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U.S. Presidential Nominations:

Outsiders in the 2016 Election

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**Abstract:** Presidential nominees from each major American political party endure a long and complex primary election. In our current system, campaign strategy often takes precedence over political ideology and experience. This notion allows outsiders to be successful, exemplified by Populist Donald Trump winning the 2016 Republican Nomination and Independent Bernie Sanders nearly securing the 2016 Democratic Nomination. This paper studies the changes in the Presidential Nomination process from 1968 to 2016, which set out to remove power from the major parties and deliver it to the people. Superdelegates, frontloading, debates and the media emerge as changes that have altered the process in order to allow political outsiders to be successful. Together, these key facets work toward establishing a system where parties are less powerful and the general population has more authority within the nomination process. After analyzing the effects of frontloading, superdelegates, debates and the media on the 2016 election, it is clear that the current system provides opportunity for outside candidates to perform well in the nomination process. Donald Trump secured the nomination of the Republican party while Bernie Sanders was a strong competitor for the Democratic nomination. With two strong campaigns from political outsiders, it is evident that political parties no longer dominate the process. The primary election has become a strong component of American democracy.

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## *Introduction*

The United States remains a two-party system, where Republicans and Democrats are the major political parties that represent the people. In order to run in the general election on behalf of one of these parties, an individual must secure the nomination by receiving over 50% of delegate votes at the party's convention. This process is complex and long, requiring significant strategy. Understanding the system and strategizing properly is pivotal for success. Proper strategies do not require notable political experience or specific political ideologies in order to prosper. Because political veteran status is not required, outsiders are able to establish a successful campaign. This was clear in the 2016, when Populist Donald Trump won the 2016 Republican Nomination and Independent Bernie Sanders nearly secured the 2016 Democratic Nomination.

Starting in 1968, a series of commissions were appointed to analyze the primary system and make suggestions regarding changes. These commissions were established in order to democratize the process, which meant removing power from the hands of the party and party leaders and placing it into those of the general voting population. An analysis of these changes points to frontloading and superdelegates as the leading major changes that resulted from these commissions. Understanding these facets of the primary election is essential for creating a successful strategy. In addition to these changes, the evolution of media and media coverage of debates has changed exponentially. Understanding the media and its rapidly changing role in the primary election is pivotal for a campaign. Combining strong analyses of these facets and how they work to create our current nomination process is how a candidate wins a nomination. Campaign strategy wields more power than both political experience and political opinion,

which is why this current system allows for outsiders like Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders to have the opportunity to secure or nearly secure a nomination.

### *Primary Voters*

The sole purpose of the presidential primary election is to put forth the nominees for the general election. This winnows the candidate pool and only gives certain candidates the chance to be a real competitor. Without winning the nomination of one of the two major parties, it is almost certain an individual will not win the general election, making primary a pivotal part of the process. Despite being a precursor to the general election, they receive much less attention. The voter turnout for primary elections is a fraction of the turnout for the general elections they precede, which is surprising due to their significance in the process.

In order to promote democracy and its foundations, it is important to promote voter turnout with voting legislation. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 made racial discrimination in voting illegal, which expanded the pool of eligible voters exponentially (“History of Federal Voting Rights Laws” 2015). Another piece of legislation, the National Voter Registration Act, sought to make registration for voting easier for all citizens (“The National Voter Registration Act of 1993” 2015). Specifically, it required that in addition to whatever avenues for registration states already had, three other processes were required to be available: while applying for or renewing a license, at all offices that provide public assistance and all offices that provide state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities, and a mail in form. These two changes provided better and easier access to voting: one of the most essential rights of democracy.

Voter turnout is not as high as one might anticipate, which is alarming because high voter turnout is a mark of a healthy democracy (MIT Election Lab 2018). Because only a small number of people vote, it might be natural for one to assume that if all able citizens voted, elections would be dramatically different. MIT (2018) argues against this notion, indicating that the political attitudes of non-voters are not much different than those of voters. This argument is based upon research conducted at the federal level and focuses on general elections. However, it is important to note that what may be true for general elections may not be true for primary elections. In primary elections, there are often so many more choices, which give voters the chance to align more closely with one candidate over another. The difference in policy and ideology in primary elections are, at their core, not as drastic as those during the general election. If candidates are from the same party, they typically do not disagree on hot topic issues while those from different parties do, making the decision at the general election level more obvious than at the primary level. There are stark differences in general elections that might not be as apparent in primary elections. Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders were the exception to this rule, as both of these outsiders were very different from their competitors and mainstream ideology within their respective parties. This idea is important to discuss because it could change the way we think about elections as a whole. If a certain electorate has the capacity to alter the political scene, it would be strategic for candidates to focus on that voting pool.

An opposing argument has been made suggesting that those who vote in primary elections tend to be more extreme than those who do not (Kamarck and Podkul 2018). If true, this points to a specific issue of ideology translation from primaries to general elections. Many individuals who are more centrist on the political scale may feel as though their ideologies are

not well represented by either candidate set forth by the two major parties, as they tend to take more extreme positions on a lot of hot topic issues (healthcare, abortion, welfare, etc). This causes a discrepancy in ideologies between elected officials and their constituents. There is also an issue of electability, especially within the parties. The main goal of each party throughout the primaries is to nominate a candidate who will have the chance to win. If those participating in the primaries put forth a more extreme candidate, this isolates the independents, centrist, or swing voters in the general election. In order to maintain electability, parties need to put forth candidates who are less radical in their beliefs because centrist voters are important for success. Therefore, in order to produce candidates who will be electable and who will provide fair representation, all voters should participate in the primary elections.

The role of political parties has changed at the turn of the 21st century. At their core, political parties are used as a cue for voters (Maisel and Brewer 2010). It is argued that elections themselves have shifted from party-centered to candidate-centered as a result of parties losing control over the elections. As voter power increased, party power decreased. The party leaders have attempted to hold on to as much power as possible, still finding ways to be involved in the process. The candidates, however, have become the center of the elections. Because primary elections have fewer points of dissent among the same party candidates, the race fixates on who they are as a person. Subsequently, image and likability become integral for success, emphasizing the importance of media.

### *Changes to the Nomination Process*

The Presidential nomination process has evolved over the years. Before the Progressive Era (early 20th Century), choosing a nominee was largely up to the party leaders and elected

officials. There was no official participation by the American people so candidates were forced to impress political leaders and delegates. During the Progressive Era, the idea of the primary election was added to the process as an attempt to hear more of the people's voice (Kamarck 2018). Between this era and 1968, the process could be broken down into two parts. The first was the smaller primaries, which could have been either a caucus or an election. At these events, the American people were able to voice their support for a candidate. However, most of the delegates were not decided through this method. Most delegates were chosen by party leaders and attended the convention as unpledged or pledged to the favorite-son, the party's choice (Kamarck 2018). The small primaries were so insignificant that many major candidates did not even put their name on the ballots. In some cases, like with John F. Kennedy, the parties required a candidate to enter the primaries to test their electability; it was like a mock election. It was not until the reform era that the primary elections were an impactful part of the process. Prior to these reforms, all decisions were made by delegates at the National Conventions (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Delegates were chosen and voted, sometimes as much as ten times, based on their personal opinion. Along with selecting the party's nomination for both President and Vice President, the delegates were tasked with deciding if there are any valid credential disputes regarding the possible nominee, as in deciding whether they have the experience and reputation to be successful in the general election. They also were set to decide any major rule changes within the party as well as the future direction of the political party. These major decisions were being made by delegates, who were chosen by party leaders, with little to no interaction with the general population (Maisel and Brewer 2010).



The nomination process in 1968 was a mockery of American democracy, as the powerful individuals of each party simply selected their nominee and primary election results had little to no influence. While political parties do not require internal democratic processes, their power undermined national democracy. It is contradictory for a major facet of our democratic system to not promote democratic values. The integrity of American democracy is harmed when institutions have the power to hire and fire elected officials. That power should have belonged to the people (Maisel and Brewer 2010). While the parties themselves are not required to be democratized, they must fit into our democracy and their role needs to be minimized in order to protect the rights of the people. President Lyndon B. Johnson was eligible for another term, which typically means he would be an unchallenged candidate. However, there was great disdain for the Vietnam War and a growing unrest within the party. This led to Senator Eugene McCarthy gaining momentum toward unseating the incumbent President Johnson. In November of 1967, McCarthy launched an expansive grass-roots revolutionary campaign in New Hampshire, the first of the primaries. Despite not winning the primary, McCarthy won 42% of the vote and signaled a weakness in Johnson's campaign (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Sensing the incumbent's vulnerability, Senator Robert F. Kennedy joined the race. That combined with an even stronger opposition to the war caused Johnson to drop out of the race entirely. Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey decided to join the campaign, but too late to run in the primaries. That meant he would have to win the delegates at the convention. Kennedy and McCarthy continued to split winnings but Kennedy was assassinated after giving his California primary victory speech in Los Angeles. Humphrey picked up a lot of the votes that Kennedy left behind, giving him a strong chance against McCarthy. When it came time for the convention, protestors

were unsurprisingly against Humphrey due to his support for Johnson's agenda (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Protestors were beaten and the scene was chaotic but Humphrey secured the nomination. The scene was chaotic and violent.

The convention was so valuable because the primary elections that were held had no real input. The representation in the primaries was not directly represented in the votes at the convention, which inherently gave astronomical value to the Convention itself. That allowed for a man who had not won one single primary election to be chosen as the nominee. Protests and riots erupted at the lack of democracy in the system. This was humiliating for the Democratic party and sparked significant change within the nomination process (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Political change and protest were not unheard of in America during this time. These protestors spoke out in regard to other current events, including the anti-Vietnam War movement, the civil rights movement and women's rights. The political climate in this time period was centered around increasing the involvement of the American people in American politics. It was about basic rights of the people.

After 1968, the Democratic party created the McGovern-Fraser Commission and set out to examine the process and identify its faults. It sought to provide real value to the primary elections through sets of rules tying convention delegates to people's votes. Two specific issues stuck out sorely. First, some states did not have a clear process for how their delegates, the individuals actually voting to select the nominee, were appointed (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This meant there were a lot of back door deals and a staunch lack of transparency. Second, in Georgia and Louisiana, the governor appointed all of the members of the delegation (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This took a significant amount of power away from voters and placed it in the

hands of the governors. The core issues found to be plaguing the process have been debated since then.

*Mandate for Reform* was the final report released by the commission. Essentially, the report argued for the process to be open, timely and representative (Maisel and Brewer 2010). The report suggested changes that would further democratize the process. A lot of the suggestions were widely accepted while some of the more specific items were debated and controversial. For the first time, it was vocalized that the states should be required to adopt the nomination process set forth by the commission, therefore creating one nomination process (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Until then, it was not a rule that states must hold a primary election or that the primary be required to have any true political power. By 1972, states had two options for their primaries (Maisel and Brewer 2010). The first was that at least 90% of the delegates' votes would be determined by the primary. The second option was to hold a caucus, in which party regulars would meet to discuss presidential preferences. These are two *very* different events. The primary elections are designed to have party members visit a polling location and select their preferred candidate. In a caucus, members are present to select representatives that will go to a secondary meeting and establish the number of delegates pledged to each candidate. Those delegations would be proportionate to the presidential preferences expressed at the first caucus. Despite both processes being different, they both stood on one core value: transparency. The system was no longer a series of back door deals and trade-offs but a system of clarity and public notice (Maisel and Brewer 2010).

Changes and reforms to the process continued from 1972 to 1988 within the Democratic party. After the 1972 election, the head of the Democratic National Committee Robert Strauss

appointed a commission to focus on the delegate selection process. Two new reformations came from the Mikulski Commission but they did make a number of concessions to party regulars. The first was outlawing the idea of an open primary, which meant that only registered Democrats could participate in primaries. The second was the idea of fair reflection of presidential preference, which meant that all candidates receiving over 15% of the overall vote be proportionately supported by the delegates moving forward (Maisel and Brewer 2010). The result of this can drastically change the outcome of the primary elections. In a winner-take-all, one person is able to take all of the delegates without beating their opponents. It allows the process the opportunity to be longer and more inviting to real participation by the voters (Maisel and Brewer 2010). The longer the election is, the more of an opportunity there is for a dark horse to emerge. Additionally, candidates are able to receive more support in a winner-take-all system. This delivers a clearer winner, with more support in a general election. Despite some arguments surrounding these changes, they stayed intact for the 1976 election with some leeway for interpretation by states.

During the 1976 election, the DNC leader Strauss appointed Michigan Democratic chair Morely Winograd as head of a new commission. The recent changes caused an increase in primary events, leading to issues with scheduling. The Winograd Commission was established to examine these issues and make recommendations (Maisel and Brewer 2010). After the 1976 convention, the committee was extended. The extension of the group also included the addition of White House representatives. This was an overt attempt by the Carter administration to prevent a real challenger for the incumbent President in the 1980 election (Maisel and Brewer 2010). The commission decided that working toward a more specific primary calendar would

help alleviate some of the issues they had identified in the process. An idea, labeled the window concept, established that primaries be held within three months, from March to June (Maisel and Brewer 2010).

There were, however, exceptions made for states who held primaries before March in 1976. Those two exceptions were made for the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire “first-in-the-nation” primary. Conveniently, these two events helped launch Jimmy Carter’s first campaign. It was originally stated that the purpose of this adjustment was to shorten the length of the campaigns. However, any viable competitor would clearly begin campaigning prior to the first primaries. Additionally, as sought after by Carter’s representatives, it would be harder for any challenger to overcome an incumbent in such a short amount of time. Theoretically, that would make sense as the incumbent would have three years of their Presidency as evidence of their abilities and have established their positions effectively while challengers would struggle to be as well known. In another attempt to keep party regulars and party favorites in power, fair reflection of presidential preference was weakened. The percentage required to receive delegates was raised from 15 to 25% (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This kept smaller candidates out of the race by denying them more delegates and giving them to the more well known party members, like incumbents. The Winograd Commission also reinstated the idea of winner take all primaries, in which the candidate that received the majority of votes would win all of the delegates from that state. With the new rule, creation of single-member districts was required. This new rule directly went against the McGovern-Fraser Commission which eliminated these types of contests at the state level. It was argued that winner-take-all should not exist because it does not accurately represent the views of the people and gives more power to one candidate than they

likely deserve. However, in 1976, many states found a loophole and ran the winner-take-all primaries at congressional district levels (Maisel and Brewer 2010). It was easy for the Winograd Commission to legitimize that loophole because it benefitted who they aimed to serve: Jimmy Carter. Overall, it was argued that the changes established by the Commission would strongly benefit the party elites while diminishing broader political participation. It is important to note that during the 1980 Democratic National Convention, most delegates felt as though Jimmy Carter would lose the general election to Ronald Reagan, which was the case (Maisel and Brewer 2010). It could be argued that the party had failed itself by allowing a nominee who did not have widespread support from the general voting pool and diminishing their chances of winning the election. This means that, once again, a commission was formed to reexamine the process.

The Hunt Commission, chaired by North Carolina's governor James B. Hunt Jr. had three simple goals: strengthen the party, increase the role of party regulars to win elections and to be sure the party could govern once they were elected (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This commission followed and reaffirmed many of the reformations, especially the idea of closed primary elections. Three changes were also suggested. The first was that delegates would no longer be bound to vote for the candidate they had previously pledged. Instead, delegates would operate under "good conscience" when deciding whether they should vote for their original pledge (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This was a direct result of Carter's lack of delegate support at the convention in the prior election. It was argued that if nominees were chosen too early, it was possible that their ability to succeed in the general election could change by the convention. The new rule served as a way to ensure the nominee was electable. The following change relaxed the rules surrounding proportional representation while explicitly reaffirming the idea of fair

representation (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Again, loophole primaries occurred at congressional levels, so there was not much of a change in winner-take-all primaries. The final and most important change was the addition of superdelegates. Previously, the Winograd commission established add-on delegates, or additional delegates added to a state's total in order to accommodate party and elected officials. The Hunt Commission supplemented this with the superdelegates: officials holding an important office who are guaranteed a spot as a delegate. The importance of this change was inherent in the rules surrounding it. First, superdelegates would go into the convention *unpledged*. That meant that these delegates- prominent party officials, bosses and leaders- would have the opportunity to choose who got their coveted vote. Those in favor of this idea argued that they would provide practical experience at the convention and produce a winning ticket, especially if the 1980 convention repeated itself (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This rule change was used as a way to keep party elites involved in the process. Superdelegates changed the presidential primary process exponentially, as to be seen in 2016.

Losing candidates in the 1984 convention, Senator Gary Hart and Reverend Jesse Jackson lodged complaints that the nomination process favored prominent members of the party too much (Maisel and Brewer 2010). They had lost the nomination to former Vice President Walter Mondale. The Fairness Commission was established to look at tier complaints. Donald Fowler, a party activist from South Carolina, chaired the group and felt that the 1984 rules worked well enough. As a result, not much was changed. More elected officials were guaranteed spots as delegates to the 1988 DNC by granting all members of the Democratic National Committee and 80% of Democratic congress superdelegate status. Through both Fowler's statement and this rule, it is clear this commission continued to favor those already in power. In

order to quell those who cried that those in power held too much power, the committee did officially lower the percentage required to receive a fair share of the delegates from 20 to 15% (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Unsurprisingly, the problems identified by Hart and Jackson were not directly addressed.

One of the more important changes to the process did not come directly from a commission but rather states themselves. In the 1988 election, a large number of delegates were selected on the second Tuesday of March, causing it to be dubbed “Super Tuesday” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This was a strategy utilized by southern politicians to maximize their state’s influence. Holding a primary earlier than other states means that there is a greater likelihood your votes will still matter. If a primary is held too late in the season, the state risks having a nominee all but officially decided. This change fundamentally altered the presidential nomination process for years to come.

What about the Republican side? All of the aforementioned commissions and their changes have been conducted on the Democratic end. For the most part, Republicans have not made major changes to their process since 1968 but they have appointed their own commissions (Maisel and Brewer 2010). According to Maisel and Brewer (2010), the first was established after the 1964 television aired Republican National Convention by President Eisenhower. Another commission was established after the 1968 election entitled the “Delegates and Organizations” but it did not address any major or controversial issues. The commission was loaded with members of the Republican National Committee. A third committee was chaired by William R. Steiger, a moderate Republican congressman from Wisconsin, and was dubbed the Rule 20 Committee. This committee focused on both disclosing campaign expenditure as well as



an increase in broader participation in the party. There are a few key differences between the way these committees worked within the two parties. First is that even when a nominee is not necessarily clear, the Republican party is explicit in their united support of the nominee set forth (Maisel and Brewer 2010). They are confident that whomever the party puts forth has a real chance at winning the general election. The second is that the reforms put forth by the committees were merely suggestions and not mandated reforms (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This is an effort to give states as much power as possible to states. Republicans also state that any mandated rules would have to be ratified by the Republican National Convention, meaning rules would not be put into place until four years later. It is also important to note, however, that a lot of the changes put into effect by the Democratic Party resulted in changes in state laws that affect Republicans as well. Overall, fundamental changes were established between 1968 and 1988.

Moving forward, election years 1992 to present are labeled as the **current system**. These nominations came with more reformations as well. The 1988 system seemed to please both parties. The only alteration to come from the 1988 season was the eradication of loopholes and their traces from the system (Maisel and Brewer 2010). At that point, everything necessary for the success of the powers of the parties, so they found no reason to make any major changes. From 1988 to 2008, the foundations of the system remained intact. There were a few rule changes during these years. In the year 2000, the Republicans moved their primary season to start a month earlier and Democrats followed suit in 2004 (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This caused a sudden movement of a lot of the primaries in both parties. There was a significant fight to be one of the first primaries. After the 2008 election, there was a bi-partisan initiative to

standardize the primary schedule (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This meant that the Super Tuesday that had occurred like a nationwide primary was broken up during the year 2012. A lot of states moved their primaries further back. Then, again in 2016, the idea of Super Tuesday was solidified.

It is important to note how much the excessive frontloading and the adjustment of the way campaigns were funded; both aspects had major effects. In 1992, states realized how important timing was in order to remain influential in the primary elections. 40% of the delegates were chosen in a three-week period in March (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This was huge for both parties' nominees. For the Republicans, a big win on Super Tuesday allowed George HW Bush the opportunity to thwart any chance of competitor Pat Buchanan making a run for the nomination. On the Democratic side, Senator Bill Clinton from Arkansas emerged as a clear front runner in a crowded primary election. Both of these men had a significant, early start that allowed them to claim their bid as the nominee and the luxury of turning to the general election early. Again in 1996, the calendar played a vital role (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Bill Clinton ran unopposed as the incumbent. The Republican end was a bit more crowded. Bob Dole, the presumed frontrunner, only had 27 candidates at the beginning of March while his opponents combined had over 100 (Maisel and Brewer 2010). By the end of March, Dole had 701 while all others combined had 144. The nomination contest was over in a matter of weeks as a result of front loading the primaries. Nobody could hold their own with so many primaries so early on and the option for winner-take-all races on the Republican side. In the year 2000, it was especially important for both parties to ensure that the process would permit a clear nominee, as each party had no incumbent. Despite this desire, no major changes occurred again. The 2004 primary

season saw an incumbent in Republican President George W. Bush. John Kerry emerged with the Democratic nomination after a severely front loaded nomination season (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Again, there were no major rule changes but the implications of the political calendar were strong.

The 2008 primary season did not see any official major rule changes but provided more norms for candidates. It has been dubbed as “the year of firsts”-the first African American candidate, the first serious female contender, the first Hispanic, the first Mormon, the oldest candidate (Maisel and Brewer 2010). In terms of the process, 2008 felt to be an extension of the past. Candidates almost across the board refused public funding. Those who did receive public funding were harmed extensively by the restrictions that came with them, as they were substantially outspent. John McCain, who struggled early in the campaign, was able to come back for a win in New Hampshire and benefitted nicely through frontloading and winner-take all primaries. He beat serious contenders like Mike Huckabee, Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney for the nomination from a party that had rejected him in the year 2000. However, with the way the process was unfolding thanks to frontloading and winner-take-all, Republicans were forced to accept McCain as their best option for the general election. On the Democratic end, a lot of the same rules applied. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were the two serious contenders, as made obvious early in the primaries. Obama won out subsequent support from other candidates and his massive funding. For the 2012 election, both parties put into place penalties for any state violating the rules of the primary calendar. Fifty percent of their delegation would be removed from the National convention, which was a crushing blow to the states’ impact on the nomination (Putnam 2016). In the Republican party, it was solidified that only four states-Iowa, New

Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina-could hold their events prior to the first Tuesday in March, which was the now accepted Super Tuesday date subsequent of the Temporary Delegate Selection Committee's suggestion to the RNC in 2010. This now was identical on both the Republican and Democratic end. Those four states were also restricted to holding their elections on or after February 1st (Putnam 2016). Republicans also instituted the rule that any contest held prior to April 1st would be required to be a proportional contest.

The purpose of these rules was to help reduce the effects of frontloading by penalizing races before March, restricting those held in March and incentivizing, at least from a winner-take-all standpoint- events held in April and beyond. For the 2016 primary, the Republicans relaxed the rules and only called for states holding primary events prior to March 16th to use proportional representation (Putnam 2016). All changes by Republicans were an attempt to shorten the primary season.

These changes have produced a lot of consequences for the primary election season. There is, of course, a lot more to the process than discussed above. However, those changes outline what is known as the "reform era" of the presidential primary process. The primaries have a lot of rules and categories. In their 2016 book, Polsby et al. (2016) discusses the five most important rules that govern the current primary season. The first rule discussed is that both parties currently require that all pledged delegates be selected within a roughly three-month time period, from March to June. This is a direct result of the idea of front loading and helps to prevent the fight to be first. It is also a nod to the fact that earlier participation does affect the efficacy of the votes. A lot of the reformations above dealt with scheduling primaries and that is represented in the current rules of the primaries.

The authors also mention that both parties grant special privileges to two states to have nomination events. Both the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary are allowed to be held prior to the March to June timeslot. This allocates a substantial amount of power to two small, unrepresentative states. They have substantial control over the outcome of the process, which will be discussed in greater detail further along in this paper. The third rule important to the current system is how the number of delegates each state gets is decided. For both parties, the delegates are allocated based upon a formula that considers both electoral votes and political participation within the state in recent elections. This is an important rule because the number of delegates per state is undeniably important. Having a set standard to decide how many delegates each state gets avoids a lot of fighting between all parties involved. It rids the process of contention later on at the convention.

The fourth rule is not a bi-partisan venture. This rule regards the Democrats utilizing proportional representation at the state level when a candidate receives over 15% of the vote. The Democrats also require that their delegates be split down the middle between male and female members. Democrats argue that this type of primary is more representative of the people's voice. This is a valid thinking that allows for the most supported candidate and allows for a stronger chance in the general election, as there is more accuracy. On the other hand, Republicans still allow states to decide whether they'd like to be proportional representation or winner-take-all. One stipulation the Republicans put into place is that any event held before March 15th cannot be a winner-take-all type, unless they are given special exemption (Iowa and New Hampshire). Republicans argue that they prefer the winner-take-all type because it mirrors the process of the general election. From an electability standpoint, it makes sense. It allows a nominee to be

decided earlier and allows for more support to be thrown behind the nominee. Additionally, in support of federalism, the Republicans allow the states themselves to have more power. Both the Democrats and Republicans make valid arguments for their decisions on their types of primaries. Both parties suggest their main goal: put forth a nominee who is electable. The fifth and final rule to discuss is how all Democratic elected officials and members of the Democratic National Committee automatically hold a delegate seat. They also are not required to pledge their support to any candidate prior to the convention, meaning they are superdelegates. Democrats utilize superdelegates at a higher percentage than do Republicans. 80 add-on superdelegates are also distributed to states as well.

Surprisingly, since their institution, superdelegates have not played an overwhelming role in terms of changing the nominee. In 1984, it could be argued that Walter Mondale could have lost the nomination without the support of these superdelegates. They issued their support for him early and kept his campaign strong throughout its entirety. Their influence was seen again in 2008. Initially, Clinton's status as a former First Lady and already established political clout within the party afforded her the luxury of having superdelegate support. However, she never had a majority and eventually wound up losing a lot of their support to Barack Obama. In the early years of the current system, the effects of superdelegates were not felt. In the years 2008 and 2016, the effect of superdelegates had grown exponentially. Their presence, whether perceived or real, adjusted the system. That is, would it call into question the efficacy of our democracy? Would the nominee be seen as legitimate and, therefore, have the ability to be a true competitor in the general election? While the consequences of superdelegates could cause a huge eruption within parties, it has yet to occur. In that case, it feels as though the addition of super

delegates was less about democratizing the process than it was about keeping party bosses and regulars satisfied with their role in the nomination process (Maisel and Brewer 2010).

It is clear that the process has undergone a series of radical changes. Prior to the reform era, representatives to the conventions were merely stand-ins for party bosses. The leaders of the parties exerted clear and defined power over the process. As reforms have been instituted, party bosses have switched their role from being powerful to being influential. Some have argued that the reforms have hurt the party while others see benefits. Those agreeing with the new system put in place are confident that the road a nominee must take will allow them to be successful in the general election. There has been consistent reformation because finding balance between leaders and citizens is not an easy task to undertake. Keeping party leaders involved while maintaining the efficacy of the primary season is difficult. In order to compromise, which is needed for success in the general election, the system must be constantly evaluated.

### *Significant Effects of the Changes*

Winning the nomination of a party is not typically an easy feat. With all of the rules that outline presidential nominations, strategies become important. Learning how to utilize rules to your advantage is beneficial for candidates, as was seen with George McGovern. After he led the charge on nomination reformation, he stepped back from the commission and utilized his close knowledge of the new system to his advantage, eventually securing the nomination (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This is not to say that one has to create the rules to be successful, but they do need to know how to use the rules in their interest. What are some of these key points?

The campaign calendar is one of the most important facets of the election to understand. It could bolster or wreck a campaign. What are some of the important parts of the nomination

campaign calendar to focus on? First, it is important to focus on frontloading. Frontloading is the action of holding primaries and caucuses that decide a significant number of delegates early within the nomination campaign season (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Quickly, states began to realize how much stronger the effects of voting were if they held their elections earlier. Overall, rules within both parties explicitly state that all delegates must be chosen between the first Tuesday in February and the first Tuesday in June of the presidential election year with Iowa and New Hampshire beginning the primary season. Today, frontloading still occurs, but it exists within a stricter set of rules. Frontloading itself has consequences as well. Candidates do not have the ability to enter the race late, as the primaries have either already occurred or would be occurring soon. Campaigning prior to the primaries is necessary.

As a result of frontloading, Super Tuesday came into effect. As mentioned, the day was originally instituted to benefit states in the South (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Other states began to interfere with this plan in 1992, in which eight states held their primary events on the second Tuesday of the month. Those states included six southern or southern border states as well as Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In 1996, eight states held their primaries on March 5th. This set of eight included five New England states as well as Georgia, Maryland and Colorado. In 2000, the number jumped to eleven states on the first Tuesday, including the same New England states as well as California, New York and Ohio. Four other states also held their primaries that week. The 2004 primary season followed suit but five other states held their primary even earlier, in February. This, in turn, reduced the impact of the states that had already chosen the first Tuesday in March primaries. Noticeably, Super Tuesday is a work in progress. In 2008, Super Tuesday took a big leap forward, when about half of all states, including the state with the largest number



of delegates, held their primaries on February 5th (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This completely changed the way that candidates strategize for success, especially with finances. Enough money had to be put into those early events. However, there always stood a chance that no clear winner would emerge that early. Therefore, they needed to reserve enough resources to continue a campaign should they still have the opportunity to win the nomination. Understanding how important Super Tuesday is in terms of allocating resources is essential for success, as a candidate could be eliminated before the season was truly underway.

The final impact of the campaign schedule to be discussed is the exemption of Iowa and New Hampshire in terms of scheduling rules. These are two states who, for the most part, are small and unrepresentative of the nation as a whole. There is no reason these two states have seemingly achieved a permanent spot as the first two primary events. For years, these two states held their primaries early, so when rule changes began to occur, it merely became commonplace. Because these states' events are so early, they tend to have a disproportionate effect on the process as a whole (Maisel and Brewer 2010). It is often argued that the outcome of Iowa and New Hampshire is when real competitors shine and those who are not adequate fall behind. Despite not having a large share of the delegates, these states receive a significant amount of attention from candidates. Without their power to pave the way to the White House for some candidates, it is likely that these two states would not get that much attention. Thus, their impact is manufactured by the campaign schedule.

Modern day politics have been largely affected by the use of media and technology (Maisel and Brewer 2010). With the adjustments of the calendar and needing to start campaigns prior to the actual election year, it might be difficult to get voters to focus on candidates that

early. At the start of the primary season, free press coverage is key. Getting your name and your stance out in the public is important to get people to start thinking about you and the primary. Surprisingly, a lot of candidates are not well known to the general public. For example, in 2000, a lot of people thought that George W. Bush was actually his father running for a second term (Maisel and Brewer 2010). It was not until the media pointed out it was his son that it became well known. A lot of the individuals running are congressmen or local politicians who are more well known to their state. Initially, it is important for these people to get their name out. As the primaries go on and the number of contenders dwindles, it is much more common for each of the candidates to have coverage. The true fight for coverage is within the early stages.

Therefore, the connection between the media and Iowa and New Hampshire is important to understand. In addition to the attention the states receive from candidates, the media focuses on them a significant amount. Candidates are well aware of how much power the media has so they go to great lengths to procure an image they are comfortable with. However, as the media begins to focus on a candidate more closely, they will begin to uncover more. Personal matters become public and the candidates sometimes do not always have control of their own image within the media. It is argued by Polsby et al. (2016) that the media attention surrounding these two has the potential to “set some candidates on a path to the White House while forcing others to permanently surrender their presidential ambitions”. The perception of a candidate prior to the debate affects how their performance during the debate is received. Maisel and Brewer (2010) second this argument and state that doing better in the primary than anticipated or having a more positive outcome than previous reports predicted is great press for a candidate. On the other

hand, having a worse showing than anticipated is detrimental to the campaign. The media and how they report can change the perception of candidates' standings.

In addition to control over the calendar, political parties have other forms of power over the nomination process. Superdelegates, the unpledged convention voters mentioned previously, were reinstated by the Democratic Party into the primary process after the McGovern-Fraser committee reforms. This decision was reached after influential party leaders refused to participate in primary elections because they did not want to back a losing candidate. It was a strategic move by these more local politicians to save face with their constituents. Additionally, they would have to be chosen for the seat, which required them to either beat out one of their constituents or lose to an outsider, neither of which had good optics. Overall, it was easier for them to simply opt out of participating in the conventions. Within the Republican party, these issues were not of concern. Influential party leaders continued to participate due to the fact that unpledged slates were still allowed to participate and fair presidential reflection was required (Polsby et al. 2016). Throughout the entire reform process, Republican party leaders played a key role in their nomination process. Clearly, the Republicans and Democrats have two different systems when it comes to nominating candidates. Republicans, as seen above, have focused less on reformation. Their system is very similar to what it always has been. The goal for the Republicans is to have party leaders and influential officials to support candidates, eventually leading to support for the nominee. In 2000, most Republican Governors gave their support to George W. Bush prior to the first primary (Polsby et al. 2016). This gave him an unbeatable upper hand, especially in the eyes of the media and his opponents. This leads the primary candidates to focus attention on those influential leaders, as their support can turn into delegate

support from their respective state quickly. For the Democrats, leaders tend to hold back their support, at least publicly. Their support and participation is more subtle than in the Republican party. Their support is intended to be on an individual level. Candidates still court them but merely for their support as a delegate, not as a gateway to a larger following. Support of superdelegates has been closely looked at since their institution. In 2004, Howard Dean ran away with a strong early showing in the primaries (Polsby et al. 2016). However, superdelegates were originally suspected to support John Kerry. Most of them continued their support, which gave Kerry's campaign life. In 2008, superdelegates threw their support behind Barack Obama, which all but gave him the nomination (Polsby et al. 2016). That is not to say that he would have lost without their support, but it did give him a more definitive push. They knew who was going to win and they wanted to give their support. Overall, the roles of these party leaders, although different in some ways, remains the same. They are intended to break any sort of ties within party conventions, which has yet to occur (Polsby et al. 2016). These positions are utilized to make elected officials and the parties themselves feel valuable to the process.

### *The Evolving Role of Media*

As the media has evolved over the years, it has become an important player in the primary election. Information is readily available and close contact with the candidates has undeniably changed the process. Sixty years ago, newspapers were the core of mass media (Polsby et al. 2016). People received their news by reading the daily paper; some cities even had two papers distributed per day. These papers were eventually eclipsed by radio and television. In the current era, television still remains pivotal but the internet has found its value as well (Polsby et al. 2016)l. With such wide access to data and information, it is difficult to weed out the true

facts from opinions and manipulated media. To be clear, it is sometimes difficult to discern the truth from fabricated or biased media.

Media is generally divided into two camps: free media and paid media (Polsby et al. 2016). Free media stems from news coverage of candidates. In the early days, free media typically referred to pamphlets and newspapers (Polsby et al. 2016). Even then, news would have the capacity to be biased toward one side or the other, as many of their owners had their personal political agendas. As technology advanced, free media expanded to include more. Newspapers became regional then eventually national, allowing them to reach a larger audience. Radio and television grew to be popular sources of information. Today, the internet plays a pivotal role in the diffusion of information. While sources like newspaper and radio still remain a constant in the election process, their role is much different. Magazines have found themselves a position in the news media as well, providing everything from polls to personal stories regarding the candidates. Talk shows have also become a valuable player in the game, as candidates and representatives may find themselves on the show or the topic of conversation. These are often highly opinionated and viewer based shows, which can affect the information that is shared. Last, but certainly not least, social media is an important aspect of the current media. It is clear that with all of the advancements made in technology, information has become attainable at all times.

One of the most important events relating to the media and the primary election is debates. These debates are specifically designed to allow the public to have a closer look at the candidates, which influences their evaluations (Polsby et al. 2016). These events allow candidates to engage directly and explain their platforms. Typically hosted by a news

organization, a set of questions and topics are chosen and a moderator is selected to run the event. While requirements need to be met to attend the event, this is a form of free media. Both the event itself and the news coverage after the event are important for the candidate. Similar to the idea of frontloading, candidates have the ability to create a strong campaign from early on in the competition. In 1960, John F. Kennedy sought to debate Richard Nixon in an effort to prove he was not too young or inexperienced to become President (Polsby et al. 2016). Nixon was put in a difficult position. Even if Nixon won, Kennedy would be able to use this as a moral victory. If he declined, he would be labeled afraid of JFK. Regardless, Nixon would emerge with no real good coming from this debate. Despite this example coming from a general election, the same notion is applied. Winning the debate is not necessary. For an outsider, a debate can be used as a launching point for their campaign. It is all about perception and how a performance is received.

Because of the exorbitant amount of media outlets available, understanding the role they play is pivotal. One thing that is important to note initially is that the role media might be expected to play is not necessarily the role they actively play. The role the media is intended to play within elections can be split into three. The first is that they are expected to provide “Informed Consent of the Governed” (Polsby et al. 2016). This idea is central to democracy and is designed to keep the general public abreast of the action in politics. Simply put, they are supposed to tell citizens what is going on. They are a connection between politicians and the people. The second position they assume is giving a “Window on the Candidates” (Polsby et al. 2016). Because every individual person cannot meet the candidates and know them on a personal level, it is the responsibility of the media to provide this information to the people. Lastly, the

media is designed to serve as a “Referee Between Opponents” (Polsby et al. 2016). Overall, they seek to keep a record to resolve any he said/she said disputes.

In addition to the desired role of the media, there are other jobs the media completes in practice. Maisel and Brewer split the “*actual*” role of media into eight separate instances. The first is that of “The Great Mentioner” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). Here, the idea is that the press has the ability to give a candidate a strong footing as the front runner before the campaign even begins. Recognition gives candidates a strong upper hand while lack thereof can force the end of a campaign before it ever truly began. Doing well in primaries requires name recognition. Without it, winning is highly unlikely. The second position described is titled “Image Creator” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). The press has the ability to paint a picture of a candidate that is widely received. Because a majority of the press is connected, it is common that their perception of candidates does not differ strongly during the nomination process. This phenomenon is known as pack journalism. Journalists and writers tend to try to be the first to report on a candidate or an event, but they are typically all restricted to the same information and the same events. These press events are utilized by the candidate to try and depict a favorable persona for the press to report on. It is the candidates attempt to control what the media is saying about them.

The third part played by the media is the “Expectation Setter” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). This is especially critical at the early events of the nomination process. Setting goals and creating a perception regarding how the candidate should do at certain primary events can either help or hinder the candidate. Expectations of a solid showing combined with a disappointing outcome can be detrimental. Expectations of a poor showing and then a surprisingly strong outcome can label a candidate as a strong competitor. A candidate who has a strong showing when they

expected one only furthers their position as a strong competitor while someone who is expected to do poorly and actually does poorly will further prove they are not a viable candidate. These expectations are set forth by none other than the media. These comparisons can change the perception of the candidate within the general public regarding electability. Fourth, the media functions as an “Issue Identifier” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). In this position, the media is able to decide which issues and stances are relayed to the public. Undoubtedly, there is a wide range of issues that candidates talk about and must make their decision known. However, the topics that are most discussed are chosen by the media and which they decide to cover. The media may focus on the candidates themselves, how they are polling or how they compete on contentious issues. In primaries, the press is focused on how campaigns are run, who has the ability to win or who is favored to win. It is not always the issues themselves that are the most important discussion. While the few hotly debated issues remain in the spotlight, other news topics play a vital role as well.

Fifth, the media serves as a “Field Narrower” during primary elections (Maisel and Brewer 2010). As mentioned, the media decides the credibility of the candidate. They have the ability to decide whether a candidate is worthy of their attention and, in turn, the attention of the general public. Before citizens even have a chance to vote, it is common for candidates to drop out of the race. This could lessen the group and place more focus on the stronger candidates. Sixth, the press can operate as a “Campaign Critic” and judge how the candidates run their races (Maisel and Brewer 2010). It is said that the media views themselves as a guard for the general public and the public good. This leads them to focus on a lot of the decisions and character defining moments of the campaigns. It is common for the front-runners to face a lot of criticism



from the press while underdogs tend to be treated a bit more leniently. This does, naturally, have unintended consequences. Because they tend to be harsher critics of those who truly have a chance at winning the nomination, they are seen in a more negative light while those who lose are more positively perceived. In turn, the public may feel as though they lost the chance to elect a better candidate, which is problematic for their belief in the current candidates. The seventh role the media assumes is “Documentor of Elections” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). In this position, the media is responsible for reporting on the elections and their events. Polling and releasing numbers regarding the elections, especially in the primary, are pivotal. Considering these polls could have an effect on the following primaries, understanding how each candidate performed is important. As previously shown, the primary process is not easy to understand and the rules allow for a lot of differentiation between the states. Understanding what is going on could be difficult for many people. As the media reports, they make that information more easily understood. While some find value in knowing quantitative information early, others feel it is not wholly accurate. Regardless, the results the media puts forth is often the only information the general public receives on outcomes. Last, the media is described as the “Purveyor of Results” (Maisel and Brewer 2010). That is, they report the outcomes of elections. It is important for them to be fast and accurate. Any mistakes from these sites can cause significant consequences.

The other camp of media is paid media (Polsby et al. 2010). In this division, the candidate provides the message. Television, radio and internet advertisements can be produced and paid for by the candidates and their campaigns. Typically, all videos ads are short and kept to the point. Advertisements on social media have become a very important factor in more modern elections. The pieces themselves may have different purposes. There are both positive

advertisements, which are about the candidates themselves, and there are negative advertisements, which focus on flaws of their opponents (Polsby et al. 2010). Positive ads try to highlight why that specific candidate is the best person for the job. They focus on their stance on issues, what they have done in their past, etc. Negative ads seek to dismantle their opponents' views, past actions, etc. Contrast ads serve a similar purpose, but also provide an attack and a defense of a person's decisions. These seem to be a bit more common because they are a less aggressive tactic, which might be beneficial in the long run. During the nomination process, these ads are not as widely utilized early in the campaign. Once the candidate pool begins to dwindle, they become more popular. Evolution of technology, however, has made using these ads much easier. Most candidates have their own websites from the beginning of their campaign, which are a form of paid media. Over the years, these websites have become major productions and require a lot of information and effort. The use of paid advertisement, along with unpaid advertisement, has grown exponentially throughout the years.

Paid press is not a straightforward topic. There are a lot of rules and regulations that govern the process. As with any complicated political process, there are common criticisms. In their book, Maisel and Brewer (2010) highlight two controversies. The first is negative advertising. There are no exact boundaries that define what is allowed within this tactic. In one way, it is widely perceived as appropriate for a candidate to raise questions about past political records or a platform. On the other hand, attacks of a personal nature are typically frowned upon. When using attack ads, candidates must be weary of crossing a line, as that could cause damage to their own campaign. Overall, it is seen that proper negative advertisements are effective within the voting pool, which is why my candidates still utilize them. This is, however, a fine line to

walk. Next, a controversial topic is issue advocacy advertisements. These advertisements are typically paid for by a group advocating for a specific cause and, in turn, a specific candidate. The idea of advocating for a candidate by tying them to a central issue of the group is a loophole in judicial decisions, which is why it is highly contested. These advertisements are overall successful, as they typically highlight the hotly debated issues of the current political climate. They are able to draw the attention of voters.

These paid media campaigns are important resources that are thoroughly strategized by the candidate and their campaign. Reaching a large audience is pivotal. Because this form of media is more closely controlled, understanding the goals is important as well. The first goal of paid media is to establish a good image for the candidate (Polsby et al. 2016). For the candidate, it is important to know their role in a race (i.e. challenger, incumbent, underdog, etc.) and use that to their advantage. They must choose the image they are going to pursue and really drive the idea home. Additionally, deciding what type of characteristics the candidate will tout is important. Running on the platform of a family man is different than running as a businessman. It is important to deliver a clear and concise message. Clouding the minds of voters is not helpful. The second goal is to set an agenda for the campaign (Polsby et al. 2016). The issues discussed in these advertisements are likely the core tenets of the candidates' campaign. They must choose wisely, as once they make a stance they must continue on that path, at least within that current election cycle. The third goal is to reinforce the support they are getting from party members and organizations (Polsby et al. 2016). This is less common in primary elections and is more of a central idea in general elections. The fourth and final goal of many of these ads is to weaken their opponent (Polsby et al. 2016). Not only is it important to prove you are a good

candidate, it is important to show you are the best candidate. That is very important in the nomination cycle when a lot of the candidates maintain similar stances.

Overall, the media is intended to serve as the general public's window into the election. Both free media and paid media are supposed to help voters know more about the candidates and make an informed vote. However, there are a few unintended roles the media has found itself fulfilling. Media itself is huge and modern politics are deeply embedded in our all-access culture. This has changed the way candidates strategize successfully. Being able to use media to your advantage is necessary because they have become such an integral part of the process. The media controls the way the public sees a candidate, meaning that the candidate must know how to use all coverage (good, bad, free and paid) in a way that will help their campaign. The media has the power to strengthen and weaken a campaign.

### *The 2016 Presidential Primary*

This section will apply the themes of the nomination process discussed to the 2016 primary election. As seen, frontloading and superdelegates have emerged as notable changes that require attention when designing a campaign. Along with the media interacting with those two features, debates during this election were a crucial media spectacle. Moving forward, this paper will discuss how all of these facets had an important effect on the 2016 election and the presence of strong outsider candidates. Prior to that analysis, a brief introduction to the major candidates is required.

Being that the 2016 election season had no incumbent, the nominations for both of America's major parties were wide open. This called for an intense race on both sides. The Republican party had an overwhelming amount of candidates at seventeen. Below is a chart

listing the major players in the 2016 Republican primary and the significant dates of their campaigns.

Table 1. Republican Candidates

<b><u>NAME</u></b>	<b><u>DATE ENTERED</u></b>	<b><u>DATE EXITED</u></b>
Donald Trump	6/16/2015	N/A
John Kasich	7/21/2015	5/4/2016
Ted Cruz	3/23/2015	5/3/2016
Marco Rubio	4/13/2015	3/15/2016
Ben Carson	5/3/2015	3/15/2016
Jeb Bush	6/15/2015	2/20/2016
Chris Christie	6/30/2015	2/10/2016
Carly Fiorina	5/4/2015	2/10/2016
Rand Paul	4/7/2015	2/3/2016
Mike Huckabee	5/5/2015	2/1/2016
Lindsey Graham	6/1/2015	12/21/2015
Scott Walker	7/13/2015	9/21/2015

*Source:* Bycoffe 2016

\*Only candidates receiving endorsements are shown.

The Republican primary unofficially began on March 23, 2015 when Ted Cruz announced his bid for the nomination. The other candidates announced their campaigns in the following few months, with the final announcement coming from Jim Gilmore on July 29, 2015. The Democratic race began very shortly after and despite Hillary Clinton being the clear front runner for the Democratic nomination, it was still a competition. The Democrats had a smaller number of real competitors, with only three candidates receiving primary votes and only two

receiving endorsements. Excluding Sanders and Clinton, Martin O’Malley was the only candidate to receive any votes in the Primary season.

Table 2. Democratic Candidates

<b><u>NAME</u></b>	<b><u>DATE ENTERED</u></b>	<b><u>DATE EXITED</u></b>
Hillary Clinton	4/12/2015	N/A
Bernie Sanders	4/30/2015	7/26/2015

*Source:* Bycoffee 2016

\*Only candidates receiving endorsements are shown.

Donald Trump is a real-estate developer, reality television star and author. Prior to his bid for the 2016 election, Trump had never held an elected office. He toyed with the idea of voting from 1985 until he declared in 2015. He came into the political spotlight in 2011 when he began to question if Barack Obama was a citizen of the United States. When Trump initially declared that he would be running for President, he was mocked. His legitimacy as a presidential candidate was questioned, but his outsider status coupled with his massive amounts of campaign funding and knowledge of the media awarded him status as a real competitor. With little political experience, Trump built his campaign on strengthening U.S. immigration laws, renegotiating or withdrawing from international trade deals, a more aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East, lowering taxes, and repealing financial and environmental regulations (“Donald Trump Presidential Campaign, 2016” 2016).

Hillary Clinton has been a constant player in the national political scene since 1991, when her husband Bill Clinton launched his presidential campaign. Clinton served as the First Lady from 1992 to 2000. She was a politically active First Lady, with her areas of interest being on children’s welfare and women’s rights. Clinton spearheaded a campaign for universal

healthcare and insurance for children, both of which were unsuccessful. In 2000, Clinton was elected as a US Senator from New York, becoming the first First Lady to hold an elected office. In Congress, she served on the Senate Armed Services Committee. There, she was able to secure significant amounts of funding for New York after the 9/11 attacks as well as supported the Iraqi invasion 2002. In 2006, Clinton won the seat again. On January 20, 2007, Clinton announced her 2008 campaign for presidency. In a hard fought battle, Clinton lost the nomination to Obama. Nearly a month later, Obama announced that Senator Clinton would serve as Secretary of State. From 2009 to 2013, she served as the highest diplomat in our nation. She faced scandal when there was an investigation launched in regards to Clinton using a personal email server to conduct business, which became a huge topic of conversation during the 2016 election. On a positive note, Hillary Clinton was the first female to receive the nomination for President of the United States. As for her political beliefs, Clinton describes herself as a “progressive who likes to get things done” (“Hillary Clinton Presidential Campaign, 2016” 2016).

Bernie Sanders is a member of the United States Senate from Vermont. As an independent (affiliated with neither party), Sanders was elected in 2006. He is a self-labeled Democratic Socialist and is a member of the Democratic Caucus. He announced his campaign for the Democratic nomination in April of 2015. Since he is not registered as a Democrat, Sanders is considered an outsider when running for the nomination. Sanders focused on economic and environmental policy at the core of his campaign. Senator Sanders ran on a platform of radical change. He believes that the rich control our country, but the power should reside in the hands of the people (“Bernie Sanders Presidential Campaign, 2016” 2016).

### *Candidates and The Media: Controlling Their Image*

As mentioned, there are two camps of media coverage when it comes to elections. Paid media allows the voters to control the information being spread while free media is at the discretion of the press. Regardless, candidates sought to control their image as much as possible. Throughout his campaign, Trump was not a favorite among the different media outlets. Of the top 100 newspapers, only 2 endorsed Trump (Sillito 2016). Over 200 papers supported Clinton while merely 20 supported Trump (Sillito 2016). Considering the media controls most of the candidate's perception, it would be imagined this would be harmful to his campaign. Donald Trump, however, utilized the media to his advantage. His blatant disregard for norms and willingness to speak his mind brought a lot of attention his way, most of which was negative. Trump was able to establish a narrative that the news was one-sided in favor of Clinton and sought to paint him in a bad light. He attempted to invalidate the credibility of the news. How was this beneficial? Trump knew that he would not be able to change the image that already preceded his bid for President. He was a raunchy, inappropriate, reality star and businessman who had been in the public eye forever. Recognition was not an issue, albeit negative. Trump spun that negative attention into a campaign platform. Not only was he getting a lot of coverage, he was able to turn the negative energy into another reason to vote him into office.

Another way in which media can be controlled by the candidate is through social networking sites. In more recent elections, social media has become an increasingly important outlet for voters. They are able to hear from the candidates directly and promptly, alleviating the rush for official press releases. In 2016, social media played a huge role in the primary process. In January 2016, 44% of voting adults reported gaining some form of knowledge about the



election from social media in the last week (“2016 Presidential Candidates Differ in Their Use of Social Media to Connect with the Public.” 2016). Despite utilizing the same resources, candidates differed in their use of social media. Pew Research Center “2016 Presidential Candidates Differ in Their Use of Social Media to Connect with the Public.” 2016) ran an analysis of the three campaigns and their use of social media over a three week period. Between May 11 and May 31, all three candidates posted about the same amount of times but on different topics and with a wide range of interaction on their posts (“2016 Presidential Candidates Differ in Their Use of Social Media to Connect with the Public.” 2016). During this time, Clinton and Sanders were still engaged in their primary election while Trump had all but officially captured the nomination. The most important aspect of this research was that Clinton and Trump largely engaged with each other (“2016 Presidential Candidates Differ in Their Use of Social Media to Connect with the Public.” 2016). This essentially edged Bernie Sanders out of the race. With competitors barely acknowledging him, it proved that Sanders’ bid for presidency had concluded. If the average voter is engaging in the social media political scene, it would be hard for them to see Sanders as a real competitor in the race. At that point, a lot of the power Sanders had diminished. Further, since Trump was the presumed nominee, it was a brilliant move on Clinton’s part to engage directly. She had to remove Sanders from the equation in order to isolate him from the competition. This instills the notion that because Trump, as the presumed Republican nominee, was only focused on her, she was the presumed Democratic nominee. In these important last few weeks of the primary season, both candidates had essentially claimed their victory.

*Frontloading, Iowa, New Hampshire & The Media*

As seen above, all of the campaigns started nearly a year before the general election was set to be held and about seven months prior to the Iowa Caucus. This period of time is often labeled the “invisible primary” as individuals aim to establish a campaign that can win (Yglesias 2016). In order to be successful, these candidates must begin their campaigns earlier in order to be successful. Why is this the case? Frontloading. The beginning of the primary season is stacked with several primary elections because states who vote earlier have more of an effect on who gets the nomination. This gives power to New Hampshire and Iowa. Because of their value, the media surrounding these primaries is pivotal to the perceived success of the candidate.

Iowa in 2016 continued to play a vital role on both sides of the aisle. Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders were the two important characters. It was well known that Clinton was expected to win in Iowa. Sanders, who was really an Independent running as a Democrat, was expected to be blown out of the water by Clinton (Karni and Debenedetti 2016). Despite winning, Clinton did not perform exactly as anticipated. She had planned to use Iowa as a strong foundation for the rest of her campaign; she wanted to use it as an opportunity to build a strong rapport as a political candidate. She only won by .3% (NPR 2016), which labeled her as a weak candidate. If a 74 year-old socialist had nearly beat her in the primary, how would she fare in a general election? This would, however, prove that Clinton and her campaign had a long way to go. This was reminiscent of her 2008 bid in Iowa, which resulted in a loss of the nomination. In theory, she would have to work harder to ensure the nomination. For Sanders, it proved that he had the capacity to be real competition. This was a huge first step for both of the candidates.

Moving forward to the New Hampshire primary election, the Democratic party was seeing some real competition. Clinton was already in a weak position heading into the next primary, which happened to be in a border state of Sanders' home state of Vermont. Typically, states and regions will vote in favor of their local candidate. This was noted going into the New Hampshire primary and it was acknowledged that Clinton was not likely to be victorious in the state. Again, however, her challenger was Sanders, who had only recently joined the Democratic party and was a true Independent. It was expected that Hillary could use her New Hampshire performance as a step forward, with a potential moral victory (Karni and Debenedetti 2016). As mentioned, it isn't always about winning the delegates of these small states, but rather proving you can compete as a real candidate. However, the results did not prove her success by any means. According to NPR's statistics, Sanders thumped Clinton with a 22.3% victory (NPR 2016). The wide gap indicated much more than a home field advantage for Sanders. It was also too large for Clinton to claim any sort of moral victory. Quite frankly, Clinton got beat fair and square.

The results from these two primaries and the media surrounding their events proved Bernie Sanders to be a viable competitor and raised questions about Hillary Clinton's strength as a campaigner. After New Hampshire was called, it was clear that Sanders was running a fantastic campaign. That was surprising since he was not even a registered member of the party. There was a lot of fear for the Clinton camp going into Nevada. Even after these first two primaries, which allocated a miniscule amount of delegates, Clinton was a questionable performer. As early as February 10, just over a week into the primary season, she was facing time restraint. If her campaign could not prove to be successful in Nevada on February 20 or South Carolina on

February 27, it would be a disaster. This was not because all of these states held such massive amounts of power in terms of delegates. It was not because they were big states. It was because of their timing in the process and the media attention surrounding them. The media is able to control, for the most part, how the public sees the candidate and perceives their wins and losses. Perception is key and it is what allowed Sanders to be a strong competitor in 2016 to what was a seemingly unattested Democratic ticket.

How about the Republicans? Things were not definitive on this side either. The Republican field was originally muddled by 17 candidates, with a few dropping out prior to the start of the official primary season. Going into Iowa, it was through what four Republican candidates- Trump, Kasich, Rubio and Cruz- had the potential to win the nomination (Bialik 2016). Back in December, Cruz had slipped in the Iowa polling and had given the lead to Trump. Still, there was no clear-cut winner and no true favorite. There was a massive turn out and Senator Cruz won 27.6% of the vote. Trump came in second with 24.3% and Marco Rubio, a close third, maintained a 23.1% of the vote (NPR 2016). Overall, this was not a detrimental turnout for any of the three. Trump, despite leading the polls but emerging with a loss, did not get crushed and Cruz remained a viable candidate. Donald Trump argued this as a moral victory, stating that when announced his candidacy, people told him not to bother going to Iowa, that he would not make it into the top ten (Eilperin and Nakamura 2016). In his eyes, he had already surpassed the expectations of his campaign. The same went for Marco Rubio, who, as mentioned, was a surprising close third. For Ted Cruz, Iowa served as a statement to the American people that his organization could compete with Donald Trump's massive campaign. Overall, these three major players left Iowa in a similar if not better place compared to

beforehand. However, Jeb Bush, a candidate with familial history in the White House, was sent to the back of the pack. When he announced his campaign, it was presumed that his political power would allow him to be at the top of the fight. He gave up early in Iowa and focused on New Hampshire. This was a huge hit to his campaign and would set him up for failure in the future.

Going into New Hampshire, Trump, Cruz and Rubio seemed to dominate the top of the competition. With such a large pool and so early in the calendar, other candidates remained hopeful to break their way into the lead. Trump, however, showed a dominant performance, winning 53.3% of the vote. John Kasich broke into the top three, coming in second place with 15.8%. Cruz took a hard hit and received only 11.7% of the vote (NPR 2016). This was declared as Trump's first overwhelming victory. In a defining moment, Trump outperformed his opponents extensively. Again, despite not being an exorbitant amount of votes, New Hampshire solidified Trump as the frontrunner. Once a mockery of the party and a candidate who was brushed off by the establishment, Donald Trump was established as the man to beat as early as February 9. As previously mentioned, Jeb Bush was an expected frontrunner who was underperforming. Again, he did not place in the top three. After these first two primaries, only six of the 17 candidates remained: Donald Trump, John Kasich, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson and Jeb Bush. It took just over a week for the field to dwindle dramatically. After Nevada, Bush also dropped out. If a candidate cannot make a name for themselves early on, they are forced to suspend their campaign. This is why these primaries are so valuable. Again, perception is key. Exiting these primaries, Donald Trump had a strong lead.

What the media takes away from these events is critical to the primary process, as they are the ones reporting to the voters. Their perception is often the only view we are given. Emerging from these early primaries, Donald Trump was allocated a majority of media attention, with a great increase in positive leaning coverage. During the primary season, these journalists base their stories around the positions of the candidates in the race. Candidates get labeled as “front-runners” or “trailing” when numbers may not overwhelmingly support these notions. This can be seen explicitly in the difference between Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz’s coverage differences. Cruz and Rubio were on the same track early in the race. While they garnered the same support, Cruz had emerged the winner in Iowa, giving him a week’s worth of leading press. However, prior to the Iowa caucus, Rubio had been dubbed the Republican Frontrunner. That label combined with a loss, albeit small, painted a picture of Rubio as a candidate who was trailing. Being that he did not win in the early two elections, his image was too poor to overcome. For the Republicans in 2016, Rubio would constantly be seen as trailing. Overall, the psychological impact that the press’ stories have is more important than the numbers themselves. This points to the notion that campaign presence takes precedence over results. For Republicans, Trump was doing better than expected, giving him a positive storyline, while Clinton was not performing up to expectation, which negatively impacted her image.

### *Superdelegates and the Media*

As previously mentioned, superdelegates did not have an overwhelming effect on the primary election process until 2016. Superdelegates are by all means an extension of power by party elites, which was certainly a push back against democratization. So how did this affect 2016? It was no secret that Clinton had the support of the Democratic party. Sanders himself was

not even truly a Democrat but seemed to have a strong chance to win the Democratic nomination. However, the Democratic party would not let that happen. Let's take a look at New Hampshire. At the polls, Sanders demolished Clinton. Sanders received 60.4% of the polling votes with about 150,000 and Clinton received 38% with about 95,000. On the other hand, all six of the state's superdelegates pledged their allegiance to Clinton, which meant both candidates received 15 delegates from the state (Stein 2016). Sanders' campaign was quick to comment on the value of superdelegates and how their support was required to win the nomination.

Throughout the primary process, it was the general consensus that Hillary Clinton would not be able to notch the nomination simply with pledged delegates and would require the assistance of unpledged delegates. However, it is important to note that Clinton was outperforming Sanders at the ballot box. Overall, Clinton received more pledged and unpledged delegates than Sanders. By the numbers, the superdelegates did not swing the vote in favor of Clinton.

In the media, however, it was clear that the Democratic Party did not support Sanders. It was no surprise, since the closest tie Sanders had to the party was during caucuses as a Senator and he regularly spoke poorly of the Democratic party itself. However, it is worth noting that the support of superdelegates, or party representatives, can be important players in the media. It was as early as June 6 that major media outlets declared Clinton the winner. This was prior to seven Democratic primaries and caucuses, including the largest slate of delegates from California. Again, Clinton did not have enough unpledged delegates to make this call, and this was the assumption of the media that the superdelegates would be supporting Clinton. This was certainly odd because the superdelegates do not pledge until the Democratic National Convention. In this instance, and the same with Barack Obama in 2008, the party's superdelegates voted in line with

the general population (Stein 2016). Would that be the case if Bernie Sanders was in the lead? It was clear that the party was not fond of Sanders securing the nomination, as he was performing well in all other aspects. It was noticed in 2016 that these superdelegates could still have a strong presence, depending on the situation. This was obvious and caused a change in post-2016 convention rules.

### *Debates and the Media*

The 2016 presidential primary race was unique in many ways. One of the most important factors in this process was the primary debates and their news coverage. These debates are televised and seek to clearly explain politicians' policies to voters. The debates in 2016 set records for audience size on both sides of the aisle, but the Republicans really drew a huge crowd. The debate coverage focused less on the policies and stances discussed and more on the "winner" of the debates. Again, this was used as a tactic to measure the candidates against each other, making everything a horse race. However, in a system that has no quantitative point system, these results are subjective. Similar to Primary Election results, many candidates are able to claim both moral victories and troubling defeats. The following analysis discusses the results of each debate based upon polls conducted by Ballotpedia.org. An anonymous survey was sent to those labeled as "Republican Insiders" and "Democratic Insiders". They were asked to note who they thought was the biggest loser, the biggest winner and to decide how much each candidate helped or hurt themselves with their performance.

Table 3. Debate 1

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
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8/6/2015	R	Main: Top 10 Candidates in Recent Polling, Secondary: All Others	Donald Trump, Jeb Bush, Scott Walker, Mike Huckabee, Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, Chris Christie, John Kasich	Rick Santorum, Bobby Jindal, Carly Fiorina, Lindsey Graham, George Pataki, Jim Gilmore	Marco Rubio
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*Source:* Barnes 2015d

Senator Marco Rubio was dubbed the winner of this debate by many Republican Party insiders. Rubio was considered to be in charge of the debate most of the time, offering intelligent insight and quick responses. Due to the subjectivity of these results, it is important to accept other honorable mentions. Both Kasich and Christie, the final candidates to meet the requirements of the debate, have strong showings as well. John Kasich had been in the background for much of the election prior to the debate, but analysts considered this to be a breakthrough event for him. Chris Christie was composed for much of the evening, except for an exchange with Rand Paul where he defended the use of cellphone surveillance to track terrorists. All these years after 9/11, tracing terrorists remains more important than security to many individuals. Jeb Bush is recognized as the most qualified candidate but is seen as boring with a lack of interaction with the audience. As for the biggest losers, many of those responding to the poll acknowledged that they were disappointed with Trump's performance. Much of their negativity stemmed from the fact that Trump stated early on in the debate that he would not rule out running as an Independent if he did not win the nomination. For most, this remark was selfish, placing himself over the party. Rand Paul racked up votes as a loser as well. His stark libertarian agenda set him apart from the GOP and their agenda. Analysts noted that both Trump and Paul would need to

prove themselves as an insurgent candidate in later primaries and debates in order to be successful. As for the secondary, “happy hour” debate, Carly Fiorina stuck out as the winner.

Some expressed that she deserved a spot on the main stage.

Table 4. Debate 2

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
9/16/2015	R	Main: Top 10 Candidates in Recent Polling, Secondary: Rest with an average of at least 1% in three recent polls	Donald Trump, Ben Carson, Jeb Bush, Ted Cruz, Scott Walker, Marco Rubio, Carly Fiorina, Mike Huckabee, Rand Paul, John Kasich, Chris Christie,	Rick Santorum, Bobby Jindal, George Pataki, Lindsey Graham	Carly Fiorina

*Source:* Barnes 2015c

In this debate, Fiorina made her way to the main debate stage and was labeled as the winner by 49% of Republican insiders. She was described as a strong outsider candidate who was in control of the facts. She was also able to land a few punches on Trump, something others were not able to do in the first debate. Again, Bush was touted as the most experienced and qualified candidate and Rubio stood strong. Kasich did not hurt his campaign, but he did not better it. He failed to show his differences from Trump and pull himself out from his shadow. Once again, Trump's performance was poorly received. Insiders noted, however, that Trump would likely not lose ground. For Trump, his camp would likely stay loyal, as anyone who did not like him would not be persuaded by any sort of debate performance. Despite a loss in the first two debates, Trump's numbers were stagnant while some others gained ground. The widespread popularity of candidates barred any huge second-place surges.

Table 5. Debate 3

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
10/13/2015	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Martin O'Malley, Jim Webb, Lincoln Chafee	N/A	Hillary Clinton

Source: Barnes 2015b

Hillary Clinton was overwhelmingly accepted as the winner of the first Democratic debate. As a front runner, she had the most to lose, but wound up earning the title with a strong performance. For many, there was no competition. Insiders felt that compared to the other candidates, Clinton was the only one suitable for the nomination. She was not truly tested by her competitors. As for the issues, she was the most confident candidate as well as the most knowledgeable. Her time as Secretary of State had certainly benefited her preparedness. As for challenger Bernie Sanders, it was widely felt that he did not really “lose” the debate. While outshined by Clinton, Sanders was able to establish credibility that Clinton already had. That is, he was able to gain ground as a real competitor, but refused to go after Clinton aggressively. While not a true victory, Sanders could have a strong argument for a moral victory. This was not unanimous, as some felt that Sanders was weak and uncoordinated.

Table 6. Debate 4

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
10/28/2015	R	Main: All candidates averaging at least 2.5% in CNBC-recognized recent national polls, Secondary: Remaining candidates averaging at least 1%	Donald Trump, Ben Carson, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, Jeb Bush, Carly Fiorina, John Kasich, Rand Paul	Chris Christie, Mike Huckabee, Bobby Jindal, Rick Santorum	Marco Rubio

*Source:* Barnes 2015a

Once again, Marco Rubio was voted the winner by many. Rubio was poised and communicative, according to republican insiders. He was effective in his rhetoric and argued well, which would be necessary against Clinton in general election debates. For all intents and purposes, it seemed like Rubio was the best debater the Republicans had. He utilized attacks to promote his views, a tactic that would prove beneficial. Cruz and Christie also received praise, with insiders saying they make themselves present and increase their credibility. Jeb Bush received the most votes for a losing performance. Again, he faded into the background. His stage presence did not properly represent his extensive resume. To some, it seemed like Bush lacked passion, which is a huge blow to any campaign. Trump and Carson, the two frontrunners in polls, continued with the same uneven performance. Paul continued to remove himself from the GOP establishment, making it difficult for him to remain in the race.

Table 7. Debate 5

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
11/10/2015	R	N/A	Donald Trump, Ben Carson, Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, Jeb Bush, Carly Fiorina, John Kasich, Rand Paul	Chris Christie, Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, Bobby Jindal	Marco Rubio

*Source:* Barnes 2015f

Marco Rubio was listed as the winner by most of the Republican insiders. Donald Trump was strong in his stance on immigration, proving to be a candidate with republican ideals in some aspects. Ted Cruz also received votes for first place, as he was considered to be building a strong

foundation for a scenario in which Carson or Trump faltered, leaving the GOP following they had built to him. Overall, Kasich was considered to be the biggest loser. He was irritating and condescending. Even when his points were valid, his tone was demanding and annoying. His content did not falter but his presentation did.

Table 8. Debate 6

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
11/14/2015	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Martin O'Malley	N/A	N/A

No insiders poll.

Table 9. Debate 7

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
12/15/2015	R	Main: All Candidates with a recent polling average of at least 3.5% nationally, 4% in Iowa or 4% in New Hampshire, Secondary: Remaining reaching 1% in four separate national, Iowa or New Hampshire polls	Donald Trump, Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, Carly Fiorina, Chris Christie, John Kasich, Rand Paul	Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, Lindsey Graham, George Pataki	Marco Rubio

Source: Barnes 2015e

While 31% named Rubio the winner, 21% called for Bush and Christie, respectively. For Bush, this was the breakout performance that was expected of him. Rubio was noted as confident without being cocky, Christie was dubbed tough without seeming shrill and Bush was finally seen as a real competitor. Some questioned if it was too late for Bush to have made a solid impact. While Republicans thought Trump delivered poorly, Democrats who answered the polls

gave the nod to Trump. As a frontrunner, he experienced no major stumbles in the debate and quite a few effective exchanges with other candidates. The individual with the most votes as the “loser” was Ben Carson, who was deemed a great man but not a great leader. Overall, Carson was falling out of the running. Those who were disappointed with Trump’s performance cited his lack of detail as their main issue. For them, he focused too much on broad strokes within policy and never offered enough specifics, leading to questions regarding his knowledge of the material.

Table 10. Debate 8

Date	Party	Who’s In	Main	Secondary	Winner
12/19/2015	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Martin O’Malley	N/A	N/A

No Insiders Poll.

Table 11. Debate 9

Date	Party	Who’s In	Main	Secondary	Winner
1/14/2016	R	Main: Top Six candidates in national polls plus any candidate in the top 5 in Iowa or New Hampshire, Secondary: Remaining Candidates	Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson, Chris Christie, Jen Bush, John Kasich	Carly Fiorina, Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, Rand Paul*	Marco Rubio

\*Did not attend.

*Source:* Barnes 2016h

For those who answered the survey, Marco Rubio once again secured the win (41%).

Surprisingly, Jeb Bush was voted second (19%) and Donald Trump was a favorable third (16%)

The elites who usually argue poor performance from Trump gave him much better reviews in the

first debate in the new calendar year. Rubio showed up aggressive and ready to engage in battle, which was obvious in his exchanges with Trump. For some, he was too overzealous. Overall, he remained the top debater within the group. Despite Trump not winning the majority, many thought his performance helped his campaign overall. Rubio, Cruz, Christie and Bush all were thought to have put on a helpful performance as well. Carson, once again, was not greeted with positive reviews. He continued to shrink in the limelight. Both Fiorina and Paul were removed from the main stage for Carson to be there, which frustrated many. Paul did not participate in the secondary event.

Table 12. Debate 10

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
1/17/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Martin O'Malley	N/A	Hillary Clinton

*Source:* Barnes 2016a

Hillary Clinton's performance at the first democratic debate in the new year landed her at the top. Sanders did not have a weak night, but his performance was not enough to ward off Clinton's sheer experience and knowledge. As a progressive candidate, Sanders took hits on some hot topic issues but was able to hit back on others. It was much of a give and take, but many felt he handled the situation well. This debate and its reactions brought about a core issue within judging: if a frontrunner emerges from the debate having suffered no major fallbacks, they are often perceived as the winner. Not only does a trailing candidate have to perform well to be deemed the winner, but the leading candidate must perform poorly. Once again, perception is

key. Moral victories have the opportunity to count for more than a subjective victory. O'Malley was so far behind in the polls that he was not even a major player in the debate.

Table 13. Debate 11

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
1/28/2016	R	Main: Top Six Candidates national polls plus anyone in top five for Iowa or New Hampshire, Secondary: Remaining candidates with at least 1% in a recent national poll	Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson, Jeb Bush, Chris Christie, John Kasich, Rand Paul, Donald Trump*	Carly Fiorina, Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, Jim Gilmore	N/A

\*Did not attend.

No Insiders Poll.

Table 14. Debate 12

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
2/4/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders	N/A	N/A

No Insiders Poll.

Table 15. Debate 13

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
2/6/2016	R	Top Three Finishers in Iowa, plus anyone in top six in recent New Hampshire or national poll averages	Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson, Jeb Bush, Chris Christie, John	N/A	N/A



			Kasich		
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No Insiders Poll.

Table 16. Debate 14

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
2/11/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders	N/A	Hillary Clinton

*Source:* Barnes 2016g

After a tough loss in the New Hampshire primary, Clinton knew she needed a commanding performance. While more than 60% boasted Clinton as the winner, just under 20% voted for Sanders or a draw, respectively. Again, the former Secretary of State's knowledge and command of the issues are what sets her apart. Sanders is able to convey his progressive, inspirational agenda very well. However, Clinton knows what it takes and was able to sow seeds of doubt regarding his plans. Clinton clung to the idea that she was the more moderate candidate, giving her a greater chance of electability. In the Democratic race, it was not necessarily the capabilities of the candidate, but their stark differences on key political issues that separated them.

Table 17. Debate 15

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
2/13/2016	R	N/A	Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, Ben Carson, John Kasich	N/A	Marco Rubio

*Source:* Barnes 2016d

Once again, party insiders responding to the poll decided that Rubio was the winner. Closely behind Rubio were Bush and Kasich. Bush was able to engage with Trump in an effective manner, using Trump's short temper for his own personal gain. This was huge for Bush, as it showed he had the intensity viewers have been searching for. The biggest losers were noted to be Trump, Cruz and Carson. Trump's demeanor was volatile, as he engaged in several personal attacks against candidates. Some labeled him as "unhinged", which was thought to hurt his campaign. For others, he continued to be an entertainment spectacle. Again, he strays away from talking policy specifics and leans toward debating over character, past actions and personal matters. This was not a surprise. As previously mentioned, those who already supported Trump were aware of his tendencies. He held a strong lead in the South Carolina polls prior to the debate. A frontrunner is successful as long as they are not badly beaten.

Table 18. Debate 16

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
2/25/2016	R	N/A	Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, John Kasich, Ben Carson	N/A	John Kasich

*Source:* Barnes 2016e

With a smaller debate stage, choosing a clear winner is not an easy feat. In the polls, there was no large gap between the percentages of votes each candidate got for first place. Rubio's praise was largely centered around his aggressive quips with Trump, showing that he was likely the only one who could handle Trump. Kasich received votes for being quick on his feet and making

memorable statements but both he and Cruz largely fell to the background during the debate. Carson barely participated. As for Trump, there is something to be said for being the center of everyone's attention. Rubio's good performance came directly from going after Trump. Trump, despite not winning debates, was still solidified as the front runner. He was leading the GOP and everyone was aware. Whether Trump was attacking or being attacked, he was consistently involved. Rubio's attacks gave him the opportunity to defend himself, which he did well. For the most part, he did not take any detrimental hits.

Table 19. Debate 17

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
3/3/2016	R	N/A	Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, John Kasich	N/A	John Kasich

*Source:* Barnes 2016c

Senators Cruz and Rubio spent a majority of the night criticizing Trump. To some, this interaction between these three candidates was nothing short of a disaster. John Kasich received his first collective positive reviews for his performance, in which he refrained from mudslinging and focused on the issues. He was labeled the winner, but it was likely too late for him to do any real damage to Trump's lead. He turned the corner too late. Once again, Trump was able to hold his own. This was another debate that Trump survived without a major hitch, which is another moral victory. While Rubio has taken on the job of taking Trump down, he has found himself engaging in debate rhetoric that would not be normally expected of him. An insider noted that

while attempting to hurt Trump, he may be hurting himself. Playing Trump's game might not have been Rubio's most strategic move.

Table 20. Debate 18

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
3/6/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders	N/A	N/A

No Insiders Poll.

Table 21. Debate 19

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
3/9/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders	N/A	Hillary Clinton

*Source:* Barnes 2016i

Clinton emerged victorious, but not in the same way she had been. Both votes for Sanders and votes for a draw were higher than at the previous debate. A lot of replies included that Clinton faced tougher scrutiny from moderators and fielded questions that undercut her character. From Benghazi to indictments, it was a tough night for HRC. Her dominance and ability to respond quickly and diminished in this encounter while Sanders was able to settle in. Her worst debate and his best managed to coincide. Clinton, however, did not face a terrible loss. As the frontrunner who still maintained composure and control, it is easy to call it yet another moral

victory. It was, however, obvious that after a win in Michigan and a strong performance, Sanders would not be quick to concede.

Table 22. Debate 20

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
3/10/2016	R	N/A	Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, John Kasich	N/A	Marco Rubio

*Source:* Barnes 2016f

Rubio returned to his previous professional manner in this debate and secured the win. Trump was a strong second, also leaning away from insults and bickering this time around. Some noted that he acted like a professional candidate in this debate. Perhaps this had to do with his continued winning in the actual primary elections. Trump largely controls the tone of the debate and he kept this one calm. This debate lacked a lot of the fire that had been previously seen, allowing Cruz and Kasich to be removed from the scene. After an uneventful conversation, Rubio and Trump walk away with most of the votes for first place but it would require a lot more real votes in the primaries for his campaign to be reinvigorated.

Table 23. Debate 21

<b>Date</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Who's In</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Winner</b>
3/21/2016	R	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Trump made the announcement on March 16, citing the fact that he felt they had done enough debates throughout the process. Kasich's team subsequently announced that he would only attend if Trump reversed his decision. This debate was cancelled.

Table 24. Debate 22

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
4/14/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders	N/A	Hillary Clinton

*Source:* Barnes 2016b

HRC found herself back at the top of the debate. This time, she was more confident and seemed presidential. Many felt as though Clinton was able to speak to and engage with those at home while Sanders only commanded the crowd that was present. Overall, it was suggested that Sanders was abrasive, repetitive and flustered with some breakthrough moments. He would need an overwhelming win to truly have beat Clinton at this point in the primary season.

Table 25. Debate 23

Date	Party	Who's In	Main	Secondary	Winner
6/6/2016	D	N/A	Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders	N/A	N/A

No iInsiders Poll.

### *The Effect of These Debates*

As seen, these debates are largely used to connect the candidates with each other and voters. How much value do they truly have? For the most part, going into the primaries voters are familiar with major candidates. Look at Donald Trump for example. By the time the debate season was in full swing, he had already solidified his base. He did not need to win these debates. All that was necessary was for him to hold his own. Donald Trump, an outsider, was able to remain the frontrunner despite not winning a single debate. He was a constant target for

mudslinging and consistently instigated others. How did this help him become the nominee? First of all, he went in as an established individual. Unlike Ben Carson or Carly Fiorina, he did not have to introduce himself. He also had experience in the spotlight, giving him an upper hand. Being a political outsider meant that he did not have the depth of knowledge other candidates did, causing him to speak in broad strokes and avoid details. Trump was able to put on a show. Overall, he kept audiences engaged and focused on him. He made himself the center of the debates, which is largely attributed to his big personality. He knew he did not need to “win” the debates. He knew that he just had to be present and consistent with his strategies. He needed to play to his base and that is what he did.

As for Sanders, it seemed that his status as an outsider hurt him at the debates. While his dreams for change were progressive and ambitious, it was easy to question their ability to be fulfilled. Those far-left aspirations made him recognizable and caused people to become interested in his platform. He was a strong speaker with solid experience. However, he was not able to overcome Clinton’s frontrunner status and the ease that came with it. He had to work hard to beat her at a debate, but moral victory was always easy for her to achieve. As an outsider, that was tough for him to overcome but he did not back down easily. Sanders held his own with a veteran Candidate in a party that he was not even registered for.

Again, perception is key in primary elections. While numbers matter at the end of the day, understanding that where a candidate is relative to other candidates is just as important. The timing of these debates is similar to the effect of frontloading. If a candidate fails early and often, it will be very difficult for them to overcome that injury. If a candidate succeeds early and often, they will be establishing a strong foundation for their campaign. These debates begin early in the

process, some even being held in the calendar year prior to the election. They serve as an opportunity for candidates who may have been on the outside, like Trump and Sanders, to break their way in. Further, they also have a lot of subjective importance. Similar to primaries, the media utilizes these debates as a horse race. It is not always about a win or a loss, but more so about how your performance is received. Donald Trump was not known for winning debates. He was known, however, for constantly being involved. He was often the center of attention and was able to reveal things about other candidates that would damage their campaign. What is interesting about Donald Trump is that his early poor press revealed much of his questionable credibility and previous actions. There was not much secrecy when it came to who Trump was as a person and as a politician. For Trump, he was a public figure everyone knew about. His most harmful information was already out there. His supporters were already aware of who he was.

As for Bernie Sanders, these debates and their coverage proved that he could be a candidate within the Democratic party. He was able to take on Hillary Clinton in a long, hard fought campaign. As a complete outsider, that was impressive. With Clinton's previous experience and reputation, Sanders should have been no match. His ability to be a true competitor for Clinton is what gave his campaign a push. Even when he did not win a debate, he was typically never completely out of the question. He was able to compete at all times and the media understood that. That is how he was portrayed.

This entire section points to the central theme of this paper. Prior knowledge and experience are not imperative for success in a primary presidential campaign. Understanding the process and using its components to your advantage are what is required for success. Knowing that winning the debates was not important but remaining in the fight kept Trump and Sanders in



the race. Knowing that all media can be good media is important. These debates showed these notions in play.

### *2016 Primary Turnout By the Numbers*

In 2008, the primary turnout reached record highs. Strong participation did not waver in 2016, with 28.5% of eligible voters participating in the nomination process. Record turnout in the Republican side drove these numbers, which briefly seemed like they would break the 2008 record. For Republicans, the turnout stood at 14.8%, as compared to 11% in 2008 and 9.8% in 2012 (Desilver 2016). However, the turnout was higher until Trump won the May 3 Indiana primary. According to Pew (Desilver 2016), the first 29 Republican primary events, up to and including Indiana, had a turnout rate of about 16%. Once Trump had essentially secured the nomination, participation fell to 8.4%. Democrats held the attention of voters for longer. Through the first 31 contests, their turnout rate hovered at 14.4%. That number only fell to 14.1% for their end of season June 7th primaries. These numbers still fell behind the record 19.5% participation in 2008 (Desilver 2016).

### *Conclusion: Consequences for Democracy*

The nomination process has been scrutinized during the last few decades. As seen, this process is pivotal in the Presidential election and cannot go without proper examination. Through several commissions, the process has been adjusted to bring more power to the general population while still leaving parties and states some control. Two major facets subsequent to these changes have been the introduction of frontloading and superdelegates. Combined with revolutionary media coverage and debates, these ideas have made the process starkly different

than it was when the quest for adjustments was first begun. Frontloading and superdelegates are foundationally undemocratic processes. Frontloading reduces the impact of votes while superdelegates give powers back to the party. Their ability to create a system where outsiders are successful lies within strategy. With proper understanding of the system and a well established plan, successful candidates are able to use these parts of the system to their advantage.

As seen with Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in 2016, having strong ties to the party is not a requirement for success. While Trump was not a prime example of a Republican, he was able to win the nomination. His strategy relied on the fact that he was not a part of the Republican party's agenda. He had never held an elected office. He was a businessman turned reality television star whose campaign knew what was required to be successful. Trump knew how to use the media and their power to his advantage-whether it was with primary results, superdelegates, or debates. Donald Trump was able to use the foundations of the primary election in an effective manner, leading him to the nomination of a party which his ideas were not completely aligned with. As for Bernie Sanders, he was in a similar situation. Not even a member of the Democratic party, Sanders gave one of the most powerful Democrats, Hillary Clinton, a close primary competition. His progressive, far-left agenda set him apart from his opponent in both a positive and negative manner. He originally was thought to be no match for Clinton, but he was able to win the first Primary Election. His early wins, ability to hold his own against Clinton in debates and positive media coverage during his surprisingly successful campaign were beneficial. He was able to stay in the race longer than anticipated, showing weaknesses in HRC's campaign. Sanders knew that he needed to prove his worth during his campaign and he did exactly that. It was, however, difficult for him to overcome the power of the

Clinton name, eventually causing him to lose the nomination. His campaign, however, was full of moral victories.

2016 served as a prime example for the strength of outsider candidates. Political power is no longer relied upon to serve in an elected office. The evolution of the primary election has changed who has the ability to be nominated. Prior to the reforms, party leaders chose the nominees. Unsurprisingly, those choices were often members of their inner circles. With the new system in place, candidates do not need to be closely tied with the party. With proper strategy, it is possible for these outsiders to secure the nomination. While political parties still maintain some control, it is clear that they do not have complete power. Political outsiders invaded the two major parties in 2016, proving this to be true. The nomination process has become a more democratic venture, leaving the power to the people.

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