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The Rise of the Ideological Left?

Testing the Asymmetrical Party Theory Through Case Studies of 2018 Primary Elections

Wyatt Anderson

During the mid-term elections of 2018, primary challenges against Democratic incumbents in Congress captured the attention of national media. One of the most prominent cases of this was the victory of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in New York's Fourteenth Congressional District against twenty-year incumbent and Democratic Caucus Chair Joe Crowley on June 26. While Ocasio-Cortez has since made a name for herself by pushing for liberal policies such as the Green New Deal, her primary campaign did not shy away from pushing her self-proclaimed Democratic-Socialist label. While her successful primary challenge could be attributed to many different factors, of particular interest is the way in which she campaigned – bringing into question how primary campaigns have changed in recent years on both sides of the aisle and the rhetoric that hopeful-nominees adopt to secure their party's nomination. Thus, the central question of this research is the following: “During the 2018 mid-term primary elections, did the rhetoric of Democratic hopefuls more closely match the same rhetorical strategy adopted by ideologically conservative Republican challengers (e.g., “I am more liberal than Representative X.”)? Or were the appeals based in relation to representing the interests of their constituents (e.g., “Representative X no longer represents the interests of this district.”)?”

The concept of primary challenges is, by no means, a new phenomenon. Challenges against incumbent candidates have occurred since the inception of the modern-day election system. While the concept of a primary challenge is not a new one, the nature of these challenges has evolved greatly, especially when contextualized with the changes in the two major political parties in the United States. As political parties solidified and realigned to the groups that we know of today, a symmetrical model, which assumes the two major parties are identical, has traditionally been used to analyze them. By using a symmetrical model, political scientists have been able to create frameworks and theories to analyze both the Democratic and Republican Parties. However, underscoring this assumption is the question of whether these parties are truly symmetrical or if, being founded under different principles, they have evolved into two distinct groups. If they have evolved into two parties with distinct purposes, then a symmetrical model of the political parties cannot be used, forcing us to use an asymmetrical model.

In their book, *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group-Interest Democrats*, Grossmann and Hopkins (2016) seek to answer this very question. The authors reject the traditional claim that the two major political parties in U.S. politics are symmetrical; instead, they favor an asymmetric model that takes into account the fundamental differences between the two parties. The most generalized difference between the two parties is that the Republican Party was founded and continues to organize itself around a series of general ideals and broad principles, thus creating a coherent, conservative ideology (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 14). Through broad appeals, the Republican Party has been able to appeal to the symbolic conservatism that a majority of Americans identify with and greatly approve of (such as the ideals of fiscal responsibility and a strong commitment to principles). In contrast, the Democratic Party, they argue, have sought to unite various groups founded on policy interests and use these diverse interest groups to create a winning, if piecemeal, coalition (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 14). The Democratic Party, with an intense focus on policy-driven outcomes and style of governance, appeals to the practical liberalism of American constituents. By using an asymmetric model

for analyzing the Democratic and Republican parties, a much more interesting and compelling response to primary challenges comes about.

Research Question

To reiterate, my research question is: “During the 2018 mid-term primary elections, did the rhetoric of Democratic hopefuls more closely match the same rhetorical strategy adopted by ideologically conservative Republican challengers (e.g., “I am more liberal than Representative X.”)? Or were the appeals based in relation to representing the interests of their constituents (e.g., “Representative X no longer represents the interests of this district.”)?” I hypothesize that Democratic challengers are becoming more ideological like their Republican counterparts. If the rhetoric of Democratic hopefuls’ primary campaigns is indeed similar to ideological appeals made by Republican hopefuls (in that they claim to be a more faithful representative of conservative ideology), this would indicate a higher level of polarization than previously thought. As a result, the Asymmetrical Party Theory would be rejected.

My question is of particular interest because it tests the Asymmetrical Party Theory in a more recent context. Additionally, the mid-term victories of new, more liberal Representatives such as Ocasio-Cortez have generated mass media attention to more liberal policies and whether the Democratic Party is shifting ideologically to the left. While it is too early to see the full implications of the election of these new Representatives, their primary challenge campaigns present a unique opportunity answer these questions. This research fulfills a current gap in the literature concerning primary challenges, as no research has been directed to specifically analyzing the rhetoric of primary challenges to test for asymmetry. Although scholars such as Robert Boatright have researched the history of primary challenges in Congressional races (see *Getting Primaried: The Changing Politics of Congressional Primary Challenges*, 2013), and his book will be one of the foundations for this research paper, his primary focus goes into addressing three central claims: (1) primary challenges are occurring more frequently; (2) there is a greater threat to primary challenges now than in the past (meaning that the challenges are more competitive); and (3) primary challenges have more of an impact than they used to on Congressional members. While these are interesting questions, they do not answer the central question I am proposing. I am curious to see if the concept of RINOs (Republican in-name-only) could be used to apply to Democrats in the future (perhaps even becoming DINOs – Democrat in-name-only – if the Democratic Party is indeed forming around a liberal ideology).

Literature Review

At its core, the Asymmetrical Party Theory presented by Grossmann and Hopkins (2016) contends that “Democrats and Republicans are different kinds of parties, exhibiting distinct types of electoral supporters, activists, and institutional workers” (14). Whereas a symmetrical model assumes the two parties to be identical in their pursuit of representing their constituents, the asymmetrical model contends that, at their core, Republicans group around ideology while Democrats group around group interests (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 14). Ideology, as they define it, “is a broad system of ideas about the role of government,” while group interests “are the product of discrete constituencies with separable and specific policy concerns” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 14 and 15). Working with these definitions as a baseline, Grossmann and Hopkins proceed to specifically how their theory works in practice through a historical analysis of how the parties came about, often in the form of electoral successes and failures.

When Republicans lose, Grossmann and Hopkins explain, they “often interpret electoral defeat as a consequence of insufficient, rather than excessive ideological purity,” and thus double-down on conservative ideals (2016, 105). The three-legged stool of the Republican Party – “free-market capitalism, a hawkish approach to national defense, and moral traditionalism” – was the result of conservative

“fusionists” that created this goal of ideological purity, often under the guise of upholding Ronald Reagan’s legacy (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 76 and 77). While there was a movement amongst Democrats that was called the “New Left,” the “two strains of activism [New Right and New Left] differed in their political objectives and favored strategies”, with liberals favoring direct protest over the creation of a general ideology (Grossmann and Hopkins, 96). Due to this, “American liberals and leftists failed to construct a fusionist movement dedicated to working within existing partisan and electoral institutions to implement a shared ideology across a range of policy domains” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 97). Rather, Democrats used their political activism in such a way that caused discrete social movements, each focusing on “specific issue areas” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 97). While Grossmann and Hopkins do agree that there are certain mechanisms that are similar between the two parties, the approaches used by both parties are completely different – especially with regard to primary challenges and primarying.

“Primarying,” a term that has come about as a result of Republican primary challenges to replace ideological moderates with a more conservative candidate, has surged in its use as a tool by both parties to solidify partisanship and create a stronger sense of ideology (Boatright, 2013, 35). Asymmetrical Party Theory would argue that Republicans are in a constant cycle of turnover due to increased polarization, signifying that primary challenges enable them to act as ideological gatekeepers (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 235). As a result, campaigns are waged in ideological terms for the Republican Party as “primary election voters appear to maintain a long-standing consensus that the advancement of conservatism is the central purpose of their party” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 220). As a result of this view, the candidates that enjoy the most success for the Republican presidential nomination “rarely speak extensively of their eagerness to work with partisan opponents in pursuit of problem-solving compromises and incremental progress” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 220). In congressional races, this same outcome continues as “the incumbent’s most serious challenger or challengers attacked him or her from the ideological right” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 234).

Conversely, there is no “remotely comparable mechanism of ideological enforcement [that] exists in Democratic Party primaries” (Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016, 235). Grossmann and Hopkins argue that because of the variety in ideology of the Democratic Party, “Congressional Democrats remain relatively insulated from the threat of primary challenges fueled by accusations of insufficient ideological loyalty” (2016, 235). Most famously “Blue Dogs,” who are ideologically moderate Democrats, are able to “distance themselves from the more liberal national leadership of their party are rarely punished” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 235). This implies that there is more to the Democratic Party in its primary elections to determine its endorsed candidates. In this regard, it appears as though the Asymmetrical Party Theory stands firm, though we would expect to see more ideological challenges under a symmetrical party model.

Primary challenges in recent years have presented a unique opportunity for applying the lens of the Asymmetrical Party Theory. Boatright chooses to examine the period of the “‘candidate-centered’ system of elections that has developed since the 1960s” (2013, 23), while others (see Brady et al. 2007 and Pyeatt 2015) choose to select from either a longer time span or a slightly shorter time span. Boatright chooses to pay closer attention to the primary elections that occurred during this time period, as he argues that much of the literature written has been devoted to the general elections of congressional races (2013, 23). Additionally, primary challenges changed in the wake of the Democratic Party’s McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms, reforms that reframed how presidential elections would run and what enabled Jimmy Carter to be nominated in 1976 over party favorites (see Cohen, et al. 2008, 158). While the McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms had a massive impact on presidential primary challenges, the effects of this were felt throughout both parties at many levels as precincts were able to hold massive sway over a party unlike ever before (Cohen, et al. 2008, 160).

Tracing the history of primary elections since the 1970s, he finds that these primary elections occur rarely as primary challengers are not afforded the same benefits that the incumbents receive, which includes, though is not limited to, campaign funding, support from the national party, and a network of loyal constituents (as well as benefits from name recognition) that have been formed in the years since taking office (Boatright 2013; see also Brady et al. 2007 for an explanation of the effect of constituents on primary election networks). Boatright finds a general trend in that primary elections are relatively not competitive which has only become more solidified as the years have progressed (2013). He points to the nationalization of primary challenges and the creation of relatively “safe” districts as a possible explanation of this. As districts become increasingly non-competitive and show a strong partisan leaning, it logically makes sense that we would see less competition in the general election and more competition in the primaries, often manifesting in ideological disagreements as that would hypothetically be the only way to differentiate candidates.

The nationalization of elections as a whole, he argues, has increased in recent years, compelling him to trace the history of primary elections through the decades since 1960 (Boatright 2013, 24). This trend is supported by other literature on the subject, as well as through the Asymmetrical Party Theory. While the Asymmetrical Party Theory applies more broadly to the political parties, the fact that “Republican identifiers are more likely than Democrats to think about partisan politics in terms of ideology and to view their party as standing for a set of abstract values and principles” leads to the logical conclusion that a broader ideology would result in a more nationalized election (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 25). In order to further explain the impacts of the nationalization of elections, one can see how the Democratic Party has shifted in less than twenty years by comparing a candidate’s challenge of an incumbent and when she herself faces a challenger.

Boatright relies on the anecdote of Blanche Lambert Lincoln’s primaries in 1992 and in 2010 to make the case for how nationalization has impacted not only general, but primary elections (2013). Facing a primary challenge over her moderate ideological positions on specific policy issues such as the Clean Air Act prompted the liberal internet group MoveOn.org to raise funds for her opponent (Boatright 2013). Although she was victorious in the primary election, what Boatright notes is interesting is that MoveOn.org was asking for funds from liberal Democrats in Worcester, Massachusetts to donate for a primary challenge in the Arkansas Senate race (2013, 27). Boatright is not the only author who notes the increased nationalization of these primary elections, though other authors elect to study the effects of ideology and partisanship in primary elections (Brady et al. 2007; Pyeatt 2015). While Boatright chooses to sample from a case that helps to prove a point, he is not the only author to continue a narrative of pitting challengers against one another on the basis of ideology. General media, including *The New York Times*, has reported on this effect in the general election and the rise of the liberal wing of the Democratic party in the wake of Bernie Sanders’ 2016 bid for the Democratic Party’s endorsement in the primary.

In their article, “Democrats in Split-Screen: The Base Wants It All. The Party Wants to Win.”, Alexander Burns and Jonathan Martin pay close attention to the differences between broad national support and what it takes for a Democrat to win, especially a Democrat running in the affluent Atlanta suburbs (2017). Written long before the 2018 midterms where the Democrats regained the majority in the House, the authors write about the concerns of the national party in an attempt to reconcile the progressive Democrats with grassroots, activist ideology and the traditional Democratic Party, which includes ideological moderates in competitive districts. Following a weekend during which Sanders was campaigning in Atlanta, the authors also met with Jon Ossoff, a moderate running to flip a conservative district in the Atlanta suburbs. Preaching a mantra of unity and compromise rather than stringent

ideology, Ossoff represents a Democratic Party at odds with itself, an interesting wrinkle that adds on to the effect of primarying. What Ossoff represents here is what Grossmann and Hopkins are trying to convince their readers of – the asymmetrical nature of the political parties. There is room for Ossoff to be in the Democratic Party as a moderate; if he were a moderate Republican, he would not even come close to even getting the nomination.

Brady et al. (2007) also address the differences between challengers in primary elections and the incumbent candidate in terms of the ideological dilemma. While they operate under the presumption of a symmetrical political model, the research they conduct helps to confirm that candidates do face a “strategic dilemma” regarding ideological positioning for congressional candidates (Brady et al. 2007, 92). Additionally, their preliminary findings suggest that “Republicans who are more conservative and Democrats who are more liberal than their districts have higher vote margins in the primary election” (Brady et al. 2007, 86). As a result, they decide to look at how ideology and partisanship help to shape candidate success in primaries versus general elections. By ideology, they refer specifically to how liberal or conservative a particular candidate is while partisanship is determined by how often they vote with their party. They caution that the two are not the same and should not be conflated. The authors find that candidates will succeed better in the general election by being less ideological, though should expect to draw more challengers in the primary if they are either more conservative or liberal than the ideology of the district they represent (Brady et al. 2007, 90).

Whereas Brady et al.’s findings suggest symmetry in the two parties through ideological extremism translating to electoral success, the Asymmetrical Party Theory contends that intra-party disputes “among Democratic candidates for elective office [are] often defined not by ideological distinctions but by different social group affiliations” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 236). Through data collected by Boatright (2013), Grossmann and Hopkins point out that “nearly half of all Republican challenges were ideological in nature – a rate nearly four times as high as that of Democratic challenges” (see Boatright 2013 and Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 237). Republicans and Democrats also are shown to campaign differently in primary challenges when the Asymmetrical Party Theory is applied. As Grossmann and Hopkins point out, “Democratic primaries usually produce efforts by candidates to construct a coalition of supporters among the party’s constituent social groups” whereas “Republican primaries tend to inspire battles among contenders for the mantle of conservatism” (2016, 238). Grossmann and Hopkins again point to how history justifies their theory, this time through different campaign styles; the distinction between the two parties goes even further than just policies. As candidates seek to win elections, both primary and general, they frame their ideology and policy positions in ways that will lend themselves to stand a better chance of winning.

In the fifth chapter of the book, *Winning with Words: The Origins and Impact of Political Framing*, Patrick J. Sellers and Taylor Ansley address how candidates attempt to frame elections (Shaffner and Sellers 2009). Although primary attention is given to presidential campaigning, the authors mention some instances of congressional campaigns. In both instances, the primary argument of the authors is that “the most innovative campaigns are increasingly adopting strategies that empower their volunteers and help frame the election campaign” (Sellers and Ansley 2009, 80). By creating a narrative that comes from the ground-up rather than top-down, candidates can enjoy broader support that appears to be more organically driven rather than commands. It can be argued however that this decision still comes from the top-down, thereby only giving an illusion of organic drive from constituents.

Sellers and Ansley contend that collective action plays an important part in the ability for candidates to create their message, and indeed with the surge of social media in election campaigns this

has become even more true (2009, 80). By creating firm coalitions based on this type of framing, candidates are able to create lasting success in their constituencies, even as these constituencies are becoming increasingly nationalized. Mobilization, then, becomes the key to energizing a voter base that will actually go out and vote on election day. In order to mobilize these voters, Grossmann and Hopkins write that the two parties use different tactics. For Democrats, “they are more likely to explicitly emphasize group ties and interests, and frequently explain how their specific policy positions are designed to benefit these groups” (2016, 239). For Republicans, they “prefer to cite general themes, especially conservative ideas about limited government, as well as personal attributes of personal character such as strong leadership and moral qualities” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 239). This information was gathered through a content analysis of presidential debates since 1960, a much larger version of a study that I am hoping to complete here (though decidedly different in a variety of ways).

Mobilization then remains true across both general elections and primaries, though primaries represent a unique case for this. The end goal of elections is to win votes, but there is more to it than just that. The language that Sellers and Ansley use here presents a possible argument for symmetry, while the interpretation of Grossmann and Hopkins remains decidedly asymmetrical. As both contain valid arguments, it is unclear which is perhaps the most accurate when analyzing the 2018 midterm election. While not exactly identical, the two parties both rely on coalitions to generate success (success being defined here by gaining votes, not in how the candidates frame themselves). Though that is the case, the questions that remain moving forward are how the parties differ in rhetoric, as well as how do the most recent primary elections compare to data collected on previous ones. Beyond this, a significant question left unanswered is how exactly do incumbents and challengers in the Democratic Party differ in their rhetorical appeals during primary challenges.

Research Design

To reiterate, my research question is the following:

Q: *During the 2018 mid-term primary elections, did the rhetoric of Democratic hopefuls more closely match the same rhetorical strategy adopted by ideologically conservative Republican challengers (e.g., “I am more liberal than Representative X.”)? Or were the appeals based in relation to representing the interests of their constituents (e.g., “Representative X no longer represents the interests of this district.”)?*

From this question, my hypotheses emerge:

H1: Democratic primary challengers use more ideological appeals than incumbents, similar to their Republican counterparts.

H2: Democratic primary challengers have a higher percentage of ideological appeals than interest group appeals.

If both hypotheses are proven false, then there would be supporting evidence of the Asymmetrical Party Theory by demonstrating a different way of campaigning between the two parties. If one hypothesis has support and the other does not, then there is some evidence that the theory continues to operate, though not fully. If both are found true, then there is more evidence for a symmetrical party model (as demonstrated in table 1.1). Additionally, if these primary challengers are successful in their challenge, they theoretically should remain committed to ideological appeals, as I hypothesize below:

H3: If these ideological challengers are successful, then they should continue to use this rhetoric in the general election.

Table 1.1 – Hypotheses H1 and H2 and support for either Asymmetrical or Symmetrical Party Theory

Hypotheses H1 & H2	Asymmetrical Party Theory Supported?	Symmetrical Party Theory Supported?
ACCEPTED – Democrats are running more on ideology.	NO	YES
REJECTED – Democrats are continuing to appeal to interest groups.	YES	NO

In order to test these hypotheses, content analysis of selected case studies was used. In particular, I was interested in studying how the candidates present themselves to the public, not necessarily in the way in which the media reports on these primary challengers. As a result of this, data collection occurred via the websites that these candidates produce in order to see how they campaigned. While much research has been devoted to the way in which the media reports on primary challengers, I believe there to be a more compelling explanation in candidate-driven narratives. These challengers were the ones trying to persuade constituents to reject an incumbent candidate and to vote for them, so it makes sense to see the way in which they framed their own campaign and the message that they are trying to communicate. Further, focusing only on the media narrative of these primary challengers (driven, in part, by conservative Republican, anti-liberal rhetoric) can drive the perception that these primary challengers are more ideologically liberal than they are. By focusing on the narratives that these candidates generated, it will limit outside bias when it comes to media reporting, though general news sources such as *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *CNN* will be used for additional context. Finally, I have elected not to examine the role of media reporting on candidates as that would be too broad in scope for the level of research being conducted.

Cases were selected according to the following criteria: (1) must be within the Democratic Primary Elections of the 2018 midterms; (2) primary challenge has to have been against an incumbent candidate; and (3) race must have been for a seat in the United States Congress. These criteria were established for three reasons. First, I am not sampling cases from the 2016 election or earlier as I do not have the resources to analyze a high volume of cases, although I will compare the frequency and outcomes of similar earlier primary challenges. Second, I am electing not to analyze Republican primary challenges as it has been widely established that Republican primary challenges are significantly more ideological in nature (see Grossmann and Hopkins 2016 and Boatright 2013). I decided to only sample from elections between an incumbent and a challenger primarily due to the fact that challenges to open seats are harder to test for asymmetry (at least in the way that I am testing for it). Challenges against incumbents provide a unique opportunity as these candidates have previously won in these districts and defeats of incumbents represent a stronger message than simply winning an open seat (as it demonstrates that voters reject the current incumbent in favor of someone new). Beyond this, it is harder to evaluate candidates based on ideology if they are all competing for an open seat as there are no DW-Nominate scores for someone who has not been in office. Third, elections at the federal level only will be selected due to constraints in resources. Federal elections are standardized in comparison to state and local-level elections, providing an automatic control. Also, more interest is often generated in federal level elections as House elections have become increasingly nationalized. Primary challenges in state level elections are not as widely reported on unless it is for the governorship.

With these requirements outlined, I utilized *Ballotpedia*, an archive of elections in the United States, to assess the primary challenges that occurred in 2018 among Democrats (“United States House of Representative Elections” 2018). Of all of the cases, four met the criteria established:

- New York’s Fourteenth Congressional District – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez against Rep. Joe Crowley (incumbent).
- Illinois’ Third Congressional District – Marie Newman against Rep. Daniel Lipinski (incumbent).
- Massachusetts’ Seventh Congressional District – Ayanna Pressley against Rep. Michael Capuano (incumbent).
- Delaware’s Senate Race – Kerri Harris against Sen. Tom Carper (incumbent).

Table 1.2 details the number of primary challenges made against incumbents from three previous election cycles. Additionally, both the number of incumbents who lost their primary challenge as well as the percentage of successful primary challenges are included below. This data was collected from *Ballotpedia* in their breakdowns of the House of Representatives (“United States House of Representatives” 2012, 2014, and 2016). We can see that primary challenges are by no means uncommon, but defeats of incumbents are unlikely (except in 2012, where eight of the incumbents lost their primary election bid due to redrawn districts pitting incumbents against other incumbents).

Table 1.2 – Challenges against House of Representative incumbents from the last three elections.

Primary Election Year	Total Number of Primary Challenges	Number of Incumbents who Lost Their Primary Challenges	Percentage of Successful Primary Challenges
2012	202	13*	6.4%
2014	161	4	2.5%
2016	194	5	2.6%

Data obtained from Ballotpedia.org (see “United States House of Representatives” 2012-2016).

**While 13 incumbents did lose their seats in 2012, eight incumbents lost to other incumbents, due to redistricting. Only five incumbents were defeated by a challenger.*

Rather than look at every piece of content each election generated, I focus on the information found on the candidates’ websites including, but not limited to, issue stances, press releases, and candidate profiles. From these particular cases, I analyze the rhetoric used by the challengers and incumbents to determine if the Democrats are beginning to show signs of ideological appeals rather than appeals to coalitions. By coalitions, I mean the various interest groups that Democratic candidates typically appeal to in order to build up a winning majority in the general election as explained by Grossmann and Hopkins (2016). They state that Democrats attempt to appeal largely to these groups by promising policy action rather than a coherent ideology like the Republican Party uses.

An important note to make about the cases that have been selected is that women and minorities are often assumed to be more liberal than their male and white counterparts. Considering that the cases that are being analyzed in this research are between male incumbents and female challengers, as well as between candidates of different races, there could be some confounding variables. At minimum, media reporting on these candidates would likely seek a narrative that plays into standard stereotypes used in regards to female candidates (see Brooks 2013). Voters will make use of common stereotypes and heuristics in order to make voting decisions (Petersen 2015). From this, we see that voters use stereotypes about female candidates, both descriptive (how they do act) and prescriptive (how they should act) (Brooks 2013, 18). Although Brooks argues that these stereotypes do not negatively impact female candidates, media bias still proves to be a potentially confounding variable, another reason for focusing

instead on the message generated by candidates. If women candidates act like they are harmed by these stereotypes in order to hide their liberalness, there would be evidence for a symmetrical model, but also another confounding variable (especially because Ocasio-Cortez's and Pressley's primary challenges were covered by national media). While I may not be able to answer this question in this paper, it is an interesting question that could be tested in further research.

To perform this content analysis, a coding system was developed in order to provide consistency across all cases analyzed. Words that would signal a greater ideological appeal to primary voters include "liberal," "democratic-socialist," "equity," and "principles." On the other side, words and phrases that signal a greater coalition appeal include "pragmatic," "commonsense," "bipartisanship," and "compromise." Other indications that would also support the Asymmetrical Party Theory would include targeted policy appeals rather than generalized statements, especially in the movements that Grossmann and Hopkins argue made up the direct action of the New Left in the 1960s (i.e. women's rights movement, civil rights movement, environmentalist movement, LGBTQ rights movement, etc.). These words and phrases signal a less ideologically-oriented style of governing that is in line with the interest-group approach that Grossmann and Hopkins argue. By utilizing this coding system, the rhetoric used in each race can be organized into two broad categories.

This methodological approach is the best option in order to accurately test the Asymmetrical Party Theory. By analyzing cases from the 2018 midterms, we see what is occurring in the wake of President Trump's election from a re-energized Democratic base. While this might confound some of the data due to candidates framing their narrative as an ability to take on Trump rather than on either specific policies or ideological terms, it still offers the first opportunity after the publication of Grossmann and Hopkins' book to test their theory. Additionally, by limiting the data collected to only the candidates, it becomes easier to look specifically at the rhetoric that they used in order to appeal to primary voters. While the media does influence voting behavior, it is not the primary concern of this research and therefore, it will not be analyzed in depth. I consider the impact limiting the significance of this research in the discussion section of this paper. Other researchers (see Boatwright 2013) also use cases to aid in illustrating what occurs during a primary challenge, making the pairing of case studies and content analysis a viable methodological approach.

Analysis

To study how the rhetoric of primary challengers differs from the incumbents that they are challenging, the candidate's websites for the 2018 midterms were studied. More attention was given to the primary challenger's website, though analysis of incumbent candidate websites was also conducted. This was done in order to see how primary challengers are portraying themselves and whether their self-driven narratives are indicative of ideological appeals or no. The winners of the primary election are written first, with incumbents signified by the symbol (i). Examples of the language coded on each website is provided in the table on the next page (Table 1.3) to demonstrate the words in context as they were found on the challenger and incumbent websites. To keep consistency, only words displayed on the candidate's websites were coded. To cross-reference and confirm that data was not interpreted incorrectly, three other students helped me review the data and code the websites of the candidates. DW-Nominate scores were also used to compare candidates, as well as explain the differences between successful challengers and incumbent candidates when the incumbent was defeated. As DW-Nominate scores currently analyze roll call votes along two dimensions (economic/distributive and other issues – currently aligning with social issues), when candidates fall out of the mainstream views, they are less compatible with this particular measure. Due to this, candidates such as Pressley and Ocasio-Cortez appear as outsiders within their party compared to establishment candidates such as Capuano or Crowley.

Table 1.3 – Examples of coded language presented in context of the challenger and incumbent’s websites.

Examples of Ideological Appeals	Examples of Interest-Group Appeals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “standing up to Trump” • “equity agenda” • “Democratic-Socialist from the Bronx” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “real needs of New Yorkers” • “coalition builder” • “a citizen, a leader, an activist, a worker, a mother, a veteran, and a queer woman of color” • “founded a bipartisan caucus”

New York’s Fourteenth Congressional District - Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez vs. Joe Crowley (i)

New York’s Fourteenth Congressional District is located in New York City, its 28.5 square miles covering the Bronx and Queens boroughs. Home to 706,440 people, 46.2 percent of whom are foreign-born, it is a diverse district both economically and racially (Census Reporter 2018). 13.8 percent of the residents fall below the poverty line, the median income is \$60,173, and the median age is 36.9 years-old (Census Reporter 2018). The sex-ratio is 50-50 between male and female, while 22 percent of the district is White, nine percent is Black, 17 percent is Asian, 51 percent is Hispanic, and one percent identifies as another race (Census Reporter 2018). Joe Crowley was the Representative of the district since his election in 1998, while Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is in her first term as Representative. The results of the primary race showed Ocasio-Cortez with 56.7 percent of the vote (or 16,898 votes) and Crowley with 43.3 percent of the vote (or 12,880 votes) (“United States House Democratic Party Primaries, 2018” 2018).

Ocasio-Cortez captured the attention of the United States by being the first candidate to collect thousands of signatures to trigger a primary election for the first time in over a decade against Crowley (“Ocasio2018” 2018). A self-proclaimed “Democratic-Socialist,” she has repeatedly been compared to Sen. Bernie Sanders and garnered the attention of mass-media (“Ocasio2018” 2018). One would expect to find that out of all of the so-called “squad” of ideologically liberal Representatives, she would be the one most likely to depend on ideological appeals and take up the mantle of liberal thought in the United States (Atler 2019). In fact, she actually is more dependent on appeals to coalitions and interest-groups – a hallmark of the Democratic Party that Grossmann and Hopkins present.

77.7 percent (35 out of 45 coded words) of all of the appeals that Ocasio-Cortez presents on her website were coded as interest-group based appeals, indicating that she follows in the footsteps of other Democrats. Only her self-proclaimed status as a Democratic Socialist was indicative of a purely ideological appeal, as were her references to creating a unified and equitable America (“Ocasio2018” 2018). Rather than shy away from her positions, she gives detailed examples of policies that she supports and bills that she has sponsored that accomplish her policy goals. These specific planks in her platform include “Support Seniors,” “Support LGBTQIA+,” “Women’s Rights,” and “Mobilizing Against Climate Change.” Each of these planks represents a different interest group that has typically formed the coalition of the Democratic Party – a hallmark of the “interest-group Democrats” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). Even in making broad addresses, Ocasio-Cortez states that she champions “the needs of working families in the Bronx and Queens” and she fights for the “real needs of New Yorkers” (“Ocasio2018” 2018). A direct shot at Crowley, Ocasio-Cortez’s rhetoric here can best be summed up as an attack against a Representative who was not representative of his constituents and she uses this storyline to her advantage. Rather than presenting herself merely as an ideological powerhouse, it appears that she frames her appeals in regards to how to

best represent the people of her district and fights for clear policy initiatives. All in all, it stands to reason that Ocasio-Cortez might be more ideologically liberal, but her appeals are similar to the ones made by Democrats for decades.

Crowley stands as one of these Democrats that depends heavily on interest group appeals, framing himself as a coalition builder able to continue to unite various groups. Out of 20 coded appeals, 17 of them fell under the coding of interest group-based appeals for a total of 85 percent. While he did use a small number of ideological appeals (three in total), Crowley demonstrated a clear leaning towards interest groups. On his home page of his website, “Joe Crowley for Congress,” he included an appeal to the “American Dream” saying that “every family in my district and across the United States can achieve” it (“Joe Crowley for Congress” 2018). While not an explicit interest group appeal, the mention of every family as well as his issue stances covering groups such as immigrants, LGBTQ+, women, and gun control make it clear that he seeks to unite a coalition made up of supporters or members of these discrete groups (“Joe Crowley for Congress” 2018). The most ideological that Crowley gets is based on “organizing resistance” to Trump, but this is also characteristic of the Democratic Party establishment members such as Nancy Pelosi (“Joe Crowley for Congress” 2018). Crowley’s message is steeped in the tradition of the Democratic Party as a coalition of interest groups.

Between the two, it is apparent that Ocasio-Cortez does make more ideological appeals than Crowley, but in the breakdown of appeals we see that she still uses more interest group appeals. In this way, we see evidence for the first hypothesis but not for the second, indicating that there is some evidence that the theory continues to operate. However, even though these two candidates share a penchant for interest groups over ideology, the differences between them become apparent when you compare their DW-Nominate scores. Along the first dimension of the test, we see that Crowley stands at -0.412 (“Voteview” 2019). While more liberal than 82 percent of the U.S. House, he was only more liberal than 57 percent of his fellow Democrats in the 115th House of Representatives, placing him in the middle of the party rather than as a party outsider like Ocasio-Cortez. In the 116th House of Representatives, Ocasio-Cortez’s DW-Nominate score is -0.238, making her more liberal than 54 percent of Congress but more conservative than 84 percent of Democrats in the House (“Voteview” 2019). Along the second dimension, she is one of the most liberal candidates in the House, although her economic stances, not able to be accurately measured by the DW-Nominate scoring system, place her outside of most Democrats. The DW-Nominate scores reinforce the perception of Ocasio-Cortez as an ideological challenger due to her liberal stance along the second dimension, but the analysis of her website shows that she operates similarly to other Democrats in her rhetorical appeals.

Illinois’ Third Congressional District – Marie Newman vs. Rep. Daniel Lipinski (i)

Illinois’ Third Congressional District is located just outside of Chicago and covers 236.8 square miles. According to Census reports, 704,050 people live in this district, with an even split between men and women and 20.5 percent of all people being foreign-born. The median age is 38.7 years old with a majority of the district being White (57 percent White, five percent Black, four percent Asian, 32 percent Hispanic, and two percent identifying with a different race) (Census Reporter 2018). The median household income is \$66,862, with 10.3 percent of constituents falling below the poverty line (Census Reporter 2018). Daniel Lipinski has served as Representative since 2004 and defeated Marie Newman in a primary challenge with 51.1 percent of the votes compared to 48.9 percent (48,675 and 46,530 votes, respectively) (“United States House of Representatives, 2018” 2018).

While Newman’s primary challenge was ultimately unsuccessful, her campaign website yields some interesting results. Beginning with the front page, she claims that her campaign can be characterized

by fighting for “everybody’s everybody,” as well as how her district needs a “coalition builder” (“Marie Newman”). Both of these phrases signal an appeal to building coalitions and targeting diverse groups of people who come together to create a majority. Due to this type of language, these appeals were coded as interest-group based appeals. This trend continues when looking at her specific policy issues.

While her specific planks can be characterized as more ideologically liberal – such as proposals for raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, Medicare for all, and streamlining education – the language that she uses signifies continued interest-group appeals. Her message is one of unity, of making sure that everyone in her district is taken care of. The word “all” is repeated no less than 18 times on her “Issues” page, and while this word does not contain any outward partisan leaning, it does demonstrate her commitment to building coalitions through broad appeals. It is the closest that she gets to an ideological appeal, but the end goal of building a coalition and a lack of references to direct words such as “democratic-socialism,” “liberal,” and “principles” leads to the conclusion that she is in line with other Democratic primary candidates. Indeed, she appeals to LGBTQ+ groups, immigrants, working class, middle class, and women’s groups through specific policy goals (“Issues – Marie Newman” 2018). All of these reinforce her alignment with the Democratic Party. In total, she made nine ideological appeals and 24 interest group appeals, for a total of 33 coded words. Of the appeals she used, 73 percent were interest group appeals compared to 27 percent ideological.

Her opponent, Lipinski, worked to solidify his position within the mainstream Democratic Party and to position himself as the “commonsense Congressman” able to work across the aisle (Daniel Lipinski for Congress 2018). This phrase, as the sub-header for his campaign, signals a strong example of an interest group appeal in his rhetoric. Lipinski, like Newman, utilized more appeals to interest groups compared to ideological appeals (16 interest group appeals compared to only two ideological) (Daniel Lipinski for Congress 2018). Among the appeals to interest groups, Lipinski focused on establishing his ability to find “commonsense” solutions to combat “gridlock and solve problems” (Daniel Lipinski for Congress 2018). He built up commitment to various interest groups through the planks in his platform focusing on women’s rights, environmental action, and displaying the twenty laws that he authored to aid his constituents, including 375 million dollars in spending for his district (Daniel Lipinski for Congress 2018).

While Newman does not have a DW-Nominate score as she was not elected to Congress, Lipinski’s score of -0.230 places him as “more liberal than 53 percent of the 116th House, but more conservative than 87 percent of his fellow Democrats (“Voteview” 2019). Given that Newman made more ideological appeals than Lipinski did, it lends evidence to support H1, although H2 again does not have evidence here to support it. In this way, Lipinski faced a more ideological challenger but was able to retain his seat through the same language that has helped the Democratic Party to gain office. Although Newman narrowly lost the seat, her challenge was still competitive enough to possibly indicate a successful ideological challenge in the future should constituents support these ideological positions.

Massachusetts’ Seventh Congressional District – Ayanna Pressley vs. Rep. Michael Capuano (i)

Massachusetts’ Seventh Congressional District covers 62.7 square miles, including most of Boston and the surrounding suburbs (Census Reporter 2018). 820,086 people call the district home, with a 52 to 48 percent split between female and male constituents and 31.6 percent being foreign-born. The median age is 31.7 years-old, the youngest average age of the districts sampled (Census Reporter 2018). 41 percent of constituents are White, 22 percent are Black, one percent are Asian, 23 percent are Hispanic, and 13 percent identify under other ethnicities (Census Reporter 2018). The median household income is \$70,019 with 18.2 percent of constituents falling below the poverty line (Census Reporter 2018). In the

primary, Ayanna Pressley successfully defeated 20-year incumbent Michael Capuano – a high ranking Democratic Party leader in Massachusetts’ Seventh Congressional District. She won with 58.6 percent of the vote compared to Capuano’s 41.4 percent (60,046 and 42,430 votes respectively) (“United States House of Representatives 2018” 2018).

In her written thank you address to constituents, Pressley calls her voters a “movement”, indicating the potential for a liberal ideology to be present in her website. However, movements have long aligned themselves with the Democratic Party before splintering off into interest groups that Democratic candidates have hoped to capture (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016, 96). It could be here that Pressley seeks to use her momentum as a liberal Democrat to help create an ideological shift in the Democratic Party, but are her appeals always coded as ideological?

More so than the other candidates that have been studied, the language of Pressley’s website is forceful, often repeating the phrase “standing up” – usually in reference to President Trump or on behalf of marginalized communities (“Ayanna Pressley for Congress”). This particular phrase was difficult to code, and it depended on the context that it was placed in. It was often accompanied by references to marginalized groups and eliminating power dynamics, which leads to the idea that it would be fighting for interest groups over a centralized ideology. This is a potential limitation of the coding system that is present, as well as a potential flaw in this theory as it is being tested. Since there has not been the same fusionist development on the side of the Democratic Party, it is hard to see the clear ideological patterns unlike in the Republican Party. However, based on the coding system used, Pressley showed a preference for using ideological appeals more than interest group appeals – 52 percent of her appeals were coded as ideological compared to 48 percent interest group-based (15 words and phrases compared to 14, respectively).

In terms of the issues section of her website, Pressley emphasizes the word “equity” in her “equity agenda” (“Ayanna Pressley for Congress” 2018). This word was coded as signaling an ideological appeal, and she follows it up with further ideological languages. More so than any other of the candidates studied, Pressley’s rhetoric is unapologetically ideological and focused on policies. Certainly, she is building a coalition, but the way in which she is doing it comes from a place of “empathy” and “equity” (“Ayanna Pressley for Congress”). She continues appeals to social groups and the various interest groups that form the Democratic Party’s modern support network, and in this way does she use interest-group based appeals. Her policy specific positions include specific legislation that targets the issues that she seeks to unite these discrete interest groups (see the issues tab of her website). She is more specific in her legislative goals compared to the other candidates, having full-length essays with end notes describing the sources that back up her policy positions. All in all, the language and rhetoric used by Pressley signals that uses more ideological than interest-group based appeals, a departure from the Democratic Party that is suggested by the Asymmetrical Party Theory.

This could possibly stem from the fact that the incumbent that she challenged, according to his DW-Nominate score from the 115th Congress, demonstrates that he is “more liberal than 97 percent of the 115th House” and “more liberal than 93 percent of fellow Democrats in the 115th House” (“Voteview” 2019). His score (-0.580) demonstrates that he was far from a moderate incumbent, but the language that he uses on his website displays that even he employed the same rhetorical appeals to interest groups as others in the Democratic Party as suggested by the Asymmetrical Party Theory (“Voteview” 2019; Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). In total, Capuano made 27 appeals – 22 interest group-based and five ideological. As Capuano’s website was no longer functioning at the time of this study, archives from the Library of Congress of his website were used to perform the analysis. The words and phrases that

presented the clearest examples of appeals to interest groups were phrases such as “issues of importance to his constituents,” “co-sponsored bills with Republican colleagues,” and using a “balanced approach” to policymaking (“Library of Congress Web Archives” 2018). While he does talk about using guiding “principles” to “cast votes that will enable the U.S.” to serve as a global ally, this is the primary extent to which he uses ideological language (“Library of Congress Web Archives” 2018). Thus, Capuano, although quite liberal in his voting record, remains a Democrat appealing to interest groups while Pressley demonstrates a departure from this model.

With regard to the differences between the candidates, it is clear to see the evidence for hypotheses one and two. However, Pressley remains an outsider in Congress at this moment as demonstrated by her DW-Nominate score. Like Ocasio-Cortez, Pressley is very liberal along the second dimension of the analysis but appears to be more conservative than many of her fellow Democrats in the 116th House on economic issues, receiving a score of -0.278 (“Voteview” 2019). In combination with the ideological language that she uses on her website, it is reasonable to state that Pressley could serve as a model for future challengers in liberal districts to defeat incumbent candidates, though her success is the only one that shows support for all three hypotheses.

Delaware’s Senate Race – Kerri Harris vs. Sen. Tom Carper (i)

Delaware is 1,948.2 square miles and home to 967,141 people, 9.4 percent of whom are foreign-born (Census Reporter 2018). The median age is 41.1 years-old, with a split between 52 percent female and 48 percent male constituents (Census Reporter 2018). The district is primarily White at 62 percent, though 22 percent of the district is Black, four percent are Asian, 10 percent are Hispanic, and two percent identify with other groups (Census Reporter 2018). The median household income is \$64,805 and 12.5 percent of constituents fall below the poverty line. Despite being a potentially challenging race for the Democratic Party nomination for the Senate seat, Kerri Harris ultimately was unsuccessful in her challenge against the incumbent, Senator Tom Carper. He won the primary with 65 percent of the vote compared to 35 percent on Harris’ part (53,633 votes to 29,405 votes, respectively) (“United States House of Representatives, 2018” 2018). Despite this wide margin of votes, both candidates align in the appeals that they use on their websites.

The first message on Harris’ website contains an appeal to “unity” and how it “will be our greatest resistance” (“Kerri Evelyn Harris” 2018). The first page also contains the message “Stand Together,” continuing the implication of a united front against both Carper as well as the Republicans she would be facing were she elected to the Senate (“Kerri Evelyn Harris” 2018). In the section of her website, “Meet Kerri Harris,” she sets up a balanced dialogue that is, on the whole, neutral. There are no blatant appeals with regards to interest groups or ideology, but rather a clear set up of her history and ability to run in this race. While this potentially says more in regards to what Brooks (2015) suggests about stereotypes regarding female candidates, the appeals in language come from her background as a “citizen, a leader, an activist, a worker, a mother, a veteran, and a queer woman of color.” These identifications show her appeal to the discrete groups found within the Democratic Party’s current coalition and show how her identity intersects with each of them.

Moving to her discussion of her platform, as well as the individual planks, we see how she is in favor of balancing “the rights of individuals with the safety of the general public” as it relates to gun reform. Presenting her liberal arguments in this way demonstrates a neutral appeal, rather than an appeal to a broad ideology or specific interest groups. The possible interpretation of this phrase could also include an appeal to those individuals whose top priority is gun reform, but this would appear a relatively tenuous stretch in coding. In terms of economic reform, she presents the opportunity for us to work for the

“average American” rather than corporations, and while this again was not coded as either an ideological or interest-group based appeal, it is worth noting. The implication would be that she specifically is appealing to working- and middle-class voters impacted by tax laws that do not work for them, and thus could be a subtle appeal to voters with economic concerns as their primary policy issue. In each of her primary policy discussions, she presents liberal ideological positions but does so by framing it within discrete policy issues. While this example is not as clear cut as others in aligning with the Democratic Party that Grossmann and Hopkins portray, the coded data demonstrate a preference for interest group-based appeals at 77 percent of all coded appeals (21 out of 27 coded words and phrases).

Unlike Harris, Carper presents himself as a “results-oriented centrist” with heavy references to bipartisanship and a “commonsense” agenda (“Official Campaign Website” 2018). More than Harris, Carper claims the centrist position as a moderate, with his DW-Nominate score backing his claim with a score of -0.176 (making him 57 percent more liberal than other Senators in the 116th Congress, but more conservative than 93 percent of all Democrats in the Senate) (“Voteview” 2019). On the home page of his website, Carper advertises his positions meant to capture distinct interest groups such as environmentalists, healthcare-oriented constituents, and constituents focused on the economy (“Official Campaign Website” 2018). While he makes the ideological charge to “fight back” against Trump in order to have “transparency and accountability,” this appeal encourages working across the aisle and to work together to combat Trump’s agenda, thereby limiting its significance (“Official Campaign Website” 2018). Due to this, Carper positions himself as a clear interest group Democrat as Grossmann and Hopkins suggest, with 18 of his 22 coded appeals being appeals to interest groups. This is an 82 percent preference for interest group-based rhetoric over 18 percent of ideological rhetoric.

Though Harris and Carper both show preference for interest group appeals in their rhetorical strategies, we see support for hypothesis one but not hypothesis two, remaining in line with other cases with the exception of Pressley and Capuano. Despite Harris not having a DW-Nominate score, we can clearly see how Carper successfully positioned himself to defend his seat in the Senate that he has held since 2001 (“Official Campaign Website” 2018). While Harris did not have to run as heavily of an ideological appeal-based campaign as others, there was not that same need as she already has more liberal stances than Carper. From this, it alludes to the possibility that there could be some difference even within races for the House of Representatives and races for the Senate.

Conclusions

From the results that have been gathered (displayed in Table 1.4 below), it is interesting to see how the cases were indicative of how diverse the districts sampled were. Certainly, primary challenges vary from one district to another, as each district, and state, is distinct. However, the clear pattern that emerges is that even the most ideologically liberal challengers still use interest-group based appeals. H1 is supported as each challenger used a higher percentage of ideological appeals than the incumbent candidate. H2 only has evidence from one case – Massachusetts’ Seventh Congressional District – making it appear that the Asymmetrical Party Theory continues to operate even when applied to newer cases. As for H3, it is increasingly clear that Pressley, the candidate who used the most ideological appeals in her website, has continued on to support this same ideological agenda in her voting record as seen through roll-call votes in the House of Representatives. The one exception to the Democratic Party that Grossmann and Hopkins characterize, Pressley’s campaign could be seen as the beginnings of an ideological approach in districts that are considered strongly Democratic. This signals that the Asymmetrical Party Theory applies deeper than previously explored by Grossmann and Hopkins.

Table 1.4 – Results from coding incumbent and challenger websites.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tom Carper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 4 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 18 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 22 ○ Leaning: Interest Group (82% to 18%) ▪ Kerri Harris <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 6 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 21 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 27 ○ Leaning: Interest Group (77% to 23%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Daniel Lipinski <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 2 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 16 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 18 ○ Leaning: Interest Group (88% to 12%) ▪ Marie Newman: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 9 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 24 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 33 ○ Leaning: Interest Group (73% to 27%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Michael Capuano <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 5 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 22 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 27 ○ Leaning: Interest Groups (81% to 19%) ▪ Ayanna Pressley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 15 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 14 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 29 ○ Leaning: Ideological (52% to 48%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joe Crowley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 3 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 17 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 20 ○ Leaning: Interest Group (85% to 15%) ▪ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of Ideological Appeals: 10 ○ Number of Interest Group Appeals: 35 ○ Total coded words/phrases: 45 ○ Leaning: Interest Group (64% to 36%)

Despite these similarities, the patterns from the sampled cases demonstrate a necessary continuation of this project to see how primary challenges have varied from election cycle to election cycle. Boatright (2013) also reached this same conclusion in his work on congressional primaries, reminding us that there are no more primary challenges now than there were in previous years, except in the late 1990s when there were fewer (213). However, Boatright points out that the primary challenges that are present today are more nationalized due to interest groups contacting their supporters and fewer restrictions in campaign finance laws. This enables the primary challenges that are present to reach a greater number of people and transform races for the party nomination in one small district from being a local election to a national one.

In conjunction with the work already completed on primary challenges, what this pattern of continued interest group-based appeals indicates is that the Democratic Party that Grossmann and Hopkins identify is still present even when there are more liberal primary challengers. Democrats are still depending on building coalitions based on the identities of interest groups in order to create majorities in districts and states. They are still thinking in terms of how broadly they are able to appeal to a variety of voters, rather than focus on upholding a true liberal ideology like Republicans do for conservative ideals.

In order for this pattern to be broken, it seems as though the Democratic Party would have to undergo the same style of fusion that Republicans did during the rise of the “New Right”. However, this seems slightly implausible as only one of the cases sampled indicates a potential for ideological campaigns winning against incumbent candidates.

Discussion

The limitations that were placed on this study due to time, finances, and scope of the research that has been undertaken also provide avenues for future research. Another significant limitation of this study is that the cases sampled all deal with districts or states that are primarily urban rather than rural, thereby limiting the generalization of this work to other potential primary challenges. To understand how this might affect the ability for candidates to run more ideologically-based campaigns, further research would have to be conducted. This is not the only potential extension of this research however.

The cases that were studied here could very likely be partnered and compared to the work that Boatright has done on chronicling primaries from previous years to determine if this asymmetry has persisted since the revamping of the modern primary election system. Additionally, the impact of Trump on the nature of primary challenges by comparing the primary challenges (or lack thereof) in 2016 to the challenges waged in 2018 would allow political scientists to continue their analysis of the impact his presidency in the context of primary challenges. Further, the work done by Brooks on male versus female candidate stereotypes could certainly be used to analyze the results of primary challenges through a different model not focused on the impact of political parties. Beyond this, a comparison of what happens for competition of open seats in primaries could also help provide insight to the Asymmetrical Party Theory. Above all else, perhaps the biggest application of this theory would be to determine when it does and does not matter, as this sample is too small to answer that question. With these as potential avenues, the Asymmetrical Party Model could be further tested and improved upon in order to impact future research conducted. It is certain though that the Asymmetrical Party Model appears to operate as a theory when applied beyond the scope of what Grossmann and Hopkins undertook.

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