

lected to parliament, where he could serve his union in a much better way than he had done until that time. Michael's union quickly doubled its party membership numbers, and mobilized behind his candidacy. When the party members' votes were counted, Michael was near the middle of the party list – a “safe” position – and knew that even if his party fared poorly in the general election, he would soon be a member of parliament.

The party leadership was proud of its decision to allow all party members to participate in selecting its candidates for public office. The media covered the party in a more favorable light, making endless comparisons between the internal democracy of this party, and the party hacks and their internal deals found among the other parties. The party also saw an increase in its membership, which added not only prospective voters but also finances to its coffers, while making the party look new, energetic, forward-thinking, and headed toward victory. What the leadership did not prepare for was that after the members made their choice, the candidates seemed to lose interest in the general election, which was only weeks away. Those in safe positions, like Michael, participated in few election activities, while those who knew that they had little chance to be elected, like Deborah, stayed at home. Moreover, after the election victory, the leadership realized that there were numerous party representatives who refused to follow their directives. Michael, for one, told the party whip that he was selected as a party candidate due to his abilities to mobilize a personal support base, which he could mobilize again next time, and not due to the influence of the party leadership. His legislative activities would first and foremost be guided by what was good for his union, and only after that by what was best for his party. The party leaders had no credible way to bring him back into line, even after he voted against the party line on several important issues. This was true for several other members of parliament as well, who quickly became known as the party “rebels.” As party cohesion ceased to be the standard operating procedure and became a goal that had to be constantly maintained, talk of a possible change in the candidate selection method once again surfaced.

The party leader, and sitting prime minister, realized that the rebels in his party made it impossible to govern efficiently, and that their number was enough not only to make him lose important policy votes in the legislature, but also to be no longer able to count on a cohesive majority in parliament. As the situation deteriorated, the party leader took the initiative – he decided to split from his party and dissolve the parliament, thus heralding a snap election. The charismatic and assertive party leader was very popular at the time, and his newly declared party was well received in the public opinion polls. The remaining party representatives realized that they had gone too far, and their leadership also decided it was time to reassert control.

As the election neared, the old and the new party each adopted a different candidate selection method in order to reign in the internal chaos. The prime

minister, along with a small circle of his close confidants, formed a selection committee to choose a list of candidates. Those who had been loyal to the party leader were retained, while other political associates and personal acquaintances were recruited to augment the new party list. The old party, trailing in the polls and left with less than one-half of its elected representatives, decided to return the candidate selection process to its central committee. Practically overnight, Michael and the other rebellious party representatives fell into line and followed the guidelines issued by their leadership. Internal democracy thus did not survive for long in the party – its unexpected consequences not only brought about a quick return to more exclusive candidate selection methods, they also decapitated the ruling party and drastically diminished its representation in the legislature.

Those who believe that Deborah, Michael, and the party leadership are examples of strange, even deviant, behavior are not aware of the significance of the internal dynamics associated with how parties decide who their candidates will be. This arena, which normally functions far from the attention of the general public and largely remains uncovered by the media, has consequences not only for the candidates and their parties, but also for their parent legislature and its performance. The realm of candidate selection, which in most countries is within the purview of each party to do with as it sees fit, influences the balance of power within the party, determines the personal composition of parliaments, and impacts on the behavior of legislators. In short, it is central to politics in any representative democracy. A party leadership that implements a reform in its candidate selection method may encounter unexpected consequences concerning key democratic parameters such as participation, representation, competition, and responsiveness. For example, does an increase in quantity influence the quality of participation? Do women fare better or worse in more open selection arenas? Are incumbents more likely to be reselected in more inclusive bodies? Does the opening up of parties create more responsive legislators, and to whom are they more responsive? These core characteristics of a polity are but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to assessing the political consequences of different candidate selection methods.

DEFINING CANDIDATE SELECTION

Leon Epstein (1967: 201) argued over a generation ago that “the selection of party candidates is basically a private affair, even if there are legal regulations.” Austin Ranney (1981: 75, emphasis in original) built on this in his definition of candidate

selection as “the predominantly *extralegal* process by which a political party decides which of the persons legally eligible to hold an elective public office will be designated on the ballot and in election communications as its recommended and supported candidate or list of candidates.” Candidate selection is, therefore, an intraparty issue; it takes place almost entirely inside a particular party arena and is largely unregulated.¹ There are very few veteran established democracies – for example, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, and Norway (until 2002) – where the legal system specifies criteria for candidate selection, and only in the United States does the legal system extensively regulate the process of candidate selection. In most countries, the parties themselves are allowed to determine the rules of the game for their selection of candidates.

The recent phenomenon of increased judicial involvement in politics is likely to lead to an increase in the adjudication of internal party affairs, including candidate selection.² However, such involvement is still largely limited to the question of whether parties have adhered to the rules and regulations they have decided for themselves (Gauja 2006). Constitutional amendments, alongside legislation that concerns both women and minority representation, have also been on the increase since the 1990s (Htun 2004). Yet, they do not dictate the methods for selecting candidates, but rather instruct parties as to the required consequences of their chosen candidate selection methods.

Candidate selection methods are thus the nonstandardized and predominantly unregimented particular party mechanisms by which political parties choose their candidates for general elections. The result of this process is the designation of a candidate, or list of candidates, as *the* candidate(s) of the party. The party then becomes effectively committed to the candidate(s), and to mobilizing its strength behind the chosen candidate(s).

In the study of candidate selection, therefore, the unit of analysis is the *single* party, in a particular country, at a specific time. Only in cases where several parties in a particular country use similar candidate selection methods, or in the rare case where legal requirements force parties to use analogous methods, can we make *uieler* generalizations.

¹ Our focus is on candidate selection to national legislatures, although, when it is helpful, we also refer to analyses of selection methods that were used to select candidates to regional, local, and supranational councils and parliaments. We refrain from analyzing leadership selection and selection of candidates to national, regional, and local executive positions. While the study of both candidate and leadership selection may be mutually beneficial, they require separate treatment since there are substantial differences between the two in terms of the methods that are in use and also in their political consequences (Kenig 2009a, 2009b).

² Rush (1988) already pointed to the developing trend in the UK of appealing to the courts as a result of conflicts regarding candidate selection back in the 1980s. A prominent case was the judicial decision that did not allow Labour to continue using all-women short lists, and led to the legislation of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act of 2002, which allowed it (McHarg 2006).

CANDIDATE SELECTION VERSUS POLITICAL RECRUITMENT

The term political recruitment belongs to the behavioral tradition. It is a central concept in the functionalist approach suggested by Almond (1960), and together with socialization it is one of the four input functions that are found in any political system. According to Czudnowski (1975: 155), political recruitment is “. . . the process through which individuals or groups of individuals are inducted into active political roles.” Scholars in the behavioral tradition have invested much effort in mapping the demographic differences between the elite and the masses. The well-known bias in favor of white, middle-class, educated men in politics was substantiated repeatedly in studies of political elites throughout the democratic world. Within this school, candidate selection was seen, at best, as one aspect of a complex and comprehensive process (Wright 1971). While Czudnowski (1975) recognized the institutional element as a part of the recruitment phenomenon, his approach concerning candidate selection methods is clearly behavioral, emphasizing societal variables and perceiving institutions as their mere reflection, and hence of little relevance:

One should add, however, that considering selection systems as independent variables leads to descriptive analyses of little theoretical relevance. Selection systems serve political purposes; they are adopted for political purposes and can be changed for political purposes. The rigidity of selection systems is itself a politically relevant cultural variable, which should focus attention on recruitment systems as indicators of rewards—or of access to the distribution of rewards—in the context of those values which are the object of collective action in any given system. (Czudnowski 1975: 228)

In more recent years, when the institutional approach re-emerged in its new version – neo-institutionalism – scholars began to look at candidate selection methods not only as reflecting politics, but also as affecting it. A central work pioneering this path of inquiry was Gallagher and Marsh (1988). Norris (1997a, 2006; see also Best and Cotta 2000a) successfully bridged between the behavioral tradition and the neo-institutional approach when she described candidate selection as one element within a more comprehensive process of legislative recruitment, which includes additional institutional aspects (e.g. the electoral system) alongside “softer” structural elements such as “supply and demand” and “opportunity structures.” Comprehensive overviews of studies of legislative recruitment also treat candidate selection as part of this field of study (Matthews 1985; Patzelt 1999).

The increase in the importance of the institutional element within recruitment analysis reflects the rise and consolidation of the neo-institutional approach. Yet, other real-world developments also contribute to this phenomenon. A major developing field of study is that of the representation of women. Recent increases in the representation of women in legislatures seem to result, at least

partially, from the adoption of an institutional mechanism – quotas – at the national and/or the party levels (Caul 2001; Dahlerup 2006; Krook 2009). In other words, the study of recruitment, which in the past concentrated on the impact of societal values, especially culture, has begun to pay attention to institutional elements. If in the past counting the number of women in parliament was a classic behavioral research strategy, it is now also recognized as a result of institutional mechanisms, such as the use of quotas and certain elements of the electoral system. In short, institutions in general, and candidate selection methods in particular, can stand now on their own as independent variables (Kunovich and Paxton 2005).

This study adopts the institutional approach, and analyzes the various aspects of candidate selection methods as the independent variables. Yet, in order to avoid repeating past mistakes, we do not presuppose that institutions can explain everything, but rather that institutions matter. We also admit that institutions, and particularly the relatively less stable arena of candidate selection methods, can be studied as dependent variables – as reflecting rather than affecting both society and politics. We chose the institutional path because we believe that by examining candidate selection methods as independent variables, we can gain a valuable anchor which allows us to better assess and explain the wide and somewhat vague phenomenon of legislative recruitment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CANDIDATE SELECTION

Selecting candidates is one of the first things that political parties must do prior to an election. Candidate selection is also one of the defining functions of a political party in a pluralist democracy and maybe *the* function that separates parties from other organizations. According to Sartori's (1976: 64) definition, "A party is any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office." Those who are elected to office will be the successful candidates previously selected, and they are the ones who will determine much of how the party looks and what it does. Moreover, a party's candidates will help define its characteristics – demographically, geographically, and ideologically – more than its organization or even its manifesto. The outcome of the candidate selection process, like the results of the general elections, will affect the legislators, the party, and the legislature for a long time after the (s)election itself is over.

Both the essence and the relevance of candidate selection were indicated long ago. It is no less than astounding that so little has been written – until lately – to expand and expound upon this. Most political science scholars, and even those who focus on political parties and electoral systems, have viewed candidate selection as one of the more obscure functions performed by political parties.

It seemed to be of interest only to those directly involved or influenced by it, and it apparently had little significance outside of these circles. This dearth of scholarly literature raised a formidable obstacle in the path of researchers who wished to undertake cross-national analyses of the subject. A few pioneering ventures did take place, with initial attempts to produce a theory or a framework for analysis, but they remain few and far between. What Ranney (1965: viii–ix) noted long ago is regrettably still largely true today. "Thus the literature of political science provides few empirical descriptions of candidate selection outside the United States, and even fewer efforts to build a general comparative theory from such descriptions. This constitutes a major lacuna in our knowledge of the institutions and problems of modern democracies."

A quick search of the term "electoral systems" in the Worldwide Political Science Abstracts produced 2,783 references to published works, whereas a similar search for "candidate selection methods" comes up with only 34 items. A more general search for "elections" reveals almost 28,534 publications, whereas the equivalent term "candidate selection" results in merely 251 works (Worldwide Political Science Abstracts). This lack of attention is also partially due to the objective difficulties and obstacles one encounters in any attempt to conduct research on candidate selection – namely, the lack of, and inaccessibility to, empirical data. A researcher who wants to compare electoral systems and analyze the election results of several democracies can gather most of this data from the internet. A researcher who wishes to compare the candidate selection methods within his or her own country will need months of fieldwork and access to data that is either not public or perhaps even unavailable. In the early 1950s, Duverger (1954: 354) described candidate selection as a "private act which takes place within the party. Often it is even secret, as parties do not like the odours of the electoral kitchen to spread to the outside world." A decade later, Anthony Howard (quoted in Ranney 1965: 3) described the selection of parliamentary candidates as "the secret garden" of British politics. In 1988, the first cross-national study of candidate selection (Gallagher and Marsh 1988) used this phrase in its title. More than twenty years later, it is still appropriate to describe candidate selection as one of the less discussed mysteries that make up the system of democratic government.

However, the more recent research into this subfield, particularly in the last decade, eschews many of the earlier assumptions, penetrates new grounds of empirical research, and shows that candidate selection has wide-ranging and significant implications for political parties, party members, leaders, and democratic governance (Hazan and Pennings 2001; Narud, Pedersen, and Valen 2002c; Ohman 2004; Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008).

The fact that research on candidate selection is underdeveloped does not testify to its insignificance. On the contrary, the relevance of this topic for the study of politics was made clear long ago. Ostrogorski (1964[1902]: 210) noted the importance of candidate selection, arguing:

It confers on the candidate an incontestable superiority over all his competitors of the same party; he becomes in truth the anointed of the party. He is "the adopted candidate." . . . Even the sitting member would not stand again if the Caucus were to start another candidate in opposition to him. His position with regard to his party would somewhat resemble that of an excommunicated sovereign in the Middle Ages, whose subjects, so devoted to him the day before, are released from their loyalty to him.

Almost a century ago, Michels (1915: 183–4) recognized the importance of candidate selection, stressing its relevance for the power struggles within parties between the leaders themselves. Schattschneider's (1942: 64) argument concerning this issue is almost seventy years old, and is still worth citing at length:

The bid for power through elections has another consequence: it makes the nomination the most important activity of the party. In an election the *united front* of the party is expressed in terms of a nomination. For this reason nominations have become the distinguishing mark of modern political parties; if a party cannot make nominations it ceases to be a party. . . . The nomination may be made by a congressional caucus, a delegate convention, a mass meeting, a cabal, an individual, or a party election. The test is, does it bind? Not, how was it done? Unless the party makes authoritative and effective nominations, it cannot stay in business, for dual or multiple party candidacies mean certain defeat. As far as elections are concerned, the united front of the party, the party concentration of numbers, can be brought about only by a binding nomination. The nominating process thus has become the crucial process of the party. The nature of the nominating process determines the nature of the party; he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party. This is therefore one of the best points at which to observe the distribution of power within the party.

Raney (1981: 103) endorses this statement, "It is therefore not surprising that the most vital and hotly contested factional disputes in any party are the struggles that take place over the choice of its candidates; for what is at stake in such a struggle, as the opposing sides well know, is nothing less than control of the core of what the party stands for and does." Gallagher (1988a: 3) takes it a step further, stating ". . . the contest over candidate selection is generally even more intense than the struggle over the party manifesto." Indeed, after an election, what largely remains as the functioning core of almost any party is its officeholders – its successful candidates.

Moreover, in parliamentary systems it is usually the case that one cannot become a member of the executive branch nor a party leader without first having served in parliament, and in order to serve in parliament one must first be selected as a candidate. The successful candidates thus also form the recruitment pool from which party leaders and executive officeholders will be drawn. In addition, in the case of closed and semi-closed list systems, the higher the position that a candidate wins in the candidate selection competition, the better the chances to get a senior parliamentary or ministerial position (Kenig and Barnea 2009).

Candidate selection is more than just a high-stakes power struggle within the party, it is more than just a battle over the party's image and policy, and it is more than a narrowing of the roster from which leaders and officeholders will be drawn. Candidate selection can determine the extent of the party's ability to remain united in the legislature. Gallagher (1988a: 15) argued, "Where nominations are controlled centrally, we might expect to find that deputies follow the party line faithfully in parliament, as disloyalty will mean deselection. . . . If they do not depend on any organ of the party for reselection, one might expect to find low levels of party discipline in parliament. . . . Party cohesion may be threatened unless control of selection procedures is maintained." The ability of prospective politicians to appeal directly to the party membership – in those parties where candidate selection is more inclusive – and not just to the party organization thus changes the locus of responsibility of the party representatives. If the party does not function as a filtering mechanism, then the key actors in the process may become the candidates themselves, who will mobilize supporters directly. The whole selection process could then be driven by the candidates and not by the parties. The result could be a weakening of partisan discipline and cohesiveness, leading to a decline in the ability of the parties to function as a stable basis for the political process and to operate effectively in the parliamentary arena. In the end, such partisan disarray may even lead the party to suffer an electoral setback.

An alternative approach to the consequences of democratizing candidate selection is based on the model of the cartel party (Katz and Mair 1995). According to this approach, parties require a considerable degree of elite autonomy in order to participate effectively in the cross-party cartel. The cartel model suggests that one possible strategy used by party leaders in order to achieve this is to empower the ordinary party members, thereby diluting the influence of the ideologically motivated and organizationally entrenched activists, because they are the ones who might be able to coordinate an effective challenge to the autonomy of the party leaders. The rationale behind this option is that the less intensely involved rank-and-file party members are more likely to be swayed by such factors as name recognition, and hence are more likely to take cues from the highly visible party leadership. In other words, an increase in the nominal power of the base of the party will come at the expense of the power of the middle-level ideological activists. Moreover, this strategy will maintain, or even increase, the power of the party leaders, rather than diminish it, and may help to sustain party unity.

Whether the democratization of candidate selection is real, leading to a decline in party unity, or whether it is used as an instrument of the party elite in an attempt to simultaneously empower and control the base, both approaches point to a connection between candidate selection and party cohesion. In short, both perspectives see candidate selection as a key variable in the process of eroding or sustaining party unity.

Reform of a party's candidate selection method can be a result of developments at three levels: the political system level, the party system (or interparty) level, and the intraparty level. At the political system level, democratization – empowering individual party members by letting them decide who their representatives will be – may be the strategy that parties adopt to cope with the decline of ideology and increased individualism. In the interparty arena, competition may lead parties – especially after they suffer electoral defeat – to look for innovations that can help rehabilitate their image. Opening up the candidate selection method can create a more popular democratic image. If a party that democratizes its selection method enjoys electoral success, other parties are likely to follow suit. At the intraparty level, internal power struggles can also lead to reform of a party's candidate selection method. Forces from within the parties may push for democratization in order to change the existing power balance between different forces: personal factions, ideological groups, different generations, or any other grouping that is relevant to a specific party at a certain point in time (Barnea and Rahat 2007).

The autonomy of parties in the arena of candidate selection means that there are many possible reasons for change, be it toward more inclusion or away from it. But regardless of the motivating factor, parties change their candidate selection methods more often than nations reform their electoral systems. On the one hand, since candidate selection methods are unregulated intraparty processes, they are less stable mechanisms than state institutional mechanisms (such as electoral systems), and are relatively more prone to change. As such, they should be seen as reflecting politics. On the other hand, these changes are not frequent enough to justify an inclusive treatment of them as only a mirror. Thus, candidate selection methods should be treated as institutional mechanisms that both *reflect* the nature of the parties and *affect* party politics. The study of candidate selection can therefore help us understand the dynamics of party organization. For example, the evolution of parties from elite to mass to catch-all influenced how the party organized its selection of candidates; and in the less ideological era of the catch-all party, Kirchheimer (1966: 198) concluded that “the nomination of candidates for popular legitimation as office holders thus emerges as the most important function of the present-day catch-all party.” This claim seems to be even stronger when related to the cartel party.

Candidate selection determines not only the choices before voters – while influencing how these choices are perceived and made – but also the composition of the parties in the legislature and, through them, the government and the opposition. It thus influences the interests most likely to be addressed and the resulting policy decisions that will be enacted. In short, candidate selection affects the fundamental nature of modern democratic politics and governance.

The importance of candidate selection methods for understanding politics stems from a combination of the three elements elaborated above:

- First, candidate selection reflects and defines the character of a party and its internal power struggle.
- Second, it is relatively easy for parties to alter their candidate selection methods, and they do so much more often than nations change their electoral systems.
- Third, a change in candidate selection methods will affect both what goes into politics – from the quality of intraparty participation to the kind of candidates chosen – and also what emerges from politics – from the extent of competition and turnover to the behavior of legislatures and their locus of responsiveness.

In other words, candidate selection is a key institutional crossroad, a crucial political arrangement that can be relatively easily altered and can cause a transformation of behavioral patterns by parliamentarians, parties, and parliaments in both expected and unexpected ways. Three additional elements, elaborated below, complete the picture concerning the relevance of candidate selection:

- Fourth, country-specific variables can increase the importance of candidate selection beyond its inherent value.
- Fifth, the chain of democratic delegation starts with candidate selection.
- Sixth, the rise of individual-based politics enhances the significance of candidate selection.

The consequences of candidate selection can be more or less significant as a result of other characteristics of a particular nation's politics. For example, in countries with single-member districts, if the number of safe seats is either large or growing, then the selection process of the winning party could be more decisive than the election itself. In both the United States and Great Britain, more than one-half of the constituencies are safe for one party or the other, with majorities of greater than 10%, which means that the effective choice of who will become a legislator is made not by the voters in the general election but by the candidate selection process. As Rush (1969: 4) stated about safe seats in Britain, “*selection is tantamount to election.*” Norris and Lovenduski (1995: 2) concluded, “In choosing candidates the selectorate therefore determines the overall composition of parliament, and ultimately the pool of those eligible for government.”

Moreover, even in marginal seats, the correct choice of a candidate by a party could make the decisive difference between winning the seat and losing it. In countries using proportional systems, the selection of candidates at the top of a party list can virtually guarantee election, particularly in the major parties, practically regardless of the results of the general election. In short, in the majority of democratic nations, in a majority of the parties, selection is equal to election. As Gallagher (1988a: 2) posited, “It is clear that the values of the selectorate, often a small number of activists, frequently have more impact than those of the voters. This applies especially under electoral systems which do not permit any degree of choice between candidates of the same party; picking candidates often amounts to picking deputies.”

Studying the consequences of candidate selection could therefore be as important as studying electoral systems, the subject of an entire industry of scholarly writing over the past decades. Ranney (1987: 73) is correct when he argues, "Candidate selection is as essential to realizing the ideal of free elections as free elections are to realizing the ideal of government by the consent of the governed." The rationale for this claim becomes apparent when the chain of democratic delegation is understood as beginning with candidate selection. Before the executive delegates power to the bureaucracy, before the legislature delegates power to the government (in parliamentary regimes), before the voters delegate power to their representatives, the first stage in the chain of delegation is the selection of candidates for public office by the parties. The institutional determinants of the candidate selection process inaugurate the chain of delegation and shape both the tactical decisions of the candidates, alongside the prospective ones, and the strategic choices of the parties (Mitchell 2000).

Last, but not least, democratic politics are becoming more candidate-centered, more personalized, and more "presidentialized" (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Even in those countries with pure parliamentary systems, proportional elections, and fixed party lists, the focus on the individual is increasing at the expense of the collective, the ideological, and the organizational – in other words, the party. The result is that the political character of a polity is now being shaped more by candidate selection than ever before. The personal and personnel implications of candidate selection are critical; candidate selection is becoming the locus of political activity, at times overshadowing the dominance of the parties in the legislative elections.

If candidate selection expresses the internal make-up of the party and impacts on how factions struggle for power, if it is a central aspect of the recruitment process influencing the type of legislators elected and their behavior in office, and thus the performance of legislatures; if it is the preliminary stage in the democratic chain of delegation, which is becoming increasingly candidate focused even in party-centered contexts; and if candidate selection is not only one of the basic functional definitions of political parties but also mostly what still remains under the purview of parties in an era of "party decline," then it is incumbent upon those who seek to understand the key elements of the democratic process to shed the traditional myopic perspective which has kept candidate selection on the backbenches of political science and to move it to the forefront of the research agenda.

CHALLENGES FOR CANDIDATE SELECTION RESEARCH

The major challenge for the study of candidate selection methods is to bring it closer to the state that the study of electoral systems was approximately forty years

ago, when Rae's (1967) seminal work, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, was published. That is, we need cross-party and cross-national empirical studies of the political consequences of candidate selection methods.

Achieving this is by no means easy. Indeed, existing theoretical frameworks, particularly those concerning party politics, provide substantial propositions for the study of candidate selection. The problem with a cross-national empirical study is that it requires familiarity with local politics and accessibility (in terms of language, as well as in other, more basic terms) to intraparty data. The lack of cross-national empirical studies is, thus, the Achilles' heel of any attempt to make further progress.

Candidate selection methods not only affect party politics, they also reflect it. There is, therefore, a need to analyze candidate selection methods both as a dependent and as an independent variable. Prominent examples of treating candidate selection as a dependent variable, in the rather exceptional case of the United States, range from Key (1949) to Ware (2002). When it comes to the origins and the politics of reform of candidate selection methods, here too there is a dire need for cross-national empirical data if we are to reach any conclusive findings. We require a more integrative look at the phenomenon of candidate selection, one that would account not only for trends but also for the differences among parties and among nations that may result from interactions at the inter- and intraparty levels.

Sailing the uncharted waters of candidate selection could help us better understand the nature of party membership, the kind of candidates selected, the dynamics exhibited within the party, the power and performance of the party in parliament, and could enhance our overall ability to evaluate politics in general and party politics in particular. Behind closed party doors, this "secret garden" of politics is still largely unexplored. This book aims at opening the gate, at penetrating the restrictive party "gatekeepers", at shedding light on this hitherto largely uncharted ground.

DEFINING "REALISTIC" POSITIONS AND CONSTITUENCIES

Our book concentrates not only on how candidates are selected, but also, and primarily, on the political consequences of candidate selection. We thus focus on the selection of candidates with real chances to be subsequently elected in the general elections. We are not interested in the way that parties determine candidacies for the positions at the bottom of the list that have no possibility of being elected, nor in candidacies in those single-member districts in which rather than selecting candidates, the parties simply try to convince someone to stand in their name, with no chance of even giving a good fight.

The concept of *safe* positions on the candidate list, or safe seats when dealing with majoritarian systems, is used quite freely in the research literature. We use