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ELECTORAL AND PARTY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Robert P. Steed, The Citadel

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Earl and Merle Black, writing in 1987, argue persuasively that much of southern political history can be understood within the context of Daniel Elazar's concept of traditionalistic political culture.¹ Although other types of political culture were also evident— most notably variants of individualistic political culture occasionally manifesting themselves in populism and entrepreneurial individualism—it was traditionalism which most fully captured the essence of the southern political past.

Certainly, V.O. Key, Jr.'s analysis of South Carolina politics at mid-century is consistent with the Blacks' assessment more generally.² The overriding concern with race and white supremacy which characterized the state's politics muted competing tendencies toward a class-based populist politics and molded South Carolina politics into patterns congruent with Elazar's traditionalistic political culture with its emphasis on paternalism, elitism, social hierarchy, a limited role for government, and conservatism exemplified by strong resistance to change.³ Well into the 1950s South Carolina's political system was characterized by low voter turnout, one-party politics, a high percentage of blacks in the population (but not in the electorate), white demagogues willing to utilize the race issue for their benefit, and malapportioned state legislatures.⁴

Over the past three decades, however, South Carolina politics changed dramatically. The economic and social changes associated with increased urbanization (and industrialization), economic development, the pressures of the civil rights movement, and population diversification were accompanied by a decline in racist rhetoric on the

part of candidates and public officials, an enlarged (and eventually) integrated electorate, a reduction of the political influence of rural areas, and an increasingly competitive two-party system.⁵ While developments in many elements of South Carolina politics have been striking, perhaps none is more significant than the sweeping change in electoral and party patterns in the post-World War II period. This article focuses on those developments with a view toward clarifying the nature of the contemporary party system in the state. We shall first describe the nature of the state's party conflict over the past half century and then analyze the South Carolina party system of the 1990s. Given the close connections between party activity and support patterns and elections, we shall pay particular attention to the state's electoral patterns.

Party and Electoral Patterns, 1948-1994

From the 1890s to the 1950s the Democratic Party dominated the South Carolina political and party systems. At the presidential level, for example, Democrats won every election between 1900 and 1964 with the single exception of 1948 when native son Strom Thurmond carried the state as the States' Rights Party candidate. Not only did the Democrats normally win, they won impressively, dropping below 90 percent of the vote only once during this period (at 87 percent in 1944). Similarly, prior to the 1960s there were no Republican successes in senatorial, congressional, gubernatorial, or state legislative elections, and most Democrats ran unopposed in the general election.

This situation began to change in the 1950s, first at the presidential level and then more gradually at the state and local levels. Dramatic economic and social changes, the most important of which were related to the sweeping challenges to the Jim Crow system of race relations, contributed to cracking Democratic solidarity. One of the earliest and clearest manifestations of this change in the state's traditional one-partyism came in 1948 when Strom Thurmond launched a third party candidacy for president. Running as the States Rights Democratic Party candidate, Thurmond received over 72 percent of the

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vote. Although the state returned to the Democratic fold in 1952, it was only by a 51 percent to 49.3 percent margin. In 1956 Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic candidate, carried the state, but only with a plurality as 55 percent of the vote went to either Republican incumbent Dwight Eisenhower or to Independent Harry F. Byrd. John F. Kennedy barely carried the state in 1960 with 51 percent of the vote.

The growing disaffection with the Democratic Party among many of the state's political leaders and voters was demonstrated in 1964 by two dramatic events which, together, launched a period of Republican growth. The first was Senator Strom Thurmond's switch from the Democratic to the Republican Party; the second was Barry Goldwater's winning 59 percent of the state's presidential votes. In a related development, Congressman Albert Watson supported Goldwater and was stripped of his seniority by House Democrats; he resigned, switched parties, and regained his vacated seat in a special election in 1965, thus becoming the first Republican elected to Congress in the state since Reconstruction. Further impetus to the fledgling Republican Party came the next year when both Thurmond and Watson won reelection to their respective seats and when the Republicans actually nominated, for the first time in decades, a gubernatorial candidate, Joseph Rogers. Although Rogers lost, he did gain 42 percent of the vote and carried three counties. Rogers' unexpectedly strong showing was accompanied by Republicans winning 16 seats in the South Carolina General Assembly. Thus, by the mid 1960s the Republican Party had been reborn in South Carolina.⁶

Starting from this base, over the past three decades, South Carolina has moved steadily, though slowly, toward a competitive two-party system. This has been most apparent in presidential elections where Republican candidates have carried the state in seven of the last eight elections. (See Table 1.) The only exception was in 1976 when fellow southerner Jimmy Carter won with 56 percent of the vote. Indeed, South Carolina has become one of the staunchest Republican strongholds at this level, frequently ranking as one of the two or three most Republican states in the nation in presidential voting. For example, in 1992 George Bush's 48 percent of the popular vote in South Carolina was the second highest percentage he received in that election.⁷

Beyond the success at the presidential level, Table 1 illustrates the Republican Party's increased strength at the state and local levels as well. For example, Republican gubernatorial candidates have shown consistent electoral strength since 1960. Republicans not only won the gubernatorial elections of 1974 and 1986, Carroll Campbell was reelected in 1990 in a genuine landslide with almost two-thirds of the vote. In 1994 the Republican Party retained the governor's mansion when David Beasley defeated Nick Theodore. The state's two U.S. Senate seats have been split since 1964, the year of Strom Thurmond's switch to the Republican Party, as Ernest F. Hollings has held one seat for the Democrats and Thurmond has held the other for the Republicans. Similarly, in congressional elections Republican strength has clearly increased. From 1965 to the present, Republicans have held at least one congressional seat, and since 1982 they have held at least two seats and have regularly garnered over 40 percent of the total congressional votes cast. Republicans won three seats (half the state's congressional delegation) in 1982, 1984, and 1992; they held a majority of seats from 1980-1982, and returned to majority status in 1994. After two decades of gradual improvement in state legislative elections, Republicans finally passed a significant threshold in 1990 by winning a third of the seats in the lower chamber (enough to sustain a gubernatorial veto). Then in stunning fashion, they became the majority party in the lower chamber in 1994, a year in which they also won seven of the state's nine constitutional offices (including the governorship).⁸ This surge in legislative seats was fueled by a number of post-election switches to the Republican Party by individuals elected to the legislature as Democrats.

In short, then, the South Carolina party system has undergone a significant realignment in the post-World War II period. The competitive balance between the parties in the electoral arena is clearly different now than at mid-century as the traditional pattern of one-partyism has been shattered. Not surprisingly, other of the elements of the traditional party system have also been altered as evidenced by data on party activists and organizations in the 1990s.

Table 1
Republican Strength in South Carolina: 1964-1994

Year	Percent of Presidential Vote	Percent of Gubernatorial Vote	Percent of Senate Vote	Percent of U.S. House Delegation	Percent of State House Delegation	Percent of State Senate Delegation
1964	58.9		62.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
1966		41.8	48.7	16.6	12.9	
1968	38.1*		38.1	16.6	4.0	16.0
1970		45.6		16.6	8.9	
1972	70.8		63.3	33.3	16.9	6.5
1974		50.9	28.6	16.6	13.7	
1976	43.1			16.6	9.7	6.5
1978		37.8	55.6	33.3	12.9	
1980	49.4*		29.6	66.6	14.5	10.9
1982		30.0		50.0	16.1	
1984	63.4		67.7	50.0	21.9	21.8
1986		51.1	36.1	33.3	25.8	
1988	61.5			33.3	29.8	23.9
1990		69.5	64.2	33.3	33.8	
1992	48.0		46.9	50.0	40.3	32.6**
1994		50.4		66.6	48.3**	

* Represents a plurality in a three-way contest.

** Subsequent to the election, a number of Democrats switched parties, giving the Republicans a majority of seats by the time of the December, 1994 legislative organizing session. As a result of additional party switching by legislators and special elections, the Republican party held 52 percent of the State House seats and 43.4 percent of the State Senate seats in January, 1996.

Source: Data compiled by the authors.

Party Organizations and Activists

Prior to the 1960s neither party in South Carolina had much in the way of formal organization. Republican organization was virtually non-existent because Republicans in the state were virtually non-existent; indeed, the state chairman during the 1950s served fulltime as chairman of the Board of Public Welfare in Washington, D.C. The main effort in the 1950s was spearheaded by retired industrialist David Dows, but little progress was made.⁹ Democratic organization existed, at least on paper, from the precinct through the county to the judicial circuit to the congressional district to the state level; in reality, however, there was little real organization or organizational activity above the county level. During the early 1900s, as the primary became the principal means for making nominations, the organizational structure was adjusted with the judicial circuit and congressional district levels being eliminated.¹⁰ Still, formal organizational activity above the county level was rare, in large part because it was unnecessary for Democratic victory.¹¹

As the Republican party became more electorally competitive in the 1960s, both parties responded with greater attention to their respective organizations. J. Drake Edens, Jr., led the effort for Republican organizational development as early as 1961, serving as the state chairman of the party between 1962 and 1965 and building the state's first genuine party organization.¹² With the party switches of Thurmond and Watson, their subsequent election victories, and the election of a handful of Republicans to the state legislature, the Republican Party had a small but active nucleus interested in organizational development. By 1966, the Republicans had established a headquarters divided into four divisions: Administrative, Research, Organization, and Finance. Each division was headed by a full-time salaried director, with an Executive Director having overall responsibility for headquarters operation.¹³

The Democrats responded slowly, in large part because their dominance of the state's politics was still nearly complete. The focus of the State Executive Committee was less on inter-party combat than on administering the electoral system, especially the party's primaries.¹⁴ While the Democrats began to take more notice of the

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emerging Republican threat and moved to become more formally organized and more efficient in such activities as fund raising and candidate support in the mid-1960s, their main concerns related to changes occurring within the Democratic Party itself.

Specifically, the South Carolina Democratic Party had to contend with two major changes in the mid-to-late 1960s. First, the civil rights movement, as part of its more general assault on the Jim Crow system, targeted laws denying African-Americans the right to vote and rules preventing them from participating in party activities. Second, following the 1968 national Democratic convention, this broad assault on exclusionary practices became intermingled with the broader effort to reform the national convention delegate selection process.¹⁵ In both cases, South Carolina Democrats found themselves wrestling with a number of changes in election laws (for example, the 1965 Voting Rights Act) and party rules. At the same time, and in a related matter, they struggled to deal with what many considered to be unwelcome changes in the national party. South Carolina Democrats sought ways to remain a part of the national organization while distancing themselves from the increasingly liberal image of the national party and such locally unpopular presidential candidates as Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern.

During the 1970s and 1980s both parties continued to develop their state and local organizations. Building on their efforts in the state's urban centers, and boosted by the gubernatorial victory of James B. Edwards in 1974 as well as a scattering of other electoral wins at the state and local levels, the Republican Party had by the early 1980s established a well-staffed, permanent headquarters in Columbia. In addition, it succeeded in getting a county chair in almost every county, had worked to extend local organizations into at least some precincts in each county of the state, and had regularly organized well-attended, efficiently run state conventions. The Democrats were also able to make progress once the turmoil associated with adjusting to new national party rules and the entry of African-Americans into the party organization subsided. The key for Democrats was in holding together a fragile biracial coalition as African-Americans became more heavily involved in party organizational operations, especially at the state level where they came to comprise a majority of delegates at the state party

convention by 1988.¹⁶

Currently, both parties in South Carolina have active organizations, in sharp contrast to the situation existing a half century ago. Both have a permanent headquarters in Columbia, with executive directors and full-time paid staffs, and both are engaged in a variety of electoral and organizational activities. In addition to working in elections at all levels in the state, both parties' organizations are also involved in helping to develop and maintain local organizations throughout the state. There is also regular interaction with the national headquarters, with both parties' state headquarters seeing themselves as liaison between the national and the local organizations. Especially for the Democrats this is a smoother operation now than in the 1970s and early 1980s. It has been made even easier by the appointment in 1995 of Donald Fowler, a long time state party leader, as co-national chairman of the Democratic Party.

Of course, the existence of a paper organization is not a guarantee of an active or effective party apparatus. As David R. Mayhew points out, there are more appropriate criteria for assessing party organization, criteria which relate to such matters as organizational autonomy, longevity, nature of the organization's internal structure, involvement in nominations, and the nature of the incentive structure.¹⁷

While the data on electoral developments are indicators of increased party competition in the state, they do not put together all the pieces in the puzzle. Mayhew's admonition to examine other elements is supported by earlier research on state convention delegates in South Carolina in 1980, 1984, 1988, and 1992 supplemented by surveys of precinct officials in 1986, 1988, and 1991. These studies strongly point to the complementary development of other indicators of increased party competition in the state: activists who are involved in a variety of organizational and campaign activities, increased involvement of activists from a variety of backgrounds and experiences differentiated in the aggregate across party lines, and activists whose ideological and issue orientations have the potential to help structure politics for the electorate.¹⁸

Data from a survey of local party precinct officials in South Carolina in the fall of 1995 provide current information relevant

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to understanding the state's party system.¹⁹ Here we are particularly interested in examining, within an interparty comparative framework, these party activists' personal and political backgrounds, activity levels and patterns, ideological and issue orientations, and perceptions of party organizational change in recent years. This should enable us to clarify the nature of the contemporary party system in the state and to update our understanding of South Carolina party development.

Selected Background Characteristics

While there are relatively few socioeconomic and demographic differences between local Democrats and local Republicans in South Carolina, those which do exist point to some key variations in the parties' histories and in their current orientations. (See Table 2.) The sharpest differences between the two groups are on race and religion. Consistent with previous studies of South Carolina party development,²⁰ the data in Table 2 point to the significantly greater involvement of blacks in the Democratic Party and the virtual lack of black involvement in the Republican Party in recent years. Over one-fourth of the Democratic activists are black as opposed to none of the Republican activists. Although the racial distinction between the two parties is not nearly so sharp at the local organizational level as at the state party conventions, there is still ample evidence that blacks contribute more significantly to the operations of precinct and county organizations in the Democratic Party than in the Republican Party.

With regard to religion, the two groups of party activists differ on a number of variables. The Republican activists tend to be considerably more likely than the Democrats to identify themselves as fundamentalists, charismatics, and evangelicals, they are more likely to say that they have had a born again religious experience, and, most importantly, they tend to be much more likely than their Democratic counterparts to say they either support or sympathize with the Christian Coalition (75 percent to 11 percent). Clearly, there is some support here for the widely held view that the religious right has become involved in the South Carolina Republican Party. The data on

Table 2
Personal Background Characteristics of Local
Political Party Officials in South Carolina

Background Characteristic	Democrats	Republicans
<u>Age</u>		
25 or under	1	1
26 to 39	10	14
40 to 60	48	47
60+	42	38
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	70	67
Female	30	33
<u>Race</u>		
White	73	99
African American	26	0
Other	1	1
<u>Education</u>		
High school or less	23	17
Some college	18	27
College graduate	18	26
Graduate education	41	30

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Table 2 (continued)

Background Characteristic	Democrats	Republicans
<hr/>		
<u>Family Income</u>		
Under \$10,000	4	1
\$10,000 - \$19,999	10	4
\$20,000 - \$29,999	11	11
\$30,000 - \$39,999	15	16
\$40,000 - \$49,999	14	15
\$50,000 - \$59,999	11	14
Over \$60,000	35	39
<u>State of Childhood</u>		
South Carolina	75	60
Other South	11	15
Non-South	14	26
<u>Fundamentalist</u>	6	23
<u>Charismatic</u>	7	11
<u>Evangelical</u>	16	32
<u>Born Again</u>	32	47
<u>Christian Coalition</u>	11	75
<u>Church Attendance</u>		
Every week	49	59
Almost every week	20	22
Once a month	12	6
Few times a year	14	9
Never	6	3

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

frequency of church attendance are also consistent with this conclusion in that the Republican activists generally report higher levels of attendance than do the Democratic activists.

From the standpoint of party development, it is also important to note the varying patterns of responses when these activists were asked about their state of childhood. Clearly, the Democratic activists are more southern, and more South Carolinian, than the grassroots Republican leaders, a reflection of the greater importance of immigration to Republican Party development in the state (as in the South generally) in the post-World War II period; this points to an inter-party variation of some significance within the context of party development in the region.

The other data in Table 2 reveal relatively minor inter-party variations. Very few of either group are under 39 years of age, and almost identical majorities of each are college graduates or above. Roughly two-thirds of these local activists are male, regardless of party, and most are relatively affluent (although Republicans' incomes are slightly higher than the Democrats' incomes).

Local activists differ across party lines more sharply with regard to their political backgrounds. Not surprisingly, in light of the more recent development of Republican viability in the state, grassroots Democratic Party officials indicate longer histories of party activity than their Republican counterparts. As shown in Table 3, 42 percent of the Republicans have been active less than 10 years in contrast to 20 percent of the Democrats. Of the Democrats, moreover, 25 percent have been active over 30 years compared with 14 percent of the Republicans. Similarly, slightly larger percentages of the Democrats have held other political positions, and Democrats are more likely than Republicans to come from families which were identified with their present political party. In fact, the data on parental party identification point clearly to the historical weakness of the South Carolina Republican Party—as well as to its recent growth—inasmuch as more local Republican officials report parental identification with the Democratic Party than with the Republican Party. Not only have a large portion (almost half) of the local Republican leaders broken from their family's party ties, almost one-fourth of them have personally switched from the Democratic Party, a figure standing in sharp contrast

Table 3
Political Backgrounds of Local Political
Party Officials in South Carolina (in percent)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
<u>Years Active</u>		
10 years or less	20	42
11-20 years	27	29
21-30 years	27	15
More than 30 years	25	14
<u>Other Pol. Positions</u>		
Party officer	46	34
Elective position	10	7
<u>Parents' Party Id.</u>		
Both Democrat	74	42
Both Republican	5	26
Both Independent	6	11
Mixed	5	13
Not sure	10	8
<u>1992 Presidential Vote</u>		
Bush	10	96
Clinton	87	0
Perot	3	3
Other	0	0
Did not vote	0	0
<u>Party-Switcher? (Yes)</u>	12	24

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

to the Democrats, only 12 percent of whom have switched from the Republican Party.

The contribution of disaffection with the Democratic Party to the development of the Republican Party is seen clearly when the data on parental party identification and party switching are combined with the data on how these activists voted in the 1992 presidential election.

Less than 90 percent of the current Democratic leaders were happy with their party's most recent presidential candidate, even though Bill Clinton was a fellow southerner. This stands in contrast to the high level of voting loyalty displayed by the Republican activists in 1992.

Political Activities

The movement toward increased two-party competition and improved party organizations over the past two decades is generally reflected in the activity levels of local party officials in both parties. As shown in Table 4, respectable percentages of these local officials were active in the various campaign activities listed. These officials were especially active in distributing campaign literature, contributing money to the candidates, and distributing posters and lawn signs. They were quite inactive, however, in using public opinion surveys and purchasing billboard space, activities which are more likely to be done by those at higher levels in the party organization. With regard to inter-party comparisons, the Republicans indicate a slightly higher level of activity, especially on those activities involving the highest percentages of officials in both parties.

While these data do not paint a picture of South Carolina party officials or organizations as groups of uniformly unceasing activists, they do suggest that these are far from being the moribund organizations common in the state a few decades ago. Indeed, the range and variety of activities performed is impressive enough to indicate a reasonable degree of organizational commitment. This is especially true for the Republican Party, undoubtedly a reflection of the greater emphasis on organizational effort by that party nationally and/or the perceived need to overcome decades of electoral weakness

Table 4
Campaign Activities Personally Performed by
Local Leaders (in percent)

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
<u>Campaign Activities</u>		
Distributing campaign literature	58	60
Contributing money to candidates	61	67
Distributing posters and lawn signs	50	62
Organizing telephone campaigns	30	29
Organ. campaign events	22	25
Mailings to voters	26	34
Conducting reg.drives	27	15
Organ. door-to-door canvassing	22	17
Dealing with media	14	16
Arranging fund-raising events	20	19
Public opinion surveys	9	10
Purchasing billboards	3	3

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

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in the state through a vigorous organizational effort.

There is additional evidence of relatively strong commitment to campaign activity. At all electoral levels, solid majorities of the local officials in both parties said that they are at least "moderately active" in election campaigns. The Democrats are slightly more active as a group in local elections with 71 percent placing themselves in the top two activity level categories, the active percentage declining somewhat for state elections, and declining still further for national elections. But even at the national level, 55 percent of these grassroots Democratic Party activists indicate they are moderately or very active.

While Republican leaders are similarly active, their electoral level emphasis is a bit different. In contrast with the Democrats whose greater local and state efforts and lower national effort are consistent with that party's pattern of electoral success in recent years (and the widely reported southern disaffection with the national Democratic Party and its presidential nominees), the local Republican officials demonstrate very slight declines in levels of activity from local to state to national elections.

Ideology and Issues

One expected consequence of increased inter-party competition is a clearer differentiation of the parties by ideology and issues. Tables 6 and 7 indicate that such a process of party sorting has taken place in South Carolina by the 1990s. With regard to ideological self-placement, the local Democratic leaders vary sharply from the local Republican leaders in two ways. First, local level Democrats are clearly more liberal than the Republicans (50 percent to 2 percent) and significantly less conservative (26 percent to 98 percent). Second, they are more liberal than conservative (50 percent liberal and 26 percent conservative), but they are not nearly so overwhelmingly liberal as the Republican officials are overwhelmingly conservative (98 percent to 2 percent). Interestingly, however, there is some indication in these data that the Democratic Party has become a bit more liberal over the past five years; the 1991 survey of local party officials found a 4:3 ratio of

Table 5
Levels of Activity of Local Party Officials in
Local, State, and National Elections (in percent)

<u>Election Level</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Local Elections		
Very active	49	36
Moderately active	22	29
Somewhat active	18	22
Not active	11	12
State Elections		
Very active	37	29
Moderately active	28	35
Somewhat active	22	23
Not active	13	13
National Elections		
Very active	33	26
Moderately active	22	32
Somewhat active	24	21
Not active	21	21

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

liberals to conservatives among Democratic activists as compared with the almost 2:1 ratio in 1995.

Table 6
South Carolina Local Party Officials'
Ideological Self-Placement (in percent)

<u>Ideology</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Very liberal	6	0
Somewhat liberal	44	2
Middle of Road/Moderate	24	1
Somewhat conservative	25	74
Very conservative	<u>1</u>	<u>24</u>
	100	101
N=	(231)	(312)

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

Similarly sharp differences between the Democratic and Republican activists occur in their respective positions on a series of specific issues. (See Table 7.) The Democrats are more liberal than the Republicans in the aggregate on all except one of the 13 issues, and in a number of instances (the need for an Equal Rights Amendment, handgun control, fewer services to balance the budget, national health insurance) the differences are quite large. Even on those issues where the Democrats evince little liberalism (e.g., school prayer, prohibition of pornography), they are considerably more liberal than the local Republican leaders. The only exception to this pattern is the issue of sacrificing civil liberties to fight drugs; here the two parties are each about evenly split with the Republicans being a bit more liberal than the Democrats. In short, the South Carolina party system is characterized by local leadership groups which clearly reflect different ideological and issue orientations.

Table 7
South Carolina Local Party Officials' Positions
on Selected Issues (in percent liberal responses)

<u>Social Issues</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
The Equal Rights Amend.	74	16
Personal choice for abortion	48	12
Affirm. action (women)	64	13
Affirmative action (racial minorities)	65	12
School prayer/Bible reading	46	20
Reduce environmental protection	89	36
Prohibit porn. sales	42	19
Birth control info in schools	79	28
Fight drugs, sacrifice civil liberties	47	50
Handgun control	85	22
Ban homosexuals as teachers	61	17
Fewer services to balance budget	81	12
Nat. health insurance	90	10

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

Party Perspectives

A final consideration in this analysis relates to local party officials' views of their own political parties. Perceptions of such matters as organizational change and feelings toward the party offer insight into changes in the party system, activist morale, and possible future concerns for the party.

Data on party switching and the 1992 presidential vote presented earlier suggest, for example, there is a noticeable element of unhappiness among the South Carolina Democratic activists regarding the recent direction of the national Democratic Party. The data in Table 8 offer only slight confirmation of this point, however. Democrats are only a little more likely to identify strongly with their state party than with their national party; for the Republicans, the pattern is reversed with slightly greater identification with the national party than with the state party. Indeed, in contrast to earlier data which show sharp inter-party differences, there is really no notable difference in the state-national identification patterns between the two parties. There is some variation between the parties with regard to strength of identification; however, as Republican activists at both levels of party identification tend to identify somewhat more strongly with their party than the Democratic activists identify with theirs. For example, when we combine strong and weak identifiers at the state level, we find that 91 percent of the Republicans indicate such identification as compared with 84 percent of the Democrats. At the national level, the figures are 93 percent for the Republicans and 80 percent for the Democrats. Perhaps most surprising is the finding that a few of the Democratic precinct leaders actually identify themselves as Republicans (5 percent at both the national level and the state level).

Whether these are leaders in the process of switching parties in the near future, we cannot say, but there is no doubt that data such as these (even when the percentages are so small) provide evidence of a party experiencing some internal turmoil.

When asked about their feelings toward the political parties, the Democrats once again indicate less affection for their party than the Republicans do for theirs. While a larger percentage feel close to the state Democratic party than to the national Democratic party, this

Table 8
Party Activists' National and State Party
Identification (in percent)

<u>National Party Id.</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Strong Democrat	64	0
Weak Democrat	16	0
Independent Leaning Dem.	9	0
Independent	6	1
Independent Leaning Rep.	2	6
Weak Republican	1	12
Strong Republican	<u>2</u>	<u>81</u>
	100	100
N=	(219)	(310)
 <u>State Party Id.</u>		
Strong Democrat	66	0
Weak Democrat	18	0
Independent Leaning Dem.	8	0
Independent	4	1
Independent Leaning Rep.	3	7
Weak Republican	0	11
Strong Republican	<u>2</u>	<u>80</u>
	101	99
N=	(229)	(312)

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey

relatively lower affection relates to both the state and national parties. (See Table 9.) For example, 72 percent of the Democrats say they feel close to the national Democratic party as compared with 85 percent of the Republicans saying they feel close to the national Republican party. Similarly, while 79 percent of the Democrats indicate that they feel close to their state party, 90 percent of the Republicans respond in this manner. Perhaps the most heartening thing in these data is the marked improvement in Democratic feelings over the past five years; in the 1991 survey only about a third of the Democrats indicated close feelings for the national party and less than half felt close to the state party. While still not as positive as among the Republicans, there may be some indication here of a shoring up of loyalty to the Democratic party organization at the grassroots in South Carolina.

Consistent with the evidence suggesting that the South Carolina parties have changed, the local officials in both parties also perceive some change. However, the Republican activists are considerably more optimistic about the nature of that change than are the Democratic activists. For example, 86 percent of the Republicans, but only 10 percent of the Democrats, see their county party organizations as being stronger now than they were ten years ago. Thirteen percent of the Democrats and eight percent of the Republicans say that they see no local organizational change while 77 percent of the Democrats and only 6 percent of the Republicans feel that their party organizations are weaker than a decade ago. Thus, in spite of scattered evidence that local Democratic activists are more committed to their party than a few years ago, there are still strong indications of Democratic Party decline in South Carolina.

In short, then, these data suggest that local Republican leaders exhibit more support for their party and perceive their party in a more positive light than their Democratic counterparts. For the Democrats, the changes of the past decades are generally cloaked in pessimism and may well be contributing factors to the declining electoral support in the state in recent years. Local Republican leaders, on the other hand, have clearly been energized and invigorated by these changes, and their views of the party's organization reflect this upbeat spirit.

Table 9
Party Activists' Feelings Toward the Political
Parties (in percent)

<u>Feelings Toward the National Dem. Party</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Close	72	1
Neutral	17	4
Distant	<u>11</u>	<u>95</u>
	100	100
N =	(218)	(296)

<u>Feelings Toward the National Rep. Party</u>		
Close	4	85
Neutral	16	10
Distant	<u>81</u>	<u>6</u>
	101	101
N =	(199)	(309)

<u>Feelings Toward the State Democratic Party</u>		
Close	79	2
Neutral	15	5
Distant	<u>5</u>	<u>93</u>
	99	100
N =	(223)	(298)

Table 9 (continued)

<u>Feelings Toward the State Republican Party</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Close	4	90
Neutral	16	6
Distant	<u>80</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
N=	(201)	(310)

Source: 1995 South Carolina Local Party
Officials Survey.

Conclusion

These data point to three clear conclusions. First, the South Carolina party system has moved significantly toward two-party competition. Consistent with changing voting patterns, the data on local party officials demonstrate the development of inter-party competition. The two major parties' activists are differentiated in certain personal and political background characteristics as well as in their positions on ideology and issues. The parties are now structuring political conflict in the state in ways generally compatible with the existence of a two-party system.

The Republican party has benefited from population movement into South Carolina and from the demonstrated disaffection of many white South Carolinians with the Democratic party; consequently, the Democrats have seen an erosion of electoral support and activist loyalty. Unfortunately for the Democrats, much of the evidence presented here—e.g., presidential voting patterns, identification

with and feelings toward the party, and activists' perceptions of organizational change over the past decade—raises some questions about their future, including potential for further deterioration in party identification and electoral strength. Whether this potential materializes or is arrested by the state Democratic Party's efforts (and there is some evidence of at least limited success in these efforts), the result of change over the past three decades has been the development of a party system characterized by two parties competing on more equal terms than at any time in the past century. Even so, the Republican Party appears poised on the brink of soon becoming the clearly dominant party with the Democrats relegated to the position of loyal opposition, holding few statewide offices and only a minority (albeit a substantial minority) of the members of each house of the state legislature.

The second broad conclusion is that both parties show signs of organizational vitality. The data reviewed above suggest strongly that both parties' efforts in the state go well beyond cosmetic adjustments of the paper organizations. In each party there is an organizational structure and cadre of local officials who are at least moderately active in a wide range of party business. While the inter-party patterns differ somewhat, both aggregates of party leaders indicate relatively high levels of activity in elections at all levels of the system, and they are engaged in a wide variety of party-related activities.

Unfortunately, we do not have comparable data on party organization in South Carolina prior to the 1980s; consequently, it is difficult to conclude with certainty that the party organizations have changed in specified ways in recent years. There are, however, two reasons for believing that this has been the case. First, most of the descriptions of the traditional party system in the state²¹ comment on the virtual absence of tangible organization in either party. To the extent that these descriptions were accurate, our data suggest remarkable organizational improvement. Second, the party activists themselves, especially the Republicans, perceive that some noticeable changes have occurred.

Moreover, there is evidence of leadership experience and stability within both parties in the state. Among party activists (as opposed to public officials) there is little evidence of significant turnover, and few have switched parties. There are, in short, firm

leadership bases upon which the organizations can build. In sum, these data point toward the conclusion that each party, in a time of substantial partisan change in the state, has ongoing vitality and organizational strength and adaptability to changing electoral circumstances. This is especially true for the Republican Party, but it also holds for the Democratic Party in spite of its slip from the position of dominance it held at mid-century and in spite of some evidence we have examined which points to the potential for further weakening.

The third broad conclusion is that the South Carolina party system is now considerably less consistent with traditionalistic political culture than it was at mid-century. Increased inter-party competition, greater economic diversity, increased heterogeneity within the electorate, and greater inclusiveness within the ranks of party activists of groups once largely excluded, have made the system less elitist and less paternalistic. Additionally, modern campaign techniques (especially those related to use of the media) have largely replaced the more personal campaigning of the past, and more extensive and inclusive party organizations have replaced the relatively small, low-activity organizations of the past. At the same time, scattered elements of the traditionalistic political culture remain; for example, the conservatism characteristic of such a culture is still relatively widespread, especially with regard to such issues as abortion, school prayer, and pornography. Within the ranks of Republicans, such strong conservatism is evident across an even wider range of issues. In spite of such vestiges of traditionalism, however, it is reasonably clear that the South Carolina party system currently operates in a much different cultural context than it once did, and there is little likelihood of a return to full-blown traditionalism.

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Endnotes

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2. V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), chap. 7.
3. Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism*, 2d ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), esp. pp. 99-102.
4. Key, *Southern Politics*, chap. 7; also see, Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, *The Transformation Of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequences Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), chap. 11.
5. Donald L. Fowler, *Presidential Voting in South Carolina, 1948-1964* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, Bureau of Governmental Research and Service, 1966); Chester W. Bain, "South Carolina: Partisan Prelude," in William C. Havard (ed.), *The Changing Politics of the South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), chap. 12; Bass and DeVries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics*, chap. 11; William V. Moore, "Parties and Electoral Politics in South Carolina," in Luther F. Carter and David S. Mann (eds.), *Government in the Palmetto State* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, Bureau of Governmental Research and Service, 1983), chap. 4; Laurence W. Moreland, Robert P. Steed, and Tod A. Baker, "South Carolina," in Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker (eds.), *The 1984 Presidential Election in the South* (New York: Praeger, 1986), pp. 123-132; Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker, "South Carolina Party System: Towards a Two-Party System," in Luther F. Carter and David S. Mann (eds.), *Government in the Palmetto State: Toward the 21st Century* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, Institute of Public Affairs, 1992), chap. 2; and Cole Blease Graham, Jr., "Partisan Change in South Carolina," in Robert H. Swansbrough and David M. Brodsky (eds.),

The South's New Politics (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

6. See Bain, "South Carolina: Partisan Prelude;" Moreland, Steed, and Baker, "South Carolina;" and Steed, Moreland, and Baker, "South Carolina: Toward a Two-Party System".

7. Laurence W. Moreland, "South Carolina: Republican Again," in Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker (eds.), *The 1992 Presidential Election in the South: Current Patterns of Southern and Electoral Politics* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1994), chap. 7.

8. Specific data are reported in South Carolina Election Commission, *Election Report 1994-1995* (Columbia, SC: 1996); also see "Dixie Voters Look Away: South Shifts to the GOP," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 52 (1994), pp. 3230-3231; *Charleston Post and Courier*, November 10, 1994, pp. 1-A, 6-A, 7-A.

9. See Moore, "Parties and Electoral Politics in South Carolina," esp. pp. 46-47.

10. Frank E. Jordan, Jr., *The Primary State: A History of the Democratic Party in South Carolina 1896-1962* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Democratic Party, 1962), pp. 2-3.

11. Key, *Southern Politics*, chap. 7.

12. Moore, "Parties and Electoral Politics in South Carolina," pp. 46-47; Bass and DeVries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics*, p. 24.

13. *Standing Operating Procedures of the South Carolina Republican Party Headquarters*, 1966.

14. Most of the party's archival materials for the early 1960s deal with records of candidate filings, primary returns and recounts, and other such details related to conducting primaries and elections rather

than with organizational matters.

15. See, for example, William Crotty, *Party Reform* (New York: Longman, 1983); Nelson W. Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); David E. Price, *Bringing Back the Parties* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1984), chap. 6; and Robert P. Steed, "Party Reform, the Nationalization of American Politics, and Party Change in the South," in Tod A. Baker, Charles D. Hadley, Robert P. Steed, and Laurence W. Moreland (eds.), *Political Parties in the Southern States: Party Activists in Partisan Coalitions* (New York: Praeger, 1990), chap. 1.

16. For a more complete discussion of party organizational development in South Carolina, see Robert P. Steed, "Party Organizations in South Carolina," in Daniel S. Ward and Andrew M. Appleton (eds.), *State Party Organizations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, forthcoming 1996). Much of the following discussion of contemporary party organizations in the state is also developed in much more detail in this analysis.

17. David R. Mayhew, *Placing Parties in American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

18. See, for example, Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker, "The Nature of Contemporary Party Organization in South Carolina" (paper presented at the 1987 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Ill., September, 1987); Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker, "Party Decline or Revitalization? The Case of South Carolina" (paper presented at the 1990 annual meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association, Providence R.I., November, 1990); Robert P. Steed, Tod A. Baker, and Laurence W. Moreland, "Dancing to a Different Tune? A Comparison of State and Local Party Activists" (paper presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the Midwestern Political Science Association, Chicago, Ill., April, 1991); and Robert P. Steed, Laurence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker, "Party Sorting at the Local Level in South Carolina," *The National Political Science Review* 5

(1995), pp. 181-196. Additionally, William V. Moore, Cole Blease Graham, Jr., and Frank T. Petrusak conducted surveys of the 1993 Republican state convention delegates and the 1994 Democratic state convention delegates, and William V. Moore and C. Connor Crook conducted a mail survey of the state's county chairs in 1995. These data are discussed in Cole Blease Graham, Jr., William V. Moore, and Frank T. Petrusak, "Republicans and Democrats, Christian Coalition Members and African-Americans: Comparing Party Activists in South Carolina" (paper presented at the 1995 annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Tampa, Florida, November, 1995).

19. The data were gathered in a mail survey conducted in October to December, 1995. Samples of local party officials and county chairs were drawn from precinct organizational forms made available by each party's state headquarters. Three waves of questionnaires were sent out. The response rate for Democratic officials was 46 percent (N=248); the response rate for Republican officials was 49 percent (N=332).

20. For example, Bain, "South Carolina: Partisan Prelude;" Graham, "Partisan Change in South Carolina," pp. 167-170; Moreland, Steed, and Baker, "South Carolina: Different Cast, Same Drama in the Palmetto State," pp. 128-133; and Robert P. Steed and John McGlennon, "A 1988 Postscript: Continuing Coalitional Diversity," in Tod A. Baker, Charles D. Hadley, Robert P. Steed, and Laurence W. Moreland (eds.), *Political Parties in the Southern States: Party Activists in Partisan Coalitions* (New York: Praeger, 1990), chap. 11.

21. See, for example, Key, *Southern Politics*, chap. 7.

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