguments on how candidate selection affects each of the outcomes studied, this dissertation also makes important contributions to the literature on candidate selection by demonstrating the consequences of variation in candidate selection on outcomes that lay beyond the party. While candidate selection might not be the strongest predictor found in the studies, the dissertation shows that how candidates are selected affects the outcomes studied here and demonstrates the need for studies that focus on outcomes outside of the party when studying candidate selection, especially in conjunction with contextual factors, such as corruption.

7.2 Limitations

Despite the extensive contributions of this dissertation, there are aspects of candidate selection and its consequences that remained unstudied in this dissertation. First, while this dissertation heavily relies on assumptions of prevalent vote-buying and campaigning on anti-corruption platforms by candidates in primaries, I remain unable to test these assumptions. As Astudillo and Detterbeck (2020) state, while data is rare on candidate selection, even less is known about the process of primaries⁶. Evidence on vote-buying and mass-registrations in primaries remains largely anecdotal (c.f. also Ascencio 2021), and to the best of my knowledge, no comprehensive effort has been made to investigate the campaigns on which candidates run in primaries.

⁶For recent advances in this field, addressing voters' motives in selecting leadership candidates and congruence voting in primaries, please refer to Wauters et al. (2022) and Vandeleene et al. (2023).

As these assumptions are key aspects of the dissertation's theoretical argument, it would have been interesting to inquire more about this. However, given the sensitive nature of vote-buying and the difficulties of measuring it, as well as the low likelihood that parties would allow to conduct, e.g., membership surveys in which their members are asked whether intraparty clientelism takes place, it was not feasible within the realm of this dissertation to collect this data. Similar arguments apply to the campaigning of primary candidates: While without a doubt of interest, a systematic data collection on this matter was beyond the scope of the dissertation. Such a data collection effort would require a systematic search of newspaper archives, party archives, and expert interviews, which was impossible to do within this dissertation's scope.

As discussed earlier, another potential shortcoming of this dissertation is its measurement of candidate selection. While other research argued that candidate selection is a continuum and complex process (Gallagher 1988; Hazan and Rahat 2010; Tuttnauer and Rahat 2023), for theoretical and practical reasons, I abstained from measuring it as continuous in the studies included in this dissertation. However, the dichotomous measure can also not capture another important aspect of candidate selection: the importance of informal influence (Bjarnegård 2018; Cheng and Tavits 2011; Meserve et al. 2018; Reiser 2023). This could be especially important for Paper 3, which investigates how corruption and candidate selection interact in affecting female representation. In this case, informal influences are likely to have played a role not easily captured by the coding decisions and could potentially explain the lack of more substantial findings. The other studies in this dissertation are less likely to suffer from such issues, as they concern voters' perceptions of candidate selection. As I am interested in how voters perceive variation in candidate selection in these papers, informal influences are accounted for by voters' perceptions of the candidate selection method. They are, therefore, part of the anticipated mechanism by default.

In terms of outcomes studied, this dissertation is limited to two large topics: the effect of candidate selection on corruption perceptions and female representation. As argued before, corruption perceptions have drastic effects on various factors that political scientists and the general public care about,

such as life satisfaction (Helliwell and Huang 2006), political participation (Agerberg 2020; Dahlberg and Solevid 2016; Ezrow and Xezonakis 2016)), and trust (Hakhverdian and Mayne 2012; Morris and Klesner 2010; Richey 2010; Rothstein 2013), and ultimately shape individual actions. However, some might see the focus on corruption perceptions rather than “actual” corruption as a shortcoming.

The second outcome, female representation, suffers less from this shortcoming, at least in Paper 3, which studies the presence of female candidates among mayoral candidates. Still, one might question why female representation is important enough to be among the first outcomes studied. As women continue to be underrepresented in political offices, especially in executive offices, I perceive it paramount to study how changes in candidate selection affect women’s representation. However, the number of outcomes that could and should be studied in relation to candidate selection is infinite, and a large number of outcomes had to remain unstudied in this dissertation.

Furthermore, while Paper 1 employs a design that covers several years, most of this dissertation is built on designs that rely on single-time point measurements, such as the Italian mayoral elections in 2014 and the experimental studies. Paper 1, however, hints at the possibility that the effects of primaries on the outcomes investigated here vary across time, a caveat that this dissertation cannot address.

Finally, earlier in this introductory chapter, I argued that primaries are best studied where they occur and justified the selection of Italy and Spain as the two main cases under investigation. While the selection of these cases was appropriate for reasons of validity and variation in the relevant concepts, it limits the applicability of the findings. Spain and Italy are both unique countries with historically high corruption levels within the context of Western European countries. This does not only potentially threaten causal inferences if primaries were introduced explicitly because of high corruption levels or if candidate selection methods are chosen to prevent or strengthen female representation among candidates but also restricts the inferences and predictions that can be made if primaries are introduced for the selection of executive positions in less corrupt contexts. Nonetheless, given the current

data availability, I believe this dissertation still makes important empirical contributions. I hope future research will allow for more comparative cross-country research on sub-national executive offices.

7.3 Concluding remarks

In this dissertation, I developed four studies on two themes: corruption perceptions and female representation. Studies 1 and 2 show how primaries, contrasted with elite selections, affect voters' perceptions of their institutions as corrupt and how they influence the evaluation of candidates' quality. The results suggest that primaries lead to higher perceptions of corruption in local institutions, which is largely attributed to the competitive process of primaries. However, Paper 1 also suggests that the effect of primaries becomes weaker over time. In addition to this, the findings of Paper 2 suggest that voters perceive candidates selected via primaries as less corrupt but also less competent and less experienced than candidates selected by elites. The analysis of open-ended questions explains this finding: Voters perceive candidates from primaries as political outsiders that benefit from this outsider status in terms of their corruptibility evaluations. However, they are also evaluated as less experienced and competent because they lack connections to political networks.

Paper 3 turns to the second theme of the dissertation, female representation, and shows that candidate selection interacts in affecting female representation among mayoral candidates in high corruption contexts, such that high-level leaders are less likely to select a female candidate in high corruption contexts, whereas primaries do not affect this. Paper 4 looks at potential gendered effects of candidate selection on voters' evaluation of candidates by investigating whether candidate selection can exacerbate or mitigate voters' perception of female candidates as less corrupt. The results suggest that voters' evaluation of female candidates is neither increased nor decreased by selection via inclusive means, indicating that women's outsider status is not exacerbated by an outsider-producing method. Instead, voters seem to perceive women as more than "just" outsiders to corrupt networks, as they are also not harmed by increases in experience to the same extent as male candidates are.

The theoretical contribution of this dissertation can be summarized as developing a theoretical framework in which the internal dynamics of parties, and especially intraparty competition, affect outcomes that lay beyond the realm of the party and developing arguments on how specifically candidate selection affects these outcomes. In detail, Paper 1 addresses the lacunae of parties as an important factor in corruption research, which has largely been focused on macro- and micro-level factors. In contrast, Paper 2 addresses the question of how voters perceive primaries and how they evaluate candidates resulting from different candidate selections more directly. Paper 3 addresses the field of corruption and female representation as well as the literature on candidate selection and female representation. With notable exceptions, the two strands of literature have largely “co-existed” rather than interacted. Thus, by merging the two strands of literature, candidate selection is added as a potential moderating factor to the literature on female representation and corruption, and corruption is introduced as a moderator to the literature on candidate selection and female representation. Further, as one of the few studies focusing on executive and sub-national office, this study also makes important empirical contributions, as is underpinned by the findings that contradict recent findings on national legislative office. Paper 4 further contributes to these fields by investigating how candidate selection affects the presence of female candidates and whether voters perceive them differently in terms of corruptibility evaluations. The findings of Paper 4 suggest that voters’ evaluations of women’s corruptibility are not affected by how candidates are selected.

The work in this dissertation also makes significant empirical contributions, as all studies included in this dissertation are based on extensive data collection efforts on sub-national-level candidate selections. This broadens the availability of data for future research and allows easier studying of a variety of topics in relation to candidate selection and candidates themselves and compliments the theoretical contributions of this dissertation.

The takeaway from this dissertation in terms of whether intraparty democracy and especially inclusive candidate selection are beneficial for parties and democracy is not simple to formulate. While primaries show an initial increasing effect on corruption perceptions, this effect declines over time, and

voters believe candidates resulting out of primaries to be less corrupt, which could help counteract the loss of trust in politicians and parties. An increase in intraparty democracy can also motivate party members to become more engaged in their party and can offer viable new ways of holding party leaders and candidates accountable. Additionally, while primaries are not conducive to the likelihood of female candidates being selected or affect the evaluations of female candidates, they do not hurt female candidates in either regard.

As this dissertation largely focused on two themes, it is left to explore for future research how candidate selection also affects other outcomes, such as political participation and trust, an issue that also needs to be addressed through the expansion of available data sources. Another central aim of future research should be to investigate the primary process in more detail, focusing on the motivations of party members to participate in primaries and their incentives to vote for candidates, as well as to investigate the strategies and motivations of candidates in primaries. The field would also benefit from further clarification of the definition of primaries, as well as developing more nuanced measurements of candidate selections that are widely applicable.

However, this dissertation laid out to show that changes in parties' organizational structures, especially changes in candidate selection, can have consequences that reach beyond the party itself and affect voters more directly than previous research might have anticipated.

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Included papers I-IV

1. Charron, Nicholas and Jana Schwenk. 2023. "Inclusive candidate selection and corruption: evidence from Spanish regions." *West European Politics* 46(7):1396–1423.
2. Schwenk, Jana. 2023a. "The effect of primaries on voters' evaluation of candidates' quality – experimental evidence." *Party Politics*, e-pub ahead of print.
3. Schwenk, Jana. 2022. "Candidate selection and female representation in the context of high corruption: the case of Italy's 2014 mayor elections." *Electoral Studies* 79.
4. Schwenk, Jana. 2023b. Who's the outsider now? The effects of candidate selection and experience on gendered evaluations of corruptibility. *Unpublished Manuscript*.