

Research Council of the UK (Research Grant 0000-23-1991) and conducted by Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski. The *Canadian Candidate Project 1993* study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Lynda Erickson would also like to thank Jane Dyson, Gonzalo Carasco, Susan Fonseca, Christopher Kam, Jean-François Labell, Judy Morrison, Ken Stewart and Jeffrey Yip for their assistance with the project, Ken Carty for advice, Elizabeth Arnold, Cynthia Cusinatto, Rosemary Dolman, Sheila Gervais, Tom Flanagan and the national offices of the Canadian political parties for their participation in the project. The *New Zealand Study* was funded by the Foundation for New Zealand Research Science and Technology and conducted by Peter Aimer, Helena Catt, Raymond Miller, Jack Vowles and Jim Lamare.

Lastly this book would not have been possible without the cooperation of all the parliamentary candidates who generously set aside time in a busy schedule to participate in the surveys, and all the party officials who provided assistance, information and advice. We thank you all for your help.

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1 Introduction: theories of recruitment

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Competitive democratic elections offer citizens a choice of alternative parties, governments and policies. But, equally important, campaigns provide voters with a choice of candidates for office. The nature of the ballot may vary: Dutch voters are offered a long list of names under a common party banner; Canadians face the choice of one candidate per party in their riding; in American primary elections citizens can pick from rival nominees within a party. But in all cases voters are selecting political leaders who may determine the future of their country. Which candidates get on the ballot, and therefore who enters legislative office, depends on the prior recruitment process.

The concept of *legislative recruitment* refers to the critical step as individuals move from lower levels into parliamentary careers. The chapters in this book work within a common conceptual framework which assumes that all such recruitment involves four levels of analysis (see Figure 1.1):

- the *political system*, notably the legal regulations, party system and electoral system, which structure candidate opportunities in the political market-place;
- the *recruitment process*, particularly the degree of internal democracy within party organisations and the rules governing candidate selection;
- the *supply* of candidates willing to pursue elected office, due to their motivation and political capital; and lastly,
- the *demands* of gatekeepers (whether voters, party members, financial supporters or political leaders) who select some from the pool of aspirants.

These levels can be understood as nested, in a 'funnel of causality', so that supply and demand works within party recruitment processes, which in turn are shaped by the broader political system. The core question pursued in subsequent chapters concerns how individual actors interact within different institutional contexts. By comparing how the recruitment

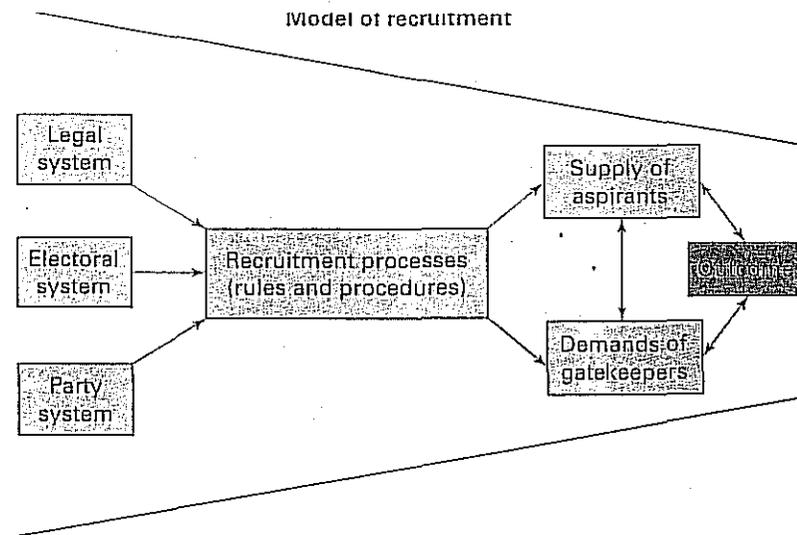


Figure 1.1 Model of recruitment.

process works in a range of advanced industrialised democracies we can explore how far variations in the institutional setting have a major impact upon the outcome.

The book compares established democracies including nineteen advanced industrialised societies in North America, Western Europe, Scandinavia and the Pacific. The research design is based upon a contextual analysis of the recruitment process within the major parties in each country combined with elite-level surveys of individual parliamentary candidates in elections held during the early 1990s. Most chapters deal with the recruitment process in general elections while the conclusion covers candidates running for election to the European Parliament. Similar, or functionally equivalent, questions were asked in each survey, allowing comparison of factors such as the social background and political experience of candidates. This approach provides significant cross-national variations in the institutional context, while allowing a richer and denser understanding of the specific process of recruitment within parties in each country. The conclusion seeks to test theories of recruitment in a systematic manner across member states of the European Union. The aim of this introduction is to suggest why political recruitment matters, to map out common perspectives in the literature and to outline the

approach adopted by this book, and to identify the core features of the recruitment process which will be covered by subsequent chapters.

Normative concerns about political recruitment

The recruitment process represents one of the basic functions of every political system which has long raised normative concerns about the consequences of the recruitment process for political careers, the social diversity of legislative elites, and the democratic distribution of power within parties.

What is the impact of recruitment on political careers?

Many previous studies have analysed political careers, where recruitment represents the first step in a lifetime's parliamentary service (Mezey 1979; Jewell 1985; Buck 1963; Blondel 1973; King 1981; Riddell 1993; Schlesinger 1966, 1991). Through recruitment people are choosing their leaders. In the long run *who* gets into the legislature, perhaps rising during a twenty- or thirty-year career into the highest offices of state, may have more important repercussions for the future of the country than other electoral choice. In many countries recruitment into parliament is a filtering mechanism which determines who is eligible for government office. Some who pursue legislative careers will ultimately rise to become Cabinet Ministers, party leaders and heads of state. There are alternative pathways into political elites, including the military, media or bureaucracy, but experience of elected office remains the most common route in most democracies (Blondel 1987, 1995). As Kazee (1994, 165) argues, the effectiveness of government in any society depends in large part upon the quality of the leaders who seek office. The personal experiences, political attitudes and abilities which politicians bring to public life can vary substantially across different political systems, depending upon the qualifications which are regarded as relevant for elected office. Unlike those who become physicians or civil engineers, there are no standardised and internationally recognised qualifications to be a politician. Unlike vacancies in executive management, there are no specified and well-defined job descriptions. Politicians can adopt multiple legislative roles (see Searing 1994). Whether the recruitment process favours those who can raise independent financial resources, those who have worked their way up the party ladder, or those with considerable experience in local government, may produce very different types of legislators. In turn, this may influence effective governance.

As ideal types, routes into political careers can be classified as relatively

hierarchical or lateral. Many established parliamentary systems, particularly in unitary states, are characterised by a clearly demarcated and well-trodden ladder into the higher echelons of power. In Britain, for example, the steps are well defined. Labour and Conservative politicians commonly rise from constituency party office and local government service to become a parliamentary candidate, then, if elected, a back-bench MP, perhaps a junior minister, and ultimately, the pinnacle of power, a cabinet minister or Secretary of State (see chapter 9). British politicians can rarely miss or by-pass a step in the established hierarchy. Westminster provides stable and institutionalised political careers. This process reinforces common experiences as politicians are socialised into the familiar routines of the corridors of power. With relatively moderate levels of incumbency turnover, any outsiders at Westminster are soon absorbed into 'the best club in London' (for detailed accounts see Riddell 1993; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Vertical segmentation and differentiation reinforce minimum transfers between political elites, for example few higher civil servants ever enter parliament. Similar patterns are evident in Germany (see Wessels chapter 5), the Netherlands (Leijenaar and Niemöller chapter 7) and Australia (see McAllister chapter 2). In Japan the pathway to power is even more closed, since many new members of the Diet 'inherit' their seat through long-standing family connections and well-established *koenkai* machines. About a quarter of Diet members enter as 'hereditary' or 'nisei' (second generation) candidates (see Fukui chapter 6).

In contrast in federalist systems with a division of powers, like the United States, there are complex and diverse (although not random) routes into legislative office, with horizontal or lateral career moves, and a more permeable elite. Hence aspirants may move from the US House into the Senate, from Gubernatorial office into the Presidency, or from a Cabinet post into the judiciary (see Ehrenhalt 1992; Fowler and McClure 1989; Kazee 1994). The 'revolving door' in American politics also facilitates rotation between the private and public sectors, for example from the news media into the White House executive, or from Congress into a lobbying firm. Canadian politics is also characterised by a relatively open system, with a high level of incumbency turnover, where progress in political careers does not require many years of party or local government service (see Erickson chapter 3), while Finland also shares many of these characteristics (see Helander chapter 4).

The differences between these career paths to Westminster, the Diet and Capital Hill may have a significant impact, not only on the type of politician who succeeds in these systems, and the qualifications and experience of people who embark upon political careers, but also upon the

cohesiveness and permeability of the legislatures. Most importantly, many established democracies have experienced an increased *professionalisation* of legislative careers (Buck 1963; King 1981). To use the Weberian distinction, in many countries amateurs who live *for* politics have been increasingly replaced by professionals who live *from* politics (Weber 1958). This shift signifies a move from amateurs who may enter public service as a temporary step, perhaps at the end of a long and distinguished life in business, the law or journalism, towards a full-time life-long career with its own training, qualifications and rewards. This trend means that more and more representatives tend to be experienced politicians, adept campaigners and skilled legislators, with many years of public service.

This pattern has caused concern about whether greater professionalisation weakens the linkages between citizens and their representatives, and whether the power of incumbents allows them to restrict opportunities for new challengers to enter parliament, as discussed in subsequent chapters on Australia (McAllister chapter 2), The Netherlands, (Leijenaar and Niemöller chapter 7), Japan (Fukui chapter 6) and Germany (Wessels chapter 5). Yet at the same time in other countries there are concerns that too many amateurs may be entering parliament without the necessary prior political experience or legislative skills, a pattern noted in Canada (Erickson chapter 3) and in Finland (Helander chapter 4). Clearly there is a fine balance between the necessary experience required for effective governance and the circulation of political elites which allows new blood to enter parliaments. In many countries there is concern that the recruitment process has shifted out of kilter on one side or other of this delicate equilibrium.

Does recruitment produce diverse leaders?

The recruitment process also determines the composition of parliaments, who gets into power, and therefore whether legislatures reflect society at large. This process has long raised concerns about the legitimacy of representative bodies. In comparing the social composition of parliaments we can draw a distinction between the larger pool of *aspirants* who are interested in pursuing elected office, the smaller group of *candidates* who are nominated to stand, and the smallest group of *legislators* who are elected into parliaments. Like a game of musical chairs, some fall by the wayside at every stage of the process. If the recruitment process involves a totally neutral competition for office, then parliaments will perfectly mirror the supply of aspirants who come forward. But unless MPs are picked purely at random, the recruitment process filters some over others, on a systematic basis. Some candidates fail while others succeed,

depending upon factors such as their party service, formal qualifications, legislative experience, speaking abilities, financial resources, political connections, name-recognition, group networks, organisational skills, ambition for office or incumbency status. The criteria which are relevant for success can vary from one country to another.

The central concern here is that as a result of this filtering process legislators are often atypical of the electorate. One long tradition in the literature has traditionally focussed on political elites, notably the socio-economic background of leaders in government, the civil service, business and industry, and the military (Thomas 1939; Ross 1955; Aaronovitch 1961; Bottomore 1964; Parry 1969; Scott 1991; Mellors 1978; Putnam 1976; Loewenberg and Patterson 1979; Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman 1981). These studies established that legislatures worldwide include more of the affluent than the less well-off, more men than women, more middle-aged than young, and more white-collar professionals than blue-collar workers. Moreover, over time the paucity of working-class MPs has been exacerbated, with the growth of representatives from a professional background like lawyers, businessmen and journalists (Norris 1996a). In recent decades traditional issues about social class have received less attention than concern about the persistent under-representation of women and ethnic minorities (Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Randall 1987). Worldwide women are 9 per cent of parliamentarians, and 5.6 per cent of cabinet ministers (United Nations 1995). The proportion of women MPs has declined in recent years, following the abandonment of quotas in Central and Eastern Europe. Identifying the differences and similarities in the pathways to power which cause this pattern, and analysing their consequences, is one of the primary aims of this book.

One major stream of literature has been concerned to understand the consequences of the composition of elites for political representation (Birch 1964, 1971, 1993; Pitkin 1967; Penock and Chapman 1968; Eulau and Wahlke 1978; Converse and Pierce 1986; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996). In the older literature, based on the responsible party model of representative democracy, it was commonly assumed that *what* members stood for, particularly their party affiliation, was more important than *where* they came from (Edinger and Searing 1967; Schleth 1971; Matthews 1985:45). Yet a growing body of work has demonstrated that the social background of legislators may matter not just for the symbolic legitimacy of elected bodies, but also for the attitudes and behaviour of representatives. Studies have found that the class, generation, gender and education of elected members produces attitudinal differences within parties in Germany (Wessels 1985: 50-72) and

Sweden (Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996: 31-48). Gender differences among legislators have been found to be significant predictors of their attitudes in Britain (Norris and Lovenduski 1995), Scandinavia (Karvonen and Per Selle 1995) and the United States (Thomas 1994). This suggests that the development of a more diverse legislature may influence not just its legitimacy but also its dominant policy agenda, and perhaps its style of politics.

Is the recruitment process democratic, open and fair?

The last controversy in the literature revolves around how far the process of recruitment is internally democratic within parties, which concerns the appropriate division of power between party leaders and grassroots members. At the turn of the century Ostrogorski (1902) established a long tradition which suggests that *who* selects candidates, whether party leaders, members or grassroots voters, may have important consequences for the distribution of power within parties, and perhaps for party discipline in parliament. Institutionalists have studied recruitment to understand the distribution of power within party organisations, who has the power to select, and the formal rules governing the process (McKenzie 1955; Eldersveld 1964; Epstein 1970; Painebanco 1988; Ranney 1965; Rush 1969; Ware 1996; Katz and Mair 1994, 1992).

Parties can be classified according to the degree of centralisation of the selection process, on a continuum ranging from the most open systems determined mainly by voters (such as the Canadian Conservatives or the US Democrats), to the most closed systems determined mainly by party leaders (such as the Mexican PRI or Forza Italia). Between these poles, a range of actors may play a role: voters, party members, local delegates, factions, affiliated groups, regional officers and national party leaders (see Ware 1995; Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Lovenduski and Norris 1993).

Normative theories concerning the importance of internal party democracy, and its consequences, continue to be strongly debated. Proponents of responsible party government argue that democracy works most effectively where parties provide an alternative set of programmes on the major issues facing the country, voters choose parties based on their policies and performance, and free and fair elections are held at regular intervals to allow alternation of the parties in power. As such democracy provides all citizens with an opportunity to hold parties collectively responsible for their actions. In contrast advocates of 'strong' or 'participatory' democracy argue that the choice of parties in elections once every four or five years provides only limited opportunities for citizen control over their leaders. To supplement this system, it is sug-

gested, core party activists in local areas or all grassroots party members need to be able to exercise influence over their leaders through internal party mechanisms, including determining the selection of party candidates, leaders and policy platforms. This debate poses unresolved issues about whether representatives should be accountable to the whole electorate, to grassroots party members, to a smaller group of party activists, or to the party leadership.

The new institutionalism research design

The process of recruitment therefore raises significant normative concerns about how the process should operate according to rival conceptions of democracy, and empirical issues about how the process does operate in practice. While the importance of recruitment is widely acknowledged, there have been few systematic studies into the shadowy pathways to power prior to election in most countries. Comparative studies comparing the process in different countries, using a common theoretical framework, remain even scarcer (for detailed reviews of the literature see Matthews 1985; Czudnowski 1975; and comparative studies by Loewenberg and Patterson 1979; Mezey 1979; Norris 1996a; and Gallagher and Marsh 1988). This means that although we have well-developed theories of voting behaviour and elections, which have been examined and replicated in many different national contexts, as a result of this neglect it sometimes appears as if candidates are born by miraculous conception, politically fully clothed, the day the campaign is announced. We lack powerful and well-tested theories which could unify comparative research on candidacies. Building on the literature which is available, this book seeks to develop our theoretical and empirical knowledge by exploring routes to power in a wide range of parties in advanced industrialised democracies. The core questions explored by subsequent chapters concern *who* becomes a candidate, *how*, and *why* this happens.

A thorough review of the literature (Fowler 1993) highlights the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding legislative recruitment, and the fragmentation of the field. We have already discussed some of the predominant perspectives which have focussed on the insights recruitment provides into political careers, issues of social representation, and the process of party politics. Each approach has provided important clues to understand part of the puzzle of legislative recruitment. While establishing a rich foundation on which to build, these approaches need to be melded into a more integrated and comprehensive theoretical framework. The book works within a *new institutionalism* perspective, an increasingly popular approach which suggests that the atti-

tudes and behaviour of individual actors need to be understood within their broader institutional context (March and Olsen 1989; Powell and Dimaggio 1991). Many studies have focussed on the formal recruitment process as set out in legal regulations, constitutional conventions and official party rules (see, for example, Rush 1969; Ranney 1965). These studies often assume that the formal processes determine the outcome. The obvious weakness of this approach is that formal rules may have little bearing on informal practices. Constitutions may exercise *de jure*, not *de facto*, authority. The focus on party structures neglects the attitudes, priorities and concerns of selectors, whether party leaders, members, voters or non-party financial supporters, or interest groups. Moreover institutional approaches have also paid little attention to the motivation and experience of candidates. In contrast behavioural approaches have used surveys of elites to understand the attitudes of party selectors or candidates (see, for example, Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Bochel and Denver 1983). Yet the micro-behavioural perspective assumes that these attitudes are static, and generalisable irrespective of the broader context. For example, it assumes that selectors are looking for the same qualifications in candidates irrespective of the type of seat, type of party, or type of rules governing the process. Yet a change in the procedures, for example a party's adoption of affirmative action quotas to boost women's representation, may encourage more women to aspire for office, and may alter the attitudes of selectors towards female nominees.

We can start to rectify this gap by combining the analysis of the macro-level institutional structure of recruitment – the political systems and recruitment processes within parties – with the micro-level analysis of the attitudes of the candidates and selectors using individual-level survey data. This assumes a multi-method approach, ideally combining qualitative sources (depth interviews with core actors, participant observation of selection procedures, and organisational analysis of party structures) and quantitative sources (surveys of candidates, aspirants and party selectors). The *new institutionalism* approach used in this book assumes that the politics of recruitment is not simply reducible to either the attitudes, preferences and concerns of individual actors, or the legal and constitutional structures within which they work. Instead there is a process of interaction: the rules and procedures of political systems structure behaviour, attitudes and opinions in predictable and orderly ways.

The analytical framework of legislative recruitment

The chapters which follow work within a broadly common framework, although the stress on different components varies, as befits each particu-