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# Expectations and Preferences in Presidential Nominating Campaigns

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*Survey data from the preconvention waves of the 1980 National Election Study are used to estimate the effect of expectations about who will be nominated on respondents' own preferences. The results confirm the conventional belief that bandwagons play an important role in nominating campaigns; at the same time, they suggest that the dynamics of the nominating process may be more subtle than simple bandwagon models would indicate. First, preferences are strongly and consistently projected onto expectations, making the relationship of central interest a reciprocal one. Second, the bases of candidate choice appear to change systematically with political circumstances. In close, volatile campaigns, support for bandwagon candidates (like George Bush in early 1980) is based largely on favorable expectations and on relatively general, diffuse political evaluations (e.g., "leadership"). By comparison, when expectations about the nomination are very one-sided, their impact on preferences approaches zero, and more specific, substantive political evaluations become increasingly important.*

The meteoric rise to prominence of Gary Hart is the latest in a series of object lessons concerning the importance of momentum in the contemporary presidential nominating process. Like George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, George Bush, and John Anderson before him, Hart capitalized on better-than-expected performances early in the caucus and primary season to break out of the pack, attracting remarkably broad support from an electorate that had barely recognized his name a few months earlier.

A variety of journalistic and academic observers have documented the apparent impact of momentum in recent nominating campaigns.<sup>1</sup> However, most of these accounts have focused solely on the broad dynamics of the phenomenon; few provide any evidence, or even speculation, about the political character of momentum or about the nature of the individual-level behavioral mechanisms underlying the aggregate-level

phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the wake of Hart's remarkable success, pundits and analysts found themselves groping for answers to the same kinds of questions they previously asked about Carter, Bush, and others. How did he take off? Was his momentum based mostly on support for his new ideas, on strategic calculation, or on the pure excitement of his rush to the forefront of the race? What are the implications of his success for our understanding and evaluation of the institutions we use to select our presidential nominees?

As a first step toward answering these and similar questions, I propose and test a microlevel model in which the preferences of potential voters are determined in part by their expectations about who will be nominated. A "bandwagon" effect of this sort—however rational or visceral—would account for the main features of the aggregate-level phenomenon of momentum by causing a candidate whose chances of being nominated are improving to attract increasing support, thus improving his chances still further, attracting even more support, and so on over time.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, my model provides a useful individual-level test of the importance of momentum in nominating campaigns. At the same time, my focus on the individual political behavior underlying the phenomenon of momentum makes it possible to embed the impact of expectations on preferences within a more general model of political perceptions and preferences in the preconvention period, and thus to specify more precisely than has

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<sup>1</sup>For relevant analyses of recent campaigns, see Schram (1977), Witcover (1977), Matthews (1978), Aldrich (1980), Marshall (1981), and Bartels (1983).

<sup>2</sup>A notable partial exception was provided by Shanks and Palmquist (1981).

<sup>3</sup>For a mathematical analysis of the dynamics of this process, see Aldrich (1980b).

heretofore been possible the nature and role of "bandwagons" in the nominating process.

### Data and Models

In 1980, for the first time, a CPS National Election Study provided extensive information about public preferences and expectations during a presidential nominating campaign. The first part of this multiwave survey consisted of interviews with more than 1000 respondents in late January and February 1980, after the Iowa caucuses but before the New Hampshire primary. It thus provides a useful source of information about individual attitudes and expectations during the crucial early phase of the nominating campaign. A second cross-section of similar scope conducted in April makes it possible to compare early attitudes and preferences with those prevailing well into the sequence of primaries and caucuses.

In both of these cross-sections, and for both parties, the joint distribution of expectations and preferences is strikingly consistent with the bandwagon hypothesis. Among Democrats and Independents, those who expected Carter to win the Democratic nomination were much more likely than other respondents to prefer Carter as the Democratic nominee.<sup>4</sup> In the January-February survey, 63% of those who *expected* Carter to win also *wanted* him to win, whereas only 7% of those who did not expect him to win preferred him themselves. Similarly, in the April survey, Carter was the first choice of 52% of the respondents who expected him to be nominated, but of only 9% of those who did not expect him to be nominated. Among Republicans and Independents, those who expected Reagan to win were also substantially more likely to prefer him themselves; the proportions were 42% versus 9% in January-February and 45% versus 1% in April.

These congruences between expectations and preferences are certainly consistent with the hypothesis that expectations about who will win the nomination influence the preferences of potential voters during the primary season. Indeed, these bivariate relationships between preferences and expectations are as strong or stronger than the relationships between preferences and any of the usual range of variables used to explain preferences, such as

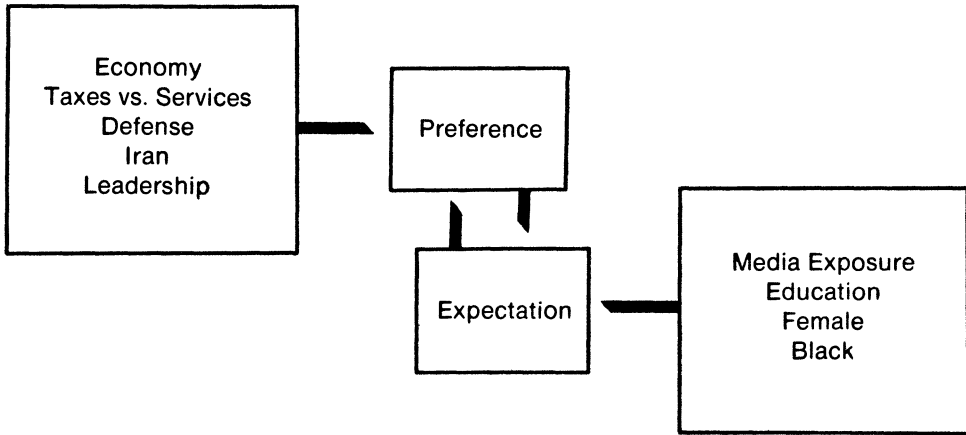
ideology, job ratings, issue positions, or personality evaluations. However, in estimating the causal impact of expectations on preferences, it is necessary to take account of an obvious alternative explanation for the relationship between the two variables: potential voters may first decide which candidate they prefer, and then project these preferences onto their expectations about the outcome of the nominating contest, using selective perception or wishful thinking to convince themselves that their favorite is doing well regardless of the real political situation. Such projection effects have previously been documented, not only for expectations about election outcomes (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954, p. 289), but also for perceived issue positions of candidates (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954, chap. 10; Markus & Converse, 1979; Page & Jones, 1979) and groups (Brady & Sniderman, 1983). These results are substantively important for the revisions they suggest in our inherited theories of political behavior. But they are also methodologically important: even if the phenomenon of projection was of no interest in its own right, we would still have to take it into account in order to estimate accurately other political relationships of interest.

In the present case, if we ignore the fact that primary season expectations are, in part, projections of the potential voters' own preferences, we are bound to overestimate the true strength of the reciprocal bandwagon effect of expectations on preferences. The only way to avoid this bias is to construct a model that explicitly incorporates the simultaneous reciprocal impacts of the bandwagon and projection effects. In the remainder of this article I develop just such a model, based on the assumptions that preferences are influenced by expectations (the bandwagon effect) and by comparisons of the competing candidates on the issues (broadly defined), and that expectations are influenced by preferences (the projection effect) and by social characteristics measuring political awareness. The causal relationship between expectations and preferences is thus allowed to work in both directions, with each of these central variables also determined in part by other variables that can be treated for present purposes as exogenous.

The specific variables included in my analysis of the 1980 data are shown in Figure 1 for Democrats and in Figure 2 for Republicans. The variables on the left side of each figure are those assumed to affect preferences, but not to affect expectations (except indirectly through preferences). The variables on the right side of each figure are those assumed to affect expectations, but not to affect preferences (except indirectly through expectations).

<sup>4</sup>Throughout this article, analyses of the Democratic campaign are based only on responses from Democratic identifiers, Independent Democrats, and "Pure" Independents. Analyses of the Republican campaign are based only on responses from Republican identifiers, Independent Republicans, and "Pure" Independents.

Figure 1. Causal Model for Expectations and Preferences: Democrats



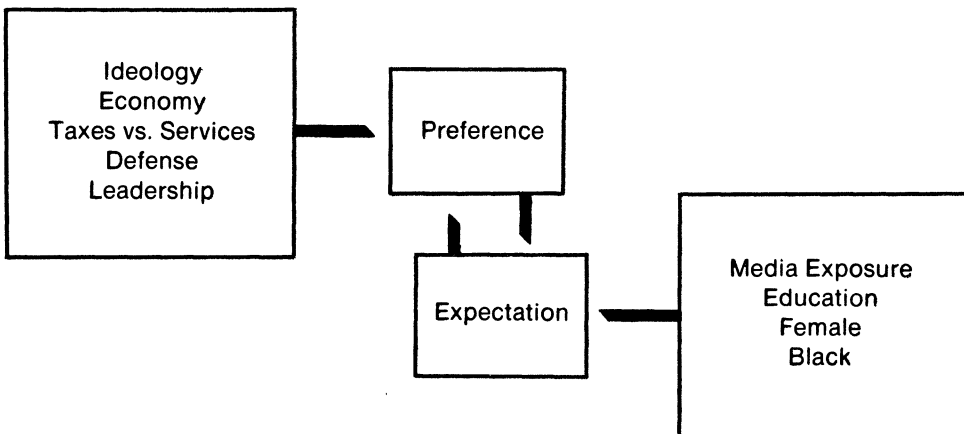
Given the relative paucity of previous theoretical or empirical analyses of preconvention preferences, the exact specification of these models must unavoidably be to some extent a matter of guesswork. Additional exogenous variables could have been included (especially on the preference side of the models); where they would not have altered the results and interpretations presented here, I have excluded them.<sup>5</sup> This par-

simonious approach seems appropriate because my goal is to investigate a specific causal relation-

<sup>5</sup>Many of the exclusions in the models estimated here are based on preliminary empirical experimentation. For example, education and race were dropped from the preference side of the model because their effects were negligible after controlling for issues, leadership, and

expectations. Several other variables (e.g., age, frequency of church attendance, attitudes about energy and the environment) were dropped from the analysis completely, because they appeared not to have distinct effects of sufficient strength to be worth retaining. On the other hand, the major argument against including a variety of the available "personality" evaluations is a theoretical one: these evaluations—when they exist at all—are unlikely to be exogenous, so that adding them to the models would complicate the analysis greatly without providing much promise of additional substantive insight.

Figure 2. Causal Model for Expectations and Preferences: Republicans



ship, rather than to construct a general explanation of political attitudes in the pre-convention period. In any event, the specifications in Figures 1 and 2 do tap the dimensions of political perception and evaluation most commonly stressed in accounts of the 1980 nominating campaigns (e.g., Harwood, 1980).

The usual method for estimating parameters in models like the ones proposed here is two-stage least squares. In this case, however, the situation is complicated by the fact that expectations and preferences are both measured as dichotomies; for example, Carter is named as the most likely nominee or not, and Bush is a respondent's first choice or not.<sup>6</sup> These dichotomous responses presumably reflect underlying continua of expectations and preferences which, though unobserved, are the real objects of analysis. In order to estimate causal relationships involving these underlying continua, I have modified the usual two-stage least squares procedure by employing nonlinear logit models in both the first and second stages of the analysis. The first stage uses exogenous variables to construct purged estimates of each respondent's position on the underlying preference and expectations continua, and the second stage estimates the parameters of the structural model relating the underlying continua to each other and to the exogenous variables.<sup>7</sup>

### Iowa to New Hampshire: Democrats

Having outlined a model of preferences and perceptions in nominating campaigns, it is now possible to return to the available data in order to estimate the magnitudes of the various causal effects posited in that model. My focus in this and the two subsequent sections will be on the determinants of expectations and preferences across a variety of campaign settings tapped by the 1980

<sup>6</sup>The expectations question reads, "Here is a list of people who are possible choices for the Democratic (Republican) Party nomination for President this year. Who on this list do you think is *most likely* to win the Democratic (Republican) nomination?" (NES V153, V178). The preference question is, "Of all the candidates on this list, who is *your* first choice for the Democratic (Republican) nomination this year?" (NES V176, V209).

<sup>7</sup>The two-stage logit procedure serves here to approximate a more coherent but far more complicated maximum likelihood procedure based on the probit assumption that the underlying continuous distribution of expectations and preferences is bivariate normal. For discussions of the relevant methodological issues see Lee (1981) and Maddala (1983, pp. 242-252). The likely practical effect of the simplification employed here is to underestimate somewhat the standard errors of the second-stage parameter estimates.

study. Although the bandwagon effect of expectations on preferences is the causal effect of central substantive interest, my results will also shed some light on the role of political issues and evaluations in the development of pre-convention preferences, and less directly on the role of the media in generating and sustaining bandwagon phenomena.

Parameter estimates reflecting the determinants of expectations and preferences for Democrats in the post-Iowa survey are shown in Table 1. The estimates in the first part of the table correspond to the model on the left side of Figure 1. They indicate that preferences for Carter as the Democratic nominee were significantly influenced by evaluations of Carter and Kennedy on a variety of issues. To facilitate comparisons across issues, all of these evaluations were scaled to range from zero to one.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the relative magnitude of the parameter estimates give a direct indication of the relative importance of different issues in determining nomination preferences. In order to interpret these magnitudes more directly, it is useful to calculate the change in the probability of preferring Carter as the Democratic nominee associated with each of the indicated second-stage logit coefficients. These changes in probability, each calculated for an idealized voter otherwise indifferent between the two candidates, are shown in the last column of Table 1.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The original survey items used to generate the issue evaluations were of three types. Evaluations of Carter's handling of Iran were derived directly from a seven-point response (NES V999). Comparative evaluations of the candidates' abilities to "solve economic problems" and "provide strong leadership" were derived from comparative ratings on four-point items (V663, V664, V690, V691, V744, V745, V789, V790). Comparative evaluations of the candidates' positions on taxes vs. services, defense spending, and (for the Republicans) overall ideology were derived from relative distances of the perceived candidate positions from respondents' own positions on a seven-point scale (V944, V947, V954, V1081, V1082, V1083, V1085, V1089, V1114, V1115, V1116, V1118, V1122). In every case, the resulting issue evaluations were scaled so that zero represents the strongest possible preference for Kennedy, 1.0 represents the strongest possible preference for Carter, and .5 represents neutral or missing values. Thus, all of the issue effects in Table 1 (and subsequent tables) are in the expected direction.

<sup>9</sup>Because the logit model posits nonlinear effects, the actual probability change associated with each variable depends on a respondent's overall probability of preferring Carter. It is customary to evaluate the change in probability for a respondent whose score on each variable equals the sample mean, but this sample-specific rule of thumb makes it impossible to compare probability changes across surveys. Given my interest in discerning an intelligible pattern in the results from four

Table 1. Determinants of Preferences and Expectations for Carter, January-February ( $N=655$ )

	Parameter Estimate	Approximate Standard Error	Change in Probability
<b>Preferences<sup>a</sup></b>			
Expectation	.375	.162	.093
Leadership	1.543	.886	.368
Economy	3.082	.753	.647
Taxes vs. services	1.906	.882	.443
Defense	1.834	.865	.429
Iran	1.226	.441	.297
Intercept	-5.535	.805	-
<b>Expectations<sup>b</sup></b>			
Preference	.661	.077	.164
Media exposure	.750	.471	.185
Education	.0559	.0377	.014
Female	-.340	.214	-.085
Black	-.704	.259	-.174
Intercept	.778	.469	-

<sup>a</sup>-2 log likelihood = 667.4; 76.8% correctly classified.

<sup>b</sup>-2 log likelihood = 567.9; 78.0% correctly classified.

The estimates in the second part of Table 1 correspond to the model on the right side of Figure 1. They indicate—not unexpectedly, given the political situation at the time of the post-Iowa survey—that highly educated Democrats and those most exposed to the news media were most likely to expect Carter to be the party's nominee. In addition, Carter was more frequently named as the expected nominee by men than by women and by whites than by blacks.<sup>10</sup>

These results are consistent with the idea that expectations are, in part, a reflection of political

awareness, at least when the political environment provides reasonably clear and consistent signals about who is likely to win. But expectations are more than just beliefs based on what people are *told* will happen; to some extent, they also reflect what people *hope* will happen. This projection effect is captured by the parameter estimate for preferences in the expectations equation. Respondents who wanted Carter to win the nomination were significantly more likely than others to expect that he would, in fact, be nominated, even after controlling for differences in the social characteristics of these two groups. A one-unit change on the underlying continuum of preference apparently produced a change of more than sixteen percentage points in a respondent's probability of expecting Carter to be nominated. More concretely, an exogenous increase of one percentage point in an undecided respondent's probability of preferring Carter apparently produced an increase of .661 percentage points in her probability of expecting Carter to win the nomination. Preferences thus appear to have been a powerful determinant of expectations during the early part of the nominating process.

By way of comparison, we can return to the first part of Table 1 to assess the reciprocal impact of expectations on preferences. The parameter estimate, .375, suggests that an exogenous increase of one percentage point in an undecided respondent's probability of expecting Carter to be nominated produced an increase of a little more than a third of a percentage point in her probability of preferring Carter as the Democratic nominee. Although only a little more than half as

separate campaign contexts, it seems preferable here to adopt a less descriptive but more consistent baseline, evaluating the change in probability for a respondent with a .5 probability of preferring Carter. Note, however, that this is precisely the respondent for whom, under the assumptions of the logit model, the change in probability associated with each variable is greatest. Thus, the changes in probability shown in this and subsequent tables should not be interpreted as average effects for each variable in the sample at hand, but as maximum potential effects for respondents at the point of greatest uncertainty.

<sup>10</sup>My measure of media exposure is a scale constructed from survey responses concerning exposure to political conversation, network television news, news magazines, newspapers, and radio news (NES V12, V22, V24, V26, V28). Education is measured by years of formal schooling (V1483). The effects of race and sex, captured by dichotomous variables for blacks and females (V1701, V1702), presumably reflect differences in exposure and attention to (mainstream) political news media which persist after controlling for education.

big as the projection effect, this bandwagon effect is big enough to have very significant political consequences. Elsewhere (Bartels, 1983, pp. 191-193) I have estimated that Carter's victory in the Iowa caucuses in 1980 increased his probability of being nominated by about 12 percentage points, and that a single week's results later in the primary season increased his probability of being nominated by as much as 20 percentage points. If these changes in probability can be translated directly into changes in subjective expectations, the results presented here suggest that Carter's primary and caucus successes may have increased his overall popular support by from four to seven percentage points in a single week.

**Iowa to New Hampshire: Republicans**

In many respects, the Republican contest in the month before the New Hampshire primary provides the most interesting political circumstances of the 1980 nominating campaign. George Bush had just scored a startling upset in the Iowa caucuses and was suddenly "the hottest property in American politics" (Cannon & Peterson, 1980, p. 137). Bush himself, in his campaign speeches, referred frequently and gleefully to "Big Mo," and not without reason: in a period of ten days, Bush gained more than 20 points in the polls, surpassing Reagan as the first choice of Republicans for their party's nomination. The first wave of the 1980 CPS National Election Study was perfectly timed to provide a detailed picture of expectations and preferences during this heady month, and thus of a bandwagon almost comparable in

magnitude (although not in duration) to Carter's in 1976 and Hart's in 1984.

What were the ingredients of Bush's sudden popularity? The logit estimates in the first half of Table 2 provide some indications. First, it is interesting to note that most of the "issues" included in my analysis had substantially smaller impacts on support for Bush among Republicans than on support for Carter among Democrats. The only exception to this pattern involves the most general (and least substantive) of the "issues"—leadership. Both the pattern and the exception suggest that Bush's support was more diffuse, and less firmly grounded in specific political perceptions, than Carter's. In this respect, the results conform to the stereotypical view of bandwagons like Bush's as being non-ideological—even, to some extent, apolitical—in character.

The other interesting difference between Bush's support and Carter's is that expectations had a much greater impact on support for Bush than on support for Carter. On the Democratic side, an exogenous increase of one percentage point in an undecided respondent's probability of expecting Carter to be nominated increased her probability of preferring Carter by about a third of a percentage point. On the Republican side, the corresponding increase in the probability of preferring Bush was more than a full percentage point—a powerful translation of expectations into preferences. It is not hard to understand how bandwagons like Bush's begin to roll when perceptions of success have such a dramatic impact on the preferences of potential voters.

**Table 2. Determinants of Preferences and Expectations for Bush, January-February (N=490)**

	Parameter Estimate	Approximate Standard Error	Change in Probability
<b>Preference<sup>a</sup></b>			
Expectation	1.176	.203	.286
Leadership	1.340	1.281	.323
Economy	-.316	1.282	-.079
Taxes vs. services	-.084	1.012	-.021
Defense	1.191	1.147	.289
Ideology	.496	1.118	.123
Intercept	-1.607	1.113	-
<b>Expectations<sup>b</sup></b>			
Preference	.632	.140	.157
Media exposure	1.178	.611	.286
Education	-.0549	.0598	-.014
Female	-.524	.236	-.130
Black	4.046	1.242	.766
Intercept	.140	1.124	-

<sup>a</sup>-2 log likelihood = 379.2; 84.1% correctly classified.

<sup>b</sup>-2 log likelihood = 469.8; 78.2% correctly classified.

Table 3. Determinants of Preferences and Expectations for Carter, April (N=620)

	Parameter Estimate	Approximate Standard Error	Change in Probability
<b>Preferences<sup>a</sup></b>			
Expectation	.087	.117	.022
Leadership	3.754	.696	.735
Economy	.462	.766	.115
Taxes vs. services	2.632	.906	.577
Defense	1.963	.811	.455
Iran	2.114	.408	.484
Intercept	-5.944	.693	-
<b>Expectations<sup>b</sup></b>			
Preference	.595	.096	.148
Media exposure	.927	.555	.228
Education	.1314	.0417	.033
Female	-.800	.279	-.197
Black	-1.194	.297	-.290
Intercept	.996	.548	-

<sup>a</sup>-2 log likelihood = 654.5; 72.6% correctly classified.

<sup>b</sup>-2 log likelihood = 407.4; 87.3% correctly classified.

Given the impact of expectations on preferences for Bush in the early phase of the 1980 campaign, it seems reasonable to inquire into the determinants of these expectations. Some evidence is provided by the results in the second half of Table 2. Three points are worthy of notice. First, the projection effect, measured by the parameter estimate for preference, is virtually identical in magnitude to the corresponding projection effects among Democrats in both the early and late primary season surveys. This similarity provides some indication of the persistence of projection as a behavioral phenomenon across a variety of political settings.

Second, media exposure seems to have played a powerful role in the development of expectations that Bush would win the Republican nomination; indeed, the estimated effect of media exposure on Republican expectations is more than 50% greater than the corresponding estimated effect of media exposure on Democratic expectations at the same point in time. It is worth recalling that Bush's objective chances of being nominated were, despite his success in Iowa, certainly no better than Carter's at this stage in the campaign. Thus, the greater impact of media exposure on expectations on the Republican side is a reflection not simply of a less ambiguous political reality, but also of the general emphasis and specific interpretations placed on that reality by the media to which potential voters were more or less heavily exposed.

A third, related, point is that education appears to have had a *negative* effect on Republicans' propensity to perceive Bush as the most likely nominee in the month after Iowa. This is the only

instance, of the four investigated here, in which media exposure and education had counteracting rather than reinforcing effects. Although the parameter estimate for education is too imprecise to provide definitive evidence, it is tempting to speculate that, in this instance, the kind of media exposure instrumental in increasing respondents' perceptions of Bush's chances was primarily *un-critical* exposure to the media's month-long fascination with Bush, his campaign, and his "Big Mo" in the wake of his Iowa victory.

#### Bandwagon and Projection Effects Later in the Primary Season

In order to test the persistence of the relationships linking expectations and preferences in nominating campaigns, I have replicated the analyses of the post-Iowa survey described above, using the separate cross-sectional survey conducted in April 1980. By that time many of the primaries and caucuses were over, and there was considerably less objective uncertainty than there had been in February that Carter and Reagan would be their parties' nominees. Given these changes in the political situation, one might expect either the bandwagon or projection effects, or both, to be less powerful in April than in February.

The results of the replication, shown in Tables 3 and 4, are in keeping with the changes in the political situation in the intervening months. On



Table 4. Determinants of Preferences and Expectations for Reagan, April (N=439)

	Parameter Estimate	Approximate Standard Error	Change in Probability
<b>Preferences<sup>a</sup></b>			
Expectation	.007	.146	.002
Leadership	.868	1.137	.214
Economy	2.136	1.067	.488
Taxes vs. services	1.019	.875	.249
Defense	2.572	.906	.567
Ideology	1.888	.816	.440
Intercept	-4.908	.798	-
<b>Expectations<sup>b</sup></b>			
Preference	.801	.196	.198
Media exposure	1.841	.568	.430
Education	.1174	.0504	.029
Female	-.565	.292	-.140
Black	-.644	.522	-.160
Intercept	.183	.669	-

<sup>a</sup>-2 log likelihood = 535.5; 67.9% correctly classified.

<sup>b</sup>-2 log likelihood = 335.7; 85.2% correctly classified.

the Democratic side (Table 3), evaluations of Carter's handling of the Iranian crisis and more general evaluations of the candidates' relative "leadership" qualities gained substantially in importance as determinants of nomination preferences as the crisis wore on from February to April. At the same time, perhaps because the rate of inflation began to recede from its January peak of 20% and public attention began to turn from the economy to foreign policy, the effect of comparative economic evaluations on nomination preferences declined significantly. Finally, the bandwagon effect almost disappeared, with an exogenous increase of one percentage point in an undecided respondent's probability of naming Carter as the most likely nominee adding less than one-tenth of a percentage point to her probability of preferring him herself.

On the Republican side (Table 4), comparative evaluations of the candidates with respect to the economy, defense, taxes vs. services, and ideology all increased substantially in importance as determinants of candidate preferences.<sup>11</sup> The only

comparative evaluation to decline in importance between the two surveys was the one involving leadership. In addition, for Republicans as for Democrats, the bandwagon effect so evident before New Hampshire had virtually disappeared by April. By this point in the campaign, apparently, respondents in both parties were relying more heavily on substantive political perceptions—and much less heavily on strategic considerations or momentum—than in the earliest weeks of the campaign.

The determinants of expectations in the second part of Tables 3 and 4 also reflect changes in the political situation between February and April. In each party, as it became more and more obvious that Carter and Reagan would be nominated, media exposure and political awareness became more powerful determinants of respondents' expectations. Among Republicans, the contrasting effects of exposure and education in the month after Iowa had become congruent by April, suggesting that the media's interpretation of the race may have changed sufficiently to make sophisticated respondents more, rather than less, likely to accept it. However, the increasing importance of objective determinants of expectations did little to reduce the importance of projection; even in April, with both races for all practical purposes decided, from 60 to 80% of any exogenous change in preferences was projected onto expectations about who would be nominated. This result provides further evidence of the resilience of projection as a psychological mechanism, even in situations where objective cues about the shape of political reality are quite powerful.

<sup>11</sup>By April, Bush was so far out of the race (only 3.4% of the Republican and Independent respondents still expected him to be nominated) that Reagan had clearly become the sole focus of the Republican campaign. For this reason, I analyzed preferences and expectations for Reagan, rather than for Bush, in the April survey. In order to confirm that the comparisons between the two periods made in the text do not depend crucially on which candidate is the focus of analysis, I also analyzed preferences and expectations for Reagan in the earlier survey; the results were consistent with those reported above.

### Patterns and Implications

Having analyzed the determinants of expectations and preferences in a variety of campaign settings, I turn in this section to a discussion of how my results fit together, and of what they suggest about the nature and role of momentum in the presidential nominating process.

From the political standpoint, the candidate preferences of potential primary voters are obviously of key importance, and my analyses shed some light on the determinants of these candidate preferences. In almost every instance, comparative evaluations of the candidates on the issues (the economy, taxes and services, defense, the Iranian crisis) had strong effects on potential voters' preferences. These effects would not be surprising, were it not for the occasional claims of campaign observers (e.g., Gopoian, 1982) that issues play only a minor role in primary voting. The evidence presented here indicates that issue perceptions do matter, particularly in stable contests involving well-known candidates.

What about less stable contests involving less well-known candidates? This case is the more interesting one if our goal is to understand the role of momentum in the nominating process. My analysis of support for Bush at the apogee of his challenge provides a fairly clear picture of the distinctive political character of bandwagon phenomena. If I were to construct a typical profile of bandwagon support, it would include three major elements: unusually weak effects of specific issue perceptions, relatively strong effects of more diffuse perceptions involving general qualities like leadership, and very strong positive effects of expectations on preferences. Thus, it appears that supporters flock to the candidate with momentum mostly because he is new, exciting, and getting a lot of attention, and that they bolster this diffuse support with more specific, reasoned political judgments only later (or, if the candidate fades, not at all).

Under what kinds of political circumstances do these bandwagon phenomena occur? Recent experience suggests that they are most common when unexpected successes by little-known candidates disturb the stability of a nominating campaign; certainly, Carter in 1976, Bush in 1980, and Hart in 1984 all fit comfortably within this general pattern. In principle, we could construct a continuum of political contexts defined by several related features of nominating campaigns, including the number and political stature of the competing candidates, the number of primaries and caucuses that have already occurred, and the apparent closeness of the race. It is not completely clear how these contextual factors fit together in determining the importance of momentum. For-

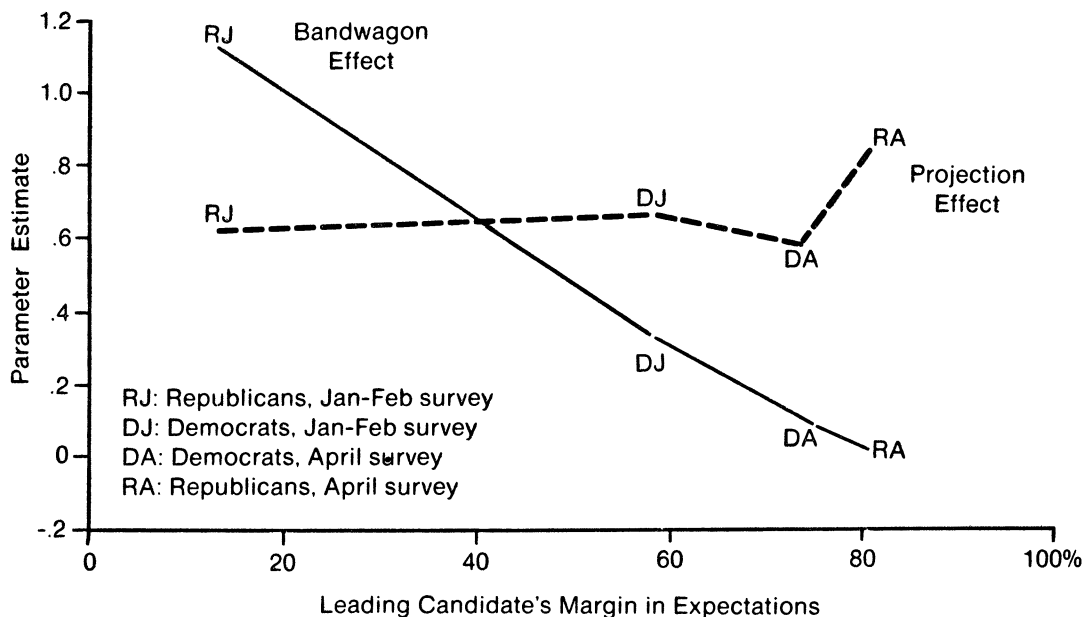
tunately, they tend to covary in actual campaigns: as the primary season progresses the field is winnowed, surviving candidates tend to become better known, and expectations about who will be nominated tend to become less problematic and more widely shared. Thus, it is possible to characterize different campaign situations fairly straightforwardly on the basis of simple indicators, without doing gross violence to the underlying political reality.

For example, it is possible to measure the preponderance of expectations for the frontrunner in each of several different campaign situations. The greater the frontrunner's margin in perceived chances of being nominated, the less volatile the situation, and presumably the less closely that situation approximates the bandwagon conditions typified by the emergence of Carter, Bush, and Hart. When applied to the four separate campaign situations tapped by the 1980 data (Democrats between Iowa and New Hampshire, Republicans between Iowa and New Hampshire, Democrats in April, Republicans in April), this simple criterion successfully distinguishes the situation prevailing in April, when both parties' nominations were practically locked up, from the more fluid situations prevailing in January and February. In addition, it successfully distinguishes the volatile Republican situation after Iowa, when Bush was rapidly vaulting into public prominence and into a narrow lead in the polls, from the much less volatile situation on the Democratic side at the same time, when both candidates were already very well known and their relative standings in the campaign already seemed fairly stable.

Once we begin to distinguish campaign situations in this way, it is possible to explore systematic variations in observed political behavior across different political contexts. In the present case, the most interesting such variation is in the importance of the bandwagon effect from one setting to another. I have already indicated above that the magnitude of this effect varied substantially from the early Republican campaign (where it was very large and positive) to the April campaigns in both parties (where it was essentially zero). In Figure 3, this variation is graphically related to the volatility of each campaign situation, measured by the leading candidate's margin in expectations of being nominated. The relationship is strong and clear: the bandwagon effect is most important in settings where the nomination is perceived to be very much in doubt, and least important in settings where one candidate has established a clear predominance.

By contrast, it is clear from Figure 3 that the magnitude of the projection effect of preferences on expectations is much less variable. In one instance, among Republicans in April, the estimated

Figure 3. Variation Across Campaigns in Bandwagon and Projection Effects



projection effect is noticeably larger than in the other three instances; but this difference does not correspond to any obvious political feature of the campaign and may simply reflect the stochastic nature of parameter estimates. The most reasonable interpretation of the general pattern of these results is that projection is a quite persistent behavioral phenomenon, varying little in impact across the range of campaign settings represented in the 1980 data.

The persistence of the projection effect across a range of campaign settings may make it more or less interesting as a topic for detailed analysis. But in either case, the danger involved in ignoring the phenomenon of projection is easily illustrated by comparing the estimated effects of expectations on preferences presented above with similar estimates based on a simpler model in which projection plays no role. In this simpler model, preferences are determined by issue evaluations and expectations, as before, but expectations are treated as exogenous. The results of the comparison, shown for Democrats and Republicans in the pre-New Hampshire survey in Table 5, are striking. In each case, the effect of expectations on preferences is grossly overestimated by the simpler model—on the Republican side by a factor of two, and on the Democratic side by a factor of seven. The problem in each case is that the portion of the correlation between expectations and

preferences actually due to projection is wrongly attributed to the bandwagon phenomenon in the simpler, misspecified model. In the presence of substantial projection effects, models that do not allow for reciprocal causation simply cannot be trusted to provide meaningful results.<sup>12</sup>

Given a more realistic model that takes due account of projection, it does seem possible to estimate the reciprocal influence of expectations on preferences in a meaningful way. The results presented here suggest that this bandwagon effect can play a major role in the dynamics of nominating campaigns. Under circumstances like those prevailing in the Republican party in early 1980 (and in the Democratic party in early 1984), expectations appear to be translated very powerfully into preferences, making it possible for candidates with momentum to generate new support at a prodigious rate.

<sup>12</sup>A similar problem presumably plagues the analysis of "electability" as a determinant of preferences among party activists offered by Stone & Abramowitz (1983). Although one of their models does treat electability as an endogenous variable, Stone & Abramowitz ignored the possibility that perceptions of electability may be determined partly by personal preferences. To the extent that such a projection effect exists, an analysis like Stone & Abramowitz's will tend to overestimate the importance of electability as a determinant of preferences.

Table 5. Estimated Bandwagon Effects with and without Projection (January-February)

Effect of Expectations on Preferences among	With Projection	Without Projection (Misspecified Model)
Republicans	1.176 (.203)	2.535 (.285)
Democrats	.375 (.162)	2.571 (.364)

My analysis also provides some suggestive evidence about the nature of bandwagon support and about the mechanisms by which it is generated. Presumably, once some political event triggers the process, the behavior of the news media provides a critical link between political reality and the perceptions of potential voters. Horse race coverage, polls, and projections provide a steady barrage of information about who is winning and who is gaining ground.<sup>13</sup> The impact of media exposure on expectations reflects the results of this barrage. More important, the relative diffuseness and lack of substantive political grounding of bandwagon support reflects what the media do *not* provide with nearly as much volume or enthusiasm at this stage in the campaign: specific information about the candidates' qualifications to be president.

Finally, my analysis provides some indication of the limits of the bandwagon phenomenon as an explanatory variable. Most of the formal models of the dynamics of the nominating process (Aldrich, 1980b; Bartels, 1983, chap. 4; Brady, 1984, pp. 49-55) suggest that expectations and preferences should drive each other in a continuing upward spiral, with successful candidates doing progressively better and others falling by the wayside as the campaign proceeds. But the three most notable bandwagons in recent nominating campaigns—Carter's in 1976, Bush's in 1980, and Hart's in 1984—all appeared to slow during the course of the primary season. The results presented here reflect a similar slowing at the individual behavioral level: although bandwagons were much in evidence immediately after the Iowa caucuses, particularly on the Republican side, they had all but disappeared by April.

Only further investigation will make clear whether these results indicate a more general pattern. But if they do, they put the dynamics of the presidential nominating process in a new light.

The bandwagon phenomenon focused on by earlier analysts, important as it obviously is, may not necessarily lead in the real world to the kinds of outcomes predicted by our simple models. Rather than doing better and better (or worse and worse) in an unbroken cycle, candidates may reach plateaus of support determined in part by their political skills and circumstances.<sup>14</sup> Why? One reason may be that the media, the public, or both tend to tire of the horse race and, eventually, turn their attention to less volatile, more substantive considerations (or simply stop paying attention to the campaign altogether).

The dynamic properties of such a process (and their political implications) would depend crucially on a variety of behavioral and institutional parameters. It might be that momentum stops mattering only after one candidate is so far ahead that the race is, for practical purposes, over. In that case there would be little comfort in the fact that attention turns from the horse race before the horses are back in the stables. On the other hand, and more benignly, momentum might shape the nominating process not by propelling one candidate willy-nilly to the nomination, but by creating a framework in which genuine intraparty competition takes place, winnowing out many of the contenders, giving others unforeseen prominence, but eventually confronting party voters with a meaningful substantive choice.

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<sup>13</sup>For a useful description of the content of media coverage during the 1980 nominating campaign, see Robinson, Conover, & Sheehan (1980). Also relevant is the earlier analysis by Matthews (1976).

<sup>14</sup>Starting from somewhat different substantive considerations, Brady (1984, pp. 39-49) constructed a mathematical model of the nominating process exhibiting dynamic properties consistent with this outcome.

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