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Presidential Nomination Forecasting 2024: Classic Components in an Atypical Race

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Introduction

The topic of American presidential elections has remained central to political discussions since the founding fathers drafted the Constitution. Article Two, Section One of the Constitution lays out the guidelines for presidential elections, yet Article Two neglects to mention the process of how to nominate candidates for the presidential race. Lacking Constitutional guidance, early presidential nomination conventions of the parties in the 19th century and early 20th century did not reflect ideals of democracy. The delegates that voted at the conventions were selected by party insiders and their votes reflected the sentiments of the party bosses, disregarding the preferences of the general voters. Party bosses at the time were accused of bribing delegates to vote a certain way with the promise of power and money. (Reuters, 2016) Votes at this time were outright bought; money has always played a large part in presidential elections.

Presidential nomination reform started with President Theodore Roosevelt in 1912. Roosevelt previously held office twice, and he was seeking his third re-election. Roosevelt went on to win nine out of ten Republican primaries yet failed to secure the nomination. As previous nomination conventions went, the party bosses controlled the delegates' votes and William Howard Taft secured the Republican nomination. Roosevelt's shortcomings led to the formation of the Progressive Party, or the Bull Moose Party, which chose Roosevelt as their presidential candidate. Although Roosevelt did not win the presidency in 1912, Americans faced the corruption of presidential nominations and demanded reforms. The power was put in the hands of the voters, no longer the party bosses, as primaries were adopted in nearly every state. The primaries allowed for the voters to choose their delegate, and as a result, primaries became a more relevant and influential part of presidential elections. Candidates seeking party nomination now cater their campaigns to early primaries such as New Hampshire and South Carolina, as

well as the Iowa Caucus, to ensure early success. Primary season will not be a triumph for all who enter the race seeking party nomination; some candidates will drop out of the race during this time if they are not successful. In the 2024 election cycle, candidates Vivek Ramaswamy and Ron DeSantis dropped out after their third and fourth-place finishes in Iowa. As primary season continues, voters will have a clearer indication of the candidate that has the potential to be chosen as a strong contender for President of the United States.

The procedure for selecting a nominee for the presidential election is both long and complex; political scientists and researchers work to identify significant trends and collect data throughout the nomination process. Many determinants play a role in the outcome of presidential party nominations throughout different stages of the election. Several factors contribute to this including campaign expenditures, cash reserves, polling results, momentum of a campaign, and endorsements given by party elites. Electoral activities in the pre-primary stage can play a more significant role than in later stages research has found. (Dowdle et al., 2016) Specifically regarding the pre-primary period, the activities include campaign fundraising, expenditures, elite support, polls, cash on hand, and early campaign organization.

When a candidate has high fundraising and organization, this is referred to as "frontloading" their campaign. Frontloading is a significant predictor of building momentum in the early stages of the campaign. Momentum plays a large role in setting the tone of the race and creating a horse race for early media coverage, yet it is difficult to measure momentum statistically. Fundraising, expenditures, elite endorsements, and polls are variables that can be measured quantitatively before the primaries begin. Political scientists argue these components may have a larger effect on outcomes than primary results. In the literature review, these components and their significance will be explored further. Given the importance and

complexity of presidential nominations, this study aims to investigate the determinants that predict success in a presidential election.

My research will focus on the current election cycle, the 2024 Republican nomination contest. President Joe Biden is running for re-election; thus the Democrat nomination will be excluded from my research. As of March 6, 2024, all Republican candidates (with the exclusion of Donald Trump) had dropped out of the race. Nikki Haley decided to end her campaign after winning the singular state of Vermont on Super Tuesday, and she was the last candidate left in the race. The elimination of the other candidates leaves former President Donald Trump as the front-runner and only option for the Republican nomination. The circumstances surrounding the 2024 race for the Republican nomination are unprecedented, suggesting different factors could influence the outcome in ways not observed in previous nomination contests. The atypicality of this race raises the potential for variables that have been significant in the past to be insignificant, or vice versa. A review of the literature on the classic variables used for nomination forecasting in past election cycles is discussed in the following section.

Literature Review

A plethora of studies exist that assess the determinants of success in presidential party nominations. Scholarship on the topic became more prominent after the McGovern Fraser Commission recommendations were adopted by the political parties in the 1970s. The reforms altered the rules in awarding delegates and determining winners. This led to many states altering their primary calendars, causing longer primary elections. (Adkins & Dowdle, 2005) These changes also shifted the factors that led to success in winning a party's presidential nomination. Presidential nomination candidates need to rise high enough in the polls to cross the hurdles

thrown at them in the frontloaded calendar, including the pre-primary period and have the stamina to endure the long primary calendar ahead.

      The nature of the presidential nomination process resulted in campaign fundraising being a more important component of achieving success in the presidential party primaries. Presidential campaigns have become increasingly expensive throughout the years. According to OpenSecrets (n.d.), President Joe Biden spent $1.044 billion of his campaign committee's money and an additional $580 million of outside money during the 2020 Presidential race. Biden's total reaches a staggering $1.6 billion spent. Incumbent of the 2020 presidential election, Donald Trump spent $773 million of committee money and $313 million of outside money. Trump's total spent comes to about $1.087 billion. Biden won the 2020 presidential election, perhaps reflecting the importance of his increased funds compared to Trump. However, the 2016 presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump shows a different outcome. Clinton accumulated more spending than Trump, yet she ultimately lost the race. Clinton spent approximately $769 million (including committee spending and outside money) and Trump spent a fraction of that, his total spending totaling at about $433 million. Both Clinton and Trump's totals in 2016 are considerably less than Biden and Trump's totals in 2020, contributing to the ever-increasing price of presidential elections. It is clear from these statistics that money is not able to "buy" the presidential nomination, however, it indicates that major amounts of money are necessary to compete. In Figure 1, the large jump from the total cost of the 2016 presidential race to the highly increased spending in 2020 is apparent, as well as the slow increase over time. The graph has been adjusted for inflation.
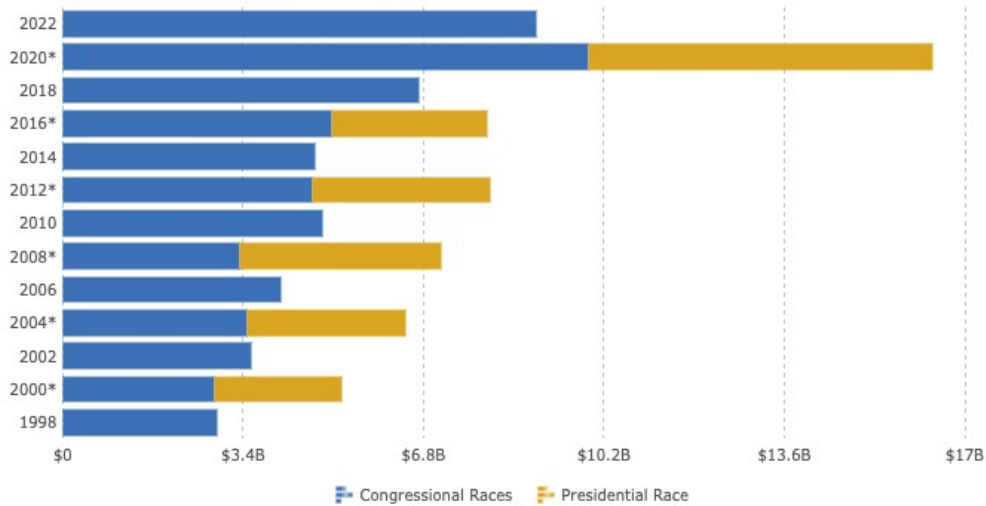
Figure 1: Source - OpenSecrets

Money is vital to appeal to voters through various forms of media and voter outreach. A candidate obtaining early finances and organization can be integral to their campaign's success. (Adkins & Dowdle, 2005) Cash reserves and campaign expenditures are important factors when determining which candidate will be successful in the primaries, a trend reflected in the polls. As stated by Goff in 2004, "the relationship among money, media attention, and poll rankings appear to be mutually reinforcing" (Goff, 2004, p. 6). Goff refers to the early point in the campaign that precedes the actual state primaries as the "money primary." (Goff, 2004, p. 4) During the money primaries, early organization is crucial as fundraising success and media coverage of the success can increase candidate name recognition and legitimacy. For example, when a candidate raises money early in the nomination process, they can purchase professional staff who organize campaign events giving them more access to media coverage. Early money can also contribute to the candidate engaging in political consulting, allowing them to strategize the campaign long before the primaries and nomination take place. Although factors such as media coverage and the importance of professional staff are nearly impossible to measure within

research, they provide important context as to why money plays an integral role in presidential elections.

Cash reserves can be predictive of which candidates will have more longevity in the race, but it has been shown to have different effects between the parties. "Steger found that candidates' cash reserves significantly affect the Democratic primary vote." (Steger, 2008) On the other hand, it was found that the Gallup poll results were more predictive for Republican candidates in comparison to Democrat candidates. Cash reserves help predict in cases where there is no front-runner, but Gallup polls are better predicters when there is a front-runner pre-Iowa for both parties. In research done by Adkins, et. al., it was found that there is a "strong positive relationship between the amount of financial reserves a campaign has at the end of the pre-primary period and success during the primary season." (Adkins, et. al., 2016) During this study, the financial portion was split into campaign expenditures and cash reserves. Campaign expenditures were measured as a percentage of the campaign funds that each candidate spent during the pre-primary period, relative to the total raised by all candidates. Cash reserves measured unspent money that the candidate possessed in the fourth quarter a year before the election. Cash reserves were not found to be significant in a model run during the pre-primary period, but they were significant in the post-New Hampshire period. On the other hand, campaign expenditures were not found to be significant in either the pre-primary model or the post-New Hampshire model.

Candidates have the risk of "underperforming" despite having raised a large amount of money. (Adkins, et. al., 2016) Large sums of money can certainly help a candidate with their chances of being nominated, but it does not guarantee success. As discussed previously, Hillary Clinton spent a considerably larger amount of money than Donald Trump in her 2016

presidential election campaign, but she did not win. In an article published by Dowdle et al. in 2016, it was found that "candidates who raised the most money in the preprimary period typically won their party's nomination, but in some instances, the candidates do underperform" (Dowdle et al., 2016). The effect is described as asymmetrical by Steger, "A lack of… resources ensures defeat, but having them does not ensure victory" (Steger, 2008).

Another significant factor that has been shown to have a large impact on success is elite support. Elites within the political parties help drive a candidate to the top with endorsements. Endorsements by the party elite are strong predictors for both parties. "Endorsements by party elites reflect an insider game, as opposed to a mass partisan effect" (Steger, 2008). Adkins, et. al., supported this sentiment in their research in 2016 finding that "party elites still manage to play a crucial role in nomination outcomes" (Adkins, et. al., 2016). Party elites as well as campaign fund contributors and the media "provide cues to each other" about which candidates have electability and viability (Steger, 2008). The impact of party elites is an echo of the power of party bosses in early presidential elections, indicating that there is a small percentage of voters that may have a stronger influence than the general voters due to the nature of American politics.

The third element with strong predicting power is the momentum gained. As discussed previously, momentum can be gained by frontloading a campaign and performing well in early primaries. "Candidates who gain momentum by beating expectations for the vote share in early caucuses and primaries tend to receive greater support in subsequent primaries, while others drop out as they fall behind in delegate count or run out of money" (Steger, 2008). Forecasting vote share for primaries has a greater chance for error than forecasting for general elections because pre-primary predictions do not account for the impact of positive or negative momentum gained

or lost in the primary and caucuses, as these have a greater effect. Unfortunately, momentum is hard to predict and measure.

The way momentum works in the primaries has shifted since the 1970s; in the past momentum has favored dark horse candidates. Now, momentum favors insider candidates with prior political experience and major support from within the party. Bandwagon voting is a large component of the nomination process and contributes to momentum in the primaries. "Jumping ship" to support the winning candidate can have a big payoff in politics. The most reliable indicator of which candidate will win is early ballots. Early ballots will show the early success of a candidate, causing others to hop on the bandwagon and lead to the candidate's victory as they gain more support along the way. "When they (advanced delegate polls) reveal that sentiment is turning strongly toward a single outstanding candidate, they accelerate a development that would otherwise take place more slowly" (Collat, et. al., 1981).

The fourth component of predicting success in presidential primaries is polling results. Polls often reflect who will be nominated, however, the polls can change drastically leading up to the beginning of the election year. Polls contrast in their effect on the two political political parties. "Republican races…typically feature a candidate with a strong lead in pre-primary polls, which makes polls a stronger predictor of their success in the primaries" (Steger, 2008). Polls interact with the significance of other components, such as fundraising. A front-runner with a minimum of 40% approval in Gallup polls during the month before the Iowa Caucus deems a noncompetitive race. Cash reserves help predict in cases where there is no front-runner, but Gallup polls are better predicters when there is a front-runner pre-Iowa. (Steger, 2008) For the 2024 nomination cycle, Trump received over 40% support in the polls throughout the entire cycle. Even his largest competitor, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, did not reach over 35%

support throughout the race. In the graph below, the purple line represents Trump, the pink line

represents DeSantis, and the green line represents Haley. This polling data is accredited to

FiveThirtyEight which uses the key estimate of various polls to predict an average percentage of
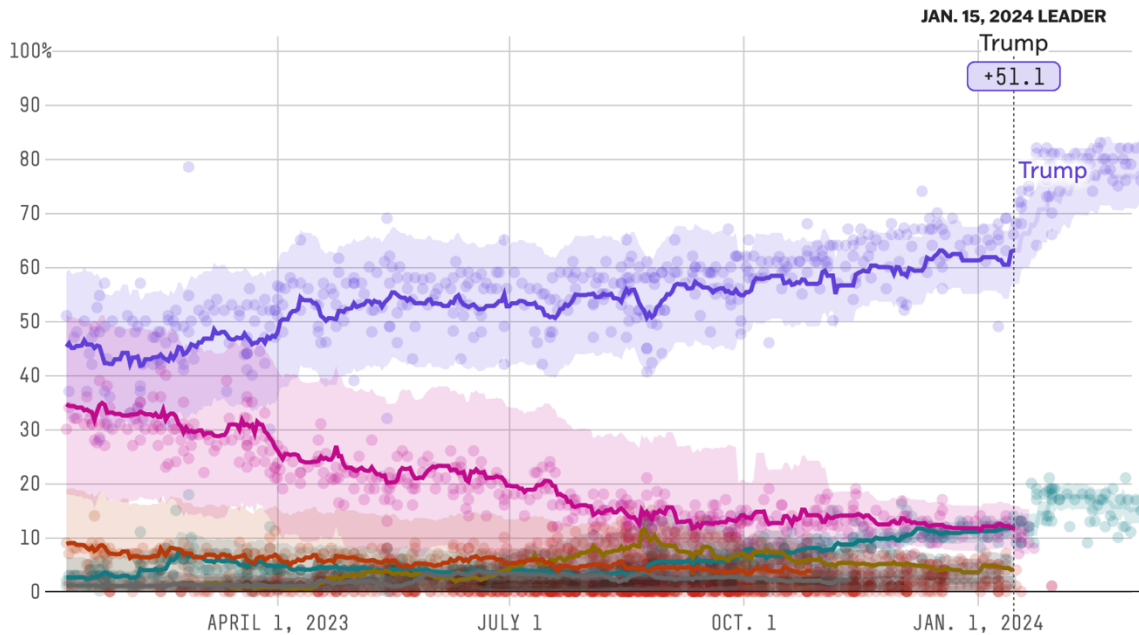
poll support.

Figure 2: Source - FiveThirtyEight

Historically Iowa and New Hampshire are the first states to participate in the presidential

primaries. In the 2024 election cycle, the Iowa caucus took place first on January 15. The New

Hampshire primary took place on January 23; however, the secretary of state is authorized to

pick a date seven days before any other state. Research has shown that the results from these

primaries/caucuses have a significant effect on the outcome of the election. According to

research done by Adkins and Dowdle in 2001, the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary can

test the strength of the candidates early. In Adkins and Dowdle's paper titled "How Important are

Iowa and New Hampshire to Winning Post-Reform Presidential Nominations?" they examined

factors that would indicate New Hampshire and Iowa's success in candidates. The researchers

determined that momentum in New Hampshire produces significant success in the general

election. (Adkins & Dowdle, 2001) Some aspects that were investigated during their research were the Gallup poll, money raised, parties, and cash reserves. Yet, the research did not include races in which the incumbent was seeking re-election. This paper gave an adequate overview of what factors contribute to success in the early primaries, yet it is not fully applicable to the 2024 election cycle because current President Biden is seeking re-election.

Primary success can also be a large indicator of how a candidate will do in the presidential race. A study done by Norpoth in 2004 explored the effect of primary results on the presidential race concerning whether the candidates had incumbent status. Norpoth defines the out-party as the party opposite of the incumbent. In the 2024 race, the Republican party would be considered the out-party, even though Trump is a quasi-incumbent. Norpoth found that "the better the party that doesn't have an incumbent does in the primaries, the harder it is for the incumbent to be re-elected" (Norpoth, 2004, p. 738). However, if the out-party has less than 50% in primary support, the incumbent party will likely win the election. Norpoth also found that in 1912, Woodrow Wilson set a precedent that primary success and general election victory go together for the out-party. Yet, the candidate should aim to have over 50% support to acquire this success. The primaries are important for candidates who want their party's nomination in addition to garnering a strong effect on the outcome of the presidential election.

In the 2012 presidential election, Barack Obama sought re-election from the Democratic party and the Republican party selected Mitt Romney as their candidate. The same will be happening for both parties in 2024 as the Republican party seeks a candidate again. Research done on the Iowa caucus in 2012 examined multiple aspects of the caucus, and how these aspects predict the outcome of the nomination process. Political scientists have noted that the Iowa caucus results can be an inaccurate reflection of nationwide voters due to the demographics of

those who attend the caucus. In a paper by Donovan et. al., they found that in 2012 the measure of demographics of caucus-goers matched the registered voters in the state. Donovan et. al. measured education, income, age, and religion and found that the demographics "tracked very closely to a broader Iowa registered voter sample" (Donovan, et. al, 2014). White, high-income, college-educated voters in the older age range were both likely to attend the caucus and registered to vote. Media attention plays a significant role in the results as well. As media attention shifts from one candidate to another throughout the nomination process, a candidate's media attention can increase because of their performance at the caucus. The researchers also found that at least one party's nominee won in Iowa since 1996. Gallup poll standing, money, and time spent in Iowa by the candidate have the most effect on predicting the vote share in Iowa. These results then affect the primaries and caucuses in other states. Therefore, the performance of the candidate in Iowa is related to their performance in New Hampshire. Iowa vote share predicts New Hampshire vote share. This evidence suggests a causal role for the Iowa caucus for media attention and vote share in future primaries/caucuses. (Donovan, et. al., 2014) These trends are consistent with findings in research done by Adkins, Dowdle, Sebold, and Cuellar in 2016. These authors discovered that results in Iowa do not have a direct effect on overall primary results. However, New Hampshire results are positively correlated with nomination outcomes. (Adkins, et. al., 2016).

Overall, the scholarship on presidential primary success has been relatively consistent and largely concise in predicting the primary winners for the past two decades, but that may change in the 2024 presidential primary elections, given the nature of the election. The candidates are politically polarizing and largely unpopular among their opposing political parties. A more intriguing aspect is that the race essentially contains two incumbents, Joe Biden, an

unpopular incumbent, and Donald Trump. Trump has had 91 criminal indictments and has refused to participate in the Republican party's primary debates. The 2024 race certainly will break up the monotony of predicting presidential primaries. The unusual circumstances of this election inspired my research question: will classic forecasting variables be statically significant in data analysis when predicting a presidential nomination race that is not typical?

Hypothesis

Hypothesis: The Republican presidential nomination will be forecasted accurately using classic components such as money raised, elite endorsements, momentum gained, polling results, and primary results, although the incumbent versus incumbent race is atypical.

Null Hypothesis: The Republican presidential nomination will be forecasted inaccurately using classic components such as money raised, elite endorsements, momentum gained, polling results, and primary results due to atypicality in the race as incumbent versus incumbent.

Methodology

As a part of my honors thesis project, I worked on a coauthored paper titled "Modeling the 2024 Republican Presidential Nomination: 'The 215 lb. Gorilla in the Race' or Trump as a Quasi-Incumbent." The paper was coauthored along with my thesis adviser, Dr. Karen Sebold in addition to Dr. Andrew Dowdle, Randall E. Adkins of the University of Nebraska, and Wayne Steger of DePaul University. The project used data from previous presidential nomination competitions and compared them to the 2024 Republican presidential nomination race, specifically Trump's results. The previous competitions used in the research included the years 1980 to 2020 with the exclusion of 1980, 1984, 1992, 1996, 2004, 2012, and 2020. These contests will be excluded because they had incumbents running for re-nomination, therefore

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there were no serious challengers within their parties. My part in the project was to collect data for Iowa caucus win, Iowa caucus vote share, New Hampshire win, New Hampshire vote share, and Gallup poll results.

The variables used for comparison in two OLS regression models were divided into two categories: pre-primary variables and primary results. The pre-primary period includes data from before the first primary took place. The first primary in the 2024 election cycle was the Iowa Caucus which took place on January 15, 2024. The pre-primary variables included campaign expenditures, cash reserves, poll results, and endorsements. Campaign expenditures and endorsements were measured until December 31, 2023, the year before the nomination race. The primary results included Iowa caucus win, Iowa caucus vote percentage, New Hampshire win, and New Hampshire vote percentage.

At the beginning of the 2024 presidential nomination race, Donald Trump led in polls, fundraising, and elite endorsements. The other top contenders for the Republican nomination included the former ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, current Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, and entrepreneur, Vivek Ramaswamy. As polling began, both Trump and DeSantis were strong contenders. In January 2023, DeSantis reached over 30% in the polls, the highest in his campaign, and Trump received over 40%. (ABC News, 2023) Over time, DeSantis's poll numbers slowly dropped as Trump's steadily rose consistently to over 50% since May 2023. Haley's polling slowly climbed as the Republican primaries approached, yet she never reached over 20%. Ramaswamy did not achieve success in the polls; his highest polling occurred in August 2023, sitting slightly above 10%. (ABC News, 2023, 2024) Although Trump was challenged by four other Republican candidates, his pre-primary results were strong as well as his wins at Iowa and New Hampshire. These successful results came as a shock for some –

Trump did not participate in one Republican debate, nor did he seem defeated by his presidential loss in 2020. Despite his negative media coverage and countless criminal indictments, Trump performed well as his loyal base uplifted him and placed their votes during the primaries. Due to Trump's strong pre-primary results and primary finish, I hypothesize that these classic components will predict Trump's success despite his quasi-incumbent status.

Trump's status as a quasi-incumbent provides a greater context as to why his success may come as a surprise. For example, he was challenged by other Republican candidates, suggesting that others within his party underestimated his strength as a candidate. Trump lost the 2020 presidential election to Democrat Joe Biden in addition to his low approval ratings as president. (Dowdle, et al. 2024) Despite his previous shortcomings, Trump gained a strong base of supporters and the data from his campaign aligns with that of previous nomination winners, even though he is technically an incumbent. There has not been a former president seeking re-election in over 100 years. Theodore Roosevelt sought re-election in 1912 after creating his party, the Bull Moose Party, and was not successful. The election of 2024 will be a historical one and a study of whether a former president can seek re-election and be successful.

The OLS regression models generate forecasts for the "open" presidential nomination races in the years 1980-2020 (aside from exclusions mentioned previously). Open presidential nomination races are races in which the previous president is not seeking renomination. The dependent variable used in the regression is the percentage a candidate receives in the nomination cycle. The independent variables are poll results, campaign expenditures, cash reserves, and elite endorsements in the first regression model, with the addition of the New Hampshire and Iowa results in the second model.

A linear regression model was chosen for this research due to its versatility and ease of interpretation. Linear regressions are not limited by the types of data that they can interpret, making it simple to determine which variables are associated with one another. Linear regressions are also useful when wanting to predict a certain outcome, which fits my research of the 2024 presidential nomination cycle. The model allowed for conclusions to be drawn regarding the significance of the variables in addition to the prediction measures.

The poll results data was collected from the Harris poll for the 2024 race. However, data was used from the CNN poll that detected the average percentage of approval of candidates for the nomination races in 2016 and 2020. All years prior used data from the Gallup poll, which was discontinued for the pre-primary season in 2015.

The campaign expenditures component was split into two variables: campaign expenditures by December 31 before the primaries and remaining cash reserves of the campaign at that date. These figures were found through the process of measuring "the amount of money spent as a percentage of the money each candidate spent during the pre-primary period relative to the total raised by the entire candidate pool in that contest as of that date" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

Cash reserves as a variable evaluate the ability of a candidate's campaign to invest in resources that could potentially improve the candidate's performance. Former research has shown that the cash reserves variable could be a more accurate predictor of the success of a candidate than money raised, or money spent. (Adkins & Dowdle, 2005) Similar to the variable campaign expenditures, cash reserves are calculated as "a percentage of the unspent money that each candidate has available at the end of the pre-primary season, relative to the entire nomination field's cash reserves at the end of that period to control for both inflation and the context of individual election cycles" (Dowdle et al. 2024).

Endorsements as a variable can contribute to forecasting despite reforms that have been made to the candidate nomination process. The variable is measured by an unweighted total of House, Senate, and gubernatorial endorsements. The data stops on December 31 the year before the nomination race. (Dowdle et al., 2024)

The Iowa Caucus win variable is the earliest formal test of a candidate's strength within the race. Candidates usually spend a large amount of time in Iowa traveling from county to county, hosting campaign events, and reaching out to voters to perform well in this first contest. An important aspect of Iowa is generating momentum, kickstarting a candidate's campaign to take off into the other states. (Donovan et al., 2014) The data is coded as a "1" for the winner of the Iowa Caucus and a "0" for the candidates who did not win. The vote share is also modeled within the regression with a simple percentage of the votes that the candidate received.

The New Hampshire Primary win variable has shown to be more statistically significant from the regression than the Iowa Caucus results. This trend could be explained by the candidate receiving more media attention, creating more momentum for their campaign. (Norpoth, 2004) New Hampshire is also a chance for candidates who did not perform well at Iowa or in the pre-primary period to prove their strength. (Adkins & Dowdle, 2001) It is coded the same way as Iowa, with the winner receiving a "1" and the other candidates who did not win receiving a "0."

Results

TABLE 1: OLS Forecasting Models of Aggregate Primary Vote, 1980-2016

	Pre-Primary	Post-New Hampshire
Poll Results	.79** (5.27) [.54]	.43** (3.86) [.30]
Campaign Expenditures	-.003 (-.002) [-.01]	-.27* (-2.22) [-.17]
Cash Reserves	.10 (.95) [.10]	.08 (1.11) [.08]
Endorse-ments	.20** (2.07) [.21]	.21** (2.91) [.21]
Iowa Win		7.46* (2.06) [.13]
Iowa Percent		-.04 (-.41) [-.04]
NH Win		12.51** (3.87) [.22]
NH Percent		.55** (5.02) [.41]
Constant	.59 (.34)	-1.25 (-1.02)
R^2	.63	.83
Adjusted R^2	.61	.82
F	42.90	60.05
SEE	12.14	8.36
N	107	107

NOTE: The dependent variable is the percentage of the total aggregate primary vote, not including the results of the New Hampshire Primary, that a candidate receives in a given nomination cycle. Coefficients are unstandardized ordinary least squares (OLS) coefficients; t scores are in parentheses (), standardized beta coefficients are in brackets [ ], SEE=standard error estimate. Significant at * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2: Combined Model Predicted and Actual Finish, 1980-2024

Year	Party	Stage	First	Second	Third
1980	R	Pre-Primary	<u>Reagan</u>	Connally	Baker
1980	R	Post-NH	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Bush</u>	Baker
1984	D	Pre-Primary	<u>Mondale</u>	Glenn	Cranston
1984	D	Post-NH	<u>Mondale</u>	<u>Hart</u>	Glenn
1988	R	Pre-Primary	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Dole</u>	<u>Kemp</u>
1988	R	Post-NH	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Dole</u>	<u>Kemp</u>
1988	D	Pre-Primary	Jackson	Dukakis	Gephardt
1988	D	Post-NH	<u>Dukakis</u>	Gephardt	Jackson
1992	D	Pre-Primary	<u>Clinton</u>	Kerrey	Brown
1992	D	Post-NH	Tsongas	Clinton	Kerrey
1996	R	Pre-Primary	<u>Dole</u>	Gramm	Alexander
1996	R	Post-NH	<u>Dole</u>	<u>Buchanan</u>	Alexander
2000	R	Pre-Primary	<u>Bush</u>	<u>McCain</u>	Forbes
2000	R	Post-NH	<u>Bush</u>	<u>McCain</u>	<u>Keyes</u>
2000	D	Pre-Primary	<u>Gore</u>	<u>Bradley</u>	
2000	D	Post-NH	<u>Gore</u>	<u>Bradley</u>	
2004	D	Pre-Primary	Dean	Gephardt	Clark
2004	D	Post-NH	<u>Kerry</u>	Dean	Clark
2008	R	Pre-Primary	Giuliani	F. Thompson	McCain
2008	R	Post-NH	<u>McCain</u>	Huckabee	Giuliani
2008	D	Pre-Primary	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Edwards</u>
2008	D	Post-NH	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Edwards</u>
2012	R	Pre-Primary	<u>Romney</u>	Paul	<u>Gingrich</u>
2012	R	Post-NH	<u>Romney</u>	<u>Santorum</u>	Paul
2016	R	Pre-Primary	<u>Trump</u>	Rubio	Cruz
2016	R	Post-NH	<u>Trump</u>	<u>Cruz</u>	Bush
2016	D	Pre-Primary	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>O'Malley</u>
2016	D	Post-NH	<u>Clinton</u>	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>O'Malley</u>
2020	D	Pre-Primary	<u>Biden</u>	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>Warren</u>
2020	D	Post-NH	Sanders	Buttigieg	Biden
2024	R	Pre-Primary	Trump	DeSantis	Haley
2024	R	Post-NH	Trump	Haley	Ramaswamy

NOTE: Underlined names indicate a correct ordinal forecast in terms of the percent of the primary vote. The paper was submitted before the end of the 2024 primaries, so no final results were available yet. In the 2008 Democratic nomination process, Hillary Clinton finished with the highest number of total aggregate primary votes if the results of the Florida Democratic Primary are included.

The regression predicted Trump to win in both the Pre-Primary and Post-New Hampshire models. The largest difference between the two models is that DeSantis was predicted second in the Pre-Primary model and Haley was predicted second in the Post-New Hampshire model. Third place in the Pre-Primary model was predicted as Haley and Ramaswamy in the Post-New Hampshire model.

The regression found for the poll results component is that "the greater a candidate's standing in the exhibition season polls, the more votes a candidate will receive in presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024). Donald Trump performed well in both the exhibition season polls and primaries in the 2024 presidential nomination cycle.

The regression found that for the campaign expenditure variable "the more money a candidate spends in the exhibition season relative to their opponents, the more votes he or she will receive in presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

The regression found that for the cash reserves category, "the larger the amount of unspent money at the end of the pre-primary period that candidates have relative to their opponents, the more votes in presidential primaries that a candidate will receive" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

The regression found that for endorsements, "the greater the number of elite endorsements that candidates have relative to their opponents by the end of the Pre-Primary season, the more votes a candidate will receive in presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

The regression found that for the Iowa win component, "the winner of the Iowa Caucus will receive a larger number of votes in the sum vote of all presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

The regression found that for the Iowa vote percentage component, "the higher a candidate's percentage of the vote in the Iowa Caucus, the larger the number of votes in the sum of all presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

The regression found that in the New Hampshire Primary win component, "the winner of the New Hampshire primary will receive a larger number of votes in the sum vote of all presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024).

The regression found that for the New Hampshire Primary vote percentage, "the higher the percentage of a candidate's vote in the New Hampshire Primary, the larger the number of votes in the sum of all presidential primaries" (Dowdle et al., 2024)

The R^2 variable in the model represents the statistical confidence in the analysis. The R^2 value is then adjusted for error. As the model shows, there is a higher statistical confidence in the post-New Hampshire model than in the Pre-Primary model. The results of the Post-New Hampshire model likely have higher confidence due to the added amount of data and insurance of which candidate will be successful after their primary performance.

The statistically significant variables are marked with an asterisk. The model found poll results in both the Pre-Primary model and the Post-New Hampshire model to be significant. Campaign expenditures were only found to be significant in the Post-New Hampshire model. The Iowa win variable was significant, but the Iowa vote percentage was not significant. Both the New Hampshire win variable and New Hampshire vote percentage were significant in the model.

The SEE variable represents the standard error within the model and the N variable represents the number of cases that were included. The F variable represents variance.

Conclusion

For years, the American presidential elections have been typical from a research standpoint. American voters have not seen a former president seeking re-nomination since 1912 with Teddy Roosevelt. In addition to two incumbents facing one another, it could be a repeat of the presidential race as in 2020: Democrat Joe Biden versus Republican Donald Trump. Independent Robert F. Kennedy will also enter the race, potentially disrupting the typical Republican-Democrat partisan voting.

Presidential nominations allow Americans to use their right to democracy and have a voice in presidential elections. However, this research has shown that some of the outcomes may be out of the hands of the voters. Although success in the early primaries of Iowa and New Hampshire is statistically significant, the success that is achieved is heavily influenced by variables that take place before the primary period begins. The average American voter does not have the means to boost a candidate's campaign with large donations as the cost of campaigns skyrockets, nor do they have connections to sway party insiders to give endorsements to a candidate they support. The average American voter can show up on primary and election day, cast their vote, and hope that democracy is honored by their participation. America and the Constitution are built on this right, yet every election cycle there is a discourse of both parties not having full faith in their candidates.

Knowing the presidential nomination process can allow for a future where future leaders can put the power back in the hands of the people. Yet at this current juncture in American politics, money, polls, and elite endorsements appear to have the largest effect on the outcome of these nominations, leaving voters feeling out of touch with their options for candidates. Even in

the 2024 presidential competition, an atypical race, the classic components have shown that they are the strongest influences on the presidential nomination outcomes.

The largest weakness in my research is the components that are not measurable. As mentioned earlier, Trump did not take the typical approach for his campaign. He did not show up for debates, he did not have positive media coverage and the state of Colorado tried to ban him from their ballots for insurrection. Yet, he was still successful. The variable that I could not measure in his case is the momentum that he gained throughout his campaign and the impact of media coverage on Trump (both positive and negative).

The biggest strength of my research is the access I had to decades of data on past election cycles, dating to 1980. In addition to the data, largely concise and descriptive studies are abundant on the topic of presidential nomination forecasting. Studying and absorbing the research of political scientists who have delved into this topic previously allowed for my research to be holistic, well-informed, and accurate. Although I view this as a strength, it could potentially be interpreted as a weakness. Because the past literature and research on this topic are very concise, there is potential for blind spots of variables that were not considered.

My research was strengthened by the two regression models that were used, as opposed to one. Analyzing regression from both the Pre-Primary period and the Post-New Hampshire period allowed for my research to be specific and thorough. The two models also garnered the ability to draw stronger conclusions about variables and their significance, which would not have been as straightforward if they were lumped together in one regression model.

If I were to redo this project, I would have started my research on Trump's campaign earlier. Due to the nature of this race and former President Trump's successful strategy, I think it could have been insightful to study how he was potentially playing the long game with his

campaign. Trump and his team likely have been planning on winning the Republican nomination

since his presidential loss in 2020, therefore I think it could be impactful to study his campaign

before the typical pre-primary season.

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