Classifying Party Leaders’ Selection Methods in Parliamentary Democracies

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Classifying Party Leaders’ Selection Methods in Parliamentary Democracies

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ABSTRACT The post of the party leader is one of the most prominent positions in modern parliamentary democracies. Some party leaders become prime ministers, others serve as the heads of the opposition, while still others are appointed as cabinet ministers. This article offers a classification of party leader selection methods. The opening section discusses the significance of leadership selection. Each of the next four sections presents a different dimension of the classification of party leadership selection: selectorate, candidacy, voting method and de-selection mechanism. The framework established in this article may be a useful tool for future research in the field of leadership selection.

Introduction
Party leaders are among the most important political figures in modern representative democracies. They play an increasingly important role in general elections and hold considerable power vis-à-vis their parties (McAllister, 1996). This phenomenon has been termed the “presidentialization” or “personalization” of politics (Poguntke & Webb, 2005; Mughan, 2000). In most cases, a person seeking to become prime minister must first assume the position of party leader. In this way, the office of party leader often serves as gatekeeper to the highest political position in the country.1 The methods through which party leaders achieve their position are, therefore, an important political institution.

These methods become especially important when the prime minister retires or dies during the parliamentary term. Since general elections are not required by law in such cases, a new prime minister may be selected or nominated by the ruling party.2 In these circumstances, the decision concerning the highest office in the country is not even in the hands of the entire electorate. Instead a more exclusive selectorate is making that choice – be they party members, party activists, party legislators or even an informal party elite group. Only four of the last ten British prime ministers initially assumed their office following general elections. The others (Eden, Macmillan, Home, Callaghan, Major and Brown) assumed the premiership following an intra-party procedure. This pattern is common in other countries as well.
Japan, for instance, each of the last seven prime ministers first assumed office following an internal contest within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The selection of a party leader must, therefore, be seen as more than just an intra-party matter, but as a procedure that may affect who will serve as the leader of a country.

The method of party leadership selection is also important because it represents an aspect of intra-party democratization. Reacting and adapting to social changes, an increasing number of parties have changed their internal distribution of power to give their members a role in candidate selection, policy-making and leadership selection (Scarrow et al., 2000). While one can debate whether these steps mark a genuine concern with reducing the democratic deficit or, as some have suggested, a more cynical attempt by parties’ elites to reduce the power of party activists (Mair, 1994, p. 16; Marsh, 1993, p. 230), the trend toward the intra-party democratization of leadership selection is nonetheless a salient development for party politics.

The different methods for selecting a leader may bear significant political consequences. For instance, they may affect the types of candidates competing and persons selected (McSweeney, 1999), determine the level of competitiveness in the contest (Kenig, 2009), and dictate to what extent the incumbent leader is secure in his/her position (Bynander & 't Hart, 2007). Given this, it is surprising that more studies have not examined party leader selection methods from a comparative perspective.

Most current research is either focused on a single case study (Alderman & Carter, 2002; Cowley & Garry, 1998; Cowley & Bailey, 2000; Kraus & LeDuc, 1979), a single-party study (Bogdanor, 1994; Quinn, 2004; Heppell, 2008; Denham & O’Hara, 2008), or a single-country study (Courtney, 1995; Stark, 1996; Müller & Meth-Cohn, 1991; De Winter, 1993; Yanai, 1981). Few studies have presented even a limited cross-national perspective: Punnett (1992) and Courtney (1995) dealt briefly with party leader selection methods in countries outside of the United Kingdom and Canada; a special issue of the European Journal of Political Research, edited by Marsh (1993) collected studies from different countries; Davis (1998) also compared leadership selection in six countries; and LeDuc (2001) provided a systematic comparison between three parties in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada. Yet, except for Punnett, none of these studies included a comprehensive classification of party leader selection methods. Usually, the selectorate (the body that selects the leader) was perceived as the sole selection criterion.

This article aims to redress the gap in current research by presenting a richer classification of party leader selection methods. Each of the four sections that follow presents a different dimension of the classification of party leadership selection: selectorate, candidacy, voting method and de-selection mechanism.

**Selectorate**

The selectorate is the body that selects the party leader. It is often regarded as the most important criterion for delineating party leader selection methods. The phenomenon of “democratization of party leadership selection” almost always refers to the process of opening up the selectorate to a wider range of voters. At one extreme, the selectorate
may be composed of only one person, and at the opposite extreme, it may be composed of the entire electorate. It is thus useful to present the different selectorates on a continuum (see Figure 1), in which one pole represents the most inclusive selectorate and the other pole represents the most exclusive one (Rahat & Hazan, 2001).

A Single Individual

The most exclusive selectorate is, by nature, one that is comprised of a sole individual. Whether it is a retiring political leader who names his successor, or a spiritual leader who nominates the political leader of the party, such a selectorate is exceptional today for parties that operate in modern democracies. In the Liberal Democrat Party in Japan, on at least two occasions, the retiring leader has been asked to decide which faction leader should succeed him (Punnett, 1992, p. 9).

Party Elite

Here the leader is selected by an informal group of party notables, or elite. A selectorate of this kind may conduct a formal vote, but it is more likely that the name of an agreed-upon candidate will emerge from informal discussions. This was the common method through which leaders of the British Conservative Party “emerged” until 1963.

Parliamentary Party Group (PPG)

The selection of the party leader by the party’s elected representatives in the legislature was the dominant method in the United Kingdom and other Westminster type democracies until the mid 1970s. Since then, the three major British parties have abolished this system in favor of more inclusive selectorates. The big parties in Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, however, still grant their representatives in parliament the prerogative to choose their party leader. There are considerable variations in the size of this type of selectorate. For instance, the selectorate that installed Jeremy Thorpe as the leader of the British Liberal Party in 1967 consisted of just 12 members. The selectorate that selected John Major as the leader of the British Conservative Party in 1990 consisted of 372 members. There are also slight variations between the parties regarding what kind of parliamentarian is entitled to participate in the leadership vote. Some parties restrict the vote to their representatives in the lower house, while other parties, like the Australian Labor Party (ALP),
allow their representatives in the upper house to participate in the selection of the leader. Still other parties, such as the Irish Fine Gael, allow their representatives in the European Parliament to participate as well.

Selected Party Agency

This selectorate is very common in parties within continental Europe. Here, the leader is selected by the members of a selected party agency – a convention, conference, congress or assembly. These are regular party agencies that command various functions and tasks, including the selection of the party leader. The size of these agencies varies, but generally it ranges between a few hundred to a thousand members. In 2000, for example, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was selected as the leader of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) by approximately 1,000 delegates of the party congress. Leaders of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) are selected by some 500 delegates of the party congress.

For much of the last century the dominant Canadian parties have employed a similar type of party convention selectorate. However, these conventions differ from the cases presented above since they are not regular party agencies but rather special, ad-hoc entities with the prime task of selecting a leader (Courtney, 1995; MacIvor, 1994; Perlin, 1988). Another difference is that rank-and-file members participate in the earlier stages of the process. Given these distinctions, and also the fact that the Canadian leadership conventions are also much larger than other selected agencies (the 2006 Liberal Party Leadership Convention had about 5,000 delegates), it might be argued that this sub-type of selectorate, unique to Canadian parties, is slightly more inclusive than other selected party agencies.

Party Members

In this selectorate, also known as “closed primaries”, “party primaries” or “one-member-one-vote” system (OMOV), the entire party membership participates in the selection of the leader and every vote is counted equally. Just two decades ago, this type of selectorate was very rare. Recently, however, many parties have responded to demands for internal democratization by opening up the process to wider participation. Again, there is variation in the number of members involved in the process. In the Irish Labour Party, for example, some 3,500 members took part in the selection of the party leader in 2004; in France, nearly 140,000 members took part in the selection of the leader of the Socialist Party in late 2008.

Electorate

The entire electorate is the most inclusive end of the selectorate spectrum; here parties allow anyone, regardless of party affiliation, to vote. This kind of selectorate, also known as “open primary”, is quite rare in parliamentary democracies (Carty & Blake, 1999). In 2007, Walter Veltroni was selected as the leader of the Democratic Party in
Italy via such a selectorate. This newly formed party opened its primary election to all Italian citizens at least 18 years old and to any immigrants who had lived in Italy for at least three years. More than 3.5 million voters participated in the process.

The six types of selectorates presented above may be regarded as pure types. Some parties, however, use more complex systems. For example, some parties have opened up the process to the entire membership, but still have not gone “all the way” in terms of granting each member an equal vote. Instead, they weight the votes. There are two reasons for such a measure. First, it reconciles the demand for democratization with the desire to retain some control in the hands of the party leadership. The British Labour Party and the Japanese Liberal Democrats both employ a weighted system for this reason. Leaders of these two parties are selected according to an Electoral College formula, which grants the Parliamentary Party Group votes a proportionally heavier weight. The second reason for this measure is to reconcile the demand for democratization with the desire to retain territorial balance. This rationale explains why the Conservative Party of Canada introduced in 2004 a “point system” for calculating the votes, which gave each constituency the same weight, regardless of how many members actually cast a vote. Both reasons are a violation, however, of the “every vote is equal” principle and therefore should not be treated as a pure type of selectorate. In terms of inclusiveness, weighted selectorates should be considered slightly more exclusive than a pure party members’ type.

Another example of the blending of selectorate types is the method used by the British Conservative party since 1998. While the entire party membership has the final say in the selection process, they may only choose between two candidates. If more than two candidates compete for the position, the PPG, through a series of eliminative ballots, produces a shortlist of two names, from which the members may choose (Alderman, 1999). The PPG, therefore, still yields considerable power in the selection process.

About a decade ago, Scarrow et al. (2000, p. 143) found that the parties in which leaders are selected by the party membership constitute a minority (less than one-quarter) of all cases. However, since this study was conducted, many more parties have opened the selection process to the entire membership. Table 1 is a list of the current leaders (as of December 2008) of 45 parties from 17 established democracies, along with the selectorate that elected them. As the table reflects, almost half (22 out of 45) of the parties now give their members a significant role in selecting their leader. The rest of the parties split between those that select their leaders via the PPG (nine cases) and via delegates of a selected party agency (12 cases). There are two cases of “extreme” selectorates; remarkably, both are in Italy. The leader of the Democrats was selected by more than 3.5 million voters in an open primary. His rival, Silvio Berlusconi, has created a party around his personality and was never formally elected as its leader.

Candidacy

As discussed above, the selectorate is probably the most important criterion in the leadership selection method; however it is certainly not the only one. Indeed, focusing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Selectorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>Kevin Rudd (2006)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>Malcolm Turnbull (2008)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>People’s Party (ÖVP)</td>
<td>Josef Pröll (2008)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-Democrats (SPÖ)</td>
<td>Werner Faymann (2008)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Bloc Québécois</td>
<td>Gilles Duceppe (1997)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>Stéphane Dion (2006)</td>
<td>Convention delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Liberals (V)</td>
<td>Anders Fogh Rasmussen (1998)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People’s Party (DF)</td>
<td>Pia Kjærsgaard (1996)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-Democrats</td>
<td>Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2005)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UMP</td>
<td>Nicolas Sarkozy (2007)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberals (FDP)</td>
<td>Guido Westerwelle (2001)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social-Democrats (SPD)</td>
<td>Franz Müntefering (2008)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Fianna Fáil</td>
<td>Brian Cowen (2008)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fine Gael</td>
<td>Enda Kenny (2002)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
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### Table 1. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Selectorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likud</td>
<td></td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu (2005)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>Walter Veltroni (2007)</td>
<td>Electorate (open primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forza Italia/PdL</td>
<td>Silvio Berlusconi (1993)</td>
<td>Self enthroned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Democrats (DPJ)</td>
<td>Ichiho Ozawa (2006)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal-Democrats (LDP)</td>
<td>Taro Aso (2008)</td>
<td>Party members/votes weighted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Christian-Democrats (CDA)</td>
<td>Jan Peter Balkenende (2001)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberals (VVD)</td>
<td>Mark Rutte (2006)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Labour (New Zealand)</td>
<td>Phil Goff (2008)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National (New Zealand)</td>
<td>John Key (2006)</td>
<td>PPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Social-Democrats (PSD)</td>
<td>Manuela Ferreira Leite (2008)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socialists (PSOE)</td>
<td>José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2000)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Moderates</td>
<td>Fredrik Reinfeldt (2003)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Democrats</td>
<td>Mona Sahlin (2007)</td>
<td>Congress delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>David Cameron (2005)</td>
<td>Party members*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>Alex Salmond (2004)</td>
<td>Party members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In the first stage, the PPG selects two candidates. Party members have the right to select one of these two as the leader.
exclusively on the selectorate obscures the degree of openness – i.e. not only who is entitled to vote, but also who is entitled to be selected. A party may reform its selection process by opening it up to its members, yet still retain control over the process by setting strict candidacy requirements. These requirements serve as thresholds to the process and must be taken into consideration.

The candidacy requirements may be divided into eligibility and additional requirements. Eligibility refers to who is entitled to stand, in regard to his/her party affinity. Some parties, like the Irish Labour Party, allow only incumbent members of parliament to stand. Other parties allow any voter to stand as a candidate. In between these two extremes, there are parties that allow only party members to stand or that require a minimal membership period.

Provided that the prospective candidate is eligible to stand, additional requirements are sometimes mandated to validate his/her candidacy. The most common requirement is the presentation of signatures of a minimum number of supporters. This measure is undertaken to make it harder for fringe candidates to run. Without this type of constraint, a fringe candidate might drag the party through an expensive, dubious campaign and harm the party image. Signatures can be those of parliamentarians, delegates of a selected party agency, or party members. The British Labour Party requires a candidate to present the support of at least 12.5% of the party MPs. Candidates for leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada are required to present the support of at least 300 party members, including at least 100 from each of three different provinces.

Another common requirement is payment of an entry fee to enter the race. This requirement serves as a disincentive to frivolous candidacies and subsidizes the costly leadership campaigns. Entry fees have become higher over the years. For instance, the Progressive Party of Canada charged 500 Canadian dollars in the 1976 leadership election; in the 2003, the fee for the same party soared to 45,000 Canadian dollars, and a candidate for the Liberal Party of Canada had to pay 75,000 Canadian dollars.

Finally, some parties, particularly those in continental Europe, require a candidate to secure his/her nomination through the support of an exclusive, intra-party elite group in order to have a realistic chance of winning. Although this support is not a formal requirement (the actual selection of the leader is conducted at the party congress, where other candidates may also stand), the candidate with the backing of the party elite is nearly always nominated. Thus, the congress delegates’ selection procedure is usually a mere rubber stamp of the party elite’s candidate. The last four leaders of the German Social Democrats, for instance, have been selected (or rather ratified) by the party congress after securing the nomination of the party elite.

**Voting Method/Majority Requirement**

In contrast with the electoral systems used for general elections, leadership elections do not distinguish between majoritarian, proportional, semi-proportional, or mixed electoral formulas. The selection of a leader (n = 1) is, by definition,
majoritarian. Still, it is important to distinguish between the different shades of majority requirements.

A winning party leader must obtain more votes than his/her opponent; however, parties set different standards for declaring a candidate as the winner. Most parties require that a candidate obtain an absolute majority of the votes (50% + 1). Other parties set a lower threshold. In the Israeli Labour Party, for example, a candidate need only obtain more than 40% of the votes; in the Socialist Party in Spain, a simple plurality of votes suffices.9 Regardless of the majority requirement, however, if only two candidates are contesting the leadership post, a clear and certain winner will emerge (except in the unlikely case of a tie). If there are more than two candidates, only the plurality requirement will always produce a winner. However, since it is conceivable that in the first round of multi-candidate races no candidate will secure the majority, a mechanism to produce the eventual winner is required. There are three such basic mechanisms:

1. In Majority Runoff, each selector votes for one candidate. If no candidate meets the majority requirement, a second ballot is held between the top two vote-winners. Naturally, following the second ballot, a clear winner emerges. This mechanism is widely used in the election of heads of states, such as the French presidents. Some party leaders have also been selected through runoff election, including Stockwell Day and Stephen Harper, in 2000 and 2002 respectively, as leaders of the Canadian Alliance.

2. A different method to produce a winner is through Exhaustive/Eliminative Ballots. In the first ballot, each selector votes for one candidate. If no candidate meets the majority requirement, the candidate who received the least number of the votes is dropped from the contest and an additional ballot is held. This procedure is repeated until one of the candidates meets the majority requirement and is declared winner. In multi-candidate contests, several ballots may be needed to select a winning candidate. In 1967, for example, the Progressive Conservatives in Canada required five ballots to finally select Robert Stanfield.

3. Finally, a party may use the Preferential Vote (Alternative Vote). Here, each selector ranks each of the candidates from the most to the least preferable. In the first count, all of the first preferences (most preferable) are counted. If no candidate meets the majority requirement, the candidate who received the least number of first preferences is dropped from the contest and his selectors’ second preferences are re-allocated to the other candidates. This procedure is repeated until one candidate meets the majority requirement and is declared a winner. Again, multi-candidate contests increase the chance of multiple “counts”. Charles Kennedy, for example, was proclaimed the leader of the British Liberal Democrats in 1999 only after the fifth “count”.

There is a clear relationship between the size of the selectorate and the mechanism used to produce a winner. The use of exhaustive ballots is not realistic when the selectorate is composed of thousands of party members. Organizing several
ballots for such a large selectorate is expensive and time-consuming, not to mention an impractical imposition on selectors. Therefore, exhaustive ballots are found only in relatively exclusive selectorates – e.g. PPGs or party agencies. The most inclusive selectorate that uses this mechanism is the Liberal Party of Canada’s leadership convention, which consists of approximately 5,000 delegates. The runoff and preferential vote mechanisms are better suited to wider selectorates.

**De-selecting Mechanism**

Leaders of political parties also differ from each other in the manner they are held accountable to their parties. Although not an integral dimension of party leader selection, the rules regulating the challenge to an incumbent leader are vital to the analysis of leadership selection. These rules may affect the extent to which parties may oversight leaders; how much leaders are secure in their position and may even determine if a contest is to be held in the first place – and, if so, how competitive it is. In order to assess how parties regulate leadership succession, the following questions must be addressed: Is the leader selected for a fixed term? And, is it possible – and if so, under what conditions – to challenge an incumbent leader?

**No De-selection Mechanism**

Let us begin with the parties in which leaders are selected for an unlimited tenure, during which they cannot be replaced. In other words, leadership change occurs only upon the retirement or death of the incumbent. That was the case in the large Canadian parties until the mid-1960s and in the British Conservative Party until 1974. The only way to remove a leader was through persuasion or pressure from fellow MPs (Courtney, 1995, p. 38; Punnett, 1992, p. 53). It is not by chance that these two examples are from the past. Today, the democratic norms of accountability and competitiveness (along with the perception that a leader is evaluated mainly by his/her ability to bring electoral achievements for the party) make it unlikely for a party to grant their leader an unlimited mandate. Indeed, all parties today incorporate some type of mechanism to enable the displacement of a leader. There are three such procedures: direct challenge at the end of a fixed term, leadership review and vote of no confidence.

**Direct Challenge at the End of a Fixed Term**

Here, the leader is selected for a fixed term, during which s/he cannot be challenged. When the term is over, however, a window of opportunity opens for those wishing to compete for leadership. Unless the incumbent decides to retire, other aspiring leaders must face the incumbent directly. Examples include the Irish Labour Party, which selects its leaders for a six-year term; the Socialists in Spain, which select their leaders for a four-year term; the Liberal Democrats in Japan, which select their leaders for a three-year term; and the Democrats (DPJ) in Japan, which select their
leaders for a two-year term. Between 1974 and 1998, leaders of the British Conservatives were selected for just a one-year term, at the end of which they were exposed to a potential challenge. Although this challenge rarely materialized, this mechanism was in fact responsible for the de-selection of both Heath and Thatcher.\(^{10}\) While this rule enables challengers to contest the leadership post at the end of a term, doing so often bears high political costs. Not only do incumbents have an advantage, but party activists also dislike direct confrontation, perceiving it as “disunity”, which is potentially damaging to the party’s public image. Ultimately, if one challenges and fails, it might be a critical blow for his/her political position within the party (Quinn, 2005).

**Leadership Review**

This mechanism gives the party a chance to evaluate its leader by a formal vote, without requiring a specific challenger to step forward. For instance, the Liberal Party of Canada (2005) has the following regulation:

A resolution calling for a leadership convention shall be placed automatically on the agenda of the convention next following a federal general election. If such a resolution is duly adopted by secret ballot, the National Executive shall call a leadership convention to take place within one year of the abovementioned secret ballot.

While it is very rare that delegates vote for a leadership convention, the option to do so serves as an important litmus test of the leader’s popularity within his/her party. The option is especially significant when there is a gradual decline in a leader’s popularity. Leaders often interpret this declining support as a message for them to evacuate their position. At his leadership review in 2003, for example, Gerhard Schröder, then chairman of the German SPD and Chancellor, received the support of “only” 80% of the party congress delegates (down from 89% two years earlier). His declining popularity was most likely a factor in his decision to resign the position of party chairman soon after the leadership review. In other cases, leaders anticipating a loss in the leadership review may choose to retire on their own terms prior to the vote. Such were the circumstances that led Jean Chrétien, then leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and Prime Minister, to announce his intention to retire.

**No-confidence Vote**

Like the leadership review, this procedure does not provide for a challenger to directly step forward and confront the leader. However, unlike the review, the no-confidence vote may occur at any time in the leader’s tenure, not just at the end of the term. The British Conservatives have been using this mechanism since 1998. According to the party’s protocol, at least 15% of the PPG must sign a request for a no-confidence vote. Once this threshold is surpassed, the PPG votes on a motion of
no confidence in the leader. In the Australian Liberal Party, the process is even
simpler; the PPG may opt for a motion of no confidence either by an open show of
hands or by a “spill” motion, which, if passed by a secret ballot, declares the leader-
ship position to be vacant (Courtney, 1995, p. 36).

Both the leadership review and the no-confidence vote make the leader’s position
potentially less secure. Because they do not require a challenger to step forward, the
political risks are reduced and potential candidates may first act behind the scenes to
evict the leader, and then, only if their motion succeeds, may they present their
candidacy.

Three of the four dimensions of leader selection discussed above – namely the
selectorate, the de-selecting mechanism and the candidacy requirements – often
dictate to what extent a method is considered open or closed. As shown in Figure 2,
there is a wide range of possible combinations in any leadership selection method. It
is rare for all three aspects to be truly open or closed. For instance, the current
selection method of the British Conservatives is open in terms of the selectorate and
de-selecting mechanism, but rather closed in terms of candidacy requirements. In
the large Australian parties, the selection method is closed in terms of the selectorate
and candidacy requirements, while its de-selecting mechanism is extremely open.

The fourth dimension, voting method/majority requirement, does not affect the
openness of a method. Still, it is an important dimension, which may influence
competitiveness and participation. A series of eliminative ballots, for example,
enable candidates to come from behind and gradually build a majority. In Canada,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selectorate</th>
<th>Candidacy</th>
<th>De-selecting Mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electorate</td>
<td>Every citizen, no additional requirements</td>
<td>No-Confidence Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Members</td>
<td>Every citizen, with additional requirements</td>
<td>Leadership Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Party Agency</td>
<td>Party members, no additional requirements</td>
<td>Direct challenge at the end of a (short) fixed term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Party Group</td>
<td>Party members, with additional requirements</td>
<td>Direct challenge at the end of a (long) fixed term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Elite</td>
<td>Parliamentarians, no additional requirements</td>
<td>No formal mechanism for de-selecting a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Individual</td>
<td>Parliamentarians, with additional requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Party leader selection methods: a three dimensional classification.
both Joe Clark (Progressive Conservatives, 1976) and Stéphane Dion (Liberals, 2006) were elected leader despite being placed only third following the first ballot. They could have never elected under a simple majority or majority runoff systems.

Conclusion

Do leadership selection methods make a difference? Some argue that truly outstanding leaders will be allowed to rise to the top, whatever the particular selection method that is used (Punnett, 1992, p. 163). In other words, that “the outcome of a contest has little to do with who is making the choice” (Stark, 1996, p. 131). Others maintain that the adoption of more inclusive selection methods has created consequences, intended as well as unintended (LeDuc, 2001, p. 337) and that “changing the rules changed the game” (McSweeney, 1999). We can expect that this important yet under-researched topic would continue to attract scholarly debate and research. Hopefully, the classification framework presented here provides a basic tool for this much-needed further research.

Notes

1. There are several exceptions to this rule. For instance, a dominant figure may establish a party, install him or herself as its leader and compete in general election, as in the cases of Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia and recently “The People of Freedom” Party) or Charles de Gaulle (Gaullist Party). Alternatively, the party may choose a different prime minister candidate than their leader. For example, when Gerhard Schröder became the Chancellor of Germany in 1998, he was not at the time party leader (Social Democrats, SPD). That position was manned by Oskar Lafontaine. Only a year later, following Lafontaine’s resignation, did Schröder assume this position.

2. In most cases, prime ministers are the leaders of the largest party in parliament (with or without absolute parliamentary majority) or the largest party in the ruling coalition. Only in rare cases do they belong to other parties.

3. It is interesting to note that the literature on leadership selection is skewed in focus: the majority of works deals with British parties. Alderman and Carter (1991, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2002), for instance, studied at least five cases of leadership contests in the United Kingdom.

4. The first to introduce a more inclusive selectorate were the Liberals in 1976. They were followed by the Labour Party in 1981 and by the Conservatives in 1998.

5. Indeed, this was one of the main reasons that led to the abolition of an exclusive selectorate in favor of a more inclusive one.

6. Actually, the Labour Party allocates an equal weight to three distinct voters’ sections: the PPG, “ordinary” party members and affiliated trade unions members. In practice, turnout amongst the trade union section is very low (see Quinn, 2004).

7. Obvious requirements of minimal age or citizenship are excluded from the discussion.

8. This strict requirement has twice (1992, 1994) prevented Ken Livingstone from competing for the post of party leader, and also ensured the “coronation” of Gordon Brown in 2007, after no other candidate surpassed this threshold. The 12.5% threshold applies to cases in which the leader position is vacant. In cases of leadership challenge, the threshold is set even higher: a prospective candidate must present the support of at least 20% of the party MPs.

9. The British Conservatives used a unique requirement between 1965 and 1997: in order to win the first ballot, a candidate not only had to secure the majority of votes, but also to best his second place opponent by at least 15%.
10. There are parties that set different rules for challenging the leader while the party is in government (when the leader is prime minister) against while it is in the opposition. While not in government, the British Labour Party’s leader is elected for a one-year term and is exposed to challenges on an annual basis. However, when the party is in government, the party conference must first approve a challenge. In the Israeli Labour Party, when the leader is not prime minister, s/he may be challenged twice during the parliamentary term. When the leader is also prime minister, s/he may only be challenged once, a few months before the next general elections.

11. In fact, the PPG have increased its control over the de-selecting of leaders and the nominating of candidates. This was demonstrated well in 2003: First, the incumbent leader (Iain Duncan Smith) was ousted following a no-confidence vote held in the PPG. Then, the MPs made sure that only one candidate (Michael Howard) would be nominated, thus depriving the party members of any role.

References