

Candidate Selection in Venezuela
(and Its Impact on Legislator Behavior)

Brian F. Crisp
University of Arizona

Paper prepared for the Latin American Studies Association XXIII International Congress, Washington, DC, September 6-8, 2001.

Candidate Selection in Venezuela
(and Its Impact on Legislator Behavior)

Brian F. Crisp
University of Arizona

The process of nominating candidates is one of the most important functions played by political parties. The institutions, rules, and procedures that a party uses to determine access to the ballot reveal a great deal about the nature of the party and its own level of internal democracy. The institutions constructed to select candidates can include the entire populous or a privileged handful of party elites, and the process can be conducted across entire countries or in small districts. Candidate selection processes can help explain the nature of candidates chosen and the behavior of partisan delegations once in office. The candidates chosen and their behavior as legislators have a significant impact on the nature of representation itself. Legislators from the same party may stand together for a coherent ideological program or they may deliver constituency service and pork barrel programs in very personalistic terms. They may seek to become experts on a particular topic and gain seniority in the committees where those issues are decided or they may remain generalists who move from task to task within the party and the legislature. I will test the notion that nomination procedures could have a significant impact on how representation occurs with data on Venezuela.

An appeal to institutional determinants is not new. Variations among assembly members have been explained by institutional characteristics of the electoral system. Most studies have focused on the number and types of votes cast by individual voters, the extent to which votes can be pooled from candidate to candidate within parties, or whether the ballot allows voters to choose from or rank copartisans. The nomination process that occurs before elections is frequently ignored. A few works have focused on nomination procedures but in an unsystematic manner, failing to generalize from the individual case or to connect nominations to other institutional characteristics in a broader effort to explain representation. In other words, institutions and formal procedures are recognized as significant, but most attention is devoted to general elections — not candidate selection.

Nomination procedures have probably been slighted because they are usually within the domain of individual parties. Thus, they can vary within national contexts, not just across them, and they may only be informally codified within party statutes, rather than appearing in black-and-white as part of national electoral laws. These characteristics complicate the researchers task. Many studies are designed to make generalizations at the national level, but focusing on the candidate selection process might only allow for generalizations at the level of the party. Because in most systems parties can determine their own rules regarding access to the ballot, in-depth fieldwork on how parties choose their candidates and how that process may have changed over time must be substituted for knowledge of clearly codified and relatively widely available electoral rules. Despite these difficulties, it is important to account for nomination procedures in a systematic way because they chronologically precede all the institutional characteristics of the electoral system noted above. They are the first opportunity to signal would-be representatives and incumbents what is expected of them.

This is not to minimize the importance of electoral rules and their likely interaction with candidate selection procedures. I suspect that the two are typically isomorphic. Legislators can face incentives that value the party's reputation or incentives that value a personal reputation, and it is likely that these two institutional stages will work together to encourage the same kind of behavior. This is so because there is no point in having the two work at cross-purposes, and those in charge of designing the electoral system are probably also in control of political parties (and their internal procedures). To the extent that candidate selection procedures and electoral rules encourage the same behavior, their independent effects will be difficult to discern from one another. However, while I suspect that the two

frequently coincide (and would like to test this expectation), there are plenty of exceptions — candidate centered nomination rules in systems with party centered electoral rules and vice versa. Venezuela does give us the opportunity to compare the behavior of legislators across parties with varying candidate selection procedures while holding constant an electoral system that encourages focus on the party's reputation.

My guess is that when the two, candidate selection and general election, are at variance, the electoral system trumps. First, it applies to all candidates and therefore, regardless of variation at the party level, the impact at the election level is shared. Once most legislators or the major parties tend in one direction — toward personal or party reputation — others are constrained. The members of the majority will create a legislative institution likely to increase their prospects for reelection (Mayhew 1974). For example, they will adopt voting procedures for the chamber floor that make personalistic or party-centered behavior more likely. Likewise, committee assignments and tenure are likely to reflect the reelection needs of the majority. Thus, while some may face contrary incentives as a result of the candidate selection procedures within their party, they will be part of a legislative body not attuned to their needs.

The upshot of this interaction is that we should expect greater variation in legislator behavior across countries (or, more accurately, electoral systems) than across parties in the same country. Thus, for my purpose in this paper, the electoral rules in Venezuela are likely to promote party-centered behavior regardless of any party level variation in candidate selection. Any variation observed is likely to fall within a band of behavior deemed acceptable given the electoral rules. Forthcoming, systematic cross-national work will test these suspicions.

Institutional Determinants of Legislator Behavior

Several formal characteristics of the electoral system are hypothesized to explain important legislator behaviors such as committee careers, legislative initiative, and constituency service. However, many works omit nomination procedures from their list of causal variables or they fail to separate characteristics of a candidate's ballot access from the ballot type.¹ This distinction is important in theoretical and conceptual terms since the latter is mandated by law and is universal for all parties within a system while the former can vary from party to party.

Carey and Shugart (1995) have ranked electoral systems on their incentives to cultivate a personal vote. They propose that legislators' incentives for credit claiming can be explained by the combination of the electoral variables of ballot access and type, the degree of vote pooling, the number and level of votes cast, and district magnitude. They present a trichotomized measure of ballot access distinguishing among the cases where, party leaders have the authority to present a fixed ballot, party leaders have the authority to present alterable ballots, and party leaders have no control over ballot access. The incentive for legislators to behave entrepreneurially increases as the control of party elites decreases. They also identify three variations in vote pooling — pooling across the entire party, pooling at sub-party levels,

¹Nomination procedures for legislators have not received as much attention in the American literature as the presidential process has (for a review of this literature see Norrander 1996; see also Aldrich 1980, Bartels 1988, and McCann 1996). Still there have been studies of divisive primaries, raiding in open primaries, effects of majority versus minority party status on the number of candidates, attempts by political parties to control nominations through endorsements, questions about racial biases in run-off primaries, and studies of turnout. The importance of self-selection combined with two broad-based parties in the American case has led to a developed literature on “ambitions” — why individuals pursue congressional careers and the route they take. Ambition is likely to be less explanatory where procedures bring actors other than the individual candidate into play.

and no pooling — and hypothesize that the incentives for legislator entrepreneurship covary with the extent to which votes are pooled. Where votes for one party member cannot help another, behavior to enhance the party's reputation is not given a high priority. Finally, "vote" captures the considerable variability across electoral systems both in terms of the number of choices available to voters and the number of votes a voter is allowed to cast. For example, in some electoral systems, voters are restricted to a single party vote. Under such conditions (*ceteris paribus*), the personal reputation of the legislator is unlikely to have much importance, and the political party is the focus of vote choice. The impact of magnitude is hypothesized to vary depending on other electoral system characteristics. In systems that employ a closed list ballot type, where voters cannot rank individual candidates, there is an inverse relationship between district magnitude and the incentive to cultivate a personal vote. The greater the number of legislators elected from an electoral district, the weaker the personal vote incentive, because distinguishing oneself from your copartisans makes no sense when the order of candidates on the ballot is fixed. In all other systems, meaning those where voters can distinguish among candidates from the same party, the relationship between district magnitude and the incentive to cultivate a personal vote is positive. Because individual candidates are in competition with all others, including their copartisans, establishing one's own individual reputation can make a difference.

Despite the compelling hierarchy of personal vote seeking incentives offered by Carey and Shugart, their work fails to explicitly consider the independent effect that nomination procedure has, instead including it under the variable "ballot". However, since ballot "measures the degree of control party leaders exercise over access to their party's label, and control over ballot rank in electoral list systems" they have included what are really two distinct dimensions in this one variable (Carey and Shugart, 1995, p. 418). The nomination process is worthy of attention, independent of the structure of the ballot, and should be treated as a separate independent variable. Nomination procedures are not predetermined by ballot type, and thus collapsing the two dimensions in this way ignores possible variations. I will attempt to derive hypotheses about how nomination procedures should influence legislator behavior, all other things, including the nature of the electoral system, being equal.

Theory and Hypotheses

I will document the relationship between the emergence of legislative entrepreneurship, or the inclination to cultivate the personal vote, and the incentives defined by both the cross-temporal and cross-sectional variation in nomination procedures and electoral rules in Venezuela between 1988 and 1998. As will be detailed below, nomination procedures vary across parties and across time within parties, and in 1993 Venezuela used a compensatory mixed-member system in place of its traditional closed list, proportional representation system. I hypothesize that legislators' efforts to enhance their own individual reputations for the purpose of electoral survival will vary across time and place (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987; Carey and Shugart 1995). Where the incentives are strong enough, efforts to enhance one's own reputation can be at odds with party goals and reputation, thereby altering the nature of representation, the programmatic effectiveness of democratic regimes, and the likely stability of democracies.

Nomination Procedures

Candidate selection processes involve how a candidate gets his or her name on the ballot, and there is considerable variation across electoral systems in these nomination procedures (Gallagher 1988). Of interest for this paper is the degree to which political parties exert control over whose name appears on the ballot. Where political parties have relatively more control over ballot access, I would expect to observe stronger party discipline among legislators and a lower incentive for the emergence of

legislative entrepreneurship. After all, if a legislator is beholden to the political party to gain access to the ballot, then his or her electoral survival is intimately linked to the preferences and reputation of the party.

Thus, the first general hypothesis centers on this issue of nomination procedures. Where parties control access to the ballot and where political party decision making is very centralized, I expect the greatest degree of party discipline and the lowest degree of legislative entrepreneurship. Where the process is least centralized, meaning candidates have open access to the party's ballot and party decision making is very decentralized, legislative entrepreneurship is likely to be higher. Candidates are not constrained by the need to please their party in order to gain ballot access.

Venezuelan parties varied quite widely in their nomination procedures with Acción Democrática (AD) using a rather closed system where the National Executive Council (CEN) has a great deal of influence over the choice of nominees. The CEN is required to consult widely with national, state, and local elites and to even receive lists of possible candidates from them, but the executive council has the right to name a full 1/3 each slate despite the fact that the suggested lists already, at least in part, reflect the preferences of national leaders. Party regulations adopted in 1998 did away with the 1/3 restriction, giving the CEN the power to name all candidates for state and national legislative seats. COPEI, the Christian Democratic party, is somewhat more open in its process with 2/3s of its PR candidates being nominated by regional and local leaders alone. What is more, in the elections under consideration in this paper party statutes mandated that the order of candidates on the slate assure that the 1/3 of the candidates chosen by national leaders be distributed down the slate evenly — one nationally chosen candidate for every two regionally and locally chosen one. In 1993 the party used primaries open to party members from each district to select its single-member district candidates, and in 1998 it used primaries open to all voters. Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) has the most open nomination procedures. In 1988 it used party (closed) primaries at the state level to assemble its PR lists, and in 1993 it used open primaries at the state level to choose its PR slates and open primaries at the district level to choose its single-member district candidates. In 1998 the party reverted to its pre-1988 use of regional conventions to choose all its candidates because party elites wanted more power to construct pre-electoral coalitions.²

The Electoral System

Carey and Shugart (1995) discuss the relationship between district magnitude and the incentive to pursue a personal vote. District magnitude is the number of legislative seats an electoral district fills in an election. In systems that employ a closed list ballot type, where voters cannot rank individual candidates, there is an inverse relationship between district magnitude and the incentive to cultivate a personal vote. The greater the number of legislators elected from an electoral district, the weaker the personal vote incentive, because distinguishing oneself from your copartisans makes no sense when the order of candidates on the ballot is fixed. Instead, legislators have an incentive to enhance the reputation of their party as a whole. In all other systems, meaning those where voters can distinguish among candidates from the same party, the relationship between district magnitude and the incentive to

² If there is a difference between the rules under which a legislator was chosen and the rules he or she will face in the upcoming elections, one would predict that legislators would respond to the nomination procedures and electoral systems that would be used in the future. However, in Venezuela changes to these procedures have been adopted very late in legislative terms. For example, late in the 1994 to 1998 term electoral reforms were adopted to allow for multi-member districts and unlimited votes. Not only did the change come after more than four years of the five year term, but, in addition, legislators did not know where there would be multimember districts and if they would be running in them. Thus, I will hypothesize that legislators are behaving in accordance with the rules under which they were most recently chosen.

cultivate a personal vote is positive. Because individual candidates are in competition with all others, including their copartisans, establishing one's own individual reputation can make a difference.

Once we separate ballot access (party centralization of nomination procedures) from ballot type, the Venezuelan system has not varied on Ballot, Pool, or Vote, and each of these characteristics has the value least likely to promote personal vote seeking.³ Variations in incentives to cultivate a personal vote stem from variations in party centralization of nomination procedures and from changes in district magnitude. We should expect the most legislative entrepreneurship by legislators from parties with nomination procedures that are participatory, as they are in MAS, and from legislators elected in single-member districts where their personal reputation is most important. The final column of table 1 provides an overall personal vote seeking incentive score under the assumption that the preceding individual characteristics are cumulative in their effects.

³Party centralization interacts with ballot type to determine party elites' control over candidate selection. For example, in an electoral system where there is no party controlled list (Ballot Type = 2), party centralization is less relevant than in cases where the ballot is a closed list (Ballot Type = 0). A complete typology of all the hypothetical combinations would require a complex system of weighting for party centralization depending on ballot type. Fortunately, in the parties and electoral rules under study the interaction is much less complex. Venezuela has used only one ballot type in the period under study, a party presented closed list.

One might also hypothesize that the degree of vote pooling in a country as well as the choices available to voters are substantially related to the emergence of legislator entrepreneurship (Carey and Shugart 1995). Carey and Shugart (1995) identify three variations in vote pooling — pooling across the entire party, pooling at sub-party levels, and no pooling — and hypothesize that the incentives for legislator entrepreneurship covary with the extent to which votes are pooled. Clearly, in systems where no pooling is done, candidates are largely responsible for their own electoral survival. By implication, legislators in such systems have a much greater incentive to enhance their personal reputation, advertise themselves to voters, and heighten their own name recognition above and beyond the recognition of the party. Research on House incumbents has unambiguously found this to be the case in the United States (c.f., Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978; Fiorina 1989; Bianco 1994). In systems where votes can be pooled, on the other hand, there is a much greater incentive to work to enhance the reputation of the party as a whole. After all, one's electoral survivability is substantially bolstered if one's political party fares well. Thus, in a system where votes are pooled across the entire political party, the incentives for the personal vote are likely to be lower than in systems where pooling is done at the sub-party level, or where no pooling is done. In Venezuela, both the legislative electoral systems used thus far have called for vote pooling at the party level in all races. This is the form of pooling least likely to lead to legislative entrepreneurship or personal vote seeking.

A third attribute of the electoral system involves the choices available to voters. There is considerable variability across electoral systems both in terms of the number of choices available to voters and the number of votes a voter is allowed to cast. For example, in some electoral systems, voters are restricted to a single party vote. Under such conditions (*ceteris paribus*), the personal reputation of the legislator is unlikely to have much importance, and the political party is the focus of vote choice. Consequently, the emergence and cultivation of the personal vote in such systems is tempered. Electoral systems that stress and indeed provide strong incentives for the personal vote are systems where voters are allowed to cast multiple votes for individual candidates or a single vote for sub-party factions (Carey and Shugart 1995). Such systems stress the personal vote because every candidate on a vote list or every sub-party slate, even candidates and slates within the same party, are in competition with each other. Thus, distinguishing oneself from all others, including copartisans, is critical. Under such conditions, we would expect legislative entrepreneurship to flourish. Again, Venezuela has shown no variation on this dimension thus far. In each kind of race, voters have only been able to cast one ballot at the party level.

Table 1
Personal Vote Seeking Incentives in Venezuela

Party	Party Centralization	Median District Magnitude	Encouragement of Legislator Entrepreneurship
1989-1993			
Acción Democrática	0	1	1
COPEI	1	1	2
Movimiento al Socialismo	2	1	3
Acción Democrática Closed PR List	0	1	1
1994-1998			
Acción Democrática Single-Member	0	2	2
COPEI Closed PR List	1	1	2
COPEI Single-Member	2	2	4
Movimiento al Socialismo Closed PR List	2	1	3
Movimiento al Socialismo Single-Member	2	2	4

Party Centralization: 0 = Centralized, 1 = Mixed, 2 = Decentralized.

Median District Magnitude: 0 = National District, 1 = Four to Twelve, 2 = Three or Less.

Personal vote seeking incentives in Venezuela range from 1 to 4 on this scale with Adeco legislators running on closed PR slates having the least incentive to engage in legislative entrepreneurship. Copeyano legislators from PR slates and Adeco legislators from single-member districts have the next lowest incentive to cultivate a personal vote, though for different institutional reasons. Masistas nominated in a participatory fashion to PR slates have a greater incentive to engage in entrepreneurship. Copeyanos and Masistas nominated in single-member districts have the greatest incentive to cultivate a personal vote, though the score of “4” is less than half the hypothetically possible score. We would expect much more legislative entrepreneurship in other national contexts.

Legislative Entrepreneurship

A rich body of literature focuses on U.S. legislators' cultivation of the personal vote, and we use it to define indicators of legislative entrepreneurship. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina define the personal vote as “that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record” (1987, 9). This paper will explain variation in the degree to which legislators seek to cultivate the personal vote. That is, under what conditions do legislators have an

incentive to entrepreneurially highlight their personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record? Our use of the term "legislative entrepreneurship" simply implies a legislator's desire to enhance his or her personal reputation with the goal of maximizing that part of their vote that is the personal vote.

The terms "hill style" and "home style" have been used to distinguish a Congress member's Washington behavior from his or her district behavior (Fenno 1978); however, in terms of describing the cultivation of the personal vote, a legislator's home style and hill style are certainly not independent. In Washington, members of Congress select committee positions, in part, to pursue constituency service activities such as directing distributive goods back to the district in the form of "pork barrel", and to demonstrate to constituents they have "one of their own" on a relevant committee (Rohde and Shepsle 1973; Smith and Deering 1990). In the United States after the onset of the Australian Ballot in the late 1800s, the importance of the reputation of the individual Congress member relative to that member's party affiliation, greatly increased. As a result, tenure on congressional committees increased because longer tenure led to the accrual of greater expertise and influence in the jurisdiction or issue area of the committee. Consequently, not only did members begin to purposefully select constituency-relevant committees, they also tended to stay on these choice committees for a long time (Katz and Sala 1996). In Venezuela congressional committee appointments are made on an annual basis, and I collected membership lists from a wide-variety of primary sources. I will use this data to examine committee career paths and whether variation in longevity can be explained by personal vote seeking incentives.

Legislative initiative and voting are other ways a legislator can cultivate the personal vote. In the U.S. Congress, members of the House routinely introduce legislation that is often very narrowly focused on their own congressional district. Whether this legislation ever becomes enacted is often irrelevant, for a major impact of legislative initiation is simply to show the "folks back home" the legislator is engaging in activity with the constituency's preferences in mind. Venezuelan bills initiated by legislators have been coded by their intended target. Bills that are individual, local or regional in focus are more likely to serve as service to the "folks back home" or as legislative pork. Votes that are sectoral or national in focus are unlikely to be targeted at particularly geographic, electoral districts.

Voting on legislative proposals is also a means to enhance one's individual reputation. Members of the U.S. House and Senate routinely defect from party leaders' preferences if these preferences substantially deviate from their constituencies' preferences (Davidson and Oleszek 1994). Indeed, a perennial dilemma for House and Senate party leadership is to balance their own preferences with the often deviating preferences of their House and Senate membership (Rohde 1991; Davidson and Oleszek 1994; Smith 1995). Because the need to cultivate the personal vote is so significant in the U.S. Congress, party unity on many votes is often quite low (relative to other electoral systems, particularly parliamentary systems), and there is very often little in the way of sanctions party leaders can place on "deviant members" (Davidson and Oleszek 1994), particularly when party leaders in the U.S. Congress are compared to party leaders in other legislative systems. In Venezuela, virtually all votes are taken by show of hands and no numerical totals or individuals' votes are recorded because discipline is assumed high. Legislators are assumed to have voted their party's line unless they explicitly ask that their abstention or contrary vote be noted. The process in itself discourages entrepreneurship as a legislator's partisan infidelity must be personally acknowledged and recorded. However, there have still been instances when legislators have made use of this provision, and I recorded those for every vote on a bill where the chamber was losing control of whether the bill became law or not (when it passed the bill to the Senate or when it passed a bill to the executive).⁴

⁴ There are also out-of-legislature activities that cultivate a personal vote. The use of casework is a prominent activity in which every member of Congress engages. As many scholars have noted, casework, such as the classic example of rectifying problems with a person's social security check, is an

My expectations are summarized below in table 2:

Table 2
Formal Hypotheses

Independent Effects of Nomination Procedures and Electoral Systems on Legislative Entrepreneurship

A: Where the nomination process is the most open, I hypothesize that legislators will:
... seek longer committee tenures on committees with a constituency appeal.
... more frequently initiate legislation with a specific geographic focus.
... more frequently vote against their party majority on the chamber floor.

B: Where median district magnitude is lower, we hypothesize that legislators will:
... seek longer committee tenures on committees with a constituency appeal.
... more frequently initiate legislation with a specific geographic focus.
... more frequently vote against their party majority on the chamber floor.

Committee Careers

The Venezuelan Chamber of Deputies had 22 permanent committees during the period from 1989 to 1998. Legislators can belong to more than one committee. Partisan composition of each committee is proportional to each party's seats in the Chamber. Seats are assigned among parties using a d'Hondt formula, and parties are free to designate which of their members will serve on each committee. Committee presidencies and vice-presidencies are also handed out proportionally among the parties. Prior to 1994 the president and vice-president were almost always from the same party, but in 1994 the Chamber adopted an internal regulation requiring that the offices be split between parties. When a bill is initiated it is sent to committee and the full house does not take action on the bill until the committee reports out. It is at the committee stage that the relatively disciplined Venezuelan parties make their positions on a bill known for the first time, and bills often die in committee as it becomes clear that a majority of disciplined legislators will not support them on the chamber floor. Committee consideration is also the opportunity to modify bills in an effort to increase their support on the chamber floor.

Committee membership assignments are made annually. The very fact that Venezuelan legislators can change committees so frequently, rather than once per legislative term for example, indicates that there might not be significant incentives to build seniority on a given committee. In addition, there is no requirement that parties respect previous service, or seniority, on a committee as they make their appointments of committee members or leaders — though party faction leaders typically take into consideration legislator's requests for committee assignments. To test my hypotheses regarding institutional incentives, I have calculated the average stay of each legislator on each committee he or she

ideal activity to promote the personal vote (c.f., Fiorina 1989). The payoff of casework is quite high because it promotes name recognition and word-of-mouth advertising. Satisfied constituents talk to other constituents. Thus, it has been found that even constituents who had no occasion to contact a Congress member still had favorable personal evaluations of him or her (Rivers and Fiorina 1989). As Fiorina (1989) noted, "it is better to be known as an errand boy than not to be known at all." The significance legislators attach to casework for generating the personal vote is indicated by their presence in the district including the number of district offices and staff. Other office perquisites used to grow the personal vote include franking privileges and allowances for travel to the district (c.f. Cover 1977; Cover and Brumberg 1982; Parker 1986). In Venezuela, no out-of-legislature activities of any quantity could be detected. Interviews with legislators and party leaders from a variety of parties indicated that there were no government or party resources available for district offices, staff, or travel.

was assigned to per congress.⁵ The maximum stay is five years, the number of years in a legislative term. I would expect legislators from parties with open nomination processes and legislators from single-member districts to try to stay on committees longer, building seniority, policy expertise, and policy influence to help them in their credit claiming efforts.

Table 3
Committee Career Lengths

	Low Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	Moderately Low Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	Moderately High Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	High Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	Average
All Committees					
Average Stay (Yrs)	2.34	2.49	1.93	2.16	2.33
5 Largest Committees					
Average Stay (Yrs)	2.45	2.56	2.08	1.98	2.39

The average stay of legislators on committees does not support my hypotheses. Where there are differences among types of legislators, those with low personal vote seeking incentives have on average longer stays than those with relatively higher incentives to be entrepreneurial (see table 3). I did sort out the five largest committees, reasoning that once legislators get on the more important legislative committees, as indicated by their size, legislators with high personal vote seeking incentives might try harder than other legislators to stay on these commissions. A more nuanced testing of the hypothesis that relates legislators' districts to particular committees will have to wait for future iterations.

Legislators have not internally organized the chamber so that they can pursue differences in personal vote seeking incentives. Faction leaders informally listen to legislators when making committee assignment, but individual members are not guaranteed that their preferences or seniority will be respected from committee to committee. What is more, the d'Hondt formula used for handing out committee presidencies, vice-presidencies, and regular seats means that party delegation size influences the ability to place members on the committee of their choice. For example, Masista legislators from single-member districts may have wanted seats on select committees but could not get them because their party had less than 15% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies from 1994 to 1998. If they cannot get on committees that serve their entrepreneurial interests, they might not see any reason to build up a long tenure on a lesser committee. Table four looks at average committee stays across legislators from the same party, regardless of how they were nominated or elected. The larger the party, the more choice committee seats it gets, and the longer members stay on these committees — though legislators from no party average 2.5 on the committees to which they are assigned.

⁵ In 1990 the Chamber of Deputies did not report committee memberships as usual. Instead, the *Diario de Debates* listed committee membership by party. AD, the largest party in the legislature, published its committee presidents and vice-presidents but not its regular committee members. Other sources were used to find signed committee reports with members names. This still left 13 committees for which it was impossible to regular Adeco members. These legislators would have low personal vote seeking incentives, and, thus, table 3 underestimates the average stay of these types of legislators.

Table 4
Committee Career Lengths Across Parties

	Acción Democrática	COPEI	Movimiento al Socialismo
	All Committees		
Average Stay (Yrs)	2.44	2.35	2.03
	5 Largest Committees		
Average Stay (Yrs)	2.46	2.45	2.09

One possible interpretation of these findings is that incentives to engage in entrepreneurial behavior have been so low in Venezuela that legislators have not organized their institutional rules to allow for it. However, differences in nomination procedures and district magnitudes may encourage legislators to behave differently from one another and to change the internal regulations of the chamber in the future so they can better act on their personal vote seeking incentives.

Legislative Initiative⁶

Several actors have the ability to introduce legislation in Venezuela, including legislators. My hypothesis is that legislators with relatively high personal vote seeking incentives are most likely to introduce bills targeted at specific groups and places. Using the coding scheme developed by Taylor and Diaz (1997), we designated each bill as having a national, sectoral, regional, local, or individual focus. Legislators with relatively high incentives to engage in legislative entrepreneurship are more likely to introduce legislation with a regional, local, or individual focus. Just as the lack of internal chamber regulations regarding recognition of seniority impeded personal vote seeking in committee careers, the Venezuelan constitution impedes personal vote seeking through the initiation of legislation. The constitution requires that legislators initiate legislation in groups of at least three. This makes it impossible for a legislator from a single-member districts to introduce legislation aimed at his or her district without the cooperation of at least two other legislators.

Of all the bills initiated by legislators in Venezuela, the vast majority are national or sectoral in focus. Between 1989 and 1998 legislators initiated 64 bills, and just over 25% of them had become law by mid-1998. Of the bills initiated by legislators 57 were national or sectoral in focus. This fits with the overall low personal vote seeking incentives relative to other national contexts. The larger project of which this paper is a part will explore these hypotheses and finding in greater detail. Almost a third of the time bills that are national in focus are initiated by an entire partisan delegation. This is rarely the case for sectoral bills (1 of 22). More in depth analysis will have to be done of the sectors being targeted and the partisan identification of the initiators before I can describe or explain any patterns.

Of the remaining seven bills, one is targeted at an individual legal entity, two are targeted at a specific region, and four are aimed at a specific locality. Five of the seven bills were initiated in the second congress when incentives to engage in legislative entrepreneurship were higher for many members. The local bill initiated prior to 1994 when all Deputies came from proportional representation, statewide districts was designed to lower subway ticket prices for students. The “metro” serves Caracas and its adjoining municipalities, hence the “local” classification of the bill. The bill was initiated by three Copeyanos, all of whom were elected from the Federal District, or the Caracas area. These legislators appear to have been engaging in personal vote seeking. Initiated in 1991, the bill

⁶ Congressional transcripts for August and September 1998 are still not available.

had still not been passed by congress as of mid-1998, and its prospects of becoming law were minimal. The remaining local bills were initiated by a mixture of Deputies from proportional representation slates and single-member districts. None of them had become law by mid-1998. One was initiated by the entire faction of COPEI which was composed of 21 members from single-member districts and 32 from PR slates. An effort to reform the law governing the Federal District was initiated by five Deputies, one each from AD, COPEI, and MAS and two from La Causa R (LCR). The Adeco and Copeyano were from the proportional representation slates for Bolívar and the Federal District respectively. The Masistas and Causistas were from single-member districts, two from the Federal District itself and one from Bolívar. The remaining local bill was drafted to create an investment fund for the metropolitan area of Caracas. It was initiated by three legislators from COPEI, MAS, and LCR. All were from single-member districts in the Caracas area (the Federal District or bordering state of Miranda). These legislators from different parties worked together to sponsor legislation targeted at the geographic area they had in common.

The regional bill initiated during the first congress was an effort to create a regional development corporation for the Amazonas region. This is a sparsely populated region with little representation in congress, and only one of the five initiating deputies was from Amazonas or a bordering state. The other regional bill was an effort to cut electricity prices for the benefit of residents of the state of Zulia, where electric consumption is relatively high due to air conditioning needs. Seven of the eight initiating deputies were from single-member districts in the state of Zulia. They were all Copeyanos. The bill passed but was later reformed. It was the only one of the seven individual, local, or national bills to have passed by mid-1998.

The lone individually focused bill initiated by legislators during the ten year period was designed to support a single professional society, the society of health workers. It was sponsored by six legislators from four different parties. Four of the legislators (one from COPEI, one from MAS, and two from LCR) were from single-member districts. They represented an array of geographic entities, the Federal District, Miranda, Aragua, and Lara, and the first three are contiguous. The bill included funding to build a museum and other facilities, a particularly divisible reward in geographic terms.

Only two Adecos, where nomination procedures were tightly controlled, initiated bills with an individual, local, or regional focus despite having a plurality of seats in both congresses. The bills without a national or sectoral focus showed some potential for generating personal votes. They were typically targeted at groups or places within the legislators' districts. Only one bill was initiated solely by members from single-member districts, and it was clearly designed to benefit the area in which their districts were drawn. Of the remaining bills, omitting the one sponsored by the entire COPEI delegation, initiators from single-member districts outnumbered those from PR slates fourteen to five, despite making up only one-half of the second congress under study. Apparently legislators from single-member districts were trying to be relatively more "parochial" in their focus.

Party Discipline⁷

It has always been assumed that discipline is nearly universal in Venezuela. However, this conclusion was never based on any systematic empirical data. As part of this project I examined every vote that was taken which moved a bill from one chamber to another or from one chamber to the executive. I examined only votes on bills because other forms of legislative activity are not as central to policy content and because they were too numerous to count. In addition, I only looked at votes that resulted in the bill leaving a chamber rather than votes at the end of the first discussion when legislators

⁷ Congressional transcripts for August and September 1998 are still not available.

knew the bill would be revisited before their chamber lost control of it. My reasoning was that only when the bill was leaving their control were legislators truly voting their conscience on what might actually become law.⁸

Unfortunately, roll call votes are very rare in Venezuela. In fact, while examining something close to 3,000 votes, the roll call procedure was only invoked once and even then only the vote totals, rather than the votes of individual legislators, were reported. Instead, votes are typically taken by a show of hands, and party discipline is assumed to be universal. However, after the decision on a bill is announced, legislators can intervene in the debates to explain why they voted the way they did. This is the only mechanism available to legislators for breaking party discipline. If they have previously intervened in the debate, they can explain their decision to abstain or to vote opposite their copartisans. If they have not intervened in the debate previously, their only option is to vote opposite their copartisans. Recall that my expectations are that legislators nominated through open procedures and elected in single-member districts will be most likely to have broken discipline at some point in the legislative term.

Table 5 indicates that, as expected, party discipline is very high in Venezuela. Of the 319 legislators from AD, COPEI, and MAS in the two congresses under consideration, only twelve broke party discipline.⁹ Given that the personal vote seeking incentives in Venezuela reach a maximum of four on a ten point scale, the high degree of discipline is not surprising.¹⁰ However, the breakdown in discipline that does occur follows the expectations stated in the hypotheses (the numbers in parentheses are expected values). Legislators with low and moderately low, by the already minimal Venezuelan standards, personal vote seeking incentives rarely broke discipline — only 2.79% of them broke discipline. On the other hand, 7.35% of those with moderately high and high personal vote seeking incentives broke discipline.

Table 5
Party Discipline

	Low Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	Moderately Low Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	Moderately High Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	High Personal Vote Seeking Incentives	Total
Broke Discipline	3 (4.59)	4 (4.85)	3 (1.09)	2 (1.47)	12
Did Not Break Discipline	119 (117.41)	125 (124.15)	26 (27.91)	37 (37.53)	307
Total	122	129	29	39	319

A closer look at the exact list of dissenters indicates that party leaders' control over access to the ballot may be more important than district magnitude for explaining differences in legislator behavior. In AD, the party with the most centralized nomination procedures, only three of 152 legislators (<2%)

⁸ Occasionally bills will be voted on one article at a time rather than as a unit. After the final article is approved, the entire bill is declared law. I did not count votes where legislators voted on each article individually.

⁹ Some of these individuals broke discipline more than once per congress, but they are only counted once. A legislator who served both terms, from 1989 through 1993 and 1994 through 1998, was counted twice. Legislators could be nominated and elected under different rules for each congress and our expectations of the individual would change accordingly.

¹⁰ Many legislators split from their parties during the congressional term, some after breaking party discipline and others before. These splits could be efforts to respond to personal vote seeking incentives, but they are not reported in Table 5.

broke discipline. All three defections were done by deputies elected from proportional representation slates, not from single-member districts. One of the defectors was Carmelo Lauría, a party leader, who was president of the Chamber of Deputies the first time he defected. In both instances he voted against the national budget, and in a personal interview he made it clear that it was not the result of “constituency” pressure but because he philosophically disagreed with the deficit spending. The moderately low personal vote seeking incentive column includes Adecos from single-member districts and Copeyanos from proportional representation slates. All four of the defectors in that column were Copeyanos nominated by a combination of national and regional party leaders to proportional representation slates, indicating that perhaps AD’s tight control over nominations overrode the effect of a smaller district magnitude. However, all the bills that Copeyanos defected on were national or sectoral in nature, clouding the possibility that it was done to serve a geographically defined constituency. All five of the defectors on the right-hand side of the table were Masistas, three from proportional representation slates and two from single-member districts. Again, the bills on which all five defected were national or sectoral in character.

Thus, party discipline seems to follow the pattern we would expect. It is generally very high across nomination procedures and district magnitudes because ballot type, votes cast, and pooling all discourage legislative entrepreneurship. Where breakdowns in discipline do occur, they seem to support my hypothesis about the importance of nomination procedures. Legislators from AD, the most centralized party, almost never defect (<2%). Copeyanos with their mixed nomination procedure defect slightly more often (3.33%). The members of MAS, where nomination procedures are very participatory, are the most likely of the three major parties to defect (approximately 10%). It should be stressed that Venezuelan legislators have only faced new incentives for a brief period, and there may be a learning process that is underway. Legislators from single-member districts may learn to defect in the future, especially given the recent decision to go to multimember districts with unlimited votes.

Subnational Variation in Institutional Incentives

As expected, legislative entrepreneurship in Venezuela is low. Incentives to enhance one’s personal reputation are so low that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish Venezuelan legislators from one another despite differences in the way they are nominated and elected. This was particularly the case for committee careers. Legislators do not build up seniority on committees, and the variation that does exist is better explained by the size of the party than the nomination procedures and district magnitudes for individual legislators. However, variation in institutional incentives at the subnational level did seem to have some of the expected effects. Bill initiation did show the potential for personal vote seeking behavior, and legislators from single-member districts were disproportionately involved in initiating bills with an individual, local, and regional focus. Legislators from the major party with the most centralized nomination procedures were disproportionately unlikely to initiate bills without a national or sectoral target. The differences among legislators on bill initiation seemed to follow the pattern we would expect, including the fact that the vast majority of bills initiated in Venezuela, a system particularly low on personal vote seeking incentives, were national or sectoral in their focus. Finally, party discipline too appeared to follow the patterns hypothesized. In general, discipline is very high. Where breakdowns in discipline do occur, party leaders’ control over access to the ballot seemed particularly important in explaining the relative likelihood of defecting from the party line.

The study of institutions is not new to comparative politics or political science more generally, and the return of institutions to center stage has yielded many positive results. However, further advancement with this approach will require more nuanced attention to subnational characteristics and their interaction with national outcomes. This will, in turn, entail detailed fieldwork. Initial, nearly

exclusive focus on the national level is not surprising. Our goal is generalization, and the larger the level of analysis the easier it is to draw broad lessons. Accounting for subnational variations will sacrifice parsimony, and it will only be a good trade-off if it yields significantly more explanatory power. From the point of view of the individual researcher, national-level institutions are more easily observed from afar or with a limited amount of time available. Nomination procedures are one set of subnational institutional arrangements with the potential to yield a great deal of explanatory power at the national level.

References

- Aldrich, John H. 1980. *Before the Convention: Strategies and Choices in Presidential Nomination Campaigns*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1988. *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Bianco, William T. 1994. *Trust: Representatives and Constituents*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Cain, Bruce E., John A. Ferejohn, and Morris P. Fiorina. 1987. *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Carey, John M. and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1995. Incentives to cultivate a personal vote. *Electoral Studies* 14, 417-439.
- Cover, Albert D. 1977. "One Good Term Deserves Another: The Advantage of Incumbency in Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* 71:523-42.
- Cover, Albert D., and Bruce S. Brumberg. 1982. "Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion." *American Political Science Review* 76:347-59.
- Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek. 1994. *Congress and Its Members*, 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1989. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gallagher, Michael. 1988. "Conclusion." In *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, ed. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh. London: Sage.
- Katz, Jonathan N. and Brian R. Sala. 1996. "Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection." *American Political Science Review*. 90:21-33.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCann, James A. 1996. Presidential nomination activists and political representation: a view from the active minority studies. In *In the Pursuit of the White House*, ed. William G. Mayer. Chatham House, Chatham.
- Norrander, Barbara. 1996. "Presidential nomination politics in the post-reform era. *Political Research Quarterly* 49, 875-915.
- Parker, Glenn R. 1986. *Homeward Bound: Explaining Changes in Congressional Behavior*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Rivers and Fiorina 1989. "Constituency Service, Reputation, and the Incumbency Advantage." In M. Fiorina and D. Rhodes (eds.) *Home Style and Washington Work: Studies of Congressional Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Rohde, David. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rohde, David A., and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1973. "Democratic Committee Assignment in the House of Representatives: Strategic Aspects of a Social Choice Process." *American Political Science Review*. 67:889-905.
- Smith, Steven S. 1995. *The American Congress*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Smith, Steven S., and Christopher Deering. 1990. *Committees in Congress*, 2 ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Taylor-Robinson, Michelle M. and Christopher Diaz. 1999. "Who Gets Legislation Passed in a Marginal Legislature and is the Label Marginal Legislature Still Appropriate? A Study of the Honduran Congress." *Comparative Political Studies*. 32(5): 589-625.

The laws concerning candidate selection in democracies run the gamut from detailed to general and from mandatory to voluntary-butaided-by-incentives. Why Methods Matter. Candidate-selection methods hold significance for at least four reasons: 1) They have large political consequences for the composition of parliaments and the behavior of their members; 2) they play a major role in the delegation process within modern representative democracy; 3) they show how power is distributed within parties; and 4) their importance is rising with the increase of candidate-centered, or. Candidate selection can also affect the turnover of legislators through the continuation or deselection of incumbents.