Does intraparty democracy affect levels of trust in parties? The cases of Belgium and Israel

Abstract

Previous research has shown a steady decline of citizen’s political trust and growing skepticism towards key institutions of representative democracy. Political parties, which perform the crucial role of linking citizens to the political system, are in the eye of the storm: citizens are generally more distrusting towards parties than other social and political institutions. The relevant literature mentions that parties often implement intraparty democratization to remedy party distrust. This article examines whether these intraparty reforms actually affect levels of trust in political parties. More specifically, the authors analyze the effect of democratic candidate selection processes on party trust among voters. The analysis is based on the cases of Belgium and Israel, where politicians made a strong case for intraparty democracy in recent history. The results indicate that, while inclusive selectorates indeed increase trust levels, decentralization decreases trust towards parties in both countries.

Key words: Candidate selection, trust in parties, Belgium, Israel
The literature on democratic political attitudes is vast. Scholars have examined how country-level determinants, such as economic conditions, cultural features and institutional structures shape citizen's satisfaction with democracy, levels of external and internal efficacy, social capital and political trust. They also test how individual level characteristics, such as gender, race, or sophistication levels affect citizens' political attitudes. This article extends the current research and examines the effect of intraparty democracy—a party level characteristic—on the levels of trust in political parties. Political trust is a crucial attitude for citizens in representative democracies, as it is often considered as diffuse political support, which enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic government (Easton, 1965; Hetherington, 1998; Miller, 1974a, Mishler and Rose, 2005). Trust in democratic institutions "reflects evaluations of whether or not political authorities and institutions are performing in accordance with the normative expectations held by the public" (Miller and Listhaug, 1990, p. 358). In this paper we adopt an institutional perspective on trust (as opposed to a cultural view) and assert, similar to Mishler and Rose (2001) that institutional trust centers on citizens' evaluation of institutions' performance.

An extensive body of literature shows a steady decline of citizens’ trust over the last decades in various democratic institutions such as government, parliament and parties (Catterberg and Moreno, 2005; Listhaug and Wiberg, 1995; Klingemann, 1999; Fuchs et al, 1995, Norris, 1999a; 1999b). Indeed, the severe decrease of trust in political parties is part of a general skepticism and public disenchantment towards key institutions of representative democracy (Dalton and Weldon, 2005). The decline of trust in parties was also attributed to, among other things, the weak linkage between voters and their representatives, which used to be mediated by parties (Norris, 1999a; Dalton, 1999).
Early authors such as Ostrogorski (1902) and Duverger (1952) established the common wisdom that political parties are the inevitable basis of democracy and perform a number of key functions in democratic political systems. Although this consensus has not been called into question by more recent scholars, it seems that parties are one of the least trusted institutions: compared to other social and political institutions, citizens are even more distrusting towards parties as they receive extremely poor ratings in the majority of international public opinion surveys (e.g. ESS, WVS, EVS). Apart from declining party support, the drop in party membership figures and campaign participation rates all point to a general erosion of partisan attachment in advanced industrial democracies (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000).

Parties have experimented with several remedies to overcome the reported partisan decline (Van Biezen et al, 2012). One of the strategies is to democratize intraparty decision-making procedures to mobilize members and citizens into the democratic process (Scarrow et al, 2000; Cross and Pilet, 2014). In this contribution, we examine whether intraparty democracy, measured by the inclusiveness of the selectorate and decentralization in the candidate selection process, indeed positively affects levels of trust in parties. The empirical analysis is based on the cases of Belgium and Israel, where politicians and public opinion-makers made a strong case for intraparty democracy at some point in recent history. We find support for the hypothesis that inclusive selectorates increase levels of trust in parties. Decentralization, on the contrary, tends to decrease trust levels in both countries.

**Determinants of trust in parties: what about party level-predictors?**

A significant segment of the literature has focused on identifying the determinants of political trust among citizens. Although trust levels are declining across varying types of political systems and cross-national variation is relatively low compared to within-country differences (Mishler and Rose, 2001), scholars have found several common individual-level as well as
contextual macro-variables to significantly affect citizens’ trust in democratic institutions in general and political parties in particular.

**Individual determinants**

With regard to individual-level variables, subjective well-being, external efficacy, support for coalition parties, and toleration of corruption have robust significant effects on political trust across different groups of nations (Catterberg and Moreno, 2005). Slomczynski and Janicka (2009) show that individuals' social stratification positions impact pro-democratic attitudes such as trust in democratic institutions, but the effect is mediated by the countries' level of economic development. Mishler and Rose (2001) conclude that individual evaluations of political and economic performance by the regime are substantially more important than socialization experience.

In sum, socialization and demographic variables such as age, education, gender, town size and church attendance often have significant, but rather weak effects in these statistical models. Indeed, some scholars argue that “political trust and distrust tend to be more or less randomly distributed among people with different individual characteristics such as education, income, religion, age or gender” (Newton and Norris, 2000: 7). So although some political socialization effects might occur as well (see, for instance: Almond and Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1997), empirical findings mainly support the institutional performance model, which states that political trust is determined by the evaluation of performance by the institutions under consideration (Newton and Norris, 2000). This implies that political trust is politically endogenous: institutions are able to generate trust if they perform well (Przeworski et al, 1995).

**Macro-level determinants**

In addition to the institutional performance predictors and since the institutional performance model is basically a systemic model, another group of scholars described and analyzed the
effects of contextual determinants, such as the age of the democracy, its electoral system and its economic condition, on political trust (Miller and Listhaug, 1990; Bovens and Wille, 2008; van der Meer, 2010). Van der Meer and Dekker (2011) hypothesize that country level characteristics such as corruption, economic development, electoral system and former regime type affect trust levels, but the effects are mediated by citizens’ evaluations of politics. Their model only supports the hypothesis that corruption levels negatively affect political trust, and that this macro effect is explained by micro-evaluations of competence and reliability (Van der Meer and Dekker, 2011).

Although low levels of political trust are worrying, the empirical support for the institutional performance theory encourages optimism: democratic institutions can affect trust levels by delivering what they are expected to (e.g. providing economic growth). This implies that even for political parties, one of the most distrusted democratic institution in public opinion surveys, not all is lost. As mentioned, political parties try to remedy party decline through intra-party reforms and democratizing their decision-making procedures. In this manner, democratizing parties fulfill one of their vital functions in representative democracies: mobilizing people to participate in the electoral process, or in this case to become more involved in intraparty politics (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000).

From the viewpoint of the institutional performance theory, this implies that intraparty democracy would generate more trust among their voters: democratizing parties more strongly correspond to the expected role of parties linking citizens to the electoral process, and thus perform better than undemocratically organized political parties. Hence, this theory predicts that levels of trust in parties among citizens supporting democratically organized parties should be substantially higher than trust levels among citizens, which support undemocratically organized parties.
To our knowledge, there have been no previous attempts to examine the effects of intraparty reforms on levels of trust in parties. It has been argued that the spreading distrust of political parties probably increases pressures for institutional changes that alter the role of parties in the democratic process (Cain et al., 2003). Dalton (2004) examined whether such electoral reforms in Japan and New Zealand, which were fuelled by growing public disenchantment with political parties (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001), restored public confidence in parties. The data did not support this argument, and it was concluded that as distrust in parties extends across all types of electoral systems and party configurations, institutional reforms will not suffice to solve this problem. We argue that the absence of a significant effect here was because Dalton (2004) examined the effect of a general electoral reform on party support. We, on the other hand, propose to study the effects of specific intraparty reforms on the level of trust in parties. In other words, we link the democratic nature of party organizations to the level of party's trust towards this particular democratic institution.

**The effect of candidate selection processes on trust in parties**

We look at the nature of parties’ candidate selection processes, one of the key responsibilities of parties in representative democracies, and examine whether and how it affects citizens’ trust levels in parties. In the last few decades, we have witnessed an ever growing interest of political scientists in intra-party politics in general and candidate selection procedures in particular. Whether focusing on candidate selection processes' determinants and the reasons for their adoption (Bille, 2001; Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Katz, 2001; Lundell, 2004; Pennings and Hazan, 2001; Shomer, 2014; Wu, 2001) or on candidate selection processes effect on various political phenomena (Bowler et al., 1999; Crisp et al., 2004; De-Luca et al., 2002; Faas, 2003; Hazan and Rahat, 2000; 2010; Hix, 2004; Shomer, 2009; Sieberer, 2006; Kernell, 2008), scholars mainly failed to address whether and how candidate selection processes affects
citizen's political attitudes. We argue that the way parties select their lists—the degree to which the process involves the general public, and its level of centralization—should affect citizens' evaluation of parties themselves, and therefore, as argued by the institutional performance model, their levels of trust in them.

**Defining the selectorate and decentralization dimension**

When theorizing about the effect of candidate selection procedures on citizens' trust levels in political parties, we specifically regard two central dimensions that the literature identifies as cardinal for the study of selection processes: selectorate and level of centralization. We hypothesize that each dimension affects citizens' trust in parties differently. The first dimension—the selectorate—is the group that selects the candidates and determines who is eligible to represent the party on election-day. Similar to Rahat and Hazan (2001), we conceive the selectorate dimension to range from an exclusive pole, whereby one party leader selects to an inclusive selectorate, in which the entire electorate takes part in a party's candidate selection process. Movement along the selectorate dimension is done according to the size of the selecting body. The second dimension—level of centralization—measures the territorial and sectorial level at which the selection process takes place. In this paper we focus on territorial centralization, which categorize whether selection is done exclusively at a national level, or whether it ensures regional and/or local participation as well (Hazan, 2002). Thus, in a fully decentralized procedure local party organizations solely make the selection (Malcolm, 1973; Ranney, 1965).

How, then, does the scope of the selectorate and the level of selection processes' centralization affect citizens' trust levels in parties? We contend that democratic selectorates—those that include more participants in the selecting body—might either increase or decrease citizens' trust in parties, while decentralized procedures decrease it. We present two mechanisms through
which larger selectorates affect citizens' trust in parties, whereby the first—procedural fairness—enhances trust levels, and the second—intraparty conflict—decreases them. We also present one mechanism, which relates selections' centralization levels to trust in parties: intraparty conflict, while differentiating pre-electoral from post-electoral periods.

The first mechanism through which larger selectorates affect trust in parties relates to procedural fairness. Literature on job applicants' perceptions of selection procedures repeatedly emphasize the importance of fairness perception of the selection procedure itself (Gilliland, 1993; Ryan and Ployhart, 2000). Indeed Gilliland (1993) maintained that, for example, selection information—information provided in advance about the scoring system, for instance—affects the perceived overall fairness of the selection process (Arvey and Sackett, 1993). In political science it has been argued that procedural fairness positively affect citizens' attitudes towards the government (Miller and Listhaug, 1999). We contend that, by the same token, procedural fairness should derive trust toward political parties upwards. As the selection process is open and as a larger segment of the electorate is entitled to participate in selecting the party's candidates, the process appears to be procedurally fair. No longer do voters perceive the selection procedure to take place at a back room filled with cigar's smoke, where party leaders negotiate at the expanse of voter's interest and compose the party's list (De-Luca et al, 2002). The inclusive process is more informative and is, therefore, perceived to be open, transparent and fair: it allows ordinary citizens, given parties' rules for eligibility, to directly participate and affect the outcome. Indeed, this was the reason some parties opted to democratize their selection processes from the get-go (Cross, 1996; Scarrow, 1999).

While procedural fairness explains a hypothesized positive effect of inclusive democratized selectorate on trust in parties, the second mechanism we present—intra party conflict—should explain a negative effect. Democratic selection processes that integrate a larger size selectorate into the process also intensify and highlight intra-party conflict. As opposed to selection via
party leadership, which encourage candidates to be loyal to the leadership, selection via 
democratic processes incentivizes candidates to compete against their co-partisans for the 
support of a large and amorphous selectorate. In other words, candidates are incentivized to 
emphasize their unique reputations, at the expense of their collective party reputation, and to 
distinguish themselves from their co-partisan candidates (Norris, 2004). Kernel (2013) finds 
that voters are less likely to vote for parties that allow voters, rather than party leaders, to select 
their candidates. She ascribes these findings to the notion that as a greater segment of the 
citizenry is involved in selection processes they become more aware to intra-party conflicts and 
factionalization, and they lose support in those parties. Similarly, Greene and Haber (2015) 
argue that democratic selectorates, i.e., primaries, enhance public's awareness of intra-party 
disagreements, which in turn negatively affect citizens' evaluations of parties and their tendency 
to vote for them. Thus, inclusive selection processes that expose intra party conflict should 
derive downward citizens' trust in parties.

Whereas the first mechanism associated with democratic selectorates—procedural fairness—
enhances citizens' trust in parties, the later mechanism—intra party conflict—is associated with 
a decreased level of trust. Given these two contradictory plausible projections about 
selectorate's effect on trust in parties, we hypothesize them both, and allow the data to 
empirically determine how selectorate affect trust levels, and which mechanism is at play: 
procedural fairness or intra-party conflict. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1a. Inclusive candidate selection methods are associated with higher levels of trust in parties.

H1b. Inclusive candidate selection methods are associated with lower levels of trust in parties.

Intra-party conflict is also the mechanism that relates the candidate selection's level of 
centralization to citizens' trust in parties. In what follows, we describe how decentralized 
selection processes intensify intra-party conflict both during the selection stage (prior to the
elections) as well as after the elections took place. We maintain that these instances of intra-party divisions should derive downwards citizens' trust in parties.

Decentralized candidate selection processes may bring to the political forefront intra-party divisions between the local and the national levels of the party. For example, it has been argued that there exists a tradeoff between territorial and the nationally desired social decentralization: when selections are conducted at the local level it is harder to optimize social representation, for instance, female representation (Matland and Studlar, 1996). Indeed, Mitchell and Bradbury (2004) argued that the Scottish and Welsh decentralized selection procedures exposed an intra-party tension, as central party leadership asked to balance territorial concerns with other concerns such as female representation and in the Welsh case, ethnic representation. In the Belgian case, earlier research shows that decentralized candidate selection does lead to more balanced territorial representation, but the latter comes at the expense of female representation in realistic list positions (Put, 2015).

Decentralized selection processes also strengthen intra-party divisions in the post-election period. It has been argued that parties, which employ centralized candidate selection processes behave in a unified manner, as the party's representatives tend to toe the party line (Hix, 2002; Sieberer, 2006; Wright, 1971), whereas decentralization, which is associated with greater territorial representation (Hazan and Rahat, 2010), stimulates conflict since parliament members, who owe their selection to a local group, might defy the national party line and represent their selections' constituents. Benedetto and Hix (2007, 762) hypothesize decentralized selection processes to be associated with greater disunity and rebellion, since "the more decentralized candidate selection and/or deselection is, the more likely that rebels will be protected from sanctions from their leadership."
These intraparty divisions, whether during the selection stage or in the post-election period, might give parties a bad image, harm their unitary record, cause party supporters and voters to be disgusted by the offensive competitive political process, and find it repulsive and hurtful. They may loath it and consequently lose trust in political parties themselves. We therefore hypothesize that:

H2. Decentralized candidate selection methods are associated with lower levels of trust in parties.

Data and method

We use data from Belgium and Israel to empirically test how levels of centralization and the scope of the selectorate affect citizens' trust in political parties. Both countries use a proportional electoral system to elect their parliament, which coupled with the countries' social cleavages yield a multiparty legislature. Moreover, in both countries various parties employ divergent mechanisms to select their lists enabling variation on both the selectorate dimension, as well as the level of centralization. We take advantage of this within country cross-party variation in selection processes—our key independent variable—to examine how they affect citizens' trust in parties. By analyzing each country separately we hold constant various macro-level determinants that were hypothesized to affect trust levels, for example a country's electoral system. In addition to the variation in selection methods that characterizes both Israel and Belgium, in both countries politicians and parties themselves publically argue in favor of democratizing selection processes, citing legitimacy crisis and increasing citizenry trust as crucial reasons. For example, Israeli Knesset Member Ben-Ari said on June 2011 that "only primaries will restore public's trust" (Chanel 7, 2011). In Belgium, especially during the 1990s several parties have democratized their internal decision-making procedures with the explicit
goal of decreasing citizens’ distrust towards political institutions (Devos and Verstraeten, 2002).

For Belgium we examine five consecutive legislative sessions from 1995 until 2014, and in Israel we examine three consecutive legislative terms from 2003 until 2013. We use individual-level data to measure respondent's trust levels and other independent variables, and utilize a two-level hierarchical linear model, whereby individual respondents constitute the first level, and parties within a given legislative session constitute the second level of analysis. We nest individual respondents within parties (in a given legislative session) using their answer to a vote question. Specifically in the Israeli case we use the Israeli Democratic Institute's Democracy Index, and utilize the question "If the elections were held today, which party would you vote for?" to connect respondents to parties. In Belgium we use the Belgium General Election Studies for the 1995, 1999 and 2003 elections, and the European Social Survey for the 2007 and 2010 elections. In both studies, the respondents were asked to answer the question: “What party did you vote for in the last national election?” This survey item allows us to nest respondents in political parties and link their levels of trust with intraparty candidate selection dimensions. Data on parties' candidate selection processes was collected by the authors.

**Variable operationalization**

The outcome variable is a categorical variable which measures citizens' trust levels towards political parties. Note that the question wording and the number of categories in the trust questions' answer differ between Israel and Belgium. Thus, while in Israel respondents were presented with four possible answers, in Belgium they were presented with five (see on-line appendix for details). Since we do not pool the Belgian and Israeli cases together this minor difference does not pose a serious challenge for the analysis.
The main predictors of the current research refer to candidate selection processes' selectorate scope and their levels of centralization. As mentioned earlier, we define the selectorate as the body that makes the decision and participate in the selection process. We operationalize it using three categories, whereby 0 represents selection via a small group of party leaders, 1 is used for selection via party delegates, and 2 represents selection via primaries (O'Brien and Shomer, 2013). Centralization level is also a three-category variable, whereby 0 was assigned to parties that uses solely nationalized procedures, 1 represent parties whose selection process involved both the national as well as the local level, and 2 was given to parties with exclusively localized procedures (O'brien and Shomer, 2013). For each country we present two models, whereby the first uses the above mentioned operationalization of selectorate and centralization, while treating each of the three-category variables as an index. The second operationalization validates the index assumption by treating each variable as a categorical variable, and using treatment contrasts: creating three dummy variables for selectorate and three dummy variables for centralization, each dummy indicates whether the respondents' answer falls in the dummy's category or not. In the model we have to treat one dummy variable as a reference group, hence we decided to use selection via party leaders as a reference group in the selectorate treatment contrast, and selection solely at the national level as the reference group in the centralization treatment contrast.

At the party level, we control for 2 additional variables. To begin with, we control for whether the party which the respondent voted for is a coalition or an opposition party. Norris (1999) finds that people who support the party in government have higher levels of institutional trust. Similarly, Lambert et. al. (1986) use data from the 1984 Canadian National Elections Study and find that respondents who support parties in the government had significantly higher levels of trust compared to those that supported opposition parties. We, therefore, included a dummy party-level predictor to identify whether the party the respondent supported is a coalitional party.
(1), or an opposition party (0). The second party-level predictor controls for the party's ideology, whereby -1 was assigned for right parties, 0 for center parties and +1 for left parties.

The literature review demonstrated how individual level demographic predictors have modest effects on political trust. It also emphasized that performance evaluations are more consequential for citizens' trust levels. We therefore included several individual level demographic variables in the right hand side of the model. Thus, we control for respondents' education levels, under the assertion that more educated respondents will exhibit greater trust levels; income levels (Slomczynski and Janicka, 2009) while hypothesizing that higher income increases trust; age while using a squared term of age as well to allow for curvilinear relationships, and gender.5

Moreover, some scholars argue that political and economic performance evaluations are more important predictors of citizens' trust levels than the demographic variables (Mishler and Rose, 2001). However, data availability concerns prohibit us from including direct measures of performance. To overcome this drawback we opted to use a proxy: satisfaction with democracy. Satisfaction with democracy has often been regarded as a performance measure (Huang et.al., 2008; Linde and Ekman, 2003). Klingemann (1999) used confirmatory factor analysis to find institutional trust and satisfaction with democracy to load on the same dimension he terms performance of the regime. Thus, we use the satisfaction with democracy measure to proxy for respondents' performance evaluation, as we expect high levels of satisfaction with democracy to positively correlate with high levels of trust in parties.
Results

Table 1 presents four hierarchical models, whereby the first two columns present the results for Israel and the last two present them for the Belgian case. In each model, the outcome variable measures citizens' trust levels in parties. As mentioned, we use both an indexed version and a categorical version of the two main predictors: selectorate and centralization. The results we obtain support the hypothesis that using democratized inclusive selectorate positively relates to citizens trust levels in parties, while selection at a decentralized level decreases citizens' trust in parties. It seems citizens, who vote for parties that employ primaries tend to trust them more, as the procedure is perceived to be more open and embracing. The positive effect of democratic selections' procedural fairness, therefore, outweighs the negative effect due to intra-party conflict. Intra-party divisions and struggles play, though, an important role in explaining the findings that voters who vote parties that employ decentralized processes, tend to exhibit lower level of trust towards parties.

With regards to selectorate's effect on respondent's trust level in parties we see, looking at the second column in Table 1 that Israeli voters, who vote for parties that use primaries have higher trust levels by 0.123 (on a 4 point scale), than voters who vote for parties that select their lists via party leaders, all else held constant. Similarly, voters who support parties that use delegates exhibit trust levels that are higher by 0.181—a 1/5 standard deviation—than those who support parties that select in an exclusive manner. Both results are statistically significant at a conventional level. The results for the Belgian case are comparable. A more inclusive selectorate is associated with greater trust in parties, all else being equal. Specifically, voters who vote for parties that use delegates exhibit higher trust levels by 0.340 (on a 5 point scale), which are about 0.4 standard deviations. The effect for selecting via primaries is slightly stronger whereby citizens who support these parties trust them more by a magnitude of 0.354
Theoretically we proposed two explanatory mechanisms that connect parties’ selectorates to citizens’ partisan—procedural fairness and intra-party conflict—each yielding a differing hypothesis about the effect. We allowed the data to determine which mechanism is at work. The analysis clearly supports H1 and reveals that voters who support parties that use primaries have higher levels of partisan trust, and therefore we conclude that either procedural fairness is the mechanism at work, or at a minimum its effect is stronger so it outweighs the negative effect of intra-party conflict and which helps explain primaries’ positive impact on citizens’ trust in political parties.

The analysis also finds support for H2. For both Israel and Belgium we find a negative effect of decentralization on partisan trust levels. In Israel, holding all else constant, voters, who support parties that use more decentralized processes have lower trust levels by a magnitude of 0.238 than voters, who support parties with centralized candidate selection. This result is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. In the Belgian case, where we can use the treatment contrast, we clearly see that the negative effect of decentralization (as is evident from the negative coefficient of the decentralization variable in the 3rd column of Table 1) stems from citizens who support parties that used solely localized procedures. The coefficient of selection
via combined national and local selection is non-significant (the 4th column in the table), the coefficient of local selections is -0.246, and is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, it is these citizens, who vote for parties that utilize entirely localized selections, who exhibit lower trust levels compared to others that support parties with only national selections.

The governmental status of a party also seems to affect citizens' trust levels. Respondents, who support parties in the government tend to have higher levels of partisan trust, compared to respondents that support opposition parties. In three of the four models presented in the paper, the coalition variable's coefficient is positive and statistically significant at least at the 0.1 level.

The demographic predictors included in the model also conform to their hypothesized effects. As many scholars argue, the effect of these demographic variables on trust levels is limited, as the more important determinants of partisan trust relates to citizens' performance evaluations. And indeed, controlling for all other variables, and especially the satisfaction with democracy variable—our proxy for performance evaluation—we find no demographic variable with a consistent significant effect across all models. For example, gender does not seem to affect partisan trust, neither in Israel nor in Belgium, and education seems to exhibit opposite effects in the two countries: in Israel, more educated voters tend to be associated with lower levels of partisan trust whereas in Belgium they tend to be correlated with higher levels of trust. Similarly, where Belgian affluent respondents exhibit greater trust level in political parties, in Israel income does not seem to bare an effect.6

While the effect of the demographic covariates is weak and inconclusive, the impact of satisfaction with democracy—our proxy for citizens' performance evaluation—is strong and steady. Higher levels of satisfaction with democracy, which proxy positive performance evaluations, are positively correlated with high levels of trust in parties. Thus in Israel, a one unit increase in respondent's satisfaction levels increases his/her trust in parties by a magnitude
of 0.169. Indeed movement on the full range of satisfaction with democracy, from respondents who are at not at all satisfied with democracy to those who are very satisfied, increases partisan trust by a magnitude of about 0.7. Belgium presents a similar picture. A one unit increase in the satisfaction with democracy scale is associated with an increase of 0.426 units in the 5 point trust in parties scale. This means that movement on the full range of satisfaction with democracy is associated with an increase of almost two units (out of a possible five) in trust for parties.

**Conclusion**

Ample scholarly work has been devoted to identifying the trends in citizens' trust in political parties and the reasons for its apparent decline. Scholars often look at macro—country level—factors such as, for example, institutional features. They also examine individual-level determinants of partisan trust, debating whether and to what extent demographic characteristics affect citizens' trust levels in parties. While some found support for these measures, others argued that it is the respondent's judgments and evaluations about political and economic performance that mainly shape their attitudes towards political institutions in general, and parties in particular. In this paper we add to our scholarly understanding about trust in parties by focusing attention on the meso—party level. We specifically examine whether and how the way parties select their candidates for electoral races affects citizens' trust levels.

Parties themselves, as part of their struggle to revamp their glory days of strong partisan attachments and support, adopted democratic intra-party candidate selection processes. This was done in an effort to facilitate greater citizen's involvement in and mobilization to the democratic process, hoping it will increase citizen's efficacy and sense of belonging, and restore their trust in political parties, as they will perceive intra-party decision making processes in general and candidate selection processes in particular to be more open, transparent and reliable. To what extent, then, do candidate selection processes affect citizens' trust in parties? To what
degree might selection procedures indeed be considered a tool parties can utilize to reestablish the electorate's confidence in them?

We theorized about the effect of candidate selection processes on partisan trust, while distinguishing between selections' centralization levels and the scope of the selectorate. The theoretical mechanism that links centralization levels to trust—pre and post-electoral intra-party conflict pointed to a negative relationship between decentralized selection processes and citizens' trust. For the scope of the selectorate variable we present two theoretical mechanisms that relate this variable to trust in parties. Procedural fairness links democratized selection processes, which enable an inclusive selectorate to participate, to high levels of trust in parties. As citizens view democratic selection processes as more transparent, fair and less corrupt, their confidence in the selection process is projected to the party as a whole. The second mechanism— intra party conflict—explains why democratic selection processes might negatively affect citizens' partisan trust. The increased size of the selectorate incentivizes candidates to compete against one another in a personalized campaign and differentiate themselves from their co-partisans frequently by throwing mud at their opponents, besmirching and discrediting them even at the expense of the collective party's reputation. Thus, democratic selectorates are associated with greater intra-party competition and more intensified intra-party conflict. This, in turn should derive downwards citizens' trust in political parties. Since both explanations are plausible, we let the data determine between the two explanatory mechanisms presented by empirically testing if and in what direction selectorate affect trust in parties.

We test the hypotheses using individual and party level data from Israel and Belgium, two countries which present a great deal of variation in their parties' candidate selection processes, and in which debate over selection methods revolved partially around arguments about partisan trust. We find that inclusive selectorates increase levels of trust in parties, meaning that we find support for the hypothesis that supporters of democratically organized parties are more trusting.
It seems the positive impact of citizen's perceptions about democratic selections' procedural fairness outweighs intra-party conflicts' negative effect. The data also support our second hypothesis that decentralized selection processes will tend to decrease levels of trust in parties.

The analysis presented above is a cross-sectional in nature, and does not directly test the mechanisms through which selectorate and centralization affect trust in parties. Future research will have to directly examine, possibly through experimental manipulation, whether and to what degree respondents perceive democratic selection procedures to be fairer and more transparent compared to exclusive selections, and whether this perceived procedural fairness translates indeed to greater levels of trust. A carefully designed lab experiment might enable us to also ascertain how voters weigh the two competing mechanisms of procedural fairness and intra-party conflict as they form evaluations about parties.

Moreover, to date, to the best of our knowledge no cross-national survey and almost no country-specific survey asked respondents direct questions about their views and opinions regarding parties' candidate selection processes. In fact the only survey we know of is the Israeli National Election Study from 1996, the election year for which the four largest parties in Israel used primaries to select their lists. It would be of great importance to researchers and politicians alike to systematically study citizen's views about intra-party selection processes so that we can progress our understanding about the potential multifaceted ability of primaries to amend and overcome parties' decline.

*Word Count: 8006 words.*
Notes

1 The legislative sessions for each country were chosen based on data availability of both, candidate selection processes, as well as survey data.

2 Note that two of the surveys were conducted shortly after the elections took place On April 2003 (where the elections took place by the end of January, 2003) and March 2009, where elections took place in February 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2009. The 2006 survey, on the other hand, was in the field prior to the elections. Thus the survey was collected during February, 2006, and the elections were held by March, 28\textsuperscript{th} of that year. Ideally we would have like to have an identical partisan vote question for all legislative terms. Moreover, the ideal type of a nesting question would have asked respondents in a post-election survey which party did they vote for in the elections, or in a pre-election survey it would have asked them if the elections were held today which party would they vote for. Indeed, the 2006 question falls squarely into this ideal type, but the 2003 and 2009 questions do not. Unfortunately the surveys contained no other information we could use to overcome this pitfall.

3 Since the outcome variable has four categories for the Israeli case, and five for the Belgian we also estimated a two-level ordered logit hierarchical model, for each country. Substantive results are similar to the ones presented in the paper, especially concerning the effect of selection processes, and we therefore chose to present the more easily interpretable results. The on-line appendix includes the ordered models for Belgium and Israel.

4 In Israel we could not include treatment contrast for both selectorate and centralization, as this led to perfect multicollinearity. Therefore, we only include contrast for the selectorate variable.

5 While we wish we could have included additional individual level predictors such as respondents' subjective well-being or their corruption perceptions, we simply do not possess these indicators for the years included in each country's analysis. Please refer to the on-line appendix for more details concerning variables' coding.

6 See the on-line appendix for details.

7 In the survey respondents were asked: 'the primaries bring about: (1) a worst system of government, (2) no change, (3) a better system of government'. 38% of respondents believed primaries bring about a better system of government whereas only 16.2% thought they bring about a worse system of government. (43.2% believed primaries have no effect). These numbers might differ nowadays from the 1996 period, as a more dynamic public debate about the advantages and disadvantages of the primary system took place. Unfortunately the INES did not continue asking this question in later surveys. Moreover, the 1996 INES regrettably did not ask
respondents the battery of questions about trust in people and institutions. We therefore, cannot directly ascertain
the relationship between perceptions about primaries’ plusses and citizens’ trust in parties.
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Table 1: Selection Effect on Trust in Parties: Israel and Belgium

| Parameter               | Israel Index | Israel treatment contrast | Belgium Index | Belgium treatment contrast |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
|                         | β (P-value)  | β (P-value)               | β (P-value)   | β (P-value)               |
| Fixed Effects           |              |                           |               |                            |
| Intercept               | 1.757 (<0.001) | 1.757 (<0.001)           | 2.410 (<0.001)| 2.318 (<0.001)           |
| Selectorate             | 0.181 (0.003) |                           | 0.145 (0.049) |                           |
| Decentralization        | -0.238 (0.008)|                           | -0.133 (0.023)|                           |
| Delegates               | 0.181 (0.003) |                           | 0.340 (0.008) |                           |
| Primaries               | 0.123 (0.019) |                           | 0.354 (0.004) |                           |
| National+Local          |              |                           | -0.016 (0.848)|                           |
| Local                   |              |                           | -0.246 (0.021)|                           |
| Party Ideology          | 0.023 (0.266) | 0.023 (0.266)             | 0.036 (0.429) | -0.015 (0.737)            |
| Coalition               | 0.168 (<0.001)| 0.168 (<0.001)            | 0.165 (0.100) | 0.107 (0.286)             |
| Satisfaction with       | 0.169 (<0.001)| 0.169 (<0.001)            | 0.426 (<0.001)| 0.426 (<0.001)            |
| democracy               |              |                           |               |                            |
| Education               | -0.010 (0.059)| -0.010 (0.059)            | 0.024 (0.050) | 0.025 (<0.045)            |
| Income                  | -0.016 (0.283)| -0.016 (0.283)            | 0.017 (0.002) | 0.017 (0.002)             |
| Age                     | -0.012 (0.016)| -0.012 (0.016)            | -0.005 (0.325)| -0.005 (0.311)            |
| Age2                    | 0.000 (0.049) | 0.000 (0.049)             | 0.000 (0.374) | 0.000 (0.359)             |
| Gender                  | -0.025 (0.469)| -0.025 (0.469)            | -0.001 (0.954)| -0.001 (0.975)            |
| Variance Components     |              |                           |               |                            |
| Intercept               | 0.056 (0.284) | 0.056 (0.284)             | 0.220 (<0.001)| 0.212 (<0.001)            |
| Residual                | 0.834         | 0.834                     | 0.835         | 0.835                     |
