The State of the Parties Seventh Edition

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The State of the Parties (Seventh Edition)

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THE STATE OF THE PARTIES

The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties

Seventh Edition

Edited by John C. Green, Daniel J. Coffey, and David B. Cohen

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Acknowledgments

THE RESEARCH EFFORT THAT PRODUCED THIS BOOK is the product of more than two decades of scholarship. The first edition originated from research coordinated in 1993 at the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics on the changing role of political parties in American politics. The second edition reflected the impact of the 1994 elections, while the third through sixth editions reported further changes after the 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008 elections, respectively. The present, seventh edition considers the impact of the 2012 election and subsequent events.

From the beginning of this effort, our goal has been to bring together party scholars from around the nation to discuss the state of American party politics and new avenues of research. On each occasion, we have been privileged to field a "dream team" of contributors, and although the roster has differed each time, the team for this edition is just as strong, including a mix of veteran and emerging scholars. We are deeply grateful for their participation. Taken together, the chapters in this volume offer insight into the "state of the parties" now that the twenty-first century is a decade old.

The development of this volume was greatly aided by the staff of the Bliss Institute. Janet Lykes Bolois was not only instrumental in compiling the chapters and managing the layout but has also honed the unique skill of putting up with the editors—no simple task, to be sure. In addition, we would like to thank Janet, Jenni Fitzgerald, and our other colleagues for their help with the 2013 State of the Parties conference, where these papers were first presented. As in the past, we owe a debt of thanks to Jon Sisk, Benjamin Verdi, and their

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The State of the Parties

Change and Continuity in 2012

Daniel J. Coffey, David B. Cohen, and John C. Green

O N NOVEMBER 4, 2010, REPUBLICANS WON 63 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and picked up six Senate seats. Two years later, President Barack Obama won reelection, defeating Governor Mitt Romney. The first term of the Obama era revealed that the intensely competitive balance between the two political parties has become a defining feature of American politics.

Political parties are as central to the operation of American government as they have ever been. The parties have adapted with remarkable agility to a new social and economic environment in ways that other social and economic institutions—newspapers, television networks, record labels, bookstores—have not. This is in part because American political parties are composed of networks of activists, donors, and the general public. The parties, centuries-old institutions, are structured in such a way that new candidates, new movements, and new ideas are allowed to find a place, reinvigorating the parties themselves. Combined with ideological polarization, the parties assemble armies of supporters every two years, with the outcome of national elections often depending upon which party is better able to mobilize its supporters.

This collection of chapters is the seventh in a series that assesses the state of the parties after a presidential election (Shea and Green 1994; Green and Shea 1996; 1999; Green and Farmer 2003; Green and Coffey 2007; 2011). In this volume, a group of prominent and emerging scholars examines the "state of the parties" from a variety of perspectives. These chapters reveal American political parties to be vibrant and dynamic institutions, central to all aspects

of politics in a functioning democracy, and worthy of special study in their own right. But before turning to these chapters, a brief review of the years leading up to the 2012 election is in order.

The 2012 Presidential Campaign

Similar to 1980, 1992, and 2004, the 2012 election was in many ways typical of a somewhat weakened incumbent seeking reelection. In these previous cases, a fragile economy saddled the incumbent administration with low approval ratings and a rocky first term. While we describe the events of the primary season and campaign more in depth below, it is important to keep in mind a point made by journalist Tim Murphy about the media coverage of the presidential election: the term "game-changing" was applied to dozens of moments in the 2012 election (Vavrek and Sides 2013, 1). In reality, in an environment of intense polarization and well-funded campaigns using ever-more sophisticated mobilization techniques, the effect of the campaign was largely a case of what political scientists refer to as "activation," and the outcome largely was decided by what are referred to as "fundamental" factors, such as the state of the economy. There were many important events in the 2012 campaign, but structural forces exert a strong influence on election outcomes.

The political landscape had changed quite dramatically since Obama's first election in 2008. In that election, Democrats had cemented their control of Congress. The Great Recession's full impact, while driving Obama's election, would not be felt until 2009 and 2010. Obama began his presidency with hopes that political polarization might subside. Unfortunately, administration promises that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the fiscal stimulus), totaling over $800 billion, would lower unemployment to 7.8 percent by the end of 2009 were not fulfilled (McCullagh 2009). Instead, unemployment rose from 6.8 percent in November of 2008 until hitting a high of 10 percent in October of 2009, the highest since the severe (but short) recession of 1982. Unemployment would stay above 8 percent for almost the entire first term, the longest stretch of unemployment at that level since the Great Depression.

In this context, the Tea Party movement was born. Similar to the Ross Perot–inspired Reform Party movement of the 1990s, the Tea Party movement was motivated by a concern about burgeoning debt and deficits. The U.S. federal budget deficit rose from $161 billion in 2007 to $1.4 trillion in 2009 and would stay over $1 trillion for most of Obama's first term.[1] The Obama administration was caught between a rock and hard place. The sharp

increase in federal spending and deficits helped spark the Tea Party movement. On the other hand, the danger of spending too little could lead the economy back into a crisis. Indeed, austerity measures enacted in Europe weakened the European recovery, and some economists, including Noble Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, warned that government spending was too small to fend off the rapidly deepening recession (Heath and Salamat 2010).

Additionally, the Tea Party movement's primary motivation was opposition to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), passed in March of 2010. Since the Truman administration, Democrats had been pushing for health care reform, with many Democrats advocating for the creation of a single-payer system (see, e.g., Herszenhorn 2009). "Obamacare," as the ACA become known, was in reality a much more market-oriented reform, with some ideas borrowed from the health reform law passed in Massachusetts in 2006 ("Romneycare") and conservative organizations such as the Heritage Foundation (e.g., Zinner and Livingston 2012). During town hall meetings with constituents in 2010, Democratic members of Congress were often heckled and berated by Tea Party supporters, and sometimes threatened with violence (Hulse 2010). In the context of a poor economy and an increasing national debt, the perception that the administration was spending recklessly fueled the Tea Party movement. Members of the Tea Party were deeply suspicious about the changes the bill would bring about, with rumors of "death panels" and a government takeover of health care. Sarah Palin, the 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee and a darling of the Tea Party, exemplified the hysteria caused by Democratic health care proposals when she wrote in a Facebook post "The America I know and love is not one in which my parents or my baby with Down syndrome will have to stand in front of Obama's 'death panel' so his bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective judgment of their 'level of productivity in society,' whether they are worthy of health care" (Barr 2009). While many of these claims were unfounded, the fallout from the financial crisis left the federal government with an ownership stake in General Motors and Chrysler, and the government had given out $200 billion in bank bailout funds for many of the nation's leading banks. These factors perhaps fed into anxiety about health care reform. By September 2010, Obama's approval ratings had fallen to 44 percent.[2]

The Republican wave in the 2010 midterm elections was historic by any measure. The party reestablished the majority control of Congress they lost in the 2006 midterm election. Additionally, they gained over 675 state legislative seats, exceeding their gains in 1994, resulting in taking control of 19 state legislative chambers from Democrats and full control of government in 20 states. They also won six governorships (for a majority of the nation's statehouses) (Storey 2010).

President Obama briefly seemed to regain his footing when he announced late in the evening of May 1, 2011, that Osama bin Laden had finally been found and killed in a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, following a successful covert operation ordered by the president. The president's approval rating spiked (and online prediction markets indicated nearly certain reelection prospects) (Jones 2001). Yet the political situation in Washington did not improve. The Obama administration, in an attempt to mollify the newly empowered opposition, had decided against raising the federal debt ceiling in a lame-duck legislative package to extend the Bush tax cuts, while Democrats held the majority in the final months of 2010. This set up a political showdown in the summer of 2011 over increasing the federal debt ceiling, normally a routine procedure. Though a last-minute deal was struck, the apparent dysfunctionality of the American political system led to diminished approval ratings for both the Congress and the president. Standard & Poor's lowered its long-term credit rating for the United States, largely citing political dysfunction as the reason for the ratings change.

Polarization extended beyond Washington. At the state level, many newly elected Republican governors began pushing for broad reductions in state spending, and intense legislative battles and public protests broke out in states such as Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana when governors pushed for "right to work" legislation. In this setting, the president's reelection appeared in doubt, and a number of challengers stepped up to be the Republican nominee.

The 2012 Presidential Primary Season

With President Obama facing no opposition for his party's nomination in 2012, all the action was on the GOP side of the ledger. In the beginning and differing from the situation in 2008, the Republican Party had a well-financed and well-known front-runner: Mitt Romney. The former Massachusetts governor simply never stopped running from his failed bid four years earlier, and many assumed he would win the nomination with little effort. Romney, himself, campaigned during the invisible primary season as if he was already the nominee, campaigning against the incumbent president, not the other Republican candidates (Scherer 2011). The poor quality of the Republican field exacerbated this notion of Romney's front-runner status. Beyond Romney, the cast of characters was long but lacked heft, leaving many observers with the impression that Romney would easily wrap up the nomination, thus sparing the party faithful the bitter infighting experienced in 2008. That was not to be the case.

The 2012 GOP field was indeed weak. In fact, one Republican strategist commented that it was the "weakest Republican field since Wendell Willkie

won the nomination on the sixth ballot in 1940" (Henneberger 2011). And it may have been. Besides Romney, the field ranged from conservative unknowns Herman Cain and Thaddeus McCotter, to conservative fire brands Michele Bachmann, Rick Santorum, and Newt Gingrich, to conservative governors Rick Perry and Tim Pawlenty, to the hero of the Libertarians, Rand Paul, to the only centrist in the group, Jon Huntsman. Few of these individuals were household names, at least outside the Beltway. Despite this, the nomination campaign was fraught with a surprising amount of drama as conservatives were reluctant to rally behind Romney (e.g., Dougherty 2011). Whether it was his Mormon religion, or his moderate record including the creation of a health plan as governor that resembled the Affordable Care Act, or his inability to connect with ordinary folk, the conservative base searched for an alternative (Viguerie 2011).

The invisible primary stage witnessed a number of Republican candidates receiving scrutiny in the media as alternatives to Romney. None could quite match up, though. Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty, a steady candidate not given to hyperbole that can be such an advantage in the early stages of a campaign, never gained traction and exited early. Buoyed by her win in the Ames Straw Poll in August 2011, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann was then courted by conservatives.[3] But like many who would come under the glare of the national spotlight, Bachmann faded quickly. Following Bachmann would be Godfather Pizza CEO Herman Cain, the only African American candidate in the GOP field, who generated initial excitement followed by great disappointment after revelations of an illicit affair. Texas governor Rick Perry's late entrance into the race in December 2011 likely doomed his candidacy before it ever got started. His dismal early performance in the Republican debates finished him off.

The Iowa Caucus changed the state of the race, however. Although media reports had Romney winning a very close election on the night of January 3, when the official tally came in, Rick Santorum, the former two-term Pennsylvania senator, had edged out the front-runner by a mere 34 votes (29,839 to 29,805), with Texas congressman Ron Paul finishing a close third. The lack of a knockout blow by Romney provided enough daylight to offer hope to conservatives looking for that alternative. Though Romney would easily win the New Hampshire primary a week later, Newt Gingrich, the mercurial ex-Speaker of the House from Georgia, would win the South Carolina primary on January 21. A four-way race would ensue for the next several weeks. Talks commenced in early February 2012 between the Santorum and Gingrich campaigns to combine forces and create a "unity ticket" that would compete against Romney. Those negotiations collapsed when neither candidate could agree on who would be the leading man and who would be the understudy

(Green 2013). Had the unity ticket become a reality, Mitt Romney's road to the nomination would have become much more difficult.

Over time, the backing of party elites along with a strong base of donors helped Romney hold off his challengers (Vavrek and Sides 2013). By early April the race was all but over. But it may have been a Pyrrhic victory. The campaign was bruising. Twenty-seven debates and scores of attack ads exposed many of Romney's weaknesses as a candidate that were later exploited to great advantage by the Obama campaign (e.g., see Johnson 2012).

The General Election

For the first time in the modern campaign finance regime, neither presidential campaign would accept federal matching funds. In the summer of 2012, the Romney campaign was at a significant disadvantage, having depleted its financial resources throughout the primary campaign, while the Obama campaign had spent much the previous year amassing a war chest for reelection. Advisors for both campaigns noted that the summer was crucial: between April and the end of August, Obama had outspent Romney $177 million to $46 million on ads (Stein and Blumenthal 2012).

As a result, Romney's campaign struggled throughout the summer. By July, Obama led most polls by about 3–5 points, and out of 37 national polls conducted in July and August, Obama led 25 polls while Romney led only 7. Additionally, nearly all of Romney's leads were by a single point, while many polls showed Obama with leads of close to double digits.

On August 11, 2012, Governor Romney chose Wisconsin representative Paul Ryan to be his running mate. A Midwestern Catholic whose social views on abortion were fairly mainstream for the Republican base, Ryan was seen by many as a "true" conservative. Also, since Romney's campaign strategy was focused on the economy and deficit reduction, Ryan's prominence in the debt-limit fight assured many fiscal conservatives, especially Tea Party members, that the Romney campaign was serious about reducing government spending and would commit to making this an issue in the general presidential election. Ryan had a reputation as a policy wonk, something that, to put it charitably, differentiated him from the controversial 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee, Sarah Palin. Briefly, the selection appeared to work. After a summer of trailing the president by between 3 to 13 points in most polls, Romney began to catch up. By the end of August, most polls showed a tight race as Obama's lead shrunk to as little as a single point.

The Republican National Convention, however, seemed to reestablish Obama's lead. Shortened by a day due to Hurricane Isaac, the Tampa, Florida,

convention garnered little attention, with most news coverage devoted to actor Clint Eastwood's (the "surprise" guest the campaign had been promoting) poorly received monologue in which Eastwood berated an empty chair, using it as a prop to symbolize President Obama's absentee leadership. Indeed, a Gallup poll conducted after the convention found Romney actually lost ground to Obama, one of only three candidates to not have a postconvention bounce in the Gallup poll's history (Jones 2012).

Unfortunately for Romney, by the end of September, he had fallen behind by as much as 7–9 points in some polls and led in only one of 34 national polls conducted between the convention and the first debate. Some of this decline can be explained by the release of a secret video recorded at a private fundraiser in which Romney criticized 47 percent of Americans as strong supporters of Obama because they were "dependent upon government" (Corn 2012). Following the release of the video obtained by *Mother Jones* magazine and uploaded on September 17, promptly going viral, Romney's numbers sank among independent voters (Newport 2012). More than anything, however, Obama's lead in the polls reflected an improving economy. By the end of September, unemployment was back down below 8 percent for the first time since the start of the Great Recession, while GDP had grown for six consecutive quarters by the end of September.

The fall campaign briefly became interesting in October when the president performed very poorly in the first presidential debate in Denver. The first debate was a bit of a shock as Obama appeared disinterested, much as President George H. W. Bush had in an infamous 1992 debate performance. Post-Denver debate polls showed Romney surging ahead. Debates often produce temporary shifts in polls that dissipate by the end of a campaign. Indeed, as noted in some of the following chapters, those most attentive are also the most ideologically polarized, while those least engaged are now even more likely to tune out media coverage of politics (Arceneaux, Johnson, and Cryderman 2013). While the Romney campaign talked about its "momentum," the polling changes were most likely due to disaffected Republicans being reengaged, rather than moderates bolting to Romney from Obama.[4] The president performed much better in the final two debates and was widely viewed as more engaged and aggressive. Additionally, the administration seemed to effectively respond to Superstorm Sandy that devastated the East Coast in late October. Additionally, the president made some key appearances with the popular Republican governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie, demonstrating bipartisanship and empathetic presidential leadership. By early November, while some polls were showing a tied race, other polls, especially those conducted in key battleground states, were showing Obama with a small but stable lead.

On Election Day, Obama won 51.1 percent of the popular vote. This was somewhat of a disappointment for the campaign considering its vaulted campaign machine, but it mirrored the close 2000 and 2004 election results. Obama won 332 electoral votes and lost only Indiana and North Carolina from his 2008 victory. For Republicans, the loss resulted in consternation, as Obama again won Ohio, Virginia, Florida, and Colorado—all states that had voted for Bush in both 2000 and 2004. There was little change in Congress; Democrats gained two seats in the Senate, which they already controlled, and the Democratic gain of eight seats in the House left them well short of a majority.

A major factor in the campaign had been the use of advanced analytics. The Obama campaign already had experience with using experimental techniques to develop and refine its strategy and tactics (Issenberg 2012). In 2012, the campaign doubled-down on these efforts, heavily investing in its technological infrastructure. The campaign staffed a full office of computer and social scientists in Chicago. The campaign experimentally tested messages and donations requests, slightly adjusting the messages to different groups to determine which messages achieved the highest return or which emails were most likely to be opened. For example, the campaign found that sending emails with odd and often casual titles were most successful, with emails benchmarked against up to 17 alternatives (Green 2012).

In contrast, the Romney campaign, while also investing heavily in advanced analytics, suffered from a poor execution of what was judged by some to be largely a good strategy. Project ORCA claimed to have ground-level data on upwards of 23 million voters. The plan was to use this information to fine-tune where mobilization efforts would be most effectively deployed right up to and through Election Day. Instead, the system crashed, and many of the campaign's volunteers were locked out for hours during the day and had not been given backup paper instruction manuals (Falcone 2012).

The Obama campaign also outmaneuvered the Romney campaign on more traditional tactics. As was the case in 2008, the Obama campaign widely outdid its competitor, staffing 786 field offices nationwide, compared to 284 for Romney. Republicans in general place more emphasis on "direct" contact through phone calls and doors knocked. Yet the Obama field offices gained a reputation as bases in which eager volunteers got to know the surrounding communities and, while data to answer this question is sparse, the Obama campaign believed the voter contacts made through these field offices were more effective.

The 2012 campaign also took place in the post *Citizens United* era. In terms of financing, the race was closer. Though the Obama campaign outspent the Romney campaign directly, Republican Super PACS helped to close the gap. When all campaign spending was tallied, Obama and the Democratic allies

doubled Republican spending on television advertisements ($412 million to $215 million) and online advertising ($118 million to $101 million), while Republicans spent more on telemarketing ($75 million to $35 million) and consulting services ($31 million to $7 million). Overall, each campaign spent nearly a billion dollars (Stein and Blumenthal 2012).

Obama's Rocky 2013

President Obama was riding high after his reelection, with a solid 56 percent approval rating just after New Year's Day 2013. But his second-term honeymoon, if it could be called that, was short-lived. After scoring a political victory in early January when the House Republican leadership agreed to the president's demands not to extend the Bush era tax cuts in exchange for a deal avoiding the fiscal cliff, things turned south for the Obama White House.[5] In the wake of the December 14, 2012, Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, in which 26 students, teachers, and staff members were murdered, President Obama urged Congress to strengthen the nation's gun laws by expanding background checks "for anyone trying to buy a gun" and restoring "the ban on military-style assault weapons and a 10-round limit for magazines" (Obama 2013a). The president's modest proposals were widely supported by the American public by margins of 9 to 1.[6] Despite this, no gun control measure was passed by Congress, dealing the president a significant blow on an issue he publicly expended much political capital.

And things got worse quickly for the White House as negative publicity from the September 11, 2012, attacks on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, continued as news of the IRS targeting conservative groups during the reelection campaign broke. In June, media reports surfaced that a former National Security Agency and CIA employee named Edward Snowden had leaked damaging information to the media about the United States' mass surveillance of individuals and foreign governments. In late August, President Obama threatened to take military action against the Syrian government in response to reports that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons against its own civilians and rebel forces in their civil war. After failing to get approval for an airstrike from Congress, a compromise was negotiated by Russia, and the Obama administration backed down from what was widely perceived as either an empty threat or what could have been a violation of the War Powers Act had the administration acted unilaterally (e.g., see Crowley 2013; Tackett and Dorning 2013).

On October 1, 2013, the federal government shut down after the breakdown of budget negotiations between the Obama administration and

Congress. Lasting 17 days, the shutdown was viewed as a victory for Obama as Republicans failed in their attempts to use the threat of the shutdown to dismantle or delay the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. The victory was short-lived, however, as the rollout of Obamacare was plagued by a barely functioning website and other problems, which led the president to admit that the website "hasn't worked as smoothly as it was supposed to work" and leading him to "remind everybody that the Affordable Care Act is not just a website" (Obama 2013b). By the end of a very rocky 2013, President Obama's approval rating had plummeted to around 40 percent.

The rest of this book examines the impact of 2012 on the "state of the parties," noting both change and continuity. This examination proceeds in five parts: polarization and the electorate, polarization and political elites, Tea Party politics, Super PACs and partisan resources, and partisan activities. A brief review of each section follows.

Polarization and the Electorate

What impact did the 2012 election have on the broader party system in the United States? The chapters in this first section of the book suggest that polarization between the parties is rooted deep within the electorate.

In chapter 2, Alan Abramowitz finds that polarization has increased in the American electorate. He finds that *affective* polarization, or the intensity of voter attachment to their party, is increasingly negative views of the opposition party among Americans. In contrast to some studies that argue that voter's emotional attachments to parties are the main source of polarization in the mass electorate, Abramowitz argues that it is being driven by a growing ideological divide between each party's base of identifiers. As a result, political campaigns are more focused on attacking the opposing party, and these messages are more effective at energizing and turning out supporters than in the past.

In chapter 3, David Kimball, Bryce Summary, and Eric Vorst find many of the same patterns, although they argue that emotional, or affective, factors play a larger role in driving polarization among the mass electorate. They find partisans express more fear and contempt toward the opposite party and its presidential candidates. They agree that this "demonization" has many roots, which include differences in the ideological beliefs or values of party identifiers. Yet they note that group attachments and the growth in partisan media have contributed substantially to the psychological foundations of polarization. In an examination of Tea Party supporters, they find that evaluations of the nation's direction were predicted largely by how much contempt they have for the Democratic Party and President Obama.

In chapter 4, Edward G. Carmines, Michael J. Ensley, and Michael W. Wagner explore why the liberal-divide conservative is such a powerful anchor for the two-party system. Their analysis of public opinion finds that citizens have more complex policy views than the unidimensional liberal-conservative divide. They find the electorate is composed of several types of voters, including the more familiar liberals, conservatives, and moderates, but they also identify that many "moderates" have either populist or libertarian views. Dashing the hopes of those who believe there will be a uprising of moderates in forming a third party, their data indicate that this group of those self-identifying moderates are actually polarized from each other. As a result, neither party can achieve a dominant majority as shifting issue priorities from election to election keep these voters from attaching to one party. On the other hand, a moderate third party would be unable to gain agreement on basic principles since libertarians and populists are sharply divided on social and economic issues.

In chapter 5, Jeffrey M. Stonecash explores how polarization replaced what had been a central issue of previous editions of this book, the decline of parties and the rise of candidate-centered politics. Regional sorting, he finds, produced a temporary dislocation of each party's base, but over time congressional polarization has resulted as new regional attachments have cemented. Similar to Abramowitz, Stonecash finds that policy positions of the parties matter; on issues as diverse as taxes, entitlements, race, and foreign policy, the parties now offer clearly different agendas to voters, and voters in congressional elections are now selecting members who represent these different policy priorities.

Polarization and Political Elites

While there are sharp partisan differences among the general public, polarization is just as, if not more, intense among party elites, as illustrated by the chapters in this section.

In chapter 6, William Connelly takes on the question of whether or not American politics really is dysfunctional. While many assume the answer is "yes," historically, this may not be true, and we may be diagnosing the wrong problem. Connelly argues that our politics is the result of our dislike of the "cacophony of Madisonian pluralism" that serves as the guiding principle for the American constitutional system. The historical evidence, he argues, indicates we are no more partisan or gridlocked than in the past. Instead, Americans may be "hypersensitive" as the post–World War II era was an unusually calm one dominated by the success of the New Deal and the Cold War consensus. Instead, Connelly argues, the Madisonian political system

allows for both inter- and intra-party fighting and compromise, and there is little evidence the system has failed to take action over the past decade in which the nation has faced several serious crises.

In chapter 7, Michael J. Ensley, Michael W. Tofias, and Scott de Marchi examine when congressional polarization began and whether polarization is the result of a new breed of partisan members or if those in the House and Senate have changed over time to become more polarized. Using a new measure of member ideology, they find that contrary to previous research, congressional polarization began in the 1960s, a decade earlier than previously thought. Second, they find that the ideology of members of Congress changes over time, and this has contributed to polarization.

In chapter 8, Boris Shor tackles ongoing debate about whether and how polarization can be reduced by examining state legislative polarization. With a dataset measuring the voting patterns of thousands of individual legislators and 99 state legislative chambers, Shor finds that polarization is correlated with district public opinion, but that the correlation is actually stronger for within-district polarization than for between-district polarization. Candidates, uncertain about the median opinion within their districts, have more legislative success appealing to the more ideologically extreme voters in their districts. While many have identified redistricting or income disparities as a primary cause of polarization, Shor's research demonstrates that there is a great deal of longitudinal and cross-sectional variation in the level of polarization across the states. Given this variation in institutional and demographic factors, Shor concludes that there is not a single "smoking gun," and proposed reforms for primaries, the redistricting process, or term limits may not be able to reduce legislative polarization.

In chapter 9, Daniel Coffey also examines polarization at the state level by examining state party platforms. The platforms demonstrate that state parties are highly polarized; the most liberal Republican platform is more conservative than the most conservative Democratic platform. At the same time, parties are not monolithic, and ideological differences exist within each party. Importantly, Coffey's research shows that issue priorities vary within and across parties. He concludes that federalism, usually seen as a moderating force in a two-party system, may be contributing to polarization in the current environment.

Tea Party Politics

How did the rise of the Tea Party affect the Republicans and the broader party system in the United States? The chapters in the following section of the book suggest that the Republican Party has serious internal divisions and that the Tea Party will remain a force within the GOP in the coming years.

In chapter 10, Ronald B. Rapoport, Meredith Dost, and Walter J. Stone examine what the rise of the Tea Party means for the Republican Party. Their analysis of a national survey finds that Tea Party supporters are significantly more conservative than non–Tea Party Republicans and that they have significantly different issue priorities than mainstream Republicans. Their clout within the party, they find, is enhanced by their greater level of activity in campaigns and other forms of political participation. Rapoport, Dost, and Stone confirm these findings using a survey of over 12,000 members of the largest Tea Party membership group, FreedomWorks. In a second wave of surveys with FreedomWorks, they find that many of these activists have extremely negative views of Establishment Republicans. At the same time, however, at least in 2012, many Tea Party members backed Romney and other congressional Republicans. Rapoport, Dost, and Stone are skeptical, however, that such a pattern will reappear in 2016 if the party does not nominate a Tea Party presidential candidate.

In chapter 11, Peter Francia and Jonathan Morris, confirm the broad difference between Tea Party Republicans and Establishment Republicans. In fact, their analysis finds that intra-party differences between the groups within the GOP on issues and evaluations of political figures were greater than those within the Democratic Party, often seen as the more fractious party. They trace these differences to different patterns of media consumption as they document that Tea Party Republicans rely on conservative sources with much greater frequency. Similar to Rapoport, Dost, and Stone, however, they also find that Tea Party Republicans provided support for Mitt Romney. In an examination of nearly a quarter of a million Tweets in October 2012, they find that the tone of Tea Party and Establishment Republicans were similar in their positive tone for Romney and negative tone for Obama, indicating that the party unified during the presidential election.

Finally, in chapter 12, William Miller and Michael Burton explore some of the philosophical differences within the Tea Party itself. They argue that the Tea Party has so far managed to meld traditionalist virtue and libertarian philosophy despite the internal conflicts between the beliefs of each. They argue that to understand the fortunes of the GOP, it is necessary to understand how the different factions—libertarians, traditionalists, and pragmatists—can be aligned with or against each other in shifting patterns. The Tea Party's strength, they argue, is its strategic position in contemporary American politics. As a minority faction, the Tea Party has successfully made use of the mechanisms of Madisonian democracy by freely employing the legislative tools of obstruction. At times, this provides the pragmatist (establishment) Republicans a valuable source of strength in their battle with Democrats. In other moments, however, the factions within the Tea Party are led to openly disagreement, weakening the overall position of the GOP. For the most part,

they note that the Tea Party's merger of libertarians and traditionalists has been a powerful and disruptive force that both serves and frustrates pragmatic Republicans.

Super PACs and Partisan Resources

In 2012, party resources were a central story in light of the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* and the creation of Super PAC organizations. The chapters in this section describe these changes.

In chapter 13, Diana Dwyre and Robin Kolodny return to their earlier work on parties and fund-raising. They find that political parties are still "orchestrating" the connection between candidates and their financial supporters. With the recent rise of many new organizations, they examine if such groups dilute the influence of parties. They argue that parties, as seat maximizers, benefit by the support of nonparty groups and that parties still play an important role in the "orchestration" of financial and electoral support. Contemporary parties have adapted to this new environment, and parties clearly seem to be directing allied groups toward the candidates and races the parties are targeting in pursuit of majority status. Their analysis finds that allied groups, even with direct coordination, are following the direction of the parties. Changes in campaign finance law have not diminished party strength, they conclude.

In chapter 14, David B. Magleby examines the rise of Super PACs. He develops a classification of Super PACs into three broad categories based on their electoral focus: candidate specific, party centered, or interest group based. He finds that Super PACs were largely candidate-specific entities created to help particular candidates and that Super PAC activity was far greater on the Republican side than on the Democratic side. Magleby concludes that most interest-group Super PAC activity is a supplement to rather than a replacement of other electioneering activity. Magleby predicts that Super PACs play an even more prominent role in future elections, as they serve the needs of candidates for fundraising. He also predicts there will be greater competition between Super PACs in congressional nominations between main stream and more ideological groups.

Partisan Activities

Once again, parties were active in turning out voters. The following chapters explore the ground-game efforts of the parties, changes to the presidential nomination process, and the state of local parties.

In chapter 15, Paul A. Beck and Erik Heidemann look at the party's ground game in the 2012 presidential campaigns. Based on an analysis of responses to the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP), they examine how parties reached out to voters in their targeting efforts and compare their results between 2004 and 2012. They find that while the parties largely targeted their base, in 2012, respondents in battleground states reported high levels of contacts from both parties. Their analysis throws some caution on the conventional wisdom that the Obama campaign radically changed voter targeting. Beck and Heidemann find that Obama and the Democrats largely targeted likely voters who were older and more affluent in the same manner the GOP did. They also find that contacts in 2012 remained largely impersonal and surprisingly that contacts through new media did not actually rise sharply from 2004. They conclude with a note of caution that for all of the attention to increasing technology, parties and the presidential campaigns still need to use face-to-face, labor-intensive contacts to reliably turn out supporters.

In chapter 16, Caitlin Jewitt evaluates the 2012 nomination in light of the recent history of the parties' reforms of the presidential nomination process. She finds that the Republican Party reformed its rules for the 2012 nomination to allow more voters and states to have a say in the process, but that these reforms did not succeed. Compared with 2008, in 2012 fewer states and voters participated in the Republican nomination contest. She argues that while parties often try to limit the front-loading of primaries, a concentration of primaries at the beginning nomination contest can allow more voters a voice in the nomination. State parties are not sufficiently deterred by sanctions for violating party rules, and awarding more delegates to states with later primaries is not enough of an incentive if the contest has already been decided. She argues that the GOP must find a way to get states to obey national rules, which violates the party's principle of states' rights. Jewitt is skeptical that the party will be able to successfully prevent states from moving up their primaries in 2016.

In chapter 17, Douglas Roscoe and Shannon Jenkins look at how local party organizations have adapted since the early 1980s. Based on a web survey of local party chairs across the United States conducted during 2010 about the 2008 election cycle, they find that, despite a greatly changed environment, local parties have adapted quite well. Local parties remain useful for candidates through an "adaptive brokerage model" in which local parties are focused on providing the labor required for turning out voters in elections. Local parties, they find, are less integrated with state and national parties and less involved in fundraising, but local parties are becoming more institutionalized, even though they are less active outside of election cycles. Local parties, they argue, have an important niche within the American electoral system and will likely continue to be an important resource for candidates running for office.

In chapter 18, Daniel Shea notes how much has changed since the first *State of the Parties* volume, in which party organizations were resurgent but parties seemed to be losing support among voters. Twenty years later, scholars are focused on explaining the rise of polarization. Shea examines this phenomena by exploring the role of geographic ideology. Following the work of Bill Bishop in *The Big Sort*, which argued that citizens appear to be seeking communities of like-minded citizens, Shea's examination of election results reveals an increasing proportion of landslide counties. Interestingly, however, a survey of local party chairs shows that parties are active in both landslide and competitive areas. Generally, local party leaders feel that their parties are more active than in the past. Shea also finds that sorting effects are limited; despite electoral differences, party chairs in both types of counties tended to have similar goals and report similar levels of engagement from their supporters. He finds there was some evidence that parties in competitive districts are more focused on winning elections than on ideological purity. He finds that Republican chairs are more likely to support ideological purity compared to Democratic chairs.

Finally, chapter 19 returns to Mahoning County, Ohio. William Binning, Melanie Blumberg, and John C. Green explore the role of party endorsements in nominating candidates. Reviewing almost a century of the Mahoning County Democrats, they find that the value of party endorsements still matters. Over the years, there has been considerable variation with endorsements coming and going as a policy of the county party. The party is sometimes a "kingmaker" and sometimes a "cheerleader," and the history of this party shows how vibrant and adaptable local parties are to a changing environment.

Unanswered Questions

These chapters provide a detailed review of the "state of the parties" after 2012. But they also raise a number of unanswered questions about the state of the parties in the future. Among the most important are:

- What will be the legacy of the Obama administration? Will the implementation of the Affordable Care Act rank with other Democratic achievements such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid? Or will there be a backlash, as there was to the Great Society in the 1970s and 1980s?
- Will the Tea Party movement continue to remain a force in the GOP? Will it fracture the Republican Party as it seeks a nominee for 2016? Can libertarians and social conservatives coexist in the Republican Party?

- How will both parties adapt to an ever-changing social and technological environment?
- How will broad demographic changes affect party fortunes? Will Hispanics remain a core part of the Democratic base? What will be the long-term effect of dramatic changes in public attitudes toward gay marriage and marijuana?
- Will the trends in campaign finance evident in 2012 continue breaking new records in every election cycle? Will the individual donor pool remain larger and continue to expand? Or will new innovations in campaign finance—including new rules and laws—once again change the source of party resources?
- Will the high level of partisan polarization persist in the presidency and the Congress? Or will polarization decline, reducing political tensions but also limiting the responsiveness of American government?

Notes

1. Figures are from the Congressional Budget Office: http://www.cbo.gov/publication/45067.

2. http://www.gallup.com.

3. The Ames Straw Poll (also known as the Iowa Straw Poll) is a meaningless popularity contest that serves as a fundraiser for the Iowa Republican Party but nonetheless receives great media attention (Blake 2011).

4. Polls often measure "likely voters" as a function of engagement and the respondent's subjective assessment of whether they will vote. Until the first debate, many Republicans were unenthusiastic about Romney, and so polls of likely voters would have fewer Republicans. The first debate then is most likely a case of the activation of partisans rather than the conversion of independents or moderates.

5. The term was popularized by Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board Ben Bernanke, who used the term to refer to the expiration of the Bush-era tax cuts and the forced budget cuts (sequestration), both of which were set to occur January 1, 2013.

6. For example, in a CBS News Poll in which respondents were asked, "Do you favor or oppose a federal law requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers?" conducted February 6–10, 2013, 91 percent favored such action, including 81 percent of Republicans.

I

POLARIZATION AND THE ELECTORATE

2

Partisan Nation

The Rise of Affective Partisanship in the American Electorate

Alan I. Abramowitz

O NE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS in American politics over the past several decades has been the growing divide between Democrats and Republicans in Washington. Based on a statistical analysis of roll call voting patterns, the ideological divide between the parties in both chambers of Congress is now larger than at any time in the past century. Since the 1970s, Democrats in both the House and Senate have moved to the left while Republicans in both chambers have moved even more sharply to the right. As the southern states have realigned with the Republican Party, conservative Democrats who once exercised enormous power in Congress have almost completely disappeared. And as the northeastern states have realigned with the Democratic Party, liberal Republicans who formerly exerted considerable influence over their party's platform and presidential nominating process have likewise been relegated to the dustbin of history.

As a result of the ideological realignment of the parties, there is now no overlap between the ideological distributions of the two parties in either chamber of Congress. Moderates in both parties and especially in the Republican Party have largely disappeared, making bipartisan compromise on major issues extremely difficult, if not impossible (Poole and Rosenthal 2007). Since the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives after the 2010 midterm elections, this deep ideological divide has contributed to a series of increasingly acrimonious confrontations between the most conservative House majority in modern times and a liberal Democratic president and Senate majority over issues ranging from health care and the environment to the budget and the debt ceiling (Mann and Ornstein 2012).

There is widespread agreement among scholars that partisan polarization has reached new heights in Washington in recent years. However, there is much less agreement about whether and to what extent partisan conflict has increased in the American electorate. According to one school of thought, represented by Morris Fiorina and his co-authors, the rise of partisan polarization in recent decades has largely been confined to political elites and a relatively small group of activists within the public. The result, according to Fiorina, has been a growing disconnect between this "political class" and the American people who are no more partisan or polarized than they were in the 1970s (Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Fiorina 2013).

Fiorina and his co-authors have acknowledged that the American electorate is somewhat better sorted along ideological lines than it was in the past—that there is now a closer connection between party identification and ideology so that Democrats are more likely to self-identify as liberals and Republicans are more likely to self-identify as conservatives. However, they claim that this limited sorting has not produced any increase in partisan polarization within the electorate (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011).

I have argued elsewhere that partisan sorting and polarization are actually closely connected and that there has been a significant increase in ideological polarization as well as ideological sorting among voters since the 1970s (Abramowitz 2013a). In this chapter, I present evidence that there has also been a substantial increase in the intensity of party preferences within the American electorate over the past several decades and that this increase in partisan intensity, or affective polarization, is largely the result of an increase in the intensity of voters' ideological preferences. Like Democrats and Republicans in Congress, Democratic and Republican voters are now much more divided along ideological lines than in the past, and this increased ideological divide has produced an increase in the intensity of their partisan preferences.

While there has been almost no change in the strength of party identification in recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the strength of partisan affect as measured by the average difference between ratings of the two parties on the American National Election Studies feeling thermometer scale. This increase has been driven almost entirely by increasingly negative ratings by partisans of the opposing party, a fact that may explain why there has been little change in the strength of voters' identification with their own party. Despite the stability of party identification, however, the increase in partisan affect has had important consequences, contributing to a substantial increase in party loyalty in voting. As a result, the American electorate is now more partisan in its behavior than at any time in the post–World War II era.

Party Identification and Partisan Affect in the American Electorate

One of the puzzling features of American electoral politics in recent years has been the apparent contradiction between the increasingly partisan behavior of the electorate and the relative stability of the distribution of party identification. Since the 1970s, the proportion of party identifiers, including leaning independents, voting for their party's presidential and congressional candidates has increased and ticket-splitting has declined. In 2012, party loyalty reached its highest level in the history of the American National Election Studies: 92 percent of Democratic identifiers and leaners and 90 percent of Republican identifiers and leaners voting for their party's presidential candidate; 88 percent of Democratic identifiers and 92 percent of Republican identifiers voting for their party's House candidate; and 89 percent of all voters casting a straight-party ticket in the presidential and House elections. Results from the 2012 National Exit Poll were similar, with record levels of party loyalty and straight-ticket voting.

Despite this substantial increase in partisan behavior, however, there has been relatively little change in what is perhaps the most commonly used measure of the strength of party attachments in the American electorate— party identification. Data from the American National Election Studies show almost no change in the average strength of party identification between 1978 and 2012. There has been a modest increase in the proportion of leaning independents in the electorate since the 1970s along with small decreases in the proportions of pure independents and weak identifiers. However, the proportion of strong identifiers has remained fairly stable at around 35 to 40 percent since the 1980s after falling somewhat in the 1970s.

Based on these results, one would conclude that there has been little change in the intensity of voters' partisan preferences over the past four decades. But that conclusion would be incorrect. When we measure the intensity of voters' party preferences based on the difference in feeling thermometer scores between the two parties rather than strength of party identification, a very different picture emerges, as the evidence displayed in figure 2.1 clearly shows. Between 1978, the first year in which the ANES survey included feeling thermometer questions for the two political parties, and 2012, the average difference between voters' ratings of the parties increased from approximately 23 degrees to approximately 39 degrees. The average difference of 39 degrees was the largest for any election in the series.

How can we explain the apparent contradiction between the trends in party identification and party affect? We see no increase in the average strength of party identification in the electorate even as we see a fairly substantial increase in the intensity of partisan affect measured by the average difference in

FIGURE 2.1
Average intensity of party preference on feeling thermometer scale among voters, 1978–2012.
Source: ANES Cumulative File and 2012 ANES. *Note:* 2012 data based on personal interviews only.

voters' ratings of the two parties on the feeling thermometer scale. A possible solution to this puzzle can be seen in figure 2.2, which displays the trend in the average feeling thermometer ratings given by party identifiers, including leaning independents, to their own party and to the opposing party. What the evidence displayed in this figure shows is that since the late 1970s, party identifiers' ratings of their own party have been stable, fluctuating around 70 degrees on average. However, over the same time period, party identifiers' ratings of the opposing party have declined rather dramatically from an average of just under 50 degrees in 1978 to an average of about 30 degrees in 2012. So the increasing divide in voters' evaluations of the two parties has been driven almost entirely by declining evaluations of the opposition party. Voters do not like their own party any more than they did thirty or forty years ago. This may explain the flat trend in the strength of party identification. However, it appears that voters dislike the opposing party a good deal more than they did thirty or forty years ago.

The increase from 23 degrees to 39 degrees in the average difference between voters' ratings of the two parties means that far fewer voters were indifferent between the two major parties and far more voters strongly preferred one party to the other in 2012 than in 1978. Over these 34 years, the proportion of indifferent voters fell from 28 percent to 13 percent, while the proportion rating one party at least 50 degrees higher than the other increased from 12 percent to 35 percent. Thus, with regard to affective evaluations of the two parties, the electorate in 2012 was far more polarized than the electorate in 1978. This shift can also be seen by comparing the standard deviations of the full feeling thermometer difference scales in the two years. The standard deviation of the 1978 distribution was 32.9 degrees, while the standard deviation of the 2012 distribution was 48.2 degrees.

Affective polarization is greatest among the most politically engaged members of the electorate—those whose opinions carry the most weight with elected officials. This can be seen by comparing the average absolute difference
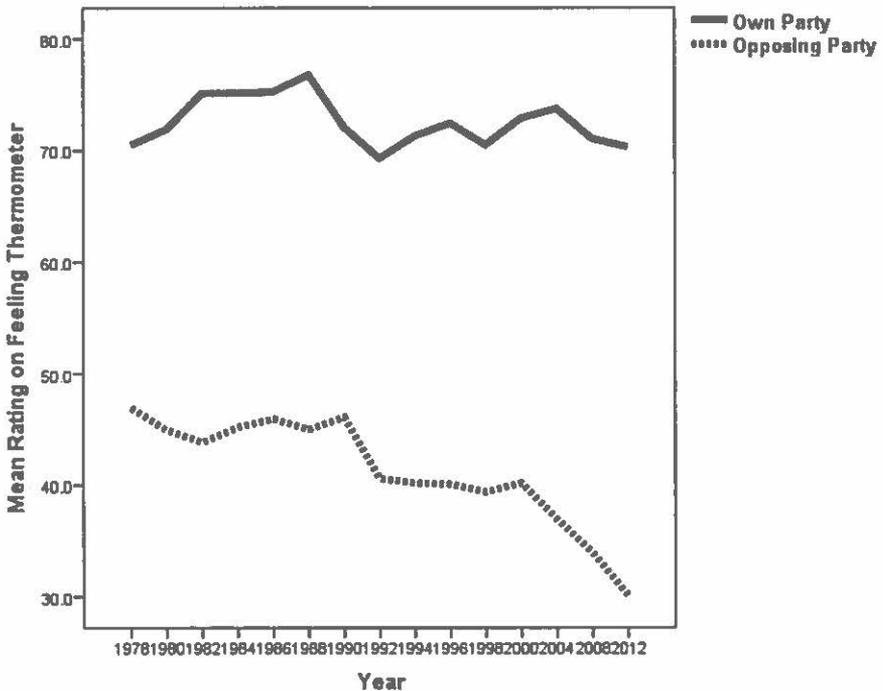
FIGURE 2.2
Average feeling thermometer ratings of own party and opposing party among voters, 1978–2012.
Source: ANES Cumulative file and 2012 ANES. *Note:* 2012 data based on personal interviews only.

in ratings of the two parties on the feeling thermometer scale among respondents in the 2012 ANES survey who reported different levels of campaign-related activity. The size of the average absolute difference in feeling thermometer ratings of the parties ranged from 22 degrees for politically inactive respondents to 33 degrees for those who reported engaging in only one activity (generally voting), to 40 degrees for those who reported engaging in two activities (generally voting and trying to persuade a friend, relative or co-worker to support a candidate) to 52 degrees for those engaging in at least three activities. These results show very clearly that the greater the level of citizens' political involvement, the more polarized are their affective evaluations of the parties.

The findings presented thus far raise an important question. Does the increase in partisan intensity measured by the growing difference in feeling thermometer ratings of the parties matter given that there has been little or no increase in the strength of party identification over the same time period? Not surprisingly, our measure of partisan affect is highly correlated with party identification, with a Pearson's r ranging from .73 in 1978 to .84 in 2012. However, even after controlling for party identification, partisan affect has a substantial influence on voting behavior. In every presidential election between 1980 and 2012, partisan affect measured by the difference in party feeling thermometer scores had a large and statistically significant influence on presidential vote after controlling for party identification. In every year except 2000, the partisan affect variable had a stronger impact on vote choice than party identification. When it comes to voting decisions, partisan affect clearly matters.

Ideological Polarization and the Rise of Partisan Affect

What might explain the rather substantial increase in affective partisan polarization in the American electorate since the 1970s? One plausible explanation is ideological polarization. We know that the two parties have been moving apart in their ideological orientations for several decades, and so have voters who identify with the parties, with Democrats moving to the left and Republicans moving to the right. As a result, we would expect that each party's supporters now feel closer to their own party's ideological position relative to the opposing party's ideological position than in the past. This might explain the increase in partisan affect since the larger the difference in ideological proximity that voters perceive between the two parties the more strongly they would be expected to prefer the party that they feel closer to.

In order to test the ideological proximity hypothesis, I measured the relative distance of voters from their own party and from the opposing party on the seven-point liberal-conservative scale. Since this scale has a range from one to seven, the ideological proximity scale ranges from zero for a voter

who places a party at the same location as herself to six for a voter who places a party at the opposite end of the scale from herself. Figure 2.3 displays the trend between 1972 and 2012 in the average ideological distance of voters from their own party and the opposing party. Leaning independents were included as party supporters in calculating the distance scores.

The results displayed in figure 2.3 show that over this 40-year time period there was almost no change in the average perceived distance between voters and their own party. Voters generally viewed themselves as fairly close to their own party with the average distance score hovering around one unit. In contrast, over the same time period there was a sharp and fairly consistent increase in the average perceived distance between voters and the opposing party. Voters in 2012 perceived the opposing party as much more distant from their own ideological position than in 1972. This was true for both Democrats and Republicans. As a result, the average relative ideological proximity score for all party identifiers more than doubled between 1972 and 2012, going from an average of just under one unit to an average of more than 2.2 units on a scale with a range of zero to six.

To get some idea of the possible significance of an increase from less than one unit to more than two units in the average relative ideological proximity score, table 2.1 displays the proportion of voters in each presidential election year who had either no ideological preference or only a weak ideological preference for a party, those with a score of zero or one, compared with the proportion of voters who had a very or fairly strong ideological preference for a party, those with a score of three or higher. The results in table 2.1 show that

TABLE 2.1
Intensity of Party Ideological Preference, 1972–2012

Year	None, Weak (0–1)	Strong (3–6)
1972	53%	21%
1976	48%	28%
1980	43%	32%
1984	41%	32%
1988	39%	33%
1992	41%	36%
1996	36%	38%
2000	35%	38%
2004	36%	42%
2008	32%	47%
2012	30%	46%

Source: ANES Cumulative File and 2012 ANES.

Note: 2012 data based on personal interviews only.
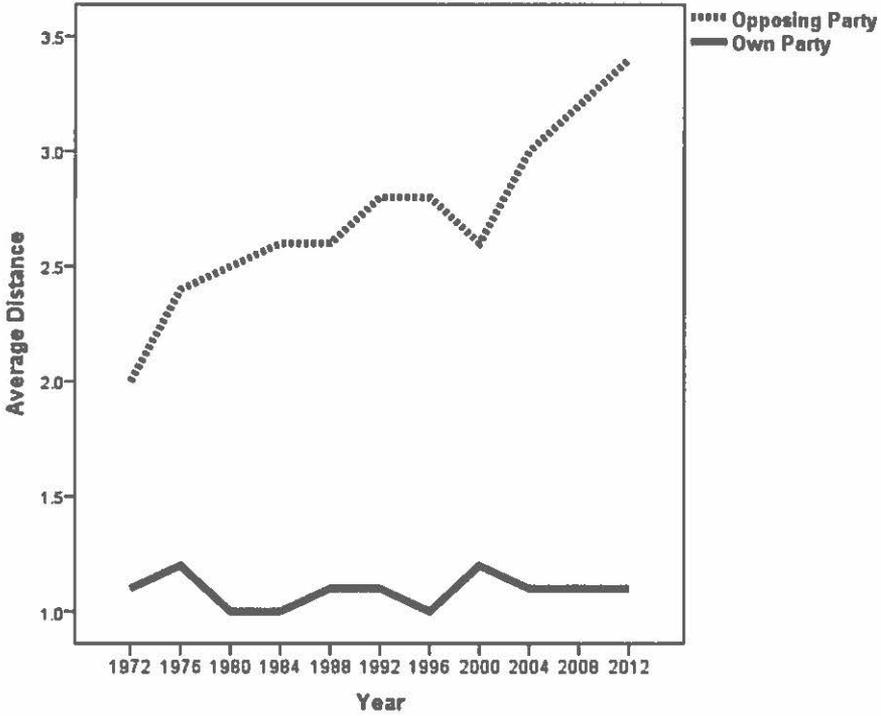
FIGURE 2.3
Mean distance from own party and opposing party on liberal-conservative scale,
1972–2012.
Source: ANES Cumulative File and 2012 ANES. Note: 2012 data based on personal interviews only.

between 1972 and 2012 there was a rather dramatic decline in the proportion of voters who had either no ideological preference or only a weak ideological preference for a party and an equally dramatic increase in the proportion of voters who had a very or fairly strong ideological preference for a party.

In 1972, a majority of voters had either no ideological preference for a party, placing themselves equally distant from both parties, or only a weak ideological preference, placing themselves only one unit closer to one party than to the other party. By 2012, however, less than a third of voters had either no ideological preference for a party or only a weak ideological pref- erence. Over the same time period, the proportion of voters with a strong ideological preference for a party, those placing themselves at least three units closer to one party than to the other party, increased substantially. This group made up barely one-fifth of the electorate in 1972 but nearly half of the electorate in both 2008 and 2012. As was true for partisan affect, intensity

of ideological preferences was strongly related to political engagement. The greater the level of campaign-related activity of citizens, the more intensely they favored one party's ideological position: the average absolute difference in ideological proximity to the two parties was 1.6 units among the politically inactive, 2.0 units among those engaging in only one activity, 2.5 units among those engaging in two activities, and 2.9 units among those engaging in three or more activities.

It is possible, of course, that voters' perceptions of their relative proximity to the Democratic and Republican parties are the product of projection more than rational assessment of where the parties stand in relation to their own ideologies. In other words, voters may simply assume that their preferred party is close to their position and that the opposing party is far from their own position regardless of what their own position happens to be. However, this does not appear to be the case. There is in fact a very close relationship between where voters place themselves on the liberal-conservative scale and their perceptions of the relative proximity of the two parties. In 2012, the correlation (Pearson's r) between ideological self-placement and perceived relative proximity was an extremely strong 0.86. This was the strongest correlation between ideological self-placement and relative party proximity for any election since 1972. Voters who placed themselves at or near the left end of the ideology scale overwhelmingly viewed the Democratic Party as closer ideologically than the Republican Party, while those who placed themselves at or near the right end of the scale overwhelmingly viewed the Republican Party as closer ideologically than the Democratic Party. And those who placed themselves exactly in the center of the ideology scale felt, on average, about equally close to both parties.

The question is whether and to what extent ideological proximity explains partisan affect. According to the ideological proximity hypothesis, voters now have more intense party preferences on the feeling thermometer scale because they have stronger ideological preferences for a party. In order to test this hypothesis, figure 2.4 displays a scatterplot of the relationship between the average absolute ideological proximity score (the absolute value of the difference between the distance from one's preferred party and the distance from the other party) and the average absolute partisan intensity score (the absolute value of the difference between the feeling thermometer rating of the two parties) for voters in presidential elections between 1980 and 2012.

The results displayed in figure 2.4 lend support to the ideological proximity hypothesis. They show that there is a fairly close relationship between the average ideological proximity score of voters and the average partisan affect score of voters and that both relative ideological proximity and partisan affect have increased over time. Voters in 1980 had the smallest average ideological
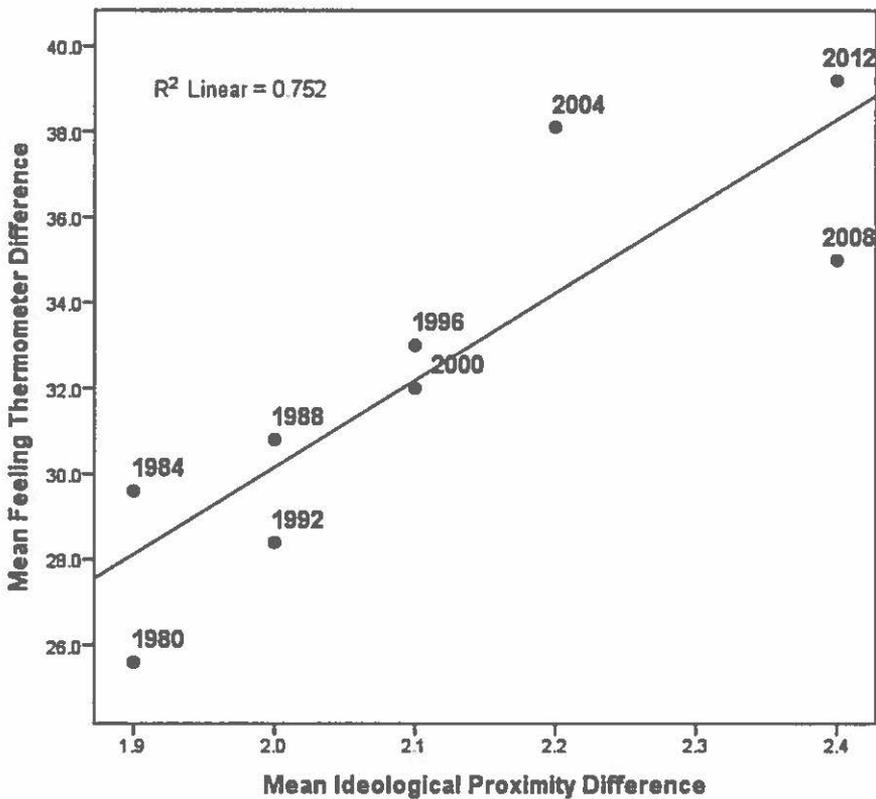
FIGURE 2.4
Mean party preference on feeling thermometer by mean ideological proximity
advantage, 1980–2012.
Source: ANES Cumulative File and 2012 ANES. Note: 2012 data based on personal interviews only.

proximity difference and the least intense party preference while voters in
2012 had the largest average ideological proximity difference and the most in-
tense average party preference. These results suggest that increasing ideologi-
cal proximity differences are contributing to more intense party preferences
on the feeling thermometer scale.

Additional evidence that ideological polarization is behind the increase in
affective partisan intensity can be seen in table 2.2, which displays the trends
in the correlations of ideological self-placement and issue positions with par-
tisan affect between 1980 and 2012. Two of the policy issues, health insurance
and government services, were not included in the ANES survey until 1984.
The overall trend is very clear in this table—the correlations of ideology and
issue positions with partisan affect have increased fairly steadily. By 2012,

TABLE 2.2
Correlation of Party Difference on Feeling
Thermometer Scale with Ideology and Issues, 1980–2012

	Correlation of Party Feeling Thermometer Preference with			
Year	Ideology	Health Insurance	Gov't Services	Abortion
1980	0.46			−0.02
1984	0.50	0.31	0.41	0.15
1988	0.51	0.31	0.37	0.05
1992	0.51	0.37	0.36	0.20
1996	0.56	0.45	0.47	0.18
2000	0.59	0.31	0.41	0.23
2004	0.63	0.37	0.43	0.23
2008	0.65	0.47	0.52	0.34
2012	0.69	0.55	0.54	0.33

Source: ANES Cumulative File and 2012 ANES.

Note: 2012 data based on personal interviews only.

intensity of affective party preferences on the feeling thermometer scale was closely related to voters' policy preferences and ideological orientations.

Voters in 2012 with liberal policy preferences tended to rate the Democratic Party much more positively than the Republican Party, while voters with conservative policy preferences tended to rate the Republican Party much more positively than the Democratic Party on the feeling thermometer scale. This can be seen very clearly in the case of what was perhaps the single most salient domestic policy issue in the 2012 presidential election—the Affordable Care Act that was signed into law by President Obama in 2010. Opinions on this law were sharply divided within the electorate, with 24 percent of voters expressing strong support for the law, placing themselves at the extreme liberal end of a seven-point scale, and 24 percent expressing strong opposition, placing themselves at the extreme conservative end of the same scale. Location on the "Obamacare" scale was strongly related to affective partisan evaluations. Voters who strongly favored the Affordable Care Act rated the Democratic Party an average of 49 degrees higher than the Republican Party, while voters who strongly opposed the Affordable Care Act rated the Republican Party an average of 31 degrees higher than the Democratic Party.

The magnitude of the ideological proximity effect in 2012 can be seen very clearly in figure 2.5 that displays the mean partisan affect score of voters by their relative ideological distance from the two parties. Positive scores here indicate that a voter perceived the Democratic Party as closer than the Republican Party while negative scores indicate that a voter perceived the Republican Party as closer than the Democratic Party. The correlation between these
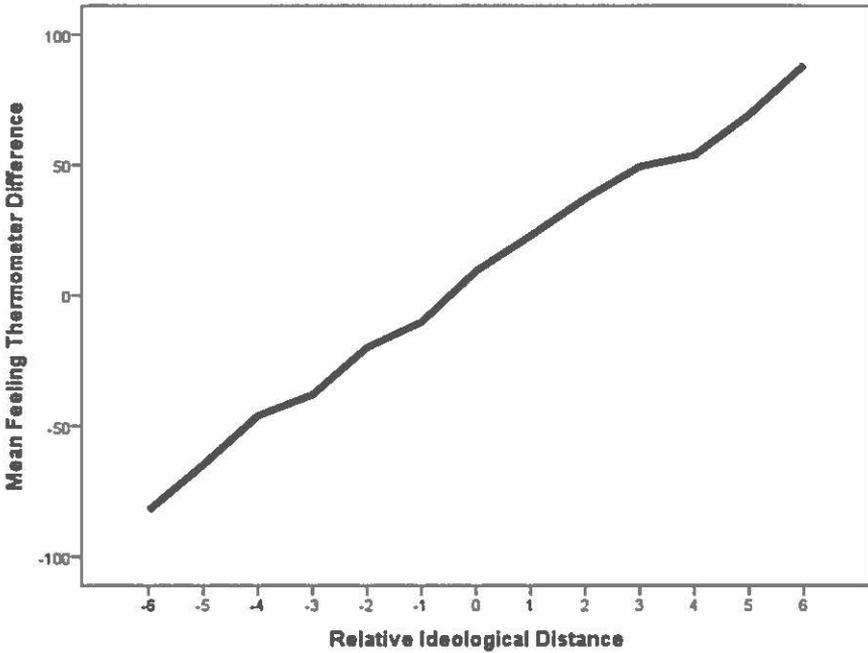
FIGURE 2.5
Party preference on feeling thermometer scale by relative ideological proximity to parties in 2012.
Source: 2012 ANES, personal interview mode.

two variables (Pearson's r) was a very strong 0.80. Moreover, this relationship has been growing stronger over time. This was the strongest correlation between ideological proximity and partisan affect since the ANES added the party feeling thermometer questions in 1978. The correlation was only .58 in that year but increased to an average of .66 during the 1980s, .70 during the 1990s, and .75 during the 2000s.

There was a very close connection between ideological proximity and partisan affect in 2012. Thus, among the 21 percent of voters in the 2012 ANES who placed themselves at least three units closer to the Democratic Party than to the Republican Party on the ideology scale, the Democratic Party was rated an average of 56 degrees higher than the Republican Party on the feeling thermometer scale; among the 25 percent of voters who placed themselves at least three units closer to the Republican Party than to the Democratic Party on the ideology scale, the Republican Party was rated an average of 46 degrees higher than the Democratic Party on the feeling thermometer scale. Moreover, the relationship between ideological proximity and partisan affect was strongest

among the most politically active members of the electorate. The correlation between ideological proximity and partisan affect was 0.62 for the politically inactive, 0.68 for those engaging in only one campaign activity, 0.82 for those engaging in two campaign activities, and 0.90 for those engaging in three or more campaign activities. These results indicate that the more involved in politics Americans become, the more influence ideology has on their affective evaluations of the parties.

Of course, ideological proximity was not expected to be the only influence on partisan affect in 2012. There were a number of other variables that could have affected the intensity of voters' partisan preferences, including other political attitudes and demographic characteristics. For example, evaluations of national economic conditions and personal finances could have influenced voters' ratings of the parties on the feeling thermometer—with a Democrat in the White House, we would expect positive evaluations of economic conditions and personal finances to produce higher ratings of the Democratic Party relative to the Republican Party and negative evaluations of economic conditions and personal finances to produce lower ratings of the Democratic Party relative to the Republican Party. In addition, even after controlling for ideological proximity and evaluations of economic conditions and personal finances, we would expect African American and Hispanic voters to rate the Democratic Party more favorably than the Republican Party compared with white voters given the troubled relationship between the Republican Party and both of these groups in recent years.

In order to estimate the contribution of ideological proximity to partisan intensity, I conducted a regression analysis with the partisan affect score as the dependent variable. In addition to relative ideological proximity, evaluation of the national economy and personal finances, a variety of demographic control variables were included in the regression analysis: age; gender; dummy variables for African Americans, Latinos, and other nonwhites (non-Hispanic whites were the excluded racial category); family income; education; marital status; frequency of church attendance; and membership in a union household. The results of the regression analysis are summarized in table 2.3.

The results displayed in table 2.3 show that while several independent variables had statistically significant effects on affective partisan evaluations, especially the dummy variable for African American racial identity, relative ideological proximity had by far the strongest influence of any of the variables included in the regression analysis. A comparison of the standardized regression coefficients shows that the estimated coefficient for relative ideological proximity dwarfs the magnitude of any of the other estimated coefficients. To put these findings in perspective, while the entire set of independent variables explained 70 percent of the variance in partisan affect scores, relative ideological proximity alone explained 64 percent of the variance.

TABLE 2.3
Regression Analysis of Party Differences on Feeling Thermometer Scale in 2012

Independent Variable	Beta	t	Significance
Ideological Distance	0.707	31.4	0.001
National Economy	0.069	3.0	0.001
Personal Finances	0.057	2.9	0.002
Age	−0.007	−0.4	N.S.
Education	−0.008	−0.4	N.S.
Family Income	0.026	1.2	N.S.
Married	−0.043	−2.2	.05
Black	0.166	8.6	0.001
Latino	0.059	3.2	0.001
Other Nonwhite	0.028	1.5	N.S.
Church Attendance	−0.026	−1.4	N.S.
Union Household	0.084	4.7	0.001

Adjusted R-squared = 0.70

Note: Entries shown are standardized regression coefficients.

Source: 2012 ANES, personal interview mode only.

Discussion and Conclusions

The evidence presented provides strong support for the ideological proximity hypothesis. Data from ANES surveys conducted between 1980 and 2012 show that the increasing intensity of voters' partisan preferences on the feeling thermometer scale over this time period coincided very closely with an increasing average difference in relative proximity to the two parties on the liberal-conservative scale. In addition, data from the 2012 ANES show that relative ideological proximity was by far the strongest predictor of partisan affect among voters in the 2012 election. It seems clear that voters' affective evaluations of the parties on the feeling thermometer scale have become increasingly polarized over the past four decades largely as a result of ideological polarization—the growing ideological divide between the Democratic and Republican parties and between their supporters.

Recently, some scholars have drawn a distinction between affective polarization and ideological or policy polarization in the American electorate. They have argued that while affective polarization has increased substantially within the public over the past several decades, ideological or policy polarization has not. According to this theory, ordinary Americans now have more intense feelings about political parties than in the past, but these feelings are not closely related to their ideological positions or policy preferences (Heth-

erington 2009; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2013). The problem with this theory, however, is that it does not provide a satisfactory explanation of why affective polarization has increased within the public, and it ignores abundant evidence of a growing ideological divide between politically engaged Democratic and Republican voters (Abramowitz 2010).

The evidence presented shows that there is in fact a very close connection between affective polarization and ideological polarization within the American electorate. Since the 1970s, Democratic and Republican voters, like Democratic and Republican elites, have been moving apart in their ideological positions, with Democrats moving to the left and Republicans moving to the right. It is this growing ideological divide between supporters of the two parties that largely explains the rise of affective polarization during the same time period.

A substantially larger proportion of voters now view one party as much closer to their own position than the other party on the liberal-conservative scale, and these perceptions are strongly related to their affective evaluations of the parties. More specifically, voters place their own party about the same distance from themselves as in the past, but they place the opposing party much further from themselves than in the past. As a result, voters on average rate their own party about as favorably now as they did forty years ago but they rate the opposing party much less favorably now than forty years ago. What we are seeing is asymmetric affective polarization in response to asymmetric ideological polarization.

The increase in affective polarization in the American electorate over the past several decades has had major consequences for election campaigns and voting behavior. Although the strength of party identification has changed very little, Democrats and Republicans now perceive the opposing party as much further from themselves on the liberal-conservative scale than in the past and have much more negative feelings about the opposing party than in the past. As a result, party loyalty has been increasing, and ticket splitting has been declining. Voters are less likely to cross party lines not because they have more positive opinions of their own party and its candidates but because they have more negative opinions of the opposing party and its candidates. Thus, the opposing party and its candidates have become unacceptable alternatives that one would never even consider supporting.

The increasing ideological distance of partisans from the opposing party and their increasingly negative evaluations of the opposing party may be contributing to the increasingly negative and angry tone of political rhetoric in campaigns and in other arenas such as congressional debates and cable news programs. Voters may be more receptive to negative messages about the opposing party and its candidates than thirty or forty years ago. Therefore, such

messages may be more effective in energizing and mobilizing partisans than in the past. While negative campaigning may have been a turnoff for most voters in the past, that no longer appears to be true. Attacking the opposing party and its candidates may now be the most effective way of energizing one's supporters, attracting donations, and turning out the vote.

3

Political Identity and Party Polarization in the American Electorate

David C. Kimball, Bryce Summary, and Eric C. Vorst

E VIDENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION among party elites has fueled a debate about the degree of polarization among the American public. Much of the debate has focused on an ideological definition of polarization. However, more attention should be given to psychological components of polarization. Increased partisan disagreement among politicians and activists has fostered a more attentive public and a stronger sense of partisan identity among mass partisans. Polarized politics encourages the public to view politics in zero-sum "us versus them" terms and denigrate their political opponents more than in the past.

Using survey data from the American National Election Studies, we find that Americans have become more polarized in their basic evaluations of the two major political parties. In particular, followers of both parties express increasing levels of fear and contempt toward the opposite party and its presidential candidates, with the 2012 election cycle producing record levels of out-party demonization. Polarized ratings of the two major parties have many roots, including party identity, ideology, core values, group-based attitudes, individual predispositions, and the growth in partisan media.

We also examine the Tea Party, the latest front in the partisan wars and a good example of the psychological basis of mass polarization. The strongest predictor of Tea Party support is the degree to which voters like the Republican Party and dislike the Democrats. Red-meat rhetoric that demonizes the opposition is a staple of political campaigns, and it sustains opposition parties when they are not governing. Since President Obama has occupied the White House, evaluations of the nation's direction are closely associated

with contempt for the Democratic Party and its president. There is a deepen-
ing reservoir of fear and loathing of the opposing party that can be tapped
by political leaders eager to mobilize the base for the next political battle,
but contempt for the opposition inhibits efforts to find common ground in
American politics.

Increasing Contempt for the Opposite Party

One by-product of ideological polarization is growing fear and loathing of the
political opposition among the mass public. Figure 3.1 shows the percentage
of partisans who report feeling angry or afraid about the opposite party's
presidential candidate. The data are from surveys conducted by the American
National Election Studies and questions that ask if the presidential candidate
of a particular party ever made the respondent feel angry or afraid.[1] While
opposite party presidential candidates tend to inspire more anger than fear,
both indicators increase over time. Both indicators also reach new highs in
2012, with almost half of partisans professing fear and almost two-thirds of
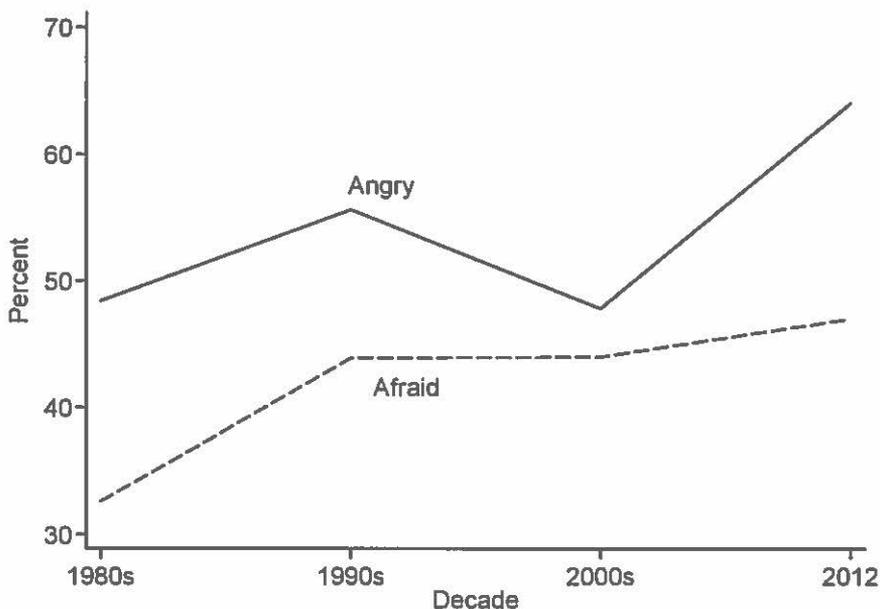
FIGURE 3.1
Emotions toward other party's presidential candidates by decade.
Source: ANES 2010, 2013.

partisans expressing anger in reaction to the presidential candidate from the opposite party.

More compelling evidence from Iyengar and colleagues (2012) depicts growing mass polarization in the feeling thermometer ratings of the two major parties. The thermometer questions ask respondents to rate groups or political figures on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating warmer feelings and lower scores indicating more animosity toward the object. As figure 3.2 shows, during the past thirty years, Republicans and Democrats have consistently rated their own party positively, at approximately 70 degrees.[2] However, ratings of the opposite party have declined over time, with a relatively steep drop occurring during the last ten years. Mean ratings of the opposite party were close to 50 degrees in 1980 but have dropped almost to 30 degrees in 2012. We observe the same trend for Republicans and Democrats. To summarize, the average gap in affection for one's own party versus the opposite party, termed affective partisanship or "net partisan affect" (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012), has increased from roughly 25 degrees in 1980 to almost 37 degrees in 2012.
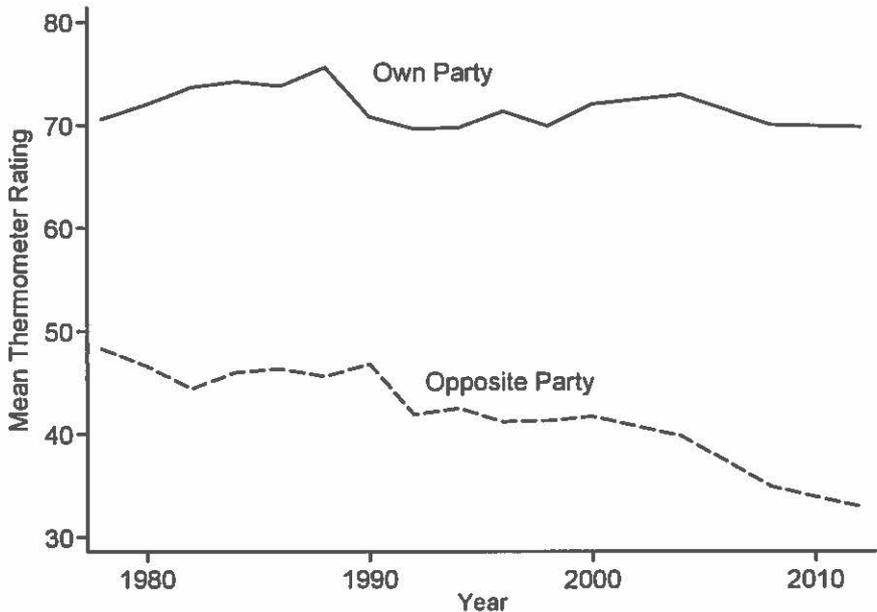
FIGURE 3.2
Mean ratings of own party and opposite party, 1978–2012.
Source: ANES 2010, 2013.

Why is this polarization in affective ratings of the two major parties happening? In the previous chapter, Alan Abramowitz argues that ideology is at the root of mass polarization. In contrast, others such as Iyengar and colleagues (2012) argue that partisan identity and exposure to political campaigns explains mass polarization. Political campaigns tend to focus heavily on inter party differences, which reinforce partisan identities among voters. Negative campaign advertising is devoted to demonizing the opposing party and its candidates, which should encourage partisans to view their opponents in a harsher light. Furthermore, negative campaigning in presidential elections has increased over time (West 2013), which also corresponds with the growing polarization in ratings of the two parties.

Both of these perspectives help explain polarized attitudes toward the political parties. We think Abramowitz understates the importance of partisan identity in explaining affective polarization. In addition to ideology, there are other political attitudes associated with party polarization in the United States. A strong partisan identity, core values that are common reference points in political debates, group-related symbols and attitudes, the growth of partisan media, and individual predispositions help explain polarized ratings of the two political parties. In the next section, we explain how these concepts relate to party polarization and then provide some evidence from the 2012 ANES survey to support our hypotheses.

Sources of Mass Polarization

We examine the predictors of polarized party evaluations using data from the American National Election Studies 2012 Time Series survey (ANES 2013). Our measure of polarized partisan attitudes is the thermometer rating for one's own party minus the thermometer rating for the opposition party, dubbed "net partisan affect" by Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012). We examine several political attitudes as predictors of net partisan affect. Some of the ANES respondents were interviewed in person, and some completed the survey via the Internet. Since the Internet sample is more polarized than the face-to-face sample, we include a dummy variable for the Internet mode of survey response as another control variable. Net partisan affect is approximately five degrees larger, on average, for the Internet respondents than for the face-to-face respondents. We also control for residents of battleground states to test the hypothesis that exposure to the presidential campaign produces more polarization. On average, net partisan affect was just 1 to 2 degrees higher in battleground states in 2012.

Partisan Identity

As articulated in the chapter by Alan Abramowitz, the link between partisan and ideological identification is an important source of polarization in the United States. However, even though many political debates in American politics can be boiled down to ideology, political parties and candidates frequently avoid using terms such as "liberal" or "conservative" in their campaign rhetoric. This makes sense because few Americans use ideological terms to discuss politics, and many do not understand politics in terms of left-right ideological concepts (Converse 1964; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Goren 2013). More than one-fourth of American survey respondents are unable to place themselves, or the major parties, on an ideological spectrum. Those that do tend to assume, sometimes incorrectly, that their favored candidates have the same policy and ideological positions as themselves. The tendency to project one's own attitudes onto favored political figures is most pronounced among people with strong party attachments (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012). In *The Rationalizing Voter*, Milton Lodge and Charles Taber (2013) find that emotions shape political evaluations before cognitive considerations. This means that our expressed attitudes are often rationalizations of our feelings toward political groups or prominent officials. Inviting people to place themselves and the political parties on an ideological scale is an invitation for them to rationalize their contempt for the opposition. Thus, there are some limits on the ability of ideology to explain public contempt for the political opposition.

Political polarization is more than just holding different positions on hot-button issues. Polarization is accompanied by an "us versus them" mentality, in which partisanship shapes the way people see the political world. As stated in *The American Voter*, "Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation" (Campbell et al. 1960, 133). This is consistent with long-standing research on social identity, which argues that people derive their own sense of self from their membership in groups. The motivation to identify with an in-group (to which the person belongs) that is distinct from a perceived out-group is powerful (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Furthermore, social identity theory predicts that group conflict encourages people to exaggerate intergroup differences and produce negative feelings about opposing groups.

Party identification is a central concept in the study of American voting behavior, and it was originally conceived to resemble other social group identities, like religion. Party loyalties are developed early in life, are relatively stable over time, and shape the way we view the world. Strong partisans stand out from other partisans in terms of their robust social identity with a

political party, which is associated with increased voter loyalty, activism, and ideological extremism (Greene 2004; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Partisans are motivated to hold beliefs that support their party, even when those beliefs are factually incorrect (Bartels 2000; Jerit and Barabas 2012). People tend to bring their policy preferences and party affiliation into alignment by changing their ideology and policy preferences, not their party, even on issues like abortion (Levendusky 2009; Layman et al. 2010).

Two recent examples illustrate this phenomenon. When President George W. Bush, a Republican, presided over federal budget deficits, significantly more Democrats than Republicans reported that the deficit was a very important problem. When a Democratic president, Barack Obama, oversaw budget deficits, Republicans were more likely than Democrats to cite the deficit as a very important problem (Zaller 2012). In 2006, during the Bush administration, Republicans were more likely than Democrats to believe that NSA surveillance programs were "acceptable" (by 75 percent to 37 percent). In 2013, under the Obama presidency, Democrats (64 percent) were more likely than Republicans (52 percent) to believe that NSA surveillance programs were acceptable (Pew Research Center 2013). It is very unlikely that these patterns can be explained by a principled change of opinion in both parties or a movement of deficit hawks and civil libertarians from one party to the other.

Even though the number of strong partisans in the electorate has not increased substantially, elite polarization causes strong partisan identity in the mass public to pack a stronger punch. Exposure to elite polarization makes people more certain about their own party identity (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013). Regardless of the substance of the disputes, mass partisans have a rooting interest in seeing their party win political battles. Observing partisan debate leads people to distrust the other side more (Mutz 2007; Levendusky 2013). Thus, the growing contempt and fear directed toward political opponents is partly due to the increased salience of party identification.

As evidence, figure 3.3 presents mean levels of net partisan affect for different levels of party identification. Strong partisans clearly stand out in the graph, producing significantly more polarized ratings of the two parties than others, and the average difference between strong partisans versus weak and leaning partisans has grown by about five degrees over the past 30 years. The differences between weak and leaning partisans are not nearly as pronounced. For strong partisans, the difference in party thermometer ratings increased from roughly 39 degrees in 1978 to over 56 degrees in 2012. Net partisan affect has risen for other partisans as well, but not as steeply as for strong partisans. In sum, a strong partisan identity is a leading determinant of contempt for the political opposition.
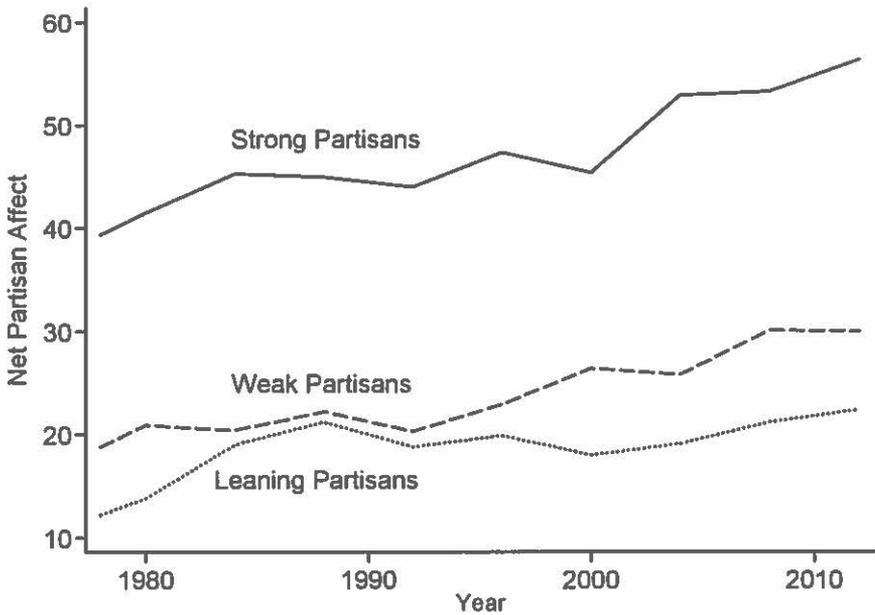
FIGURE 3.3
Net partisan affect by strength of partisanship, 1978–2012.
Source: ANES 2010, 2013.

Predispositions

In addition to partisan identity, we hypothesize that some individuals have predispositions that foster more negative views of the political opposition. One such trait is the "need to evaluate," which reflects a person's capacity for being judgmental. Those who are high in the need to evaluate tend to hold more intense opinions (Jarvis and Petty 1996). When it comes to partisan politics, we expect that the need to evaluate is associated with more negative opinions of the opposition and more polarized ratings of the two major parties. We measure the need to evaluate by averaging responses to two questions about how frequently they form opinions about things.[3] Higher values indicate a stronger need to evaluate.

A second predisposition relevant to partisan polarization is authoritarianism, a worldview "concerned with the appropriate balance between group authority and uniformity, on the one hand, and individual autonomy and diversity, on the other" (Stenner 2005, 14). Authoritarians value conformity and order and tend to view the world in black and white terms. At the other

extreme, libertarians value diversity and appreciate nuance. Authoritarianism is associated with public preferences on issues such as gay rights, military intervention abroad, and government surveillance. Thus, some argue that authoritarianism shapes partisanship (Hetherington and Weiler 2009), with those high on the authoritarianism spectrum gravitating toward the Republican Party. We have a somewhat different point of view. First, the relationship between authoritarianism and partisanship is not strong, and there is considerable variation on the authoritarianism dimension within both parties. Second, authoritarians make stronger distinctions between in-groups and out-groups (Stenner 2005). Thus, authoritarians, regardless of the party with which they identify, should hold more negative opinions of their political opponents and more polarized ratings of the two major parties. We measure authoritarianism based on four forced-choice questions that ask about preferred traits in children (independence versus respect for elders; curiosity versus good manners; obedience versus self-reliance; and being considerate versus well behaved). Responses to the four questions are averaged together to create the authoritarianism scale ($\alpha = 0.60$). Higher values indicate a more authoritarian worldview.

Partisan Media

The recent growth of partisan media on cable television, talk radio, and the Internet is another likely source of polarization in American politics. Partisan media programs and websites tend to feature hyperbolic language and fear mongering that highlights the latest outrage perpetrated by the political opposition (Berry and Sobieraj 2013). Thus, partisan media seems to be an effective mechanism for nurturing negative attitudes toward the opposite party. There is evidence that consumers of partisan media become more polarized in their political views (Mutz 2007; Levendusky 2013). Thus, we expect that consumers of partisan media will exhibit more polarized ratings of the two major political parties. We measure exposure to both flavors of partisan media. The ANES survey included a long series of questions asking which TV and radio programs they regularly consume and which websites they regularly visit. We selected nineteen sources, from Rush Limbaugh to Sean Hannity to the *Drudge Report*, as examples of conservative media. We averaged together responses indicating the number of those media sources that people frequented regularly ($\alpha = 0.86$). Higher values indicate greater exposure to conservative media. We apply the same measurement method to nineteen liberal media sources, including *Huffington Post*, MSNBC, National Public Radio, and the *New York Times* ($\alpha = 0.77$). Higher values indicate greater exposure to liberal media. Partisan

media exposure is confined to a fairly small slice of the American electorate. Based on these measures, the median respondent is not a regular consumer of any liberal media or any conservative media.

Ideology, Core Values, and Group Attitudes

Ideology is another common predictor of party polarization, as more extreme ideological positions are associated with more polarized ratings of the parties. We control for ideology by using the item that asks respondents to place themselves on a seven-point scale from extremely liberal at one end to extremely conservative at the other end. A follow-up question asked moderates, and those who could not place themselves on the scale, to choose one side of the ideological spectrum or the other. We used the follow-up item to place many of those uncertain ideologues as slightly liberal or slightly conservative, minimizing the amount of missing data. Higher values on the scale indicate more conservative respondents. Conservatism should produce more affective polarization for Republicans and less for Democrats.

As noted by Alan Abramowitz (2010 and chapter 2), a series of core values and group attitudes have helped make the two parties more ideological. We include two core values and two group attitudes to stand in for ideology as predictors of net partisan affect, since some people may not frequently think about politics in terms of left-right ideology. Core values are general beliefs about how the world should work, and values guide a person's understanding of right and wrong. Political campaigns frequently frame policy disputes in terms of core values, which encourage partisans to view those conflicts in terms of good versus evil. Thus, values are crucial for nurturing negative views of the political opposition.

We examine two core values that have become common sources of partisan conflict in American politics: limited government and moral traditionalism.[4] Limited government deals with the degree to which the national government should intervene to provide an economic safety net for its citizens. Those who believe that people are largely responsible for their own well-being favor limited government. High adherence to limited government is associated with more conservative views on economic policies and correlates with Republican partisanship and voting behavior (Goren 2013). The ANES survey contains four questions to measure beliefs about limited government. The items ask about preferences for free markets, preferences for more or less government, why government has gotten bigger, and the amount of preferred regulation of business. We averaged responses to the four questions to create the limited government scale ($\alpha = 0.77$). Higher values indicate a stronger preference for limited government.

Moral traditionalism focuses on "the degree to which conservative or or-
thodox moral standards should guide the public and private life of the nation"
(Goren 2013, 5). Moral traditionalists oppose changing norms regarding fam-
ily structure and believe that government should promote traditional family
values. In contrast, moral progressives are more tolerant of different lifestyles
and resist government efforts to enforce traditional notions of morality.
Moral traditionalism undergirds several policy debates in the United States,
including abortion and gay rights; and moral traditionalism has been a source
of partisan conflict since the 1960s (Goren 2013; Clawson and Oxley 2013).
We measure moral traditionalism using four questions that ask respondents
the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements about newer
lifestyles, changing moral behavior, traditional family values, and tolerance
for different moral standards. Responses were averaged together to create a
moral traditionalism scale (α=.77). Higher values indicate a stronger prefer-
ence for traditional moral values.

Group Attitudes

In addition, attitudes toward social groups are an important source of
policy preferences and contribute to polarized ratings of the two political
parties. Partisan rhetoric is frequently framed to appeal to public stereotypes
of prominent groups in society. In addition, some theories of partisanship are
rooted in public perceptions of social groups commonly associated with each
political party (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). As is the case with core
values, people who do not follow politics very closely can still form beliefs
about groups in society and rely on those beliefs to evaluate the political par-
ties. We focus on attitudes toward two groups that reflect important partisan
differences in modern politics: African Americans and women.

While many scholars have observed a decline in overt racism in the United
States, Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders (1996) argue that a new type of
racial prejudice, termed "racial resentment," has emerged in the wake of
the civil rights movement. Racial resentment centers on a belief that a lack
of work ethic accounts for inequality between black and white Americans.
Since African Americans identify heavily with the Democratic Party, racial
attitudes have likely partisan consequences. Racial resentment has not di-
minished over the last two decades and is associated with policy attitudes and
voting choices (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Valentino and Sears 2005; Clawson
and Oxley 2013). Finally, the partisan impact of racial resentment may be
stronger now that the first African American president in the nation's history
occupies the White House (Tesler and Sears 2010; Kinder and Dale-Riddle
2012). Elite political rhetoric and media coverage of politics can arouse racial

resentment in subtle ways. For example, when Newt Gingrich referred to Barack Obama as "the food-stamp president" during the 2012 presidential campaign (Weiner 2012), the remark may have tapped into racial resentment. Since there are substantial differences between black and white voters in their support for the two major parties, we expect racial resentment to be associated with polarized ratings of the parties. We measure racial resentment based on four questions that ask respondents the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements about the status of blacks in society (Clawson and Oxley 2013). Responses to these four items are averaged together to create the scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$). Higher values indicate higher levels of racial resentment.

We also examine attitudes involving the status of women in American society. Modern sexism revolves around reactions to changing gender roles and beliefs about the degree that discrimination against women still persists (Glick and Fiske 2011). There is a consistent gender gap in voting and party identification, with women more supportive of the Democratic Party and men favoring the Republican Party (Clawson and Oxley 2013). Furthermore, there is persistent partisan conflict over issues specific to women, such as abortion, contraception, equal pay, and workplace rights. For example, the Democratic Party recently campaigned on an alleged GOP "war on women," highlighting some of these issues. The "war on women" rhetoric likely stirs beliefs about modern sexism when voters evaluate the two parties. Thus, attitudes about the role of women are likely to be a source of polarized ratings of the two major parties. The ANES survey contains six questions to measure beliefs about modern sexism. The items ask about how serious sex discrimination is, media coverage of sex discrimination, whether women demanding equality seek special favors, discrimination in hiring and promotion, whether complaining about sex discrimination creates more problems, and whether women have as many opportunities as men. We averaged responses to the six questions to create a modern sexism scale ($\alpha = 0.66$). Higher values indicate greater concern about the persistence of modern sexism.

Predictors of Net Partisan Affect

We estimate two ordinary least-squares regression models of net partisan affect for members of each political party. We examine Democrats and Republicans separately because we expect that the direction of the relationship for some factors will vary for members of different parties. One model includes ideology, and the second model replaces ideology with core values and group attitudes. The relationships between the independent variables and net partisan affect are presented in table 3.1. For each independent variable we

use the model estimates to calculate how much of the gap in party thermom-
eter ratings changes, on average, when moving from the 10th percentile to the
90th percentile on each independent variable. We use this approach because
some independent variables have highly skewed distributions.

As expected, strength of partisanship stands out as the most potent predic-
tor of net partisan affect, even when controlling for a host of other political
attitudes. Holding the other control variables constant, strong partisans rate
the two parties roughly 25 degrees farther apart than do leaning partisans.
Weak partisans produce party thermometer ratings only a few degrees more
polarized than leaning partisans. Ideology also influences net partisan affect
in the expected direction. Moving from low to high conservatism among Re-
publicans increases the gap between party feeling thermometer ratings by 12
degrees. Moving in a more conservative direction among Democrats reduces
the gap in party ratings by a similar amount. These results jibe with those of
Mason (2013), who finds that partisan identity explains fear and loathing of
the opposite party more than ideological extremity.

We also find fairly consistent associations between the two predispositions
and net partisan affect. Moving from low values to high values on the need
to evaluate scale increases the gap between party ratings by roughly 4 to 6 de-
grees, for members of both parties. Similarly, moving from low to high values
on authoritarianism polarizes party thermometer ratings by roughly 5 to 9
degrees. Since both measures yield similar estimated effects for Republicans
and Democrats, this suggests that the traits contribute to party polarization
in fairly uniform ways. Some people are more predisposed to dislike their
political opponents.

Both core values polarize evaluations of the political parties in the expected
direction. Among Republicans, strong belief in limited government and
moral traditionalism (to a lesser degree) generate more polarized evaluations
of the two major parties. Core values can also help us explain the growth in
party polarization during the last few decades. The correlation between moral
traditionalism and the seven-point party identification scale has grown from
0.09 in 1986 to 0.37 in 2012. The results also reveal the moderating impact of
cross-pressured party identifiers. Party members who adhere to values that
conflict with the base position of their party (limited government and moral
traditionalism in the case of Democrats) are less polarized in their ratings of
the two parties.

We also find evidence of our hypothesized effects of group-based attitudes
on party polarization. Moving from low to high values in racial resentment
among Republicans increases the gap in party thermometer ratings by 7 de-
grees. For Democrats, a higher level of racial resentment slightly mutes affec-
tive party polarization. Racial resentment also helps account for the growth

TABLE 3.1
Predictors of Net Partisan Affect, 2012

Independent Variable	Republicans		Democrats	
Strong partisan	23.4	27.0	28.9	27.7
	[20.5, 26.3]	[24.2, 29.8]	[26.3, 31.6]	[25.1, 30.3]
Weak partisan	1.9	2.9	3.4	5.0
	[-0.9, 4.8]	[-0.02, 5.8]	[0.7, 6.2]	[2.3, 7.7]
Need to evaluate	4.8	3.6	6.3	6.4
	[1.6, 8.1]	[1.6, 8.1]	[3.3, 9.2]	[3.6, 8.8]
Authoritarianism	5.7	5.1	8.7	9.5
	[2.5, 8.8]	[1.8, 8.4]	[5.1, 12.3]	[5.9, 13.0]
Conservative media	8.7	8.2	-2.5	-2.4
	[5.9, 11.4]	[5.4, 11.0]	[-3.6, -1.4]	[-3.5, -1.3]
Liberal media	-5.1	-4.1	2.4	-0.4
	[-7.2, -3.0]	[-6.3, -2.0]	[0.2, 4.6]	[-2.6, 1.9]
Battleground state	-2.3	-2.1	2.4	2.9
	[-4.6, 0.1]	[-4.5, 0.3]	[0.2, 4.6]	[0.8, 5.1]
Survey mode (Internet)	5.6	4.2	5.7	5.4
	[3.3, 8.0]	[1.8, 6.6]	[3.6, 7.9]	[3.3, 7.6]
Ideology	12.1	—	-12.0	—
	[9.7, 14.4]		[-14.6, -9.4]	
Limited government	—	9.9	—	-9.3
		[6.8, 13.1]		[-11.6, -7.0]
Moral traditionalism	—	4.6	—	-11.2
		[1.6, 7.5]		[-13.8, -8.6]
Racial resentment	—	7.1	—	-2.7
		[4.0, 10.2]		[-5.9, 0.5]
Modern sexism	—	-0.2	—	8.4
		[-3.3, 2.9]		[5.6, 11.2]
N	1840	1848	2821	2872
R^2	0.36	0.35	0.26	0.29

Note: Estimates are created using ordinary least-squares regression. Cell entries indicate the expected change in net partisan affect when moving from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile on the independent variable. The 95 percent confidence intervals are in brackets. Data are weighted by the poststratified weight for the full sample.

Source: ANES 2013.

in affective polarization since the 1980s, as the correlation between party identification and racial resentment has increased from 0.15 in 1986 to 0.37 in 2012. Turning to gender attitudes, increasing concern about modern sexism among Democrats produces more polarized ratings of the two major parties but has little impact on Republicans.

Compared to the attitudes and predispositions examined here, the overall impact of media exposure on party polarization is rather weak. This is due in

part to the fact that exposure to partisan media is very narrow. For example, the median Republican is not a regular consumer of any of the 19 conservative news sources we examined. Similarly, the median Democrat does not frequent any liberal sources. Nevertheless, we do find that Republican exposure to conservative media is associated with an 8 degree increase in the gap between party thermometer ratings. Exposure to liberal media has a weaker impact on party polarization. Overall, while the partisan media has grown substantially over the past several years, it may not influence mass polarization because of the electorate's limited exposure to partisan media.

While we provide evidence of the pluralistic roots of party polarization in the United States, we also believe that increased denigration of the opposite party has several important consequences. In the next sections, we examine two areas where net partisan affect contributes to our understanding of public opinion: attitudes toward the Tea Party, and evaluations of the country's direction.

The Tea Party and Out-Party Denigration

In a relatively short period of time, the Tea Party has become an important force in American politics, putting its stamp on debates about government spending and the national debt and influencing Republican primary elections around the country. The Tea Party has also emerged as a major source of opposition to President Obama and the Democratic Party agenda in national government. We examine public support for the Tea Party using data from the first wave of the ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Survey (EGSS1), conducted via the Internet in October of 2010. This was one of the earliest national surveys to include questions about the Tea Party.

We estimate a simple statistical model of support for the Tea Party, which is measured on a scale from 1 (oppose a great deal) to 7 (support a great deal). Previous research finds that support for the Tea Party is largely confined to whites (Skocpol and Williamson 2013), so we limit our analysis to non-Hispanic white respondents to the survey. Some argue that Tea Party support is motivated by ideological opposition to the policies of the Democratic Party under President Obama (Abramowitz 2013a; Summary 2013). We try to mimic these studies in creating a policy conservatism scale based on several binary choice questions that ask about opposition to prominent legislative items early in the Obama presidency. We created a scale from seven of these legislative items, including the stimulus bill, the children's health insurance program (SCHIP), cap and trade legislation, the Affordable Care Act, regulation of the financial industry, ending the military's "don't ask, don't tell" pol-

icy, and federal funding of stem cell research. Our measure indicates the proportion of those legislative items that the respondent opposed (Cronbach's α = 0.80). Higher values indicate more conservative policy preferences, so the policy measure should be positively associated with support for the Tea Party.

Some studies find that support for the Tea Party is motivated by racial resentment and a reaction to the election of the first African American president in the nation's history (Parker and Barreto 2013; Abramowitz 2013a; Summary 2013). We create a racial resentment scale using the same four survey questions described above (Cronbach's α = 0.83). Higher values indicate higher levels of racial resentment, so racial resentment should be positively correlated with support for the Tea Party.

We hypothesize that support for the Tea Party in 2010 also represents a strong partisan reaction to the first instance of unified Democratic Party control of Congress and the White House since 1994. Thus, net partisan affect (the degree to which one likes the GOP and dislikes the Democrats) should be a good predictor of support for the Tea Party. The EGSS1 survey did not include party feeling thermometer questions to allow us to measure net partisan affect in the same way as with the 2012 ANES data. However, there is an acceptable substitute: four questions that ask how much respondents liked or disliked the Democratic Party, Barack Obama, the Republican Party, and Sarah Palin on a scale from 1 (like a great deal) to 7 (dislike a great deal). We reverse the scale for the Republican Party and Palin items and average the four responses to create a net partisan affect scale (α = 0.80). Higher values indicate greater positive affect for the GOP, so the scale should be positively associated with Tea Party support.

We find that when controlling for policy preferences and racial resentment, support for the Tea Party is still strongly associated with the degree to which one dislikes Democrats and likes Republicans (see table 3.2). Moving from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile on net party affect increases expected support for the Tea Party by 2.7 points, almost half of the range of the support scale. By comparison, policy conservatism and racial resentment have smaller effects on Tea Party support (0.9 points and 0.6 points, respectively). Overall, these results suggest that the Tea Party can be understood as a vehicle for those who dislike the Democratic Party the most. It is likely that increasing party polarization helped to make the Tea Party possible. A deepening reservoir of hostility to the Democratic Party among Republicans provides fertile ground for Tea Party appeals. With growing contempt for the GOP evident among Democrats, perhaps a similar movement on the Left is not far behind.

Party polarization sharpens the emotional nature of political conflict. As the rise of the Tea Party implies, heightened contempt for the opposite party

TABLE 3.2
Predicting Support for the Tea
Party among Non-Hispanic Whites, 2010

Independent Variable	Impact [95% CI]
Net Partisan Affect	2.7
	[2.4, 3.0]
Policy Conservatism	0.9
	[0.6, 1.2]
Racial Resentment	0.6
	[0.3, 0.8]
N	904
R^2	0.55

The dependent variable is support for the Tea Party on a scale from 1 (oppose a great deal) to 7 (support a great deal). Estimates are created using ordinary least-squares regression. Cell entries indicate the expected change in support for the Tea Party when moving from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile on the independent variable. The 95 percent confidence intervals are in brackets. Data are weighted by the poststratification weight.

Source: ANES 2010–2012 Evaluations of Government and Society Study, October 2010 Survey.

creates greater fear and loathing when reckoning with occasions when the opposite party controls the legislative and executive branches of the government. In the same 2010 EGSS1 survey, we examined questions that asked whether the direction of the country made respondents feel angry, afraid, worried, or outraged. Even though the nation was just emerging from a major recession in 2010, contempt for Democrats was more strongly associated with negative emotions about the country's direction than economic anxieties, such as being unemployed, or conservative political views. While negative feelings about the way things are going in the nation are shaped by several factors, party polarization and contempt for the opposite party are an important source of those negative feelings.

Conclusion

There are growing differences in feelings toward the two major political parties in the United States. Contempt for the opposite party has increased substantially, particularly during the past ten years. The increase in negative feelings for the opposition party is partly a response to elite polarization, which strengthens the salience of party identity among the public, and fuels biased

political reasoning and distrust of the political opposition. Polarized ratings of the parties have many other sources, including ideology, core values, group-based attitudes, individual predispositions, and exposure to partisan media. Thus, in crafting rhetoric that encourages revulsion for the opposition, both political parties can appeal to a diverse palette of public attitudes.

Party polarization and increasingly negative assessments of one's political opponents have important consequences for American politics. Party polarization has helped create emotional space for the Tea Party to emerge. Support for the Tea Party is strongly related to how much one likes the Republican Party and dislikes the Democratic Party. Twenty years ago, when there was considerably less contempt for Democrats among GOP supporters, there may not have been much of a market for the Tea Party. If that contempt continues to grow, then the Tea Party should continue to thrive. Since we observe similar levels of contempt for the GOP among Democrats, there seems to be an opportunity for a more coordinated movement like the Tea Party to form on the Left.

Increased negativity toward political opponents among the mass public is a promising development for those eager to mobilize the base of either party. Appeals that emphasize threats and fear are more effective at motivating mass political activity than a positive agenda (J. Miller 2013). Politicians can appeal to feelings of contempt, anger, and fear to draw more citizens into the political arena. However, having repeatedly stoked those negative feelings among party supporters, it can be difficult for politicians to ride that tiger when governing requires negotiation and compromise. If partisans do not view the other side as legitimate, then they are less likely to support compromise with the opposition. This dynamic seems to have contributed to the government shutdown in October of 2013. Partisans on each side would not support their party leaders making concessions to the other side (Motel 2013). It appears that many national politicians responded to those desires, prolonging the shutdown crisis. Given the increasing disdain for political opponents, similar crises will likely occur in the foreseeable future.

Notes

1. For the 2012 ANES survey one sample of respondents was interviewed face-to-face, the traditional mode for ANES surveys, and the other sample completed the survey on the Internet. Several indicators show the Internet sample to be more polarized than the face-to-face sample. For any depiction of chronological trends, as in figure 3.1, we only use the face-to-face sample of the 2012 survey.

2. For all analyses we treat Independents who lean toward a party as partisans.

3. The questions asked whether the respondent has opinions about many things and if the respondent has more opinions than the average person. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's α) for these items is 0.66.

4. These are not meant to be an exhaustive list of core values in American politics. Additional values are covered by Goren (2013) and Clawson and Oxley (2013). Rather, limited government and moral traditionalism have structured party conflict in the United States for an extended period.

4

Why American Political Parties Can't Get Beyond the Left-Right Divide[1]

Edward G. Carmines, Michael J. Ensley,
and Michael W. Wagner

I N OCTOBER OF 2010, *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman pre-
dicted that "there is going to be a serious third party candidate in 2012, with
a serious political movement behind him or her—one definitely big enough
to impact the election's outcome" (Friedman 2010). The Pulitzer Prize–win-
ning scribe claimed that this new party would not come from the right or the
left, but the "radical center," which was tired of a failed two-party system.
Two years later, Friedman followed up, promoting former U.S. Comptrol-
ler General David Walker as an independent who could appeal to moderate
America (Friedman 2012). On the other side of the national paper of record's
ideological spectrum, Ross Douthat, on the day after the 2012 election, wrote
in one breath that President Barack Obama's reelection victory in 2012 was
"a realignment" and in the next breath that it "may not even last after another
four years" (Douthat 2012).

Popular accounts of American politics and predictions about its future like
those described above are common. Whether the claims focus on a growing
centrist goliath that brings the two major parties to their knees or describe
a durable shift in the electorate that advantages one party over another, the
element that these kinds of forecasts about the future of the American experi-
ment have in common is the expectation of rapid, dramatic, and long-lasting
change.

We argue that those who expect such vivid and enduring transformations
in the American party system will be waiting a while. Just as record low levels
of approval for Congress and a continuing decline in trust in the govern-
ment's ability to do the right thing are not likely to translate into the rise of a

viable, centrist third party, there is not much evidence that President Obama's reelection has created a durable Democratic realignment (but see Judis and Teixeria 2004). When considering the state of the parties for 2012 and beyond in the United States, we argue that it is crucial to take into account the more diverse ideological orientations of the American electorate compared to the simple left/right divide that characterizes the contemporary two-party system. We explore a simple, but fundamental, question: *What are the consequences of the discrepancy between the one-dimensional structure of elite policy preferences and the two-dimensional structure of citizens' policy preferences?* In this chapter, we explain: 1) why many of those self-identifying as ideologically moderate are actually polarized *from each other*—making a centrist third party's rise very difficult; 2) why the parties are constrained in their ability to make major plays for parts of the electorate who do not share their ideological preferences; and finally; 3) why, at the same time, just focusing on increasing the support from their core ideological supporters is unlikely to lead to a partisan majority.

The Contemporary Partisan Divide in the American Electorate

While partisan political elites are more polarized along a single left-right ideological continuum than they have been in several generations, nay, centuries (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006), the coalitions supporting their bids for office on Election Day are structured in a way that makes sudden but durable change unlikely. The major reason is that the electorate does not solely divide its attitudes along the same left-right dimension that dominates elite debate (Jackson and Green 2011). The American public is made of polarized liberals and conservatives to be sure, but it is also made up of libertarians, populists, and moderates who not only face a party system with no natural home but also one that systematically cross pressures them day by day, issue by issue, and election by election.

Our previous research reveals deep divides in contemporary American politics—not just between liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans or between an active ideological minority and an inactive nonideological majority—but also between ideologically orthodox and ideologically heterodox citizens (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a). We use the term *orthodox* to mean that individuals have attitudes on both economic issues and social issues that match the program of issue preferences advocated by one of the two major political parties. Liberals hold left-leaning views on both social and economic issues and conservatives hold right-leaning views on both types of issues, while libertarians hold conservative economic preferences and liberal social preferences and populists hold liberal economic views and conserva-

tive social ones. Moderates, in our definition, hold middle-of-the-road views across both issue dimensions.

The deep-seated ideological heterogeneity that we have discovered in the American electorate has led to two simultaneous but diametrically opposing developments in contemporary American politics. On the one hand, precisely because ideologically consistent liberals and conservatives share the economic and social issue preferences of Democratic Party elites and Republican Party elites respectively, they have become significantly more entrenched in the contemporary party system. They tend to be stable partisans, straight-ticket party voters with exceptionally strong attachments to their respective parties while strongly opposing the opposition party (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012b). While they do not vote at higher rates than their fellow citizens, they do participate in more campaign-related activities, which no doubt enhances their political visibility and influence (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2011). They are also more likely to use partisan media outlets to learn about politics. In short, ideologically orthodox citizens have become more aligned with the existing party system. They represent the mass tentacles from party elites that reach into the wellsprings of the American electorate.

Populists and libertarians along with moderates, on the other hand, are much less connected to the two major parties and less likely to engage in political activities. They are being pushed out of conventional two-party politics, which leaves them with a classic "exit or voice" choice (Hirschman 1970): not participating at all, become the primary force of swing and split-ticket voting, or forming and voting for third parties.

What do these five ideological categories comprise and how are they measured? Mass policy preferences are not represented along a single left-right ideological divide (Converse 1964; see also Claggett and Shafer 2010; Shafer and Claggett 1995). Instead, the domestic policy preferences of the public vary along two major dimensions, the first associated with economic and social-welfare issues and a second dominated by social and cultural issues (Shafer and Claggett 1995; Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2011). While the preferences of party elites on these two dimensions are closely aligned— hence, the single-dimensional structure of elite opinion—for most of the public the economic and social ideological dimensions are largely separate and only weakly correlated (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012b).

To create empirically our five ideological categories, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on American National Election Studies (ANES) questions on citizens' issue positions from 1972 to 2012. The CFA model allowed the correlation between the dimensions to vary. Specifically, we identified questions that mapped onto either the economic or social ideological dimensions and used those questions to identify citizens'

underlying, latent positions on each dimension. Since the number of complete cases is diminished when all of the issue questions are used simultaneously, we chose to impute missing values before performing the CFA. We have taken advantage of this approach in our analyses examining how individuals' location in a two-dimensional measure of ideology helps explain variation in party identification and civic engagement (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a; 2011).

We created five datasets through multiple imputation and then performed the CFA to estimate each individual's position on each dimension. The correlation between the two issue dimensions never exceeds 0.5 in any survey, which is crucial for our contention that there is a large proportion of the American public that does not fit into the traditional left-right continuum on both of these issue dimensions simultaneously (see Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a; 2012b; 2011 for additional details).

We have defined ideological groups by dividing the two-dimensional policy space into five discrete areas that are represented in figure 4.1. The x-axis represents preferences for economic issues, ranging from the most liberal at the left end of the spectrum to the most conservative at the right end of the spectrum. The y-axis represents preferences for social issues. The lower end of the axis represents more liberal preferences on social issues such as abortion and gay rights, while the higher end represents more conservative social issue preferences.

Given that each dimension is set to have a mean of 0 and the standard deviation is 1, the origin (0,0) is roughly the center of the space. Moderates are defined as those respondents that are within a one-half of a standard deviation of the origin in any direction and are shaded gray in figure 4.1. The other groups are defined in terms of the quadrant in which they are located. We classify those that have a positive (negative) value on both dimensions as Conservative (Liberal). Those that have a positive (negative) value on the economic dimension and a negative (positive) value on the social dimension are considered Libertarian (Populist).

Figure 4.1 makes it immediately clear that the American electorate is made up of more than liberals, conservatives, and moderates. Liberals are located in the lower-left quadrant of the figure while conservatives find themselves in the upper right-hand corner of the figure. Moderates are in the middle. The "off-diagonal" is made up of libertarians in the lower-right corner as they prefer the government to play a less active role in the managing of the economy while simultaneously preferring that the government play a less active role in regulating questions of morality. Conversely, populists are in the upper left-hand quadrant of the figure, preferring government management of both the economy and government regulation of social behaviors.
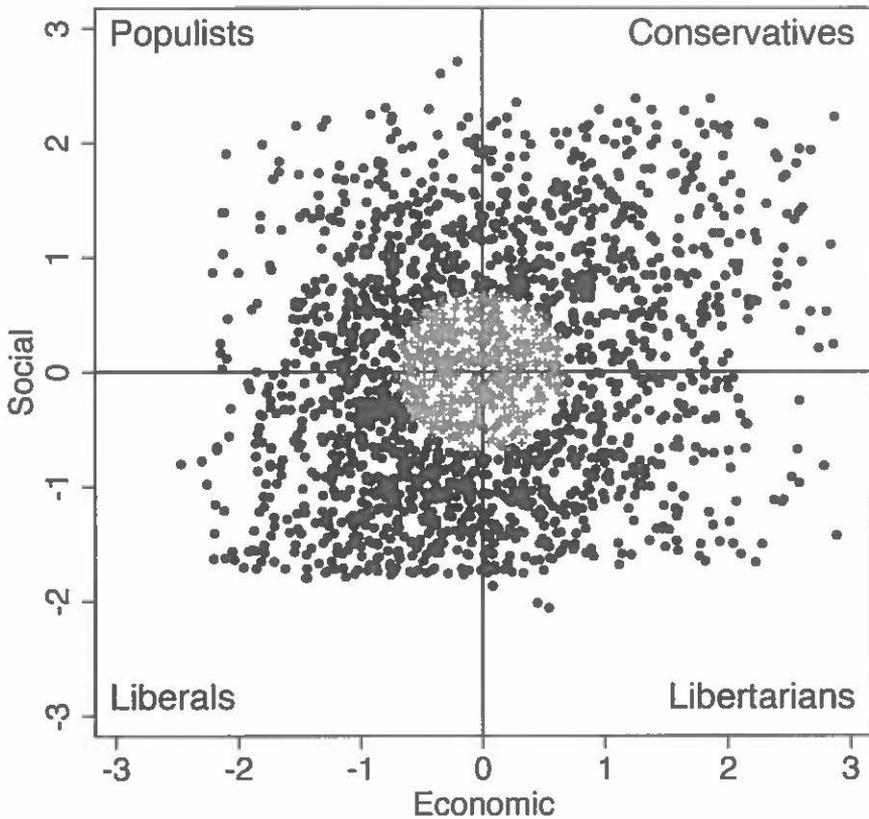
FIGURE 4.1
Ideological distribution of the 2012 American electorate.
Source: ANES 2012.

Importantly, libertarians, populists, and moderates all choose, on average, the middle value on self-reported ideology scales (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a), but even a cursory glance at figure 4.1 makes clear that these three groups of people have little in common when it comes to their issue preferences. A candidate seeking to appeal to what Friedman calls the "radical center" would be on a fool's errand, as no candidate—no matter how skilled—could appeal to self-identified moderates who are ideologically libertarian and populist as they hold policy preferences that are precisely opposite of one another.

While liberals and conservatives are the most populated categories, figure 4.1 also shows that the number of libertarians, populists, and moderates in

the electorate is nontrivial. Based on the information displayed in figure 4.1, conservatives and liberals made up 46 percent of the electorate in 2012. While orthodox voters are more likely to be partisans, most heterodox voters identify with a party as well. While heterodox voters engage in more split-ticket voting and exhibit more variability in the durability of their partisan attachments, their general willingness to identify with a party makes the job of third-party candidates more difficult. Moreover, while their partisan attitudes and attachments are generally weaker than those of conservatives and liberals, most libertarians, populists, and moderates do identify with a political party, even if that party is not a perfect fit for their ideological orientations.

When third-party candidates have emerged, they have done best when trying to appeal to a particular ideological group in political circumstances that are challenging to the conventional two-party candidates that conservatives and liberals are predisposed to support. For example, in 1992, an economic recession drove President George H.W. Bush's approval rating to 29 percent in August of 1992, just months ahead of his unsuccessful reelection bid. Republicans still approved of Bush, but even their approval had dropped to 57 percent, the low point of the president's support from his co-partisans (Gallup 2014). Bush's Democratic opponent, Bill Clinton, endured months of scandals and media-feeding frenzies along the campaign trail about his draft record, personal life, and personal financial dealings.

Enter Texas billionaire and independent candidate H. Ross Perot. Perot's campaign focused on economic issues, promising to run America like a business as he excoriated President Bush for raising taxes and for the rising national debt. However, he was pro-choice on the abortion issue and thus more closely fit the ideological profile of libertarians than conservatives or liberals. Perot captured about 19 percent of the popular vote. From where did his votes come? We conducted a multinomial logit analysis of the 1992 presidential vote in which a vote for Perot is the baseline category.[2] In the regression, we control for partisan identification, retrospective and prospective economic evaluations, and trust in government. In the comparison of voting for Bush relative to Perot, socially conservative voters are to be more likely to support Bush. Economic conservatism does not have a statistically significant effect on choosing Bush relative to Perot. In the comparison of voting for Perot relative to Clinton, we found negative and statistically significant coefficients on the economic and social variables indicating that economically and socially conservative voters were likely to support Perot relative to Clinton.

The best way to analyze the results for our model is to consider predicted probabilities for different combinations of the social and economic issues variables. Figure 4.2 presents the predicted probability of voting for Perot for each of our five ideological groups. Specifically, we defined a conserva-
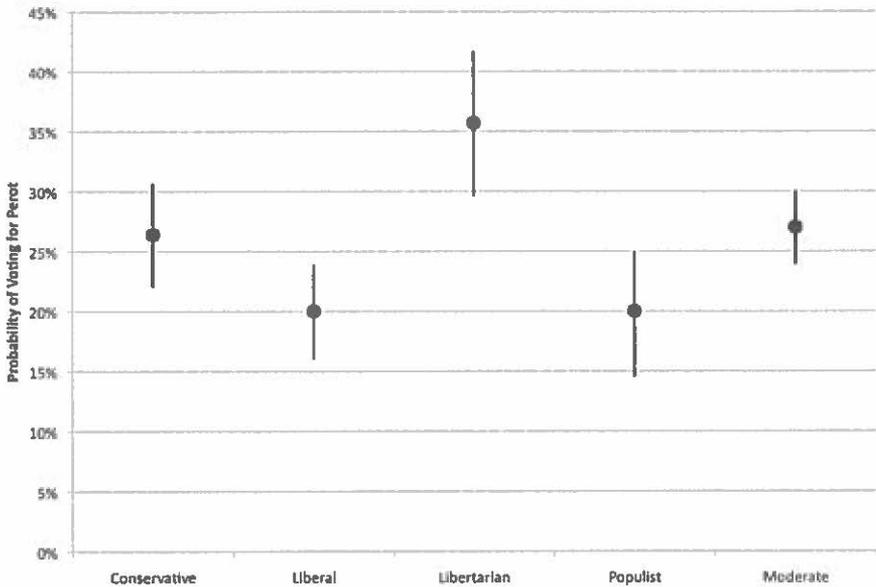
FIGURE 4.2
Probability of voting for Ross Perot in 1992 by ideological group.

tive (liberal) on a particular dimension to be one standard deviation above (below) the mean, and a moderate would be located at the mean on each dimension. Based on this, we calculated the predicted probability of voting for Perot for each of the five ideological types.

The economic and social scales have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. So for the purposes of creating figure 4.2, the moderate has a score of 0 on both dimensions. The conservative and populist have a score of 1 on the social dimension, whereas the liberal and libertarian have a score of -1 on that dimension. For the economic dimension, the conservative and libertarian have the same score of 1, whereas the liberal and populist have a score of -1 on the economic dimension. Figure 4.2 indicates that the independent candidate, Perot, appealed the most to libertarians, who (along with populists and moderates) are much less stable in their partisanship over time than conservatives and liberals (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a). Given the choice between a Republican candidate who was consistently conservative across issue dimensions and an independent who was a better match for their own general views, libertarians had a 36 percent likelihood to vote for Perot. Of course, that also means a majority of libertarians were more likely to vote

for either Bush or Clinton, highlighting the importance of party identifica-
tion in determining vote choice (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes
1960; Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, and Weisberg 2008). On the one hand,
the independent candidate who appealed to the precise issue preferences of a
group of voters won more of their votes as compared to any other ideological
group. On the other hand, even the voters who agreed with Perot across two
issue dimensions were more likely to vote for another candidate, highlighting
the incredible difficulty for independent candidates to appeal to a winning
coalition of voters.

The other two ideological groups that are most likely to self-identify in the
middle—populists and moderates—were about 15 and 10 percentage points
less likely than libertarians to cast a vote for Perot. Liberals and populists were
the least likely to support Perot. This makes sense as both liberals and popu-
lists prefer far more government intervention into the management of the
economy than did Perot. Conservatives were about as likely as moderates to
support Perot. Thus, even if an independent candidate enters the presidential
race, gains significant media attention, participates in the debates, and airs
advertisements, figure 4.2 highlights how unlikely it is that the candidate can
appeal to a winning coalition of voters without the signal of a major party
label behind him or her. There are nontrivial votes to be had in the "off-
diagonal" ideological space occupied by many American voters, but it appears
as though there are not enough votes among these heterodox voters, to win
many elections.

Opportunities and Constraints Facing Partisan Elites

The multidimensional character of American public opinion both gives op-
portunities to and constraints to the two major parties as they seek to build
a stable electoral majority coalition. Since neither party has been able to as-
semble such a stable majority since the Democrats lost this status in the 1960s,
both parties have won national elections by cobbling together a coalition that
goes beyond their core ideological supporters. When Republicans triumph
they must win millions of votes beyond those who have conservative posi-
tions on both economic and social issues, just as Democrats must extend their
electoral reach well beyond their ideological core.

Given this situation, there are two alternative strategies available to each
party as they seek to build a majority coalition. First, they can focus primar-
ily on gaining additional support from their natural ideological supporters;
Republicans appealing to conservatives, Democrats appealing to liberals.
This would lead to an intensification of the already marked polarization that

characterizes American parties today. The alternative strategy is to expand their ideological appeals by focusing on increasing their support among one or more of the three other ideological groups. This latter scenario actually encompasses two distinct strategies, one involving an appeal to moderates, the other an appeal to populists or libertarians (Hillygus and Shields 2009). The former strategy involves moderating their party's issue stances by moving toward the center on economic and social issues. Making an appeal to populists or libertarians, by contrast, necessitates the two parties making a move on only one issue dimension since both parties are already aligned with these of diagonal voters on one dimension. Thus, the Republican Party would need to move left on the social issues dimension to increase their appeal to libertarians or move right on the economic issue dimension to appeal to populists. Similarly, the Democrats could increase their appeal to populists by moving rightward on social issues or moving left on economic issues to appeal to libertarians.

Notice that there is a tradeoff in these partisan appeals to moderates versus populists and libertarians. The former only involves moderating—not fundamentally altering—their economic and social issue stands, but involves altering their positions on both issue dimensions. Contrariwise, to increase their appeal to libertarians or populists each party would have to adopt a new issue position, but only on one of the issue dimensions.

To examine the implications of these alternative strategies facing the currently constituted Republican and Democratic parties, we turn to the analytic model developed by Robert Axelrod (1972). His model calculates the contribution that different groups make to a party's electoral coalition. The group's contribution is defined as the proportion of a party's total votes provided by a given group and is based on the three components of the group: its size, turnout, and loyalty. Simply, a group's contribution to the party's coalition is greater if the group is large, its turnout is high, and its vote is lopsided for one or the other party. Conversely, a group's electoral contribution is less when it is small in size, has low turnout, and its members evenly split their vote between the two parties. Since these components can differ substantially across and within groups and can change over time, the formula provides a useful mechanism to evaluate the contribution that any group makes to a party's overall electoral coalition. Axelrod's model initially was used to calculate the contribution of various demographic groups to the Democratic and Republican electoral coalitions, but the model can readily be applied to ideological groups.

Figure 4.3 shows the contribution of each of our five ideological groups to the Republican presidential electoral coalition from 1972 to 2012, while figure 4.4 presents the same information for the Democratic presidential coalition.
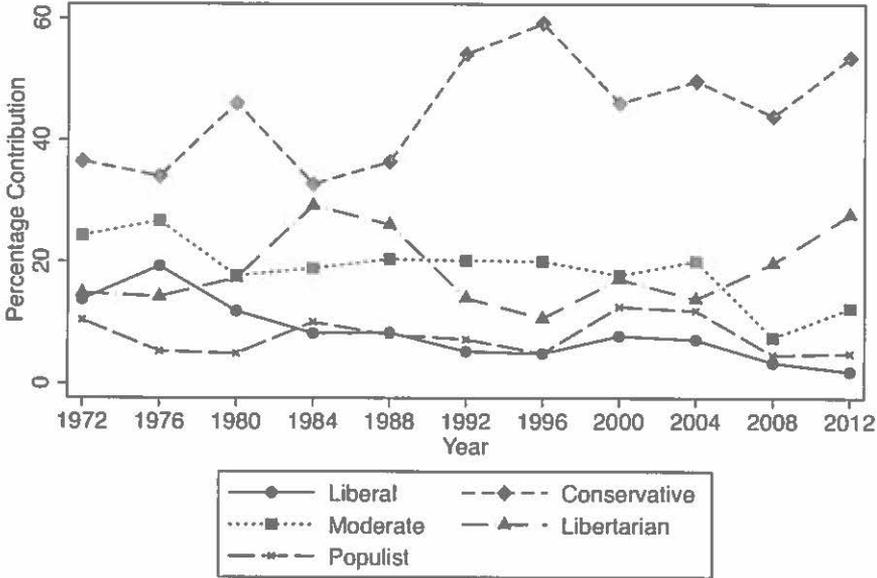
FIGURE 4.3
Contribution to the Republican presidential vote by ideological group.
Source: ANES 1972–2012.

One can see that over time, Republican reliance on conservative votes has increased substantially, going from the mid-30 percent level in the 1970s to an average of over 50 percent in the 1992 to 2012 period. That is, more than half of Republican electoral support is now provided by conservatives. Simultaneously, the contribution of liberals to the Republican electoral coalition has declined to less than 10 percent in each of the last eight presidential elections. Figure 4.4 indicates that ideological liberals make the largest contribution to the Democratic coalition, averaging 42 percent throughout this entire period. Thus, Republicans are far more dependent on conservative support than Democrats are on liberal support. In this sense, Republicans can be considered more of an ideologically oriented party than Democrats.

When we examine the three components of size, turnout, and loyalty for each of the ideological groups for 1972, 1992, and 2012, we gain some insight into the possible strategies for each party as they attempt to assemble a lasting electoral majority. Turning first to the Republican Party, the question, stated bluntly, is can an electoral Republican majority be constructed from additional conservative votes? The proportion of conservatives in the electorate has remained remarkably stable throughout this entire period, averaging 27 percent of the public. Consequently, if a Republican majority is to be based
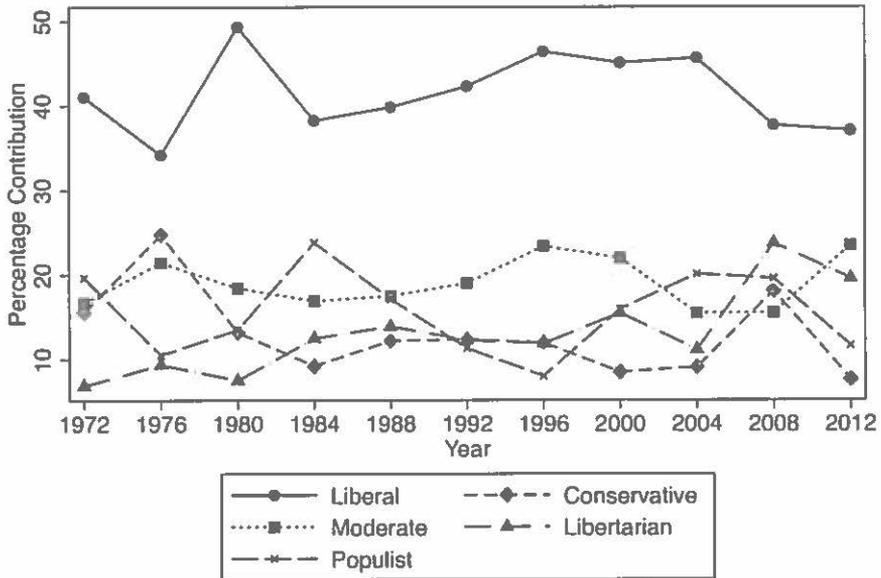
FIGURE 4.4
Contribution to the Democratic presidential vote by ideological group.
Source: ANES 1972–2012.

on conservative votes, it must rely on increases in the group's turnout and loyalty. But as table 4.1 indicates, average voting turnout among conservatives is already close to 80 percent, as is Republican Party loyalty among conservatives. The 2012 election is especially revealing in this regard. Mitt Romney won 86 percent of the conservative vote, and 83 percent of conservatives voted in the election, but he still lost the election. The implication: there are probably not enough inactive, disloyal conservatives to make the Republicans a majority party.

But this does not mean a Republican majority is beyond reach. Neither moderates nor especially populists are likely to contribute significantly to a Republican majority. As table 4.1 shows, populists are not only the smallest group in the ideological universe, but they also have the lowest turnout. But perhaps most importantly, they have shown a strong disinclination to vote for Republican presidential candidates, especially in recent elections. The high watermark of Republican populist support was 49 percent in 1972. But the average level of populist support for Republicans throughout this entire period is only 34 percent, and the last two presidential elections saw a mere 17 percent and 27 percent of populists vote for the Republican ticket.

Moderates offer a more promising target for Republican efforts. They are a larger portion of the public than populists and turn out in higher numbers.

Chapter 4

TABLE 4.1
Size, Turnout, Loyalty, and Contribution to Republican Presidential Coalition

Year	Turnout	Loyalty	Size	Contribution
		Liberal		
1972	88%	38%	23%	14%
1992	77%	8%	25%	5%
2012	80%	8%	19%	2%
		Conservative		
1972	81%	81%	30%	36%
1992	76%	76%	29%	54%
2012	83%	86%	27%	54%
		Moderate		
1972	88%	73%	21%	24%
1992	65%	43%	22%	20%
2012	65%	32%	21%	12%
		Libertarian		
1972	88%	80%	12%	15%
1992	72%	60%	12%	14%
2012	79%	56%	22%	28%
		Populist		
1972	79%	49%	15%	10%
1992	59%	31%	12%	7%
2012	61%	27%	11%	5%

Most significantly for Republican prospects, moderates exhibit the most variable pattern of partisan support among the five ideological groups. Of the eleven presidential elections since 1972, Republicans have won a majority of the moderate vote in six of them and have done so as recently as 2004. But the most recent presidential elections saw the Republican ticket garner its least amount of moderate support in this entire period, only 29 percent in 2008 and 32 percent in 2012. Moderates would seem to be trending away from the Republican Party as it has become more attractive to conservatives since 1992.

Libertarians would seem to offer better prospects for Republicans. As seen in figure 4.3, libertarians made the second highest contribution to the Republican electoral coalition in 2008 and 2012. Furthermore, they are a significantly larger part of the electorate than populists, and while generally smaller than moderates overall they have actually surpassed moderates as a portion of the electorate in the last two presidential elections. Moreover, libertarians

have high levels of turnout, slightly higher than liberals and matching that of conservatives. Finally, a majority of libertarians have voted for Republicans in three of the last four elections. Libertarians would seem to provide the best opportunity for the Republican Party to expand its ideological coalition.

Evidence of the size, loyalty, and turnout in support of the Democratic Party's presidential nominee for 1972, 1992, and 2012 are presented in table 4.2. We have already noted in figure 4.4 that while liberals make the largest contribution to the party's coalition, it is significantly smaller than the contribution conservatives make to the Republican coalition. Democrats have depended less on liberals than Republicans have on conservatives to produce electoral victories. Should Democrats focus their efforts on increasing the contribution of liberals to their electoral coalition? Liberals already are a relatively high turnout group, approximating the turnout of conservatives and libertarians. They are also extremely loyal to the Democrats, with 95 percent voting Democratic in the 2012 election. Additionally, liberals make

TABLE 4.2
Size, Turnout, Loyalty, and Contribution to Democratic Presidential Coalition

Year	Turnout	Loyalty	Size	Contribution
		Liberal		
1972	88%	62%	23%	41%
1992	77%	92%	25%	41%
2012	80%	95%	19%	37%
		Conservative		
1972	81%	19%	30%	16%
1992	76%	24%	30%	16%
2012	83%	14%	27%	8%
		Moderate		
1972	88%	19%	30%	16%
1992	76%	24%	29%	12%
2012	83%	14%	27%	8%
		Libertarian		
1972	88%	20%	12%	7%
1992	78%	55%	12%	12%
2012	79%	44%	22%	20%
		Populist		
1972	79%	51%	15%	20%
1992	59%	69%	12%	11%
2012	61%	73%	11%	12%

up a somewhat smaller part of the electorate than conservatives do. It would appear that Democrats cannot add much to their coalition by concentrating on liberals. There are simply not enough inactive, nonloyal liberals to form a Democratic majority.

We have already seen that libertarians are more likely to become a permanent part of the Republican coalition than any of the other ideological groups. That leaves populists and moderates as potential Democratic recruits. On its face, populists seem to be a tempting target. They are already quite loyal to the party, supporting Democrats at an average rate of 66 percent from 1972 to 2012. But as a group, they have two major disadvantages. First, their turnout is by far the lowest among the five ideological groups (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2011). Perhaps more importantly, they also represent the smallest slice of the electorate, averaging 13 percent of the public. If Democrats were to concentrate on increasing the contribution of populists to their electoral coalition, they would need to make a major effort to boost their turnout since a political party can do relatively little to increase a group's size.

What about moderates? As we saw in figure 4.4, moderates have been an important part of the Democrat's electoral coalition. Since 1972, only liberals have exceeded their average contribution to the Democratic coalition, but moderate turnout is second lowest among these ideological groups. In terms of loyalty, they split their votes more evenly between the parties than any other group, averaging 51 percent for Democrats during this period. Democrats have done much better among moderates since the New Democrats represented by Clinton came on the scene in 1992. In five of the last six presidential elections, moderates have given a majority of their votes to Democrats, a figure that reached impressive levels of 71 percent and 68 percent in 2008 and 2012 respectively. Thus, in the last two decades moderates have moved firmly into the Democratic electoral coalition, and along with populists would seem to provide the best opportunity for Democrats to expand their coalition.

Beyond the 2012 Elections: The Future of Partisan Politics

It is often suggested that both parties can become more electorally viable by simply extending their ideological reach, making greater appeals to less ideologically oriented orthodox voters. However, our analysis suggests that this is not so easy. Because liberals and conservatives are the strongest partisans and the citizens most likely to participate, they represent the core ideological constituency of their respective party. It is difficult—indeed, it is quite risky—for partisan elites to move ideologically to attract populist or libertarian support (Karol 2009). The same logic affects the extent to which party elites are able

to moderate their positions to gain votes from more centrist voters. They do so at the clear risk of losing support among their natural ideological base.

In a two-dimensional policy space, "flanking" strategies aimed at highlighting one issue dimension over another in an election might be enough to appeal to voters who hold ideological preferences that do not match what one of the parties is offering. Presidential candidates of competing parties tapped libertarians' economic issues conservatism and social issues liberalism during the past forty years (Miller and Schofield 2003). This makes sense given that the economic issues dimension is more highly correlated with partisanship than the social issues dimension (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012b), while the social issues dimension has come to be more important in explaining self-identified ideology (Levendusky 2009).

While flanking is a theoretically plausible strategy for partisan elites to use, the parties-in-the-electorate must be careful not to go too far and upset the coalition of members that make up their base (Bawn et al. 2012). Moreover, since both parties have incentives to engage in flanking, the same members of the "off-diagonal" will be the targets of both parties. For example, Republicans should be expected to target libertarians on economic issues, but those same libertarians should be expected to receive messages about social issues from Democrats. In an era that has campaigns relying on the tools of "big data" to make inferences about voters' preferences, and thus, the kinds of messages they should receive, we might expect more flanking to occur in the future as parties improve their ability to estimate how efficient their targeted messages might be. Regardless, the irresistible force of efforts to highlight one dimension over another for ideologically heterodox voters should always be expected to run into the immovable object of two parties that have identical incentives to flank.

Another complicating factor for the two major parties, and perhaps especially for the Republican Party, has been the growth of a particular kind of polarization—not the distance between the two parties, but an asymmetric polarization in which the newly elected Republican members of Congress are becoming increasingly conservative as compared to their co-partisans continuing to serve in office, while newly elected Democrats are *also* more conservative than the Democrats who held office previously (Carmines 2011). As the Republican lawmakers become more conservative, appeals to ideologically heterodox voters become increasingly risky.

In the past few elections, a noteworthy number of Republican stalwarts lost to Tea Party–supported candidates. In 2010, Tea Party—funded candidate Christine O'Donnell upset nine-term Representative Mike Castle in the Delaware Republican Senate primary (Theiss, Morse, Wagner, Flanagan, and Zingate, 2011). In 2012, Indiana treasurer Richard Mourdock defeated

six-term U.S. Senator Richard Lugar in the GOP Senate primary. Both O'Donnell and Mourdock lost their bids for the Senate in the general election where a more moderate Republican candidate might have won (Fanagan, et al. 2014).

Table 4.3 shows the predicted probability of approval of the Tea Party for the mean member of each of our ideological groups. Approval for the Tea Party is measured along a 7-point scale (7 = strongly approve) in the 2012 ANES. First, it is noteworthy that no group crests the midpoint of the scale; the average American, regardless of her or his ideological stripes, disapproves of the Tea Party. Stipulating that, conservatives hold the most favorable attitudes toward the Tea Party while liberals hold the least favorable. Moderates, libertarians, and populists once again find themselves in the middle.

Table 4.4 suggests that Tea Party identifiers in Congress cannot afford to alienate conservative voters—the very voters we have previously shown to be enthusiastic participators and strong, durable Republican Party identifiers (Carmines, Ensley, and Wagner 2012a; 2012b). While intra-party battles over legislative strategy might occasionally dominate the headlines and cause headaches for party leaders as they did during the 2013 government shutdown and lead to speculation about forming a new, Tea Party–centered political party, Tea Party Congress members need the support of conservative voters, and conservative voters are reliable Republicans.

In the end, then, there is no great mystery as to why American political parties can't get beyond the left-right divide. Parties are by nature risk-averse organizations, and as such, they are tightly moored to the status quo. Only under the most extreme circumstances—for parties, that means repeated losses at the polls—do they adopt changes in their electoral strategy. Thus, as long as both parties can plausibly convince themselves that their ideological appeals are not responsible for their electoral defeats, they will avoid making any fundamental changes in their basic strategies. At the same time, as we have seen, neither Republicans nor Democrats will be able to cultivate a majority by only focusing on their core ideological supporters. There are simply not enough additional conservative and liberal votes to be harvested to produce an electoral majority. So, for the time being, both parties are

TABLE 4.3
Approval for the Tea Party, 2012

	Conservatives	Libertarians	Populists	Moderates	Liberals
Predicted Approval	3.22	2.55	2.26	2.41	1.74
(Std Error)	(0.199)	(0.180)	(0.162)	(0.135)	(0.115)

Source: 2012 American National Election Study; scale ranges from 1 to 7 (7 = strongly approve).

caught in a fundamental dilemma—they lack the incentive to move beyond their ideological anchors, and yet they cannot become a majority party by becoming more closely tied to these anchors. They are thus set adrift in a sea of future uncertainty.

Notes

1. We are grateful to John Green, Daniel Coffey and David Cohen for their careful attention to our project. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the State of the Parties Conferences: 2012 and Beyond at the University of Akron, Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, November 7–8, 2013.

2. To save space, we do not report the model here. Contact the authors for the results.

5

A Perfect Storm

Presidential-House Elections, Policy, and Congressional Polarization

Jeffrey M. Stonecash

THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN CONGRESS are deeply polarized, with Democrats and Republicans in both houses increasingly voting in united blocs against the other (Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2003; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2008). Partisan divisions within the electorate are also increasing. The percentage of voters choosing to identify with a party is increasing, and more of those who identify with a party are voting for their party candidates (Stonecash 2006). Those who identify as Democrats or Republicans are steadily diverging in their approval of presidential job performance (Jacobson 2007).

What is driving this division, and how did we arrive at this situation? There is plentiful research about the former question, but perhaps less clarity about the latter. With regard to the former, survey evidence indicates the public has increasingly become divided over matters involving race (King and Smith 2011), ideology (Abramowitz 2010; 2013a), class (Stonecash 2000; 2010), cultural norms (Brewer and Stonecash 2007), religious attachment (Layman 2001; Olson 2010), and authoritarianism (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). There may be arguments about which of these is most important, but divisions within the public are steadily growing and creating electoral bases for the parties that wish for different public policies.

How these strong partisan divisions emerged as congressional polarization is not as clear. The dominant theme of the academic literature of the 1990s and even early 2000s was that elections had become candidate centered, with House members viewed as cultivating personal, almost apolitical bases of support (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1990). Members had access to vast re-

sources to promote themselves and to reduce the impact of national electoral swings (Jacobson 2009). Some scholars even asked whether there had really been any increase in conflict (Fiorina 2009; 2010), and whether parties were even relevant (Krehbiel 1993). These views are an extension of the "decline-of-party" theme that dominated in the 1980s and 1990s (see Stonecash 2013, 21–31, for a review).

Just as this view appeared to be accepted as accurate, it became difficult to ignore the steady increase in partisan divisions in Congress. Voting is now organized around party (Rohde 1991; Jacobson 2003; Polsby 2004). The concern here is: How did party polarization emerge from what appeared to be a candidate-centered political world? We need to explain how party divisions became so clear and intense.

Explaining Changing Party Positioning

The 1960s to 1980s are often cited as an era in which bipartisanship in Congress worked. Each party contained ideological and geographical diversity, which constrained the degree of partisan conflict. Some see that as an era of more reasonable and pragmatic parties. This presumed era of bipartisanship also masked the fact that each party contained wings frustrated by the degree of moderation that prevailed. Conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats wanted a more forceful party expression of their views. The resulting frustrations and pursuits of more coherent electoral bases prompted realignment and shifting party policy positions. For decades the Democratic Party had a base in the South. In the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson sought to reduce that reliance and supported programs that would attract blacks and northern voters (Ware 2006; Stonecash 2013, 113–25). At the same time Republicans were pursuing votes and seats in the more conservative South.

This process of realignment resulted in first one party and then the other becoming dominated by their most ideological and fervent wings. Interpreting this repositioning within each party is often seen as a party struggling to balance the wishes of its new constituency with the need to appeal to the middle. In the 1970s and 1980s, Democrats were identified with minorities and other liberal causes (Edsall and Edsall 1991), and the party struggled to move toward a more moderate set of stances (Hale 1995). Bill Clinton as the presidential candidate moved the party toward the middle. Today Republicans are seen as the party that pursued new constituencies and is struggling with how much to allow itself to be defined by those pursued. Republicans engaged in first a lengthy pursuit of southern conservatives, and then Chris-

tian fundamentalists, and most recently Tea Party voters. At each step there has been extensive political commentary that the party has swung hard to the right and is risking alienating many moderates. The charge is that the party is becoming extreme (Mann and Ornstein 2012).

The current opposition of Republicans to the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) and their demand for extensive budget cuts is a particularly interesting matter because these stances are presented as if the party is in the grip of extremism—captured by Tea Party candidates and activists. The party needed seats and was able to capitalize on Tea Party anger in 2010 to win seats, but it now finds itself influenced by House members who are too conservative. It is not uncommon to read arguments that these "radicals" are not reflective of significant public sentiment, but that their majority is derived from gerrymandering, a press that does not present facts but has been bullied into "he said—she said," and the machinations of wealthy industrialists who fund conservative causes (Wilentz 2013). It is also not unusual to read stories in which Republicans with unusual views about creationism, Obama's legitimacy, environmental matters, and more, are quoted with the story line that some Republican members are "crazy," anti-intellectual (Coll 2013), and not quite connected to reality. The underlying presumption is that Republican policy demands are not based on facts but ideological commitments (Krugman 2013). The larger narrative is that each party, in pursuit of a new majority, has catered too much to its newest and more extreme electoral base and must struggle to bring itself back toward the middle.

Party Realignment and Perfect Storms

Although each party does struggle with its more ideological wings, the notion that a party—the Republican Party—is in the grip of extremists dismisses the substantive arguments presented by the party. The argument to be presented here is that the development of opposing party positions and congressional polarization are logical results of several trends of the last several decades.

There are four trends with a lengthy history that have culminated in the current situation. The four trends are as follows:

1. Prior to the 1960s, the nation had the odd situation of having the most liberal region of the nation represented by Republicans and the most conservative represented by Democrats. Over the last fifty years the parties have largely switched the geographical location of their strongest electoral bases. The result is a Democratic Party with a more consistent

liberal base and a Republican Party with a more consistent conservative base.

2. The process of changing party electoral bases was lengthy, with presidential results changing faster than House results. The result was a significant rise in split outcomes, which was interpreted as a rise in candidate-centered elections. As this transition continued, it has resulted in almost all congressional Democrats and Republicans having electoral bases that are consistently partisan and supportive. There is less pressure to be moderate.

3. In recent decades, partisan presumptions about how society works and the proper role of government have steadily diverged. Democrats increasingly see individuals as unfairly affected by social conditions. They presume the government should respond to unmet needs. Republicans continue to believe in individualism and personal responsibility and see government provision of benefits as creating dependency that saps individual initiative. The conflict is fundamental.

4. As these ideological battles have developed, income inequality has increased, the costs of government social programs, and particularly health care, have steadily grown. The Affordable Care Act in particular is heavily redistributive. During the same time the more affluent (achievers in the eyes of Republicans) have come to pay a growing percentage of the federal income tax. The top 10 percent now provide 71 percent of income tax revenue (Hodge 2013). Deficits are also large and sustained. Democrats see the growth of programs as investing in the health of the overall society and as fair. Republicans see these trends as reflecting a government that provides too much and takes too much from those who succeed.

The result in a sense is a "perfect storm" of political conditions. Democrats believe the government should do more and represent constituencies that are more supportive of this effort. They see redistribution as fair. Republicans believe personal responsibility should be encouraged and represent constituencies that are more supportive of this position. They see deficits as too large and sustained and the current tax burdens as unfair.

The implication of these trends is that the adoption of the candidate-centered view of congressional elections was a misunderstanding of evolving trends. The transition in electoral bases of the parties and the lengthy but temporary disconnection of presidential and House/Senate election bases was mistakenly seen as a decline in party. That connection has been restored as the lengthy realignment has come to an end, at least for now.

Regional Differences and Switching Electoral Bases

The Northeast is more liberal than the South (Reiter and Stonecash 2011). Despite this enduring difference, for much of the twentieth century Republicans dominated the Northeast and Democrats dominated the South. Each party had a base that was not reflective of its shifting national party principles. Presidential candidates sought to change this beginning in the 1960s by pursuing electoral support in the regions historically dominated by the other party. This increased Democratic success in the Northeast and Republican success in the South (figure 5.1). After some fluctuation, the 1984 election began a sustained advantage for Democrats in the Northeast and for Republicans in the South. In House elections, the historical oddity in party success by region prevailed until later in the century and moderated the stances of the parties to some degree. This separation of results persisted until the mid-1990s, when a distinct reversal was finally evident (figure 5.2). That is, it was only within the last thirty years for presidential candidates and in the last fifteen years for congressional candidates that each party acquired and sustained a base more clearly supportive of conservative and liberal policy positions. This shift in electoral bases for presidential and House candidates was lengthy and complicated (Mellow 2008; Karol 2009), but by the mid-1990s the stage was set for each party to establish policy positions that were consistently ideological.
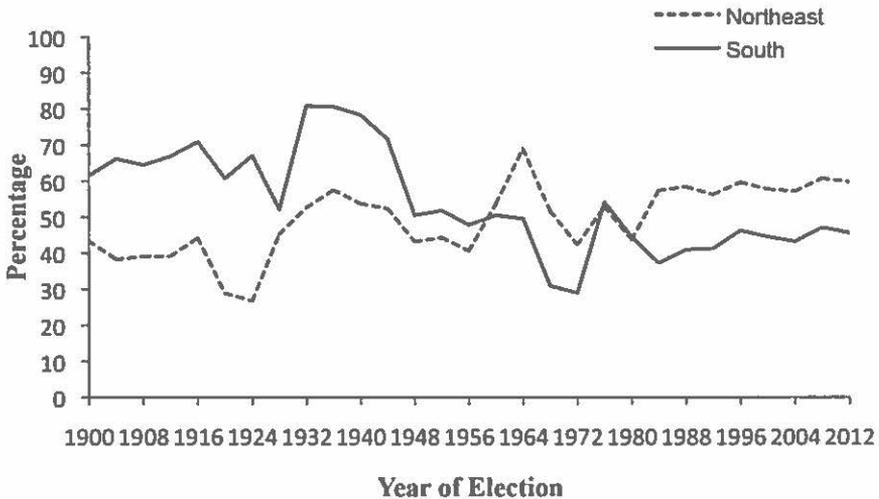

FIGURE 5.1
Democratic percentage of presidential vote, Northeast and South, 1900–2012.
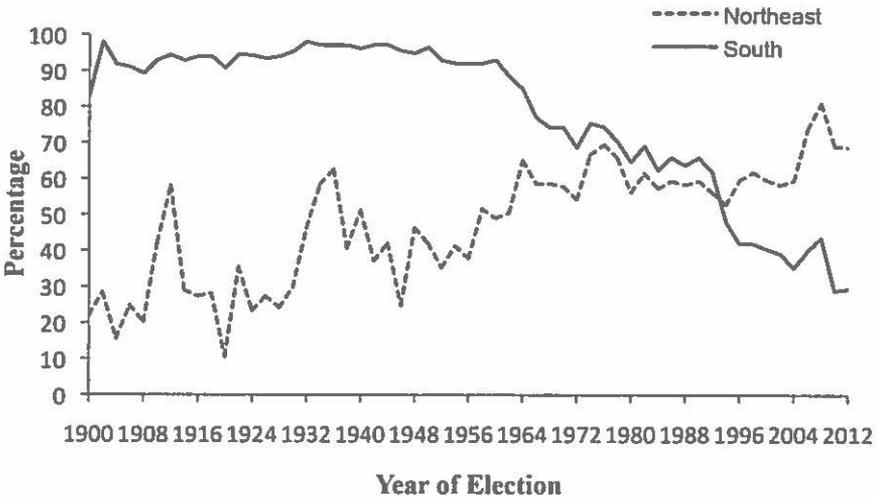
FIGURE 5.2
Democratic percentage of House of Representatives, Northeast and South, 1900–2012.

Differential Rates of Change and Ambiguity

Realignment was changing the historical electoral bases of the two parties. The rates of change differed, however, for presidential and congressional elections, creating interpretation ambiguities. Figure 5.3 presents the correlation of Republican state presidential and House results for 1904 and successive years with 1900. For sixty years, Republican results were stable. Then in 1964 and after, presidential candidates pursued and obtained very different patterns of success than had prevailed before 1964. Their relative geographical success after the 1960s was largely the reverse of what had prevailed. By 1972, their results had a correlation of -.66 with 1900 results. This reversal persisted, with some fluctuation, thereafter.

House results changed at a much slower rate, and it was not until the 1990s that the two sets of results once again overlapped. The lag in House results created a decline in the association of presidential and House results and a rise in split outcomes. Figure 5.4 indicates the correlation between presidential and House district-level results within each year from 1900 through 2012. It also reports the percentage of House districts that experienced split outcomes, or differences in the winner for House and presidential results. As realignment proceeded and House results lagged with many incumbents able to hang on to their seats even as presidential results were shifting away
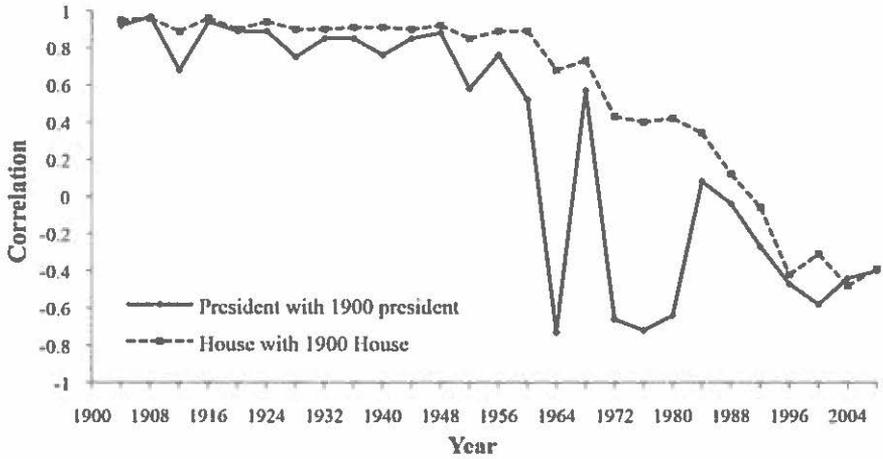
**FIGURE 5.3**
Correlation of Republican presidential and House state percentages from 1904 to 2008 with 1900 state percentages.
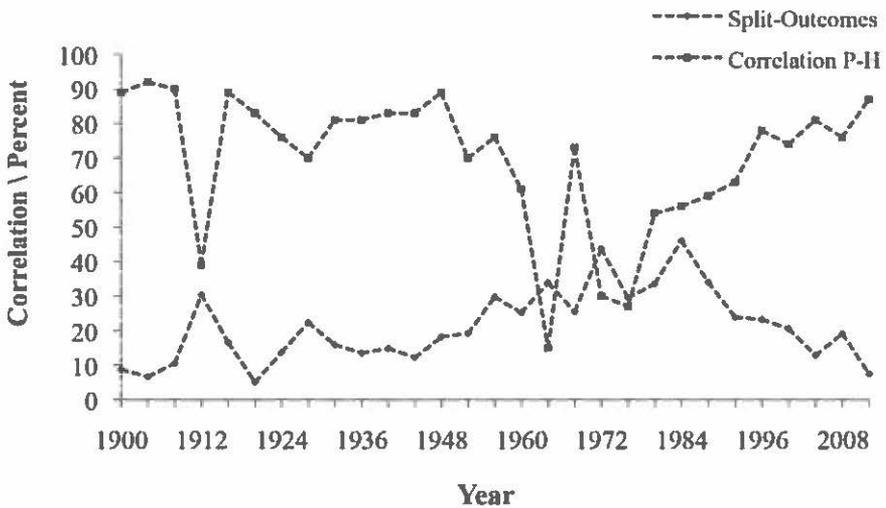

FIGURE 5.4
Correlation of Republican presidential-House election results and percent split outcomes, 1900–2012.

from them, the correlation plummeted in the 1960s and 1970s. With House results lagging, the percentage of split outcomes reached the mid-40s in the 1970s and 1980s. As House incumbents retired and were replaced by the opposing party in regions experiencing partisan change, the percentage of split outcomes steadily declined and reached 7 percent in 2012.

It was this lag in House results that prompted many to see this as the emergence of candidate-centered politics. The argument was that House members were able to separate their election results from national swings and underlying district partisan sentiments and create personal vote bases that were higher than the partisan inclinations of a district (Mayhew 1974a; 1974b; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1990). This interpretation neglected the role of parties in pursuing different electoral bases and actively recruiting candidates that would be compatible with changing party goals. It also probably led to a lag in the recognition of the developing polarization (Stonecash 2008; 2013), but eventually it was recognized (Poole and Rosenthal 1984; Rohde 1991; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Polsby 2004).

The important matter is that by the late 1990s the electoral bases of presidential, House, and Senate (Brunell and Grofman 1998; Han and Brady 2007) candidates overlapped to a significant degree. This contributed significantly to party polarization. Congressional members who have presidential results similar to theirs have greater confidence that there is consistent support for their party's positions. Those who come from split districts have no such confidence and must moderate their voting records in recognition of the precariousness of their electoral situation. As split outcomes declined, there were more members who had confidence that their electoral situation and policy positions were supported within their district.

Diverging Interpretations of How Society Does and Should Work, Program Growth, and Tax Burdens: An Invitation to Polarization

While the parties were acquiring more coherent electoral bases, the way that liberals and conservatives see American society was steadily diverging. America has long been a nation with a strong commitment to individualism (Pew Research Center 2011a). The central belief is that America is a nation of widespread opportunity to achieve if an individual takes the initiative. If an individual does achieve, they can enjoy the fruits of their labor. If they do not succeed, they are responsible for their situation. Government should not intrude to help people who do not fare well because it will discourage initiative and personal responsibility.

Over time, liberalism has come to challenge that framework for interpreting variations in success or failure (Davies 1996). The social science community

has played a major role in creating an alternative interpretation that argues that many people lack opportunity and are significantly affected by their class, race, and social context (O'Connor 2001). There are also groups—minorities, women, gays—who have limited opportunities, making achievement more difficult. The result is that liberals are uneasy about the central implication of individualism—that individuals can control their fate and are responsible for their situation (Brewer and Stonecash 2014). Individuals who fail may not have had opportunity, experienced discrimination, and may have suffered setbacks such as diseases that they did not cause. The rich also may not be entirely deserving of their wealth, and they should expect to pay taxes. As Elizabeth Warren expressed it during the 2012 campaign for a U.S. Senate seat in Massachusetts:

> There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. You built a factory out there? Good for you. But I want to be clear: you moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific, or a great idea? God bless you. Keep a chunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along. (Warren 2012)

Conservatives have not accepted this shifting interpretation of American society. They still see individualism as central to how America should operate. They see the emergence of welfare and other social programs as destructive of what made America successful (Murray 1994). Their central concern is that government is coming to support too many people, creating dependency rather than hard-working individuals who achieve (Barone 2004; Sykes 2011; Eberstadt 2012). The reason many people are failing is because they are losing the inclination to adopt the behaviors that create success (Murray 2012). Further, more of these programs are being funded by achievers. They acknowledge growing income inequality but think too much of tax revenue is coming from the affluent. The percent of all income received by the top 10 percent has increased from 32.1 to 45.2 from 1980 to 2010, while the percent of federal income tax revenue coming from them has increased from 49.3 to 70.6 (Hodge 2013).

The result is a fundamental difference in the views of how much government should help people. Liberals and conservatives see the world very differently (Marietta 2012). It has become an ongoing ideological battle (Abramowitz 2013a) and creates intense conflicts over the legitimacy and funding of social programs (Edsall 2012).

The battle involves not just whether programs should exist but how they will be paid for. It is widely reported that the distribution of income and

wealth have become more unequal, which prompts liberals to see it as proper
to raise more money from the affluent (Center on Budget and Policy Priori-
ties 2014). Conservatives acknowledge those trends but are very concerned
about the growing reliance on the more successful, the achievers, for income
tax revenues. Figure 5.5 presents the percentage of federal income tax rev-
enues that come from various percentiles of tax filers. Over time a greater
percentage is coming from the top 1, or 10 percent of tax filers. Figure 5.6
presents the progressivity of the federal income tax system (Hodge 2013).
Conservatives argue that too much of federal social programs is funded by
the more affluent. The tax system has also become significantly redistributive,
particularly as the Earned Income Tax Credit program has expanded. The
issue of tax increases is now a fundamental divide, and no Republican has
voted for a tax increase since 1993 (Rampell 2011).
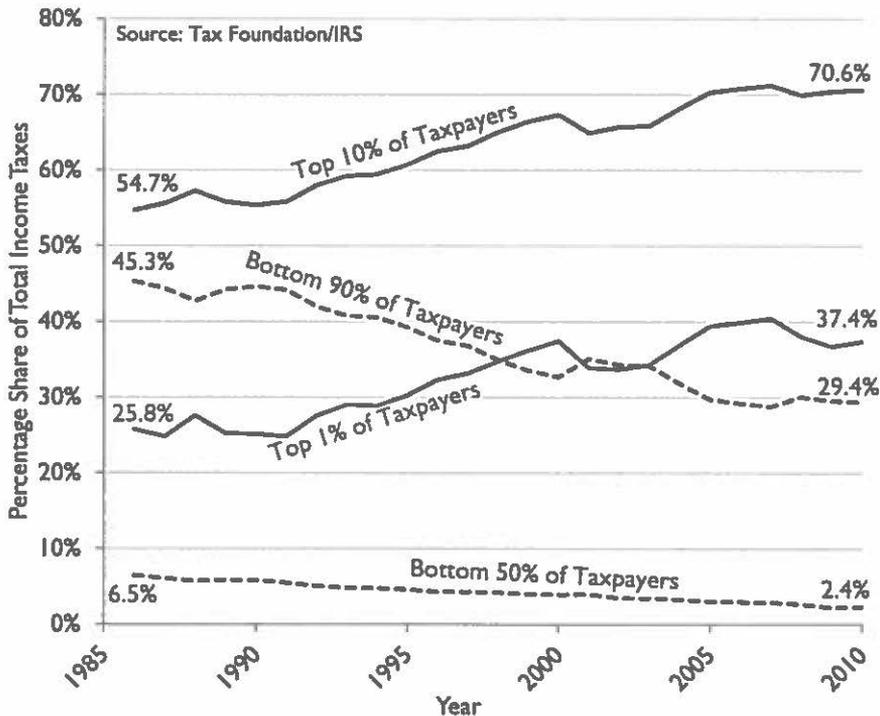
FIGURE 5.5
Percentage of federal income tax from groups of filers.
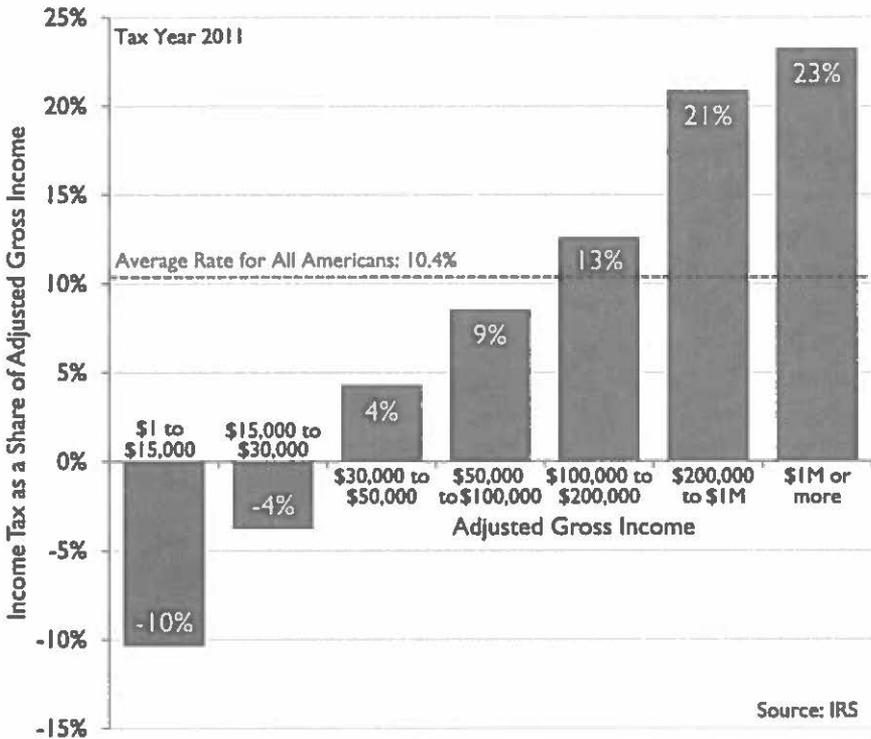
FIGURE 5.6
Tax burden or credits by income level, 2011.

The Health Care Battle

These trends have prompted the bulk of the Republican Party to argue that it is time to force a slowdown in the growth of the welfare state. They have fought the extension of unemployment benefits and are seeking significant cuts in food stamps. The Affordable Health Care Act has become the prime example of the differences between the two parties. To Democrats the case for the national government expanding access to health care is clear. The percentage of employers providing health care is declining. Younger people and those with lower incomes are much less likely to have insurance. As expressed by Paul Krugman, there was a clear moral imperative to enact this legislation: "One side (Democrats) saw health reform, with its subsidized extension of coverage to the uninsured, as fulfilling a moral imperative: wealthy nations, it believed, have an obligation to provide all their citizens with essential

care" (Krugman 2011). Any essay by a liberal/Democrat about health care presumes that some people are without insurance and that simply must be corrected. There were also practical considerations for addressing the health insurance issue—many with no insurance showing up at emergency rooms with hospitals essentially forced to serve them. The result was a bill—the Affordable Care Act—that requires insurance, provides subsidies, and specifies minimum benefits that an insurance plan must have.

For Republicans, the opposition to the government provision of health care has increased over time. Figure 5.7 indicates how strong Democratic and Republican identifiers responded over the years when asked about whom should be responsible for securing health care: government or individuals. The most committed Republicans have become strongly supportive of individual responsibility, while strong Democrats have never been very supportive of this. As strong Republicans became more supportive of individual responsibility, the difference between Democrats and Republicans have steadily grown and in 2012 reached 66 points.

As the legislative struggle over the Affordable Care Act unfolded, the division between the two parties was vast. A Gallup poll (figure 5.8) conducted in September 2009 captures the difference (Saad 2009). When asked if government or individuals should be responsible for securing insurance for individuals, Democrats were 62 percent government—35 percent individuals. Among Republicans the responses were 10 percent government—89 percent individuals.
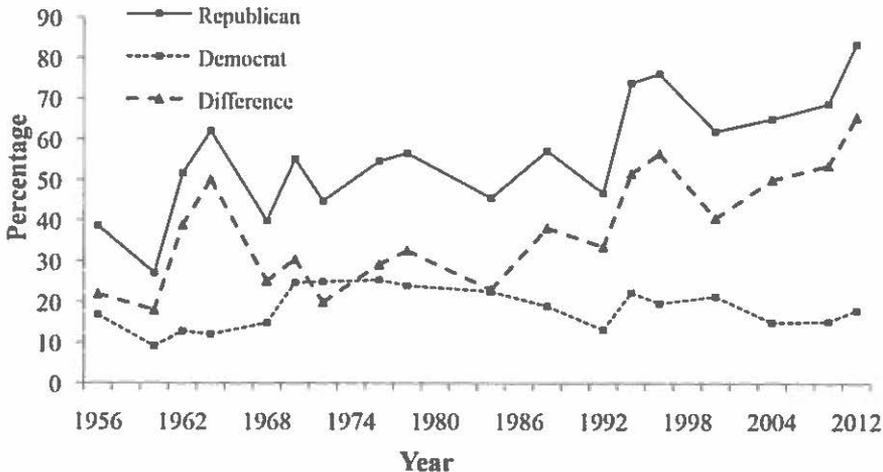

FIGURE 5.7
Percentage choosing individual responsibility for health insurance by strong party ID, 1956–2012.

Health Insurance Views — by Party ID

Which comes closer to your view about health insurance — [the government should be primarily responsible for making sure all Americans have health insurance, (or) Americans themselves should be primarily responsible for making sure they and their families have health insurance]?

■ Government responsible   ▨ Americans responsible

All Americans	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
37% / 61%	62% / 35%	34% / 64%	10% / 89%
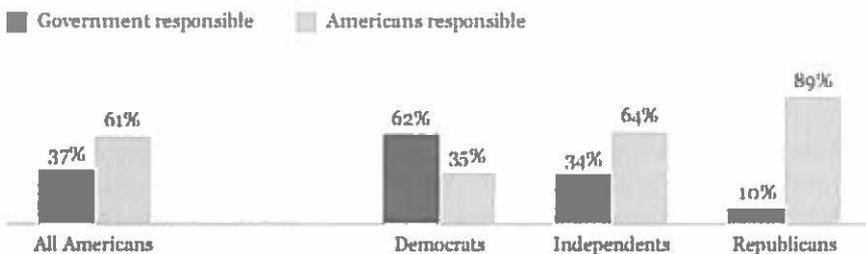
Sept. 11-13, 2009

GALLUP POLL

FIGURE 5.8
Who should be responsible for securing insurance for individuals?
Source: Gallup Poll.

The divide over the Affordable Care Act involves not just the philosophical issue of who should provide health insurance. The legislation mandates that everyone secure insurance. Democrats see this as the only way to create a wide net of contributors, while Republicans see this as a government effort to dictate individual behavior and restrict freedom. The legislation also specifies minimum benefits that must accompany any program. Democrats see this as protecting consumers from inadequate private insurance plans, while Republicans see this as imposing a "one-size-fits-all" package on many individuals who do not need all the benefits and as restricting individual freedom. Finally, the law involves significant redistribution in that government subsidizes the premiums for lower-income individuals. Some have called it one of the largest redistributive programs enacted in the nation's history (Leonhardt 2010; Krauthammer 2013). It is not surprising that the Affordable Care Act became a continuing source of conflict between the two parties.

Summary: The Importance of Combined Conditions

The current congressional polarization reflects a combination of conditions that have taken a while to come together. Beginning in the 1960s, Republicans sought a more conservative electoral base and Democrats sought a more liberal electoral base. Those pursuits were initiated largely by presidential candi-

dates, and it took some time for each party's candidates to achieve their objective. Republicans came to dominate the South and Democrats the Northeast. As the transition occurred, House results lagged, creating a high percentage of split outcomes and the mistaken impression that congressional elections were becoming candidate centered. Eventually House and Senate election results caught up with presidential results, creating unified and consistent party bases. By the mid to late 1990s each party had a coherent electoral base more compatible with its policy positions.

As this political clarity was developing, social programs continued to grow and the reliance on the more affluent for federal income tax revenue also increased. Then in the 2000s federal budget deficits increased dramatically. Democrats saw the deficits as unavoidable to maintain programs, while Republicans saw them as dangerous for the future of the nation and proposed plans to cut programs and lower deficits. The Affordable Care Act, enacted in 2010, embodies these fundamental conflicts over programs, taxes, and the role of the federal government.

The combination of growing differences in party electoral bases that have fundamental disagreements with each other, the growing cost of government social programs, increasing inequality in the distribution of income and wealth, and greater reliance on the affluent for federal income tax revenue have created divisions that are unlikely to go away soon. There are now more House districts with substantial percentages of nonwhites who tend to vote Democratic. There are heavily white districts that vote Republican (Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2003). Polarization is a logical consequence of current conditions, and the debate about the deservedness of programs and who should pay the taxes necessary for these programs will likely continue for the foreseeable future.

II

POLARIZATION AND POLITICAL ELITES

6

Partisan, Polarized, Yet Not Dysfunctional?

William F. Connelly Jr.

"I've seen many troubles in my time, only half of which ever came true."

—*Mark Twain*

IN APRIL 2013, THE *WASHINGTON POST* hosted a pugilistic, op-ed debate about partisan gridlock, pitting economist Larry Summers against political scientists Tom Mann and Norm Ornstein. Summers made the case for "when gridlock is good" (Summers 2013a). Mann and Ornstein countered, arguing "gridlock is no way to govern" (Mann and Ornstein 2013). Both sides raised good arguments. Both sides also got personal. Mann and Ornstein recommended that Summers "stick to economics." Summers advised Mann and Ornstein to "spend some time outside Washington." Even academics, it seems, have gotten caught up in the partisan polarization in Washington these days. These competing op-eds were poles apart.

Summers criticized "gridlock theorists" who "yearn for a return to an imagined era when centrists in both parties negotiated bipartisan compromises that moved the country forward" and who "suppose that progress comes from legislation, and that more legislation consistently represents more progress" (2013a). Defending gridlock, Summers argued that partisanship and incremental change have been "the norm rather than the exception" in American history. Indeed, "fears about the functioning of the federal government have been a recurring feature of our political landscape since Patrick Henry's assertion in 1788 that the spirit of the revolution had been lost" (2013a). Summers insisted, "structural obstacles" in our constitutional system do *not* explain our purported inability to mount all challenges facing America, and he defended

"checks and balances" for serving to preclude potentially harmful legislation, left and right. Besides, Summers argued, "the system over the last four years has been quite productive in producing significant legislation," with "two whirlwind years" (111th Congress) followed by "two gridlocked years" (112th Congress) (2013a). Compared to other nations, Summers insisted, the United States is doing well even if distrust of government has grown, since "[d]eclines in trust have been observed around the industrial world and with respect to almost all institutions" (2013a). Apparently, things are better than they look, according to Summers.

Mann and Ornstein are not so sure. As the editors and authors of three books titled *The Permanent Campaign, The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back On Track*, and most recently, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, their pessimism about our prospects seems to be growing. In their April op-ed, Mann and Ornstein accused Summers of painting a "rosy scenario." They contrasted the partisan polarization and ideological "tribalism" of Washington today with the "strong political center" and "responsible bipartisan leadership" of previous decades when "major advances were achieved with some level of cooperation or restraint, if not consensus, between the parties." Mann and Ornstein blamed House and Senate Republicans for their "obduracy and promiscuous use of the filibuster." But they also lamented "the shortcomings of our political system," which they observed is "designed not to act with dispatch."

In the above op-ed exchange, we find *definitions* of dysfunction, cited *causes* of dysfunction, and *questions* as to whether or not our politics is in fact dysfunctional. As commonly understood, it seems, dysfunction consists of increasingly contentious partisan polarization, limited legislative productivity, and gridlock. More frequent use of the Senate filibuster is a key factor contributing to deadlock. Partisan polarization and gridlock produce an all-politics-all-the-time "permanent campaign" in which politics trumps policymaking. Finger pointing abounds, raising questions about who to hold accountable. The Mann, Ornstein, and Summers debate also raises the question of whether or not today's alleged dysfunction originates in shortcomings in the design of our constitutional system. Should we blame James Madison? Summers usefully notes that criticisms of our Constitution date to the founding ratification debate between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists.

Red versus Blue

We can concede the obvious; namely, that our politics is more partisan and polarized, without necessarily resolving important debates within political

science—for example, whether polarization is an elite or popular phenom-enon, or both; whether polarization is really sorting; or whether we are either closely divided or deeply divided. We also need not blame any *one* of our key mediating institutions, parties, interest groups, or the media for the messiness of our politics. There is plenty of blame to go around. For example, Barbara Sinclair usefully concludes in *Party Wars*, her classic study of partisanship: "Partisan polarization cannot be blamed for many of the features of contem-porary politics that we do not like, such as ugly politics" (Sinclair 2006, 368). In short, our politics *is* messy, ugly, cantankerous, and contentious—but is it dysfunctional? Or is the cacophony of politics as usual?

Is the seeming dysfunction in our politics new or the historical norm? In our haste to criticize the present, we must be careful not to misconstrue history. Partisan polarization may not be new. Instead, it may be the historical norm according to Han and Brady in their careful study titled "A Delayed Return to Historic Norms: Congressional Party Polarization after the Second World War" (Han and Brady 2007). They observe "the recent period of polarization mirrors patterns of polarization that have prevailed throughout most of congressional history. In fact, the truly unusual historical period is the bipartisan era im-mediately following the Second World War" (Han and Brady 2007, 506). The confluence of events following the Great Depression and World War II, coupled with a largely dominant New Deal Coalition, may, in part, explain the quiescent 1950s. Samuel Lubell metaphorically described the 1950s as a time when the Republican moon was the pale reflection of the dominant Democratic sun. The recurrence of partisanship since is, Han and Brady conclude, a return to histori-cal norms. The 1950s baseline often popular with critics of partisan polarization today may give us an inaccurate sense of what is normal in our politics. The good old days of Ozzie and Harriet (and Joe McCarthy?) may not be the appropriate standard for judging politics today. Perhaps American politics is, as Samuel Huntington once put it, "the promise of disharmony." Partisan confrontation and bipartisan compromise may both be as American as apple pie.

Today we appropriately lament the ugliness of Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC) shouting "You lie!" at President Barack Obama in 2009. Yet we forget the precedent of Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) using the word "lie" eight times in a 1984 floor speech disputing President Ronald Reagan's description of private deficit reduction talks (*Congressional Record* 1984, 5196–197). Simi-larly, we may be seeing memory-polishing history today with allusions to the amicable relationship between President Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-MA) in the 1980s, forgetting that Speaker O'Neill said in a press confer-ence at the time, "The evil is in the White House at the present time. And that evil is a man who has no care and no concern for the working class of America and the future generations of America. . . . He's cold. He's mean. He's got ice water for blood" (Phillips 1984).

Of course, presidents Obama and Reagan are in good company. Abraham Lincoln was likened to an ape; about one of our greatest presidents one of the leading newspapers of the time said, "The age of the statesman is gone . . . God save the Republic . . . from the buffoon and gawk . . . we have for President" (Schambra 2004). With evident good humor, Lincoln was similarly critical of Congress in a separate context, "I have been told I was on the road to hell, but I had no idea it was just down the road with a dome on it" (Thurber 1991, 653).

Animosity up and down Pennsylvania Avenue is not new. Longtime Hill maven Don Wolfensberger recently described Congress bashing as a national pastime, citing Rep. Nicholas Longworth's 1925 acceptance speech as Speaker: "I have been a member of the House of Representatives . . . twenty years. During the *whole of that time* we have been attacked, denounced, despised, hunted, harried, blamed, looked down upon, excoriated, and flayed. I refuse to take it personally" (Wolfensberger 2013a). Even world-famous authors have flayed Congress. Charles Dickens, no stranger to the best of times and worst of times, complained about American politics in the 1840s: "Look at the exhausted Treasury; the paralyzed government; the unworthy representatives of a free people; the desperate contests between the North and South; the iron curb and brazen muzzle fastened upon every man who speaks his mind, even in [Congress] that Republican Hall, to which Republican men are sent by a Republican people to speak Republican Truths—the stabbings, and shootings, and coarse and brutal threatenings exchanged between Senators under the very Senate's roof—the intrusion of the most pitiful, mean, malicious, creeping, crawling, sneaking *party spirit* into all transactions of life" (Dickens 1974).

Sounds like today! Or at least the references to our exhausted Treasury, paralyzed government, and party spirit sound like today. But it also sounds like James Madison in *Federalist # 10*, acknowledging that our constitutional system "involves the *spirit of party* and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of government" (Scigliano 2000, 56). While anecdotes alone do not make for a complete argument, the Founders' practice of their principles during the 1790s, the first decade of the new American Republic, cast further doubt on the ready assumption that our politics is supposed to consist of comity, civility, and bipartisan *bonhomie*. According to historian Joseph Ellis, the 1790s was a "decade-long shouting match" unparalleled in American history. Gordon Wood observed "party spirit . . . ruled all" (Connelly 2010). Is polarized partisanship new, or is it the norm and a natural part of American politics? Does bitter partisan polarization mean our politics is dysfunctional?

How Would We Know?

By what standard might we judge whether our polarized, partisan politics is dysfunctional? As witness to the above debate between Mann, Ornstein, and Summers, two measures of dysfunction come readily to mind. First, what did the Founders intend or expect? Second, is gridlock precluding necessary legislative productivity?

First: What Would Jemmy Do?

We have already begun to investigate the first question—what did the Founders intend or expect?—but it is worth examining more completely. Mann and Ornstein raise this Founders' intent question in *The Broken Branch* (Mann and Ornstein 2006). Summers, too, raises this question when he notes above that "fears about the functioning" of the federal government have been with us since Patrick Henry criticized the new Constitution. Summers cites, too, albeit favorably, the "checks and balances" and "structural obstacles" in our constitutional system. Mann or Ornstein, in their dueling op-ed, reference "shortcomings in our political system," a system, which, they say, is "designed not to act with dispatch." Presumably they mean the system designed by James Madison.

Madison may be called the Father of our Constitution, though he insisted, rightly, that the Constitution was the work of many hands, including but not limited to those at the Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1787. Joseph Ellis, speaking about the ratification debate, concludes, "Taking sides in this debate is like choosing between the words and the music of the American Revolution" (Ellis 2007, 90–91). The Constitution "made argument itself the answer by creating a framework" that would promote "an argument without end" (Ellis 2007, 90–91).

Similarly, Herbert Storing (1981) suggests American politics can best be understood as an ongoing and ever deepening debate between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. The Federalists may have won the ratification debate—it was their Constitution that was ratified—but not before the Anti-Federalists left their mark on the Constitution, for example, with the Bill of Rights or the principle of federalism built into Senate representation. The Federalists may have won the debate, Storing argues, but the Anti-Federalists correctly identified the defects of our Constitution, thus giving rise to an unending debate—a series of *echoes* of the Federalist/Anti-Federalist debate—throughout American history. To understand the effective functioning of our constitutional system, therefore, we must take seriously both the Constitution and its critics; *therein resides a standard for judging dysfunction.*

To begin, one might legitimately ask, "Who cares what the Founders think?" Yet Madison understood his design better than we do today; certainly he understood more than the Anti-Federalists, especially regarding the virtues of the new system. Asking "What did the Founders intend or expect?" in this context is another way of asking what sort of politics does our constitutional system elicit. Is sharp partisanship a normal and natural part of our politics? Perhaps our politics invites argument and contentiousness.

Who today echoes the Federalists, and who echoes the Anti-Federalists? Again, the Anti-Federalists correctly identify the defects of our constitutional system, as seen, for example, when the Anti-Federalist "Centinel" decried a politics based on "an opposition of interests." Centinel asked, "How is the welfare and happiness of the community to be the result of such jarring and adverse interests?" (Storing 1981, 55–56). How do the separation of powers and checks and balances, coupled with "the spirit of party and faction," produce the common good? Good question. Do parties and special interest groups corrupt our politics? Critics of our constitutional system today, including Mann and Ornstein, echo this Anti-Federalist critique. Madison recognizes the defect they identify.

In *Federalist # 10* Madison readily acknowledges the "mischiefs of faction" and even the "violence of faction," which he labels a "dangerous vice." He does not mince words. Madison recognizes the "instability, injustice, and confusion introduced into the public councils" by the factious spirit. And yet he unleashes the "mischiefs of faction," both majority and minority factions, into our politics, all in the name of liberty. Even though Madison acknowledges this defect, the Federalists still won the debate. Why?

The Anti-Federalists lost the ratification debate for two reasons, one theoretical, the other practical. First, the Anti-Federalists lost the argument in principle because they had the weaker argument. They could not provide a better cure than Madison to the mischiefs of faction inherent in a liberal regime, short of curbing liberty in the name of protecting liberty—"a cure worse than the disease" according to *Federalist # 10*. Second, the Anti-Federalist fallback position, as a practical matter, was the obviously dysfunctional Articles of Confederation. You can't beat something with nothing. They did not like the promised cacophony of Madisonian pluralism, yet they lacked a serious alternative. Moreover, the new Constitution was *more effective*, not less effective, than the failing Articles of Confederation. The Anti-Federalists recognized the defects of the Constitution, but they failed to appreciate its virtues. The critics of our constitutional system today may be in a similar position; while recognizing the defects of our constitutional system, they may not fully appreciate its virtues.

Today's critics, like the Anti-Federalists, may not appreciate the fact that the Federalists designed their Constitution to limit the abuse of power and yet

also provide for the effective use of power. Limited, yet effective government. Free and effective government. With the new Constitution, the Federalists sought more effective and energetic government. They sought to empower government, rather than weaken government as has so often been presumed by critics of the Constitution (Meyers 1973). The separation of powers is not reducible to checks and balances; rather, the Constitution provides for a separation of functions system, with three powerful and independent branches, each potent within its own sphere exercising its proper function. As Madison noted, the Federalist Constitution provides for "stability *and* energy" (Scigliano 2000, 224). The Constitution provides for *more effective* government, as we shall see when we turn later to discuss legislative productivity.

Furthermore, like the Anti-Federalists, the critics of our constitutional system today recognize that the "spirit of party and faction" corrupts our politics; but do they appreciate, as Madison does, that the spirit of party and faction also constitutes our politics?

From the perspective of James Madison, politics today may not in fact be dysfunctional. Madison did not think we could take the politics out of politics. In *Federalist # 10* Madison notes that the "principal task of modern legislation"—meaning constitution making—is the regulation of "various and interfering interests," which again "*involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of government.*" Madison's Constitution intentionally incorporates both the "mischiefs of faction" and the "spirit of party." American politics encompasses both intense minorities and aspiring majorities, both special interest groups and majority-seeking parties, arguably both "pluralism" and (conditional) "party government." The Constitution checks and balances special interests and political parties, yet the Constitution also embraces and empowers special interests and political parties. Madison understood that minority and majority factions were mischievous, yet he unleashed them, again, in the name of providing the greatest amount of liberty.

In *Federalist #10*, Madison observes,

> Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an ailment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency. (Scigliano 2000, 56)

Madison understood that in a free society, politics, including the "spirit of party," is ubiquitous. Since the "latent causes of faction" and "the spirit of party" are natural to man, Madison sought to *control the effects* of factions, rather than *remove their causes*. Madison did not think it possible to take factionalism or partisanship out of politics; he sought instead to multiply factions in the extended republic and to *control their effects* by means of

republican institutions governed by constitutional structure. "In the extent and proper structure of the Union, therefore, we behold a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government" (Scigliano 2000, 61). Factionalism is a disease, yet Madison liberates it onto our political landscape. He governs the "spirit of party and faction" by means of his constitutional structure; most importantly, the separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, bicameralism, and the representative principle. This constitutional structure actively invites and promotes competition between parties and factions, as witnessed by our contentious politics today, especially under conditions of divided government.

In the *New Yorker*, journalist Nicholas Lemann argues that the struggle among contending interest groups both constitutes and corrupts our politics (Lemann 2008). Similarly, partisan confrontation between political parties both constitutes and corrupts our politics. There is an element of truth to the perspectives of both Madison and his critics—as Madison fully appreciated.

In a democratic republic like the United States, Madison argues, majorities can control minority factions; thus, the real danger resides in majority factions. Madison's constitutional system controls the mischief of majority faction, including partisanship, for example, by promoting active competition not only between parties but also within parties. The separation of powers, bicameralism, and federalism mitigate the dangers of partisan factionalism, often pitting *intraparty* factions against one another as much as *interparty* factions. Internal party factionalism serves even today to break the violence of majority faction and promote compromise.

This is one reason we perhaps can be sanguine about partisan polarization today, just as the Founders survived the bitterness of politics in the 1790s. As much as red versus blue polarization defines our politics today, so, too, does internal party factionalism, as witnessed by the Tea Party faction among House Republicans limiting Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) during the fall of 2013. Similarly, in 2013 the liberal wing of the Democratic Party limited President Obama's options on Syria, his choice of nominees for Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve (poor Larry Summers!?), and his ability to negotiate with Republicans on deficits and the debt-limit extension (Goldfarb and Kane 2013). The *Washington Post's* Karen Tumulty reported during the October 2013 shutdown that congressional Democrats preferred President Obama spend more time playing golf, rather than risk having him negotiate with Republicans, lest he compromise on party principles (Tumulty 2013).

Even in polarized times like today, intraparty factionalism curbs the excesses of interparty factionalism. Further examples include that even though Democrats resorted to budget reconciliation as a means to circumvent their loss of a filibuster-proof majority to pass the Affordable Care Act in March

2010, internal factions among congressional Democrats (think Tim Penny) limited the full policy aspirations of liberal Democrats who failed to get all they wished for in the Affordable Care Act. Similarly, intraparty factionalism among congressional Republicans during the fall of 2013 limited the options of both Speaker Boehner and the Tea Party wing of the GOP, whose "defund Obamacare" strategy failed, sans endgame, in spite of Texas senator Ted Cruz's faux filibuster. Ultimately, congressional Republicans had to retreat to more moderate ground to end the debt-limit showdown shutdown.

Yet internal party factionalism, like interparty factionalism, can also promote entrepreneurial policy ambitions by enabling policy ferment within the two parties. Both intra- and interparty factionalism can empower competitive policy ambitions to play a role in our politics, thus potentially increasing, rather than decreasing, policy innovation. Nelson Polsby recognized the role of "innovation and stalemate" built into our constitutional routines. Polsby observed, "It is possible to discern an alternative and somewhat overlapping pattern of activity and retrenchment, of focus and stalemate in congressional affairs." He concluded, "Neither one mode or the other is exclusively 'natural' to Congress . . . both roles are historically characteristic of Congress, and both fully express the powers of Congress as contemplated by the overall constitutional design" (Polsby 2004, 145–46). Madison sought both energy and stability with his Constitution.

In a recent study in *The Forum*, Eileen Burgin and Jacqueline Bereznyak underscore the important role of intraparty compromise even during times of sharp interparty polarization:

> In overlooking intra-party compromises, we contend that the negative implications of partisanship and the permanent campaign have been overemphasized, and the merits of bipartisanship inflated. Despite the undeniable ills of Congress, the status quo can be challenged and major legislation can be enacted through quality intra-party compromise.

They conclude, "With non-stop campaigning, sharp partisanship, and an uncompromising inter-party mindset, the dynamics of intra-party compromise among fellow partisans who span the ideological spectrum assume a central role" (Burgin and Bereznyak 2013, 211). Factionalism within our parties may explain why "conditional party government" is the closest approximation to "party government" we ever attain in our separation of powers system (Aldrich and Rohde 1998). Perhaps, too, the bitter partisan polarization today does not necessarily mean we have lost the capacity to govern ourselves.

The Founders—at least the Federalists—intended and expected the spirit of party and faction to play a central role in our politics. They experienced this partisanship themselves in virulent form during the tumultuous 1790s. Some

today insist that the Founders were antiparty, commonly citing two famous utterances. In his Farewell Address, George Washington warns the nation about the dangers of partisanship. Thomas Jefferson, likewise, observed that if he could not go to heaven but with a party, he would rather go to hell. It is worth remembering, however, that Washington's cabinet was the fetus of our two-party system, since it included both Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. The latter's antiparty words are belied, of course, by his actions in founding the first great enduring party in America, the Jeffersonian Democratic Republicans, the foundation of today's Democratic Party.

The Anti-Federalists correctly identified the corrupting tendencies of partisanship and faction both then and today. Yet Madison, as theorist and as an active and effective party leader, lived and thrived in the constitutional context of a bitterly polarized and increasingly partisan politics leading up to Thomas Jefferson's "Second Revolution" in 1800 and beyond. In 1792 Madison penned an essay titled "A Candid State of Parties," in which he outlines a brief history of parties in America from the Revolution to the 1790s. Like the *Federalist Papers*, "A Candid State of Parties" is both a partisan tract and a perspicacious study as befits Madison as politician and scholar. He concludes the essay by observing that the division of parties following the establishment of the government under the new Constitution is "natural to most political societies" and is likely to endure (Meyers 1973). Partisanship can indeed corrupt our politics as the Anti-Federalists feared. Yet as Madison understood in both theory and practice, partisanship also inevitably constitutes our politics. From the perspective of the Anti-Federalists, our politics today is dysfunctional given its jarring partisanship, but from the perspective of Madison and the Federalists it may be politics as usual—and it may be manageable.

Party Government or Pluralism: Pick Your Poison?

Factional contention and combat are a constant in our politics, since the Constitution unleashes the spirit of party and faction. Sometimes this takes the form of red versus blue confrontational polarized partisanship, an approximation of party government, and sometimes it takes the form of a special-interest-dominated, you-scratch-my-back-I'll-scratch-your-back compromising pluralism. When the latter prevailed in the 1950s, political scientists told us our politics was broken, and the APSA called for "responsible parties." When polarized partisanship prevails today, offering a choice and not an echo, political scientists again say our politics is broken. Congress cannot win, it seems. But why is intraparty factionalism preferable to interparty factionalism, or vice versa? Either way, factionalism prevails in our Madisonian system, whether in the form of majority factions or minority factions.

In *Democracy in America,* Alexis de Tocqueville discusses "great parties" and small parties. Tocqueville weighs and balances the virtues and defects of both, noting that America had great parties in the early Republic, but by the 1830s the nation was mired in the petty politics of small parties. "What I call great political parties," Tocqueville intones, "are those more attached to principles," along with "ideas" and "convictions." On the other hand, "small parties are generally without political faith" and tend to focus on selfish interests, animated by "factious zeal." "Great parties," Tocqueville observes, "convulse society; small ones agitate it; the former rend and the latter corrupt it; the first may sometimes save it by overthrowing it, but the second always create unprofitable trouble" (Tocqueville 1966, 175).

As witness, Tocqueville's on-the-one-hand, on-the-other critique of great and small parties, there always seems to be a readily available criticism of the practice of our politics, perhaps at least in part thanks to the design of our constitutional system. Newt Gingrich (R-GA), as a back-bench bomb thrower storming the barricades of the House Democrat's "permanent majority," prided himself on promoting a "grand partisanship" rather than a "petty partisanship," reminiscent, perhaps, of Tocqueville's great and small parties. Newt's confrontational bombast was blasted by those, like Mann and Ornstein, who preferred a politics of compromise and civility; they accused him of trying to destroy Congress.

Newt became Speaker. Later, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), taking a page from Gingrich's playbook, also embraced the politics of confrontation, rather than compromise, to become Speaker following the 2006 election (Frost 2007). Politicians and parties are either unwilling to compromise on principle, making them ideologues to their critics, or they are solely focused on their self-interest in gaining re-election and bringing home the bacon. Just as the spirit of party and factionalism are a constant in our politics, so, too, are these criticisms. Are we hyperpartisan today, or, like the Anti-Federalists, are we hypersensitive to partisanship?

Purported hyperpartisanship is one premise of many critics of our constitutional system; lack of legislative productivity seems to be another such premise.

Judged by the expectations and worries of Anti-Federalists, then and now, our politics is always found wanting—and it is always producing "deadlock" or "gridlock" whether in the 1950s or today. We have even been told we suffer from "demosclerosis," the hardening of our political arteries by the glut of special interests. Our latter day Anti-Federalists, however, differ from the original critics of the Constitution, who, after all, did not really want a strong and effective government. Today's critics want "progress" and "productivity." Where did this come from? Arguably, it was introduced, or at least made commonplace, by Woodrow Wilson, who also introduced the favorite alter-

native paradigm of Progressives and neo-Progressives, namely the British parliamentary ideal. The Anti-Federalists lost the debate because all they had to offer was the failed Articles of Confederation. Contemporary critics who echo the Anti-Federalist criticism of our Madisonian constitutional system believe they have found in the British parliamentary ideal a viable alternative, one likely to produce greater progress and productivity.

If the Federalists designed the Constitution to be more effective, why does it seem to some today to be inadequate? One answer may be that our creaky eighteenth century constitutional structure is incapable of responding to the exigencies of modern life. This, anyway, was Woodrow Wilson's criticism *in the nineteenth century* when he criticized the separation of powers as the "radical defect" of our constitutional system (Connelly 2010, ch. 4). The gridlock critique is not new. Wilson introduced the progressive presumption that we need progress. Change or "evolving" presumably must mean "improving" (Will 2010). From this perspective, legislative activism or productivity may be a given—which brings us to our second question below.

Second, is gridlock precluding necessary legislative productivity?

One common way to judge dysfunction is by examining legislative productivity, but as witness the Mann, Ornstein, and Summers debate, there seems to be some disagreement as to whether, in fact, we suffer from gridlock. Some credible critics of our politics cite "stalemate" (Binder 2003). Robert Draper, in his recent book, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do*, notes, offering useful statistics, "a woeful output of historic proportions" (2012a) in the 112th Congress. The Brookings Institution's Sarah Binder observes that both Democrats and Republicans have policy agendas they wish to advance. "Conservatives do have a policy agenda that requires a functioning Congress. . . . I look at what have they done relative to the kinds of major policy problems they've talked about. I want to know what has Congress done relative to the big issues of the day" (Huey-Burns 2013). Speaker Boehner, on the other hand, argued, "We should not be judged by how many laws we create. We ought to be judged on how many laws that we repeal" (Huey-Burns 2013). How would we know whether we have the optimal level of legislative productivity? What objective standard might apply?

Some journalists and political scientists challenge the presumption that our politics is gridlocked. Jonathan Rauch recently observed,

A funny thing happened on the way to legislative gridlock and fiscal meltdown in the past few years. In paralyzed, polarized Washington, where Democrats refuse to reduce spending without revenue increases that Republicans peremp-

torily reject, Democrats have accepted spending cuts, Republicans have accepted tax increases, and deficits have come down. (Rauch 2013, 115)

Going back a bit further, Brookings scholar Pietro Nivola celebrated our success as a nation in addressing the 2008–2009 economic crisis.

Could it be that, for all the laments about America's "gridlocked" and "broken" political system, it actually appears to have done a better job contending with the Great Recession and its aftermath than did many other advanced democracies? Increasingly, it looks that way. The comparatively favorable performance, moreover, may well have much to do with the actions that our system *impeded*, not just the actions that it permitted. (Nivola 2012)

Nivola goes on to note,

We Americans have a tendency to wring our hands over the country's partisan polarization and seemingly paralytic political institutions. Many of us also seem quick to forget, however, that in 2008 and 2009 those same institutions succeeded in arresting a financial free-fall unprecedented since the 1930s. (Nivola 2012)

Citing the Toxic Asset Relief Program (TARP) at the end of the Bush administration, along with President Obama's $900 million fiscal stimulus, Nivola credits the U.S. political system for its "respectable activity," rather than dysfunction, relative to European nations. He concludes, "Unlike, say, the British parliamentary model—so admired for its capacity to act decisively," we should be willing to "give our old Madisonian political order the credit it's due" (Nivola 2012).

Perhaps the most rigorous study on this question is David Mayhew's 2011 *Partisan Balance: Why Political Parties Don't Kill the U.S. Constitutional System* (Mayhew 2011). Mayhew recommends we relax a bit in our consternation about gridlock; he finds vitality and stability, change and stasis in a constitutional system that is not about to collapse due to permanent gridlock. Too often claims of gridlock overlook the amount of policymaking occurring outside the legislative process (Mayhew 2011). Does the legislative productivity standard assume governmental activism is objectively good? After all, "failure to enact unpopular proposals does not supply a solid platform for blaming the system" (Mayhew 2011, 41, 77). Sometimes "[g]overnment is divided because 'we the people' are divided on key issues," as John J. Pitney (2013) recently noted. Or as the *Washington Post*'s Robert Samuelson observed,

People complain about government gridlock. But what often obstructs constructive change is public opinion. The stalemates on immigration and retirement spending are typical. We avoid messy problems; we embrace inconsistent

and unrealistic ambitions. We want more health care and lower health care costs; cheap energy and less dependence on foreign energy; more government spending and lower taxes. The more unattainable our goals, the more we blame "special interests," "lobbyists," and other easy scapegoats. (Samuelson 2008)

Partisan polarization may be one of those easy scapegoats when the problem, in fact, may be a lack of consensus. Certainly, we voters bear some responsibility since we embraced divided government in 2006 following our growing discontent with George W. Bush, and, again, in 2010 following the first two years of Barack Obama's presidency. In both instances, it appears, voters chose to curb presidents.

Is this "democracy working as it should," as Don Wolfensberger suggests in "Policy Gridlock: Is It the New Regular Order?" Wolfensberger cites Barbara Sinclair attributing the "much maligned partisan polarization" to "the strengthening and internal homogenization of the political parties [which] . . . has made possible the development of a strong and more activist party leadership that allows the majority to work its will" (Wolfensberger 2012).

One wonders: Do we have overly high expectations for legislative productivity? Are we hypersensitive to gridlock? The standard cannot simply be our druthers, since some want more legislative activism and others want less. Is it in fact a given that we are gridlocked? Certainly, as Draper notes, the 112th Congress witnessed a paucity of productivity, yet it followed on the heels of the 111th Congress, the first two years of the Obama presidency, which many have argued was the most productive Congress since the 1960s or perhaps since the 1930s. The 111th Congress passed the economic stimulus, the Affordable Care Act, Dodd-Frank financial regulatory reforms, and more. One may reasonably agree or disagree with these policy prescriptions, yet they certainly represent policy productivity.

Other substantial breakthroughs in legislative productivity over the past few decades have been responses to overwhelming majority sentiment; for example, bipartisan legislative activism followed closely on the heels of 9/11 in the form of the PATRIOT Act and Homeland Security Department. At other times, significant legislative innovations resulted from bipartisan compromises following bitter partisan conflict, such as the historic 1986 Tax Reform Act, 1996 Welfare Reform Act, and the 1997 Budget Accord. According to Dan Palazzolo in *Done Deal? The Politics of the 1997 Budget Agreement*, the 1995 dual government shutdowns were the necessary predicate for eventual agreement (Palazzolo 1999). Sometimes gridlock and productivity go hand in hand. Our constitutional system invites both stability and energy.

Larry Summers (2013b) seems sanguine about our prospects, citing our success addressing daunting challenges, including the 2008 financial crisis, deficits and debt, financial regulation, health care reform, education reform,

and energy independence. What if gridlock is good, as Summers suggests? Gridlock may, at times, be a form of governing. Obstructing legislation can be effective governance if the status quo is preferable to legislative change. Surely each of us finds ourselves wishing for gridlock at times. The Pelosi-led Democrats fought George W. Bush's Social Security reform to a standstill in 2005 to 2006. Likewise, Republicans wish they had succeeded similarly in promoting gridlock on health care reform in 2010. Limited government and activist government may each be desirable at times.

Lee Rawls dares to defend both partisanship and gridlock in *In Praise of Deadlock: How Partisan Struggle Makes Better Laws*. Rawls sees "hard bargaining" rather than "gridlock" (Rawls 2009, 95–98). Recent examples of this might include the eleventh-hour budget accord in spring 2011, the summer 2011 debt-limit accord, the "fiscal cliff" 2012 New Year's resolution, or the Murray-Ryan negotiated December 2013 budget agreement.

Rawls, a long time senior Senate staffer, concludes that much of the energy in American politics originates from party competition. He even defends the oft-maligned Senate filibuster, insisting the filibuster promotes *both* gridlock and *bi*partisanship since the filibuster forces negotiations, thus necessitating bipartisanship. Rawls asks: Which do you want? Ending gridlock and ending partisanship are incompatible objectives (Rawls 2009, 11, 52, 103). Robert Dove and Richard Arenberg, authors of *Defending the Filibuster*, like Rawls, are also experienced Hill staffers; Dove served for decades as Senate Parliamentarian. They, too, defend the filibuster, saying it is "the possibility of filibusters that drives senators to reach for compromise" (Dove and Arenberg 2012, 162). Partisanship, bipartisanship, confrontation, compromise, gridlock, and productivity are all part of our constitutional system.

Gridlock Blame Game

In their op-ed duel with Larry Summers, Mann and Ornstein blame congressional Republicans, along with the Senate filibuster, and "shortcomings of our political system" for purported gridlock. They do the same in *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*. Mann and Ornstein may be right in blaming James Madison, though Summers is also right to credit Madison, as in effect he does, for recognizing that sometimes gridlock *is* governing.

Politicians and pundits enjoy pointing fingers and leveling blame at Republicans or Democrats, Congress or the president, House or Senate. Yet assigning responsibility—whether for purported partisanship, dysfunction, or gridlock—is not so easy in our complex constitutional system. In fact, James

Madison made political accountability impossible—or so we are told by Anti-Federalist and Progressive critics of our Constitution.

The Anti-Federalist "Centinel" complained about the intricacy of the proposed Constitution: "If you complicate the plan by various orders [e.g. the separation of powers], the people will be perplexed and divided in their sentiments about the sources of abuses or misconduct." Madison concedes this point. Wilson concurred with Centinel in lamenting the Constitution's complexity: "How is the schoolmaster, the nation, to know which boy needs the whipping?" Neo-Progressive Carter/Clinton White House counsel Lloyd Cutler made the same argument in a famous 1978 article titled "To Form a Government." In our separation-of-powers system, he protested, we never form a government (Cutler 1980). He's right.

In the British parliamentary system (again, the ideal for progressive constitutional reformers from Wilson to today), commonly the majority party is the government and the minority party is the loyal opposition. No such luck in our complex Madisonian system. Neither party is ever simply the "government," or simply the "opposition." Both parties at all times are part of the government and part of the opposition. Consequently, both parties, both branches, both chambers at all times bear some responsibility for the purported dysfunction in our politics—and, in turn, they deserve some of the credit for its successes.

The fact that our complex separation of powers precludes accountability is most evident under conditions of "divided government," including today. President Obama, a Democrat, controls the White House. Speaker Boehner has a Republican majority in the majoritarian House, although it is not always clear that Speaker Boehner is in charge. Democrats have a majority in the Senate, although it is also not always clear Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) controls the Senate, given Senate rules empowering the minority and even individual Senators, as witness Kentucky senator Rand Paul's filibuster. Even under conditions of so-called united party government, the minority party always retains leverage, perhaps especially in the Senate; however, it remains to be seen how much this has changed since Reid detonated the nuclear option in November 2013.

Still, like squabbling siblings pointing fingers, trying to determine who to blame is a fool's errand; even if each of us is tempted to blame one side or the other depending on our partisan predilections.

Ultimately, what critics of our Constitution see as a defect Madison saw as a virtue. Madison did not want simple majority rule; rather, he sought *fully popular* government representative of the whole, providing leverage for both majority and minority factions, including intense minority factions. Consequently, under our complex constitutional system neither the president nor

the Congress simply governs; neither party is ever wholly the government. Simple majorities do not govern, since our republican institutions temper even super majorities. The majority party, if such even exists, is not the "government," and the minority party is not merely the "opposition." In this important sense, the Constitution governs the behavior of the president and Congress, House and Senate, Democrats and Republicans. No party, branch, or chamber is the government pure and simple. All are part of the government and part of the opposition at all times. Hence, all at all times deserve credit and blame.

At the bottom, the partisan blame game itself is inherently political. Both parties are naturally partisan because both parties are partial; neither ever represents the whole. The blame game often says more about those pointing fingers than about those they accuse. By leveling blame, accusers make clear where they stand.

Since neither party is ever simply the government or the opposition, perhaps Madison also deserves some of the blame or credit. Perhaps, he, too, deserves the blame or credit for another feature of our politics critics often lament today: the permanent campaign. Since—unlike the British parliamentary system—neither party is ever simply the government, nor simply the opposition, politics is permanent and constantly permeates policymaking. The October 2013 showdown shutdown stands as an example; arguably, both parties, both branches, both chambers were at all times playing politics *and* pursuing their understanding of good public policy. For Madison, playing politics is how we make policy; it never ends.

Hyperpartisan and Gridlocked?
Or Hypersensitive to Partisanship and Gridlock?

It is not at all clear that our politics is dysfunctional because it is partisan, polarized, and purportedly gridlocked. By historical standards, we are not extraordinarily partisan today. Even though our politics may not be hyperpartisan, we seem, like the Anti-Federalists, to be hypersensitive to partisanship. Are we hypersensitive to partisanship because we fail to appreciate Madison's perspective? Similarly, given the feats our legislative process accomplishes, as tallied by Mayhew, for example, it is not altogether clear that we are gridlocked. Yet, like the Progressives, we seem to be hypersensitive to gridlock given our inflated expectations and desire for change. The Anti-Federalists may be wrong about partisanship, and Wilson may be wrong about gridlock.

Moreover, while we can take turns blaming Republicans or Democrats, House or Senate, Congress or the president, for our seeming dysfunction,

we are correct to blame or credit Madison for partisanship and gridlock. The Anti-Federalists and Woodrow Wilson were also right to blame Madison and the Federalist Constitution for making accountability impossible and politics permanent, since neither party by itself in Madison's constitutional system is ever simply the government or simply the opposition.

Perhaps we can be sanguine since James Madison still rules America?

Meanwhile, it may make sense to maintain some perspective on our seeming dysfunction. In the 1830s Tocqueville witnessed our contentious politics firsthand, including scurrilous attacks on President Andrew Jackson. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville concluded:

> To a foreigner almost all the Americans' domestic quarrels seem at the first glance either incomprehensible or puerile, and one does not know whether to pity a people that take such wretched trifles seriously or to envy the luck enabling it to do so. (Tocqueville 1966, 177)

7

Are These Boots Made for Walking?

Polarization and Ideological Change among U.S. House Members

Michael J. Ensley, Michael W. Tofias, and Scott de Marchi

W HAT IS THE STATE OF THE PARTIES IN THE United States circa 2012? If we are referring to the members of the two major political parties inside the U.S. Congress, we could answer this question with one word: polarized! Political pundits and academics alike have been commenting on, and often lamenting, the ideological polarization of the two major political parties in the U.S. Congress. Over the past several decades the patterns of behavior inside the House and the Senate indicate that the two parties have been steadily marching away from each other, with the Republican members becoming increasingly conservative and the Democratic members becoming increasingly liberal.

However, what now seems to be almost a self-evident truth that the parties inside Congress would move apart from each other ideologically, congressional scholars did not always anticipate and recognize that the parties would polarize in the way that they have. The research of Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal (1985; 1997) was pivotal in helping others recognize the growing ideological divide between the parties. Through their novel approach to estimating legislators' ideology by analyzing roll calls, scholars could now easily and reliably visualize and analyze the ideological character of parties inside Congress. Figure 7.1 presents the ideological polarization or distance between the two parties in the House from the 82nd to 112th Congresses (1951–2012) using Poole and Rosenthal's (2007) DW-NOMINATE procedure.

While this trend uncovered by Poole and Rosenthal is now undeniable, it is far from clear why this change has occurred. There are many potential culprits such as redistricting, the media, partisan gamesmanship, primary

elections, and campaign fund-raising (see McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Mann and Ornstein 2012). If we are to decipher the causes of ideological polarization, we must understand when polarization occurred, as well as identify which members of Congress contributed to the growing ideological divide between the parties. For example, did polarization begin during the tumultuous 1960s (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Aldrich 1995), or did it occur in the 1970s when liberal members of the Democratic Party began to wrest procedural control of the House away from the more conservative elements of the chamber (Rohde 1991)? And with regard to which members contributed to polarization, are the roots of polarization to be found in the new members coming to Congress? Or have existing members of Congress adjusted their ideological position over time?

In this chapter we do not seek to solve the puzzle of political polarization, but we do seek to contribute to the solution by arguing for an alternative measure of legislator ideology. This measure provides two important insights that will help us solve the puzzle of ideological polarization. First, we discover that the timing of ideological polarization is different than that suggested by the conventionally used measure developed by Poole and Rosenthal (2007). Using this alternative measure (adjusted W-NOMINATE), which is also represented in figure 7.1, we find that the ideological differences between the two parties in the U.S. House of Representatives began accelerating after the 91st Congress (1969–1970), not the 95th Congress (1977–1978) as indicated by
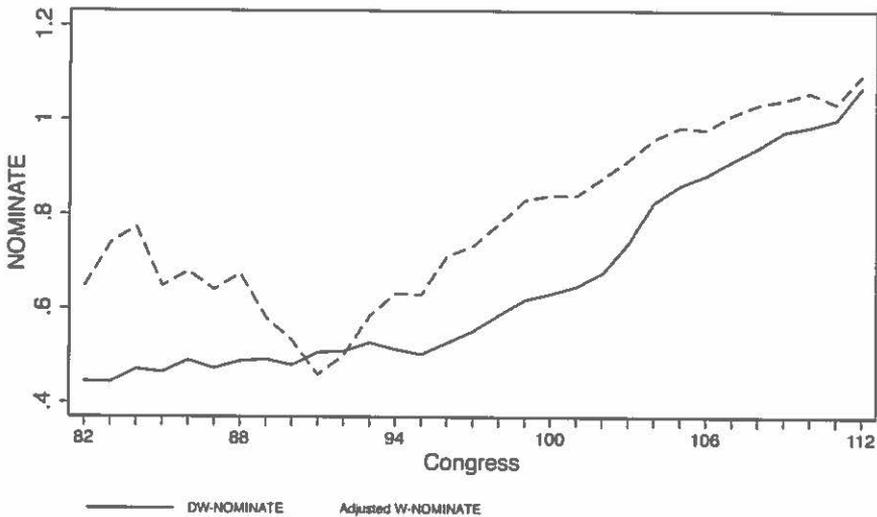
FIGURE 7.1
Ideological polarization, 1951–2012.

the Poole and Rosenthal measure of polarization. Second, we find that individual members of Congress change their ideological position. Thus, contrary to the claim made by Poole (2007) that members "die with their ideological boots on," we find that members of the House do shift their ideological position in predictable ways.

We begin by discussing the measurement of legislator ideology using the roll call votes of legislators. Next, we compare our measure of ideological polarization to the measure developed by Poole and Rosenthal (2007). Finally we use the measure of ideology to examine if House members adjust their ideological position in response to changes in their district, electoral competition, retirement, and length of service.

Measuring Ideology by Scaling Roll Call Votes

If we are to understand the causes of ideological polarization in the U.S. Congress, we need to have accurate measures of legislator ideology that can be compared across time. Political scientists frequently use roll call votes on legislation to infer the ideology of legislators, which interest groups such as the Americans for Democratic Action, The League of Conservation Voters, and the Christian Coalition have also used to evaluate members of Congress. Interest-group ratings typically count the number of times that a legislator votes on the conservative or liberal side of an issue. While these inferred ideological positions based on roll call votes are useful indicators of legislator ideology, there are problems with using these measures (Snyder Jr. 1992).

These problems with interest-groups' ratings led scholars such as Poole and Rosenthal (1997) to develop more advanced statistical procedures that leveraged the information available in the roll record but corrected for the problems inherent in interest-group ratings. Poole and Rosenthal (1985) constructed a model of voting based on the spatial theory of voting (Downs 1957) and developed a statistical program to estimate legislator ideology, which they called NOMINATE. The NOMINATE scores have been found to be highly reliable indicators of legislator ideology when comparing members to each other at a given point in time (Burden, Caldeira, and Groseclose 2000).

While being able to compare legislators to each other within a given time period is very useful, we also need to compare legislators across time if we are going to understand a process such as ideological polarization. The key difficulty in creating dynamic measures of legislators' ideology is that the position of the average roll call and the range of the positions of the roll calls are likely to shift over time due to changes in the agenda caused by turnover in the membership and changes in the political, economic, and social

environment. Simply put, what may be considered a very conservative or liberal vote in one period may appear much less extreme at a different point in time. If the scores are not adjusted for fluctuations in the underlying scale caused by changes in the agenda, researchers risk making false inferences (Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder Jr. 1999; Carson, Crespin, Jenkins, and Vander Wielen 2004; Herron 2004).

Since the roll call votes that are used as indicators to create the ideological scores are not constant between congresses, we need to develop a method that will anchor the underlying scale so we can make comparisons across time. Poole and Rosenthal (1997) first addressed the issue with D-NOMINATE, and then later with DW-NOMINATE, which are the scores that most researchers use today. In order to make these dynamic adjustments, Poole and Rosenthal (2007) assume that members move in a linear pattern over their career. Further, they add a parameter to their NOMINATE procedure that accounts for the pace of the linear change (i.e., the slope of the line). Finally, the linear change assumption implies that members move in only one direction over the course of their career, if they move at all.

Ideally, the method used for adjusting roll call voting scores should allow for dynamic comparisons without imposing assumptions on movement as restrictive as linearity and unidirectional change. This is particularly important if one is interested in testing hypotheses that imply that the pressure for members to change occurs at uneven intervals or at different points in their career. In fact, Nokken and Poole (2004) recognized how limiting the assumption of linear, unidirectional movement can be when trying to analyze how members respond to changing circumstances. In their case, they were interested in comparing how party switchers change relative to those members who stay with their party.

While the Nokken and Poole (2004) procedure might be a viable alternative, we advocate a method suggested by Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder, Jr. (1999) that can be applied to any roll call scaling procedure. The key advantage of this procedure relative to the DW-NOMINATE procedure is that it imposes less restrictive assumptions on legislator movement. Specifically, each member's position can move in a gradual manner, as well as in a more abrupt fashion in any direction. Therefore, we can examine if members change direction over the course of their career, since this method does not impose a linear functional form on movement. It allows members' scores to change in a linear fashion or in a more haphazard, abrupt manner.[1]

A Comparison of Ideology Scores

Since we start by using the W-NOMINATE scores and then adjust them using the procedure of Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder Jr. (1999), we refer to

the alternative measure of legislator ideology as adjusted W-NOMINATE, which we compare to DW-NOMINATE scores of Poole and Rosenthal (2007). Although the assumptions underlying the two approaches are quite different, the two procedures generate quite similar scores at first glance. The correlation between the adjusted W-NOMINATE and the DW-NOMINATE scores is approximately 0.96. There is some variance across the years with the lowest correlation between the two sets of scores occurring in the 91st Congress, where the correlation is 0.88. The strong relationship between the scores is not surprising given that the scores are based on the same scaling procedure and the same roll calls with the only key difference being how the scores are adjusted to make the scores comparable across time.

However, if we take a closer look at the scores, we will see that there are some potentially interesting differences between members. Consider a few anecdotes illustrated in figure 7.2, which show the career trajectories of three members and put the linearity assumption of DW-NOMINATE into question. The first example is Phil Crane (figure 7.2, top), a Republican from Illinois. Adjusted W-NOMINATE reveals Phil Crane as having both conservative and moderate movements in his career as opposed to DW-NOMINATE, which portrays a steady but slight growth into conservative voting behavior.

A second example is Bill Clay (figure 7.2, middle), an African American Democrat from Missouri who served from 1969 to 2000. Based on the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores, Clay started his career with a very liberal voting record and moderated abruptly in the 99th Congress, and then gradually became more liberal after that. The DW-NOMINATE scores, however, paint a drastically different trajectory: Clay is portrayed as an average Democrat that slowly became more liberal over his career. A final example is Matthew Martinez (figure 7.2, bottom), a Democrat from California. The adjusted W-NOMINATE scores indicate that Martinez became more conservative in the 106th Congress, which is when he repudiated the Democratic Party after a primary loss to Hilda Solis. The DW-NOMINATE records indicate Martinez had a career-long gradual slide toward moderate voting.

While figure 7.2 provides some interesting examples of how the two scores can produce different results, it is worth examining whether these individual levels make a difference in how we assess the larger picture. In other words, do these small differences across legislators cancel out when we aggregate them? The short answer is no, they do not cancel out.

When we create measures to characterize the relative location of the parties, as well the heterogeneity within the major political parties, the adjusted W-NOMINATE and DW-NOMINATE measures create substantively different measures. This is critical because there are many theories of American politics that rely on these aggregate measures. For example, one prominent theory that utilizes both of the characteristics is the conditional party government thesis (Rohde 1991; Aldrich 1995).

Phil Crane
the long serving Illinois Republican

Bill Clay
Long Serving Democrat from Missouri

Matthew G. Martinez
the mostly Democratic Representative from California
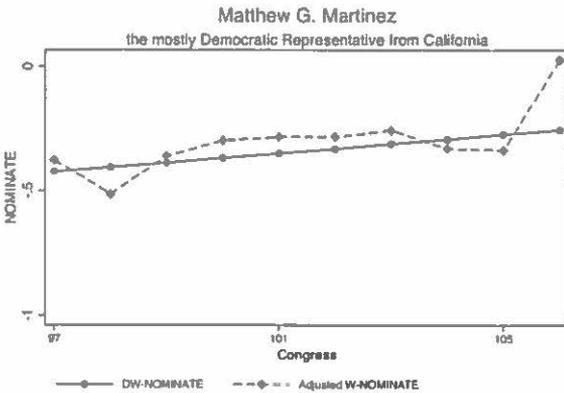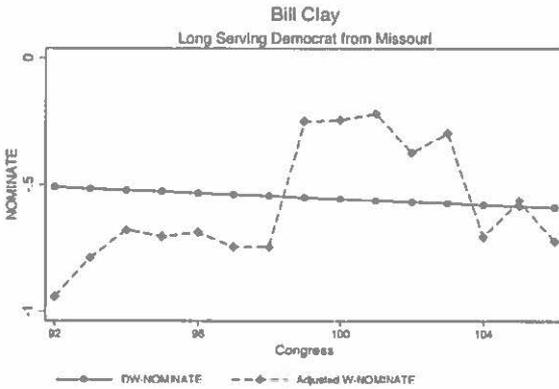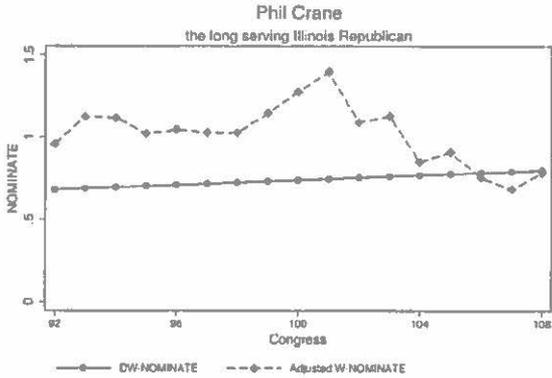
FIGURE 7.2
Selected members' ideological trajectories.

Here we show that both of these measures, polarization and intraparty homogeneity, are affected by which procedure one uses to estimate ideology for the period from 1951 to 2012. First consider the polarization measure displayed in figure 7.1. If we calculate the mean score of legislators from the same party across time, as illustrated in figure 7.3, we find that measures are similar but far from identical. Further, when we calculate the difference between the scores for the two parties, we see the different pattern illustrated in figure 7.1. The correlation of the polarization measures is 0.915, but the high correlations mask interesting differences. The DW-NOMINATE measure provides a picture of a gradual divergence between the parties, whereas the polarization measure documented using the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores shows that the parties were more polarized in the 1950s but that polarization declined through the 1960s. In particular, the adjusted W-NOMINATE measure shows that parties were more polarized prior to 1964 than the DW-NOMINATE scores. The DW-NOMINATE scores show that ideological polarization occurred later (after the 95th Congress, 1977–1978). Given that the middle of the 1960s were critical moments in terms of the transformation of the parties with respect to the role of civil rights and race in American politics (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Aldrich 1995), the pattern associated with the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores is reasonable and compelling.

Perhaps just as interesting as the differences we found in polarization across the two measures is how different the measures are with respect to internal partisan heterogeneity. Theories of conditional party government hold that the majority party is more likely to empower its leaders when the parties are further apart and less internally heterogeneous, where heterogeneity is often measured by the standard deviation of ideological scores within a party. Figure 7.4 illustrates that there are significant differences in the standard deviation of the party members' ideological positions created from the two sets of scores. The correlation of the partisan heterogeneity measures for the Republicans is less than 0.5 and the correlation for the Democrats is about 0.75. Further, the two sets of scores differ over which party is more heterogeneous since 1994. The DW-NOMINATE series suggests that the Democrats were more heterogeneous than the Republicans until the 104th Congress. After the Republicans took over the House, Democrats became more cohesive as an opposition party. Adjusted W-NOMINATE describes a Democratic Party that more closely adheres to that old Will Rogers adage about their organizational abilities ("I am not a member of any organized political party. I am a Democrat."), since only briefly for the 101st Congress (1989–1990) are the Democrats less heterogeneous than the Republicans.

It is notable that the relative positions of the Democrats and Republicans are reversed using the two measures from the 104th Congress onward. The
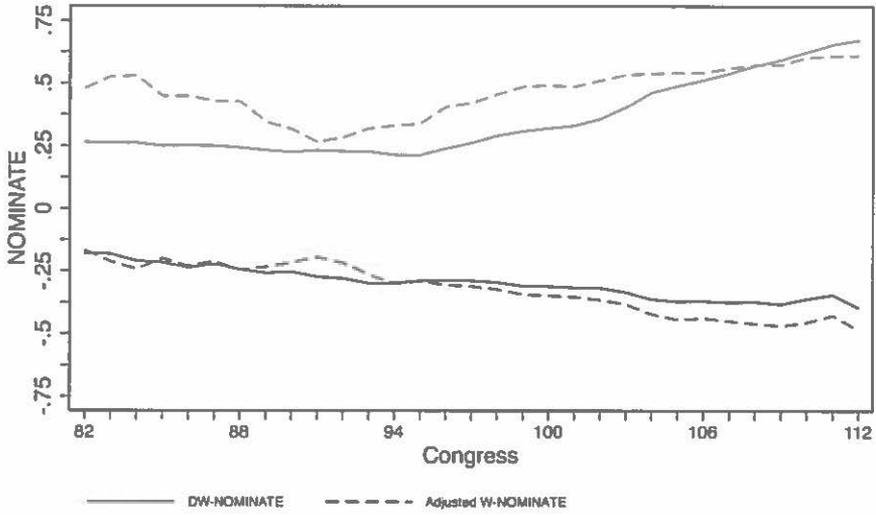
FIGURE 7.3
Party ideology, 1951–2012.
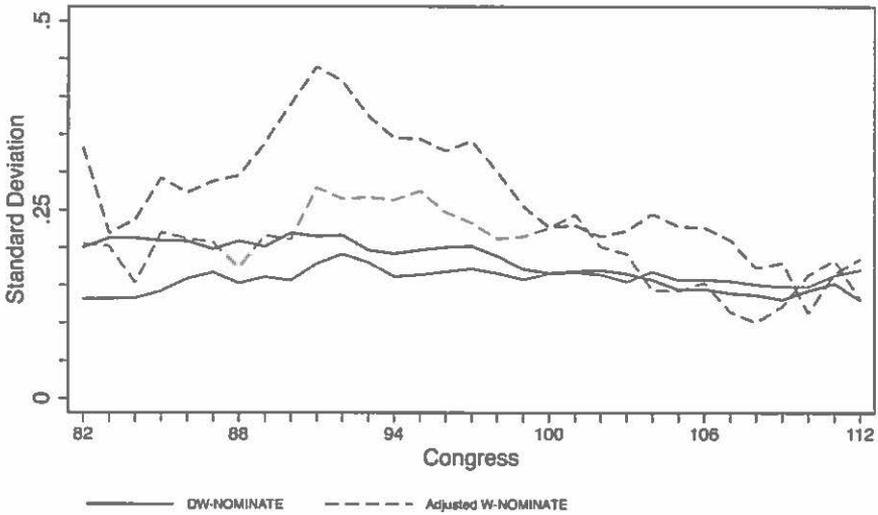
FIGURE 7.4
Ideological heterogeneity by party, 1951–2012.

adjusted W-NOMINATE scores conform to the prevailing belief that the Republicans are a more ideologically cohesive group than the Democrats, whereas the DW-NOMINATE scores suggest that since the mid-1990s that the Democratic Party is more cohesive than the Republican Party. Clearly both parties have become more homogenous since the 1960s but which party is more cohesive has importance in terms of their ability to be successful in the legislative process. The results based on the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores indicate that Republicans appear to be advantaged given their relative homogeneity. At the same time, Republicans have become more heterogeneous in recent times.

Ideological Variability in the House

So far we have demonstrated that adjusted W-NOMINATE ideology scores provide a different portrait of ideological polarization in the U.S. House than the standard DW-NOMINATE approach. In order to validate our suggested measure of ideology, we investigated whether it is related to other concepts that we theoretically would expect to find. Here we do that by investigating whether House members' ideological positions shift over time in response to several factors. And while this is useful for validating the measure of ideology, this approach also has important substantive benefits for understanding ideological polarization. Specifically, it allows us to assess whether members of Congress shift their position over time.

Poole and Rosenthal claim that one of the remaining questions in the literature on roll call voting is whether members change their ideological orientation over their career: "Do legislators learn their place in the space, in which case behavior will be more variable on early votes, or do they arrive with a pre-wired ideology?" (2007, 314). Recent work by Poole (2007) suggests that members move very little; members die with their "ideological boots" on.

However, some scholars have argued that members do move in response to electoral pressures. These scholars focus on the electoral connection and the pressure that the reelection imperative places on members to stay in step with their constituents or risk losing support at the polls (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002). One source of district change that has received close scrutiny is the change that is induced by the decennial redistricting process. Several scholars have provided evidence that as a member's district becomes more liberal after redistricting that the member adopts a more liberal voting record (Rothenberg and Sanders 2000; Stratmann 2000; Crespin 2009).

While members may move in response to changes in the ideological leanings of constituents wrought by redistricting, the importance of a member's

ideological position to reelection suggests that members may not exhibit much movement; the imperative to represent constituents will keep members anchored to their position. Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) demonstrate that the electoral connection creates stability in members' behavior by analyzing what happens when the connection is severed. They show that when legislators decide to retire or to run for higher office that they move further in the ideological space than other members.

Another factor that may contribute to stability in ideological positions is the investment members have made in their ideological reputation. Simply put, members may pay a penalty for changing their position once they have built a reputation with their constituents; fear of being branded a "flip-flopper" may keep incumbents tied to their position. Burden argues that the costs associated with movement "are not even the same for all candidates. Public officials have reputations that constrain their movement. . . . If nothing else, their roll call records tie them concretely to sets of issue positions" (Burden 2004, 214). Given that many voters may not monitor congressional activities, it may not pay to pander to moderate swing voters. Instead, as Fenno (1978) suggests, it may be better to continue to appeal to the reelection constituency, or even more narrowly, to the core supporters. But the reputation effect should vary across members according to seniority: members should exhibit less movement in their ideological positions over time. Thus, there should be a negative relationship between seniority and variability in members' ideological location.[2]

Stratmann (2000) offers another reason that movement may decrease over the course of a legislator's career. He argues that junior members in Congress have an informational disadvantage as compared to their more senior colleagues. More senior members have had time to learn their constituents' policy preferences and adjust their behavior to match their constituents' interests. On the other hand, junior members will be more likely to rely on cues from fellow partisans and other relevant actors until they have had the chance to engage, process, and learn what his or her constituents prefer. Stratmann (2000) predicts that members will exhibit more stability in their voting behavior the longer they serve.

A final factor that may induce ideological movement among members of Congress is the competitive pressures in the electoral process. Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) argue that members of Congress, as well as candidates for Congress, are closer to the median voter in the district when the election is expected to be close. On the other hand, a legislator has leeway to vote as he or she wishes if the partisan makeup of the district is tilted too much in one direction. In districts where the opposition party has almost no chance of winning the election, incumbents have less incentive to be con-

cerned about how each roll call will affect their electoral fortunes. With regard to ideological movement, the expectation is that members will adjust their position in response to electoral competition.

Here we have identified four factors that might generate movement in members' ideological positions. Specifically, we hypothesize that legislators will be more likely to change their position: (1) the more the district changes as the result of redistricting; (2) if they decided or are forced to retire; (3) the less seniority they have in Congress; and (4) the more competitive their next election is expected to be. Each of these factors implies that the pressure to change will be different at different points in a member's career. For example, the pressure imposed by redistricting will occur only when a member faces significant changes in district composition. The effect of reputation on ideological movement will grow the longer a member serves in the House; thus a member may move early in his or her career but cease to move later. Thus it is critical that a measure of legislator ideology allow for abrupt and irregular changes in behavior, as well for more gradual movements. The scores created from DW-NOMINATE preclude such irregular jumps in legislator ideology, but the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores allow this (see Bernhard and Sala 2006 for a similar application).

To test if ideological movement decreases over a member's career and responds to competition and redistricting, we analyze the change in the ideological position of House members who served in the 82nd to the 106th congresses.[3] The dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference in a member's roll call voting score in two adjacent Congresses. Thus, we are not interested in the direction in which members move; we are interested in knowing whether members change their position in either direction. We use the DW-NOMINATE and adjusted W-NOMINATE scores to measure ideology in each Congress.

The four factors we identified that vary across members that may affect the variability in ideological positions are measured as follows. *Partisan change* captures the change in constituents after redistricting and is the absolute value of the difference in the districts' partisan makeup using the normalized district partisanship measures created by Levendusky, Pope, and Jackman (2008). *Seniority* is the length of service in the House and is the natural log of the number of consecutive terms served. *Previous vote* captures the competiveness of the electoral process and is the incumbent's share of the vote from the last election. Since some incumbents did not face a challenger from the other major party in the previous election, we also include a dichotomous variable to indicate those incumbents who were *Uncontested* in the previous election.[4] *Last Congress* captures the decision to retire from the House or to run for higher office. It also captures those who are defeated in the primary election.

Table 7.1 presents the OLS regression of ideological variability using both the adjusted W-NOMINATE and DW-NOMINATE scores.[5] The first set of results uses the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores and provides support for three of the four hypotheses about ideological variability. The hypothesis that does not receive support is the competitiveness hypothesis. The previous vote variable and the uncontested incumbent variable have coefficients that are in the expected direction but are statistically insignificant. The coefficients for the other three independent variables in the model are in the expected direction and are statistically significant.

The coefficient on the partisan change variable is positive, which indicates that the larger the shift in district partisan composition, the more legislators will move in the Congress following the redistricting. The second independent variable with a statistically significant coefficient is seniority. The negative coefficient on seniority indicates that the longer a member serves in the House, the less variable his or her ideological orientation is. This supports the

TABLE 7.1
Regression of Variability in Legislator Ideology

Adjusted W-NOMINATE			
Variable	*Coefficient*	*Standard Error*	*p-value*
Partisan Change	0.0067	0.0020	0.001
Seniority	−0.0069	0.0020	0.000
Previous Vote	−0.0004	0.0117	0.969
Uncontested	−0.0030	0.0085	0.722
Last Congress	0.0153	0.0028	0.000
Constant	0.0848	0.0081	0.000
N	8402		
R^2	0.40		
DW-NOMINATE			
Variable	*Coefficient*	*Standard Error*	*p-value*
Partisan Change	0.0002	0.0002	0.316
Seniority	0.0011	0.0002	0.000
Previous Vote	0.0005	0.0012	0.697
Uncontested	0.0004	0.0009	0.605
Last Congress	−0.0012	0.0003	0.000
Constant	0.0087	0.0008	0.000
N	8402		
R^2	0.80		

Note: Dependent variable is the absolute value of the change in the legislator's score. Fixed effects are for congressional district in both models.

hypotheses offered by Stratmann (2000) and Burden (2004) that we should see less variability in members' roll call behavior over time because of learning, experience, and the development of an ideological reputation. The final variable with a statistically significant coefficient is the last congress variable. As Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) showed, we find that the severing of the electoral connection through retirement or primary defeat leads to larger shifts in a member's ideology.

The substantive effect of the variables is modest but meaningful. For example, a member serving in his or her last Congress is likely to move about 0.015 units on the scale, which is the equivalent to a move of about five to ten positions in the rank order of legislators if we focus around legislators in the middle of their party. Similarly, a move of two standard deviations on the partisan change variable produces a move of about five rank order positions, and a member that has served ten years moves approximately five rank order positions less than a new member.

The regression of ideological movement using the DW-NOMINATE scores is the second set of results in table 7.1. The partisan change variable has a positive coefficient as we would expect, but the coefficient is not statistically significant. Two of the variables are statistically significant: seniority and last Congress. However, each of the variables has a coefficient that has the opposite sign than expected and is in contrast to the results presented for the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores, as well as existing research (Stratmann 2000; Rothenberg and Sanders 2000). Based on these results, we have confidence that the adjusted W-NOMINATE scores provide a more compelling and accurate portrait of ideological change in the House.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we argue for an alternative dynamic measure of ideology for members of Congress. The adjusted W-NOMINATE measure of ideology captures important changes in the ideology of individual members of Congress that is not captured by the DW-NOMINATE measure. Further, we have shown that the differences in individual ideology also lead to important distinctions at the aggregate level. When we calculate measures of ideological polarization between the parties and heterogeneity within the parties, we find important differences. In particular, we find the partisan polarization was higher in the 1950s than in the 1960s but that polarization began to increase sharply around 1970. We also find that the Republican Party is generally the more ideologically cohesive party. Both of these observations stand in contrast to the portrait painted by DW-NOMINATE.

There are still many factors and patterns to be discovered and explained in regard to the ideology of members of Congress. The adjusted W-NOMI-NATE measure of legislator ideology over time, we believe, provides a valuable tool in assessing how and why ideological polarization has occurred in the U.S. Congress. In this chapter, we have presented two key insights that researchers should consider when attempting to explain the growing ideological divide between the Republican and Democratic parties. First, the 1960s is a pivotal time period in explaining the growth of ideological polarization. Second, when assessing the growth in polarization we should not only look to the new members of Congress entering during this period of polarization; we also need to keep a watchful eye on the behavior of those members already serving.[6]

Notes

1. Details regarding the procedure can be obtained from the authors.

2. It is possible that seniority could lead to more variability in roll calls; the longer members have served in office the more political capital they will have, which would provide slack to pursue more specific policy goals.

3. Note that we limit the analysis to this time frame given the availability of data from Levendusky, Pope, and Jackman (2008).

4. For the previous vote variable, uncontested members are assigned a 0, implying that the variable has no effect for those incumbents.

5. The model includes fixed effects for each district to control for the effect that a particular constituency may have on legislator behavior due to factors such as ideological and policy heterogeneity and demographic factors such as race, education, and income.

6. We thank John Green, Daniel Coffey, and David Cohen for their comments and suggestions. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the State of the Parties Conference: 2012 and Beyond at the University of Akron's Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, November 7–8, 2013, and at the 2010 Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Panel 40-5, "Estimating and Using Legislative Ideal Points." Special thanks to Keith Poole for making so much data available at http://voteview.com.

8

Party Polarization in America's State Legislatures

An Update

Boris Shor

WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT POLARIZATION? Excessive levels of partisanship and ideological polarization have been shown to have a pernicious effect on many aspects of policymaking and governance (see McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, 2006; 2009) for a review of the evidence at the national level.[1] As a result, a robust public debate about how to reduce polarization and partisanship has emerged. The political parties in Congress are increasingly polarized in ideological terms. This pattern is largely driven by replacement rather than adaptation; that is, moderates are increasingly leaving Congress and being replaced by ideological extremists. Both the House and Senate are polarized, and they are getting more so over time.

What about American state legislatures? As recent events in many state capitols attest, these problems are beginning to afflict policymaking at the state level. It is important to analyze these numbers to determine if polarization is leading to political gridlock and dysfunctional policy. We also need a barometer of polarization to find out whether reforms like opening up primaries, taking redistricting away from politicians themselves, term limits, and so forth can do anything about this yawning gap between the parties. And since there are 50 state legislatures, we might find answers to these questions more quickly and definitively than we can with Congress, of which we only have one.

While polarization in the states has not received the same attention as congressional polarization, our recent research has shown that state legislatures are quite polarized (Shor and McCarty 2011). Most state legislatures exhibit levels of partisan and ideological conflict that are at least as high as that of

the U.S. Congress. Moreover, polarization has been rising in most—but not all—state legislatures. And just as it has in Congress, partisan conflict within state legislatures has become a central feature of policymaking whether it be abortion policies in Texas, collective bargaining in Wisconsin, or the expansion of Medicaid in the states under the Affordable Care Act.

While the phenomenon of the polarization of state governments is intrinsically important, the states also provide a useful laboratory for evaluating the proposed reforms designed to mitigate polarization or its consequences at all levels. For example, suppose one wanted to evaluate the extent to which various features of the campaign finance system create biases toward the election of ideologues and partisans. Conducting such a study on the U.S. Congress faces any number of limitations. The basic structure of the federal campaign finance system changes very rarely. And when it does, the reforms are themselves a product of the partisan and ideological conflict that they are presumed to influence. The states, on the other hand, hold elections under a very diverse set of campaign finance rules, ranging from public financing in some states to trivial restrictions in others. Moreover, these rules change frequently. In principal, scholars could much more confidently evaluate the role of campaign finance in party polarization by leveraging both the variation in rules across and within states.

Clearly, the states are also ideal for evaluating proposed reforms of primary electoral systems, legislative districting, and convenience voting. Additionally, the states afford opportunities to examine the policy effects of partisan polarization. Do less polarized states manage their economies, governments, and disadvantaged citizens better than more polarized states? How might extreme partisanship impact opportunity for reform in education policy, public sector pensions, health policy, or any of the other salient areas of state policy making?

Trends in Polarization

Unfortunately, the data necessary to use the states to study the causes and consequences of polarization has not been available. Prior to our work, similar measurements of polarization at the state level were unavailable for two reasons: the lack of data on voting records and the lack of a metric for comparing across states. To address the first problem, legislative journals of all 50 states (generally from the mid-1990s onward) were either downloaded from the web or purchased in hard copy. The hard-copy journals were disassembled, photocopied, and scanned. These scans were converted to text using optical character recognition software. To convert the raw legislative text to

roll call voting data, we developed several data-mining scripts. Because the format of each journal is unique, a script had to be developed for each state and each time a state changed its publication format.

The initial report on this research covered the period between 1996 and 2006, which effectively means the legislators elected between 1994 and 2004 (Shor and McCarty 2011). This chapter updates the initial research with data that extend to 2011, meaning we now incorporate the legislators elected between 2006 and 2010. In all, the dataset currently covers nearly 19,000 unique state legislators across the 50 states, with more than 1,500 chamber-years of data.

The second issue is that we can only compare the positions of two legislators if they have cast votes on the same issues. If we assume that legislators have fairly consistent positions over time, we can compare two legislators so long as they both have voted on the same issues as a third legislator. But this issue poses special problems for the study of state legislators because two legislators from different states rarely cast votes on exactly the same issue. So to make comparisons across states, we use a survey of federal and state legislative candidates that asks similar questions across states and across time. The National Political Awareness Test (NPAT) is administered by Project Vote Smart, a nonpartisan organization that disseminates these surveys as voter guides to the public at large. By combining the data on roll call votes with the NPAT survey data from 1996 to 2011, we generate universal coverage of state legislators who have served in the states for which we have the roll call data. (See Shor and McCarty 2011 for the technical details of how we combine these two data sources.)

Most of the recent scholarly literature takes as its starting point quantitative trends that indicate rising party differences in roll call voting behavior in Congress (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). These findings are generally based on measures of positions on the liberal-conservative continuum as revealed through roll call voting. Though various techniques for measuring the ideology of legislators have been developed, they all produce very similar findings. By convention, higher scores on these measures represent a more conservative position. The measure of polarization used here is the difference in medians between Democrats and Republicans, with a larger gap indicating a greater level of polarization.[2]

We turn now to what the new data and the passage of time show. Figure 8.1 averages the distance between party medians over time and across chambers within states to get a sense of the average level of polarization. We are able to make direct comparison to Congress because congressional candidates answer the Vote Smart survey just as state legislative candidates do. Strikingly, the level of polarization in the U.S. House and Senate—the subject of

Average Legislative Polarization

CA
CO
MI
NM
WA
WI
NH
AZ
OH
MN
VA
MO
AK
MD
TX
NC
ME
MT
GA
IA
ID
OR
UT
CT
TN
NY
US
VT
PA
AL
WY
IL
NJ
KS
SC
OK
IN
ND
NV
SD
HI
FL
MS
MA
KY
AR
WV
NE
LA
DE
RI

0.5   1.0   1.5   2.0   2.5

Distance Between Party Medians
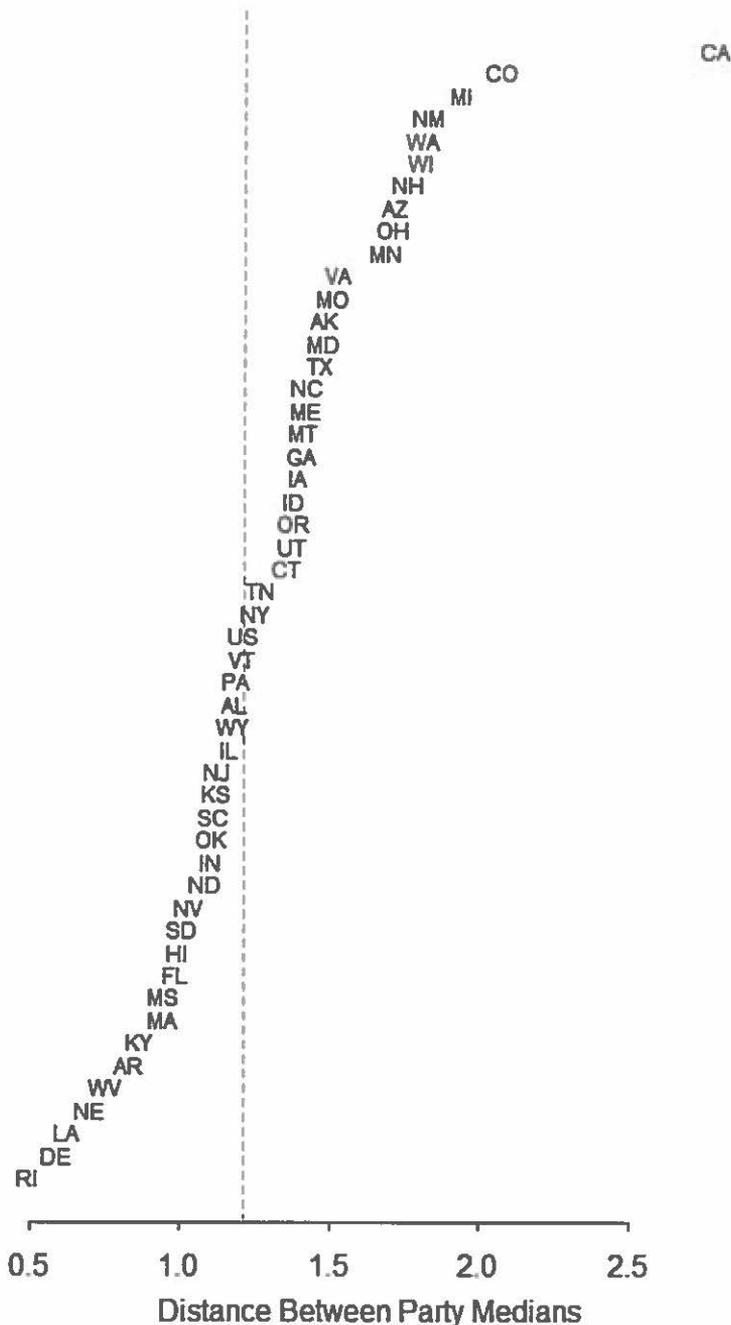
FIGURE 8.1
Comparison of polarization averaged across chambers and time for
all 50 state legislatures. Congress is included as the dashed line for
comparison.

substantial scholarly attention (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2008)—is not an outlier. In comparison to Congress, the majority of state legislatures are less polarized, while 15 are actually more polarized. California is by far the most polarized state legislature, and Congress looks decidedly bipartisan by comparison (see Masket 2009 on the causes and consequences of polarization in California). On the other end, Rhode Island and Louisiana are the least polarized. In the former, Democrats are liberal, but so, too, are the Republicans. In the latter, the converse is true.

We also find that there is variation in polarization trends across states. Figures 8.2 further illustrates how heterogeneous states are with respect to polarization levels and trends.

As with the U.S. Congress, all 99 state legislative chambers (Nebraska has a single chamber commonly referred to as the Unicam or Senate) are polarized. In 75 of those 99 chambers, the parties are getting more distant from each other. In 17 of them, the parties are roughly stable, not trending towards or away from each other. In 7 chambers, the parties are actually depolarizing or getting closer. In most states, unlike in the U.S. Congress, the upper (Senate) chamber is typically more polarized than the lower (House or Assembly) chamber. On the other hand, the lower chamber is polarizing faster in more states than the upper chamber. It is not yet clear why these differences should exist.

The top ten fastest polarizing chambers, in order, are the senates in Arizona, Hawaii, Colorado, Missouri, and Idaho, and the lower chambers in Montana, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, and Washington. The fastest depolarizing state chambers, in order, are the Wyoming House, the Oregon Senate, the Alaska Senate, the Ohio Senate, and the North Carolina Senate. This is completely unheard of in recent years in Congress. At the same time, California retains its title as the most polarized state legislature in the country. It has even managed to move up a couple of notches in the past 15 years. Another notable state is Nebraska, whose Unicam is among the fastest polarizers in the country, despite the fact that it is nonpartisan by law in the chambers and at the voting booth. Masket and Shor (2013) describe how parties in the state have overcome this powerful prohibition to work as cohesive, disciplined units—just like other states.

Asymmetric Polarization

But which parties are driving this polarization at the state level? Are both parties at fault, or is one becoming more extreme compared to the other? That is, is state legislative polarization symmetric or asymmetric? When we look
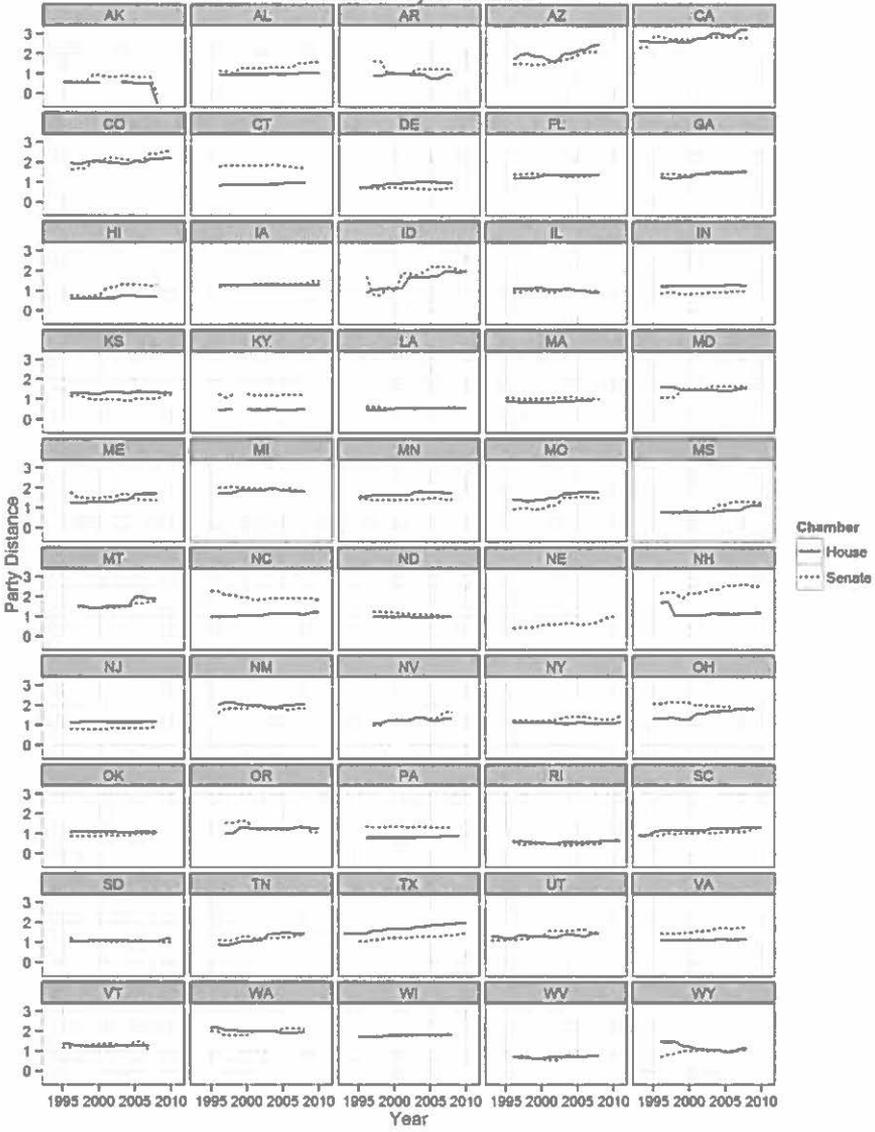
FIGURE 8.2
Difference in party medians. Higher values indicate more polarization.

at Congress over the past 20 years, we can clearly see that in both the U.S. House and Senate, the Republican Party has gotten more extreme over time relative to the Democrats (though in the House, Democrats have polarized to a smaller degree as well). This is a familiar story of asymmetric polarization. In fairness, Democrats' move in the liberal direction started earlier than Republicans: the 1940s versus the mid-1970s. Still, in recent years, congressional Republicans have unquestionably moved further, faster.

Figure 8.3 shows the picture graphically, plotting party medians over time, separately for each chamber. Looking across the states, Republicans on the whole are clearly polarizing faster than Democrats. In 68 of the 99 state legislative chambers, they are getting more conservative over time, while in 62 chambers Democrats are getting more liberal. In 16 chambers Democrats are actually getting more conservative (e.g., depolarizing), while the converse is true in 16 chambers for Republicans, where they are getting more liberal. In 21 chambers Democrats are roughly stable, and the same is true in 15 chambers for Republicans.

However, these data clearly reveal that states are wildly diverse in these terms. In some states such as Tennessee and Colorado, Republicans are getting more extreme in recent times, while Democrats are not changing much. But in other states such as Idaho, Mississippi, and California, it is Democrats who are largely responsible for the states' recent polarization. And finally, there are states such as Texas, Missouri, and Nebraska, where both parties are polarizing roughly equally and simultaneously. So the polarization story in state legislatures is similar in some ways to that of Congress: Republicans are leading the charge to the ideological poles on average. But it's different, too; the average story obscures lots of differences across states. State polarization trends thus underline the usefulness of studying state legislatures as a laboratory for political observers; there's just lots of variation to work with in trying to understand what causes what. And so we should look to state experiences to see whether reforms in areas like redistricting, primaries, campaign finance, and so on do anything to mitigate polarization, and whether some reforms might have unintended consequences that make it worse.

Causes of Polarization

A commonly mentioned cause of polarization is the impact of primary elections. Indeed, one of the most popular electoral reforms concerns changing the ways in which parties nominate candidates for the general election. The idea that less partisan—and more open—primary elections would create the conditions for more moderate officeholders were behind California's recent
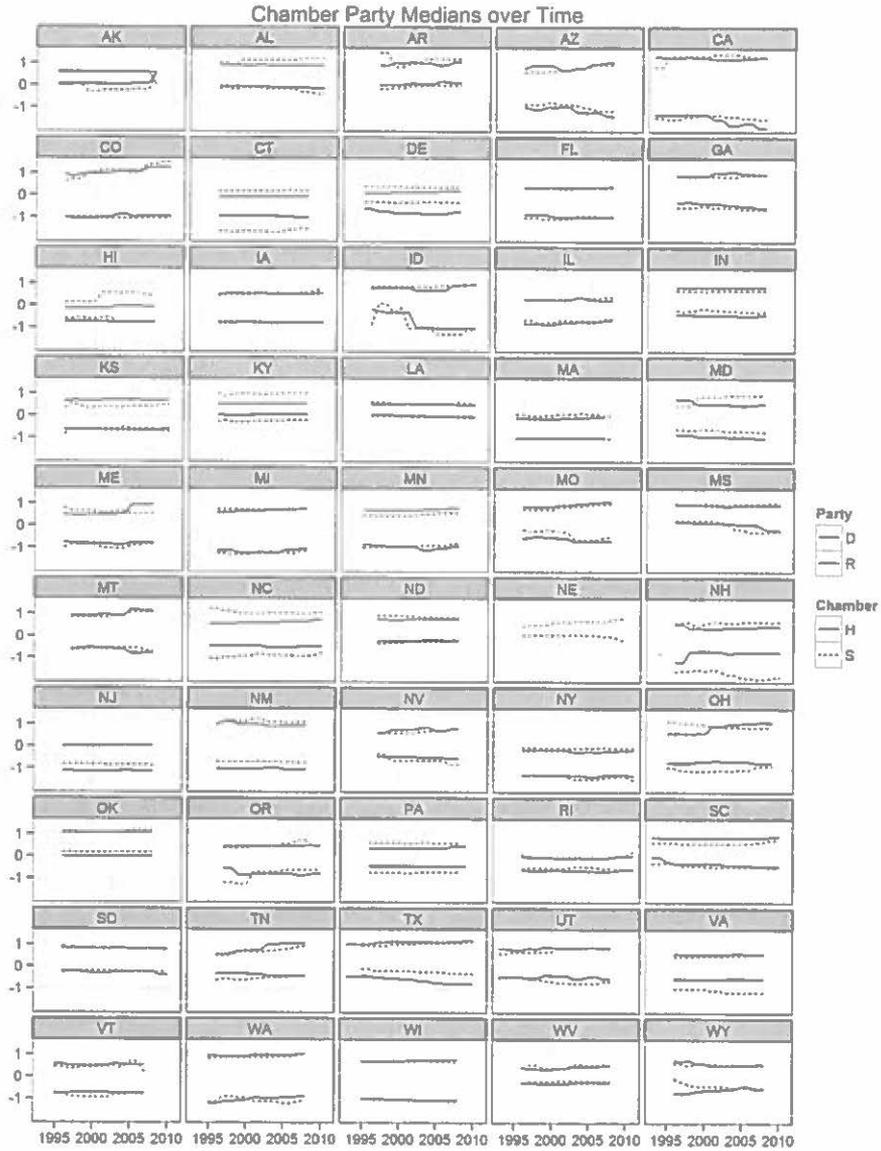
FIGURE 8.3
Party medians within chambers across states. Republicans are polarizing faster in six more chambers than Democrats.

adoption of the "top two" primary system in which the top vote getters regardless of party move to the general election. Several studies have argued for a significant effect from nomination procedures (Bullock and Clinton 2011; Gerber 1998). However, these studies rely on either purely cross-sectional data or data from a limited number of states.

Our data provide an opportunity to evaluate empirically whether moving from closed partisan primaries to less partisan open primaries reduces polarization.[3] Our findings challenge the conventional wisdom in this regard: we find few strong relationships between the openness of a primary and the moderation of the legislators it produces (McGhee et al. 2013).

Figure 8.4 shows our model predictions for the trends in legislator ideology for the five major primary systems we track. In all systems, legislators are getting more extreme over time: Democrats are becoming more liberal and Republicans more conservative. More open and nonpartisan systems, which are hypothesized to moderate candidates given the presence of independents and other-party identifiers, do not seem to have more moderate records than more closed systems.

Our study, however, only considers opening primaries to independents and cross-over partisans. Evaluations of more radical alternatives such as California's "top two" system have been limited, although our data is now being used to address this question in a new study (Kousser et al. 2014) . Our data will improve the ability to tackle this question as researchers will not only be able to use it to identify changes in California's polarization after adoption but also to compare those changes to changes in polarization in nonreform states. Such a research design would greatly improve the reliability of the inferences.

Another commonly mentioned cause of polarization is income inequality. Nationally, there has been a great increase in both political polarization and income inequality since the early 1970s. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2006) document these trends and tie them together, arguing that rising income inequality is both a cause and an effect of polarization. When incomes grow unequally, there is a greater return to organizing political conflict over the central axis of attitudes toward government activism. At the same time, when Congress is polarized, redistributive policies that can ameliorate inequality are often very hard to pass given the presence of numerous veto points in the American separation of powers system.

What about the states? Garand (2010) shows that state-level income inequality helps explain state opinion and U.S. Senate polarization. New research and new inequality data from Voorheis (2014) show that these results extend to state legislative polarization, but with an interesting twist. While the overall relationship between state inequality and legislative polarization
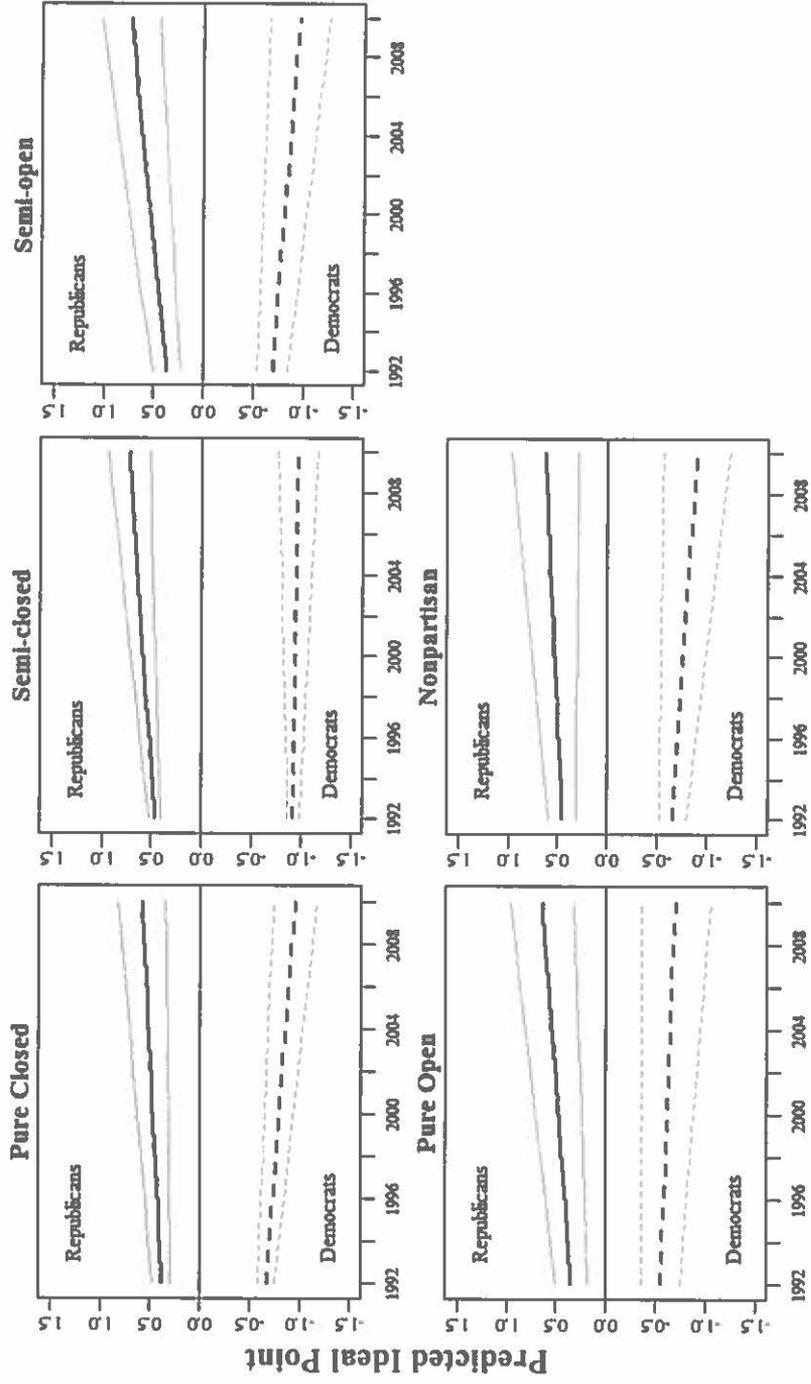
FIGURE 8.4
Predicted legislator ideology trends holding all other variables fixed at their means, including fixed effects. Gray lines represent 95 percent error bounds. All systems appear to show polarizing trends over time, with little difference between them.

is positive and significant, there are important differences in the relationship by region. Figure 8.5 shows that the inequality-polarization relationship is actually negative in the Northeast. It is positive elsewhere, and it is especially strong in the South and West and only weakly positive in the Midwest. Further research is needed to explain this heterogeneity.

Yet another common explanation for polarization is public opinion. One of the enduring puzzles in the study of American politics is the juxtaposition of an increasingly polarized Congress with an apparently stable and centrist electorate (Fiorina and Abrams 2008). After failing to find a link between polarization in Congress and the polarization of policy preferences in national surveys, researchers are turning away from the ideology of the mass public, looking instead at institutional features like primaries, agenda control in the legislature, and redistricting that may have led to increased congressional polarization.

What about at the state level? Figure 8.6 contains simple scatterplots comparing ideological polarization in the state legislatures with the variability of ideology as self-reported by survey respondents in three huge (tens of thousands of respondents) surveys performed by the National Annenberg Election Study from 2000 to 2008. This figure shows that states with more polarized electorates elect more polarized state legislatures. Moreover, this relationship appears to be getting stronger over time.

McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2006) decompose polarization into two sources: sorting and intradistrict divergence. Polarization driven by the latter is the difference between how Democratic and Republican legislators would represent the same district. The former is the result of the propensity for Democrats to represent liberal districts and for Republicans to represent conservative ones. Shor and McCarty (2011) show that intradistrict divergence dominates sorting for state legislatures just as it does for Congress.

Yet this just moves the puzzle one step backward. Where does intradistrict divergence come from? How is that there is a large density of districts where the average voter is quite moderate but the voting behavior of the representative is extreme? Similarly, why are legislatures so much more polarized than district medians? To answer these questions, we need to move the aggregation down one step to the district level. New research brings attention back to the distribution of ideology in the mass public with new data and an alternative theoretical approach (McCarty et al. 2014) by matching state legislative ideology data with the 350,000-person "super survey" created to characterize the distribution of ideological preferences not only within states but also across and within state senate districts (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013).

The research confirms that state legislative polarization is highly correlated with both between- and within-district measures of opinion polarization.
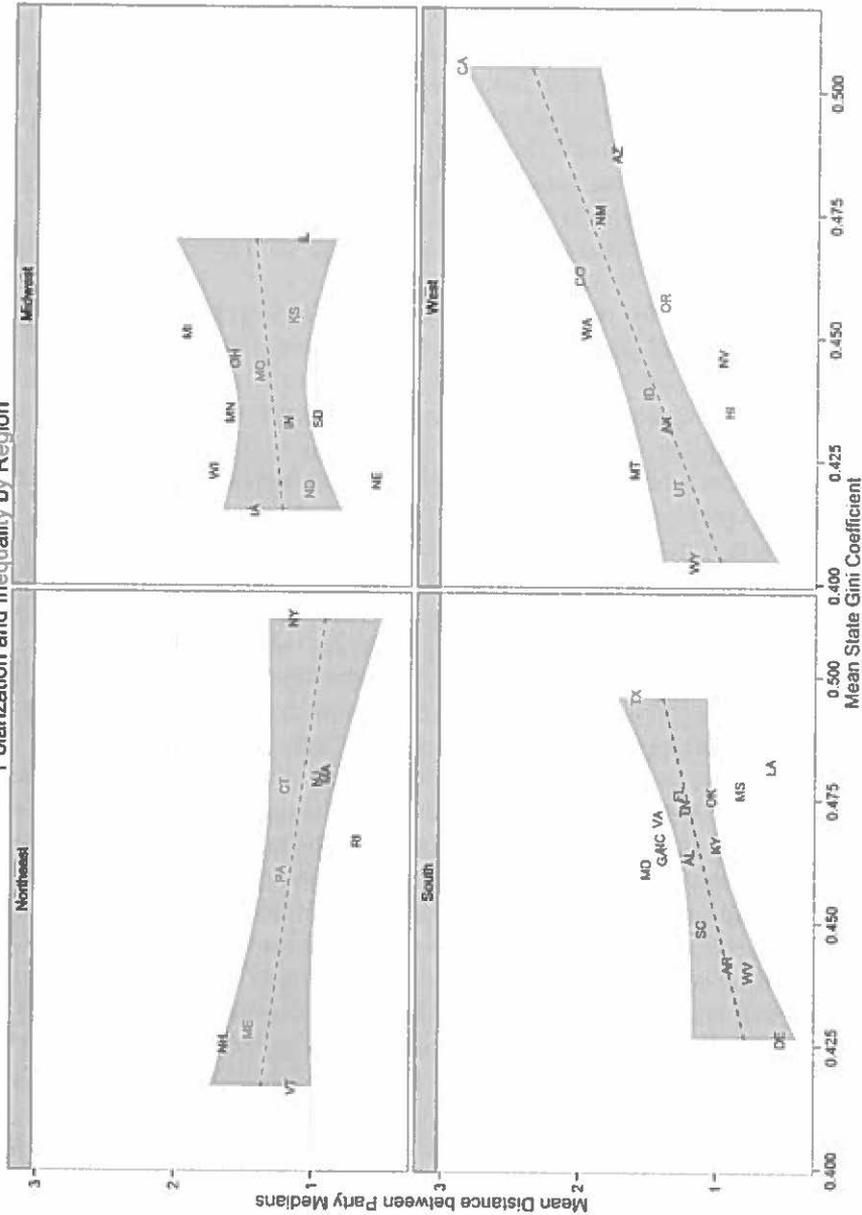
FIGURE 8.5 Scatterplot of average state-level inequality measured by a gini coefficient from Voorheis (2014) and polarization (averaged party median distances). The effect varies dramatically by region.
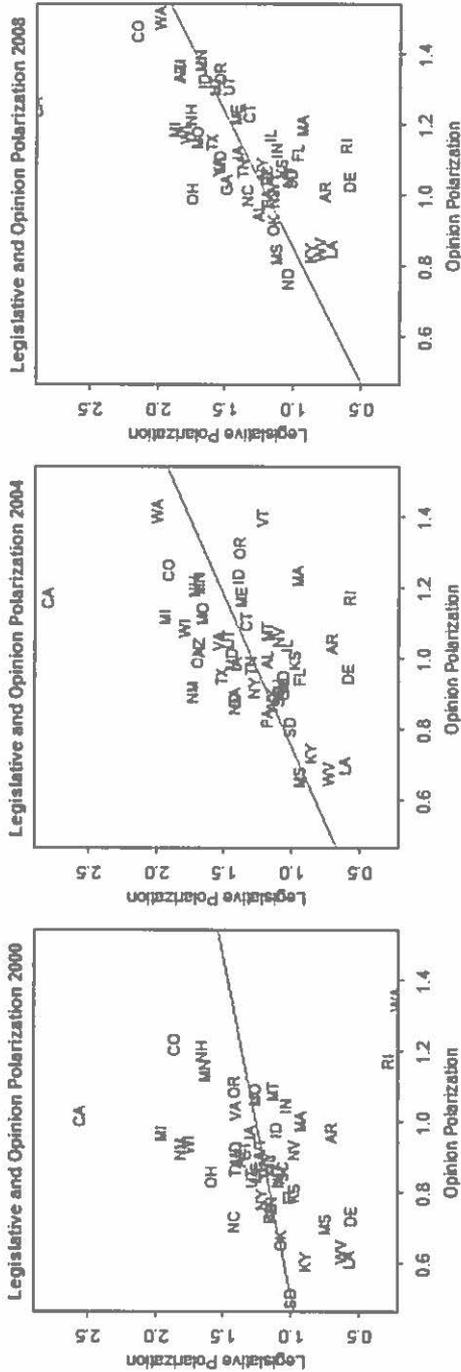
FIGURE 8.6
Opinion polarization and legislative polarization are correlated, and this is increasing over time. Horizontal axis is the variation in self-reported ideology within states for a given NAES survey.

Yet contrary to conventional wisdom, the relationship is actually *stronger* for within-district polarization than for between-district polarization. The states with the highest levels of within-district polarization, such as California, Colorado, and Washington, are those with the highest levels of legislative polarization. In the middle of each states' distribution of districts lies a set of pivotal districts that are ideologically moderate only because they are divided relatively evenly between two polarized sides.

But given the logic of the median voter, why would electoral competition in these pivotal but polarized districts generate such polarized legislative representation? The paper develops a simple intuition based on the idea that candidates must choose platforms in the presence of uncertainty over the median voter (Wittman 1983; Calvert 1985). The greater the uncertainty, the more candidates move toward their party's more extreme ideological prefer- ences. The intuition is that when district opinion is unimodal, the median voter on Election Day will be largely predictable, constraining candidates. In contrast, when voters are more evenly distributed throughout the ideological spectrum or even polarized into a bimodal distribution, there is more un- certainty about the identity of the median voter on Election Day, and hence weaker electoral constraints on candidates' ideological positioning. In other words, when districts are moderate—but only as a consequence of internal divisions—they tend to elect more extreme legislators. This situation obtains because normal Downsian pressures on candidates to converge toward the median voter are balanced against the returns to turning out a candidate's base voters. For example, this is seen in large legislative districts in which red precincts in the outlying areas surround deep blue areas like college towns. They are moderate only because they are deeply internally divided, with a balance between highly liberal and conservative voters, *not* because the voters are moderate and unimodal.

Conclusion

Even as polarization increases in most American legislatures, so, too, does scholarly understanding of the phenomenon. Work continues on document- ing the extent of polarization in the 50 states forward and backward in time. In addition, considerable new research is coming on line that tackles the possible causes of polarization, including new research on public opinion, income inequality, and institutional variation across the states. The "smok- ing gun," however, remains elusive. No one "cause" has been identified as dominant, nor is there likely to be one. Scholars can only hope to chip away at individual explanations driven by theoretical expectations. Finally, a new and

exciting body of work is starting to examine the consequences of polarization in politics and policy. More legislative gridlock is likely, for example, to lead to governors leaning on unilateral action (Ferguson and Shor 2014).

A final caveat. Unlike the U.S. Congress, which has been fairly closely divided in the past two decades, unified party government is a common reality in many states. When a single party holds both chambers of the legislature, the governorship, and is not burdened by supermajoritarian rules, polarization is no longer "weaponized." Recent developments in California (which recently abandoned the two-thirds requirement to pass a budget via initiative), Colorado, Michigan, and Wisconsin show that polarization need not slow down a unified party leadership intent on making far-reaching policy changes. These are likely to be exceptions to the rule, however.

Notes

1. This chapter emerges from work I did with Nolan McCarty. We acknowledge the support of the National Science Foundation, Award Nos. SES-1059716 and SES-1060092. Some of the work on this was done as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholar in Health Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. The data in this chapter relies on the hard work of the following: Peter Koppstein, Michelle Anderson, Chad Levinson, Steven Rogers, Jason Anastasopoulous, and Jon Rogowski. Thanks to Project Vote Smart for making their NPAT data and questions available to me. I welcome comments and questions. Any errors are my own.

2. Scholars have used other measures as well, such as the "overlap" between the parties that measures how many Democrats are more conservative than the most liberal Republican. A lower overlap score means less polarization. The use of medians is the most conservative measure, as it is the least influenced by party outliers, those legislators with positions atypical of their party. The difference in means is influenced both by extreme and moderate party outliers, while the overlap measure is greatly influenced by moderate outliers (a single conservative Democrat can make the party overlap score large). Still, nearly every method designed to measure polarization is highly correlated with every other method, increasing our confidence in the validity of our measures.

3. In closed primaries, only registered partisans may vote in their own party's primary. In open primaries, registered partisans as well as independents may vote in the primary of their choice.

9

Federal Parties and Polarization

Daniel J. Coffey

I N AN ERA OF INTENSE POLARIZATION, it is easy to look beyond the federal nature of the American party system. As previous chapters have shown, American parties and their identifiers have vastly different policy views and also have much more negative feelings toward their opponents than at any other time in recent memory. Indeed, many citizens have tuned out of politics, dismissing partisan rhetoric as empty attacks on the opposition. Is there, however, evidence that parties are not monolithic? Do parties stand for more than just "talking points"? How does Martin Van Buren's decentralized party system fit into a modern, nationally polarized system (Ceaser 1979; Goldman 1994)?

Historically, American parties stood out as organizations with mild ideological differences in comparison to European political parties. This view persists despite growing evidence that American parties are now as polarized as many major European parties. Does this mean that the "big-tent" parties of the 1950s, so despised by the writers of the APSA report (Green and Herrnson 2002), have disappeared?

American parties, it is worth remembering, evolved and adapted to fit the institutional framework of a federal political system. To gain a sharper understanding of polarization, it is worth looking more closely at parties at the subnational level. Regional differences, once large enough to tear the nation in two and still strong enough to color accents and lifestyles, could be less important in the face of such intense polarization. For example, some studies of elite polarization indicate that regions are no longer as important in explaining national polarization (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). Indeed,

many social psychologists have shown that parties, their candidates, and supporters have fundamentally different moral views, and that contemporary polarization may have evolutionary roots (Lakoff 2002; Hetherington 2009; Haidt 2012; Hibbing, Smith, and Alford 2013). Under this view, polarization transcends geography.

It is possible that ideological polarization, however intense, has adapted to the environmental setting and structural conditions that generated the American party system in the first place. There are many studies of the "red" and "blue" geographic bastions that each party maintains (Gelman et al. 2008; Cahn and Carbone 2010). There have been comparatively few studies of regional differences across and within state parties (but see Gimpel and Schuknecht 2004).

In this chapter, I explore how polarization is manifested below the national level. I present data here from a unique source, state party platforms, that help to illuminate the nature of contemporary partisanship. My analysis finds that state party platforms vary across states and between parties in three important ways. First, ideological differences between parties are acute and persistent; the most liberal Republican platform is more conservative than the most conservative Democratic platform. Yet the platforms display a non-trivial amount of intraparty ideological heterogeneity. Second, issue positions also vary across states and between parties. Much of this is due to geographic factors, driven by demographic and economic factors. Water rights and immigration, for example, matter a great deal more to citizens in Arizona and Colorado than to citizens in New Jersey or Vermont. Yet included in this variation, party platforms represent important and conscious choices about which issues to take stands on and which issues to ignore. Finally, a qualitative review of the platforms indicates that state parties are deeply divided along a communitarian-individualism fault line. At the same, state parties appear to tailor the discussion of issues such that the language and the moral basis for policy positions vary both across and within parties.

The Evidence for Homogeneity of Intraparty Moral Beliefs

In the American context, political polarization often assumes that ideological conflict is largely between liberalism and conservatism. Indeed, most studies of public opinion and political elites find that disparate issues from taxes to abortion to environmentalism and war can be neatly captured by a single ideological continuum (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Abramowitz 2010). Indeed, Layman and Carsey (2002) found, in a comprehensive study of party activists, that the number of issues on which activists are polarized has

expanded over time. In contrast to realignment theory that generally predicts that a single dominant cleavage will separate each party, Layman and Carsey's findings show that New Deal, racial, as well as religious and cultural issues separate party activists, with new issues being added instead of replacing old alignments.

Once prisoners to their regional nature (Milkis 1993; Ceaser 1979), the major parties have become much more national in orientation, with congressional parties fundraising and developing national messages each midterm election (Aldrich 2011). Measures of party voting in Congress find few remaining Blue Dog Democrats or liberal Republicans (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). Political polarization, then, would seem to subsume historical and culturally important regional differences within parties. In fact, between-party polarization has been shown to exist across states and regions measured at the elite and mass level (Weinberg 2010; Abramowitz 2010; Berry et al. 2007). Thus, nationally polarized parties predict small within-party ideological heterogeneity.

There is considerable research in political science and social psychology that the underlying reasons for the attraction to these polar ends is rooted in both biological and psychological factors (Hibbing, Smith, and Alford 2013). Recently, Haidt (2012) has shown that differences in party ideology are partially rooted in moral intuitions. Haidt provides compelling evidence that five "taste buds" make up the foundations for nearly all moral beliefs. These foundations are (1) care/harm, (2) fairness/cheating,[1] (3) loyalty/betrayal, (4) authority/subversion, and (5) sanctity/degradation. While not all researchers accept the specific five foundations, considerable research suggests that the liberal-conservative polarization most likely masks a multidimensional foundation, whether this is rooted in genetics, culture, personality, or socioeconomics, or some combination of these factors (Carney et al. 2008; Mondak 2010; Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

Ideological Polarization and Issue Heterogeneity

The search for genetic or ingrained personality differences is quite appealing to help understand political polarization in extreme settings, such as contemporary American politics. There is, however, a danger to such reductionism. Issues such as gun control can simultaneously tap into beliefs about freedom, safety from criminals, and protection of the young from violence. Environmentalism captures intuitive feelings about protecting citizens from pollution, preserving the sanctity of natural habitats, as well as the freedom of individuals and corporations to use private property without government interference.

In addition, genetic and psychological explanations for polarization are faced with a puzzle if ideology varies over time and space. That humans and their ancestors spent hundreds of thousands of years in organized social groups quite probably does explain a lot about the origin of our moral beliefs. The insight provided by social psychologists has greatly advanced the understanding of contemporary polarization. Yet too often the search for the smoking-gun root cause explanation of polarization leads to a failure or even a desire to consider the variance properties of these explanations. By and large we can assume that basic human personality traits have not changed much in the last thirty years, but the degree of polarization has quite substantially. That is, while moral views have evolutionary roots—these judgments equipped our ancestors to survive a hostile world—humans also adapt to changing environments in both time and place. Indeed, Haidt and other social psychologists acknowledge that moral beliefs vary depending on circumstances. Westerners, for example, are far more likely to endorse the foundations of fairness and care than those of sanctity, authority, and loyalty, which are more commonly linked with morality among non-Westerners (see Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010).

There are several reasons, then, to expect that state parties will not have monolithic issue or ideological positions. The federal form of the U.S. government has meant that legal boundaries and guarantees of some constitutional autonomy have provided the conditions necessary for cultural development. Economic development and migration have also proceeded along regional lines, attracting different types and concentrations of people. In turn, these factors have led to the creation of different societies and expectations about government, social norms, and even different dialects.

In state politics, scholars have developed numerous cultural typologies to explain cross-sectional differences in state politics and policies. One of the more prominent is Daniel Elazar's (1984) trichotomy of political cultures (moralist, individualist, and traditionalist), which remains the single most cited and perhaps compelling scheme of inter- and intrastate divisions. More recently, Lieske (2012) has found evidence that has identified eleven distinct state subcultures, which he finds form a continuum that reduces to a unidimensional measure that correlates Elazar's, while Woodward (2012) identified 12 separate "nations" that predate the creation of American government and continue to drive differences that extend well beyond government. This is in addition to the infamous "red-state, blue-state divide" that is often used to explain regional ideological differences (Brooks 2001; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Gelman et al. 2008). Indeed, a recent study found that basic personality differences exist across states (Rentfrow et al. 2013).

None of these studies address intraparty variance; these studies are generally focused on explaining the roots of interparty divisions. Since understanding variance is an important part of social science, it is a worthwhile enterprise to explore how party positions vary across the geographically large nation. Has polarization eliminated deeply embedded historical and cultural regional identities? Are state political parties uniformly polarized? Does polarization allow for policy flexibility for the local franchises?

Methods of Analysis

From a research perspective, it is quite difficult to find comparable sources that articulate political beliefs across states. One untapped resource is state political party platforms. Not all state parties write platforms; in the mid-Atlantic and most Southern states, there is not a tradition of writing platforms, while platforms are most frequently found in the upper-Midwestern states. In previous studies, I found that the state parties most often write platforms in Moralist states with well-organized parties and those states that score high on Robert Putnam's (2000) social capital index (Coffey 2006). State party platforms vary considerably in length and issue content and often serve as battlegrounds for factions within the state parties. As a result, some state parties produce platforms inconsistently.

Nevertheless, the platforms are ideal for the current study for several reasons. Party platforms express a party's essential principles, and most state parties have their platforms on their websites. While the length and the content of the platforms vary from state to state, platforms are each state party's opportunity to define the key issues of debate in the state and to make clear their positions on those issues. The platforms are important statements of the organization, whether they are put together by the state party central committee or written by activists at the precinct level. A key benefit of analyzing state parties is that variance in political conditions across the states means that several hypotheses about how well parties represent citizens can be tested. I do not claim that the platforms represent the single view of an entire state party. Indeed, part of the value of studying these platforms is that they are windows into not only the core values of the parties but also the conflicts and tensions that exist within and across state parties.

Analyses of political texts can provide important insights into the meaning of partisan and ideological differences. Previously impossible research questions that required the analysis of political texts containing hundreds or even thousands of words can now be coded in time periods of seconds (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). Human coding, in contrast, is labor intensive and suffers

from persistent reliability concerns. Most computer-assisted-text-analysis (CATA) programs use algorithms that break texts into individual words. Programs then largely make decisions based on the frequency of words in one text relative to either reference texts or other texts in the sample (see Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003; Martin and Vanberg 2008; Benoit and Laver 2008; Kidd 2008). Researchers have been successfully applying text analysis software (along with expert, human coding) for years to place European ideological position parties based on their manifestos (Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003; Lowe et al. 2011). Text mining or analysis software is frequently used to identify meaningful patterns in speeches, legislative debates, and media coverage (Young and Soroka 2012; Weinberg 2010). The applications of automated systems are numerous. Hart, Childers, and Lind (2013), for example, applied DICTION to campaign speeches and found four main differences in party tone: Restoration (Republican) versus Reform (Democratic), Utility (Democratic) versus Value (Republicans), Community (Democrats) versus Independence (Republicans), and Populism (Democratic) versus Nationalism (Republican).

While the advantages of computer-based coding are clear, I have chosen to manually code the platforms for several reasons. Most CATA are still designed for narrow purposes. Programs often are good at serving a particular purpose; DICTION is good at identifying the tone of a text, Wordscores and Wordfish are designed to identify the relative ideology of a text compared to other texts in a sample. As Krippendorff notes, however, "Humans cannot help but render texts meaningful while reading, and they may not always do so reliably. The reliability that computer analysis offers, in contrast, lies in the process of character string manipulation, which is far removed from what humans do when interpreting text" (2012, 210).

Currently, there are no CATA programs available for categorizing political texts into simple issue categories that readers would easily recognize. A statement along the lines that "we believe these rights should be protected" can be easily found in both Republican and Democratic platforms, applied to a dizzying array of different issues. Algorithms generally are designed using word counts, yet such studies are limited in terms of semantic validity, or the preservation of the meaning of a text to a reader in the process of coding. Many issues are inherently multidimensional, and while scaling techniques can establish linkages between issues, few issues are neatly condensed. As Grimmer and Stewart point out, "the complexity of language implies that automated content analysis methods will never replace careful and close reading of texts" and that automated programs are "best thought of as amplifying and augmenting careful reading and thoughtful analysis" (2013, 268). Thus, the dataset that I have created can be used as a baseline for other research-

ers exploring more specific questions about state party ideology. Providing a human benchmark as essential is not meant to preempt the use of computer-based algorithms to identify similar patterns (Lowe and Benoit 2013).

The Dataset

The data set for the current study are the 52 state party platforms written in 2010 and 2012 for states in which both parties have published platforms. The platforms are usually available on party websites.[2] The 52 platforms produce codes for 11,000 individual sentences and over 200,000 individual words.[3] Using states in which both parties have platforms allows for more direct comparisons between party platforms. As a result, this is a rich dataset for future studies into the development of ideological beliefs across states or how issues arise into the political agenda.

For each platform, the sentence was the unit of analysis, with each sentence coded into one of five ideological categories and into one of 25 issue categories. I have previously shown that state party platforms written from 2000 to 2004 are highly polarized (Coffey 2007; 2011). For this study, I applied a similar coding procedure, although in this case I have employed a more nuanced five-point scale such that each sentence was coded as either very conservative (-1), conservative (-0.5), moderate (0), liberal (0.5), and very liberal (1). By measuring ideology in this manner, a standardized value can be assigned to each category, ranging from 1 (all liberal sentences) to -1 (all conservative sentences). I used two basic guidelines to classify sentences: (1) Would such a sentence appear in the opposition party's platform? and (2) How would a reasonable person interpret such a sentence? I have previously shown the validity of this coding scheme (Coffey 2005; 2007; 2011).

The platforms clearly distinguish the parties across the states. The Democratic average score is a fairly liberal 0.55, while the average GOP platform is -0.52. In fact, there is no overlap between the parties: Indiana's 2012 Republican platform, which is the most liberal GOP platform, has a score of -0.26, while the 2012 Alaska Democratic platform, which is the most conservative Democratic platform (in 2012), has a score of 0.36. Figure 9.1 provides stark evidence of the parties' polarization.

Regional variation occurs, but only slightly. As shown in figure 9.2, with the platforms broken into four regions, the ideological variation is modest and with small sample sizes, it is difficult to conclude that any particular region stands out. For Democrats, Southern parties (0.48) are more conservative, Eastern parties (0.61) are the most liberal, and Midwestern (0.56) and Western (0.54) are closer to the party mean. In the case of the GOP, Eastern

State Platform Polarization, 2012
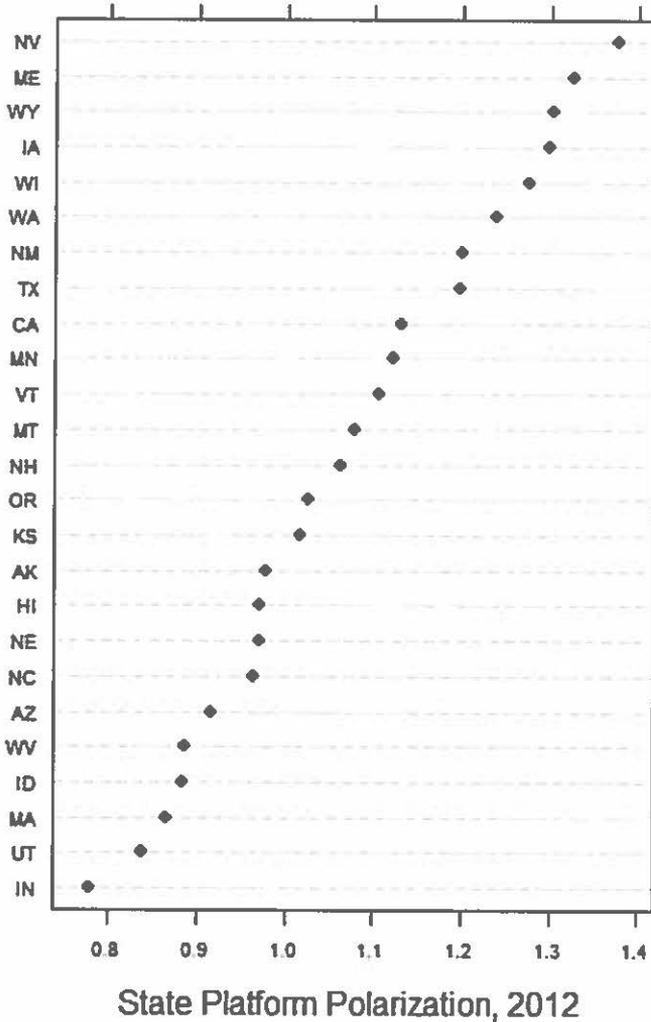
FIGURE 9.1
State party platform polarization, 2012.

parties (-0.48) and Midwestern parties (-0.51) are noticeably moderate relative to Southern and Western Republican parties (-0.54). While it is the case that different regional differences might reveal sharper distinctions, these divisions provide evidence that regional variations among state parties occur, but they are not immediately evident in terms of ideology. In sum, state party platforms confirm the finding that parties are polarized nationally, with modest regional differences.

This pattern does not mean that state parties are nothing more than administrative units of the national organization. These differences are most pronounced on gun control, the death penalty, reproductive rights, and gay rights. On these social issues, party diversity was more pronounced, even if somewhat inhibited. For example, seven Democratic Party platforms express explicit support for the Second Amendment right to bear arms (Massachusetts, West Virginia, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Wyoming). Sometimes, such divergence was often cautious in tone, such as the Nevada Democratic Party, which states, "We support providing our families and community a healthy environment, including programs that provide education about gun safety, while affirming our belief in an individual's right to bear arms under the 2nd Amendment."

Party Issue Diversity

In a federal system, we should expect to see issue diversity for two reasons. First, platforms should mirror the concerns of the local population. Iowa, after all, is different than California. State party platforms address quite specific policy proposals, from classroom funding formulas to tax rates for natural resource extraction. Demographic and economic characteristics drive platform content. Second, and more pertinent to the issue of polarization, is that state party platforms are open-ended documents crafted by members of the state party.

Polarization might result in a low degree of intraparty issue diversity. It is important to point out the difference between issue and ideological polarization. Nationwide, parties are highly polarized across legislatures, although as noted in the previous chapter, there is still variance in the degree of polarization. I argue it is possible to observe homogeneity of intraparty ideology but heterogeneity of issue positions.

I coded platform sentences into 25 separate subcategories that were used for the content analysis.[4] The use of subcategories allows for the detection of differences in the content of ideological debate across states with different political cultures and demographics, which a single right-left dimension will not capture, for reasons noted above. This provides a valid indicator of party issue priorities across states. This results in a measure of attention for each issue. The percentage of attention for each issue was measured as simply the number of sentences for each category divided by the total number of sentences. While many political issues tap into multiple considerations for the sake of consistency, sentences were broadly placed into a single category each.

At first glance, there is clear evidence of "issue ownership" (Petrocik 1996). Parties appear to "own" certain issues, as shown in figure 9.3, which show the
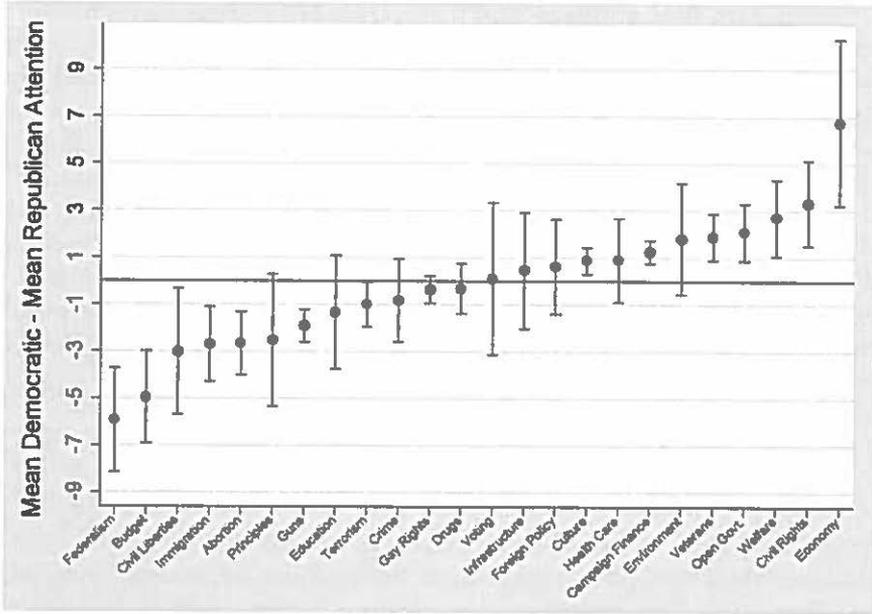
FIGURE 9.2
Partisan differences in issue attention.

difference between the mean Democratic percentages devoted to the issues and the mean Republican percentage. For example, Democratic parties on average devoted 5.8 percent of platform sentences to civil rights issues, nearly four times more than the Republican average of 1.5 percent. Democrats were significantly more likely to address economic development, social welfare, health care, civil rights, environmental issues, and issues of open government, while Republicans were more likely to address budgetary concerns, federalism, civil liberties, gun rights/control, immigration, and abortion. These differences were generally consistent across states.

Across states and parties, however, considerable content was devoted to most economic issues. Indeed, for both parties education, economic development, the environment, health care, and national defense were given equal priority. But while discussions of the specific policies raised varied across states, these issues demonstrated considerable head-to-head conflict. For example, most Democratic platforms supported workers' rights to organize, and many Republican platforms supported "right-to-work" laws.

Yet the data also indicate that state parties tended to place different emphasis on the issues in terms of prominence. Figures 9.3 and 9.4 present the central tendency of issue content for each issue. As can be seen, there is con-
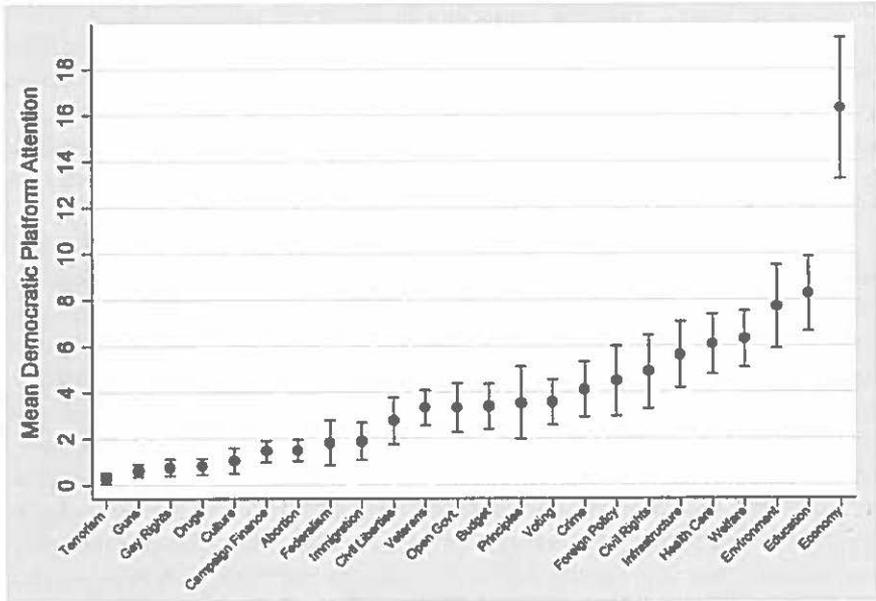
FIGURE 9.3
Mean Democratic platform issue attention.
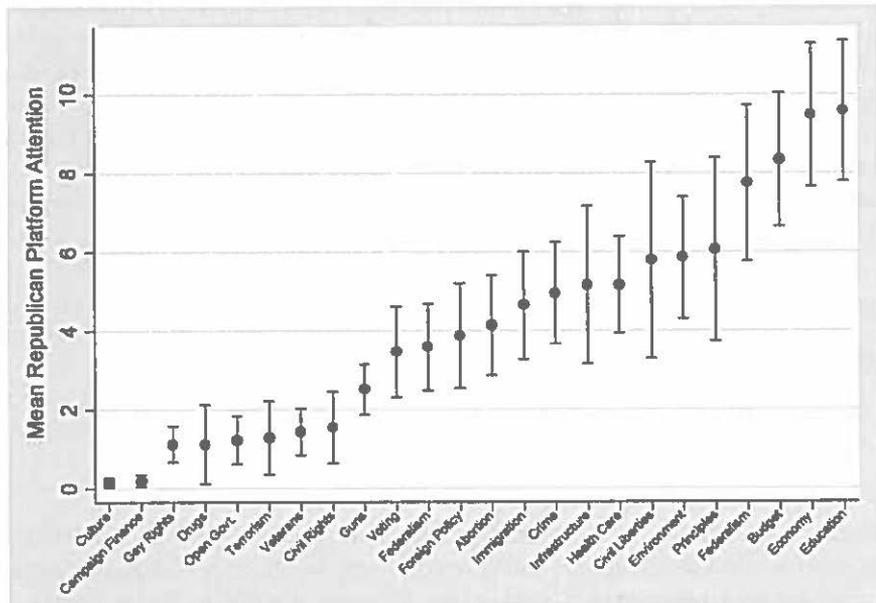
FIGURE 9.4
Mean Republican platform issue attention.

siderable intraparty variance. Importantly, there was considerable variation across state parties and issues. Some of this pattern reflects the nature of how the platforms are written. Longer platforms addressed more issues. In states in which platforms are written by drawing from citizen-written planks at spring caucuses, platforms tended to address more issues, and more contentious issues. This pattern was particularly true in the upper Midwestern and Western state parties.

For most controversial social issues, there appeared to be the most intraparty variance. For example, eight Democratic platforms and seven Republican platforms of the 27 paired comparisons in the sample avoided any mention of same-sex marriage. Of the twenty states that do address these issues, the positions are quite firm: Democrats support same-sex marriage and Republicans oppose it. So ideological heterogeneity is manifested not through explicit contradictions of the national party orthodoxy but by omitting discussion. Beyond the platforms providing some support for gun rights, an additional eight Democratic platforms do not include any mention of gun control. In contrast, on a similarly controversial issue such as abortion, only two state Democratic parties fail to provide any mention of this issue, and these two states are relatively conservative (Alaska and Kansas). The same is true for Republicans, in which only two states fail to mention this issue (Hawaii and Massachusetts).

In sum, however, even in a polarized political system, there is considerable within-party as well as regional-issue heterogeneity. This provides some affirmation for the claim that when issues are aggregated to the national level, national parties will be ideologically polarized across numerous issues. Instead of narrowing the number of issues, federalism increases the number of issues national parties will address and therefore contributes to overall ideological polarization. State parties do not address every issue, but in general, when they do, their positions are quite far from the median. National parties, then, are not pressured by their state affiliates to find a common ground within the party. Instead, as the national platforms show, to satisfy state party activists, national parties may find it most advantageous for the sake of party unity to take ideologically polarized stands on nearly all issues.

Diversity of Meaning

Finally, a qualitative review of state platforms reveals an impressive diversity of views about how issues are interpreted. These issues, as noted above, were addressed by both parties across states. The articulation of issues demonstrates both intra- and interparty differences.

With regard to interparty differences, the most consistent thematic difference in the platforms is the weight placed on the value of community versus individualism. Valence issues, such as education, economic, and infrastructure development all demonstrate the principled differences between the parties along these main lines. This finding held across states; Democratic parties invariably stressed communitarian themes and Republicans stressed individual freedom. A common Democratic statement on the economy can be found in the Wisconsin Democratic platform: "American companies have an obligation to our nation to be established here at home, follow our labor and environmental laws, and pay taxes for the good of the commons." The Democratic Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota states that they support directing the "Minnesota Department of Education to take all actions to close the achievement gap, integrate schools and programs, and fund school efforts to achieve integrated and equitable schools." In contrast, the Iowa Republican platform states, "We support the idea of choice and competition through educational vouchers and/or tuition tax exemptions to assist parents as they exercise their right of choosing government, private, alternate, or home schooling educational programs for children."[5]

Republican platforms tended to be deeply suspicious of the centralization of power. Nearly all Republican platforms devoted attention to the balance of power between the states and the federal government. Mentions of the Tenth Amendment are frequent across states in Republican platforms. A clear indication of the different perspectives on the proper role of government is in the Idaho platforms. The Idaho Democrats state, "We reject the position that state governments have an arbitrary right to nullify federal laws, a position that was settled nearly 150 years ago through bloody conflict" and additionally reject turning over federal land to state and local governments. The Idaho Republicans call for the "Idaho Legislature and Governor to nullify any and all existing and future unconstitutional federal mandates and laws, funded or unfunded, that infringe on Idaho's 10th Amendment sovereignty." Many Republican platforms express opposition to the United Nations. Mentions of "Agenda 21" appear in several Republican platforms. For example, the Texas Republican platform states, in a section on "Defending Sovereignty at Home and Abroad," that the "Republican Party of Texas should expose all United Nations Agenda 21 treaty policies and its supporting organizations, agreements and contracts." The Iowa Republicans are even more adamant in their opposition: "We strongly oppose the diabolical collusion of the United Nations in establishing the unconstitutional sustainable development agenda 21 in our local communities, our state and our nation." Democratic platforms, in contrast, explicitly support federal and even international intervention. The California Democrats "promote and support affirmative action, the rights

accorded to women in Title IX, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and ratification of the ERA."

I did not find, however, much evidence of a libertarian-social conservative divide on the Republican side. Most Republican platforms favor smaller governments but are also socially quite conservative. The Maine Republican platform, which is the most explicit about its Tea Party influence, also devotes a section to family values and opposes same-sex marriage and abortion and ranks as among the most conservative Republican platforms.

Intraparty diversity is also common, which again appears most acutely in a qualitative review of the texts. For example, the Massachusetts Democrats devote an entire section to the "climate crisis" and state, "We understand that these changes are a direct result of human activity, primarily greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels including coal, oil and natural gas." In contrast, the West Virginia Democrats state, "We support energy independence that uses 'clean-coal' technology to fuel and power America and the expansion of West Virginia's energy resources to include our rich natural gas deposits and all forms of clean and renewable energy." Policy differences tended to be fairly specific on valance issues such as education or the economy, but as with gun control, direct conflict within parties did occur.

Importantly, the focus on polarization in recent years has led to a broad conclusion that there is a decline in civil discourse exacerbated by the rise of "poli-tainment," televised shouting matches that often lack substance and are meant to drive outrage by partisans in the general public (Mutz 2007; Sobieraj and Berry 2011). Partisan identifiers in the mass public, feeling threatened by the opposition, are willing to support often quite ostentatious claims about the other side's positions and motives (Mason 2013). The Indiana Democratic platform and the Massachusetts Republican platforms have some of the usual rhetoric that one finds on cable news. The Massachusetts Republican Party, for example, manages to find fault with the state's fourth-place ranking of the 50 states on math tests by noting that the state's children scored behind children in Singapore and South Korea.

This review of the state party platforms is a refreshing contrast to national polarization. The state parties seem to attempt to do what the proponents of theory of deliberative democracy do: "When citizens or their representatives disagree morally, they should continue to reason together to reach mutually acceptable decisions" (Guttman and Thompson 1996, 1). For example, the North Carolina Republican Party tempers their section on the importance of traditional family structure by stating, "We recognize that single-parent families succeed and that two-parent families sometimes fail," and later goes on to state, in a section on parental rights, that "government, however, should protect children from abuse and neglect, balancing parental rights with the

protection of a child's health and safety." Many Republican Party platforms, while favoring strict controls on immigration, offered cautionary statements that illegal immigrants were worthy of due process protections. To understand the contrast that is possible, consider the following two statements. The Maine Republican platform states: "No amnesty, no benefits, no citizenship— ever—for anyone in the country illegally. Arrest and detain, for a specified period of time, anyone here illegally, and then deport, period." In contrast, the Texas Republican platform is a bit more temperate: "Because of decades-long failure of the federal government to secure our borders and address the immigration issue, there are now upwards of 11 million undocumented individuals in the United States today, each of whom entered and remain here under different circumstances. Mass deportation of these individuals would neither be equitable nor practical."

Several Democratic platforms acknowledge religious rights, and many Western Democratic platforms note the importance of balancing private property rights with environmental protection and providing explicit support for hunting and fishing rights. Overall, the state party platforms are often carefully articulated visions about what policies and principles would be best for society. Certainly there were more than a few attacks of opposing views, but the state parties generally took pains to explain why their policies would be best.

There were also areas of issue agreement. Both parties expressed support for open government. Specifically, both parties called for more open hearings, stricter punishments for corruption, and in general supported the initiative and election of judicial offices. Both parties supported programs to help veterans. Democrats tended to be more specific in the policy proposals they advocated, but there were almost no direct conflicts with the value of providing government support for veterans, consistent with previous research on support for merit-based social welfare programs (Skocpol 1995). Finally, both parties favored strict limits on the use of eminent domain, with Republicans generally more assertive about the unchecked use of this power by local governments.

Still, there was also considerable intraparty diversity of meaning as well. Western Democratic parties were more likely to address environmental issues from the perspective of protecting the sanctity of the environment as an end in itself. The Wyoming Democratic platform states, "Wyoming Democrats support the protection of Wyoming's wildlife, biological diversity and natural resources and maintenance of public access to public lands in ways that preserve the integrity of those lands." In contrast, Eastern and Midwestern parties tended to emphasize the need to protect humans from pollution. The New Hampshire Democratic platform states, "We support policies that

protect land we can cultivate, water we can drink, air we can breathe, and streams we can fish, and that address the threat of climate change and pollution." Republican platforms did not always offer the same reasons for supporting the Second Amendment; in many states, the right to bear arms was seen as part of self-defense, but in several other platforms, the right was seen more as a constitutional right to be protected against government interference. These patterns require greater empirical scrutiny, but it was apparent from a manual reading of each platform that the parties draw upon a diverse set of moral foundations to justify the positions of their parties.

Conclusion

In sum, the state party platforms represent the principals of each party quite well. While Americans continue to express frustration with the sound bite nature of politics in the media, it is important to note that parties do have meaningful differences on issues and principles. State party platforms, admittedly obscure documents, provide a window into the core values of both elected officials and the citizens they represent. While the platforms express polarized views, a review of the platforms reveals that state parties have a genuine concern with the well-being of their state and nation. One sees few examples of the uncivil or often sophomoric discourse that characterizes cable "debate" on television news.

Perhaps just as importantly, the federal nature of the party system allows parties to represent their citizens by allowing parties to take nuanced stands on issues and to decide which issues matter most to their citizens. The analysis shows clear evidence of within-party variance in terms of ideology and issue positions. Some of these differences are predictable, such as Southern parties being more conservative than Eastern parties, but state-to-state variance is relatively high, even within regions. Moreover, state party platforms provide a rare chance to analyze how parties articulate their differences. The platforms show that parties and their citizens draw upon different cultural interpretations of the issues, and the platforms succinctly capture this diversity of meaning. The analysis presented here hints at a theory of issue heterogeneity and ideological homogeneity. While this idea requires greater empirical scrutiny, it is possible that in a federal system polarization can cause greater issue heterogeneity. The national party, on the other hand, is pressured to not moderate positions, but to expand the number of issues on which it takes extreme positions.

Finally, the development of a comprehensive dataset of state party platforms provides a valuable resource for researchers of party and state politics.

While the dataset is limited by the fact that not all state parties write platforms, a number of questions about state and regional party politics can be explored by analyzing state party platforms. Indeed, many issues that motivate party position changes begin at the state level, and evidence of shifting positions can be found by looking closely at state party platforms (Coffey 2006). Researchers using automated methods have at their disposal a dataset of nearly 250 documents and one million words in just the last decade, and the platforms are rewritten every two years in some states. In our field, we stand to learn a great deal about the party system by using this long-neglected resource.

Notes

1. Haidt provides some evidence that there may in fact be six foundations, including a liberty/freedom foundation.

2. State parties often write platforms during midterm election years. For the sake of consistency, I have used the most recent platform for each state party.

3. The full dataset of platforms includes over 250 platforms written between 2000 and 2012. The coding data can be obtained at   http://gozips.uakron.edu/~dcoffey/index_files/coffeyresearch.htm.

4. The issues were budget, economic development, social welfare, health care, public works, veterans, law and order, general principles, immigration, civil rights, civil liberties, gay rights, abortion, education, environment, federalism, campaign finance, terrorism, national defense, partisanship, illegal drugs, voting, and open government.

5. Interestingly, there was considerable opposition in both parties to the adoption of Common Core standards; this is perhaps due to the historic nature of education as a state or even locally run system.

III

TEA PARTY POLITICS

10

The Tea Party, Republican Factionalism, and the 2012 Election

Ronald B. Rapoport, Meredith Dost, and Walter J. Stone

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY MADE HISTORIC GAINS in the 2010 elections, winning the majority in the House of Representatives by picking up 63 House seats and drawing within striking distance of a majority in the Senate by adding six seats. Equally important, Republicans picked up a record 680 state legislative seats, giving it its highest number since 1928. Among Republicans, hopes to win back the White House were high heading into the 2012 elections.

A major reason that the Republicans had so much success in 2010 was the much discussed "enthusiasm gap" between party identifiers in the electorate. Gallup reported that 63 percent of Republicans were "more enthusiastic than usual" about the election compared with only 44 percent of Democrats. This 19 percent gap was more than twice as great as the Republican advantage in 1994. But what was rarely mentioned was that this gap was entirely due to Tea Party Republicans. Democrats and non–Tea Party Republicans showed almost identical levels of enthusiasm (44 and 45 percent, respectively). It was the 78 percent of Tea Party Republicans who were "more enthusiastic" that made the difference (Jones 2010). However, Tea Party enthusiasm came at a cost for the Republican Party establishment as Tea Party challengers won primaries in Utah, Kentucky, Delaware, and Nevada against high-ranking current or former Republican officeholders, or in the case of Utah and Alaska, against incumbent Republican Senators. And the Tea Party showed its power immediately after the election, even before its newly elected supporters had taken office, confronting Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and forcing him to back off his support of earmarks. As the Tea Party flexed its political

muscle by threatening sitting Republican Senators in the run-up to the 2012 elections, Republican Senators as senior as Orrin Hatch and John McCain moved to the right to head off primary challenges from Tea Party candidates. When Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana did not abandon his moderate positions, he was easily defeated after 36 years in office.

Not surprisingly, given its stridency, attempts to dismiss the Tea Party date back almost to its inception. Liberal and Democratic groups have claimed that the movement is "astroturf." Then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) emphasized on Tax Day 2009 that the Tea Party was without serious grassroots support, its only funding coming from some of the wealthiest people in America (Fox KTVU San Francisco 2009). Early criticism came not just from Democrats. Republican senator Lindsay Graham in July 2010 declared that the Tea Party is "just unsustainable because they can never come up with a coherent vision for governing the country. It will die out" (Kleefeld 2010).

The Tea Party movement, however, has proved remarkably resilient and remained a force in the Republican Party. Even though there has been a decline in Tea Party supporters (from 29 to 22 percent of the population since 2010), supporters of the movement still comprise between 45 percent and 55 percent of the Republican Party (NBC/*Wall Street Journal* surveys aggregate annual data from 2010 to 2013).[1] In a late October 2013 NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, taken after the government shutdown and the debt ceiling crisis, 23 percent of Americans viewed the Tea Party positively; almost exactly the same percentage rated the Republican Party positively. As Alan Abramowitz points out, because Tea Party supporters are more active than non–Tea Party Republicans, they comprise a significant majority of the active Republican Party. He found that Tea Party supporters made up 63 percent of Republicans who reported contacting an elected official to express an opinion, 65 percent of Republicans who reported giving money to a party or candidate, and 73 percent of Republicans who reported attending a political rally or meeting (Abramowitz 2011).

Establishment attacks on the Tea Party accelerated after Romney's defeat and 2012 election losses in key Senate races. The Growth and Opportunity Project committee appointed by RNC chair Reince Priebus, in what most saw as a thinly veiled reference to the Tea Party, claimed that "third-party groups that promote purity are hurting our electoral prospects" (Republican National Committee 2013, 54). Jenny Beth Martin, national coordinator of the Tea Party Patriots, responded that "with the catastrophic loss of the Republican elite's hand-picked candidate—the Tea Party is the last best hope America has to restore America's founding principles" (Tea Party Patriots 2012).

Exchanges between Tea Party and Establishment Republicans in the run-up to the debt ceiling and government shutdown in the fall of 2013 reached

new levels of acrimony. Ted Cruz and others further sharpened the divisions within the party as factionalism erupted into civil war. As one Republican Senator said after a closed door meeting with Cruz, "It's pretty evident it's never been about a strategy—it's been about him. That's unfortunate. I think he's done our country a major disservice. I think he's done Republicans a major disservice" (Raju 2013). For his part, Ted Cruz attacked his copartisans, saying, "I think it was unfortunate that you saw multiple members of the Senate Republicans going on television attacking House conservatives, attacking the effort to defund Obamacare, saying it cannot win, it's a fool's errand, we will lose, this must fail. That is a recipe for losing the fight, and it's a shame" (Robillard 2013a).

Understanding the factional divisions within the Republican Party is crucial to understanding contemporary American politics. Much of the academic work on the Tea Party has focused on its ideology, determinants of participation in the movement, and the legitimacy of the movement itself (Ulbig and Macha forthcoming; Perkins and Lavine 2011; Abramowitz 2011; Rae 2011; Skocpol and Williamson 2013), without a broad examination of Tea Party supporters and Tea Party activists and their relationship to other Republicans. This chapter attempts to fill that gap.

We begin by examining the factional conflict between Tea Party and non–Tea Party Republicans, focusing on differences in issue positions and priorities at the mass level of the party. We then turn to similarities and differences between Tea Party supporters in the electorate and Tea Party activists as represented by FreedomWorks subscribers. In any political movement, midlevel activists occupy an important role since they supply the energy in campaigns and the direction of the movement. This is of particular interest in the case of the Tea Party since these groups have been singled out for criticism as the source of "astroturfing." By comparing the positions and priorities between Tea Party supporters in the electorate and Tea Party organizations, we show that activists and mass identifiers with the Tea Party are remarkably similar in their views. We conclude by examining how FreedomWorks activists responded to the 2012 election. Rather than respond to calls for compromise and adjustment from the Republican establishment, Tea Party activists have become more committed than ever to their ideological approach to politics and to their negative view of the Republican Party and its leaders.

Our national sample is a December 2011 YouGov/Polimetrix survey (CCES). This survey was sent to a sample of 1000 respondents to the CCES November 2010 survey—700 of whom had expressed "very positive" views of the Tea Party at that time and 300 of whom had not. While this gave us a sample that was much more heavily Republican than the U.S. population (69.6 percent Republican, 10.6 percent independents, and 19.4 percent Democrats), weights assigned

by YouGov/Polimetrix allow us to approximate a national random sample. It is also appropriate because of our heavy focus on the Republican Party. Our sample of potential Tea Party activists is based on a survey of FreedomWorks subscribers. We received usable surveys from 12,172 respondents. According to the YouGov/Polimetrix survey, FreedomWorks is the largest Tea Party membership group, including 12.9 percent of all of those who rated the Tea Party "very positive." As the largest Tea Party membership group, FreedomWorks supporters provide a good representation of Tea Party potential activists.[2] The survey was sent to the entire FreedomWorks email list of 700,000 subscribers; however, according to the organization, only about 60,000 individuals open any given email, so our response rate based on those opening email is just over 20 percent.[3] We conducted the second wave survey of 10,000 wave-1 respondents in spring 2013 and received 2,600 completed surveys.[4]

Republican Factionalism

In the CCES sample from December 2011, only slightly more than one in five Republicans (counting Republican leaners) were strong Tea Party supporters, but more than 40 percent were "supporters, but not so strong." Slightly over a third of Republicans were either former Tea Party supporters or "never Tea Party supporters." In sum, more than 60 percent of all Republican respondents, then, called themselves "Tea Party supporters."

Consistent with Abramowitz's findings, Tea Party supporters were much more active than non–Tea Party supporters. In 2008, Tea Party Republicans performed 1.54 activities for the presidential and congressional tickets on average, compared with only 0.45 activities by non–Tea Party Republicans. In 2010 House races, Tea Party Republicans performed on average 1.15 activities versus only 0.26 by non–Tea Party Republicans. As a result, Tea Party supporters were responsible for the vast majority of all campaign activity performed by Republican Party supporters in those campaigns.

Figure 10.1 shows striking divisions across a wide range of issues between Tea Party and non–Tea Party Republicans.[5] On all issues, except limiting imports, a majority of Tea Party Republicans took one of the two most conservative positions, whereas on no issue besides Obamacare did a majority of non–Tea Party Republicans take comparably conservative positions. The mean difference across the ten issues is 32 percent. Remarkably, on four of the ten issues (giving vouchers to families, environmental regulation, abolishing the Department of Education, and abortion), non–Tea Party Republicans were actually closer to the Democrats in the sample than they were to the Tea Party Republicans.

■ Tea Party Republicans   ▪ Non-Tea Party Republicans
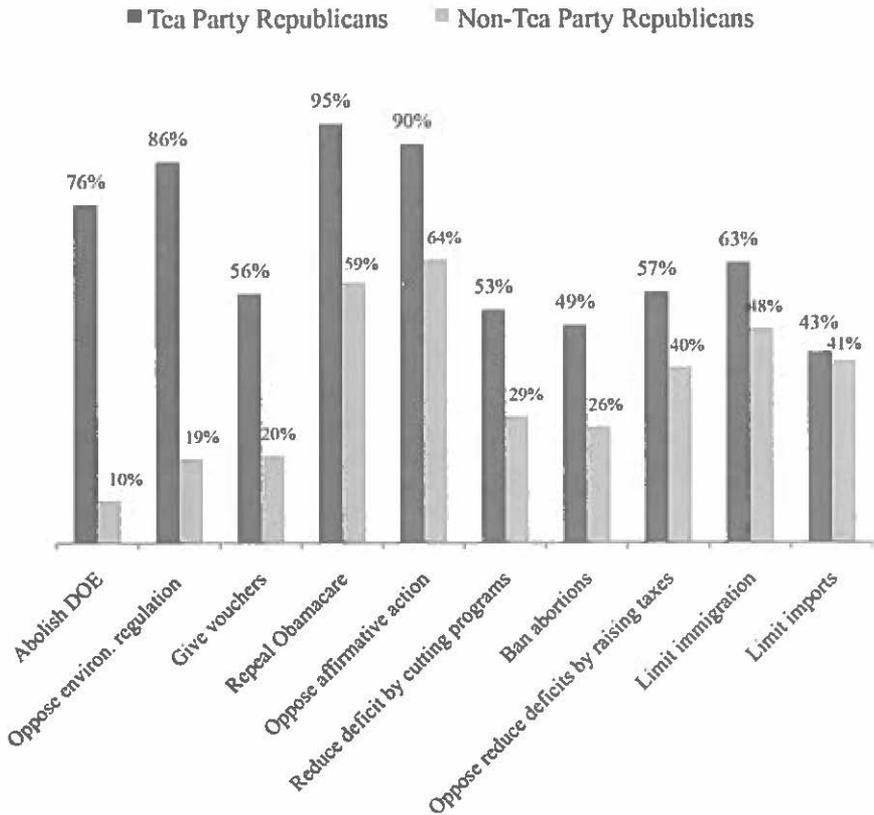
FIGURE 10.1
Percentage taking most conservative positions on issues (CCES).

Factional differences on issue positions extend to the priority given to those issues. In figure 10.2, we show the percentage of each group that rates an issue as their top priority issue. Whereas more than a third of all Tea Party Republicans pick either "Shrinking Government" or "Repealing Obamacare" as their top priority, only 4 percent of non–Tea Party Republicans share their priorities. In fact, "Repealing Obamacare" is the second most important priority for Tea Party Republicans but is tied for last of the eight issue areas for non–Tea Party Republicans. On the other hand, jobs and the deficit dominate the list of priorities for the non–Tea Party Republicans with 60 percent picking one of the two, compared with only 40 percent of Tea Party Republicans. When asked directly which should be a higher priority, jobs or the deficit, almost two-thirds (63 percent) of Tea Party Republicans selected the deficit, while a majority (53 percent) of non–Tea Party Republicans selected jobs.

■ Tea Party Republicans   ▨ Non-Tea Party Republicans
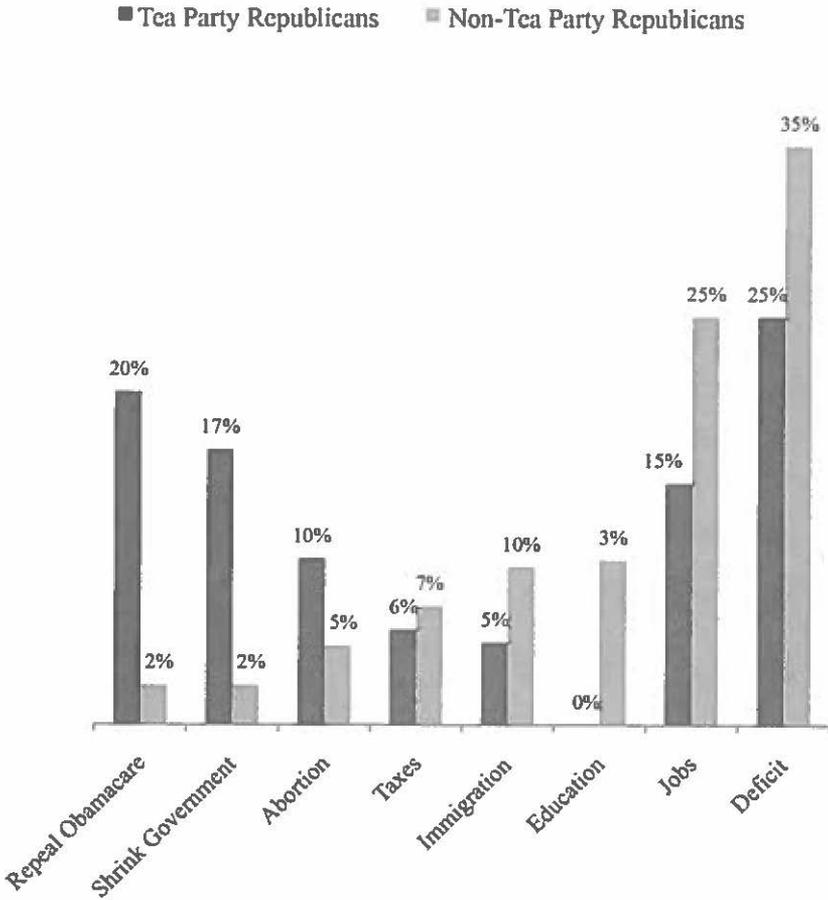
FIGURE 10.2
Top priority issues (CCES).

The rancor surrounding the fall 2013 government shutdown and debt-ceiling fights between Tea Party and non–Tea Party Republicans suggests that bridging issue differences and building a Republican consensus may be difficult, requiring compromise from both sides. However, when we asked respondents their position on the statement, "When we feel strongly about political issues, we should not be willing to compromise with our political opponents," Tea Party Republicans were particularly resistant while non–Tea Party Republicans were much more open to compromise. In fact, almost six times as many Tea Party Republicans as non–Tea Party Republicans "strongly agree" with the statement (23 percent versus 4 percent), and almost twice

as many Tea Party as non–Tea Party Republicans either "agree" or "agree strongly" (58 percent versus 32 percent). The combination of an issue chasm on both position and priority, coupled with a lack of agreement on tactics and compromise, helps explain the conflict within the Republican Party over the national debt and the government shutdown.

Because the factional divide within the Republican Party is characterized by greater activism among Tea Party supporters, it is not surprising that Tea Party candidates challenged more traditional Republicans and won primaries. We turn next to the FreedomWorks sample to shed additional light on the activist stratum within the Tea Party movement.

Examining the Tea Party's Activist Base

Numerous academic studies show that it is the activist base that supplies much of the energy and manpower for parties and organizations, and explains party change (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Herrera 1995; Stone and Rapoport 1994; Claassen 2007). Carmines and Stimson (1989) are explicit in assigning a major role to activists in transmitting changes in party positions to a less-involved electorate. The role of Tea Party activists in recruiting and promoting primary challenges to incumbents and Establishment Republicans has been well documented (Berry, Sobieraj, and Schlossberg 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2013). As Abramowitz (2011) finds by analyzing decades worth of ANES data, the emergence of the Tea Party movement at the grass-roots level can be understood as an outgrowth of the increased conservatism of the Republican electoral base, especially the activists within that group.

Given the importance of Tea Party rallies and other Tea Party events in publicizing the movement (Madestam et al. 2011), the role of activists in showing support and transmitting the positions of the Tea Party are self-evident. In new movements, like the Tea Party, activists may be even more significant than identifiers in the population. As an important component of the Tea Party movement, FreedomWorks supporters are an additional lens through which to understand the Tea Party movement.

Numerous studies show that activists are more extreme than less active group members, just as party activists are more extreme than rank-and-file identifiers (Kirkpatrick 1976; Miller and Jennings 1986; Aldrich 1995; Stone 2010; Maisel and Berry 2010). Claassen and Nicholson (2013, 868) find that as a consequence of partisan and ideological self-selection, group members express more extreme opinions than nonmembers. Thus, claims about "astro-turfing" by Tea Party organizations like FreedomWorks might suggest wide disparities in the mass base and the organizational activists.

That FreedomWorks subscribers are organizational activists is beyond dispute. More than 80 percent of FreedomWorks subscribers have done at least one activity for the Tea Party (compared with only 20 percent of Tea Party Republicans), and more than half have performed three or more activities (compared with only 3 percent of Tea Party Republicans).[6]

On the other hand, because of the unique qualities of the Tea Party movement (i.e., its strong ideological component and the rapidity with which it developed), it is unclear whether we should expect to find the same discontinuity between activists and nonactivists that Claassen and Nicholson (2013) suggest.

■ FreedomWorks　　■ Tea Party Republicans
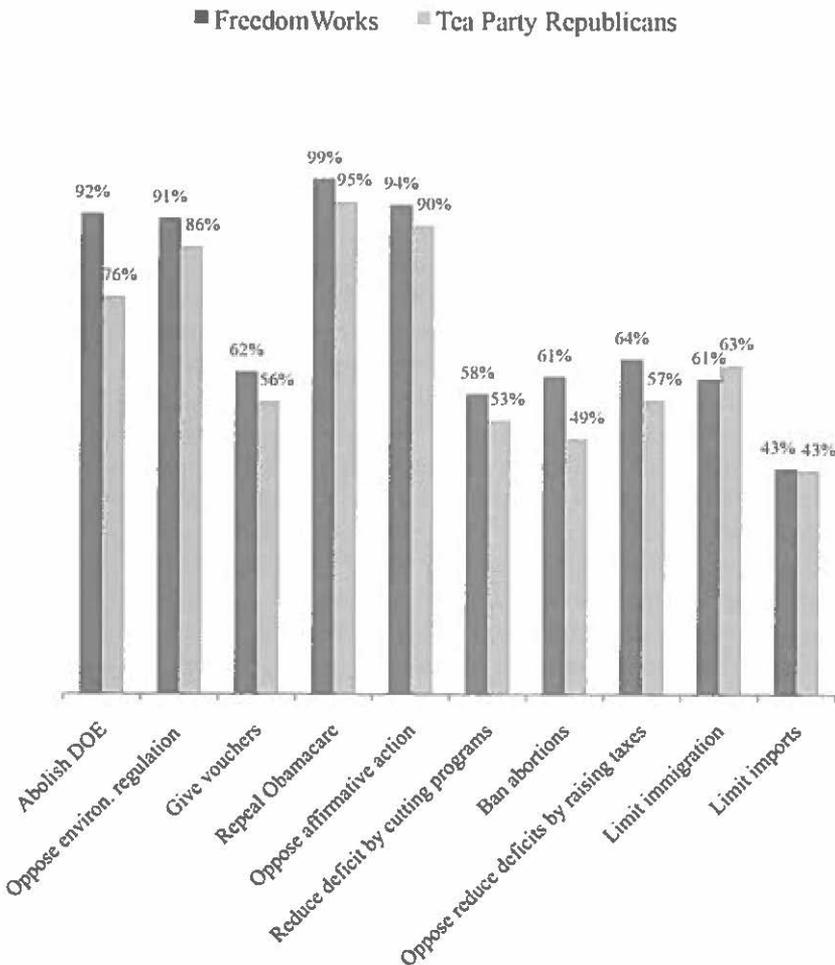
FIGURE 10.3
Percentage of Tea Party Republicans (CCES) and Tea Party activists (FreedomWorks) taking most conservative positions on issues.

In figure 10.3, we compare Tea Party Republicans and the FreedomWorks sample. The gap we found between Tea Party and non–Tea Party Republicans dwarfs the differences between mass and FreedomWorks Tea Party supporters in figure 10.1. Both the Tea Party Republican and FreedomWorks groups are close to unanimous in their opposition to increased environmental regulation, affirmative action, and Obamacare. On all other issues, except for abortion and abolishing the Department of Education, the differences are less than 10 percent. The largest difference between the two groups is on abolishing the Department of Education, where more than 92 percent of FreedomWorks supporters either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the proposal but "only" 76 percent of Tea Party supporters in the mass sample did.

Figure 10.4 shows that Tea Party Republicans and FreedomWorks supporters are also quite similar in their issue priorities (again, to a much greater degree than Tea Party and non–Tea Party Republicans in the electorate). In
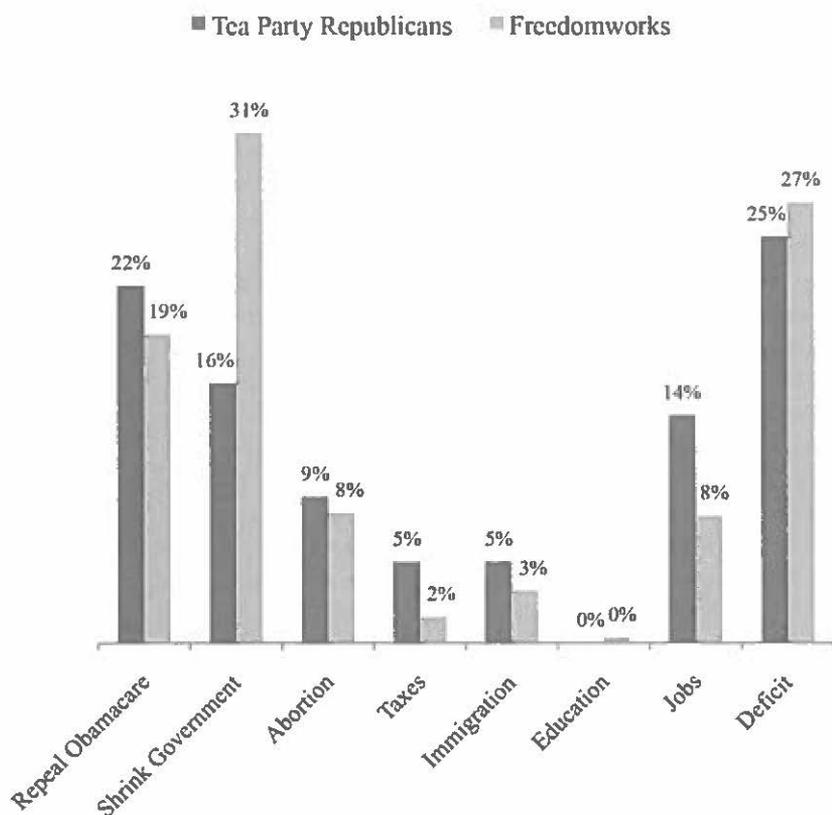
FIGURE 10.4
Top priorities of Tea Party Republicans (CCES) and Tea Party activists (FreedomWorks).

fact, the only issues on which priorities differ by more than 5 percent are "jobs" (selected as the most important issue by 14 percent of Tea Party Republicans but only 8 percent of FreedomWorks subscribers) and "shrinking the size of government," selected by 31 percent of FreedomWorks subscribers and 16 percent of Tea Party Republicans.

One other difference between FreedomWorks supporters and the rank-and-file Tea Party Republicans concerns partisan attitudes. While virtually all respondents in each group rated the Democratic Party as "poor" or "well below average," Tea Party Republicans were less negative toward Republicans than FreedomWorks subscribers: slightly less than half of Tea Party Republicans rated the party above average, and only a third of FreedomWorks subscribers did.

Response of the Tea Party to 2012 Elections

As noted, GOP chair Reince Priebus initiated the Growth and Opportunity Project to focus on causes for the party's defeat in 2012 and to help plot future strategy. In the first report from the Growth and Opportunity Project, there are thinly veiled criticisms of the Tea Party and the candidates it supported (Republican National Committee 2013). The report emphasizes that "our standard should not be universal purity; it should be a more welcoming conservatism" (5). It faults the Republican campaign message for failing to engage women, younger voters, and minorities, and it draws particular attention to Romney's poor showing among Hispanics. It concludes that "we must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform. If we do not, our Party's appeal will continue to shrink to its core constituencies only" (8). It calls for greater levels of pragmatism and less ideological purity by asserting "just because someone disagrees with us on 20 percent of the issues, that does not mean we cannot come together on the rest of the issues where we do agree" (8). These sentiments reflect the goal of Karl Rove's Conservative Victory Fund initiative, which is to block future Akins and Mourdocks from winning Senate primaries while paving the way for less ideological and extreme candidates that have better odds of winning the general election. Rove faults the Tea Party for the loss of six Republican Senate seats over 2010 and 2012 election cycles (Zeleny 2013).

In contrast to this "establishment" view, 19 conservative leaders, including leaders in the Tea Party, wrote an open letter on the FreedomNow website, arguing that Rove was wrong in his attempt to "blame conservatives and the tea party." Rather, they argue:

In 2012, the only Senate [non-incumbent] Republican winners were Jeff Flake, Deb Fischer, and Ted Cruz—all of whom enjoyed significant tea party and

conservative support. Meanwhile, more moderate candidates like Tommy Thompson, Heather Wilson, Rick Berg, and Denny Rehberg went down to defeat despite significant support from [Karl Rove's organization] Crossroads." (ForAmerica 2013)

In early October 2013 during the government shutdown, past Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney attacked Ted Cruz for spearheading the attachment of anti-Obamacare provisions to the government funding bill; Cruz brushed off the criticism lightly, refusing to compromise (Kopan 2013). The conflict within the Republican Party spilled over into the 2014 primaries, with primary challenges to Lindsay Graham, Lamar Alexander, and even Mitch McConnell, all of whom were seen as too willing to compromise with Democrats.

Although self-identified Tea Party members of Congress since the election have shown little evidence of movement in the direction of the Growth and Opportunity Project recommendations, there has been virtually no in-depth attempt to assess changes in Tea Party supporters and activists over this period.

Figure 10.5 shows that FreedomWorks supporters had a very different view of causes of the Republican loss in the 2012 presidential election from the Growth and Opportunity Report. Almost twice as many thought that Romney's not being conservative enough was a "major cause for his defeat" as though the lack of outreach to Hispanics was a major cause of his defeat; only 5 percent thought that his being too conservative was an important cause.[7] Fewer than one in six (16 percent) thought Romney's association with the Tea Party was a major cause of his defeat. In fact, those who either select minority outreach, Romney's conservatism, his association with the Tea Party, or his campaign's overconfidence comprise a smaller percentage than those selecting "Romney not being conservative enough" alone.

If Romney's failure was an inability to make the case for conservative Tea Party positions, then there is little incentive to moderate. FreedomWorks subscribers showed no significant shift on immigration, an issue that received a lot of postelection attention from both the GOP report and Republican leaders like John McCain, Lindsay Graham, and Marco Rubio. FreedomWorks subscribers also do not show any decline in support for an amendment banning abortion. In fact, in both cases there is a slight increase in the percentage taking one of the two most conservative positions. Overall, 43 percent took one of the two most conservative positions on both issues, up from 39 percent only 15 months earlier. The lack of softening on issues is but one example of a rejection of the GOP report.

Appeals for stylistic change toward greater pragmatism also failed to resonate. In the aftermath of the 2012 election, FreedomWorks subscribers
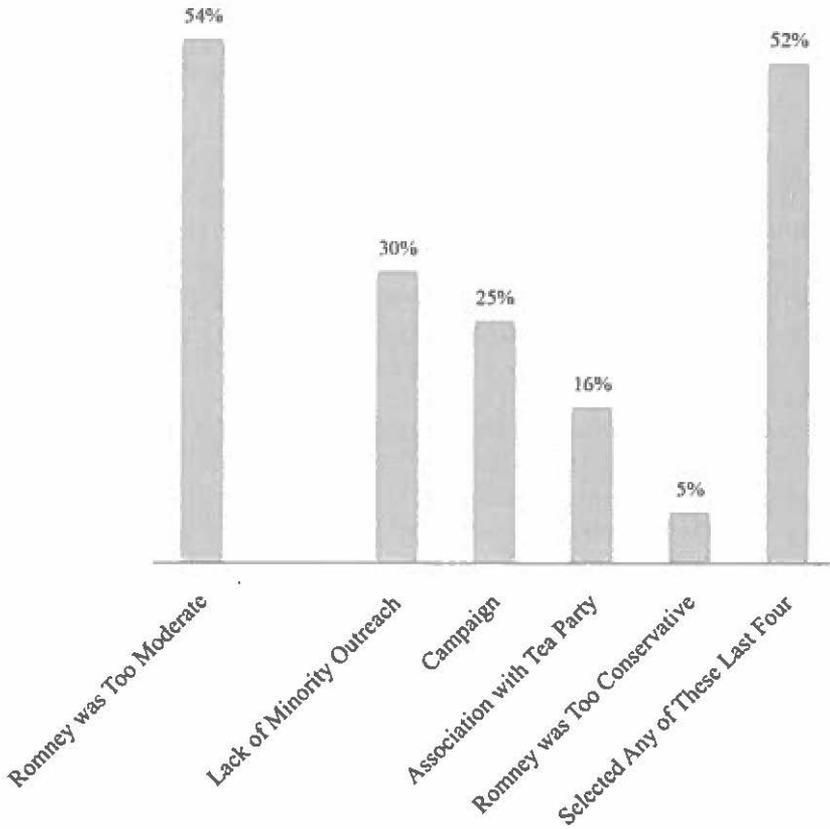
FIGURE 10.5
Percentage ranking each reason as very important as cause of Romney-Ryan loss
(FreedomWorks).

were more purist and less willing to compromise than they had been in the prenomination period. While in December 2011 a third of FreedomWorks supporters (33 percent) strongly agreed that "we should not be willing to compromise without political opponents when we feel strongly about political issues;" by spring 2013 that had risen to almost half (47 percent), reflecting agreement with Ted Cruz who said in a Fox News interview, "I don't think what Washington needs is more compromise. . . . I think what Washington needs is more common sense and more principle" (Latino Fox News 2013).

Willingness to compromise to win "half a loaf" finds scant support in the FreedomWorks sample, which also applies to nomination candidate choices.

More than three-quarters of FreedomWorks subscribers prefer a Republican nominee candidate "running well behind in the polls, but with whom they agreed on the important issues" over one who was even or ahead in the polls but with whom they disagreed on some important issues. This purism on issues and preference for ideological candidates clearly reflects a perspective that clashes with Establishment Republicans like Karl Rove, who put a much higher value on winning elections, even with ideologically suboptimal candidates. The purist views of FreedomWorks subscribers explain their refusal to support more moderate but electable Republicans (e.g., Richard Lugar in Indiana, Mike Castle in Delaware) in nomination contests in favor of their more ideological and extreme opponents (Richard Mourdock and Christine O'Donnell).

Dimensionality of Evaluations

This unwillingness to compromise extended to increasingly negative feeling toward Establishment Republicans including the Speaker of the House. Figure 10.6 shows that FreedomWorks supporters' ratings of the Republican Party went from bad to worse between 2011 and 2013. Speaker Boehner, however, came in for the biggest fall, as the figure shows. While he was actually rated more positively than negatively in 2011, by 2013 his positive ratings had fallen by more than half and his negative ratings had more than doubled.

On the other hand, leading Tea Party senators such as Ted Cruz and Rand Paul received extremely high ratings, with more than 95 percent positive and less than 2 percent negative.

The fact that Establishment Republicans rate low and Tea Party supporters rate high might imply that both groups are being evaluated on a common scale—conservatism, purism, or just support for the Tea Party. If this were the case, a factor analysis would display a single factor encompassing evaluations of the full set of political figures. On the other hand, we might expect that there are actually two separate dimensions on which candidates are evaluated: an "Establishment Republican" dimension and a "Tea Party" dimension. Under this latter scenario, candidates could be high on both or low on both, or high on one and low on the other.

We ran a principal components analysis with varimax rotation, including evaluations of all the prospective 2016 Republican candidates as well as the Tea Party, Republican Party, and Republican congressional leaders. Strong support exists for the two-dimension model: one dimension captures Establishment Republicans such as congressional leaders Boehner, Cantor, and McConnell, Chris Christie, and the Republican Party, while evaluations

■ 2011   ■ 2013
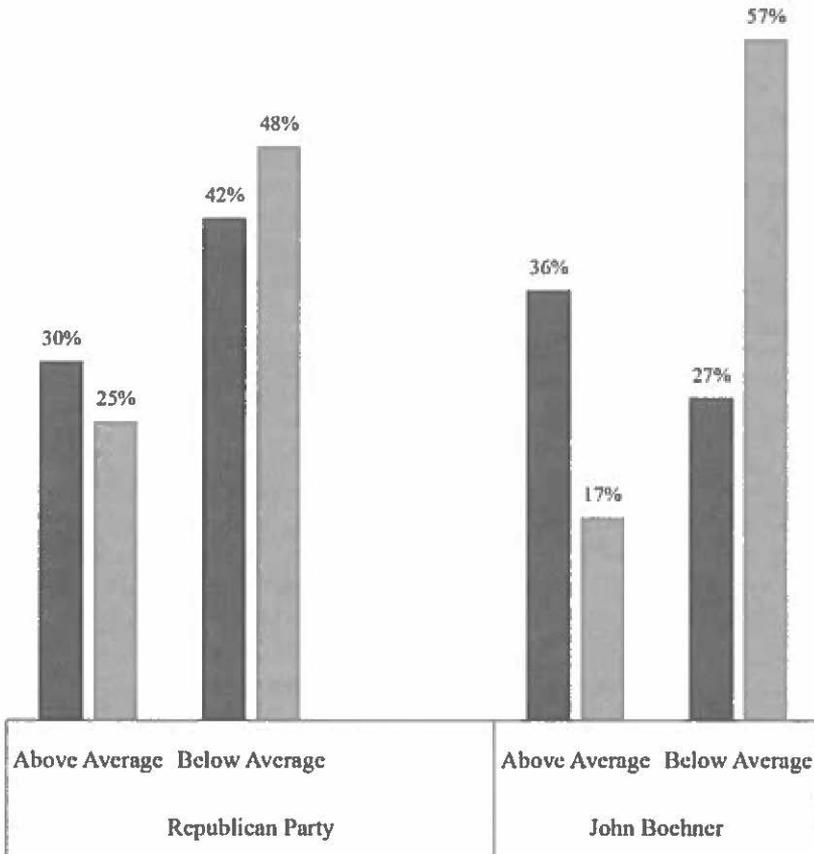
FIGURE 10.6
Decline in ratings of the Republican Party and John Boehner, 2011–2013
(FreedomWorks).

of Mike Lee, Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, and the Tea Party itself define the "Tea Party" dimension.

In figure 10.7, we plot each of the figures in two-dimensional space based on their factor loadings. If we divide the plot into four quadrants based on factor-loading scores, it is clear that only two of the four quadrants are really occupied to a significant degree. Marco Rubio and Paul Ryan are the excep-
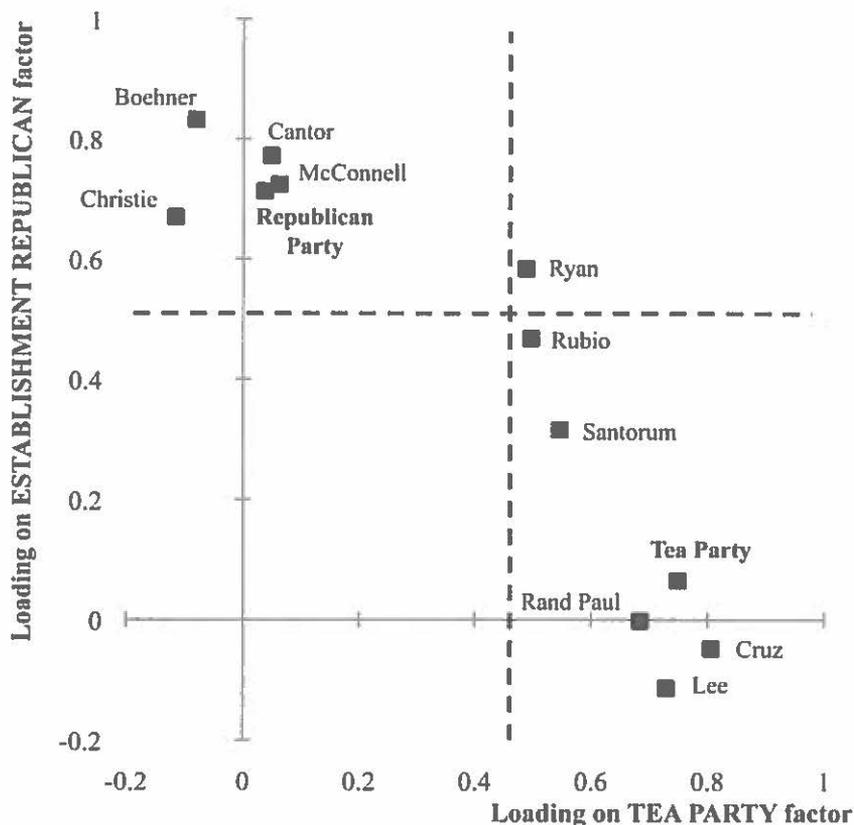
FIGURE 10.7
Grouping of 2016 nomination candidates and Republican congressional leaders along establishment Tea Party dimensions.

tions, being the only candidates who both load highly on both dimensions. They remain popular with the FreedomWorks sample (more than 85 percent positive and less than 10 percent negative) yet are linked to both the Tea Party and the establishment. Rubio and Ryan's loadings suggest that under the right circumstances, a Tea Party candidate may be linked to Establishment Republicans without sacrificing his popularity, which may position them well to run for president in 2016.

Conclusions and Implications

Our analysis points to a party deeply divided between a Tea Party majority among rank-and-file identifiers and a more moderate minority. Under these circumstances, attempts by established leaders of the Republican Party to shed or tame the Tea Party are unlikely to succeed.

Instead, the chasm in issue positions and priorities presage continued conflict, particularly as the party moves toward 2016. The bitter factional conflict over the government shutdown, the debt limit, and the budget all present serious difficulties for a party trying to gain power, particularly when, for a significant part of the party, ideological purity trumps electability.

Although our study shows deep divisions in the Republican Party, massive defection by Tea Party supporters seems unlikely, even if the GOP nominates a more moderate establishment candidate. Reluctance to compromise on issues and a clear preference for nominating an ideologically appealing, if less electable, candidate does not transfer into an unwillingness to support the Republican nominee in the general election when the alternative is a liberal Democrat.

The 2012 election presents a case in point. Even though at the beginning of the nomination contests in December 2011, more FreedomWorks respondents said they could not support Romney for the nomination than said that he was their first choice, they supported him actively once he was nominated. As figure 10.8 shows, with the exception of Ron Paul supporters, at least 75 percent of FreedomWorks backers of 2012 Republican nomination losers were active in Romney's general election campaign against President Obama. Even among FreedomWorks supporters who had rated Romney negatively in December 2011, 63 percent ended up being active on his behalf.

As much as Tea Party supporters have reservations about the Republican establishment and as much as they are willing to support Tea Party candidates for Congress in Republican primaries, the prospect of Democratic victory is unacceptable. In essence, the choice gets reframed from the nomination context, when Tea Party supporters vehemently support ideological soulmates, to the general election when a less attractive Republican runs against a Democrat.

Our findings have clear implications for the 2016 presidential election: bridging the factions within the Republican Party before 2016 will be extremely difficult, and a bitter presidential nomination contest between the "establishment" and Tea-Party wings is likely. Our data suggest that regardless of which faction wins the nomination, the general election contest will inevitably motivate Tea Party supporters to back the Republican nominee.
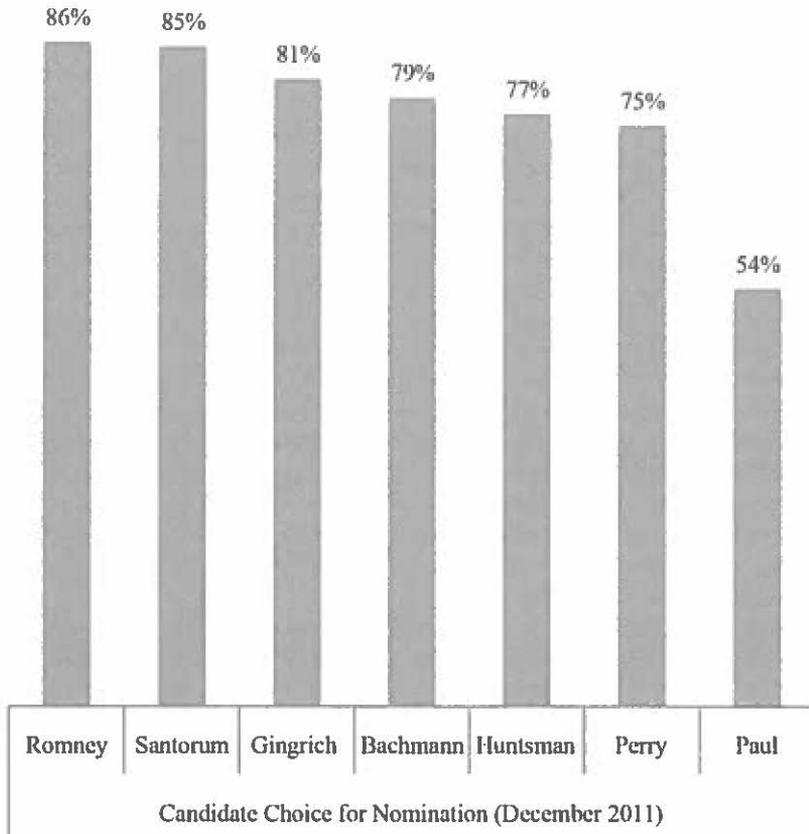
FIGURE 10.8
Percent active for Romney-Ryan in December 2011 by Republican nomination preference (FreedomWorks).

Notes

1. The NBC question may understate the number of Tea Party supporters. We use a question asking respondents if they are: strong Tea Party supporters, supporters but not so strong, former Tea Party supporters, or never a Tea Party supporter. The two "supporter" categories make up about two-thirds of Republican identifiers (63.4 percent), whereas the NBC survey completed around the same time (December 2011) showed only half of Republicans supporting the Tea Party.

2. The large sample size allows us to compare respondents who reported membership in FreedomWorks with respondents who reported membership in other organizations comprising the Tea Party movement. Based on a comparison of Freedom-

Works members who belonged to other Tea Party groups, FreedomWorks email recipients are quite representative of prospective Tea Party supporters and activists.

3. By the AAPOR standards using the total number of subscribers, though, it is slightly under 2 percent.

4. The reason for having a smaller send out for wave-2 than the total wave-1 respondents is that approximately 6,000 had taken themselves off the FreedomWorks email list. Although there are some differences between those dropping out and those in the wave-2 mail-out group, such differences are consistently small. Across a set of 69 variables including all the issue variables, the political figure evaluations, all the activity variables (for both Tea Party and Republican candidates), attitudes toward the system, and all demographic variables, there are only three in which Somer's d is greater than .05 and none in which it is as great as 0.08.

5. For each issue the scale was strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. We took the two most conservative positions and combined them for this figure. On immigration and import restrictions we define favoring restrictions on immigration and protectionism as the conservative position, although however we define "conservative," the results are similar.

6. Activities included convincing someone to join a Tea Party group, attending a meeting, supporting a Tea Party candidate, joining a local group, joining a national organization, and contributing money.

7. There were eight items that respondents rated as being either "very important," "important," "not too important," or "not important at all" for Romney's defeat. On average, respondents picked as a very important reason for Romney's defeat. A majority of respondents selected either one or two of the eight items as a "very important" reason. The items, in addition to the ones discussed, were voter fraud, Romney's Mormonism, and the electoral college system.

11

The Divided Republicans?

Tea Party Supporters, Establishment Republicans, and Social Networks

Peter L. Francia and Jonathan S. Morris

IN EARLY 2013, TWO PROMINENT REPUBLICANS, Karl Rove and Sarah Palin, took aim at one another in the aftermath of the Republican Party's disappointing 2012 election performance. Rove announced plans in February that his Super PAC, American Crossroads, was backing the Conservative Victory Project—a group formed to oust ultraconservative Tea Party candidates in Republican primary elections. A month later, at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), Palin defended the Tea Party and criticized Rove, telling the crowd, "If these 'experts' who keep losing elections and keep getting rehired and getting millions—if they feel that strong about who gets to run in this party, then they should buck-up or stay in the truck" (Killough 2013). Rove promptly replied that if he did run for office, he would "serve out" his term and "would not leave office midterm"—a criticism directed at Palin's decision to resign two years before the completion of her term as Alaska's governor (Killough 2013). This war of words between Rove and Palin was more than personal; it underscored what many political observers suggest are real fractures—even "civil war"—between Tea Party supporters and "Establishment Republicans" (see Martin, Rutenberg, and Peters 2013).

A fractured Republican Party, however, runs counter to previous assessments (see Lengle, Owen, and Sonner 1995). Until recently, scholars have labeled Democrats as "divided," noting that from 1936 to 1996, Republican voters were less likely than Democratic voters to defect (vote against one's own party nominee) in 80 percent of presidential elections (Mayer 1996; Campbell 2008). One account describes the culture in the Democratic Party

as "open, loud, and confrontational," whereas the Republican Party is more "closed, quiet, and consensual" (Freeman 1986, 338).

The Democratic Party is also more demographically diverse than the Republican Party (Teixeira 2009), and, throughout the 1990s, contended with an ideological battle between its liberal wing and the rise of more centrist Democrats who called themselves "New Democrats." As recently as 2003, former Vermont governor and presidential candidate Howard Dean remarked that his campaign to win the Democratic nomination for president would differ from his opponents in that he would represent the "Democratic wing of the Democratic Party"—referring to the ideological split between liberals and centrists (see Mencimer 2004).

Yet the rise of the Tea Party has reshaped discussions about which party is more unified (Abramowitz 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2013; Rapoport et al. 2013). In recent years, the Tea Party has grown and organized in opposition to policies such as the Affordable Care Act and the growth of the federal debt, and it became a potent electoral force during the 2010 congressional elections, helping Republicans recapture majority control of the U.S. House. However, Tea Party candidates also brought with them losses in U.S Senate races in Nevada (2010), Delaware (2010), Colorado (2010), Indiana (2012), and Missouri (2012)—all contests where Republicans began as strong favorites. These disappointing defeats stirred debate within the Republican Party and ultimately motivated leading conservatives such as Rove to push back against the influence of the Tea Party.

This chapter analyzes data from the 2012 presidential election to determine the extent to which the divisions characterized by Rove and Palin extend to the Republican electorate. We examine whether these divisions are likely to persist by exploring where Tea Party Republicans look for their political information in comparison to Establishment Republicans. Research shows that those repeatedly exposed to only like-minded ideas often develop stronger and more ideologically extreme positions (see e.g., Sunstein 2002; Jamieson and Cappella 2008; Levendusky 2009). Although there are more sources of political information than ever before, a significant number of news consumers choose only select points of view, making it less likely that they will come across counterarguments (Prior 2007; Sunstein 2007). The result is the creation of "echo chambers" in which like-minded media consumers receive information that reinforces and solidifies their political perceptions (Jamieson and Cappella 2008).

This trend has been particularly noticeable in the conservative media establishment with the Fox News Channel and conservative talk radio (Jamieson and Cappella 2008). The conservative movement has taken advantage of these communication outlets in order to exert their influence. Social networking

websites, likewise, have helped the conservative media establishment's efforts to organize and unify its supporters (Livne et al. 2011; Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 2011; Mascaro, Novak, and Goggins 2012; Skocpol and Williamson 2013). If indeed Tea Party Republicans rely more heavily on conservative media outlets for their political information and are more unified through social media networks than established Republicans, then Republican divisions might be likely to persist into future elections.

Our analysis ultimately reveals deep divisions within the Republican electorate. Tea Party Republicans hold significantly more extreme political positions and are more likely to rely on conservative media outlets for political information. However, our overall analysis also shows that Tea Party and Establishment Republicans were not divided on everything. Both Tea Party and Establishment Republicans were able to come together in the 2012 general election and unify in support of Mitt Romney and in opposition to Barack Obama.

The Divided Republicans?

We examine data from the ANES 2012 Time Series Study, which includes 5,914 respondents in the preelection survey (and 5,510 respondents in its postelection survey). Respondents completed interviews—either face to face or through the Internet—during the two months preceding the November election and then again during the two months following the election (for more information about the ANES 2012 Time Series Study, see www.electionstudies.org). Consistent with its previous surveys, the ANES 2012 Time Series Study asks respondents to identify their partisan affiliation and partisan leanings if an independent. The ANES 2012 Time Series Study also asks respondents about their feelings toward the Tea Party.

Those classified as *Tea Party Republicans* were respondents who answered that they identified as Republicans and reported that they were supporters of the Tea Party. We also include independents who leaned toward the Republican Party and were supporters of the Tea Party in this category because independent "leaners" exhibit political behavior and attitudes consistent with self-identified partisans (Keith et al. 1992). Those who answered that they identified as Republicans, or as independents who leaned toward the Republican Party, but were neutral toward or not supporters of the Tea Party fall into the category of *Establishment Republicans*.

As noted earlier, historic divisions have long pitted conservative-to-moderate Democrats against those in the more liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Although many southern conservatives gradually left the Democratic

Party, creating a more ideologically cohesive Democratic Party than in the past (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998), recent descriptions of the Democratic Party as "ideologically diverse" remain (Hopkins 2009). To capture this ideological diversity, self-identified Democrats and Democratic leaners who answered that they were "extremely liberal" or "liberal" comprise the *Liberal Democrat* category. Democrats who answered that they were more conservative than "extremely liberal" or "liberal" (i.e., "slightly liberal," "moderate," or any of the "conservative" categories) fall into the *Moderate Democrat* category. Those remaining respondents who had no partisan attachments or leanings fall into the *Pure Independent* category.

Seven-Point Issue Position Scales

Table 11.1 shows the extent of partisan divisions on a series of political issues that required respondents to identify their positions on a 7-point scale. On the question of whether the government should provide fewer services in areas such as health care and education or more services in these areas even if it means increased spending, some 68 percent of Tea Party Republicans are on the far end of the seven-point scale, in which a "1" and "2" indicate support for "many fewer government services," compared to 33 percent of Establishment Republicans. This 35-point gap is considerable when compared against the two blocs in the Democratic Party. Support for "many more government services" at the "6" and "7" categories of the scale was highest among liberal Democrats at 33 percent compared to 15 percent for moderate Democrats, reflecting a smaller 17-point difference. In addition, both blocs of Democrats have an ample number of respondents who answer in the middle categories. This stands in contrast to the minority of Tea Party Republicans who indicated a moderate response.

On a similar 7-point scale, respondents were asked to indicate their feelings toward whether the "government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks" or whether "the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves." Seventy-seven percent of Tea Party Republicans answered "6" or "7" on the scale, indicating that blacks should help themselves, compared to 60 percent of Establishment Republicans. Somewhat smaller differences are present among Democrats, with a heavy concentration of answers from both liberal and moderate Democrats in the middle categories of the scale. These results are particularly interesting given that issues tied to civil rights have historically been most divisive in the Democratic Party.

When asked whether the government should "see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living," 71 percent of Tea Party Republicans fall into the "6" or "7" category that "each person should get ahead on their own," compared to 44 percent of Establishment Republicans. Democratic divisions are noticeably smaller. Twenty-three percent of Moderate Democrats and 29 percent of Liberal Democrats place themselves in the "1" or "2" categories, with healthy-sized majorities in both groups falling in the moderate categories.

On the need for the federal government "to regulate business to protect the environment," Tea Party Republicans (42 percent) are significantly more likely than Establishment Republicans (14 percent) to oppose regulation because they believe it will "not work and will cost jobs." Likewise, strong divisions are also present among Democrats. Seventy-five percent of Liberal Democrats favor regulating business to protect the environment compared to 52 percent of Moderate Democrats, representing a sizable 23-point gap.

On perhaps the most controversial subject of all in recent years—health insurance—large divisions are again present within the Republican Party. A larger percentage of Tea Party Republicans (68 percent) than Establishment Republicans (47 percent) are supportive of private insurance health plans. On the Democratic side, similar internal divisions are present, with Liberal Democrats (55 percent) more likely than Moderate Democrats (33 percent) to favor a government health insurance plan that provides coverage for "all medical and hospital expenses for everyone." These patterns are similar for the Affordable Care Act (i.e., "Obamacare"), with Tea Party Republicans (86 percent) significantly more opposed to the law than Establishment Republicans (56 percent). Divisions are present among Democrats as well, with Liberal Democrats (79 percent) favoring the law more strongly than Moderate Democrats (52 percent). Taken together, health insurance, much like environmental protection, is an issue with significant differences within both parties.

It is only on the 7-point scale for defense spending that divisions within the Democratic Party stand out more significantly than they do in the Republican Party. Thirty-nine percent of liberal Democrats fall into the "1" or "2" category of favoring great decreases in defense spending compared to 18 percent of Moderate Democrats. On the other side of the scale, where "6" and "7" represent support for great increases in defense spending, 34 percent of Tea Party Republicans support this position compared to 23 percent of Establishment Republicans. While Democrats are more divided on this issue than Republicans, the results taken together show Republicans to be equally, and on some issues, more, divided than Democrats.

TABLE 11.1

Partisan Divisions on Selected Issues in the 2012 Election

	Tea Party Republican	Establishment Republican	Pure Independent	Moderate Democrat	Liberal Democrat
Government Services Scale					
1–2 = Provide many fewer services	68%	33%	19%	8%	3%
6–7 = Provide many more services	2%	4%	14%	15%	33%
N	822	1,305	655	1,562	651
Govt. Assistance to Blacks Scale					
1–2 = Govt. should help blacks	1%	3%	8%	12%	24%
6–7 = Blacks should help themselves	77%	60%	46%	30%	16%
N	805	1,288	684	1,499	624
Guaranteed Job/Standard of Living Scale					
1–2 = Govt. provide jobs/std. living	4%	11%	21%	23%	29%
6–7 = Each person get ahead on own	71%	44%	21%	14%	9%
N	837	1,306	757	1,645	670

Environment/Jobs Trade-Off Scale					
1–2 = Regulate/protect environment	8%	21%	42%	52%	75%
6–7 = No regulation/will cost jobs	42%	14%	9%	5%	2%
N	798	1,191	650	1,460	644
Medical Insurance Scale					
1–2 = Government insurance plan	4%	8%	24%	33%	55%
6–7 = Private insurance plan	68%	47%	24%	14%	6%
N	836	1,308	735	1,611	672
Support 2010 Health Care Law					
1–2 = Favor a great deal	3%	13%	20%	52%	79%
6–7 = Oppose a great deal	86%	56%	31%	12%	4%
N	849	1,396	815	1,767	697
Defense Spending Scale					
1–2 = Greatly decrease def. spending	4%	6%	17%	18%	39%
6–7 = Greatly increase def. spending	34%	23%	15%	10%	5%
N	829	1,260	654	1,558	641

Source: American National Election Study, 2012.

Note: Middle options (3–5) not shown.

Job Performance of President Obama

Table 11.2 examines evaluations of President Obama's job performance and shows that Tea Party Republicans are consistently the most negative. Ninety-two percent of Tea Party Republicans "disapprove strongly" of President Obama's handling of his job as president. In comparison, 64 percent of Establishment Republicans fall into this category—a rather high percentage, but still a considerably lower percentage than that reported for Tea Party Republicans. Democrats are also divided somewhat on President Obama's job performance, although to a lesser extent than among Republicans. Seventy percent of liberal Democrats report strong approval of President Obama's handling of his job as president compared to 53 percent of Moderate Democrats.

Overwhelming majorities of Tea Party Republicans also disapprove strongly of President Obama's handling of the economy (93 percent), health care (90 percent), foreign relations (87 percent), and the war in Afghanistan (63 percent). Establishment Republicans are quite critical of President Obama as well, but significantly smaller percentages fall in the "disapprove strongly" categories on his handling of the economy (72 percent), health care (70 percent), foreign relations (55 percent), and the war in Afghanistan (40 percent). Liberal Democrats and moderate Democrats are divided by similar margins, with the exception of President Obama's handling of the war in Afghanistan—an issue in which similar percentages of moderate Democrats and liberal Democrats express approval. In total, assessments of President Obama's job performance reveal roughly similar gaps in intensity of approval and disapproval among Republicans as among Democrats.

Party Divisions and the Echo Chamber

As the results above demonstrate, divisions within the Republican Party now rival or exceed those in the Democratic Party. As noted earlier, living in the so-called echo chamber can reinforce and push individuals to adopt even more extreme positions over time. With this in mind, we compare the sources of political information that individuals in each party faction rely upon and use.

Table 11.3 begins by examining viewership of several Fox News programs, all of which have content that would reinforce strongly conservative viewpoints and positions. The results indicate that Tea Party Republicans, by very large margins, expose themselves more regularly to Fox News programs such as the *Fox Report*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Hannity*, *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren*, and *Huckabee* than Establishment Republicans. In comparison, Es-

TABLE 11.2
Partisan Divisions on President Obama's Job Performance in 2012

	Tea Party Republican	Establishment Republican	Pure Independent	Moderate Democrat	Liberal Democrat
Obama: Handling of Job					
Approve Strongly	2%	5%	19%	53%	70%
Disapprove Strongly	92%	64%	35%	8%	2%
N	850	1,371	779	1,743	696
Obama: Handling Economy					
Approve Strongly	1%	3%	16%	45%	61%
Disapprove Strongly	93%	72%	46%	12%	3%
N	846	1,383	774	1,739	691
Obama: Handling Health Care					
Approve Strongly	2%	6%	20%	54%	78%
Disapprove Strongly	90%	70%	43%	14%	3%
N	839	1,369	790	1,741	697
Obama: Handling Foreign Relations					
Approve Strongly	1%	8%	20%	56%	74%
Disapprove Strongly	87%	55%	34%	9%	3%
N	838	1,348	760	1,733	685
Obama: Handling Afghan War					
Approve Strongly	4%	14%	22%	51%	51%
Disapprove Strongly	63%	40%	35%	12%	8%
N	821	1,347	759	1,730	688

Notes: Some columns may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

TABLE 11.3
Partisan Divisions on Viewership of Fox News Programs and Other Television

Watches the following shows regularly:	Tea Party Republican	Establishment Republican	Pure Independent	Moderate Democrat	Liberal Democrat
FOX News: Fox Report	47%	25%	9%	11%	6%
FOX News: The O'Reilly Factor	44%	16%	5%	4%	2%
FOX News: Hannity	36%	10%	3%	1%	0%
FOX News: Greta Van Susteren	30%	8%	3%	2%	2%
FOX News: Huckabee	29%	8%	2%	1%	0%
ABC: 20/20	17%	24%	21%	26%	22%
ABC: World News	14%	17%	14%	22%	19%
ABC: Nightline	12%	19%	14%	22%	15%
CBS: 60 Minutes	21%	28%	23%	35%	34%
CBS: Evening News	19%	26%	25%	29%	22%
CBS: Face the Nation	9%	7%	8%	10%	12%
NBC: Nightly News	20%	30%	23%	30%	31%
NBC: Meet the Press	12%	10%	7%	12%	15%
Approximate N	777	1,266	661	1,617	637

Source: American National Election Study, 2012.

tablishment Republicans are more likely than Tea Party Republicans to watch "hard news" programs more regularly, including *20/20, ABC World News, Nightline, 60 Minutes, CBS Evening News,* and *NBC Nightly News.* Outside of Fox News, only *Face the Nation* and *Meet the Press* were watched slightly more regularly by Tea Party Republicans than by Establishment Republicans. Among Democrats, there are no such differences. Viewing habits by moderate Democrats and liberal Democrats are generally similar.

Differences in radio listenership are especially pronounced among Republicans. Table 11.4 reveals that a sizable percentage of Tea Party Republicans who listen regularly to the radio choose the *Rush Limbaugh Show* (48 per-

TABLE 11.4
Partisan Divisions on Listenership of Conservative Talk Radio and Other Programs

Listens to the following shows regularly:	Tea Party Republican	Establishment Republican	Pure Independent	Moderate Democrat	Liberal Democrat
The Rush Limbaugh Show	48%	14%	8%	4%	2%
The Sean Hannity Show	37%	11%	5%	2%	1%
Glenn Beck	26%	9%	3%	1%	1%
The Mark Levin Show	16%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Savage Nation (Michael Savage)	11%	4%	3%	1%	1%
The Laura Ingraham Show	11%	3%	1%	2%	0%
The Neal Boortz Show	10%	3%	1%	1%	1%
All Things Considered (NPR)	7%	10%	17%	18%	40%
Morning Edition (NPR)	5%	7%	12%	15%	35%
Fresh Air (NPR)	4%	7%	9%	13%	30%
Talk of the Nation (NPR)	3%	7%	11%	13%	24%
Approximate N	577	706	298	808	381

Source: American National Election Study, 2012.

cent), the *Sean Hannity Show* (37 percent), and the *Glenn Beck Show* (26 percent)—all hosts known for their extremely conservative views. Establishment Republicans are much less likely to listen regularly to these radio programs, with only a small minority reporting that they do so for the *Rush Limbaugh Show* (14 percent), the *Sean Hannity Show* (11 percent), and the *Glenn Beck Show* (9 percent). Other conservative radio programs also draw considerably more listeners from Tea Party Republicans than from Establishment Republicans, including the *Mark Levin Show* (16 percent of Tea Party Republicans versus 2 percent of Establishment Republicans), *Savage Nation* (11 percent of Tea Party Republicans versus 4 percent of Establishment Republicans), the *Laura Ingraham Show* (11 percent of Tea Party Republicans versus 3 percent of Establishment Republicans), and the *Neal Boortz Show* (10 percent

of Tea Party Republicans versus 3 percent of Establishment Republicans). In contrast, Establishment Republicans are more likely to listen to programs on National Public Radio, including *All Things Considered, Morning Edition, Fresh Air,* and *Talk of the Nation.* Among Democrats, listenership among moderate Democrats and liberal Democrats is almost nonexistent for each of the conservative talk shows; however, liberal Democrats are significantly more likely than moderate Democrats to listen to National Public Radio—a venue that reports mostly objective "hard news," although some critics suggest a liberal bias (see Gonzalez 2011).

Readership of print media also shows some divisions (see table 11.5), although the most telling differences are across parties rather within the parties. Notably, 14 percent of Liberal Democrats report that they read the print edition of the *New York Times* regularly compared to just 1 percent of Tea Party Republicans. Tea Party Republicans instead prefer to read their news from the Fox News website (38 percent), the conservative *Drudge Report* (22 percent), or other web-based services such as Yahoo! News (30 percent) whereas Establishment Republicans visit the Fox News website (21 percent) and the *Drudge Report* website (5 percent) far less regularly. In fact, among Establishment Republicans, the top websites are the largely neutral-content sites of Yahoo! News (36 percent), Google News (25 percent), and even CNN (22 percent). Differences are smaller among Democrats, although liberal Democrats are more likely to visit the *New York Times* website (22 percent) than moderate Democrats (11 percent).

The GOP and Tea Party on Twitter in the 2012 General Election

Beyond television, radio, and other traditional sources of political information, there are also other new communication outlets available. Social networking and micro blogging through outlets such as Twitter provide a platform for various different political voices to make their views public. Among Tea Party supporters, Twitter provides a vehicle to criticize not only liberal and Democratic opponents but also to raise objections at what they consider flaws within the establishment of the Republican Party.

To examine whether Tea Party comments were more critical of the Republican establishment, we accessed historical Twitter data from Gnip.com, which collects and archives Tweets. Gnip collected all Tweets from October 1 through October 24, 2012, which contained the most common conservative and Republican-associated hashtags. (Hashtags are keywords or topics in a Tweet created by users as a method of organizing Twitter messages into categories). The most common Republican and conservative-associated hashtags

TABLE 11.5
Partisan Divisions on Readership of
Print Newspapers and Usage of Website News Sources

Reads or views the following regularly:	Tea Party Republican	Establishment Republican	Pure Independent	Moderate Democrat	Liberal Democrat
Wall Street Journal	8%	7%	3%	3%	6%
USA Today	6%	12%	5%	9%	6%
Washington Post	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%
New York Times	1%	5%	3%	6%	14%
FOX News (foxnews.com)	38%	21%	10%	11%	4%
Drudge Report (drudgereport. com)	22%	5%	6%	2%	1%
Yahoo! News (news.yahoo. com)	30%	36%	30%	41%	30%
Google News (news.google. com)	20%	25%	22%	24%	25%
CNN (cnn.com)	17%	22%	19%	25%	32%
MSNBC	16%	19%	13%	24%	24%
USA Today (usatoday. com)	10%	10%	9%	10%	7%
Washington Post (washington post.com)	6%	5%	8%	6%	10%
ABC News (abcnews. com)	4%	8%	9%	12%	7%
New York Times (nytimes.com)	4%	6%	8%	11%	22%
Approximate N	471	671	317	772	416

Source: American National Election Study, 2012.

are #gop, #tcot (Top Conservatives on Twitter), and #teaparty (Livne et al. 2011). We searched for all Tweets conducted in the English language that contained these hashtags. This search produced 4.5 million Tweets, from which we randomly sampled over 490,000. Once we removed empty Tweets and re-Tweets, we finished with a sample of 253,507 Tweets. In total, 226,003 Tweets contained #tcot, 19,916 contained #gop, and 30,693 Tweets contained #teaparty. President Obama was mentioned in 104,320 Tweets, and Mitt

Romney was mentioned in 76,630 Tweets. Republicans were mentioned in 5,123 Tweets, and Democrats were mentioned in 7,965 Tweets.

Our interest is in the sentiment and overall tone toward different political entities mentioned in the Tweets. Based on the nature of the right-of-center political hashtags contained in the sample, we would expect the sentiment to be more positive toward Republican entities and more negative toward Democratic entities. We would also expect #teaparty Tweets to be more negative in tone toward Republican entities than #gop Tweets.

In order to analyze the sentiment of each Tweet, we relied on automated content analysis of our sample using a sentiment dictionary file. Specifically, we used the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary (LSD) developed by Young and Soroka (2012) for analysis of political texts. Pulling from several existing lexicon dictionaries, the LSD is comprised of 4,567 positive and negative words. The content analysis software, Lexicoder 2.0, applies the LSD to each individual Tweet and provides a count of the number of positive and negative statements per Tweet.

We applied the LSD content analysis to all Tweets in the sample that mentioned the candidate in question, but not the other candidate. Tweets that mentioned both candidates were not included in the content analysis so that we could be confident that the positive or negative statements were assigned to the proper candidate. In total, 72,610 Tweets mentioned Barack Obama but not Mitt Romney, and 44,920 Tweets mentioned Mitt Romney but not Barack Obama. For Barack Obama, the average number of positive references per Tweet was .45, and the average number of negative references per Tweet was .80, yielding a positive/negative ratio of .57. For Mitt Romney, the average number of positive references per Tweet was .57, and the average number of negative references per Tweet was .49, yielding a positive/negative ratio of 1.16.

Figure 11.1 shows the positive/negative sentiment ratio for Mitt Romney and Barack Obama across each day in our sample (October 1–24). Some trends are evident in figure 11.1. The first trend is that negativity dominates when Barack Obama is mentioned. The ratio of positive to negative Tweets is significantly lower than one, indicating more negativity than positivity, which is not too surprising. Second, the positive to negative sentiment ratio for Mitt Romney is consistently higher than that for President Obama. Third, President Obama's ratio remains relatively consistent. A marginal uptick in the sentiment ratio occurs on October 5 and 6, when the government reported unemployment had fallen below 8 percent for the first time in his presidency, but overall the ratio stays low. Lastly, Mitt Romney's sentiment ratio did not vary randomly. His swings are clearly associated with events, particularly presidential debates.
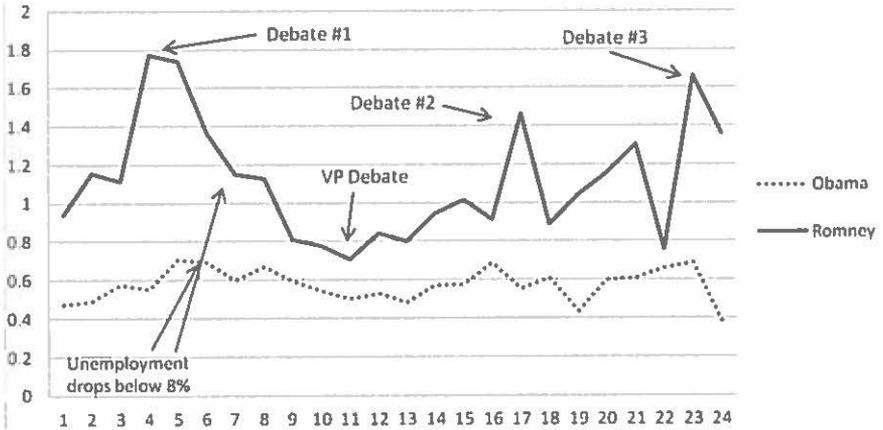
FIGURE 11.1
Positive/negative sentiment ratio (October 1–24)

Our larger question, however, was whether sentiment toward Republican entities such as Mitt Romney and the Republican Party as a whole varied between Tea Party posters and GOP posters. Because Tea Party affiliation cannot be determined based on Twitter handles, we must rely on the hashtags #teaparty and #gop as the differentiating factor. Table 11.6 shows the difference in sentiment toward Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and the two major political parties from #teaparty and #gop. Two major findings come from this analysis of Twitter sentiment. First, there is very little difference between #teaparty and #gop in sentiment toward the candidates for president. The second finding reflects a noticeable difference when it comes to sentiment toward the political parties. The amount of negative sentiment coming from

TABLE 11.6
Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Posts (#gop versus #teaparty) October 1–24, 2012

Entity Mentioned	Average Number of Positive Statements per Tweet		Average Number of Negative Statements per Tweet		Pos./Neg. Ratio	
	#gop	#teaparty	#gop	#teaparty	#gop	#teaparty
Barack Obama	0.38	0.38	0.73	0.71	0.52	0.53
Mitt Romney	0.51	0.47	0.43	0.40	1.18	1.18
Republicans	0.51	0.41	0.72	0.73	0.71	0.56
Democrats	0.36	0.33	0.80	0.87	0.45	0.37

the #teaparty and #gop are similar, but #teaparty is much less positive toward Democrats and Republicans than #gop. This is highlighted in the positive/negative ratio in Tweets that mention Republicans from #gop (0.71) versus the Tea Party (0.56).

Conclusion

The results in this chapter provide some empirical confirmation that there are rather large and significant divisions within the Republican Party. The heated rhetoric of Karl Rove and Sarah Palin runs much deeper than a personal disagreement among the two, and instead illustrates much deeper divisions that exist within the rank-and-file of the Republican Party. On several issues and evaluations of political figures, these divisions exceeded or were on par with those within the Democratic Party—a reversal from earlier accounts that portrayed Republicans as the more unified party. Perhaps as significantly, media use varied between Tea Party Republicans and Establishment Republicans, with Tea Party Republicans turning to conservative sources with much greater frequency—a prospect that may continue to divide or even increase divisions within the Republican Party.

Despite these many differences, the results also show relatively strong unity behind Mitt Romney among both Tea Party Republicans and Establishment Republicans. Indeed, during the final weeks of the 2012 election, Tea Party Republicans and Establishment Republicans were Tweeting in much the same way about their support for Romney and their dislike for President Obama. All of this suggests that while the Republican Party's two major factions are divided in several significant respects that now rival or exceed divisions within the Democratic Party, Tea Party and Establishment Republicans can and do come together in shared opposition when Republicans face a polarizing Democrat such as Barack Obama. That late unity, however, was not enough to elect Mitt Romney in 2012. The bruising and drawn-out nomination process that Romney endured—a consequence of the deep divisions within the Republican Party—had an effect on Romney, whose unfavorable rating nationwide went from 28 percent in late 2010 to 48 percent by early July of 2012. A deeply divided Republican Party, therefore, could pose significant challenges to the party's next presidential nominee in 2016.

12

Allies and Antagonists

The Tea Party Impact on the Republican Party

William J. Miller and Michael John Burton

A N OBSERVER OF CONTEMPORARY American conservatism might have predicted the final stages of the 2012 Republican presidential primary season, as a pragmatic Republican fought off candidates representing traditionalist and libertarian strands of the Tea Party movement. Mitt Romney, the pragmatist, was frequently criticized for adjusting his convictions according to political necessity, while Rick Santorum's fervent traditionalism and Ron Paul's uncompromising libertarianism articulated long-dormant tensions within the Republican Party (Burton 2013; W. Miller 2013). In the 1960s, Ronald Reagan had found a way to unite traditionalist and libertarian thinking. With Reagan's election to the White House, the separate strands of conservatism—freedom and heritage—had begun to seem inseparable. But the 2012 primaries exposed deep divisions within the Reagan coalition.

Pressures had been building since President Reagan left office. Although his vice president, George H. W. Bush, handily defeated Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis in 1988, Bush would face conservative Pat Buchanan in 1992, and later, both Arkansas governor Bill Clinton and business magnate Ross Perot. Perot's Reform Party rallied around fiscal issues such as the federal deficit, and it poached fiscally conservative voters from the GOP. Over the course of Clinton's presidency, a $290 billion per year federal deficit, was transformed into a $236 billion per year surplus. Bush Sr.'s son, George W. Bush, began his first term by cutting taxes, as many conservatives had hoped, but he ended his second term with a yearly deficit of $459 billion. Crashing markets in 2008 led Bush to sign the $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program. After Barack Obama defeated John McCain, many Republicans

assumed the new Democratic president would indulge an appetite for taxing and spending, and there was no firm guarantee that Republican pragmatists could staunch the bleeding.

If the Grand Old Party did not stand for fiscal responsibility, some supporters believed it was capitulating on an existential issue. "Washington" seemed wholly opposed to the shared conservative ideal of fiscal responsibility. Many Republicans wanted, even demanded, radical change.

This chapter examines tensions among Republican priorities as expressed by divisions between GOP pragmatism and Tea Party conservatism, and between Tea Party libertarianism and Tea Party traditionalism. The present chapter builds on previous research by studying the rhetoric of the Tea Party movement with an eye to the tensions among ideological strands. It argues that traditionalists and libertarians do not simply cooperate with one another in a strategic alliance, but also find a common ground in a merger of traditionalist virtue and libertarian freedom that helps them maintain relevance while they oppose the combined forces of pragmatic Republicans and opposition Democrats.

Philosophical Tension

While there may be no pure form of pragmatism, traditionalism, or libertarianism, there are minimal criteria for each. Traditionalism retains the best of what is old while accepting a measure of the new; libertarianism espouses the primacy of individual choice; and pragmatism sees politics as the art of the possible. Political players can rarely, if ever, be identified with a singular aspect of an ideology, but differences in priorities show the ideological diversity of the Republican Party.

The diversity could be seen in a 2010 "exit poll" conducted at a Washington, DC, "Tax Day Rally," which found that respondents who expressed deep concern about abortion and gay marriage were more likely to support former vice presidential candidate and Alaska governor Sarah Palin while others supported Texas congressman Ron Paul (Hohmann 2010). Indeed, 53 percent "would not even consider" casting their ballots for Palin while 59 percent would not consider Paul. A 2013 study by the Public Religion Research Institute found that only 53 percent of Republicans identified with the Tea Party movement, and even among libertarians and traditionalists there is only partial support for the movement—39 percent of libertarians align with the Tea Party and only 23 percent of Christian conservatives (Public Religion Research Institute 2013). Among those who identify with part of the Tea Party, 26 percent think of themselves as libertarians while 52 percent see themselves

within the "Christian Right." The complexity of modern GOP politics was made clear in the presidential preferences for 2016: GOP libertarians favored Ron Paul's son, Rand Paul, GOP white evangelicals supported Paul Ryan, and GOP Tea Partiers generally backed Ted Cruz.

It will be argued below that contemporary Republicans are frequently united on the political battlefield, but there are issues for which one strand is pitted against another, and if traditionalists and libertarians can forge a lasting alliance, they may represent an enduring challenge to the mainstream of the Grand Old Party. To assess the place of the Tea Party movement in American party politics, it is important to look both for common ground and ideological difference. Figure 12.1 demonstrates a representation of different ideological spaces. Under certain conditions, the three ideological spaces move and behave differently, with intersections becoming larger and smaller accordingly. Throughout the chapter, figure 12.1 will be shaded to represent different strategic realities within the Republican Party in America today.

Libertarianism

Since the 1950s, Republicans have tried to associate their party with a muscular approach to national security. During the Cold War and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, GOP candidates often charged that Democratic opponents were "soft" on communism or terrorism. This view of international relations stands in contrast to the earlier isolationism of Republican politics as well as the anti-interventionism of contemporary libertarians. Differences have emerged on American involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan,
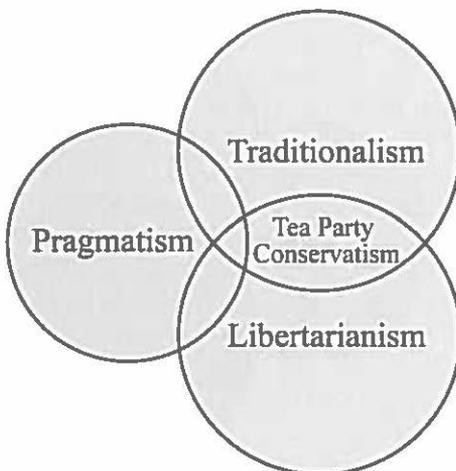
FIGURE 12.1
The current structure of the Republican Party.

Libya, and Syria. Likewise, some libertarians have called for less defense spending, and they opposed unmanned combat air vehicles, popularly known as "drones."

For most Republicans, armed drones fight terrorism without putting Americans at risk. But for Kentucky senator Rand Paul, drones threaten constitutional rights. To make his point, Paul launched a thirteen-hour filibuster aimed at forcing a nominee for the directorship of the Central Intelligence Agency to state that he would not use drones on American soil against American targets (Klapper 2013). Paul's argument went to liberty, rights, and Madisonian ideals: "[Obama] was elected by a majority, but the majority doesn't get to decide who we execute" (Little 2013). Americans, he argued, "are frustrated that they feel too few elected officials in Washington stand for our rights, are willing to rock the boat, are willing to stand up and say the Constitution matters and it matters whether it's popular or not" (Little 2013).

It is not clear that all of the support for armed drones stemmed from faintheartedness. Arizona senator John McCain opined, "If Mr. Paul wants to be taken seriously he needs to do more than pull political stunts that fire up impressionable libertarian kids in their college dorms. He needs to know what he's talking about" (Logiurato 2013). Santorum told CNN, "The drone policy is one policy. What we've seen is an administration that has refused to confront radical Islam, that embraced the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and now you see the consequences of that. . . . They have withdrawn politically from the engagement and fight. Yeah, sure, they're going after bad guys with drone programs, but that is not a comprehensive policy" (Timm 2013). What emerges from both quotes is a divide between party members on the
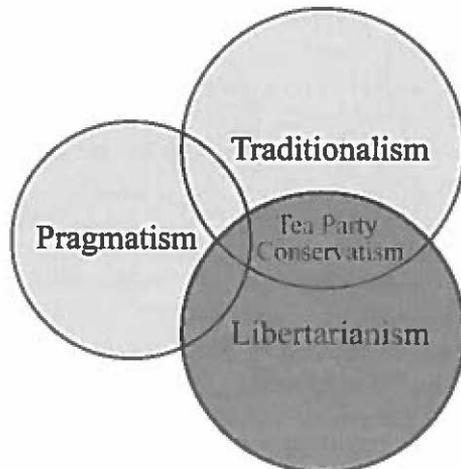
FIGURE 12.2
The Libertarian leg of the Republican Party.

potential effectiveness and efficiency of future war technologies. Figure 12.2 shows this aspect of libertarian thinking outside the purview of traditionalist and pragmatist ideology.

Traditionalism

For traditionalists, marriage is sacred and should be reserved for "one man and one woman." A 2011 Pew Research poll found, "While registered voters as a whole are closely divided on same-sex marriage (42 percent in favor, 49 percent opposed), Tea Party supporters are against it by more than 2-to-1 (64 percent opposed, 26 percent in favor)" (Pew Research Center 2011b). But the issue's importance varies across ideological strands. Libertarians might state personal opinions on same-sex marriage while asserting that the question should be left to the states; traditionalists, on the other hand, frame their opposition to same-sex marriage as protection of the family, and of children. Neurosurgeon Ben Carson, hailed by Tea Party supporters after he criticized the Affordable Care Act at a National Prayer Breakfast attended by President Obama, has made a directly biblical claim. Carson told the Illinois Family Institute, "When people come along and try to change the definition of marriage, they are directly attacking the relationship between God and his people," Carson said. "And that's the reason it's so important for them to change the definition, because if you can get rid of that, you can get rid of everything else in the Bible too" (Edwards 2013). But even if the marriage question can be framed as traditionalist morality, the passion of traditionalists is not shared by pragmatists and libertarians.

Other strands of the GOP give the issue less importance. By leaving the question to the states, Ron Paul's stance allows for a patchwork of marriage laws, including state laws that permit gay marriage—a position that contrasts sharply with traditionalist views. Likewise, for pragmatists, gay marriage has not been viewed as an apex political priority in recent years. In the fall of 2013, facing significant public support for gay marriage in New Jersey, Governor Chris Christie simply stopped fighting. A Christie spokesperson explained, "Although the governor strongly disagrees with the court substituting its judgment for the constitutional process of the elected branches or a vote of the people, the court has now spoken clearly as to their view of the New Jersey Constitution and, therefore, same-sex marriage is the law" (Peoples and Beaumont 2013). (See figure 12.3.)

FIGURE 12.3
The Traditionalist leg of the Republican Party.
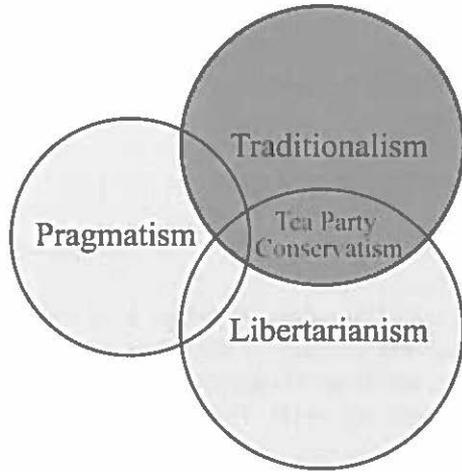
Pragmatism

Pragmatic Republicanism has typically been associated with commitments to free trade and balanced budgets. Reduced government spending and lower taxes stimulate the economy and put more money in people's pockets. Among Tea Party activists, however, opposition to taxes and spending go beyond mere practicality. Libertarians often describe taxation as theft, and they see government intervention portending government control. Traditionalists sometimes describe "big government" as antibiblical. Before moving to the conservative Heritage Foundation, Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina argued that "America works, freedom works, when people have that internal gyroscope that comes from a belief in God and Biblical faith. . . . I've said it often and I believe it—the bigger government gets, the smaller God gets. As people become more dependent on government, they become less dependent on God" (Henderson 2012). Pragmatists, who often prioritize governance, do not go this far.

Divisions between Tea Party elites and Northeastern pragmatists were visible in the federal response to Hurricane Sandy. While legislators from New York and New Jersey fumed about delays, Tea Party Republicans voted against disaster aid out of stated concerns for waste and fraud (Peck 2012; Robillard 2013b). Iowa congressman Steve King, who voted against both Sandy aid and the second tranche of aid for victims of Hurricane Katrina, expressed his worry that federal money would be spent on "Gucci bags and massage parlors" rather than rebuilding homes and infrastructure (Peck 2012; Robillard 2013b).

It was likewise for the 2013 federal government shutdown. Pragmatic Republicans sought compromise. They believed a Republican-friendly solution would fail to pass through a Democratic-controlled Senate and could not survive a presidential veto, so, instead of risking political capital on a losing proposition, pragmatists sought a workable resolution that satisfied at least some of the demands of both parties. Republicans like Peter King were calling for moderation; traditionalists and libertarians, however, favored a principled stand. Led by Ted Cruz, these sides of the Republican Party were willing to endure a shutdown in order to delay implementation of the ACA, calling their more pragmatic colleagues the "Surrender Caucus." Pragmatists, for their part, are likely to view such concessions as an ordinary cost of doing business, and indeed, one worth paying (see figure 12.4).

Virtue and Liberty

The tension between pragmatism on one side and the combination of libertarians and traditionalists on the other is a motivating force of the Tea Party movement. (See figure 12.5.) The Tea Party is clearly not the singular representative of right-leaning conservatives, or even those who share its views—but the emergence of the Tea Party as a political "brand" represents something more than a separatist movement within the GOP or a mere collection of ideologues. By sharing a banner, by weaving otherwise disparate components, the Tea Party movement shunts pragmatism to secondary status. Strategically, the alliance between traditionalists and libertarians profits

Traditionalism

Pragmatism

Tea Party Conservatism
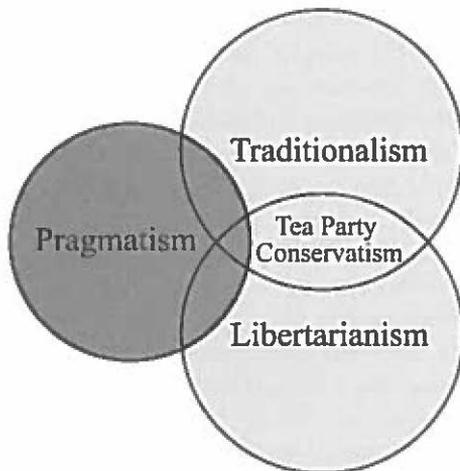
Libertarianism

FIGURE 12.4
The pragmatic leg of the Republican Party.
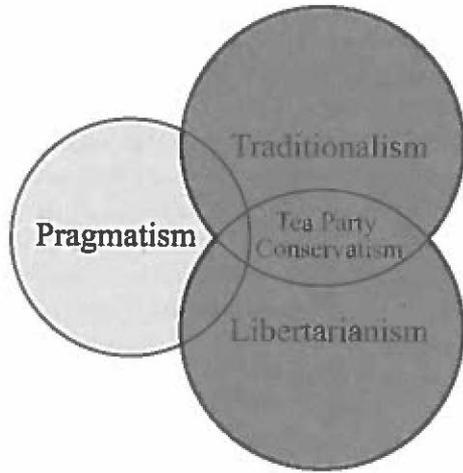
FIGURE 12.5
The Tea Party wing of the Republican Party.

both sides of the bargain: Traditionalism and libertarianism each want their party to shy away from compromise and stand firm against Democrats. Ideologically, however, the juxtaposition might seem odd. Republicans who believe morality should drive governance can find themselves in direct opposition to Republicans who want to maximize freedom.

One vital force of the Tea Party movement has been its ability to find common ground by framing libertarian views in traditionalist terms, and vice versa.

Reagan-style conservatism endorses this bond. Families and markets enjoy a symbiotic relationship whereby mothers and fathers raise children to be good and productive citizens, and those citizens, once they enter the marketplace, become part of an economy that allows breadwinners to provide for their families. Government has a place at the margins, but for the most part the public sector—especially the national government—should get out of the way. Government powers to tax, spend, regulate, and incur debt ought to be limited. Families, on the other hand, should be free to follow their dreams. Federal authorities must not tell people how to spend their hard-earned money (or whether they should own guns). The proper role of government, in this view, is largely restricted to protecting national security, private property, human life (including the lives of "the unborn"), and individual liberty.

This last point—opposition to abortion—raises questions about individualism, morality, and government power. "Life" has been a central conservative principle since the Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade* (1973). Some observers might expect libertarians to view government regulation of the abortion decision as a deprivation of personal autonomy, insofar as a majority on

the *Roe* Court found abortion rights to be a more general "right of privacy, whether it be founded in the Fourteenth Amendment's concept of personal liberty [or] in the Ninth Amendment's reservation of rights to the people." Since freedom depends on the capacity to choose and implement a course of action for one's self, outsiders might expect libertarians to be "pro-choice," though in fact conservative libertarianism has frequently been employed to reinforce traditionalist abortion policies.

A libertarian argument against *Roe* can be stated simply: Because the Constitution protects the "right to life," a presumed "right to choose" cannot properly include an unregulated right to choose an abortion. Libertarians and traditionalists need only agree that a fetus is a rights-bearing person. In a 2008 speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Ron Paul argued, "It's academic to talk about civil liberties if you don't talk about the true protection of all life; so if you're going to protect liberty you have to protect the life of the unborn just as well" (Paul 2008). Congressman and former vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan has also framed the issue in terms of government power: President Obama's defense of "Big Government" comes from "a politician who has never once lifted a hand to defend the most helpless and innocent of all human beings: The child waiting to be born" ("Rep. Paul D. Ryan's Remarks" 2012). By using libertarian logic to frame an issue usually associated with traditionalism, a potential ideological contradiction is, for those who accept certain premises, resolved in a way that can satisfy both sides.

Similarly, traditionalism can defend libertarian values. Tea Party supporters who want a scholarly perspective can read *Tea Party Catholic: The Catholic Case for Limited Government, a Free Economy, and Human Flourishing* (Gregg 2013). Jay Richards (2009), author of *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem*, contributed his melding of traditionalism and libertarianism on an American Enterprise Institute blog: "The universality of human sin is one of the best arguments in favor of a free market, which is one of the best checks on extreme concentrations of power and is perhaps the best way we've discovered of channeling human sinfulness into socially beneficial outcomes" (Richards 2010). For traditionalists, biblical passages can defend cuts to social programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Congressman Stephen Fincher of Tennessee has explained that "[t]he role of citizens, of Christians, of humanity is to take care of each other, but not for Washington to steal from those in the country and give to others in the country" (Terris 2013). Logic such as this aligns with recent arguments that sees Christ blessing charity, not taxation, which might be counted a form of theft (Bean 2009).

This traditionalist libertarianism lies at the intersection of the two major strands of Tea Party conservatism. While some issues, such as a skepticism

of armed drones, are prioritized by libertarians alone, and others, like opposition to same-sex marriage, are most important to traditionalists, the two sides can weave their views together on the role of government in the lives of citizens.

Outsiders can understand seeming contradictions in Tea Party ideology by reorienting their own perspectives. Skocpol and Williamson have noted that, among Tea Party activists, government assistance seems to be regarded as improper redistribution when the resources go to the wrong people. The oft-ridiculed slogan "Government keep your hands off my Medicare" takes a more rational meaning if Medicare is viewed, not as a handout, but as a return for hard work (Skocpol and Williamson 2013). Similarly, the intense reaction to Senator Obama's remark to "Joe the Plumber" that government should "spread the wealth around" can be attributed to a worldview that sees "makers" beset by "takers." In 2012, Mitt Romney's pragmatism was called into question when he put the matter (perhaps too) concisely, discoursing on the "47 percent" who "are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe that government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it" (Corn 2012).

The marriage of libertarianism and traditionalism is not always happy. A "Contract from America," developed in conjunction with grassroots conservative organization FreedomWorks, protested liberal tax and energy policy but made no mention of abortion and other socially conservative issues. Conversely, Indiana congressman Mike Pence has warned, "Those who would have us ignore the battle being fought over life, marriage and religious liberty have forgotten the lessons of history. . . . America's darkest moments have come when economic arguments trumped moral principles" ("Pence Remarks" 2010). And some conservatives, like Rick Santorum, have picked their battles: "When I talk about cultural issues today, I don't generally talk about abortion. The real issue of life right now is Obamacare and the rationing of treatment to those on the margins of society" (Scocca 2010).

Perhaps no recent issue has more galvanized the Republican Party better than the Affordable Care Act (ACA), or "Obamacare" (Purdum 2013). For libertarians, the ACA represents federal regulation of individual citizens and intrusion into private markets while traditionalists see in health care reform a covert mechanism for encouraging abortion. Although many pragmatists may be concerned about the potential for cost increases and policy cancellations— House Speaker John Boehner typically discusses the practical impact of the ACA and its implementation—Tea Party supporters are more likely to reference the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Framers of both ("Boehner Column" 2013). Recounting opposition to King George, the development of a

plan of government with limited powers, and the Tenth Amendment, the Tea Party Patriots (a group of Americans who push for fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets) call for an end to the health care mandate via the doctrine of nullification ("States Seek" 2012).

Discussion

The Tea Party movement proudly resists well-defined categories. Congressman Jason Chaffetz of Utah declined to join an official "Tea Party Caucus" in the House of Representatives ("I'm 100 percent pro-tea party, but this is not the right thing to do") partly because the Tea Party is supposed to represent the diversity of ground-up activism (Vogel 2010). But strength of the movement lies in its well-honed merger of libertarian and traditionalist thinking under a single, oppositional political brand (W. Miller 2014). The movement does not exhaust libertarianism or traditionalism, and it is not the only path to a reformed GOP, but it does represent a rejection of political pragmatism. Not just a marriage of convenience, the conscious effort to merge libertarianism and traditionalism into an enduring philosophy may well persist in causing problems for the pragmatists in the Republican Party even as its demise has often been predicted.

The grouping of potentially disparate ideas was present at the creation of the Tea Party movement. In 2009, live from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, with traders applauding his words, CNBC's Rick Santelli railed against a Democratic plan to infuse the ailing housing market with new cash and new regulations. He mixed the rhetoric of fiscal responsibility with broader conservative themes. He asked the traders around him, "How many of you people want to pay for your neighbors' mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can't pay their bills? Raise their hand. [Traders boo.] President Obama, are you listening?" Santelli lampooned modern macroeconomic theory ("The government should spend a trillion dollars an hour because we'll get $1.5 trillion back"), evoked fears of communism ("Y'know, Cuba used to have mansions and a relatively decent economy. They moved from the individual to the collective. Now they're driving '54 Chevys"), played on antigovernment sentiments ("The last place I'm ever going to live or work is DC"), and evoked the Framers ("If you read our Founding Fathers, people like Benjamin Franklin and Jefferson, what we're doing in this country now is making them roll over in their graves"). In the midst of his rant, Santelli shouted, "We're thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party in July. All you capitalists that want to show up to Lake Michigan, I'm going to start organizing" (Etheridge 2009).

Santelli could have trained his attention solely on the housing market. Instead, he linked it to the Framers' intentions, and Keynesian economics, and the unfairness of redistributing wealth from the responsible people to the irresponsible. If the Tea Party was narrowly focused on economic issues, the movement might have withered as the economy improved. Instead, it has gone on to embrace a wide range of issues, including armed drones and electronic surveillance, as well as immigration, abortion, and same-sex marriage.

While some observers see roots in nativism, racial animus, or deep-pocket funding, the endurance of the Tea Party may also be explained by the fact that its philosophy "makes sense" to part of the electorate. On one hand, the movement is not a Johnny-one-note that falls from view after a season of protest; it has found ways to enunciate philosophical connections across a wide range of political issues, even where those who disagree might see contradiction. On the other hand, the ideology is not so diffuse that it can't sharpen its message to a singular point, in contrast to the short-lived "Occupy" movement, which seemed to have so many messages that it lacked an effective one.

The Tea Party message is aided by the Madisonian design of American government, which protects minority interests by separating powers and providing checks and balances. In the Senate, custom and rule augur against majority domination. While the House of Representatives proceeds on majority rule, a minority within the majority can be pivotal in a time when the carrots and sticks of leadership have little persuasive force. (House Speaker John Boehner notes that "[i]t is hard to keep 218 frogs in a wheelbarrow long enough to get a bill passed" ["Boehner Likens Congress" 2012].) Whether or not the Framers would have desired routine filibusters in the Senate and closed rules in the House, both institutions permit intense minorities like Tea Party legislators to stand up for their positions and influence legislation (or block it).

Furthermore, winner-take-all elections tend to keep Tea Party Republicans inside the ranks of the GOP. The two-party system illuminated by Maurice Duverger is hostile to the emergence of a "third party," so conservative movements find ways to operate within the two-party system (Riker 1982). As a practical matter, the Tea Party would be ill advised to go it alone—as might be expected in a parliamentary system—but it can recruit candidates, and where necessary it can run against pragmatists. In states, districts, and localities where the party faithful can be assured of victory in the general election (oftentimes through congressional redistricting), the energy that pours into a Republican primary can help clarify the choices faced by Republican voters. (Cruz does not have to worry about national polls so long as Texans are satisfied with his work.) In strongly Republican jurisdictions, traditionalists or libertarians in safe seats (including those that have been redistricted to remain safe) can disregard pragmatists.

The electoral downside for GOP pragmatists can be seen in toss-up districts and middle-of-the-road states. Some Republicans argue that Tea Party candidates routinely cost the party seats in the U.S. Senate. Sharron Angle's failure to defeat Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Christine O'Donnell's loss in a general election after beating a sitting Republican in the primary are frequently mentioned. In 2012, Tea Party Republicans lost promising Senate races in Missouri and Indiana after they made puzzling references to rape and abortion. Conservative analyst Michael Barone has lamented the party's "unforced errors" and has noted both good and bad in the Tea Party, which, he said, "brings some talented people into politics—think of Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson for example—but it also brings some wackos and weirdos and witches, and we put too many of them on the ticket" (McLaughlin 2012). The national coordinator for the Tea Party Patriots, however, dug in after Barack Obama was re-elected: "I think we have not been as successful as we like. It is an impermeable steel bubble. We are really, really realizing that in order to have an impact it is going to have to come from the ground up—from the cities, the counties and the states" (McLaughlin 2012).

For Republican pragmatists, Tea Party endurance becomes problematic. In 2010, Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and U.S. House member Mike Castle of Delaware were cast aside in favor of Tea Party–backed candidates with little general-election potential. (Murkowski later won as a write-in candidate.) In Utah, in 2012, Mike Lee defeated incumbent Republican senator Bob Bennett. Even when Tea Party candidates do not pose an actual threat, the potential lies in the background. In August 2013, a series of Tea Party operations in Tennessee counties warned Senator Lamar Alexander to retire from office since "our great nation can no longer afford compromise and bipartisanship, two traits for which you have become famous" (Clines 2013). Other comparatively moderate legislators—Senator Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine, and Congressman Steve LaTourette of Ohio—retired in the midst of Tea Party politics. Grover Norquist, a lifelong libertarian who created the well-known Americans for Tax Reform's "Taxpayer Protection Pledge," captured the frustration of pragmatists in his assessment of Ted Cruz's approach to politics, as evidenced in the battle over the government shutdown: "He [said he] would lead this grassroots movement that would get Democrats to change their mind. So the House passed it, it went to the Senate, and Ted Cruz said, oh, we don't have the votes over here. . . . He pushed House Republicans into traffic and wandered away" (Klein 2013).

While some moderates in the GOP may dislike Tea Party tactics, and while Democrats often dismiss the Tea Party as a well-funded faction of uninformed voters having vaguely dubious goals, the strength of the movement

comes from its strategic position in contemporary American politics. Tea Party ideas draw from both libertarian and traditionalist thinking, and the American system of government provides an opportunity to voice minority opinions even when activists lack governing power. They can freely employ the legislative tools of obstruction. When pragmatists can bring Tea Party legislators on board, the alliance is powerful. When the libertarians and traditionalists disagree with each other, Republican influence is diminished. However, when the Tea Party's merger of libertarians and traditionalists is unified against pragmatist goals as a single, oppositional brand, it can be a disruptive force that pragmatic Republicans would like to wish away, but cannot.

IV

SUPER PACS AND PARTISAN RESOURCES

13

Political Party Activity in the 2012 Elections

Sophisticated Orchestration or Diminished Influence?

Diana Dwyre and Robin Kolodny

IN A 1998 ARTICLE, WE ARGUED that the strength of political parties in elections cannot be gauged simply in terms of contributions or expenditures dedicated to particular campaigns, but also by the role parties play in connecting nonparty actors to competitive candidates in an effort to secure or maintain majority control of Congress (Kolodny and Dwyre 1998). Are political parties still "orchestrating" the actions of others in the congressional electoral arena for gaining majorities in the House of Representatives 16 years later? We know that recently, more organizations have entered the electoral arena, but do these new organizations dilute the influence of parties, or are their actions still *orchestrated* by party organizations?

Since parties are prohibited from directly coordinating with many of the groups that conduct these activities, some assume that parties' central role has waned (Carney 2013; La Raja 2008). Others have suggested that the parties remain central to efforts to elect partisans to office. For example, these outside groups can be seen as part of a broader "partisan web" (Koger, Masket, and Noel 2009), or that parties should be viewed as "enduring multilayered coalitions" that include allied partisan groups (Herrnson 2009). Yet some evidence suggests that the parties' goals are being thwarted by the efforts of some outside groups that, for example, try to oust incumbents in primaries who are likely to win the general election and replace them with extreme candidates who may go on to lose the seat for the party (see, for example, FreedomWorks and the Tea Party Alliance in 2010 and 2012).

We examine whether the activities of these various partisan groups actually do serve the parties' goals of securing or maintaining majority control

of Congress, specifically the U.S. House of Representatives. We hypothesize that the recent increased level of activity by more nonparty groups has not eclipsed the party's orchestration function. Indeed, party organizations are likely more central, rather than less, to the overall strategic landscape.

A Theory of Parties in Elections

Our work relies on the concept of party orchestration, so it is important that we make our terms clear. We argue that parties in the American context are seat maximizers in the Downsian sense (Downs 1957). That is, the competitiveness of a seat drives the focus of party efforts, not policy positions or candidate ideology. In this view, parties do what they can to attract interest and resources to the most competitive races—to protect their vulnerable incumbents, to encourage strong challengers who might dislodge the other party's incumbents, or to win open-seat races.

The other component of our argument, orchestration, is explicitly not about direct control over the actions of other election-oriented groups. Instead, we use the Oxford English Dictionary's nonmusic definition of *orchestrate*: "plan or coordinate the elements of (a situation) to produce a desired effect, especially surreptitiously."[1] An orchestra conductor does not expect to teach musicians how to play their instruments from scratch. Instead, the conductor understands each section's strengths and limitations and uses their talents to contribute what they can, and must, to the symphony as a whole. The failure of one section of an orchestra to perform their part does not doom the entire enterprise, but it could seriously detract from the quality of the final product. Likewise, we do not expect party organizations to issue "orders" to other nonparty entities. Instead, we expect party organizations and party leaders to assess the potential contributions of each group to the party's seat-maximizing goal and to update the party's own plans, actions, and encouragement of additional actors accordingly. For example, as the number of races that are truly competitive usually narrows through the election season, the party committees will issue press releases, post on their websites, and make other public announcements about which races they are currently targeting.

A great deal has changed in the legislative party environment since the 1990s. Our argument then was that due to a change in the competitiveness of congressional elections, party organizations would accordingly become a central actor in congressional elections, rather than one subservient to candidate-based interests. We argued that parties harmonized the activities of various actors in the party orbit (now known as party networks). This included three major activities:

1. Efforts to coordinate party strategy and message with a policy focus.
2. Campaign finance strategies by party organizations and PACs.
3. Encouragement of member reinvestment strategies to preserve or seek majority status.

Does our argument still hold up in the changed landscape of congressional elections? We address these activities in turn to discover whether parties are still conducting the orchestra or have diminished influence in elections. Throughout, we remain focused on the key question—how central is the party?

In 1998 we included the significant new development of a coordinated party policy strategy by the Republicans in 1994, *The Contract with America*, and the Democrats in 1996, *Families First* (Kolodny and Dwyre 1998). What looked to be a new trend in congressional party policy presentation turned out to be a temporary device. We now see these party policy coordination efforts as important for reorienting the congressional parties from their belief that majority/minority status was fixed toward a belief that majority status was legitimately competitive. While policy pledges seem to have diminished, this does not mean that the parties do not provide their candidates with party-drafted policy papers and research materials; it simply means that attempts to publicize a universal congressional party platform have waned.

A Changing Campaign Finance Landscape

Campaign finance rules and regulations have changed less for political parties and their candidates in recent years than for individual spenders, nonprofit corporations, and now Super PACs. Political parties generally operate under the rules set out in the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) and its amendments, the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), and various Federal Election Commission (FEC) decisions, with little change since 2003.

The campaign finance changes since 2007 are the most significant modifications to the rules since the modern campaign finance regulatory regime was shaped in the 1970s, and these changes constitute a clear trend toward deregulation of nonparty actors. Corporations and unions can now use their treasury funds (i.e., corporate profits and union dues) to attempt to influence the outcome of elections due to the 2010 *Citizens United* decision. *Citizens United* and other decisions led to the emergence of a new type of federal PAC, the Super PAC, which can raise and spend unlimited contributions to expressly advocate for the election or defeat of a candidate. Additionally, the

increased use of 501(c) nonprofit corporations, which are not required to disclose their donors, has decreased the amount of campaign finance data available (Center for Responsive Politics 2011).

The recent deregulation of the activities of nonparty campaign finance participants began in 2007 with the Supreme Court's decision in *Federal Election Commission v. Wisconsin Right to Life* (551 U.S. 449 [2007]). This decision allowed corporations and labor unions to direct funds to organizations (527 committees and 501(c) nonprofit corporations) to pay for advertisements run close to Election Day that feature a candidate as long as the ad does not include an appeal to vote for or against a specific candidate. This ruling undercut BCRA's attempt to regulate ads run close to Election Day that mention or feature a candidate whether or not they included an express advocacy appeal. Before the 2007 Wisconsin decision, 501(c) nonprofits spent virtually nothing on federal elections, but in the first election after the decision, 501(c)s spent $79 million in 2008, as figure 13.1 indicates (Center for Responsive Politics 2010).

In 2010, the courts acted clearly to deregulate the federal campaign finance system. In *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (558 U.S. 310 [2010]), the Supreme Court majority declared in this 5–4 decision that restrictions on independent expenditures made by corporations violate the First Amendment right to free speech, ending over 60 years of a ban on direct corporate and union spending in federal elections in effect since the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act. The Court ruled that corporations, and by extension unions, may use their treasury funds without limit for independent expenditures during elections, as long as those expenditures are not coordinated with candidates or parties. Independent expenditures are expenditures made by individuals, parties, groups, and now corporations and unions to expressly advocate for the election or defeat of a candidate for office by, for example, using words such as "vote for" or "defeat." Such advertisements are known as express advocacy ads. With *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court overruled its 1990 decision in *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce* (494 U.S. 652) prohibiting corporate independent expenditures and the portion of their 2003 *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission* (540 U.S. 93) decision that upheld BCRA's ban on corporate use of general treasury funds for electioneering communications close to an election.

A couple of months after the *Citizens United* decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled in *SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission* (599 F.3d 686 D.C. Cir. [2010]). SpeechNow, a nonprofit association organized under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code, was formed to make only independent expenditures expressly advocating the election or defeat of federal candidates. SpeechNow challenged the constitutionality of the $5,000 limit on contributions from individuals to their group
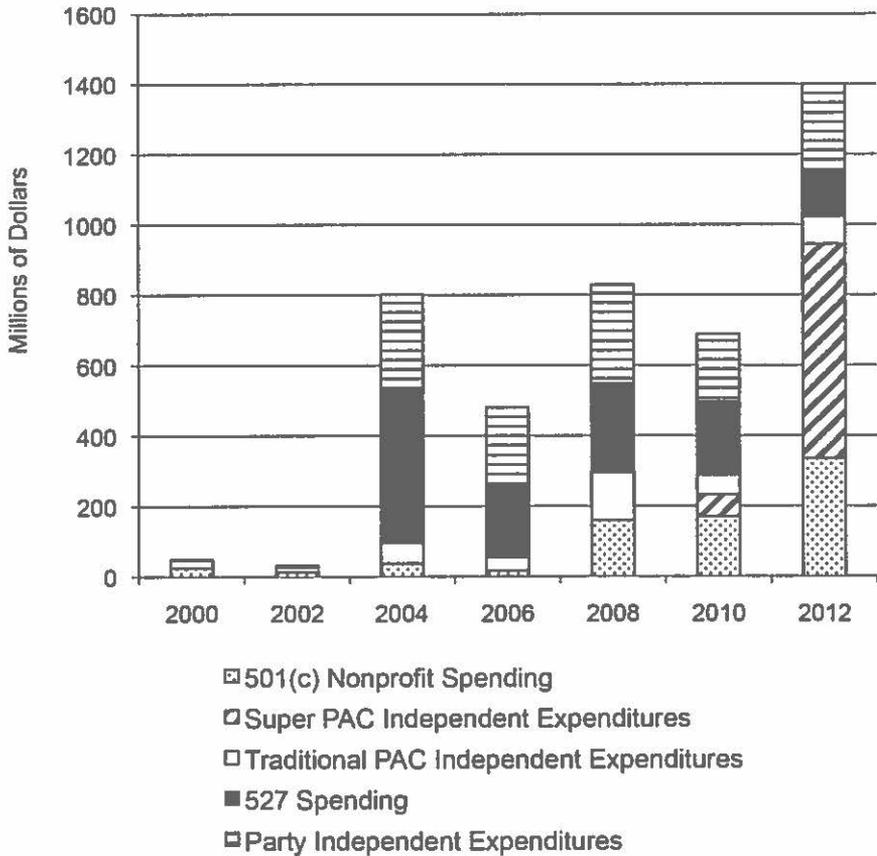
FIGURE 13.1

Reported outside spending in U.S. federal elections, 2000–2012.

Source: Party data from Federal Election Commission at www.fec.gov/press/summaries/2012/ElectionCy-cle/IE_ECYE.shtml and http://www.fec.gov/press/summaries/2012/ElectionCycle/NatlPartyYE.shtml; 527 Committee data from Center for Responsive Politics at www.opensecrets.org/527s/index.php; PAC data from Federal Election Commission at www.fec.gov/press/summaries/2012/ElectionCycle/IE_ECYE.shtml and www.fec.gov/press/2010_Full_summary_Data.shtml; Super PAC data from Center for Responsive Politics at www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/fes_summ.php; 501(c) data from Center for Responsive Politics at www.opensecrets/nonprof_summ.php. All accessed June 13–21, 2013.

as well as the requirement that the group register as a political committee and disclose its fundraising and spending. The D.C. Circuit Court ruled that limits on individual contributions to independent expenditure groups such as SpeechNow are unconstitutional because of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, in which the Court held that there is no governmental anticorruption interest in limiting nonparty independent expenditures. The D.C. Circuit Court argued that since the *Citizens United* case established that independent expenditures do not cause corruption or the appearance

of corruption, then neither do contributions to the groups that make those independent expenditures. Therefore, now there are no limits on either the money raised or the money spent by independent expenditure-only committees.

Then, in July 2010, the Federal Election Commission issued two advisory opinions to implement the *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow* decisions. The first confirmed the part of the *SpeechNow* decision that ruled that independent expenditure-only political committees are not subject to federal contribution limits. In the second opinion, the FEC exceeded the specific ruling in the *SpeechNow* decision and ruled that *Citizens United* exempted independent expenditure-only committees from the prohibitions on corporate and union contributions in addition to individual contributions. *Citizens United, SpeechNow*, and the related FEC decisions gave rise to perhaps the most significant change in the campaign finance landscape since the 1970s and led to the development of a new type of independent expenditure committee, the Super PAC.

The recent changes in campaign finance law have generally freed some nonparty organizations and individuals from the contribution, spending, and source restrictions that candidates and parties must follow. Figure 13.1 shows how the relative activity of various federal election spenders have changed since 2000, and we will consider each of the major players in turn.

527 Committees

The height of 527 activity was during the 2004 election, which led to record FEC fines for some 527s deemed to have crossed the BCRA-established line that then existed against express advocacy (Dwyre et al. 2007). The *Citizens United* case gave 527s the ability to conduct express advocacy. Yet by 2012, with a significantly changed set of campaign finance rules for 527s and other organizations, these committees were eclipsed by 501(c) groups and Super PACs.

501(c) Nonprofit Corporations

Individuals, interest groups, and now corporations and unions that want to spend money to influence federal elections, but do not want to disclose they are doing so, are legally permitted to channel unlimited amounts through 501(c) nonprofit corporations. These organizations do not have to disclose their donors and are permitted to spend unlimited amounts on express advocacy electoral activity as long as this is not their primary activity, and as long as they do not coordinate with candidates or parties.

We saw an increased use of 501(c)s in 2010 and in 2012 after the *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow* decisions (see figure 13.1), much of it due to the ad-

dition of new 501(c) nonprofits in each election cycle: in 2006 there were 18 electorally active 501(c)s, 61 in 2008, 99 in 2010, and 136 in 2012 (Center for Responsive Politics 2013a). Since the 2007 *Wisconsin* decision already allowed corporate spending to indirectly support candidates, "the major effect of *Citizens United* was thus to enhance the utility of corporate and labor money by permitting these funds to be used to directly advocate the election of candidates" (Corrado 2014).

Many critics of *Citizens United*, including President Obama, predicted that there would be a flood of corporate money into American elections. If this has happened, the money is probably being directed to 501(c) nonprofit corporations, because 501(c)s are not required to disclose the source of their donations (Center for Responsive Politics 2012c). Very little corporate money is being spent directly on federal elections, for such independent expenditures would have to be publicly disclosed. Instead, corporations prefer to shield their political activities from public view because they are wary of alienating customers, potential customers, or shareholders. Most 501(c) electoral spending is done by social welfare 501(c)(4) organizations, whose spending has increased sharply, especially since 2008 as their number has increased, while 501(c)(5) labor union spending has decreased.

Super PACs

Born out of the *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow* decisions, Super PACs (or independent expenditure-only committees) made their debut in the 2010 midterm elections. These committees can raise unlimited donations from individuals, groups, corporations, and unions and spend unlimited amounts on independent expenditures that expressly advocate the election or defeat of a candidate. They are not permitted to coordinate their activities with parties or candidates, and they must register with the FEC and disclose all of their fundraising and spending. Yet Super PACs established to support just one candidate, such as Restore Our Future for Mitt Romney and Priorities USA Action for Barack Obama in 2012, challenge this requirement for independence as well as the limits on direct contributions to candidates (Farrar-Myers and Skinner 2012).

Super PACs accounted for over 40 percent of all party and nonparty outside spending in the 2012 elections (see figure 13.1). Most of the big Super PACs, such as those that supported a presidential candidate in 2012 and others such as American Crossroads and Majority PAC, relied heavily on very large contributions from a few wealthy individuals who gave individually and/or minimally through their corporations. For example, the top contributors to conservative Super PAC American Crossroads, Dallas billionaire Har-

old Simmons and his wife, gave over $20 million to Super PACs in 2012, while his company, Contran Corporation, gave just over $4 million (Center for Responsive Politics 2012a). Super PACs do receive contributions from 501(c) nonprofits as well, and these transfers of funds may contain undisclosed corporate donations originally given to the 501(c). Thus, some corporate money may be making it to Super PACs under the radar.

How Has the New Campaign Finance Landscape Affected the Parties?

The parties are more heavily regulated and restricted in their fundraising and spending than 527 committees, 501(c) nonprofit corporations, and Super PACs, and indeed the parties' level of participation relative to nonparty spenders has declined in recent election cycles, as figure 13.2 shows. Has the parties' political influence also declined, or, as we argued in 1998, have the parties adjusted to the new campaign finance environment and become the orchestrators of nonparty campaign finance activity?

A number of scholars have argued recently that modern American parties should be seen not simply as the official party committees headquartered in Washington, D.C., and state capitals but rather as what Herrnson calls "enduring multilayered coalitions of individuals and groups that possess mutual goals and share interlocking relationships" that include allied partisan groups such as candidate committees, leadership PACs, and allied PACs (Herrnson and Kirkland 2013, 3), and now partisan 527 committees, 501(c)s, and Super PACs. Koger, Masket, and Noel see nonparty allied groups as part of a broader party network or "partisan web" (Koger, Masket, and Noel 2009). Herrnson argues that "contributions and expenditures made by party connected committees (candidate committees and leadership PACs) and allied PACs to some degree represent an outsourcing of party campaign efforts in response to legal and other limitations on formal party activity" (Herrnson and Kirkland 2013, 3).

However, rather than merely "outsourcing" party campaign efforts, might the parties have some influence over the spending decisions of these nonparty organizations? Skinner, Masket, and Dulio examined the personnel records of parties and 527 committees in the 2004 and 2006 election cycles and concluded that 527s are a form of party adaptation to new rules that limit the financial power of parties (e.g., BCRA's party soft money ban), not a disruption to the party system (Skinner, Masket, and Dulio 2013). Their network analysis of the personnel of 527 committees shows that the best-connected 527s in 2004 and 2006 "tend to have a high percentage of employees who have also

▨ Total Party Outside Spending ▢ Total Non-Party Outside Spending
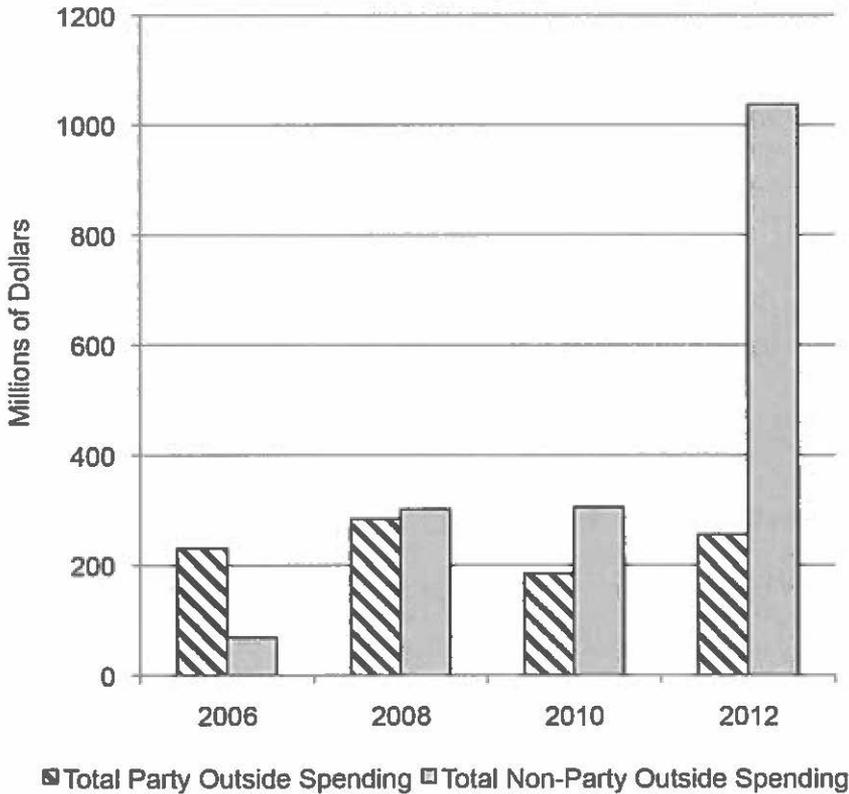
FIGURE 13.2
Total party and nonparty outside spending, 2006–2012.
Source: Center for Responsive Politics, "Total Outside Spending for Election Cycle, All Groups" at www.
opensecrets/outsidespending/cycle_tots.php?cycle=2012&view=A&chart=A (August 15, 2013).

worked for formal party organizations and top presidential campaigns," suggesting that these 527 employees were familiar with their party's goals, strategies, and tactics and may follow them (Skinner, Masket, and Dulio 2013, 141).

Herrnson and Kirkland (2013) used social network analysis on 2006 congressional campaign finance data to test a number of hypotheses about various connections between formal party organizations, party-connected committees (candidate campaign committees and leadership PACs), and allied PACs. They argue that formal party organizations are the core of each partisan campaign finance network and "influence the flow of campaign money" distributed by party-connected committees and allied PACs

(Herrnson and Kirkland 2013, 2). Their findings make it clear that formal party organizations "position themselves to exercise the greatest influence over other network members" (Herrnson and Kirkland 2013, 18). If parties are orchestrators, how much influence do the parties actually need to exercise over how these party-allied groups raise and spend their money? Might it be enough that the parties monitor their network allies and then work around their priorities and send signals to allied groups?

Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz analyzed the activities of donors to congressional candidates outside their districts, and they conclude, "large nonresident individual donations are . . . extensions of the modern parties' organizations into the electorate" (2008, 392). Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz point out that the significant information costs associated with identifying competitive opportunities are not likely to be paid by individual donors but are instead borne by parties and candidates that share donor lists and make fundraising pitches for targeted candidates (Gimpel, Lee, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2008). Others have pointed to additional means of party influence over the distribution of other actors' campaign dollars, such as the mingling that takes place at fundraising events (Herrnson and Kirkland 2013, 3) and making political intelligence about party-targeted races known to potential contributors (Dwyre and Kolodny 2014).

The parties certainly make it clear what races and candidates they are targeting. In 2012, the NRCC issued a series of press releases over the campaign season titled, "New NRCC TV Ad on _____" (fill in the blank with Democratic candidate's name). A typical release began: "Wanted to make sure you saw the latest NRCC TV ad hitting Congresswoman Betty Sutton for her anti-jobs agenda" (National Republican Congressional Committee 2012). The NRCC spent $1.8 million, the DCCC spent $1.3 million, and nonparty outside groups spent $6.9 million on this incumbent versus incumbent race in Ohio's 16th district in which Betty Sutton was defeated by Republican Jim Renacci.

Both parties also publicly display on their websites and otherwise advertise their targeted races each election cycle. The DCCC's "Red to Blue 2012" program "highlights top Democratic campaigns across the country, and offers them financial, communications, grassroots, and strategic support" (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee 2012). The site featured 55 Red to Blue candidates and directed the viewer to click on "Contribute to Red to Blue candidates on ActBlue" (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee 2012).[2] The link to ActBlue opened on a page that listed the 55 targeted Red to Blue candidates and a box with a dollar sign next to each name (ActBlue. com 2012). ActBlue's PAC gave $50.7 million to political parties in 2012 and sent $45.4 million in contributions to candidates (Center for Responsive Politics 2012d).

Party and Nonparty Spending in 2012

What about groups such as super PACs and 501(c) organizations making independent expenditures and electioneering communications? Are they targeting the same races that the parties target? Are the parties orchestrating their spending decisions?

We examined the top party-targeted House races in 2012, those where either the NRCC or the DCCC coordinated and independent expenditures were over $100,000, and the corresponding reported spending in these races by PACs, Super PACs, and 501(c) groups.[3] There were 48 such races, with a high of combined DCCC and NRCC spending of $5,026,527 in Illinois's 17th district, and a low of $616,666 spent by the Hill Committees in Iowa's 4th district. The DCCC made coordinated and/or independent expenditures over $100,000 in 54 House races in 2012. The NRCC did so in 50 House races. Table 13.1 shows the average expenditures by party and nonparty outside groups. It indicates that party-targeted races did indeed attract big spending by outside groups.

Another way to examine whether the parties are orchestrating the spending strategies of allied groups is to ask whether groups that seek to elect partisans but are not allied with the party leaders (e.g., those who follow an ideological rather than seat-maximizing strategy) do *not* follow the party's lead. In the

TABLE 13.1

2012 Spending by Hill Committees and Nonparty Outside Groups, where DCCC or NRCC Made $100,000 or More in Coordinated and Independent Expenditures

DCCC + NRCC Coordinated and Independent Spending (n)	Average CCC Spending per Race	Average Total Nonparty Outside Group Spending per Race*
$5,000,000 – 5,999,999 (1)	$5,026,525	$3,939,708
$4,000,000 – 4,999,999 (7)	$4,331,659	$3,569,009
$3,000,000 – 3,999,999 (13)	$3,517,708	$3,010,922
$2,000,000 – 2,999,999 (7)	$2,400,604	$3,240,450
$1,000,000 – 1,999,999 (12)	$1,437,980	$2,292,619
$500,000 – 999,999 (8)	$787,828	$2,497,851

Source: DCCC data from Center for Responsive Politics, "Democratic Congressional Campaign Cmts: Expenditures for and Against Candidates, 2011–2012" at http://www.opensecrets.org/parties/indexp.php?cmte=DCCC&cycle=2012 (August 11, 2013); NRCC data from Center for Responsive Politics, "National Republican Congressional Cmte: Expenditures For and Against Candidates, 2011–2012" at http://www.opensecrets.org/parties/indexp.php?cmte=NRCC&cycle=2012 (August 11, 2013); Nonparty spending data from Center for Responsive Politics, "2012 Outside Spending, by Candidate (excluding Party Committees)" at http://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/summ.php?cycle=2012&disp=C&pty=N&type=A (August 11, 2013).

* Includes all *reported* spending by PACs, Super PACs, and 501(c) groups. Note that all spending by these organizations is not reported. So these figures represent the best available data given the gaps in reporting.

next section we examine whether there is a *lack of* party orchestration where we expect to find just that—with Tea Party groups.

The Tea Party and the NRCC

Without question, the Republican Party currently confronts an identifiable countermovement in congressional races—the Tea Party. When looking at the role of party organizations, party support in primary campaigns is deemed negligible except for 1994 and 2006 (Boatright 2013). This has long been a feature of party standard operating procedure: the parties do not directly meddle in local party struggles. Rather, the parties inject themselves in the general elections in which majority status can be meaningfully pursued.

If parties are not encouraging primary challenges, who is? Boatright finds that "outside" groups have the potential to change the dynamics in primaries due to their new avenues for raising money and their ability to attract attention for their role (Boatright 2013). Indeed, it is a group's desire to be independent from the parties that encourages behavior counter to the party orchestration thesis. For majority control to be sustainable, races have to be prioritized according to competitiveness. Once the chamber is organized, legislative agendas can be formulated and potentially achieved. However, if a group has goals that are contrary to the parties' central mission, say ideological consistency or extremism, they are not only outside the reach of the parties' conductor batons, they may be actively working against the party's goals. This is where the Tea Party sits for the Republican Party.

To explore this proposition further, we examined the 34 House races where FreedomWorks, the best-funded Tea Party group, was active in 2012. In table 13.2 we recorded the extent of the financial investment in each of these races by FreedomWorks and by the NRCC. FreedomWorks spent $5.8 million in total on these 34 races, ranging from a low of $49 to a high of $2.2 million. The NRCC spent $12.4 million on these same 34 races, ranging from a low of $0 to a high of $2.4 million.

But these totals obscure the real story. In 17 of these 34 races, the NRCC spent nothing at all, compared to FreedomWorks' $1.1 million. That is because all of these seats were considered safe for "a" Republican in the general election. What was unclear was which Republican candidate would emerge from the primary. Because of redistricting after the 2010 census, some Republicans found themselves in difficult circumstances. Three of these districts had two Republican incumbent members running against each other—a situation in which the NRCC would famously stand aside, but where FreedomWorks came in on the side of the candidate more consonant with its issue positions.

TABLE 13.2
FreedomWorks and NRCC Spending on FreedomWorks'
Targeted Congressional Races, 2012

Race	FreedomWorks Spending	NRCC Spending
Illinois 8	$2,220,951	$533,514
Louisiana 3	$790,520	$0
New York 24	$405,850	$1,520,127
Utah 4	$357,967	$628,871
Florida 22	$313,608	$10,000
Florida 18	$301,014	$10,000
Colorado 6	$227,339	$2,205,617
Pennsylvania 12	$193,000	$2,467,570
Illinois 12	$170,284	$1,162,161
Michigan 3	$128,822	$0
Wisconsin 8	$110,000	$6,372
Florida 2	$92,099	$280,441
Kentucky 6	$88,622	$1,155,572
Nevada 4	$70,353	$18,962
Indiana 2	$50,171	$66,620
Arizona 4	$46,671	$0
Pennsylvania 18	$35,119	$0
Indiana 5	$33,758	$0
Iowa 4	$26,485	$521,893
Michigan 11	$24,559	$4,750
Georgia 9	$20,124	$0
North Dakota AL	$15,991	$0
North Carolina 11	$6,655	$0
Kentucky 4	$6,595	$0
North Carolina 8	$6,461	$1,039,111
North Carolina 9	$5,652	$0
Illinois 16	$5,324	$0
Missouri 2	$3,995	$0
Florida 6	$3,505	$0
Ohio 2	$1,176	$0
New York 21	$748	$782,093
Montana AL	$600	$0
California 1	$49	$0
Georgia 12	$49	$0

Source: Center for Responsive Politics, "Targeted Candidates, FreedomWorks Recipients 2012" at http://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/recips.php?cmte=FreedomWorks&cycle=2012 (accessed October 31, 2013).

A similar situation arose in seven open seats that were Republican leaning (often where the incumbent House member ran for a higher office) in which the NRCC stayed out but FreedomWorks came in. A further seven races were primary challenges to Republican incumbents in safe Republican seats.

The other 17 races are where both groups invested show a rather different pattern. Six of these races were highly competitive (Republicans won four, Democrats won two), so the NRCC invested over a million dollars in each of them. The FreedomWorks investments in these races ranged from $6,461 to $405,850, far from the highest amount they invested. Other races on this list had token investments from the NRCC and substantial investments from FreedomWorks. Often, FreedomWorks took a big chance on very risky candidates whose prospects were slim at best. Yet in nearly every case, the *outcome* of the contest reflected the NRCC's preferred primary candidate. The Tea Party investments in congressional races show that we indeed did *not* find party influence where we expected there would be little or none. This contrasts rather sharply with our findings for the campaign finance activities of other, less ideological nonparty groups where, as expected, we found evidence of party orchestration.

A Closer Look at Possible Party Orchestration

To further explore the orchestration thesis, we examined how seven "outside" spenders prioritized House races they targeted in 2012. Our seven include the independent and coordinated expenditures of the two House party committees (the DCCC and the NRCC) and the independent expenditures or advocacy spending of five other groups: FreedomWorks, American Crossroads, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the House Majority PAC, and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). To explore the party orchestration thesis, we needed to compare the parties' spending decisions (DCCC and NRCC) with both traditional "allied" groups (the Chamber of Commerce for Republicans and SEIU, a major labor union, for Democrats) and new Super PACs that may be working outside the partisan sphere (American Crossroads for the Republicans and House Majority PAC for the Democrats). We included FreedomWorks in this analysis to see whether they were also unaligned with other conservative groups.

Of the 435 races in 2012, outside money was spent by at least one of these seven groups in 172 races. We find 79 of these House races with only one of our key outside spenders involved, leaving only 93 House races with two or more outside spenders. In 52 of these races, there were four or more outside spenders.

Our party orchestration thesis suggests that the parties should be related to, but not duplicative of, other groups with whom they share a common electoral interest. So we should see a positive correlation between the parties and their affiliated groups, but not a perfect correlation. Table 13.3 shows that the DCCC has a statistically significant correlation with the targeting of races with both the House Majority PAC and the SEIU. The DCCC-House Majority PAC correlation is .410, which is about what we would expect if this group's spending was orchestrated by but not perfectly matched with the DCCC, its allied party. As a Super PAC created solely for electoral purposes, the House Majority PAC shares the DCCC's seat-maximizing goal and therefore focuses on many of the same races. Surprisingly, the DCCC has a *negative* correlation with SEIU of -.189. We certainly did not expect that level of incongruence, but it suggests that SEIU, as a policy-focused organization, is pursuing more of an access than a seat-maximizing strategy. There is no significant correlation between SEIU and the House Majority PAC, which is predicted by the orchestration thesis.

With Republicans, table 13.3 shows a significant and positive correlation between the NRCC and the Chamber of Commerce (.422) and American Crossroads (.347). Therefore, the Chamber and the party are more in sync with their election priorities than the party and American Crossroads. Indeed, the Chamber and the NRCC have been partisan allies for much longer than the NRCC and relative newcomer American Crossroads have. As we anticipated, FreedomWorks' priorities are not correlated with any other group's spending. Not only is FreedomWorks not in the orchestra, they are not even in the theatre when it comes to Republican/conservative race targeting.

The party orchestration argument relies on the Downsian view of parties. By this measure, the two parties should be opposing each other in the same competitive races and thus have a high significant correlation. If parties are seat maximizers, party effort should be concentrated on the most competitive races, and both parties should have nearly identical views of which races need the most investment. We find instead that the DCCC and NRCC have a modest, highly significant correlation of .416. However, the DCCC is more highly correlated with the NRCC than with any of their affiliated groups or with the conservative affiliated groups. So the DCCC appears to conform to our expectations.

Member Investment in Majority Status

In the late 1990s, the idea that incumbent members of Congress would actively campaign for other members by either giving away their own campaign funds or actively stumping for others was in its infancy. Now that the

TABLE 13.3
Correlations of Party and Select Group Spending, 2012[1]

Correlations		NRCC_coord_ie	DCCC_coord_IE	HouseMajPAC	SEIU	ChCommerce	AmCrossrds	FreedomW
NRCC_coord_ie	Pearson Correlation	1	0.416**	0.587**	0.141	0.422**	0.347**	0.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0.065	0	0	0.29
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
DCCC_coord_IE	Pearson Correlation	0.416**	1	0.410**	-0.189*	0.228**	0.205**	-0.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0.013	0.003	0.007	0.632
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
HouseMajPAC	Pearson Correlation	0.587**	0.410**	1	0.101	0.338**	0.340**	0.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0.186	0	0	0.943
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
SEIU	Pearson Correlation	0.141	-0.189*	0.101	1	0.158*	0.09	-0.241**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.065	0.013	0.186		0.038	0.242	0.001
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
ChCommerce	Pearson Correlation	0.422**	0.228**	0.338**	0.158*	1	0.260**	0.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.003	0	0.038		0.001	0.288
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
AmCrossrds	Pearson Correlation	0.347**	0.205**	0.340**	0.09	0.260**	1	0.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.007	0	0.242	0.001		0.783
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
FreedomW	Pearson Correlation	0.081	-0.037	0.005	-0.241**	0.082	0.021	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.29	0.632	0.943	0.001	0.288	0.783	
	N	172	172	172	172	172	172	172

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

1. Note that we used a binary code for these calculations: 0 if no money was spent and 1 if any money was spent.

Source: Compiled by authors from Federal Election Commission data.

contested nature of majority status in Congress has become institutionalized, party leaders put even more pressure on sitting incumbents to invest in maintaining or pursuing majorities. There was understandable resistance to the increasing demands by party leaders for more and more contributions from their officeholders—we always hear the old canard about how members HATE spending time fundraising. However, incumbents quickly discovered that their closest financial supporters would be willing to give more money to them to help further their position in Congress. Members were helped tremendously by the BCRA's new higher individual limits on donations to candidates. Since 2004, members have been able to accept $2,000 (adjusted for inflation) per election from an individual instead of the $1,000 (without adjustment for inflation) limit in place from 1974 to 2002. For the 2014 elections, that limit has risen to $2,600.[4] Additionally, more members have been forming leadership PACs, which allow their donors to give even more money to help their favorite members to further the party's interests.

Why don't members just give over their fundraising lists to the party committees? After all, donors could give up to $30,800 in 2012 to national party committees. The answer is that the motivations of congressional donors seem much more local than national (Francia et al. 2004). Members could not rely on directing donations to the party organizations even if they wanted to. For one, there is no guarantee that the donor would follow through on his or her promise to give to the party directly. Perhaps more importantly, donors going directly to the parties do not allow the member to claim credit for producing that cash, and the ability to claim credit for fundraising for the common good may rival legislative abilities in increasing one's position in Congress.

There are four fundamental methods for members to increase funds available for the parties:

1. Transfers from the candidate's personal campaign committee (PCC) to the party congressional campaign committee (CCC)
2. Donations to candidates from a candidate's personal campaign committee (PCC)
3. Donations to candidates through a Leadership PAC (LPAC)
4. Collective fundraising on behalf of a CCC

We know that fundraising from members via the first three modes has mushroomed since 1994, as Heberlig and Larson demonstrate (2012). Current trends show a leveling off after a tremendous trajectory of growth, as figure 13.3 illustrates.

— — — Total Redistribution
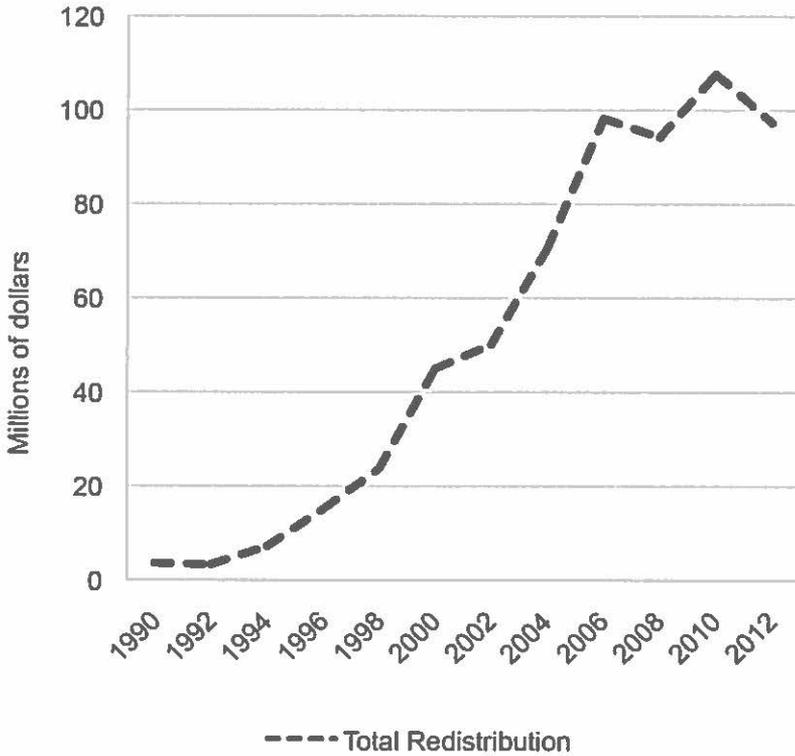
FIGURE 13.3
Total redistribution of House candidate funds to other candidates (via PCCs
and LPACs) and party committees (2012 dollars).
Source: Data obtained from Eric S. Heberlig and Bruce A. Larson, August 8, 2013.

Transfers to CCCs

Since the 1994 elections, all incumbents have been assessed "dues" to pay to
their relevant congressional campaign committee on a sliding scale commen-
surate with the prestige of their leadership or committee positions, especially
in the House. Figure 13.4 shows the substantial increase in funds transferred
starting in 2004 (when BCRA doubled individual contribution limits), peak-
ing for the Democrats in 2008 and the Republicans in 2012. The transfer of
funds from a PCC to a CCC is unlimited under federal campaign finance law
(11 CFR 113.2).

Members Giving to Candidates

Some incumbents redistribute campaign funds directly to candidates in
addition to collective party donations. Campaign finance laws allow a federal
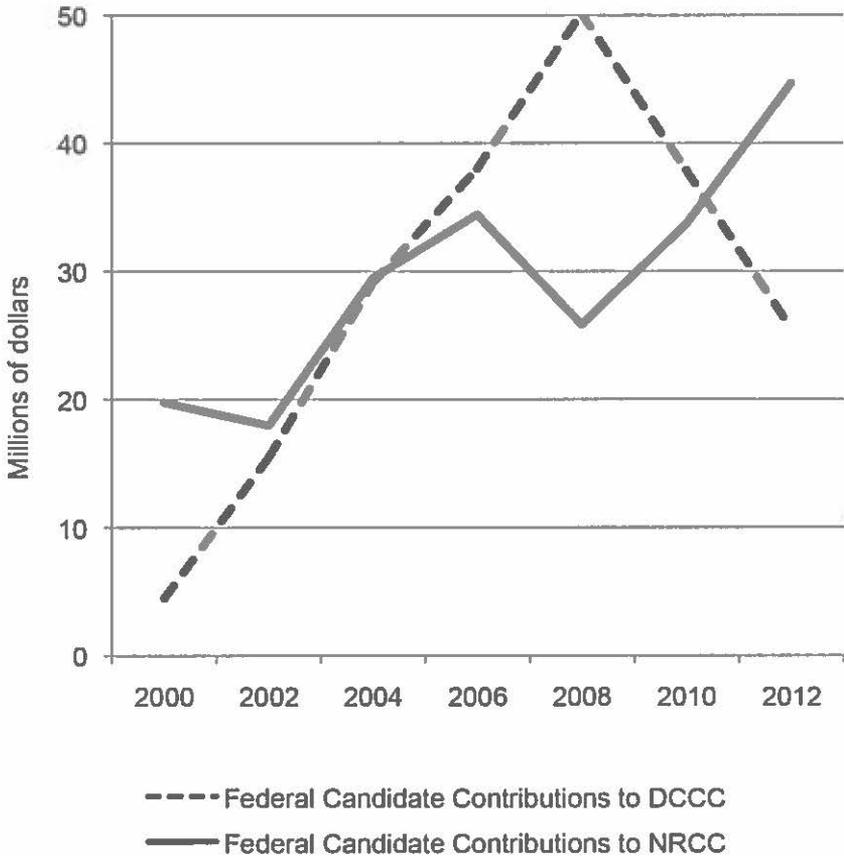
FIGURE 13.4
Federal candidates' contributions to the DCCC and NRCC, 2000–2012 (in 2012 dollars).
Source: compiled from Federal Election Commission data at www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/candc-mte_info.shtml (August 13, 2013).

candidate's authorized committee(s) to contribute no more than $2,000 per election to another federal candidate's authorized committee(s) (11 CFR 102.12(c)(2)).[5] This regulation treats federal candidate committees as individual donors without the benefit of inflation indexing. Figure 13.5 shows the steady increase in direct member donations, particularly since 1996, when majority status first came into serious contention.

Why do members do this? Heberlig and Larson have conducted extensive research into members' donations to their parties and other candidates and how this behavior assists members' ambitions within Congress (see, for example, Heberlig and Larson 2012). They explain that donors are unaware that
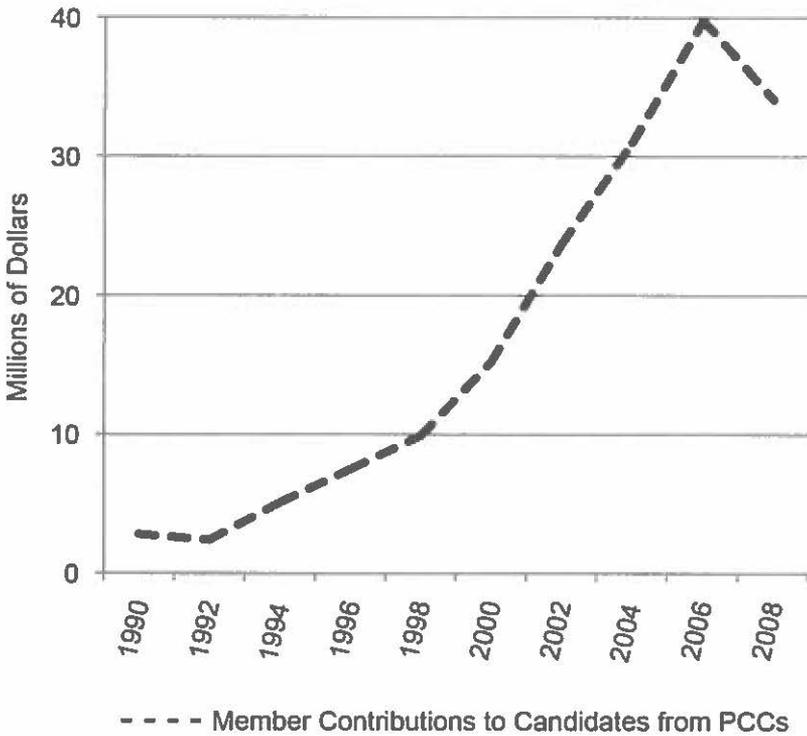
FIGURE 13.5
House members' contributions to other candidates from PCCs (in 2012 dollars).
Source: Data obtained from Eric S. Heberlig and Bruce A. Larson, August 8, 2013.

their funds may be used for the election expenses of others. Yet it is relatively easy work for many members to ask their loyal donors for just a bit more each election cycle.

Leadership PACs to Candidates

Leadership PACs are organizations created by members of Congress to donate to candidates and support their campaign endeavors generally. Creating an LPAC allows for higher donation limits than can be made from a PCC (up to $5,000 per election rather than $2,000 per election). It also allows donors to give higher amounts to the LPAC than to a PCC ($5,000 for LPACs versus $2,000 plus a COLA for PCCs). At the same time, LPACs are multicandidate committees, meaning that the PAC must donate to at least five federal candidates in order to enjoy the higher contribution and expenditure limits. The number of LPACs has been steadily rising, as have their total receipts and

contributions. Figure 13.6 shows a steep rise in LPAC contributions beginning in 2000, making for a very steep rise after the passage of BCRA in 2002 and leveling off only around 2006. The subtotals shown for Democrats and Republicans mirror the changes in majority status, with Democrats achieving parity with Republicans in 2008 after regaining control of the House and Republicans regaining the lead as of 2012.

Cooperating with Party Fundraising Efforts

The various aspects of member investments discussed here suggest that House members do act to promote the party's collective goal of attaining
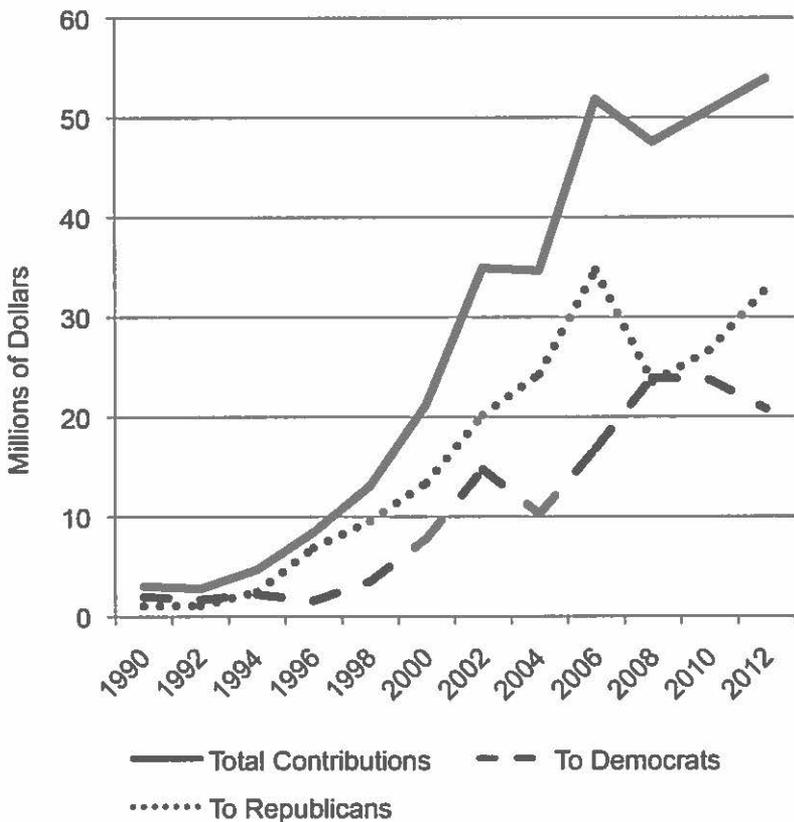
FIGURE 13.6
Leadership PAC contributions to congressional candidate campaigns.
Source: Center for Responsive Politics, "Leadership PACs: Long-Term Contribution Trends," at http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/totals.php?cycle=2012&ind=Q03 (Accessed August 22, 2013).

or maintaining majority status, as well as their own goals such as leadership ambition. Figure 13.4, in particular, shows that members have increased their support of their party committees significantly since 2000. This support of the most important collective party goal (i.e., majority status) is evidence that the parties' member reinvestment strategies are working. The congressional campaign committees are requesting and receiving members' party "dues," a clear indication that the parties' efforts to orchestrate the financial decisions of their members are working.

Conclusion

In spite of the many significant changes in the political and campaign finance environment since our original article was published in 1998, many that seem to challenge the influence of the parties, we still find ample evidence that the parties have remained the central actor that orchestrates the strategic decision making of other, nonparty political actors. Most of the major and top spending Super PACs, 501(c) nonprofits, and other nonparty groups are directing a good deal of their spending to the same races that the parties target. Indeed, the parties make it quite clear to allied groups which candidates or races they are targeting in pursuit of majority status, and these groups generally follow the same spending strategies. Where we expected to find little or no party influence in election spending strategies, there was indeed very little, as our look at the spending strategies of the Tea Party-backed FreedomWorks illustrates. Moreover, the congressional parties have asked their own members to support the parties' efforts by giving directly to the CCCs, and House members have given much more than they did in the late 1990s.

These findings challenge the notion that the parties are losing influence in the face of growing competition with many more nonparty groups and the parties' relatively restricted ability to raise and spend money on congressional races. Parties are certainly not the monolithic political actors of the old days, but they also are not being squeezed out or marginalized by other political actors. The parties' ability to get others to join them in pursuing their primary goal of majority status is a clear indication of the parties' capacity for adaptation and of their continued influence.

As the collective benefits of majority status have become clear to members of Congress and affiliated interest groups, we expect that more avenues for campaign spending will produce fewer, not more, competitive races. This may seem counterintuitive to some who "follow the money," but recent trends suggest that parties in Washington and in state capitals do what they can to shore up seats they expect to control, narrowing the scope of conflict

in congressional elections. Efforts by ideological groups such as the Tea Party had very limited impact.

Further research on party-nonparty group connections will provide a clearer picture of the dynamics of the parties' role in these relationships. Do major donors have an explicit strategy for giving resources to parties and affiliated nonparty groups? Does the professional campaign community closely represent a partisan network with the formal party organizations at the core? Will members become even more insulated from demands for constituency representation in favor of party loyalty? Our party orchestration thesis suggests that the answer to these questions is yes, and that American parties will resemble their parliamentary cousins more than they have in the past—for better or for worse.

Notes

1. Oxford English Dictionary Online, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/orchestrate (accessed October 31, 2013).

2. ActBlue is a federally registered PAC that "serves as a conduit for online contributions to Democratic candidates and committees . . . bundles and transmits earmarked contributions from individuals raised on their website to specific candidates" (Center for Responsive Politics 2013b).

3. Some spending, such as some electioneering communications, is not fully reported. Our data include only spending reported by these organizations.

4. Contribution Limits for 2013–2014, http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/contrib.shtml#Contribution_Limits, February 2013 (accessed October 27, 2013).

5. See "FEC Announces 2011–2012 Campaign Cycle Contribution Limits"—especially footnote 5—at http://www.fec.gov/press/20110203newlimits.shtml.

14

Classifying Super PACs

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ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED developments in the 2012 elections was the electioneering activity of Super PACs. More formally known as independent expenditure-only committees, Super PACs are a new mode of raising and spending money in elections that exist side by side with other modes of raising and spending money. Super PACs are limited to making independent expenditures in campaigns, but unlike conventional PACs, party committees, and candidates, they do not have contribution limits. This chapter uses data from the 2010 and 2012 elections to develop a classification of Super PACs into three broad categories based on their electoral focus: candidate specific, party centered, or interest group based.

Two surprises emerge from this classification of Super PACs in 2012. First, while many speculated that Super PACs would be extensions of corporations or unions, the reality was that they were predominantly candidate-specific entities created to help particular candidates. Of the Super PACs that spent more than $1 million in 2012, 47 percent were candidate specific, while party-centered Super PACs constituted another 33 percent of these active Super PACs. Finally, Super PACs associated with interest groups constituted 20 percent of active Super PACs in 2012; those associated with corporations or unions were less common than ones linked to ideological or single-issue groups.

The second surprise in 2010 and 2012 was that there was far more Super PAC activity on the Republican side than on the Democratic side. In 2010, 60 percent of Super PAC spending was to assist Republicans, and in 2012 the GOP edge in Super PAC spending rose to two-thirds. This difference is not

explained by the heavy Super PAC spending in contested GOP presidential contests and the absence of a contest among Democrats for the presidential nomination. During the general election, pro-Romney Super PACs outspent pro-Obama Super PACs by a ratio of nearly four to one ($190 million to $52 million).

This chapter begins with the history of how Super PACs came about and describes their activities generally in the 2010 and 2012 elections, and then classifies them into the three categories discussed above. The implications of this Super PAC classification as well as the two surprises that emerge from these data will also be examined.[1]

A Brief History of Independent Expenditures and Super PACs

Independent expenditures by individuals, conventional PACs, and party committees are not new. The Supreme Court in *Buckley* v. *Valeo* (1976) held that independent expenditures by individuals could not be limited and individuals have made independent expenditures for more than three decades. However, such expenditures by individuals have been relatively rare given the difficulties of producing and placing an election message without the help of a party or PAC. Conventional PACs have also long made unlimited independent expenditures but with funds raised under the same contribution limits as other committees. Such expenditures have been much more common, peaking in 2008 at $109 million, up from $6.6 million in 2000. In 2012 conventional PAC independent expenditures totaled nearly $92 million. It may be that some of the decline in PAC independent expenditures is explained by groups spending through Super PACs (Magleby and Goodliffe forthcoming).

Since 1996, national party committees have been allowed to make independent expenditures, but as with conventional PACs they could only do so with contributions subject to the same contribution limitations as with other funds raised by the party committees. For two decades party committees were permitted to raise unlimited individual, corporate, and union contributions for party building purposes. This "soft money" spending reached nearly $500 million in 2000 and a similar amount in 2002, but it was banned by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which took effect with the 2004 election cycle (Magleby 2011, 214). Subsequently, there has been substantial growth in party independent expenditures. In the aggregate, party committees spent under $5 million in independent expenditures in 2000 and just over $7 million in 2002. But in 2004, with soft money no longer an option, they spent $222 million independently, a figure that has remained relatively constant since then. In 2012 the party committees spent $254 in independent expenditures (Dwyre and Kolodny 2014). So Super PACs, including those as-

sociated with the parties, have not diminished party committee independent expenditures.

A constant in independent expenditures, including the new Super PACs, has been disclosure of both the source of contributions and the expenditures by the group. But for individuals and groups who want to avoid disclosure there are also ways to influence the outcome of elections, which were not new to 2010 or 2012. Corporations, for example, could make a contribution to a trade association like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and thereby mask themselves as the source of the expenditure. One type of group that generated substantial controversy in 2012 by taking unlimited and undisclosed contributions was groups organized under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. These groups were not new to 2010 or 2012, but their activity, when combined with the new Super PACs, gave added attention to the role of spending by groups other than candidates, spending that was sometimes called "outside money" or "dark money" (Rosenthal 2012). Moreover, some of these 501(c)(4) groups were closely aligned with a Super PAC. For example, the 501(c)(4) Crossroads GPS was part of a broader effort that included American Crossroads, a Republican Super PAC. While part of the surge in spending by outside groups, this chapter focuses on Super PACs and not 501(c) organizations.

What was new in 2010 and 2012 was the ability of groups to make independent expenditures with funds raised in unlimited amounts and from sources that had previously been limited or prohibited. For example, corporations had been barred from using their general treasury funds as contributions or expenditures in federal elections for roughly a century (Tillman Act 1907), and unions had been restricted from using their general treasury money for campaign expenditures for more than half a century (Taft Hartley Act 1947). The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) lifted these restrictions in some respects, while a subsequent District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals decision in *SpeechNow.org v. FEC* (2010) and related FEC rulings (FEC Advisory Opinion 2010-09 [Club for Growth] 2010; FEC, Advisory Opinion 2010-11 [Commonsense Ten 2010]) allowed for independent expenditure-only committees.

The timing of these decisions allowed only a few months for organizing the new Super PACs before the 2010 election. This election became a testing ground for groups to experiment with fundraising for this new mode of electioneering, to test what worked when spending large amounts in targeted races, and to demonstrate the potential of large contributions to donors. American Crossroads, the most active group in 2010, was formed in July 2010 by former Bush administration and GOP operatives Karl Rove, Ed Gillespie, and Steven Law (Mehta 2012a). Rove and allies "had been studying what the Democratic groups had been doing with 501(c)(4)'s" to determine how to more effectively

spend money in key contests. As a complement to their Section 501(c)(4) strategy, American Crossroads also formed a Super PAC (Rove 2013).

Democratic-aligned Super PACs were also formed in the 2010 cycle. Among them were America's Families First Action Fund (spending $6 million), NEA Advocacy Fund (spending $4.2 million), Women Vote! (spending $3.6 million), Commonsense Ten (spending $3.2 million), and Patriot Majority (spending $1.2 million) (Center for Responsive Politics 2010). These Super PACs provided early indications of some of the types of Super PACS that would emerge in 2012. For example, Commonsense Ten was a Super PAC closely connected to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and spent money in 2010 U.S. Senate races. Women Vote! was an extension of the other campaign activity of EMILY's List, a long-active, Democratic, pro-choice advocacy group for female candidates. Patriot Majority spent most of the money it raised in 2010 on the Harry Reid versus Sharon Angle U.S. Senate race in Nevada, a harbinger of the candidate-specific Super PACs that became so widespread in the 2012 presidential contest (Center for Responsive Politics 2010).

In 2010, 83 Super PACs spent a combined $63 million in independent expenditures in congressional races. Prominent examples of Super PACs in 2010 included American Crossroads, which spent $21.7 million, more than one-quarter of the $63 million in total Super PAC expenditures in 2010. As noted, Republicans enjoyed a Super PAC advantage in 2010 with three-fifths of Super PAC expenditures spent on their side. Democrats had more Super PAC spending assisting their House candidates, but the reverse was true in Senate contests in which 70 percent of Super PAC activity was intended to benefit Republicans. Roughly two of every three Super PAC dollars spent in 2010 was spent in Senate races.

Why did Republican spending by Super PACs far exceed Democratic spending? As the out-of-power party, Republicans had the unifying focus of opposing the Obama agenda. Some donor discontent with the direction of the Republican National Committee (RNC) also helped propel American Crossroads. Super PAC spending in 2010 was concentrated on a few competitive contests (as in the 1996–2002 period) with interest-group issue advocacy and party soft money (Magleby 2000; 2003). Consistent with the earlier patterns of issue advocacy and soft money spending, Super PAC spending in 2010 was largely negative in tone.

Super PACs and the 2012 Elections

Overall, Super PACs spent $607 million in 2012. The level of activity of Super PACs in 2012 varied substantially, with 74 percent of registered Super PACs

not making any expenditure. The amounts of independent expenditures varied considerably: the lowest expenditure was $34 compared to the highest expenditure of $142 million by the Mitt Romney–aligned Super PAC, Restore our Future. American Crossroads, which ranked second, spent over $104 million on the presidential and congressional contests (Center for Responsive Politics 2012a). For Super PACs making expenditures, the mean independent expenditure was $2.4 million and the median was $130,137, a difference explained by the very large expenditures of some Super PACs. Roughly half (46 percent) of all Super PACs that made expenditures spent less than $100,000. In this classification of Super PACs, we look at those that spent more than $1 million, which collectively spent $594 million or 98 percent of all expenditures by Super PACs.

The presidential contest had the most Super PAC spending in 2012, 51 percent (FEC data). All of the candidates who seriously contested for the GOP nomination had an affiliated Super PAC. Romney was the first candidate to form a Super PAC in October 2010 (Marcus 2012). Super PACs affiliated with other Republican aspirants included Winning Our Future (Gingrich), Red White and Blue Fund (Santorum), Make Us Great Again (Perry), 9-9-9 Fund (Cain), Endorse Liberty (Paul), Our Destiny PAC (Huntsman), and Citizens for a Working America (Bachmann). Some Super PACs emerged claiming to support a candidate but in fact appeared to be a means for those forming the Super PAC to enrich themselves. Revolution PAC pitched itself as supporting Ron Paul for president but spent 83 percent of the $1.2 million it raised on administrative expenses, including $153,000 to the group's founder and $1,766 monthly for rent on the group's address at a UPS Store (Bykowicz 2012).

One of the most important ways Super PACs influenced the 2012 presidential election was in the nomination period and the bridge period between when the nominees were effectively selected (May-June) and the official start of the general election with the party nomination conventions (Green, Kohler, and Schwarber forthcoming). Initially, much of the Super PAC activity in 2012 was within the Republican Party and focused on which candidate would secure the party's nomination. During this nomination period, GOP Super PACs spent money for Republicans (often for their favored candidate) and against Republicans (attacking the other contenders in their party). This was a dynamic change in the general election as Super PACs typically spend for their candidate and against the nominee of the other party. Table 14.1 presents the spending by presidential candidates and their affiliated Super PACs at the different reporting periods during the 2012 nomination contest.

In 2011 before any caucus or primary votes were cast (Reporting Period 1), Romney and Paul were the clear front-runners in spending by candidates, with Romney spending nearly $37 million and Paul $24.2 million, a gap of

Candidate and Super PAC Spending in 2012 Republican Nomination Contest

	Current Reporting Period			Cumulative	
	Candidate Spending	Super PAC Spending	Percent Super PAC Spending of Candidate Spending	Candidate Spending	Percent Super PAC Spending of Candidate Spending
Primary Elections					
Reporting Period 1 (1/1/11–12/31/11)					
Romney / Restore Our Future	$36,972,624	$4,116,262	11%	$36,972,624	$4,116,262
Romney / American Crossroads	—*	$1,016,332	3%	—*	$1,016,332
Paul / Endorse Liberty	$24,230,455	$415,543	2%	$24,230,455	$415,543
Gingrich / Winning Our Future	$10,624,423	$788,380	7%	$10,624,423	$788,380
Santorum / Red White and Blue Fund	$1,906,019	$573,680	30%	$1,906,019	$573,680
Huntsman / Our Destiny PAC	$5,807,460	$2,323,481	40%	$5,807,460	$2,323,481
Obama / Priorities USA Action	$48,895,944	$306,229	1%	$48,895,944	$306,229
Reporting Period 2 (1/1/12–3/31/12)					
Romney / Restore Our Future	$41,414,882	$36,372,538	88%	$78,387,506	$40,488,800
Romney / American Crossroads	—*	$3,000	<.5%	—*	$1,019,332
Paul / Endorse Liberty	$10,999,944	$2,977,842	27%	$35,230,400	$3,393,385
Gingrich / Winning Our Future	$10,792,977	$16,214,382	150%	$21,417,400	$17,002,762
Santorum / Red White and Blue Fund	$17,034,072	$6,955,874	41%	$18,940,090	$7,529,554
Huntsman / Our Destiny PAC	$2,019,986	$480,753	24%	$7,827,445	$2,804,234
Obama / Priorities USA Action	$45,922,026	$382,284	1%	$94,817,970	$688,513
Reporting Period 3 (4/1/12–6/30/12)					
Romney / Restore Our Future	$55,740,220	$13,098,459	23%	$134,127,726	$53,587,259
Romney / American Crossroads	—*	$2,094,258	4%	—*	$3,113,590
Paul / Endorse Liberty	$2,823,406	$26,760	1%	$38,053,806	$3,420,145
Gingrich / Winning Our Future	$2,632,547	$0	0%	$24,049,947	$17,002,762

Santorum / Red White and Blue Fund	$3,332,121	$0	0%	$22,272,211	$7,529,554
Huntsman / Our Destiny PAC	$1,059,535	$0	0%	$8,886,980	$2,804,234
Obama / Priorities USA Action	$117,320,906	$12,881,909	11%	$212,138,876	$13,570,422
Total Primary Spending					
Republican	$190,418,047	$87,457,544	46%		
Democratic	$212,138,876	$13,570,422	6%		
Bridge and General Election					
Reporting Period 4 (7/1/12–8/31/12)					
Romney / Restore Our Future	$99,014,855	$28,346,267	29%	$233,142,581	$81,933,526
Romney / American Crossroads	—*	$9,161,176	9%	—*	$12,274,766
Paul / Endorse Liberty	$984,690	$158,095	16%	$39,038,495	$3,578,240
Gingrich / Winning Our Future	$262,481	$0	0%	$24,312,428	$17,002,762
Santorum / Red White and Blue Fund	$510,560	$0	0%	$22,782,771	$7,529,554
Huntsman / Our Destiny PAC	$26,932	$0	0%	$8,913,912	$2,804,234
Obama / Priorities USA Action	$142,688,496	$11,291,605	8%	$354,827,372	$24,862,027
Reporting Period 5 (9/1/12–12/31/12)					
Romney / Restore Our Future	$249,930,889	$60,163,810	24%	$483,073,470	$142,097,336
Romney / American Crossroads	—*	$92,471,904	37%	—*	$104,746,670
Obama / Priorities USA Action	$382,680,474	$40,343,716	11%	$737,507,846	$65,205,743
Total Bridge and General Election Spending					
Republican	$350,730,407	$190,301,252	54%		
Democratic	$525,368,970	$51,635,321	10%		

*This table only lists Romney's candidate spending once each reporting period alongside Restore Our Future's Super PAC spending.

Source: Compiled from FEC data.

roughly $13 million. But Romney's spending advantage over Paul widens to roughly $16 million when spending by the two candidates' Super PACs is included. Two candidates in this 2011 period stand out for higher reliance in proportional terms on Super PACs—Jon Huntsman's Super PAC spent 40 percent of what the candidate campaign spent, and Santorum's Super PAC spent 30 percent of what Santorum's campaign spent.

But it is in the first three months of 2012 (Reporting Period 2) where Super PACs played an even larger role. For example, Newt Gingrich's Super PAC spent 1.5 times what his candidate campaign spent. Romney's Super PAC expended 87 percent of what the campaign spent, and Santorum's Super PAC spent 40 percent of what he spent. Ron Paul's Super PAC spent about one-quarter of what the candidate spent.

In the period after April 1, 2012, Romney's Super PAC remained active but spent much less in the second quarter of 2012 than it spent in the first quarter. When we look at cumulative receipts for the preconvention period, we find Gingrich was most reliant on his Super PAC, which spent 70 cents for every dollar the Gingrich campaign spent. Romney, Santorum, and Huntsman had Super PAC expenditures from their Super PACs between 31 and 35 percent of candidate expenditures.

During the period when much of the attention on the 2012 presidential contest was focused on the Republican nomination contest, the Obama-aligned Super PAC, Priorities USA Action, was launched five months after Restore Our Future was formed (Mehta 2012b). Obama had discouraged all outside group activity in the 2008 contest, and in 2012 he did not initially endorse the creation of an allied Super PAC, but in February 2012 he reversed himself and endorsed a Super PAC. His campaign manager, Jim Messina, said, "Our campaign has to face the reality of the law as it stands" (Eggen 2012). Compared to Romney's Super PAC, Restore Our Future, Priorities USA Action lagged in receipts by $3.8 million during 2011, nearly $36 million during the January through March 2012 period, only $200,000 from April through June of 2012, and just over $17 million during July through August 2012. For the cycle, Priorities USA Action raised $76.9 million less than Restore Our Future.

If we look just at the period after July 1, 2012, the two major Super PACs supporting Romney outspent the Super PAC supporting Obama by a ratio of nearly four to one ($190 million to $52 million). Why did Priorities USA Action lag so far behind Restore Our Future in fundraising in the period before the nominating conventions? First, the GOP presidential nomination contest drove the 2011 and a substantial part of 2012 fundraising, while Obama ran uncontested for the Democratic nomination. Second, Priorities USA Action lacked well-known and trusted leaders like Karl Rove or Ed Gillespie (Draper

2012b). Third, some Democratic donors had philosophical objections to Super PACs (Kroll 2012), and finally some potential Democratic Super PAC donors felt they had not been courted by Obama (Kroll 2012).

Priorities USA Action, while not nearly as active as the GOP Super PACs in the nomination phase, did occasionally spend money attacking Romney in future possible battleground states like Michigan. But it was during the bridge period that Priorities USA made its most controversial expenditure, one disavowed by Obama himself (Sweeney 2013). The ad focused on the hardship faced by a family in which the husband worked for a company acquired by Bain Capital, was laid off, and lost insurance shortly before his wife became ill and died. The point of the ad was that Bain had little regard for the human costs of its acquiring and selling companies, or what some called "vulture capitalism." The core message of the ad was similar to attacks on Romney from his prior races in Massachusetts and to the ads about Romney's Bain connection run by Gingrich in South Carolina in the primaries (Gabriel and Confessore 2012). But by running the ad early in the summer, Priorities successfully reintroduced this theme into the general election.

What was most surprising about the Bain–centered attack by Priorities USA was not that it was made, but that Romney did not respond. In the last presidential election with an incumbent running, Bush in 2004, a similar attack by an outside group was made against the challenger John Kerry soon after the nominating convention. Kerry, a decorated Vietnam War Veteran, was attacked by a group that named itself "Swift Boat Vietnam Veterans for Truth" and questioned Kerry's heroism and patriotism. Kerry did not see the group or attack as credible and did not respond. He later acknowledged this as a major mistake (Rainey 2007; Corrado 2006, 134). That Priorities USA was able to "swift boat" Romney in 2012 surprised many political operatives. Romney's allied Super PACs did not respond because they assumed the campaign was best positioned to do so. The Romney campaign did not respond because they wanted to change the subject from Bain to "defining Romney" (Russ Schriefer, as quoted in Balz and Silberman 2013, 250) and to "talking about what he would do as president" (Eric Fehrnstrom, as quoted in Balz and Silberman 2013, 261).

Super PACs were also important to congressional races in 2012. American Crossroads was active in U.S. Senate contests, spending more than $12 million. Democratic Super PACs like Majority PAC (Senate) often went toe-to-toe with American Crossroads in Senate races like those in Virginia, Ohio, and Wisconsin. In the House, Republican-leadership-aligned Super PACs like the Congressional Leadership Fund and Young Guns Action Network were often competing for votes with the Democratic House Majority PAC.

A Classification of Super PACs

Three broad types of Super PACs emerge from the 2010 and 2012 federal elections: candidate-specific, party centered, and interest group based. Candidate-specific Super PACs were largely focused on a single candidate while party-centered Super PACs typically focused on multiple candidates. Interest-group-based Super PACs often spent for or against multiple candidates and their orientation was driven by their issue focus. Within each of these classifications of Super PACs there were some differences. For example, some interest group Super PACs were more interested in intraparty competition than in intraparty spending.

Candidate-Specific Super PACs

Political Action Committees have generally been extensions of interest groups and not candidates. The notable exception to this is congressional leadership PACs that have provided a means for candidates to raise money, often from conventional PACS, beyond what they had raised for their campaign account (Currinder 2013). Leadership PAC funds are not permitted to be spent on the election campaign of the sponsor of the leadership PAC, rather, they go to other candidates (often incumbents) as a way of cultivating relationships that help the sponsor pursue a leadership position in Congress.

What emerged in 2012 was the use of Super PACs as an extension of a candidate's campaign, essentially opening up access to large donors who wanted to give to a Super PAC dedicated to electing a particular candidate. Rarely did one of these candidate-specific Super PACs spend in another candidate's race, the exception being some congressional Super PACS that spent heavily in a particular race but spent lesser amounts in a few other races.

Candidate-specific Super PACs were the most active of Super PACs in 2012, accounting for 47 percent of Super PAC spending (see table 14.2). While the anti-Romney Super PACs played tag team, attacking him in one state or another, Romney's Super PAC, Restore Our Future, countered with attack ads primarily against Santorum and Gingrich.

A clear take away from the 2012 presidential contest is that all serious contenders will foster the creation of a credible Super PAC led by individuals known by the campaign and the candidates' key financial supporters. One challenge candidates may have is managing the multiple Super PACs that may arise claiming to advance a candidacy while actually working for personal gain. Evidence of this possibility is the seemingly spontaneous formation of Super PACs claiming to be supporters of Hilary Clinton in 2016 (Tau 2013).

Candidate-specific Super PACs are about both intraparty and interparty competition. The 2010 cycle fostered this focus because of the success of ideological groups like Club for Growth and FreedomWorks in defeating Utah senator Robert Bennett at his state's nominating convention. Bennett, who had supported the Bush administration on the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), had angered these groups (Good 2010; Joseph 2013). Going into the 2012 contest, fellow Utah Republican Orrin Hatch, worried about a repeat of what had happened to Bennett, encouraged the formation of a Super PAC for 2012, Strong Utah PAC, which spent $77,350 on his behalf (Center for Responsive Politics 2012b). Even more was spent in the Texas nomination battle between Ted Cruz and David Dewhurst where Texas Conservatives Fund expended nearly $5.9 million against Cruz, who won the nomination. The lesson for incumbents is that they should defend their electoral future by creating a candidate-specific Super PAC. As the perceived threat of being "primaried" grows, the predictable reaction from incumbents will be to form Super PACs in self-defense (Boatright 2013).

Candidate-specific Super PACs have arisen in several congressional general election contests. A few examples include Independence Virginia PAC, which opposed Democratic incumbent Tim Kaine and the Florida Freedom PAC which supported Democrat Ben Nelson in Florida for reelection while Freedom PAC supported his opponent Connie Mack. Patriot Prosperity PAC, a Super PAC funded largely by Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, backed two Republican House candidates. Taken as a whole, in 2012 candidate-specific Super PACs made substantial investments in six Senate races (Virginia, Texas, Florida, Nebraska, Michigan, Ohio), and at least that many House races. This activity is only likely to grow in the future.

The modus operandi for candidate-specific Super PACs is for a trusted former aid to lead the Super PAC. These former aids, knowing the individuals and groups who have supported the senator or representative in the past, have a jump-start on fundraising. Individuals and groups that have a legislative relationship with the member will be targets for fundraising. Finally, a lesson from 2012 is it only takes one megadonor to fund a Super PAC.

Party-Centered Super PACs

A second type of Super PAC is party centered. In American elections the focus remains on candidates, but party-centered Super PACs spend heavily for their side in competitive contests. One type of party-centered Super PAC seeks to serve party electoral purposes at the presidential and congressional levels and at the state level as well (Romano 2010). For a party out of power,

TABLE 14.2

Top 100 Super PACs by Independent Expenditures, 2011–2012

Organization Name	Total	For Democrats	Against Democrats	For Republicans	Against Republicans
Restore Our Future [Candidate (Mitt Romney)]	142,097,336	0	88,572,350	13,919,902	39,605,084
American Crossroads [Party]	104,746,670	33,084	95,844,402	8,493,968	375,216
Priorities USA Action [Candidate (Barack Obama)]	65,205,743	0	0	0	65,205,743
Majority PAC [Party]	38,152,864	3,651,229	0	0	34,501,635
House Majority PAC [Party]	30,714,650	865,034	0	0	29,849,616
FreedomWorks for America [IG]	19,636,548	42,870	7,079,203	11,306,234	1,208,241
Winning Our Future [Candidate (Newt Gingrich)]	17,007,762	0	5,000	12,970,828	4,031,934
Club for Growth Action [IG]	16,585,075	15,000	4,244,957	3,060,031	9,265,087
Service Employees International Union [IG Econ]	15,189,094	12,867,337	0	5,679	2,316,078
Ending Spending Action Fund [IG] Ricketts	13,250,766	0	6,674,460	6,452,125	124,181
Congressional Leadership Fund [Party]	9,450,223	0	9,450,223	0	0
Independence USA PAC [IG] Bloomberg and guns.	8,230,454	5,113,573	296,160	2,080,923	739,798
Women Vote! [IG]	8,034,944	1,763,590	92,900	0	6,178,454
Now or Never PAC [IG]	7,760,174	0	5,361,639	2,111,775	286,760
Red White and Blue Fund [Candidate (Rick Santorum)]	7,529,554	0	0	6,739,158	790,396
AFL-CIO Workers' Voices PAC [IG]	6,331,541	3,230,012	6,466	602	3,094,461
Texas Conservatives Fund [Candidate (Supports David Dewhurst, opposes Ted Cruz)]	5,872,431	0	0	0	5,872,431
Planned Parenthood Votes [IG]	5,039,082	966,350	0	0	4,072,732

Independence Virginia PAC [Candidate (Supports George Allen, opposes Tim Kaine)]	4,921,410	0	4,921,410	0	0
Young Guns Action Fund [Party]	4,722,335	22,100	3,896,480	354,780	448,975
Make Us Great Again [Candidate (Rick Perry)]	3,959,824	0	0	3,959,824	0
Endorse Liberty [Candidate (Ron Paul)]	3,578,240	0	0	3,578,240	0
Freedom PAC [Candidate (Connie Mack)]	3,445,126	0	11,500	3,433,626	0
Florida Freedom PAC [Candidate (Connie Mack)]	3,274,019	3,271,519	0	0	2,500
National Association of Realtors [IG]	3,163,667	1,339,660	0	1,824,007	0
Fair Share Action PAC [IG] Environment	2,959,824	2,959,818	0	0	0
League of Conservation Voters Victory Fund [IG]	2,861,923	402,483	0	0	2,459,440
Our Destiny PAC [Candidate (Jon Huntsman)]	2,804,234	0	0	2,804,234	0
Spirit of Democracy America [Candidate (Paul Cook)]	2,405,245	309,800	0	67,992	2,027,453
American Unity PAC [IG (Marriage Equality)]	2,245,078	0	952,089	1,292,989	0
Treasure Coast Jobs Coalition [Candidate (Patrick Murphy)]	2,063,950	0	2,063,950	0	0
America's Next Generation [Candidate (Oppose Barack Obama)]	1,995,295	0	1,995,295	0	0
Campaign for Primary Accountability [IG]	1,816,476	203,390	522,176	121,001	969,909
Restore America's Voice PAC [IG]	1,797,419	0	1,797,419	0	0
National Right to Life Victory Fund [IG]	1,772,796	0	798,704	974,092	0
Liberty for All Super PAC [IG]	1,725,566	0	0	798,580	926,986
End the Gridlock [Party]	1,716,935	64,064	0	0	1,652,871
New Prosperity Foundation [Party]	1,570,512	0	1,437,599	132,913	0

(continued)

TABLE 14.2
(continued)

Organization Name	Total	For Democrats	Against Democrats	For Republicans	Against Republicans
Committee to Elect an Effective Valley Congressman [Candidate (Howard Berman)]	1,494,434	1,494,434	0	0	0
Cooperative of American Physicians [IG]	1,481,477	146,177	888,205	447,095	0
Patriot Prosperity PAC [Candidate (Shmuley Boteach)]	1,417,534	0	0	1,417,534	0
Super PAC for America [Party]	1,362,213	0	1,142,083	220,130	0
Senate Conservatives Action [IG]	1,331,979	0	709,605	622,374	0
Environment America Action Fund [IG]	1,303,396	1,303,396	0	0	0
Local Voices [Candidate (Barack Obama)]	1,266,266	1,266,266	0	0	0
America 360 Committee [Candidate (Scott Brown)]	1,250,723	0	805,735	444,988	0
National Horizon [Party]	1,214,582	0	0	909,405	305,177
Sierra Club Independent Action [IG]	1,194,073	286,286	0	0	812,266
Hardworking Americans Committee [Candidate (Opposes Debbie Stabenow against Pete Hoekstra)]	1,176,548	0	1,060,000	116,548	0
Rethink PAC [Candidate (Opposes Scott Brown against Elizabeth Warren)]	1,158,829	0	0	0	1,158,829
Prosperity First [Candidate (Randy Altschuler)]	1,124,154	0	23,394	1,100,760	0
America Shining [Candidate (Opposes Ed Royce against Jay Chen)]	1,055,846	277,267	30	3,343	775,206
NEA Advocacy Fund [IG]	1,010,009	105,798	0	0	904,211

Source: Compiled from Federal Election Commission data.

party-centered Super PACs provide a "clearinghouse" for donors to direct their large contributions to advance the interests of the party throughout the federal government. The most active general party-centered Super PAC has been American Crossroads. As noted, Crossroads was formed soon after the courts and FEC opened the way for Super PACs. American Crossroads was the most active Super PAC in 2010 and substantially expanded its scope and spending in 2012. It broadened from a focus on congressional contests in 2010 to a focus on both presidential and congressional contests in 2012. Overall the Super PAC spent 87 percent on the presidential contest, 12 percent on U.S. Senate races, and 1 percent on U.S. House races. Because of the scale of its activity, it became one of the most frequently discussed Super PACs. There was no equivalent Super PAC on the Democratic side, in part because having a combined congressional and presidential Super PAC is more likely to occur in the party not in control of the White House.

Democrats added to the broad partisan Super PAC category soon after the 2010 election when they formed American Bridge 21st Century (Duszak 2012). Given that Super PACs cannot coordinate with candidates or party committees, these new entities were in need of the kind of opposition research long done by the national party committees. Into this void stepped some former staff of Senate Majority Leader Reid. American Bridge actively tracks Republican candidates, researches their backgrounds, and prepares information for Super PACs to possibly include in attack ads. As with campaign tactics generally, the other party is often quick to copy the innovations of the other side, and after the 2012 election a group of Republicans, including head of the Romney campaign Matt Rhodes, announced the formation of a counterpart to American Bridge, America Rising (Haberman 2013).

Another example of a party-centered Super PAC is an extension of congressional party leadership and is structured around either the House or the Senate. These congressional chamber-specific Super PACs are closely identified with leaders such as Speaker John Boehner (Congressional Leadership Fund), former Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Young Guns Action Network), Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (House Majority PAC), or Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (Majority PAC and American Bridge). American Crossroads has played this role for Republicans in U.S. Senate races. But American Crossroads was outspent by more than three to one by the Democratic Majority PAC. It is surprising that Senate Republicans have not followed the lead of Senate Democrats and both parties in the House in having its own chamber-specific Super PAC.

The substantial involvement of congressional leaders in encouraging support for their party Super PACs is reminiscent of the "shakedowns" party leaders did to raise soft money for their parties from PACs, corporations,

unions, and individuals who often had issues before government (Corrado, Mann, and Potter 2003). Leaders such as Harry Reid, John Boehner, Eric Cantor, and Nancy Pelosi endorsed and encouraged support of their Super PACs. For example, Reid and members of his leadership team, including senators Chuck Schumer and Dick Durban, sought out donors in several large cities. When pressed on the fundraising, Reid responded, "The whole situation is too bad. It is a terrible decision [*Citizens United*], but we can't disarm unilaterally, so we are going to do whatever we can to be competitive" (Bresnahan, Raju, and Sherman 2012).

The 2012 election cycle allows us to look at patterns of resource allocation among allied PACs. The best example of this in the partisan PAC area is House Republicans, in which the Congressional Leadership Fund, Young Guns Network, and American Crossroads all made expenditures. The Congressional Leadership Fund affiliated with Speaker Boehner spent the most at $9.45 million, followed by Young Guns Action Network affiliated with former Majority Leader Cantor, which expended $4.7 million, and American Crossroads, which gave a total of $1.1 million to House general election candidates, excluding special elections and a candidate who withdrew. Those contributions are not included here. But aggregating this spending gets House GOP candidates to $16 million, or roughly half of the $31 million spent to help Democrats by House Majority PAC. In Senate contests in 2012 the Democrats also had more support from Super PACs with Majority PAC spending $38 million to assist them. American Crossroads spent $12.5 million for Republicans but the absence of a Senate GOP Super PAC meant they were at a spending disadvantage compared to Senate Democrats.

An examination of the expenditure data suggests that there is some specialization between the three party Super PACs. The Congressional Leadership Fund made expenditures in 14 contests and had a higher median contribution at $520,000 to $573,000. In six of these contests, neither Young Guns nor American Crossroads made expenditures, and in none of the contests did all three of the party-aligned Republican Super PACs make expenditures. Moreover, there appears to have been an understood division of labor when more than one Super PAC was in the same race. The Congressional Leadership Fund consistently reported spending money against the Democrat while Young Guns reported spending for the Republican in two of the races where both Super PACs were active and against the Democrat in the other three races where both Super PACs were active. When American Crossroads entered one of the same House races as the Congressional Leadership Fund, they often expended much more than Young Guns did in the races they entered.

Some groups have made intraparty contests a priority, either to help with the nomination for a challenger taking on an incumbent or to help secure the nomination of a preferred candidate in an open seat or as a challenger to an incumbent of the other party. In 2012, for example, the Club for Growth sought to defeat Indiana Republican senator Richard Lugar. Club for Growth CEO and president said, "When we find a very safe incumbent that's not supporting a pro-growth agenda we try and beat him. . . . Every senator understands why Bob Bennett didn't come back in. Every senator understands why Dick Lugar is not coming back. We think there's a ripple effect to participating in primaries that encourages a lot of office holders to focus on a pro-growth agenda more clearly" (Chocola 2012). A sign that others in the GOP see a threat of ideological Super PACs in primaries is the announcement by Karl Rove and others affiliated with American Crossroads that they had formed the "Conservative Victory Project" to become involved in Republican primaries with the aim of nominating the most electable Republican (Zeleny 2013).

Interest-Group-Centered Super PACs

Super PACs associated with interest groups cluster around two broad types: those that are extensions of groups or PACs that existed before *Citizen's United* and those that have been created since that decision was announced and are not affiliated with a preexisting PAC. Most interest-group Super PACs are extensions of interest groups organized before 2010 when Super PACs became an electioneering option. For example, FreedomWorks, Club for Growth, SEIU, and Planned Parenthood were all active interest groups before 2010 who have added a Super PAC to the array of ways they become involved in elections. Often the name of the Super PAC connects it to the preexisting PAC, but not always. For example, Women Vote! is the Super PAC of EMILY's List, an established PAC known for supporting pro-choice Democratic female candidates. But Super PACs such as Ending Spending Action Fund, or the Now or Never PAC, represent new groups that have organized in part to exploit the unlimited contributions and expenditures possible with the legal and regulatory changes since 2010.

It was commonplace for corporations to have PACs before 2010, and yet few publicly traded corporations formed a Super PAC in 2010 to 2012. The *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow* decisions permitted corporations to form Super PACs, and some speculated they would do so. Senator Russ Feingold, one of the two named Senate cosponsors of BCRA, said of the decisions, "It is possible the Court's decision will not just take us back to a pre McCain-Feingold era, but back to the era of the robber baron in the 19th century" (Feingold 2009). Despite these fears, for-profit corporations did not form Super

PACs, and few appear to have contributed to them. A primary reason for this pattern is that corporations do not want to risk offending their customers. Some informed observers point to the negative reaction to a contribution the Target Corporation made in a 2010 state contest in Minnesota (Scheck 2010). But another reason corporations may have bypassed Super PACs in 2010 and 2012 was that they could contribute as much as they wanted without disclosure to a Section 501(c)(4) group like Crossroads GPS or a Section 501(c)(6) group like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Concerns about disclosure did not appear to deter unions from forming their own Super PACs as SEIU and the AFL-CIO did or from contributing to other Super PACs. For example, unions gave Priorities USA Action, Majority PAC, and House Majority PAC together nearly $10 million in the last three weeks of the 2012 campaign (Choma 2012).

Given these categories, what type of Super PAC was most active in 2012, and was there a partisan advantage? Table 14.2 lists Super PACs with over $1 million in reported spending in 2011 to 2012. Together they spent $594 million, which is 98 percent of what all Super PACs spent in 2011 to 2012. Thus table 14.2 provides a nearly complete sample of spending by Super PACs in 2012. Super PACs are classified as candidate centered, party centered, or interest group/economic or interest group issue/ideology centered on how they spent money, and, in some cases, on interviews with individuals involved with particular Super PACs.

Some broad observations can be drawn from table 14.2. Breaking these Super PACs down into the three types, candidate specific, party centered, and interest-group centered, finds that half of the dollars spent by Super PACs that spent more than $1 million in 2011 to 2012 was spent by candidate-specific Super PACs. Republicans were the primary beneficiaries of the $279 million spent by this category, with 70 percent of these funds spent to benefit Republicans. Super PAC spending in the 2012 presidential race was even more disproportionately Republican, with 84 percent of the spending in the presidential contest by GOP-aligned Super PACs in the period through the end of June 2012 and 73 percent favoring Romney over Obama in the rest of the cycle (Table 14.1). As noted, one reason for the partisan imbalance is the contested nomination battle for president in the GOP. But that does not explain the large GOP advantage in the general election as well.

The second largest category of Super PACs was party-centered Super PACs who collectively expended just under one-third of all Super PAC expenditures among the Super PACs spending more than $1 million. Here again it was the Republicans who were the intended beneficiaries, with 64 percent of these funds going to aid GOP candidates or to attack Democrats. Here the party benefit to Republicans is due to Crossroads, which spent most of its money in the presidential contest. Democrats had an advantage in partisan chamber-specific Super PACs.

The third largest category of Super PACs in terms of expenditures was interest-group based. This category spent 20 percent of all Super PAC expenditures, and again Republicans were the primary beneficiaries. Here the party spending difference is least.

Overall, Super PACs spent nearly twice as many dollars to assist Republicans ($391 million) than to help Democrats ($203 million). Some of this difference is explained by the activity of Super PACs in the GOP presidential nomination contest, but this alone does not explain the gap. Based on the 2012 data, Republicans have a substantial Super PAC advantage over Democrats.

Some Generalizations

A classification of nearly all active Super PACs in 2012 finds that they fit into three types: candidate-specific, party-centered, and interest group–based Super PACs. They reflect the underlying partisan, candidate, and interest group environment. Given our candidate-centered politics, it is not surprising that the most Super PAC activity in 2012 was by candidate-specific Super PACs. Assembling legislative majorities is also a driving force in American politics, and the establishment of party and congressional-chamber-specific Super PACs reflects that agenda. Interest groups have a natural proclivity to invest in elections, and Super PACs provide another means to do so.

Party-centered and interest-group-based Super PACs operate in tandem with other campaign organizations, often with conventional PACs, or Section 501(c)(4), Section 501(c)(5), or Section 501(c)(6) organizations. They are therefore integrated into a broader campaign structure. Super PACs also form alliances with other Super PACs and outside money groups from other partisan or interest groups. Super PACS at the congressional level are often extensions of congressional party leaders.

Super PACs at the presidential level are different for the in-party than the out-party. For the party in power the lead, will come from the president and his advisors for that party. For the out-party, there will be a wider array of groups competing for contributions and emphasizing different messages. Because American Crossroads organized quickly and claimed the issue space of the major GOP Super PAC, we saw less of that competition in 2012 than we have seen in the aftermath of the 2012 Republican defeats in contests for the White House and control of the Senate.

Most interest-group Super PAC activity is a supplement to rather than a replacement of other electioneering activity. Super PACs spend most of their money on television attack ads. Super PACs may be active in primary elections, general elections, or both. Candidate-specific Super PACs were

important to the GOP presidential nomination process. In congressional contests, the Super PACs that were more active in primaries were more likely to be extensions of ideological interest groups, while Super PACs active in general elections are more likely party centered or extensions of conventional interest-group electioneering efforts. Nomination battles have come to be centered on ideology and with partisan gerrymandering often in districts where there is little general election competition. But control of the legislative chamber and White House often requires less stringent ideological tests. This helps explain the intraparty competition between pragmatic and purist Super PACs. Some Super PACs emphasize intraparty nominations, others interparty contests.

While we have yet to experience two full election cycles of Super PAC activity in federal elections, it is therefore likely that the initial classification offered in this paper may expand in the future. It is also the case that in the highly competitive campaign environment participants will build on what worked in prior cycles as they gear up for the next round of elections. We have seen evidence of that in the 2013 New York mayoral election and the 2013 Virginia gubernatorial election. What is the likely role Super PACs will play in the future?

- We will likely see more candidate-specific Super PACs in congressional races, especially U.S. Senate contests. As Chris Chocola of the Club for Growth states, "I think you will see an explosion of Super PACs . . . everybody is going to want one" (2012).
- All serious contenders for the 2016 presidential election will have one or more Super PACs supporting them.
- Congressional-party-leader-linked Super PACs will continue, and a Republican Senate Super PAC is likely to develop.
- There will be greater competition between Super PACs in the congressional nomination process as more main stream groups counter the spending by more ideological groups.
- The move to specialization by Super PACs will expand as Republicans mimic the success of the pro-Democrat American Bridge opposition research Super PAC.
- As the number of Super PAC participants grows, so will the need for coordination among the groups.

Note

15

The Ground Game
from the Voter's Perspective

2012 and Before

Paul A. Beck and Erik Heidemann

D IRECT CONTACTS WITH VOTERS, the so-called ground game, have been an important focus of political campaigns since the beginning of American democratic politics. Historically, the ground game was the province of the local party organizations, but their grassroots activity atrophied as they lost their "patronage armies" of campaign workers. After a period when the ground game received little attention, it became a prime focus of the presidential campaigns in the 2000s (Beck and Heidemann 2014). As the competitive balance between the parties tightened and the parties polarized, it is understandable that more attention has been devoted to contacting voters directly, especially to mobilizing party loyalists in the electoral college battleground states (Issenberg 2012; Popkin 2012).

Building upon its organizational success in 2008, the 2012 presidential campaign of Barack Obama is credited with having executed a highly effective ground game. Both sides attribute Obama's victory in 2012, as they did in 2008, at least partially to its ground game advantages over the Romney campaign despite the Republicans' increased attention to party contacts compared to 2008. By most accounts, the parties were focused on mobilizing their base so that a higher turnout of loyal partisans would provide the critical margin of victory in close races. The very fact that the Obama vote was higher than many models, especially those of the Republicans, were predicting is seen as testimony to the Obama edge in the ground game.

This chapter examines the ground game of the 2012 presidential campaigns from the perspective of reports of party contacts by respondents in a national survey of the American electorate as a part of the Comparative National Elec-

tions Project (CNEP). Respondents were asked, "Did representatives of any of the political parties or presidential candidates contact you during the 2012 campaign?" Those who reported a contact were asked to specify which party/candidate and how the contact was made. (The wording of the questions is in the Appendix.) Our analysis begins with levels of reported party contact in 2012 by party, type of contact, and whether the state was a presidential battleground. It then examines who was contacted in 2012 under these conditions. To gain some historical perspective on the 2012 ground game, we then compare these results with those from a similar CNEP survey in 2004.[1]

Respondent survey reports may be the most reliable way to determine how party contacts reach the electorate. Party and candidate organizations often claim great success in contacting potential voters, but it is difficult to disentangle the effort in the aggregate from realized contacts on the ground. There also is a tendency to attribute greater ground game effectiveness to the party or candidate who has won the election. Yet survey reports contain their own frailties as estimates of party contacts. People may have difficulty remembering party contacts across a long campaign and differentiating among different sources and types of contact. Our question asks for both party and candidate organization contacts in the *presidential* campaign because citizens might not be able to differentiate candidate from party representatives. There also is the challenge of differentiating among contact targets using a national survey of fewer than 1,300 people when campaign microtargeting segments the electorate into a multitude of small groups. We can generate reliable estimates for sizable groups (e.g., African Americans or Hispanics), but small group estimates (e.g., young college students) are beyond our reach. With these reservations in mind, survey reports can shed considerable light and raise interesting questions about the ground game in 2012—and before.

Ground Game Performance in the 2012 Presidential Campaign

Two claims about the presidential ground games in 2012 have dominated coverage of the campaigns and accounts of campaign strategies by campaign managers (Balz and Silberman 2013, Halperin and Heilemann 2013, Jamieson 2013, Sides and Vavreck 2013). First, the Obama campaign, through its own organization and the Democratic Party, is credited with being more effective at the grassroots than the Romney campaign. The Obama forces had many more field offices, especially in the battleground states. Both sides were devoted to microtargeting, but Obama seemed to be advantaged there as well (Rutenberg 2013). Second, the campaigns' ground game focus in 2012 was said to be devoted to mobilizing their support base. His ability to mobilize

young voters and minorities had been seen as a key to Obama's victory in 2008. The key question for 2012 was whether the Democrats could replicate their 2008 turnout levels among the base in face of waning enthusiasm for now–President Obama and extensive ground game efforts on the other side. Our 2012 survey data can address both of these claims.

First, as the first two columns in figure 15.1 show, the Obama campaign enjoyed an edge over the Romney campaign in reports of overall party contacts, but that edge was slight, just beyond the conventional bounds for sampling error. Subsequent columns show that the Obama edge was built on more extensive personal and electronic contacts, with the Romney campaign having an edge in contacts by mail or through literature. Even though the near parity overall is somewhat surprising given the "conventional wisdom," the patterns by type of contact probably are not. Needing to mobilize a base of young people and disadvantaged minorities who are commonly less habitualized to voting, the Obama efforts understandably concentrated on face-to-face contacts, shown in carefully controlled field experiments (Green and Gerber 2008) to be the most effective contacts.

The other most noteworthy result from figure 15.1 is the low percentage of contacts in person and electronically compared to mail/literature and
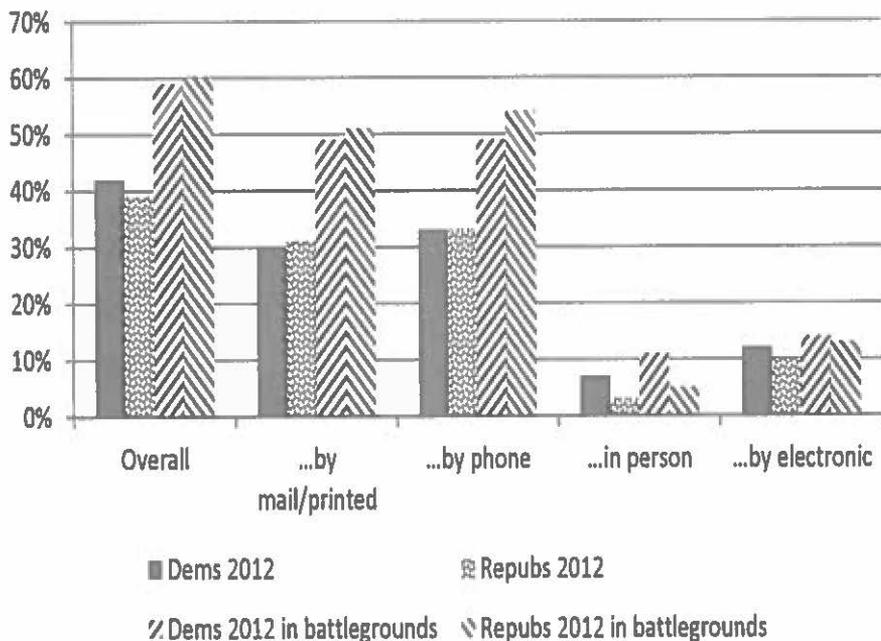
FIGURE 15.1
Party contacting by type in 2012, U.S. CNEP Survey.

telephone. It is far easier to distribute literature or to phone potential voters than it is to face them directly at their door or in some more public place. Although it is easy to contact voters via email or other electronic means as well, their reach is restricted to Internet, Twitter, or smartphone users whose addresses are known to the campaign. By contrast, personal, face-to-face contacts are labor intensive and challenging for canvassers, so it is little wonder that they are relatively rare—even if they may be more effective. Although electronic and in-person contacts reach only a small percentage of the electorate, it is worth remembering that, in an electorate of 222 million eligible voters (McDonald 2013) and 130 million presidential voters, even small percentages involve millions of citizens. By our estimates, over 20 million were contacted by each party through email/electronic means and 10-15 million in person.

Modern presidential campaigns are not really national campaigns, but instead have concentrated their scarce resources on an increasingly smaller set of "battleground" states. The second two columns of each panel in figure 15.1 focus on the eleven states (Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin) that emerged early on as the battlegrounds of the 2012 campaign—the states in which both campaigns invested considerable time, staff, and money. They clearly show much more party contacting overall in the battlegrounds compared with all fifty states. Both parties contacted about 60 percent of adult citizen respondents in the battlegrounds, almost 50 percent more than the figure for the nonbattleground states.

With one exception, contacts by email or other electronic messaging, each type of contact reached many more voters in the battlegrounds. The reason for this exception, we surmise, is that electronic messages go out repeatedly to a preexisting list of party and candidate supporters. Much of this messaging probably is directed toward fundraising, which focuses heavily on states with rich veins of potential contributors (e.g., New York, California, Texas) without regard to their battleground status.

These data challenge the claim of an Obama advantage in the ground game, especially one substantial enough to be credited with his victory. Instead, and especially in the battlegrounds, the Romney campaign and Republican Party seemed to dual the Obama campaign and Democratic Party to a draw. The lone exception lies with "in person" contacts, where Obama enjoyed about a two-to-one edge percentagewise, most importantly in the battleground states. While this edge was based on only a small slice of the electorate, it probably was the most consequential of all the contacts. Green and Gerber's (2008, especially pages 43–45 and 139) experimental evidence shows that, while door-to-door canvassing is the most difficult of contacts, it is much more effective

in mobilizing voters than other types of contacts. Using McDonald's (2013) figures for the voting eligible population and our estimates of contacts, we project that the Obama campaign personally contacted about seven million more voters than the Romney campaign in all states and about 3.6 million more in the battleground states.[2]

Personal contacts are especially important for Democrats. The Democratic base contains numerous potential voters whose educational, income, age, and mobility disadvantages dampen their participation habit, even in presidential elections.[3] Special efforts are often required to mobilize them. So the Democrats needed the advantage in personal contacts that they achieved in 2012. Moreover, it is plausible that party contacts of all types were more important in mobilizing the Democratic base than they were in getting out the vote for Republicans, especially in 2012 because Republicans seemed even more motivated to vote. Thus, even the parity in overall contacting that we have reported advantages the Democrats more than the Republicans.

Ground Game Performance in the 2004 Presidential Campaign

How does ground game activity in 2012 compare with earlier campaigns? Responses to a question similar to ours in the American National Election Study (ANES) show that the highest level of party contacting from 1956 to 2012 was reported in 2004. In that year about 45 percent of all ANES respondents and well over 50 percent in the battleground states said that they had been contacted by representatives from one of the major parties or its candidates. The highest level of contacting by a single party in that 1956 to 2012 series for the Democrats came in 2008, in line with the conventional wisdom about the Obama campaign's ground game effectiveness that year (Beck and Heidemann 2014).

The ANES data do not allow us to determine type of contact, but we can compare our 2012 CNEP data with responses to similar questions asked in a 2004 CNEP survey. These results, presented in figure 15.2, show somewhat more reported contacting for all states in 2004 than in 2012 by both parties with the exception of email and electronic contacts.[4] By contrast, they show somewhat more contacting in the battlegrounds in 2012. In most important respects, though, they echo what we found for 2012: there was parity between the parties in contacts by mail, by phone, and (within sampling error) overall. In-person contacts also were relatively rare in both years but show a Democratic edge. That more contacts were made by email or other electronic means in 2012 is hardly surprising, but that the increase from 2004 to 2012 was so small is surprising. The much-touted attention to the Internet, Facebook,
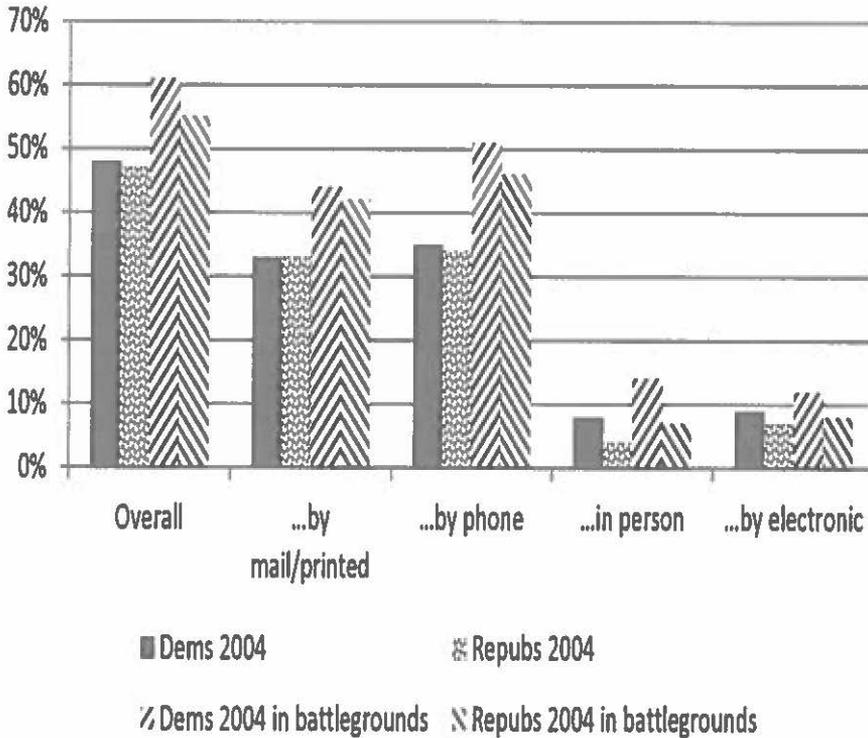
FIGURE 15.2
Party contacting by type in 2004, U.S. CNEP Survey.

Twitter, and other electronic messaging as a game-changing feature of recent campaigns may be exaggerated. That these electronic means of party contacting have become more frequent cannot be doubted. But they appear to reach only a thin slice of the electorate, barely more than 10 percent in 2012. There may be much more electronic traffic for those who draw upon it, but only slightly more people are using it than before.

Comparisons between all states and the battleground states in 2004 also parallel 2012. More respondents reported contacts by each party in the battlegrounds:[5] Roughly 10 percent more of the electorate was contacted overall and by mail and telephone there. Although relatively rare, in-person contacts also were more frequent in the 2004 battlegrounds, for both the Democrats and Republicans. As with the 2012 comparisons, reported contacts via email were not significantly different between battleground and nonbattleground states in 2004, again suggesting that such contacts are made more for campaign donations from dependable partisans than to gain votes.

Who Was Contacted via the Ground Game in 2012?

Parties and candidates target specific groups of voters in their ground game activities. Previous studies of party contacting document who is contacted from respondent reports in the ANES series (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wielhouwer 2003; Gershtenson 2003; Beck and Heidemann 2014). They find that contacts are significantly higher with a party's own identifiers; habitual voters; older, better-educated, and higher-income individuals; union households; and people who are more socially connected (such as home owners and those who regularly attend church). More competitive elections, such as those in battleground states (Gimpel, Kaufmann, and Pearson-Merkowitz 2007), also promote contacting.

In identifying variables to use in determining the targets of party contacting, we build upon these studies, adding groups that the campaigns targeted in recent elections. On the one hand, parties and candidates seek to mobilize their base—to make sure that they are maximizing turnout from potential voters who are likely to be loyal supporters. Democratic mobilization of minorities and young people is credited with the Obama victories in 2008 and 2012, just as the widespread Republican victories in 2010 are attributed to a Democratic failure to mobilize these groups as effectively. On the other hand, both parties can be expected to concentrate regularly on contacting the most easily identifiable likely voters, perhaps with microtargeting within these groups to make sure that they are mobilizing their own supporters.

Our results do not square with the conventional wisdom that the 2012 ground games were focused primarily on mobilizing the partisan base. It is reasonable to expect partisans to be contacted much more, maybe almost exclusively, by their party than by the opposition under the mobilization of base strategy. There was even more reason to focus on loyal partisans in the 2000s, as more than 90 percent of partisans voted for their party's candidates for president. Yet as the first two panels of figure 15.3 show, more potential voters were contacted by *both* parties (30 percent) than by a single party (19 percent) in 2012. Despite the unlikelihood that many of them would defect to the opposition candidate, 34 percent of Democrats reported having been contacted by Republican campaigns, and 36 percent of Republicans reported being contacted by Democratic campaigns. These figures rise in the battleground states to a slight majority (50.1 percent) reporting contacts from both parties, with 53 to 54 percent of partisans having been contacted by the other party.[6]

Our CNEP surveys allow us to address the question of who was contacted more specifically by estimating the simple relationships between reported contacts, overall and by type of contact, and the voters who seem most likely
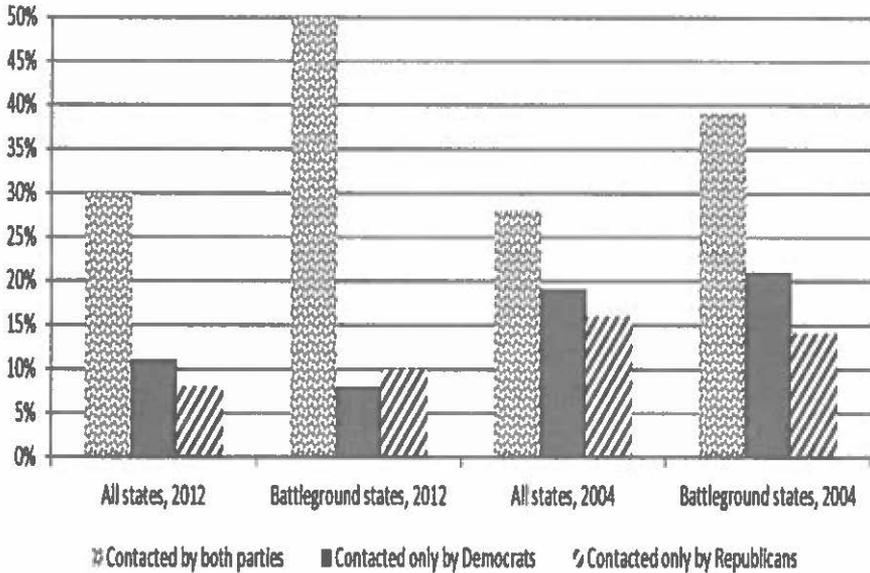
FIGURE 15.3
Contacts by one or both parties in 2012 and 2004, U.S. CNEP surveys.

to be targets of the ground game. For all states, tables 15.1 and 15.2 present the Pearson product-moment correlations (r's) that reach significance at the .01 level between the various contact measures and a series of variables that represent important groups within the electorate, mostly measured by the presence or absence of a particular characteristic. Empty cells signify correlations that fall below the .01 level of significance, and entire rows are not shown (as the note at the bottom of each table specifies) when none of the contact correlations attained this level of significance.

In overall reported contacts (columns one and two of tables 15.1 and 15.2), there are some expected but some surprising similarities between the parties. For both parties, the older the voter, the more likely the contact. Reported contacts by both parties were *more* likely in the battleground states, with those who voted in previous elections and people with high interest. Neither party focused its contacting efforts on nonpartisans and people with low interest, no religious affiliation, and claiming a race other than white, black, or Hispanic. These results are consistent with previous studies, including Beck and Heidemann (2014) for 2012 using the ANES data.

The negative relationship between reported Democratic contacts and Hispanics is puzzling in light of the importance of Hispanic voters to the

Correlations between Party Contact Measures and Voter Characteristics,
All States, in 2012, U.S. CNEP Surveys (cell entries are coefficients significant at 0.01 level)

Voter Characteristic	Dem. Overall	Repub. Overall	Dem. Print	Repub. Print	Dem. Phone	Repub. Phone	Dem. Personal	Repub. Personal	Dem. Electronic	Repub. Electronic
Age	0.24	0.26	0.21	0.25	0.26	0.28	.		0.09	0.11
<Hi Sch		-0.09		-0.10		-0.09				-0.08
Hi Sch									-0.11	
Coll Grad									0.10	
White		0.22	0.07	0.22	0.06	0.22		0.09		0.10
Black	0.13	-0.11		-0.14	0.08	-0.10	0.13			-0.07
Hispanic	-0.11	-0.13		-0.10	-0.14	-0.16				
Other race	-0.10	-0.11	-0.09	-0.11		-0.08				
Lowest Income Quartile		-0.13		-0.13		-0.11				-0.08
3rd Income Quartile		0.07					-0.09			
Highest Income Quartile		0.08		0.10		0.08				0.09
Republican	-0.08	0.20		0.21		0.19	-0.08	0.13	-0.10	0.18
Democrat	0.18	-0.07	0.13	-0.08	0.12	-0.08	0.16		0.18	-0.11
Nonpartisan	-0.10	-0.12	-0.10	-0.12	-0.08	-0.10	-0.08		-0.08	
Pastvoter	0.19	0.22	0.17	0.23	0.18	0.20			0.12	0.15
Hi Campaign Interest	0.18	0.13	0.16	0.17	0.11	0.10		0.11	0.18	0.13
Some Campaign Interest	-0.08								-0.09	
Lo Campaign Interest	-0.15	-0.14	-0.14	-0.17	-0.08	-0.11			-0.12	-0.11
Union Member	0.09		0.14	0.09	0.12				0.07	
Home Owner		0.19		0.20	0.08	0.19		0.09		0.13
Dem Activist	0.15		0.13		0.12				0.28	
Rep Activist		0.23	0.06	0.23		0.17		0.27		0.31
Weekly Church Attendance						0.09				
Battleground States	0.23	0.28	0.27	0.29	0.22	0.29	0.12	0.08		0.08
Protestants	0.09				0.13	0.08				
No Religion	-0.08	-0.12		-0.09	-0.11	-0.13		0.08		-0.10

Democratic coalition and the get-out-the-minority-vote claims that party made in 2012. What can account for this anomalous result?[7] A majority of Hispanics reside in one-party states like California and Texas, where the motivation to turn out must be generally low. Yet when we examine party contacts with Hispanics in the battleground states (see table 15.2), the surprising negative correlation with Democratic contacting is replaced by no significant relationship at all. We can think of several reasons why Hispanics are an especially challenging group to contact, despite their attractiveness as potential Democratic voters. They are younger on average than the general population, and younger people are less likely to be registered or habitual voters. Young people also are harder to reach because they are much more residentially mobile, which prevents them from being easily identifiable and contactable. Moreover, the Democratic Party and Obama campaign infrastructures were less deeply rooted in the Hispanic community, which meant that they had fewer veteran organizers and volunteers to draw upon in their canvassing efforts than they might want. Unlike African Americans who were naturally drawn in record numbers to a Democratic ticket with the first black president at its top, Hispanics also lacked the lure of a group member to draw their community leaders into active campaigning.

That nonpartisans report less contact than partisans is not unexpected, yet warrants comment. On the one hand, it is reasonable that the respective parties would focus more of their canvassing efforts on their own partisans than on nonpartisans. Nonpartisans lack the predictability of partisans in gauging how they would vote if mobilized, and campaigns do not want to encourage voters to go to the polls if they might vote against them. They also turn out at much lower levels than partisans, only in part because they may be less encouraged by party contacts. On the other hand, in a more or less partisan-balanced electorate, the vote of nonpartisans often can spell the difference between winning and losing. If the parties and candidates can identify the nonpartisans who might be more favorable to them, it is worth their while to target them. But how can they collect that information? The most readily available sources, official voting and registration records, are of little help in identifying the nonpartisans who may lean toward one candidate or another that year. Moreover, nonpartisans are disproportionately young, hence hard to locate or to identify as dependable votes if mobilized.

Finally, there are voter groups who are differentially contacted by the two parties. Republicans were much more likely to contact Republicans, not Democrats; Democrats to contact Democrats, not Republicans. Each party contacted its activists, albeit perhaps not as consistently as might have been expected. Democrats canvassed blacks, while Republicans concentrated their attention more on whites. Republican contacts were focused more on high-income voters and homeowners, whereas reported Democratic contacts did

not vary by income or ownership. Finally, union members were targeted more by the Democratic campaign. None of these differences are surprising, as the parties are working on mobilizing their bases.

Table 15.2 presents the correlations for the same variables in the eleven battleground states of the 2012 campaign. Most of them are more positive or more negative than in table 15.1 where expected. For income, the correlations of Democratic contacts with highest income (positive) respondents are significant, making their contacting pattern similar to that of the Republicans. That the Democrats now contacted highest-income voters more does not necessarily square with their traditional base, but it probably reflects attempts to harvest those most likely to vote—and, through microtargeting, they might be able to identify the more supportive of the higher-income voters. Interestingly, while most of the correlations are higher in the battlegrounds, they are not much higher.

Columns 3–10 of tables 15.1 and 15.2 contain the correlations between the voter characteristics and the four types of party contacting. A few results warrant special attention. First, print contacts and telephone contacts are associated with more voter characteristics than personal and email (or electronic) contacts. Second, contacts through literature are more associated with the voter characteristics in the battleground states than are phone, personal, or (for the Democrats) email/electronic contacts, which are about equally correlated in battlegrounds and nonbattlegrounds. Third, Democratic personal contacts with whites and blacks diverge sharply in the battleground states, producing some of the highest correlations in the two tables. Fourth, union members are considerably more likely to be contacted by both parties through printed literature and phone in the battleground states, showing that they are important targets for both Democrats and Republicans.

Including the overall contacts and the four types for both parties, a total of 690 correlations were calculated for tables 15.1 and 15.2. Of this total, only 237 are significant at the 0.01 level, surprisingly more in nonbattleground than in battleground states and surprisingly fewer overall than one might expect from voter characteristics expected to figure prominently into party contacting strategies. Moreover, only 6 of 690 reach 0.30—all but one of them in battleground states. Republican activists in battleground states via Republican email/electronic contacts are the most targeted of all, suggesting that the GOP was especially assiduous in reaching out to its base, albeit probably as much for fundraising as for mobilization, as is suggested by a correlation of 0.31 for all states. Personal contacts of blacks by Democrats are a close second, signaling the extraordinary effort the Democrats made to mobilize these most loyal members of their base. Both parties used telephones to contact people increasingly with age ($r = 0.30$ and 0.33), doubling down on those already more likely to vote. Similarly, Republicans distributed more mail/literature to

Correlations between Party Contact Measures and Voter Characteristics, Battleground States, in 2012, U.S. CNEP Surveys (cell entries are coefficients significant at 0.01 level)

	Dem Contacts	Rep Contacts	Dem Print Contacts	Rep Print Contacts	Dem Phone Contacts	Rep Phone Contacts	Dem Personal Contacts	Rep Personal Contacts	Dem Email Contacts	Rep Email Contacts
Age	0.22	0.27	0.21	0.24	0.30	0.33				
< Hi Sch										
Hi Sch				-0.19					-0.15	
White		0.20		0.26		0.19	-0.25			
Black	0.18		0.18	-0.16	0.19		0.37			
Other race		-0.14	-0.19	-0.20						
Lowest Income Quartile		-0.17		-0.19						
3rd Income Quartile							-0.14			
Highest Income Quartile	0.13	0.22	0.14	0.25	0.14	0.22				0.25
Republican		0.25		0.27		0.27				0.16
Democrat	0.19				0.20		0.22		0.14	
Nonpartisan		-0.18		-0.18		-0.20				
Pastvoter	0.16	0.26	0.17	0.32	0.16	0.24				0.17
Hi Campaign Interest	0.19	0.22	0.19	0.28		0.17	0.14	0.19	0.18	0.16
Some Campaign Interest								-0.15		
Lo Campaign Interest	-0.21	-0.26	-0.20	-0.25		-0.20			-0.15	-0.16
Union Member	0.18	0.17	0.23	0.19	0.23	0.20				
Home Owner		0.17		0.22		0.21	-0.19			0.15
Dem Activist									0.23	
Rep Activist	0.15	0.18		0.21		0.19		0.18		0.38
Protestant					0.22					
Catholic		0.18		0.21						0.11
Jew						0.11				0.14
Other religion					-0.15					
No Religion	-0.22	-0.26	-0.19	-0.22	-0.22	-0.24				

past voters than past nonvoters, substantially exceeding Democratic efforts of that type.

That these relationships are not stronger has implications for what one makes of the ground war in 2012. First, most of the groups identified in tables 15.1 and 15.2 are fairly large groups, more heterogeneous in their likely partisan preferences than parties ideally would want in targeting them. Instead, the campaigns are likely to microtarget *within* these groups. Rather than contact all union members, for example, Republicans may focus on those who exhibit Republican tendencies, while the Democrats focus on those more likely to be Democrats, information that may be accessible to union leaders. Moreover, while both parties target regular voters, they usually do so with more information about how they might have voted in the past, such as in which primaries they voted, to guide them in contacting the most responsive people. By contrast, blacks are the most homogeneously Democratic group of all the groups in the tables. Democrats run little risk of mobilizing opponents by contacting them without more precise targeting. With this one exception, the limitation of a national sample is that it cannot disaggregate groups to adequately test for microtargeting.

Second, even though we surely underestimate the precision of party contacting with our survey data, our results nonetheless challenge many of the claims made about the ground game in the 2012 presidential campaign. While there is ample evidence that the parties do tend to try to mobilize their base, they also reach out to potential voters who are not easily identifiable as part of their base. In many instances, these are contacts of convenience—regular voters, older people more likely to be at home and at the same place for many years, land-line rather than cell phone subscribers, partisans who already populate campaign mailing and emailing lists. Moreover, for all the talk of prodigious and precisely targeted ground war efforts, the reports of party contacts in our survey suggest that there is probably a substantial disconnect between plans and execution, just as there is in the delivery of so many other campaign messages. Ground war activities are inherently difficult to focus, requiring substantial planning in their targeting and assiduous follow through by volunteers in the field. This disconnect may be greatest where the most personal effort is required, in face-to-face contacts between campaigners and voters, even if these types of contact are well known to have the highest payoff.

Who Was Contacted via the Ground Game in 2004?

Our 2004 CNEP survey provides us with an opportunity to examine how contacting patterns changed between that year's presidential contest and 2012.

Earlier results suggested that the 2004 campaign may have been even more base oriented than 2012. Contacts from a single party were higher in 2004, and contacts by both parties were lower. Still, 32 percent of Republicans and also of Democrats reported contacts from both parties in 2004; 45 percent for Republicans and 43 percent for Democrats in battleground states. While these numbers do not reach the slight majority in the battlegrounds who received both Democratic and Republican contacts eight years later, they are surprisingly high.

There is good reason to expect some changes in who was contacted between the two years as a result of changes in the candidates and the strategic environment. In particular, the presence of Barack Obama at the top of the ticket in 2012 might have led the Democratic campaign to make greater efforts to mobilize minorities, especially blacks. The correlational results are indicative of ground games that were more targeted along racial lines in 2012 than they had been in 2004. Overall, Democratic contacts as well as Democratic mail/literature, telephone, and personal contacts are more correlated with black racial identifications in 2012. Correspondingly, whites were considerably more likely than nonwhites to have reported Republican contacts in 2012.

We already have seen that the consistently negative correlations suggest that neither party successfully targeted Hispanics in 2012, a result that was surprising for the Democrats. Even more surprising is that Hispanics reported even less party contacts in all states from the Democrats (and Republicans too) in 2012 than eight years before—and that there was little difference in contacting of Hispanics between the two years in the battleground states. This result challenges the conventional wisdom about 2012. Given the general support for Democrats and antipathy toward Republicans among Hispanics, the Democrats' meager success in canvassing Hispanic votes in 2012 is both unexpected, and for them surely disappointing.

Alternatively, 2004 was seen as a year in which the Republicans targeted religious voters, especially fundamentalist Christians in the battleground states. Several battleground states had gay marriage issues on the ballot that year, purportedly placed there to draw social conservatives to the polls. We find circumstantial evidence of success in this effort in the greater contacting of regular churchgoers and Protestants by Republicans overall and in battleground states, as well as in the negative correlations between GOP contacts and those with no religion or who never attend church. By contrast, weekly churchgoers and Protestants were less distinctive as recipients of Republican contacts in 2012.

Two other differences between 2004 and 2012 defy expectations. First, in 2004, union members were not contacted more than nonunion members by Democrats, although they were less likely to be contacted by the Republicans. By 2012, union members were more likely than nonmembers to be contacted

by *both* parties (especially in the battlegrounds), as the group apparently was seen by both as a fertile target for support. Second, despite all of the talk about a Republican "war on women" and a sizable gender gap in voting, women did not report more contacts than men from the Democrats in 2012, nor did men conversely emerge as a distinctive target for the GOP. This was in sharp contrast to 2004 in which women were more likely than men to report having been contacted by the Democrats. The 2004 result may be understandable given the nature of that election, but on the surface the 2012 result is not, unless it is obscuring more precise microtargeting.

There also is good reason to expect consistency between the two years in the types of voters who are logical targets for contacts by each party. These expectations are generally supported. In both years, the Democratic and Republican campaigns were more likely to focus their efforts on older people, the highest income quartile (in battleground states), past voters, and (the presumably more residentially identifiable) home owners. Party activists also were more likely to receive contacts from their respective parties. These consistencies between years generally were accentuated in the battleground states. While some of the patterns represent a ground game that is directed at the party's base, others show that the parties' efforts go beyond their base to pluck the "low-hanging fruit" of habitual voters, many of whom do not need a push to register and vote.

Finally, our data contain evidence that the battleground states were singled out for more ground-game targeting in 2012 than they had been just eight years before. Figure 15.1 showed that in 2012 both Democratic and Republican party contacts were more frequent in the battleground states than in the comparison group of all states. Party contacts were reported more frequently in the battlegrounds in 2004 too, but the differences in contacts between them and all states were about half the size that they reached in 2012.

Our data suggest that the targeting of specific groups also seems to have been more precise in 2012. One convenient way to demonstrate this is to compare summary measures of the predictive powers of the voter characteristic variables, taken together, in Logistic regression analyses of the party contact.[8] For eighteen of the twenty comparisons of two common pseudo R^2 measures (Cox-Snell and Nagelkerke) between all states and battlegrounds across the ten different party contacting measures, our model predicted better in 2012 than in 2004. The average differences between for all states and battlegrounds summarize this tendency well: 0.10 in 2012 versus 0.04 in 2004 for the Cox-Snell measure and 0.14 versus 0.06 for the Nagelkerke measure. Not only has the ground game received more attention in the recent decade or so, but it appears that its targeting may have become increasingly efficient as well.

Conclusion

Reports of party contact by respondents in two national surveys have provided a window through which to view the reach of the presidential ground games in 2012—and 2004. The results of our analysis both support and challenge the conventional wisdom. Overall, the Obama campaign enjoyed a significant edge in ground game contacts in 2012 only in personal contacts. Democrats held this edge in 2004 as well, with slight but somewhat greater advantages for other kinds of contacts. Both parties targeted their bases in these election campaigns, albeit with considerable inefficiency in both years. Perhaps the biggest surprise in our results is that many respondents reported being contacted by *both* parties, especially in 2012. There is evidence, too, that the 2012 campaigns were more concentrated on the battleground states than they had been in 2004.

We found numerous similarities between parties and between the two elections, sometimes where we did not expect them. In both years, the campaigns directed their canvassing efforts to the most likely voters—older, more affluent, more politically involved, and habitual voters. They concentrated their efforts disproportionately on the battleground states. Both campaigns also depended more on impersonal types of contact than personal contacts or emails and other electronic messages. While easier to accomplish, distributing literature and making phone calls are much less likely to be effective in mobilizing voters than face-to-face approaches, which remain conspicuously rare. Paradoxically, for all the talk of the new attention to email and other electronic forms of messaging, few respondents reported receiving these messages, and their number was only slightly higher in 2012 than in 2004. And despite their importance, Democrats did not contact Hispanics disproportionately in either year. Conversely, union members received inordinate attention from both parties in 2012 but were neglected by the Republicans in 2004, when it was home owners who were targeted by both in all states and in the battlegrounds.

Our analysis also identified party contrasts in ground game efforts, albeit again in some unexpected ways. Both campaigns were more likely to reach out to their own partisans much more than their partisan opponents and nonpartisans, with the caveat that surprisingly large numbers of partisans were contacted by both parties. The Democratic campaign reached blacks in both years, even more in 2012. The Republican campaign paid significantly more attention to whites. By contrast, only in 2004 did regular church going Protestants stand out as receiving more Republican contacts. While both parties seemed to target high-income voters, especially in the battleground states, it was the Republicans who showed consistency across the years in this effort.

In subjecting the ground game to scrutiny through the window of reported party contacts, it is not our intention to question the party and candidate organizations' expertise and effort, or their pride in their ground game successes. Both campaigns poured enormous resources into their ground games in 2012, as they had in 2004. Party ground game contacts are now a staple of presidential campaigns! Both contacted millions of voters, in many cases multiple times and through multiple means. Both made use of sophisticated modeling and state-of-the-art data mining and targeting techniques to single out viable targets to approach. Without these contacts, many eligible voters might not have cast a ballot or supported the party's candidate. The ground game probably was executed more skillfully in 2012 by both campaigns than before, at least in the modern era.

While we do not doubt the conventional wisdom that the Obama campaign enjoyed an edge in the ground game in 2012, our analysis suggests skepticism about how large—and how consequential—that edge may have been. We also are skeptical about how much each party's ground game has improved its reach compared with just eight years before. The campaigns' increasingly intensive use of technology surely has improved their productivity, but it cannot substitute for the labor-intensive, face-to-face contacts that seem so effective with voters.

Rather, ours is a cautionary tale. We recognize the difficulty of maintaining an effective ground game across multiple states amid a complicated and long presidential campaign within an electorate of over 220 million. Even if efforts are focused on a dwindling number of battleground states, they have to be prodigious. However assiduously the campaigns may have built detailed voter profiles, it is inevitable that they will fall far short of perfection in their microtargeting. However conscientiously their skilled staffs may plan and coordinate the efforts or their armies of eager campaign volunteers may work the telephones, approach voters on their doorsteps, or stuff mailers, what we know about campaigns in politics and other walks of life is that much of this effort fails to reach, much less move, many possible recipients.

In writing about local party organizations fifty years ago, Eldersveld concluded that "the party is no 'master institution' but a minimal-efficiency structure" (1964, 526). That observation applies as well to modern presidential campaigns. Even the best of campaigns are necessarily far from perfect in their ground game execution, and always will be. Of course, what matters in an election campaign is *relative* effort and success. Are they more effective than their opponents? To answer this question, we first need to determine how well the campaigns have reached out to potential voters. The window reported party contacts have provided in our analysis takes a valuable first

step in this direction. What remains to be seen is how consequential these contacts were for voter mobilization and vote choice.

Appendix: Party Contact Questions

2012 U.S. CNEP Internet survey (conducted by GfK/Knowledge Networks)

Q1. "Did representatives of any of the political parties or presidential candidates contact you during the 2012 campaign?" Check which ones among Democrat, Republican, and another party (specify) options.

Q2. *(IF Democrat/Republican checked)* "Concerning the Democrats/Republicans, was that contact with you . . . by mail or other printed material, on the telephone, in person, through email, or other electronic messaging?"

2004 U.S. CNEP Internet survey (conducted by Knowledge Networks)

Q1. "Please tell me whether any of the political parties or presidential candidates or their representatives contacted you during the recent election campaign." Check which ones among Democrat, Republican, or another party (specify) options.

Q2. *(IF Democrat/Republican checked)* "Concerning the Democrats/Republicans, was that contact with you . . . by mail, by telephone, in person, or by email?"

Notes

1. The 2012 survey was conducted from November 7 to November 19, 2012, via the Internet by GfK Knowledge Networks. Respondents were U.S. citizens drawn from a preexisting probability-based web panel representative of the adult citizen population of the United States, then weighted to match key demographic characteristics of the adult population. Non-Internet-using panelists participated via a netbook computer that GfK provided. The 2004 survey was conducted by Knowledge Networks using essentially the same methods. For more information on the GfK/KN methods, see Dennis (2001), Chang and Krosnick (2009), and *Knowledge Panel Design Summary* (2012). These surveys were conducted in conjunction with the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP), which has asked parallel questions on party contacting in over two dozen democracies since 1990.

2. Green and Gerber (2008, 139) estimate that door-to-door canvassing yields one vote per 14 contacts, which adds up to 167,000 additional Obama votes in the battleground states—about 0.8 percent of the total. Interestingly, Seth Masket estimates that Obama gained a 0.8 percent boost in a county based on his edge in field offices located there (Matthews 2012).

3. Age, education, income, and residential stability are key individual-level predictors of turnout in elections because they affect both the motivation to vote and the cost of voting. Because Americans with pro-Democratic preferences are on average younger, less educated, poorer, and more mobile, they may be assumed to require more effort to get them to the polls.

4. There were slight differences in the wording of the survey questions between 2004 and 2012 (see the Appendix). In 2012, we broadened the questions about types to include "other printed material" as well as "mail" and "other electronic messaging" beyond "email." We doubt that changes in question wording had much effect on response frequencies.

5. Fifteen states were counted as battlegrounds in 2004. Nine (Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) were battlegrounds in 2012 as well. Two (North Carolina and Virginia) were battlegrounds in 2012 but not 2004. Six states (Maine, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia) were battlegrounds in 2004 but not 2012.

6. Even with the lower reported levels of overall party contacting in response to a somewhat different question, a surprisingly high number of respondents (18 percent) in the 2012 ANES survey answered that they had been contacted by both parties compared to only one party (23 percent). In the battleground states, the percentage reporting contact by both parties rose to 28 percent—the same percentage reporting contacts by a single party. The 2012 ANES survey contained both face-to-face and Internet samples. Higher levels of party contacts appeared in the Internet sample (44 percent to 37 percent, and 61 percent to 48 percent in the battlegrounds), figures close to those from our U.S. 2012 Internet sample.

7. That so few Hispanics reported Democratic contacts (25 percent overall, 31 percent in battleground states) in our 2012 CNEP survey is echoed in other surveys. The 2012 ANES reports almost identical results: 26 percent of Latinos reported Democratic contact overall, 33 percent in the battleground states. The 2012 election survey of Hispanics conducted by Latino Decisions reports an even lower 18 percent having been contacted during the campaign (Sanchez 2013).

8. Logistic regression is preferable when the dependent variable is dichotomous, as it is for each of our party contact variables. The independent variables in the analysis are the voter characteristics that appear as the row variables in tables 15.1 and 15.2, except that where categorical variables are transformed into dummy variables for each category a base category is excluded.

V
PARTISAN ACTIVITIES

16

Republicans and Reform

The 2012 Presidential Nomination Rules

Caitlin E. Jewitt

F OLLOWING THE TUMULTUOUS 1968 Democratic National Convention, where protests raged in the streets of Chicago and Hubert Humphrey was chosen as the Democratic nominee without participating in a single primary, the Democratic Party embarked on perhaps the greatest party reform in U.S. history. In the decades that followed, the Democratic Party created a series of reform commissions, fundamentally altering the way presidential candidates are selected, and attempted to provide "timely and meaningful participation for ordinary citizens." Incrementally, the Democratic Party established a system in which voters made their preferences known through primaries and caucuses, and delegates were selected in these contests to represent the voters' preferences throughout numerous steps that culminated in the National Convention. Although the Democratic Party initiated these dramatic reforms, the Republican Party's process for nominating presidential candidates was also altered substantially by the numerous modifications made by the Democratic Party.

Though the Republican Party has made minor recommendations and reforms to the process over the past forty years, the creation of the Temporary Delegate Selection Committee in 2008 represents a significant departure in the Republican Party's pattern of being mostly uninvolved in reforming the presidential nomination process. With this committee, the Republican Party mandated that the states abide by national party rules in an attempt to lengthen the nomination process and involve more voters in the selection of a nominee.

This chapter examines the history of the parties' reforms of the nomination process, the reasons that the Republican Party finally took an active role in

the process for the 2012 nomination, and evaluates the success of the recent GOP reforms. By comparing the two most recent Republican nominations (2008 and 2012), both of which were competitive nominations, I demonstrate that while the Republican Party reformed its rules for the 2012 nomination to allow more voters and states to have a say in the process, the reforms were unsuccessful in achieving these objectives. While the 2012 nomination stretched on longer than the 2008 nomination, fewer states and voters had the opportunity to voice a preference for the Republican nominee in 2012 before a de facto nominee emerged. It appears that the Republican goals of lengthening the nomination process and allowing more states and voters an opportunity for meaningful participation were in conflict in 2012 because of the calendar of events. My findings suggest that front-loading, the trend for states to move their nominating contests toward the front of the calendar, may, at times, allow more voters a voice in the nomination. This stands in sharp contrast to the negative consequences of front-loading that are typically highlighted.

Evolution of the Presidential Nomination System

The Democratic Party initiated the presidential nomination reforms at the 1968 National Convention with the creation of the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, more commonly known as the McGovern Fraser Commission. The McGovern Fraser Commission made numerous recommendations for altering the presidential nomination process, including banning proxy voting, abolishing the unit rule, eliminating party elite ex-officio delegates, recommending states publish the time and location of caucus meetings, that caucus meetings should be held on the same date across the state, that delegates should be chosen in the same calendar year as the Convention, and that steps should be taken to encourage the representation, inclusion, and participation of minority groups (McGovern and Fraser 1970). The McGovern Fraser Commission is seen as widely successful for overhauling the presidential nomination system and having the states modify their procedures and abide by the rules in a relatively short period of time. In fact, the nomination system was reformed in time for the 1972 nomination, with the majority of states being in compliance with the rules (Democratic National Committee 1972).

The Democratic Party has not been hesitant to require reforms, as it constantly altered the presidential nomination process between 1968 and 1988. The Democratic Party had no fewer than eight commissions in this time period that adjusted and then readjusted the rules. For instance, the Democratic Party repeatedly adjusted the delegate allocation rule over the course of

twenty years to achieve various goals, including ensuring fairness, deterring minor candidates and factions, protecting President Carter's renomination chances, and as a response to dissatisfied candidates.

These constant adjustments and numerous reform commissions by the Democratic Party stand in stark contrast to what has been the Republican Party's philosophy on the nomination process. The Republican Party has typically allowed the states to choose whether they will hold a primary or caucus, which voters are allowed to participate, and how delegates are allocated, though it has engaged in minor reforms.

The Republican Party also created a reform commission at its 1968 National Convention, the Committee of Delegates and Organizations. The recommendations were much more limited than the Democratic reforms, as the Committee recommended, but it did not require representation for minority groups, it called for caucus conventions to be open to all party members, it banned proxy voting and ex-officio delegates, and it called for improved communication surrounding the selection of delegates (DiClerico and Davis 2000; Kamarck 2009). These modest recommendations had to be approved at the 1972 National Convention, and thus did not go into effect until the 1976 nomination. Also at the 1972 Republican National Convention, the Rule 29 Committee was created to assess the relationship between the national committee and the state committees and evaluate the reforms being utilized by the Democrats. However, the committee lacked enforcement power, and many of the recommendations were ultimately rejected (Kamarck 2009).

Though it did open its process to ordinary citizens, the Republican Party has tended to make minimal recommendations and encourage the states to invoke certain practices, rather than requiring reforms, as the Democratic Party has done. There are four main reasons that the Republican Party has been much less involved in instituting changes to the system. First, the Republican Party was content with the existing system because the party was successful in winning the White House in the 1970s and 1980s (Cook 2004). Second, there was not a strong faction within the Republican Party lobbying for reforms like what existed within the Democratic Party (Fraser 1980; Norrander 2010). Third, the Republican Party is known for its position on state rights and only utilizing federal authority when necessary. In line with this principle, the Republican Party has traditionally felt that the nomination process should be left up to the states and that national mandates were not necessary (Fraser 1980; Davis 1980). Finally, it is more difficult for the national Republican Party to change its rules and procedures. Unlike the Democratic Party that can alter its rules between conventions, the Republican Party requires that any rule changes be approved by four different bodies: the National Committee Rules Committee, the National Committee, the Rules

Committee of the National Convention, and the National Convention itself (Cook 2004; Mayer and Busch 2004).

While the Republican Party has not taken an active role in reforming the process at the national level, it has not been immune to many of the rule changes that have been implemented (Haskell 1996). Oftentimes, the Democratic Party reforms required changes in state laws, which forced the Republican Party to abide by the same rule changes. For instance, many states switched from caucus systems to presidential primaries in an effort to meet the requirements mandated by a Democratic reform commission most easily. This was often implemented by the state legislatures, which did not create a presidential primary solely for the Democratic Party, but instead created presidential primaries for the entire state (Cohen et al. 2008). Additionally, many states have chosen to impose the required Democratic rules on the delegates of each party.

There are several reasons that, for the most part, the Republican Party did not resist the changes that the Democratic Party initiated. First, the movement toward more direct and participatory democracy for a wide segment of the population was a popular reform, and the Republican Party would have had a difficult time resisting a democratization of the system. Second, in 1972, the first nomination of the postreform era, the Republicans were simply renominating President Richard Nixon, rather than hosting a competitive nomination. By 1976, when the Republicans were participating in a competitive nomination, the media and the public had already accepted the changes to the presidential nomination system, which would have made it very difficult for party insiders to quietly select the GOP nominee. Third, the Republican Party had observed the media attention and voter interest surrounding the 1972 Democratic process and did not want to give the Democrats the national spotlight in 1976 while they quietly nominated a candidate (Cohen et al. 2008). Lastly, there were also two high-quality and popular Republican candidates, former governor Ronald Reagan and President Gerald Ford, vying for the nomination in 1976, and party elites felt that input from Republican voters would be valuable (Haskell 1996). As a result, the Republican Party's nomination process changed along with the Democratic Party's system, without much direction or input from the national Republican Party.

That is not to say that the Republican Party has never become engaged in nomination reforms. In addition to the limited reforms and recommendations in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Republican Party created a Task Force on Primaries and Caucuses at the 1996 National Convention (Cook 2004; Busch 2000). The task force believed that front-loading prevented voters from having meaningful participation in the process and harmed candidates' abilities to fundraise and perform well during a compressed calendar.
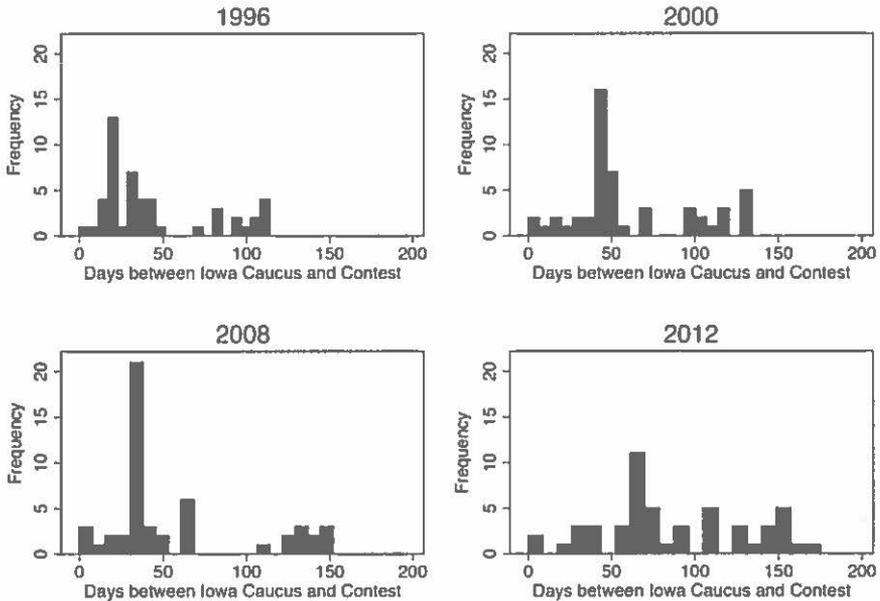
FIGURE 16.1
Front-loading and the timing of recent Republican nomination contests.

The Republicans went about attempting to change the nomination process by providing incentives to the states, rather than mandating certain rules, as the Democratic Party has traditionally done (Busch 2000). The Republican Party offered bonus delegates to states that scheduled their contests later in the nomination season, hoping that this would entice states to move their primary or caucus back in the calendar, or at least keep it where it was, since a larger number of delegates should theoretically translate into more influence in the process.

Despite the goal of combatting front-loading, the Republican Party's incentive of extra delegates was deemed not enticing enough to combat states moving their contest earlier in the season. As seen in figure 16.1, Super Tuesday, or the day that a large group of states hold their contests on the same day early in the nomination season, happened longer after the Iowa caucuses in 2000 than it did in 1996. The nomination season was more stretched out in 2000 than it was in 1996, as evidenced by the number of states in 2000 holding their contest more than 100 days after the nomination season began. However, what is not evident in these figures is that the Iowa caucuses were held earlier in 2000 than in 1996. The nomination season began on January 24, 2000, compared to a mid-February start in 1996. A few states rushed to the front of

the process on the Republican side, whereas the Democratic Party was more successful in holding states back and creating a window that states (other than the carve-out states) could hold its contests within. In other words, the Republican Party's first serious foray into reforming the presidential nomination process by offering states bonus delegates to hold later contests was unsuccessful, as the 2000 Republican nomination remained front-loaded, especially compared to the Democratic calendar.

The Republican Party Presidential Nomination System Post-2004

In a marked departure from previous limited or ineffective reforms, the national Republican Party became actively involved in adjusting the process for the 2012 nomination. At the 2008 Republican National Convention, the party chose to allow reforms to the process to occur prior to the nominating season in 2012, a shift from its typical procedure. It created the Temporary Delegate Selection Committee that would recommend changes to the process to be approved by the Republican National Committee in the summer of 2010, rather than the National Convention, as has typically been required (Mann 2009). The Republican Party decided to alter its rules for the 2012 nomination season to achieve several goals: (1) to ensure that the nomination season lasted longer than it did in 2008; (2) to allow more voters to have a say in choosing the nominee; (3) to select a nominee that had wide support among the electorate, increasing the party's chances in the general election; and (4) to keep interest and attention on the Republican nomination race to increase the chance of victory against President Obama.

In order to understand why the GOP decided to reform the nomination process for 2012, it is important to examine the preceding nomination. In many ways, the 2008 nominations were similar to those that had occurred in previous years and exhibited expected tendencies. The contests were front-loaded, and the successful candidates were well known and well financed. The most surprising feature was the lengthy, drawn-out battle between Obama and Clinton, with voters in every state having the chance to voice their preferences before a nominee was selected. In contrast to the exciting, contentious battle on the Democratic side, the Republican nomination was decided early, with John McCain essentially securing the nomination on March 4, 2008.

Many felt that the Republicans decided on their nominee far too quickly in 2008, and that this had negative consequences for the Republican Party's ability to nominate a candidate who could win in November. While the nominee has typically been chosen quickly in recent years for both parties, the delegate allocation rules allowed by the Republican Party increase the prob-

ability that the Republican nominee would be chosen before many voters cast a ballot in a primary or voiced their preference in a caucus. The Democratic Party, through its reform commissions, has prohibited or limited the use of winner-take-all delegate allocation rules, and has mandated proportional representation with a 15 percent threshold since 1992. The Republican Party, on the other hand, has (until 2012) allowed the states to utilize the delegation allocation rule of their choice, and several states have used winner-take-all. As Wright points out, allowing states to use winner-take-all rules means "small differences can have huge practical as well as psychological effects" (2009, 37). The Republican Party's lack of a mandate for proportional representation means that early front-runners and candidates with high-name recognition are advantaged more on the Republican side (Morton and Williams 2001; Wayne 2009). Given identical calendars, a Republican candidate can secure the nomination more quickly than the Democratic candidate, because the different delegate allocation rules mean that winning early states result in larger leads in the delegate count.

This quick accumulation of delegates occurred in 2008 in large part because of the winner-take-all delegate allocation methods, with the choice in only four states having any real impact on deciding which candidate would become the Republican presidential nominee. After his losses in Iowa and New Hampshire, Mitt Romney was unable to stop McCain's momentum. The results of Super Tuesday simply confirmed the decision of selecting McCain as the nominee, who was leading the delegate count by more than 400 delegates following Super Tuesday (Mann 2009). As a result, Romney withdrew on February 5, 2008, leaving McCain with only minimal competition from Mike Huckabee until Huckabee's withdrawal on March 5, 2008.

After seeing the media attention and excitement surrounding the drawn-out Democratic nomination in 2008 and the implications this had for voter enthusiasm, the Republican Party decided to reform the process. The Temporary Delegate Selection Committee believed that the process started too early and was too heavily front-loaded in 2008. It was tasked with remedying these problems prior to 2012 (J. Putnam 2012). Tennessee Republican National Committee leader John Ryder, who was a member of the Temporary Delegate Selection Committee, stated, "We will have a 60-day nominating contest that will be long enough for the party to evaluate the candidates and consider their electability, but not so long that it will create a problem for the general election" (Rothenberg 2011). The reforms were also designed to avoid an early victory for a candidate who might secure the nomination by stringing together a series of low-plurality wins. That's what happened in 2008, when McCain became the de facto nominee in early February despite failing to win a majority of the vote in nearly any of the party's contests at the time.

His early knockout victory contributed directly to reduced participation and media attention in remaining Republican primaries, in sharp contrast to the spirited Democratic contest that continued into June (Richie and Helgesen 2011).

The Republican National Committee (RNC) and the task force dealt with these perceived problems in two ways: (1) by regulating the calendar and (2) by imposing restrictions on the delegate allocation rule used by the states. More specifically, the Republican National Committee allowed four carve-out states (Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina) to hold their nominating contest on or after February 1 and before the first Tuesday in March, whereas all other states were allowed to hold their contest on or after the first Tuesday in March. This proposed February start to the nomination was significantly later than the early January start in 2008. Additionally, any state holding its contest before April had to allocate its delegates proportionally. States holding contests later in the nomination season were permitted to use winner-take-all, which should have made the state "worth" more in terms of delegates and thus more influential and consequential in the race (J. Putnam 2012). Yet the regulation for proportionality among early states was still less proportional and strict than the regulation enforced by the Democratic Party. For states holding contests prior to April 1, just the statewide delegates were required to be allocated proportionally or by using a conditional method.[1] District delegates could still be allocated in a winner-take-all fashion.

These regulations are particularly noteworthy because they represent the Republican Party *requiring* that the states abide by certain rules. The national party chose to set specific regulations about when states could schedule their contests, and, for the first time, which delegate allocation methods could be utilized. The RNC announced that any state violating the rules in 2012 would lose half of its delegates to the National Convention. In this sense, the RNC adopted a penalty as its enforcement mechanism, as the reward of bonus delegates was unsuccessful in regulating the 2000 nomination calendar.

Despite this penalty, the RNC was not able to solve the problem of states blatantly ignoring the rules and gladly accepting the penalties. With even one state willing to accept the penalty and move earlier in the process than allowed, other states would either lose their influence in the process (something that early states Iowa and New Hampshire have been very reluctant to allow) or also violate the rules and push the process earlier. In 2012, three states, Florida, Michigan, and Arizona, created a ripple effect in the calendar by moving their contests into late January and early February, and thus the carve-out states (Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina) were forced to break the rules and move their contests into early January to protect their early status (J. Putnam 2012).

For many states, the influence that comes along with an early primary or caucus date is far more important than the number of delegates the state sends to the national convention, which are more like party rallies than places for deliberation and decision in the postreform era. For instance, while flagrantly mulling over an early primary date that would violate RNC rules, Arizona governor Jan Brewer stated that she wanted to make sure Arizona was a major player in the presidential nomination and that the candidates campaigned in Arizona and that they addressed immigration and border issues (Nowicki 2011; Camia 2011).

Florida officials were also more than willing to accept the penalty imposed by the RNC for an early primary date and stressed that it was important that Florida voters vetted the candidates. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam stated, "We can't let the interests of a few party delegates override the fourth-largest state's role in selecting the next president . . . A large diverse state like Florida early in the process is a more meaningful test of the candidates' strength than any of the other early states" (Smith 2011).

Based on the actions of Florida, Michigan, and Arizona, and the subsequent movement of the early carve-out states, it is clear the GOP punishment of losing half of the delegates was not enough to force states to abide by the calendar regulations. Additionally, the Republican Party chose to impart only the minimum penalty on Florida, despite it violating rules in terms of scheduling and using winner-take-all in a contest held before April. Under the Republican Party's rules in 2012, only states holding their nominating contest after April 1 were allowed to use winner-take-all rules. Yet because Florida was already being punished for holding a contest before the approved window, the RNC opted not to also punish the state for violating the regulations on how delegates are allocated (*Huffington Post* 2011). Despite only having 50 delegates (instead of 99), Florida was free to award all of its delegates to the winning candidate, raising the stakes in the primary.

Since the Republican Party was not able to effectively enforce state parties to abide by its rules, the 2012 calendar looked completely different than the RNC intended. Due to the aforementioned states moving their contests earlier in the process, there was an unprecedented period of time between the start of the nomination and Super Tuesday, which can be seen in figure 16.1. The nomination in 2012 started just as early as it had in 2008 (January 3), but it took longer for the nomination to ramp up, as there was a period in late February 2012 without any contests. Despite the calendar looking different than the RNC intended, RNC spokeswoman Kirsten Kukowski stated, "While the primaries will now start earlier than planned, the overarching goal of the current rules was to allow more states and voters to have a role in choosing the next Republican nominee for president. This goal will be met" (Kennedy 2011).

TABLE 16.1
Average Turnout and Meaningful Participation in the 2008 and 2012 Nomination Contests*

Party	Year	Nomination Status	Turnout	Number of Contests
Democratic	2008	Overall	31.30%	49
		Competitive	31.30%	49
		Uncompetitive	–	0
Republican	2008	Overall	17.58%	48
		Competitive	17.60%	37
		Uncompetitive	17.55%	11
Republican	2012	Overall	16.15%	49
		Competitive	16.31%	30
		Uncompetitive	15.89%	19

*Note: A nomination contest is considered competitive if it occurs on or before the date the nomination was decided. A nomination is considered uncompetitive once a candidate secures a majority of delegates or a candidate becomes the de facto nominee because all of his serious competitors withdrew from the race.

The 2008 nomination began on January 3, 2008, and was secured by McCain on March 4, 2008. The 2012 nomination began on January 3, 2012, and was secured by Romney on April 11, 2012. The goal of extending the length of time the nomination season lasted was met, as the 2012 season stretched on 38 days longer than the nomination had in 2008. However, when looking closer at the number of people and states that had the opportunity to engage in meaningful participation in the process, it becomes apparent that the RNC's goals were not met. As table 16.1 shows, thirty-seven out of forty-eight contests were competitive and held before McCain secured the nomination on March 4, 2008. Eleven states held their Republican nominating contests after McCain secured the nomination in 2008. In 2012, only thirty states held their contests before Romney secured the nomination on April 11, 2012. Nineteen states held their contest after Romney became the de facto nominee, and, thus, had no say in which candidate would become the Republican nominee to compete against Barack Obama in the general election. Despite efforts to extend the process, eight more states had the opportunity to weigh in on the nomination before a de facto nominee emerged in 2008 compared to 2012.

Turning to the number of voters who participated in the process, we see that fewer voters (16.15 percent) participated in the Republican nomination contests in 2012 than in 2008, where 17.58 percent participated. Interestingly, in both election years, the turnout rate in the competitive portion of the race is not substantially higher than the turnout rate in the uncompetitive portion of the nomination. Turnout did not drop once the Republican nominee was decided, despite what we might expect. This fairly steady turnout rate

across the competitive and uncompetitive portion of the nomination can be explained by the fact that states that vote later, and consequently are more likely to be in the uncompetitive portion of the nomination, are also more likely to hold their presidential nominating contest in conjunction with their statewide primaries. As a result, turnout for states in the uncompetitive phase of the presidential nomination remains relatively high because voters are turning out to participate in statewide primary races. While the turnout rate between years for the Republican races is fairly equal, this does obscure the fact that there is substantial variation among states in each year, as depicted in figure 16.2.

In sum, fewer voters turned out in 2012 than in 2008 to voice a preference for who should become the Republican nominee, despite the RNC's intention of providing more voters a say in the nomination. The turnout rates in both Republican nominations are also significantly lower than in the drawn-out Democratic nomination of 2008. While the 2012 nomination season lasted longer, the RNC's reforms did not result in drawing more voters into the process and allowing more states to have an opportunity for meaningful participation in the process as intended. In both the 2008 and 2012 Republican
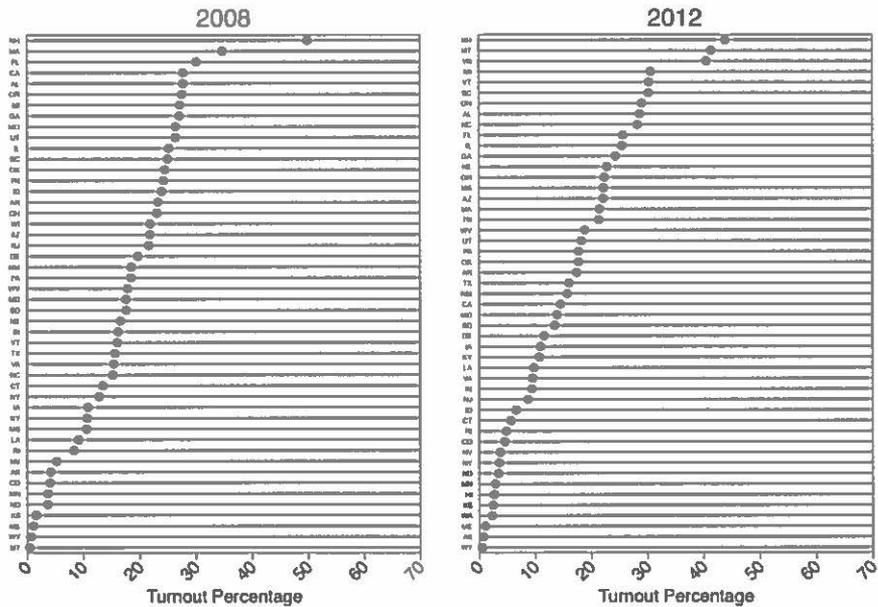
FIGURE 16.2
Turnout in the 2008 and 2012 Republican contests.

nomination races, there were much lower rates of participation and meaning-
ful choice than in the 2008 Democratic race.

Conclusion

Unlike the Democratic Party, which tinkered with and adjusted its national
party rules continually between 1968 and 1988, the Republican Party has been
content, for the most part, to be swept along by the reforms imposed by the
Democratic Party and to leave many decisions up to the states. That changed
in 2008 with the creation of the Temporary Delegate Selection Committee
and the decision to allow the rules to be changed and implemented prior to
the next nomination. With this significant foray into reforming the presiden-
tial nomination process, the Republican Party failed to achieve its objective
of allowing more voters to have a meaningful say in the nomination. With
the ripple effect of states moving their contests earlier to preserve their order
in the nomination season after Florida announced it would hold a January
primary, the 2012 nomination began just as early as it had in 2008, despite
the RNC's hope for a February start to the nomination. The GOP was suc-
cessful in lengthening the process, as it took 99 days for Romney to secure
the 2012 nomination, compared to the 61 days it took McCain to secure the
2008 nomination.

The Republican Party's goals of a less front-loaded process and allowing
more voters a say in the process were in tension in 2012. Since many states
abided by the RNC's prohibition on states (other than the four carve-out
states) holding contests prior to the first Tuesday in March, there was a lull in
the nomination calendar in late February where the nomination was stretch-
ing on, but no voters or states were making their preferences known. More
states voted in the 61 days the 2008 nomination was competitive than voted
in the 99 days the 2012 nomination was competitive. While a front-loaded
calendar is typically seen as being detrimental to the nomination process, in
2008 the front-loaded nature of the nomination calendar actually allowed
more states and voters a voice than was the case in 2012. The 2012 Republican
nomination demonstrates that stretching out the process is not enough to
increase involvement and maximize meaningful participation.

The failure to achieve these goals is due, in part, to the fact that states were
more than willing to violate the RNC's rules and accept the punishment of
the loss of half of their delegates in order to hold an early contest, gain media
attention, and be influential in the process. In 2008, Democratic candidates
did not campaign in Florida because Florida violated the Democratic Party's
rules by scheduling an early primary. We saw no similar pattern on the

Republican side; in fact, Republican candidates spent massive amounts of money in Florida in 2012. The states have learned that an early primary is worth more than additional delegates. Allowing later states to utilize winner-take-all delegate allocation in order to make these contests more influential was not particularly effective because the nomination was secured mere days after states were allowed to use winner-take-all. If the Republican Party wants to be successful in achieving its goals, then it has to ensure that the states abide by its rules. The Republican Party has, thus far, been unsuccessful in reforming the process by using incentives (in 2000) and disincentives (in 2012). This stands in contrast to the Democratic Party's ability to drastically alter the nomination process time and time again between 1968 and 1988, while receiving cooperation from the states. This task is more difficult for the Republican Party because of its overarching principle of limiting national involvement and protecting the freedom of the states.

The Republican Party will once again take an active role in the process, changing the rules for the 2016 nomination in between National Conventions, as the Republican National Committee created a subcommittee within its Standing Committee on the Rules to reevaluate and assess the rules for 2016 (J. Putnam 2013). Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus announced that he intends to shorten the 2016 primary season and move the National Convention to June, rather than holding it in August. He plans to impose a "death penalty" on states that violate the RNC's rules for scheduling by only granting states that hold contests outside of the approved window a mere nine delegates (Schultz and Livengood 2013). The Republican National Committee approved these proposals in January 2014 (Blake 2014).

The question is whether the rules will be different enough and the punishments severe enough to make a difference in shaping the nomination or if individual decisions made by the states will shape the structure of the 2016 nomination race, especially for smaller states that have fewer delegates to begin with. Additionally, Michigan and Arizona currently both have laws stating their primaries will be the last Tuesday in February, and North Carolina has proposed a law to hold its primary mere days after South Carolina votes (J. Putnam 2013). It is uncertain at this point whether these states will fall in line with RNC rules prior to the start of the 2016 nomination season.

In order to retain its authority and ability to shape its nominating procedure, the Republican Party must find a way to keep states from shuffling their contest dates and sending the nomination calendar into a free fall. The Republican Party faces a dilemma in that in order to achieve its goals and produce a nomination procedure where most voters have the opportunity to select a popular and electable candidate, it has to mandate the states follow the national rules, which violates one of the party's core principles.

I would like to thank Sarah Treul and the participants of the 2013 State of the Parties conference for their helpful comments and feedback.

Note

1. A state could allocate delegates conditional on the performance of the candidates. For instance, if no candidate receives 50 percent of the statewide vote, then the delegates are awarded proportionally to the top three candidates. If a candidate receives 50 percent or more of the statewide vote, then all of the statewide delegates are awarded to the winning candidate.

17

Changes in Local Party Structure and Activity, 1980–2008

Douglas D. Roscoe and Shannon Jenkins

POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE PROVEN to be one of the hardiest species of political organization in the American context. Their genesis occurred in an environment that was openly hostile to their formation, and they thrived despite having no formal role within governmental structures or processes. Moreover, during the course of American history, key changes in the legal, social, and technological environments have threatened them repeatedly. Remarkably, parties have continually adapted and remained a critical component of the American democratic process.

Yet despite the fact that the political environment has continued to change, little is known about the adaptation of local political parties to recent, but significant, changes in the political environment, such as the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. In this study, we assess changes in local party organizations over a nearly 30-year period and attempt to understand these changes as adaptations to developments in the larger environment. Understanding how and why local political parties adapt to changes in the political environment is important given the critical role parties play in the U.S. political system. The particular forms these institutions take and the way they adapt to their environment are attempts to remain useful in these environments. Moreover, this story of adaptation is an important one, because it emphasizes the fact that institutions arise and persist because they are useful.

Local Party Organizational Strength and Activity in Historical Perspective

In the twentieth century, concern over the demise of political parties emerged in the wake of Progressive Era reforms that introduced merit hiring systems and direct primaries in most states. In the 1960s and 1970s, these concerns mounted with the rise of mass media and the decline of party identification. As Broder suggested in his 1971 book, *The Party's Over*, these changes seemed to imply the parties had been sidelined in American politics (for a good summary of this literature, see Frendreis and Gitelson 1999).

However, research examining the role of local party organizations has shown that party organizations have not declined as some scholars worried; instead, party organizations remained strong and active in the 1980s and 1990s (Cotter et al. 1984; Frendreis and Gitelson 1999; Gibson et al. 1983; 1985). Their continued vitality was due to a shift in the nature of their activity, which increasingly involved the provision of services to candidates who were more independent from the party (Frendreis 1996). Parties played an "adaptive brokerage" role, facilitating the connections between candidate organizations and pools of resources, such as money, expertise, and volunteers (Frendreis and Gitelson 1999, 152). Thus, rather than being threatened by changes in the political environment, local parties adapted and maintained their critical role in the electoral arena.

To understand how changes in the political environment may affect local parties, it is useful to draw from the organizational adaptation perspective on institutionalism (Carrol 1984; Hannan and Freeman 1989; Lewis and Steinmo 2012; Nelson and Winter 1982), which emphasizes the ways in which institutions fulfill social functions, the ways they are useful to those who sustain them, and how the structures of institutions reflect their environment. Persistent organizations are often those that have found a successful social niche. Institutional change reflects an adaptation to alterations in the environment; to understand this change, it is critical to examine the environment to ascertain what factors are pressuring organizations toward adaptations. Changes in the broader electoral and political environment may lead to changes in the structure, activity, and integration of parties.

From this perspective, a return to questions about the structural vitality and programmatic activity of local party organizations and the integration of state and local organizations is in order due to three recent changes in the environment. First, local party organizations in the past have focused on fostering connections between candidates and resources, with money being one such critical resource (Frendreis and Gitelson 1999). However, the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in 2002 eliminated the flow of

soft money from national to state and local party organizations, upon which state and local organizations were heavily dependent (Bibby and Holbrook 1996; La Raja 2003). There was disagreement over what impact BCRA would have on state and local parties, but there was consensus that the law's passage would alter the functioning of party organizations and the relationships among them (La Raja, Orr, and Smith 2006). While research has examined the impact of BCRA on state parties (Dwyre et al. 2007; La Raja, Orr, and Smith 2006), little is known about how local party organizations have adapted to BCRA.

Second, the rise of the Internet has changed the electoral environment. Candidates now use the Internet to connect with voters and also to raise money, and voters are increasingly turning to the Internet as a source of campaign information (Farnsworth and Owen 2004; Williams et al. 2005). While candidates may look to the party to connect them with expertise in developing their Internet capabilities, they may be able to do so without the aid of party organizations, given the availability of easy-to-use software. Moreover, the rise of activist groups on the Internet may serve to undermine the vitality of local party organizations, as politically active and like-minded people have alternative means to connect and work to influence the political process (Masket 2009). These changes suggest the possibility that the adaptive brokerage role may not be as appropriate as it had been. However, technology may also have buttressed local parties in ways that counteract these forces. To the extent that many local party organizations maintain their own website and email address and can engage in Internet campaigning themselves, they can establish a more prominent organizational presence. It may also mean that local party organizations are more independent and therefore less likely to coordinate their activities with state parties.

Finally, recent election cycles have seen the reemergence of sophisticated canvassing and voter mobilization operations, particularly among the presidential candidates (Bergan et al. 2005). During the 1990s many of the local parties' traditional grassroots functions gave way to service-oriented candidate assistance, and party efforts were directed more toward candidates than voters (Frendreis and Gitelson 1999; Hogan 2002). However, in the last several elections, there has been a renewed emphasis on grassroots effort on both sides of the partisan aisle.

This focus on mobilization may reflect a growing sense that, as the country polarizes, the portion of the electorate amenable to persuasion is shrinking and so campaigns must focus on mobilizing their bases (Bergan et al. 2005; Mesrobian 2004). Moreover, this polarization also probably increased the supply of labor willing to engage in mobilization. Polarized activists will find greater purposive benefit in political activity, as the stakes appear to be higher

and the elected faces of the parties promote alternative policy courses that are more objectionable to those on the opposite side of the spectrum.

Futhermore, the changes discussed above—BCRA and the rise of Internet technology— also may have contributed. The DNC, for example, under Terry McAuliffe's leadership, took up voter contact as its major focus when the soft money machine was shut down (Mesrobian 2004). This pivot was facilitated by the emergence of computer- and web-based voter databases, which the DNC shared with state parties. Presumably, these efforts bounced down again to the local parties, where people are available to knock on doors and make phone calls. Thus, the renewed focus on voter mobilization efforts in recent elections may mean the resources local party organizations have the most access to, namely motivated volunteers, are increasingly important. Given these environmental changes—in campaign finance law, Internet technology, and mobilization activity—we hypothesize that local parties will have responded to these changes in the environment. Indeed, we find they continue to be structurally and programmatically strong, but they have shifted away from money-centered to more grassroots oriented activities.

Data on Local Party Structure and Activity

The need to assess institutional change over an extended period can only be met with data that provide consistent measures at multiple points in time. This study meets that criterion by relying on data drawn from three separate studies. These studies involved surveys of local party chairs and, importantly, the surveys in all three periods contained the same measures of local party structural attributes, programmatic activity, and state-local party integration. The first study was the Party Transformation Study (PTS) by Cotter et al. (1984), which involved a survey of local party chairs in all 50 states in 1979 to 1980. For the PTS survey, there was a 53 percent response rate, yielding 2,021 Democratic cases and 1,980 Republican cases drawn from the population of all local party committees. The second study, the Election Dynamics Project by Frendreis and Gitelson (1999), surveyed local party chairs in 1992, 1994, and 1996 in 8 to 9 states—Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, South Carolina, Washington, Wisconsin (and Ohio in 1996 only). States were chosen to be representative in terms of party organizational strength and electoral competitiveness. The response rates were very high: about 65 percent in 1992 and 1994 and 60 percent in 1996. The survey yielded samples sizes of 650 in 1992 (312 Republicans, 338 Democrats), 727 in 1994 (376 Republicans, 351 Democrats), and 673 in 1996 (333 Republicans, 340 Democrats).

We conducted the third study as part of a broader investigation into local political parties in the United States The key data came from a web survey of local party chairs across the United States conducted during 2010; the survey asked chairs to reflect on the 2008 election cycle. There were 1,187 usable responses, 511 from Republicans and 676 from Democrats. The number of responses varied considerably from state to state, but overall, the response rate was 27 percent (see Jenkins and Roscoe 2014 for more detail about the sample).

Changes in Local Party Structure and Activity, 1980–2008

Local Party Organizational Structure

We begin by examining the structural attributes of local party committees in table 17.1. First, it is evident that across all time periods there are certain structural traits that are very common and some that are not. Most local parties have a constitution and complete set of officers. Roughly half have campaign headquarters. Beyond that, the indicators of organizational maturity can be applied to far fewer party committees. Only about a quarter have a formal budget or telephone listing. The marks of a fully mature organization—a year-round office and paid staff—are relatively rare. These patterns suggest that local parties, while moderately institutionalized, still do not engage in a level of ongoing activity that demands a permanent physical location and regular working staff.

TABLE 17.1
Local Party Structure in 1980, the 1990s, and 2008

	1980		1990s Mean		2008	
	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.
Has complete set of officers	81	90	95	94	92***	89
Has constitution, rules, or bylaws	68	68	80	76	86***	79***
Has formal annual budget	31	20	36	24	34	34***
Has some paid, full-time staff	4	3	5	3	5	6***
Has some paid, part-time staff	6	5	8	5	6	8***
Has year-round office	14	12	23	15	23***	25***
Has telephone listing	16	11	29	23	28***	33***
Has campaign headquarters	60	55	58	58	63	54
Has a website					70	70
Has email address(es)					70	68
Has social media account(s)					46	41

Note: Values represent percentage of local parties with given structural attribute. Asterisks denote whether there is a statistically significant difference between the proportions in 1980 and 2008 at the *0.10, **0.05, or ***0.01 level.

Nonetheless, local parties seem to be moving toward greater levels of institutionalization. None of the indicators display a statistically significant decline over the 1980 to 2008 period.[1] Instead, there are many signs of increased structural maturity. With the exception of establishing campaign headquarters, there have been increases in each indicator among the Republicans, the Democrats, or both. Many of these increases have been substantial. The percentage of Republican committees with a formal constitution went up 18 percent points, from 68 percent to 86 percent. The percentage of Democratic committees with a telephone listing tripled, from 11 percent to 33 percent. Similar gains appear for many of the items. The data paint a picture of increasingly mature local parties in the United States over the past 30 years.

Have these changes altered the relative maturity of Republican and Democratic committees? The trends are balanced for some items, whereas some trends benefit the Democrats and some the Republicans. In 1980, the Republicans had higher rates, at statistically significant levels, among five indicators, while the Democrats had an edge on only one. By 2008, the Republicans were ahead on only three indicators, the Democrats again on one. In 2008, none of the differences between the parties was greater than 9 percentage points. So, on balance, the changes over this period have brought greater parity.

Local Party Activity

Structural maturity is important for any organization, because it creates the capacity for action. Has increasing institutionalization among local parties led to increasing activity? The answer is complicated, and reveals important facets of the changing role of local parties. Table 17.2 presents the data on the 15 activity items included in all three waves, as well as the item on get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts, which were included only in the 1990s and 2008 surveys.

First, as table 17.2 and figure 17.1 show, there are statistically significant declines for both parties in four activity areas: contributing money to candidates, buying newspaper ads, buying radio/TV time, and purchasing billboard space. Importantly, all four activities revolve around the expenditure of money by the local committee. Some of the declines are quite large. Among Republican committees, radio/TV advertising declined 14 percentage points; the number of committees contributing to candidates went down 11 percentage points. Similarly, newspaper advertising among Democratic local parties decreased 18 percentage points and radio/TV advertising dropped 15 percentage points.

For two of these activity areas—radio/TV ads and billboards—the declines were relatively consistent across the time period. However, the decreases in contribution activity and newspaper advertising appear to be concentrated

TABLE 17.2
Local Party Activity in 1980, the 1990s, and 2008

	1980		1990s Mean		2008	
	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.
Distributes campaign literature	79	79	88	88	83**	84***
Buys newspaper ads for party and candidates	62	62	65	63	52***	44***
Prepares press releases for party and candidates	55	55	65	65	59	56
Purchases billboard space	13	10	10	5	7***	5***
Distributes posters or lawn signs	62	59	91	90	82***	84***
Sends mailings to voters	59	47	60	55	53**	53***
Organizes telephone campaigns	65	61	62	59	65	70***
Buys radio/TV time for party and candidates	33	33	26	27	19***	18***
Conducts registration drives	45	56	37	45	56***	63***
Organizes door-to-door canvassing	48	49	56	55	60***	73***
Conducts get-out-the-vote effort			68	69	72	78
Contributes money to candidates	70	62	77	70	59***	57***
Arranges fundraising events	68	71	76	75	72*	75**
Coordinates county-level campaigns	56	57	56	59	58	58
Organizes campaign events	65	68	80	80	77***	79***
Utilizes public opinion surveys	16	11	17	13	13	11
Conducted party fundraising online					19	25
Assisted candidate with online fund-raising					16	22
Publicized through email					56	64
Publicized through website					53	54
Publicized through social media					26	23

Note: Values represent percentage of local parties engaging in given activity. Asterisks denote whether there is a statistically significant difference between the proportions in 1980 and 2008 at the *0.10, **0.05, or ***0.01 level.

in the period after the 1990s. This timing is likely related to changes in the broader environment. The declines in newspaper circulation did not begin until the early 1990s. And the fading role of local parties in campaign finance may be related to the BCRA, which turned off the soft money spigot in 2002. Although soft money flowed primarily from national party committees to state committees, the elimination of soft money may nonetheless have had important effects on local parties. After 2002, the national party committees made up for most of the lost soft money with increased levels of hard money (Dwyre et al. 2007). It may have simply been the case that the national committees began vacuuming up much more of the available hard money among their respective donor networks, leaving less available to flow through local
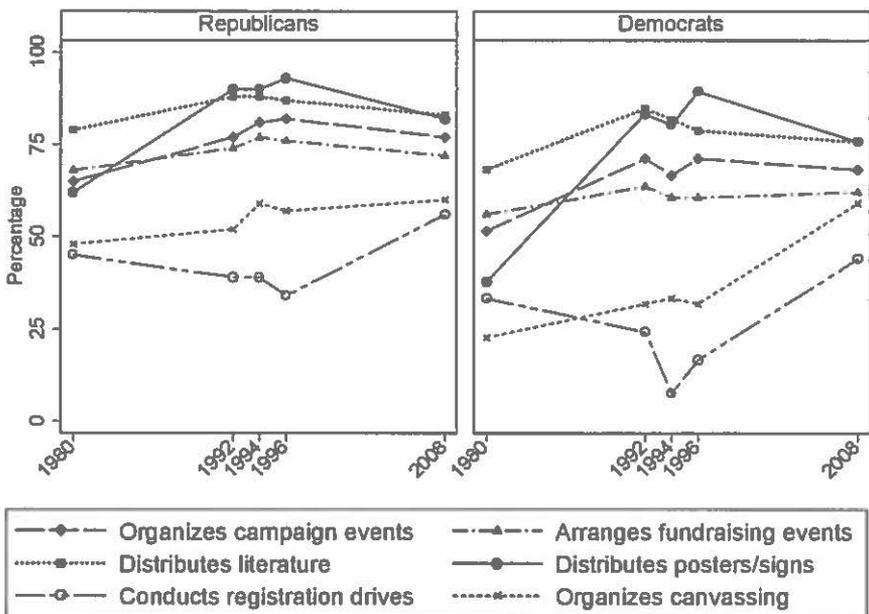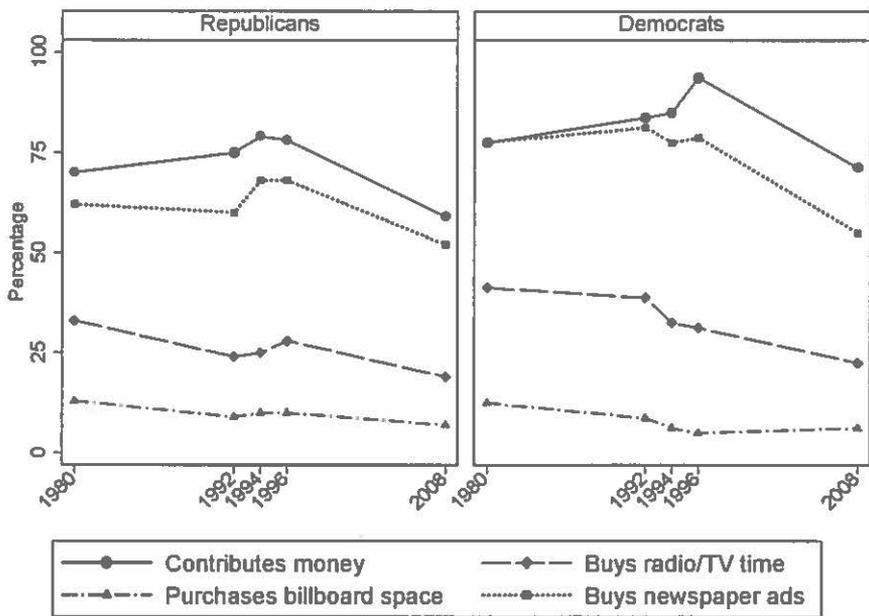
FIGURE 17.1
Changes in local party activity.

committee coffers. Indeed, few local party committees are sufficiently orga-
nized to run serious fundraising operations, especially compared to state or
national committees, legislative campaign committees, or even candidate
campaign committees. Recent news accounts report that members of Con-
gress now spend up to four hours per day fundraising; it is hard to imagine
how local parties lacking permanent staff could compete (Sullivan 2013;
Yglesias 2013).

While there were areas of decline, there were more activities that increased
in usage. Six activities became more common among both Republican and
Democratic local parties: organizing campaign events, organizing fundraising
events, distributing posters and lawn signs, conducting registration drives,
organizing door-to-door canvassing, and distributing campaign literature
(see figure 17.1). In addition, there was a statistically significant increase
in the number of Democratic committees that ran GOTV drives in 2008
compared to the 1990s (taking the average of the 1990 surveys). The timing
of these gains are somewhat varied. Some show steady increases (campaign
events), some increased mainly prior to the 1990s (posters and lawn signs),
and some dipped and then gained after the 1990s (registration drives).

Whereas the areas of decline all involve spending money, the areas of
increased activity generally require the party committee to engage in coordi-
nation, underwriting some of the transaction costs of collective action (e.g.,
organizing events or canvassing operations). They also involve unmediated
communication with voters.

Perhaps more notably, many also involve the use of local volunteers and
activists. Indeed, some of the biggest increases include these kinds of grass-
roots activities. Between 1980 and 2008, the number of Republican local
parties running registration drives went up 11 percentage points, canvassing
went up 12 percentage points, and distribution of posters and lawn signs went
up 20 percentage points. Similarly, among Democratic local parties there was
a 7 percentage-point increase in registration drives, a 24 percentage-point
increase in canvassing and a 25 percentage-point increase in placing posters/
lawn signs.

Indeed, it is accurate to say that local parties have shifted away from a
financial service role and toward a grassroots role. It takes large groups of
people to effectively distribute campaign posters and signs, conduct regis-
tration drives, canvass door-to-door, run phone campaigns, or hold GOTV
drives. Sticking yard signs into the turf or ringing doorbells to promote a
candidate are bread-and-butter campaign activities that in many ways typify
campaign "labor."

The increased use of this grassroots labor is notable because it occurs
during the time period that scholars began to describe the emergence of

candidate-centered campaigns. Candidates certainly can raise money and purchase TV ads on their own, but finding a large corps of volunteer labor is more difficult. Parties represent a place where committed activists and volunteers can be connected with candidates who have a need for campaign labor. In this way, local parties are increasingly brokering people, not money, and thereby remaining important to candidates' efforts.

As it was with organizational structure, the Republican activity advantage in 1980 declined over the following thirty years—so much so that the advantage now lies with the Democrats. In 1980, the Republicans engaged in six activities at statistically significant higher rates than Democrats; the Democrats were more active in three areas, for a net Republican advantage. By 2008, the Republicans were more active on only one item—buying newspaper ads—while Democrats engaged in three activities at higher rates. One particularly notable change involved local parties' involvement in canvassing. In 1980, the parties canvassed at the same rate. In 2008, Democrats were 13 percentage points more likely to organize canvassing efforts.

State-Local Party Integration

So far, we have seen increasingly mature local party organizations that have shifted their focus away from expenditure-related functions and toward coordination and grassroots activities. Local parties, of course, operate within a larger party structure, and their relationships with the other committees in this structure, particularly the state party committees, are an important characteristic to describe. Generally, the data here suggest an overall disintegration for Republicans, with a more mixed pattern of change for Democrats.

Table 17.3 presents the data on joint activities of state and local party committees and state assistance to local parties. There were declines among Republicans in three of the five areas. Some of these declines were quite steep. Joint fundraising fell 27 percentage points; cooperation on patronage appointments plummeted 32 percentage points. At the same time, state Republican parties became much less likely to provide assistance to local committees in a variety of areas. There are declines in seven of the ten areas and increases in only one. Again, some of the declines are large. Assistance with computer services and research both went down 19 percentage points.

Democratic joint activity also fell in three areas, but it did go up in one (shared mailing lists). As with the Republicans, some joint activities became much less likely over the time period—joint fundraising and patronage cooperation fell 24 percentage points. But when it comes to state assistance, the Democrats show signs of increasing integration. Assistance went up in five areas, although the increases were not particularly large for most items. It

TABLE 17.3
State-Local Party Integration in 1980, the 1990s, and 2008

	1980		1990s Mean		2008	
	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.
Joint Activity						
Shares mailing lists	59	37	62	57	44***	53***
Joint fundraising	47	46	30	27	20***	22***
Patronage	53	40	36	26	21***	16***
Joint GOTV	56	53	58	59	54	54
Joint registration drives	38	43	31	36	36	31***
State Assistance						
Record keeping	20	9	8	9	13***	17***
Legal advice	53	36	46	37	45***	45***
Computer services	39	23	45	30	20***	36***
Research	53	26	44	31	34***	33***
Office space	2	5	1	2	5***	4
Staff	9	10	6	7	6**	12
Recruitment	43	16	31	20	28***	25***
Operating expenses	7	14	4	10	6	7***
Campaign expenses	17	14	9	21	12***	9***
Campaign training and schools			80	60	70	66
Website development					22	16
Social media					16	8

Note: Values represent percent of local parties engaging in joint activities with the state party or receiving the specific type of assistance from the state party. Asterisks denote whether there is a statistically significant difference between the proportions in 1980 and 2008 at the *0.10, **0.05, or ***0.01 level.

also is important to note there were small declines in assistance in two areas, operating expenses and campaign assistance. But the picture for Democrats is clearly different than that for Republicans, where assistance has dropped off almost across the board.

It is also interesting to note that one of the biggest areas of decline for both parties was joint fundraising, while the one area that showed no decline for either party was joint GOTV efforts. These patterns align with those reported earlier on local activity.

Structure and Activity on the Internet

The Internet, of course, has changed electoral politics in many important ways. While there can be no comparison to earlier time frames, it is important to assess in 2008 the extent to which local party committees embraced the Internet. Our data suggest they have quite vigorously.

Most local parties have a website and email addresses, as reported in table 17.1—around 70 percent of both Democratic and Republican committees. These structural features are as common as campaign headquarters (and much more common than telephone listings ever were). Almost half of local committees have social media accounts. These structural features have given local parties an accessible public face—a place where citizens can learn about and reach out to their local parties. As recently as the 1990s, this kind of accessibility did not exist—in the 1990s, less than 30 percent of local parties had telephone listings, so for most voters interested in getting involved, the first step often meant showing up at a meeting. The Internet has given parties a much bigger welcome mat. It may be that this accessibility has facilitated the pivot toward grassroots activity.

Local parties are also using the Internet for campaign activity, as table 17.2 reveals. They are just as likely to engage in Internet publicity as to send mailings or purchase newspaper ads. And they are almost twice as likely to publicize the party or its candidates through the web or email than to buy radio or TV ads. That said, online fundraising is still somewhat limited, though this may reflect the diminished role of parties in the campaign finance game more so than an orientation toward the use of the Internet.

A comparison of Republican and Democratic committees suggests that, in this area, Republicans have the edge. They are more likely (at statistically significant levels) to have a social media account, to fundraise online, and to publicize through email. Perhaps relatedly, Democratic local parties are more likely to get assistance with website and social media from their state parties, as table 17.3 shows.

Parties as Adaptive Organizations

From these findings, five major themes emerge. First, local parties have continued to mature structurally, advancing toward a greater degree of institutionalization. Second, despite this maturation, they remain intermittent work organizations without the enduring features of permanent organizations. Third, there has been a shift away from activities that involve monetary resources and toward activities that require labor. Fourth, while Republicans maintain an edge in the structural maturity of their organizations, the Democratic parties are more active in the labor-related activities that are becoming more common. Finally, there has been a decline in cooperation and integration between the local parties and the state party organizations, particularly among Republicans. As with prior periods of party adaptation, party organizations have changed in ways that sustain their usefulness to those involved

in their maintenance, particularly candidates. We consider these findings in light of the organizational adaptation perspective on institutional change, described above.

Structural Maturity and Institutionalization

The results of this study show that trends toward increased structural maturity and institutionalization continue. From the perspective of office seekers, parties remain an important resource, so party organizations have shown steady or increasing signs of organizational maturity. However, local party organizations are still not permanent work organizations in the manner of the national party organizations, reflecting some of the ways parties are useful to political actors. Local party organizations mainly are useful in the period immediately preceding elections and are less critical to candidates—or anyone else—during the interim intervals. As a result, they have not matured as much as other political institutions. In contrast, the national party organizations, which are useful at most times to a broad set of political actors as a way of publicizing the party image, recruiting candidates, raising money, and brokering diverse party interests, have developed into highly mature work organizations with permanent offices; permanent, paid, full-time staff; and regular work routines. State political parties, which used to resemble local party organizations, rest somewhere in between these two extremes, reflecting the intermediate scope of their functions. It is possible that local party institutionalization will not advance much, given the intermittent nature of electoral activity. Alternatively, the environment might provide continual pressures on local parties to institutionalize; this could be the result if state legislative campaigns continue to become more professionalized, with longer campaign seasons and the need for more sustained assistance. Of course, more comprehensive institutionalization of the type experienced by the national parties could occur if local parties developed wholly new roles, defining a new niche that required collective action on an ongoing basis. Though this seems unlikely, the decentralization and fragmentation of political information that has occurred in recent years with the emergence of the Internet may create an opening for local parties as ongoing portals of political communication.

Functional Adaptation

Analysis of the electoral activity of local party organizations shows that while these organizations continue to be very active, there has been a shift toward activity in areas that require campaign-related labor. Local parties remain important to candidates during election periods, but changes in the

needs of candidates' campaigns have resulted in adaptations in the kinds of resources parties provide to office seekers. As politics have become more polarized and more partisan, candidates are increasingly returning to mobilization of their base as a critical component of a winning strategy. Not surprisingly, local parties have come to support this function, at least in part. Indeed, local parties are perfectly positioned for this role, because their greatest resource is access to a network of local activists with the time and inclination to engage in grassroots efforts. In this regard, it is also worth noting that while the Republicans continue to have a structural advantage, the Democrats have the edge in labor-intensive activities, reflecting traditional notions of the parties' strengths. As a result, the adaptive brokerage model of local party organizations remains accurate, although the resources being brokered have changed as parties are increasingly sourcing the manpower involved in critical campaign functions. This new brokerage role has not wholly displaced their role brokering money and other campaign services, but it does represent a shift in the mix of resources parties bring to the table and deliver to candidates.

(Dis)Integration

A long-term view of the coordination of state and local party activity shows signs of disintegration. State and local parties are less likely to engage in joint activities, such as joint registration drives and fundraising. Rather than reflecting a decline in organizational maturity, this may be due instead to the increasing institutionalization of local party organizations and the utility of the Internet, both of which may reduce the need to rely on state party resources. The soft money of the 1990s, which flowed from the national organizations to the state and local organizations, was a centralizing and integrating force within the parties. When the BCRA turned off the soft money spigot, the parties again showed signs of adaptation to this key change in the legal environment. Cooperation and aid between state and local organizations fell, as might be expected, and local parties were left more to their own devices. Interestingly, local organizations during this latter period continued to mature structurally and became more active in a number of areas. Like an organism finding new food sources when an old one disappears, local parties were able to retain their vitality.

Conclusion

Parties are adaptive organizations that respond to changes in their environment, and the need to adapt will not diminish. It is possible these changes

may lead to the decline of political parties. However, parties enjoy a tight relationship with government functions, such as elections, making them semi-public in practice, and state regulations often encompass specific elements of party structure (Epstein 1986; Holbrook and La Raja 2013). As a result, parties may become moribund, but they are protected from mortality. Given their impressive record of adaptation in the past, future adaptation is more likely than decline. The next decade will likely continue to be a highly polarized period, providing an opportunity for parties to engage in more grassroots mobilization efforts. Advances in communication technology will continue. Parties will need to continually adapt to remain useful in our political system. Considering a broader historical sweep, it is important to note that despite the numerous changes in the environment and party adaptations over the decades, the essential utility of American parties has not changed fundamentally since mass-based parties emerged in the 1820s: they are a useful institution for those who seek public office. They may fulfill additional functions, such as facilitating policymaking or disseminating information about policy alternatives. But they have never developed the social and sociological importance among the public that they have in other countries. Nor have they been as central to solving collective action problems in the legislative setting. In the United States, their form continues to be shaped primarily by their role in the electoral arena. Therefore, the basic parameters of their ecological niche have remained the same, even as the specifics of their activity evolve.

Note

1. It is possible that any differences between 1980 and 2008 reflect the fact that we are comparing two independent samples. To guard against this, we assess statistical significance by examining the difference in proportions between the 1980 and 2008 data using z tests, which are designed to allow a comparison of two independent samples.

18

Separated We Stand?

The Impact of Ideological Sorting on Local Party Dynamics

Daniel M. Shea

THE THEME OF THE FIRST *State of the Parties* volume, published two
decades ago (Shea and Green 1994), was organizational adaptation.
Party committees had adjusted to the candidate-centered, money-driven,
consultant-crazed, nonpartisan political environment of the 1970s and 1980s.
Measured by a host of variables like the size of operating budgets, number
of staff, full-time headquarters, and the scope of activities, most agreed that
the phoenix has risen from the ashes. There were a few nagging normative
questions—such as how party committees could prosper when voters seemed
turned off or whether money-centered party politics would further alienate
voters—but challenges to the "new orthodoxy" of organizational resurgence
were rare (Coleman 1994, being a notable exception).

A lot has changed in the last two decades. The theme of this volume is
certainly partisan polarization. Most, including this author, had assumed
the movement away from party labels in the 1980s would continue. The
resurgent party committees seemed well suited to assist candidates, but ill
equipped and perhaps not inclined to help voters forge long-term party at-
tachments or to compel elected officials to toe the party line once in office. It
seems quite plausible that party operatives would push their "clients" (elected
officials) from rigid party labels. And yet, because of a bitterly divisive war
in Iraq, the election of Barack Obama, health care reform, and a range of
changes outlined throughout this volume, we are witnessing historic levels
of polarization. Moderates in Congress and in state legislatures are on the
endangered species list. While a hefty number of average Americans remain

disinterested in party labels and even antagonistic to party politics, those that do attach themselves to a party label are increasingly hostile to the other side.

This chapter continues with the theme of polarization in previous chapters by exploring a related phenomenon: the impact of geographic ideological sorting on local party dynamics. Electoral competition has long been considered an important exogenous variable in understanding party organization vitality and the goals of party leaders. It has been conjectured that higher levels of competition will compel party organizations to become stronger and to implement a broader range of election-centered activities. Conversely, in "landslide" communities where competition is absent, neither the dominant or minority party organizations will have much of an incentive to recruit volunteers, raise money, hire staff, initiate new projects, get out the vote, or much else. Party leaders would also be more likely to lean toward the responsible model in less competitive areas, given that winning on Election Day is either a practical certainty (for the majority) or very unlikely (for the minority). While these suppositions seem logical, particularly from a rational choice perspective, in many instances the story is different. More importantly, the very nature of "electoral competition" may be changing.

Recently, we have been introduced to the concept of geographic ideological sorting where the ideology of community is increasingly homogeneous, leading to overwhelming dominance of one party. Just as they might select which news outlet to watch or read, the idea behind sorting is that conservatives will seek out right-leaning communities to live in, and liberals would do the opposite. This chapter is based on an assumption that sorting has occurred, and that it can be measured through election returns. Also, it is surmised that sorting shapes the nature of party politics in important ways. That is, party dynamics in sorted areas will be qualitatively and quantitatively different from areas that are not sorted.

Electoral Competition and Party Dynamics

Electoral context has played an important role in the study of party organizations, beginning with Key's (1949) seminal work on party politics in the South. Key's book offers a compelling, logical connection between organizational vitality and electoral competition. Because most areas in the South were dominated by the Democratic Party for over 100 years, local party organizations were either nonexistent or feeble—with the exception of a few urban machines. Historical assessments of party politics in the latter half of the 19th century in *other* parts of the country suggest the opposite. Electoral competi-

tion, at both the local and national levels outside the South, was fierce, thereby leading to vibrant local party committees.

The landmark Party Transformation Study (PTS) by Cotter et al. (1984) confronted this supposition, expecting to also find stronger organizations in areas with higher levels of electoral competition. They reasoned that growing electoral competition would also spur organizational adaptation. Conversely, in areas where there was little competition, local party committees would be weak. Along similar lines, an oft-cited supposition regarding the reemergence of local party committees in the 1970s was a direct connection to waning voter allegiances. Changes in party-in-the-electorate, including lower turnout and dealignment, led to uncertainty. This ambiguity propelled organizational adaptation. "It is the very weakness of partisan identification among the voters which is a stimulus for the growth of partisan organizations" (Schlesinger 1985, 1167). A serious limitation of this approach, however, is that organizational resurgence seemed to predate declining partisan loyalties. Yet the core logic seemed simple: competition and uncertainty leads to organizational adaptation and growth.

As party competition grew in previously noncompetitive parts of the country, so, too, did party organizations, it was assumed. Crowder-Meyer notes, for instance, "Though parties in the south remain weaker than parties elsewhere in the United States . . . findings demonstrate a clear strengthening of southern Republican parties" due in large measure to increased electoral competition (2011, 131).

Nevertheless, the precise connection between electoral competition and local dynamics remains elusive. Might there be a misunderstanding of the causal model? Perhaps organizational growth leads to higher levels of competition, a view dubbed the "counteracting model" (Cotter and Bibby 1980; Frendreis, Gibson, and Vertz 1990). It is possible that organizational resurgence pulls voters away from their partisan predispositions, leading to increased competition? Here the causal links are inverted from the Schlesinger model. This pattern also implies that while declining party loyalties may not aid parties, it is more than counteracted by renewed party organizations. As noted by Gibson, Frendreis, and Vertz, "[f]urther analysis should be mindful of the role that party organizations can play in counteracting declines in areas like mass attitudinal attachments" (1989, 233).

Moreover, Cotter et al. (1984) explored the competition-based conjecture only to find that it was not supported by their data: "The relationship between competitiveness and organizational strength has vanished. This may be indicative of the inefficiency of the organization . . . or it may be that the nationalization of parties . . . has erased the relationship between competitiveness and organizational strength" (1984, 88). Roscoe and Jenkins (2014)

offer a broad exploration of contemporary local party nuances, based on a survey of nearly 1,200 local party leaders. While they find a modest relationship between electoral completion and party vitality on some measures, the relationship is far from steadfast.

Finally, there are a number of case studies pointing to robust, aggressive, local party committees in areas with scant general election competition. An ongoing study of the Mahoning County Democratic Party in Ohio, for instance, has appeared in many of the *State of the Parties* volumes (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003; 2007; Blumberg, et al. 2011), as well as in this edition (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2014). Through all their work, these authors reveal a powerful, fluent local party organization, wrapped within an overwhelming Democratic majority.

Sorting and Party Dynamics

A somewhat different take on electoral competition is ideological sorting, or geographic segregation. With help from an empirical social scientist and using trunk loads of data, Bishop (2008) seemed to discover an important transformation: the steady, systematic transformation of the partisan leaning of communities. In brief, since the 1970s and spurred by more opportunities to move, Americans have been forming tightknit political tribes. In 1976, for example, some 20 percent of counties in the United States produced presidential landslides (where the difference between candidates was more than 20 percent). By 2004 that figure had jumped to nearly 60 percent.

The novel part of Bishop's analysis is the weight afforded to place of residence. There is nothing new about thinking about policies in group terms. Do Evangelicals support environmental protection? Are young voters concerned about Social Security reform? Will Hispanic Americans back a pro-choice candidate? What Bishop discovers, however, is that traditionally important demographic categories, like age, gender, religion, and occupation, are often washed out when a person's place of residence is considered. For instance, Bishop found that women in Democratic sorted counties were strongly against the war in Iraq, but Democratic women in Republican blow-out counties were strongly supportive of the war. Democrats in Republican sorted districts were much more likely to attend church than were Democrats in Democratic sorted districts. "The partisanship of place overpowered the categories that research normally uses to describe durable voting blocs" (2008, 48).

Pointing to a host of social and economic trends, such as the rise of non-white voters, immigration, migration, the decline of the traditional family

unit, economic disparities, and the rise of the women's and gay rights movements, Abramowitz (2013b) suggests geographic sorting has become an important aspect of contemporary American politics. He writes,

> In comparison with the 1950s, 60s and 70s, the United States today is much more deeply divided along geographic lines . . . This trend is clearly not a result of partisan gerrymandering, as some scholars and pundits have claimed . . . Polarization is directly responsible for both the growing partisan divide among voters and the growing geographic divide in the nation. (3)

The Big Sort and similar works imply the transformation is due to the movement of voters into particular communities. There is a shifting of residents; some voters move in, others move out. This decision may be based on cultural or lifestyle criteria, but the outcome has led to ideologically homogeneous communities. Another take on this process, however, may be the ideological transformation of existing residents. This would be "changing minds" rather than "changing place." This possibility was introduced by another journalist in *What's the Matter with Kansas?* (2004). A native of Kansas, Frank charts the transformation of the state's politics from progressive, sometimes radically liberal, to hard-core social conservatism and steadfast probusiness. The book explores how low-wage, blue-collar voters jettison economic policies that might benefit them in favor of social concerns like abortion, gay marriage, evolution, school prayer, and gun control. Conservative leaders in his state (and elsewhere) made a determined effort to shift voter concern from economic policies by raising the specter of massive cultural decay, and by suggesting that the United States is in a quasi civil war. Pitted against the "real Americans" are the liberal elite; the high-taxing, government-spending, latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving, *New York Times*–reading, Hollywood-loving, left-wing freak show (Frank 2004, 17). The relevant point is that Frank is pointing to attitudinal change, rather than migration.

A more recent treatment of the same type of phenomena was offered by Hawley (2013). Relying on individual-level survey data, he finds evidence to suggest that the partisan and ideological composition of counties plays a role in shaping voting preferences and attitudes toward candidates. Local political context is a powerful exogenous variable. He writes, "Based on these results, we can be reasonably concerned that residential political balkanization is leading to a more extreme, polarized electorate" (2013, 36).

It should be noted, however, that a long line of scholarship suggests that partisanship, once established, is rather steadfast. As the authors of *The American Voter Revisited* note, "Once an individual has formed a party attachment, however embryonic, and whatever stage in life it happened, a

self-reinforcing process of momentum takes over. . . . We subscribe to the view that an attachment with a party, for the most part, is highly resistant to change" (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 149–150).

While not rejecting the possibility that factors may be operating to make Americans more culturally inbred than a generation ago, Abrams and Fiorina (2012) challenge the geographic ideological sorting hypothesis. First, they take issue with the selection of a limited number of presidential elections in the analysis. A longer view, they argue, would underscore the dynamic, fluid nature of election outcomes at the county level. Second, they doubt the wisdom of using election returns to gauge a community's partisan leanings. "Although presidential election returns obviously are an important indicator of political preferences, they are fundamentally inconsistent with other valid indicators . . . such as voter registration" (204). Finally, while one might concede that a level of geographic sorting might be happening, the impact of such a change would likely be minimal given that the definition of "neighborhoods" has radically changed. While citizens continue to connect in deep, meaningful ways, it is often over the Internet and not necessarily at the corner coffee spot or bowling league. Abrams and Fiorina (2012) write:

> Neighborhoods are not important centers of contemporary American life. Americans today do not know their neighbors very well, do not talk to their neighbors very much, and talk to their neighbors about politics even less. And they do not see themselves as swimming in a sea of like-minded people who have intimidated or cast out anyone who believed otherwise; they are aware that their neighbors differ politically. Even if geographic political sorting were ongoing, its effects would be limited by the preceding facts about contemporary neighborhood life. (206)

But that may not be the last word on sorting. Sussell (2013), for example, recently offered an exploration of municipal-level geographic sorting in California, what he dubs microgeographic bloc and group track-level data. Both presidential election and voter registration data are used, satisfying a concern of Abrams and Fiorina. The results support the sorting hypothesis, generally. He also underscores the importance of this issue: "Whether or not partisan geographic segregation is broadly rising in the United States is not merely an academic question. If the spatial distribution of liberals and conservatives is moving from a relative diffuse structure to a more clustered one, an important consideration is the impact it might have . . . on our ability to generate meaningful policy solutions" (2013, 773).

Finally, there is a good deal of speculation, particularly from media pundits, that partisan operatives have carefully mapped the partisan contours of legislative districts. Yet few scholars accept the proposition that gerryman-

dering is at the heart of the matter (McCarthy, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009). This is not to say there is widespread rejection of the geographic sorting hypothesis, and that this phenomenon is shaping our politics in momentous ways—particularly the legislative process. Mann and Ornstein (2012), in their oft-cited volume on the breakdown of policymaking in Congress, assert that voters are making residential decisions that reinforce the ideological sorting already underway. "Citizens were drawn to neighborhoods, counties, states and regions where others shared their values and interests" (49).

This chapter is based on three suppositions. First, county party committees still matter; they continue to provide systemic and individual benefits. Eldersveld once dubbed county party organizations the "key cogs" in the party system (1964, 141), and Cotter and his colleagues (1984) noted, "What happens in the 3,600 county [party committees] determines the politics of states and the nation" (41). Given the rather dramatic nationalization of party politics in recent decades, as well as the changing nature of voter communications, these statements may be a bit overstated. Nevertheless, several recent studies (Shea, Strachan, and Wolf 2012; Roscoe and Jenkins 2014; and Crowder-Meyer 2011, among others) suggest these units remain important, particularly as service units to local candidates. Dramatic changes at the local party level have the potential to alter key aspects of elections and the policymaking process.

Second, geographic ideological sorting has occurred and is conceptually distinct from "higher levels of competition." The following figures provide a look at county-based sorting. It is based on three presidential elections with roughly the same overall level of competition: 1976, 2004, and 2012.[1] When Jimmy Carter narrowly defeated Gerald Ford in 1976, about 20 percent of the counties might be characterized as sorted. In 2004 and 2012, that figure jumps up to about 50 percent. Of course, another very noticeable difference is the dramatic shift of counties in the South that shift from heavy Democratic to heavy Republican.

Another way to assess the competitiveness of counties is to chart the standard deviation of vote share of one party. Standard deviation (SD) measures the average distance from the mean. The higher the SD, the greater the variance; that is, the greater the dispersion of the data points from the mean. Figure 18.1[2] is based on the Republican vote share at the county level. Importantly, and unlike the maps used, the counties are weighted based on population. Even so, the upward trend is unmistakable. This indicates that the average distance of a county presidential vote outcome from the overall presidential outcome has grown rather dramatically. In other words, there are fewer and fewer close elections.

1976
Politics Before the Sort

Presidential election results by county,
Jimmy Carter vs. Gerald Ford

☐ Competitive counties (margin less than 20 percentage points)
■ Republican landslide counties (Ford won by 20 percentage points or more)
■ Democratic landslide counties (Carter won by 20 percentage points or more)
   (Democratic and Republican votes only)
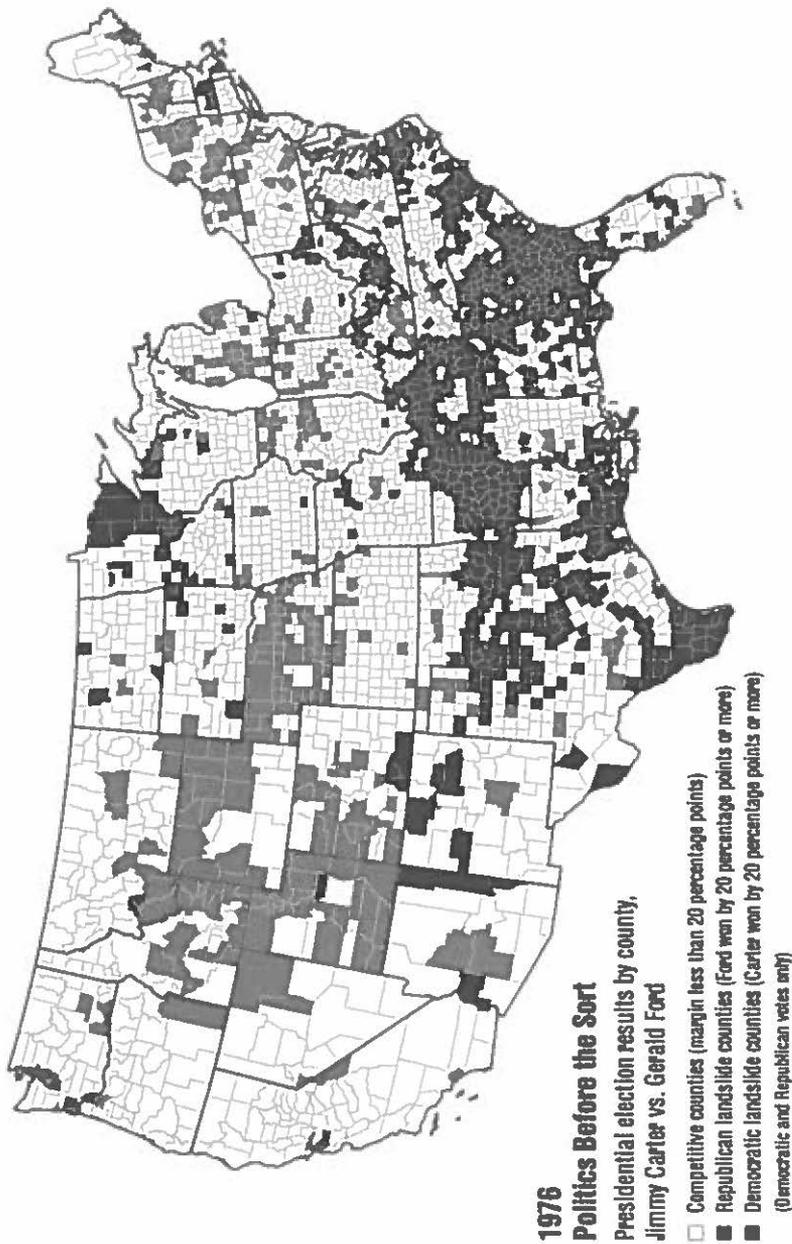
FIGURE 18.1
1976: Presidential election results by county, Jimmy Carter versus Gerald Ford.

2004
Politics After the Sort

Presidential election results by county,
John Kerry vs. George W. Bush

☐ Competitive counties (margin less than 20 percentage points)

■ Republican landslide counties (Bush won by 20 percentage points or more)

■ Democratic landslide counties (Kerry won by 20 percentage points or more)

(Democratic and Republican votes only)
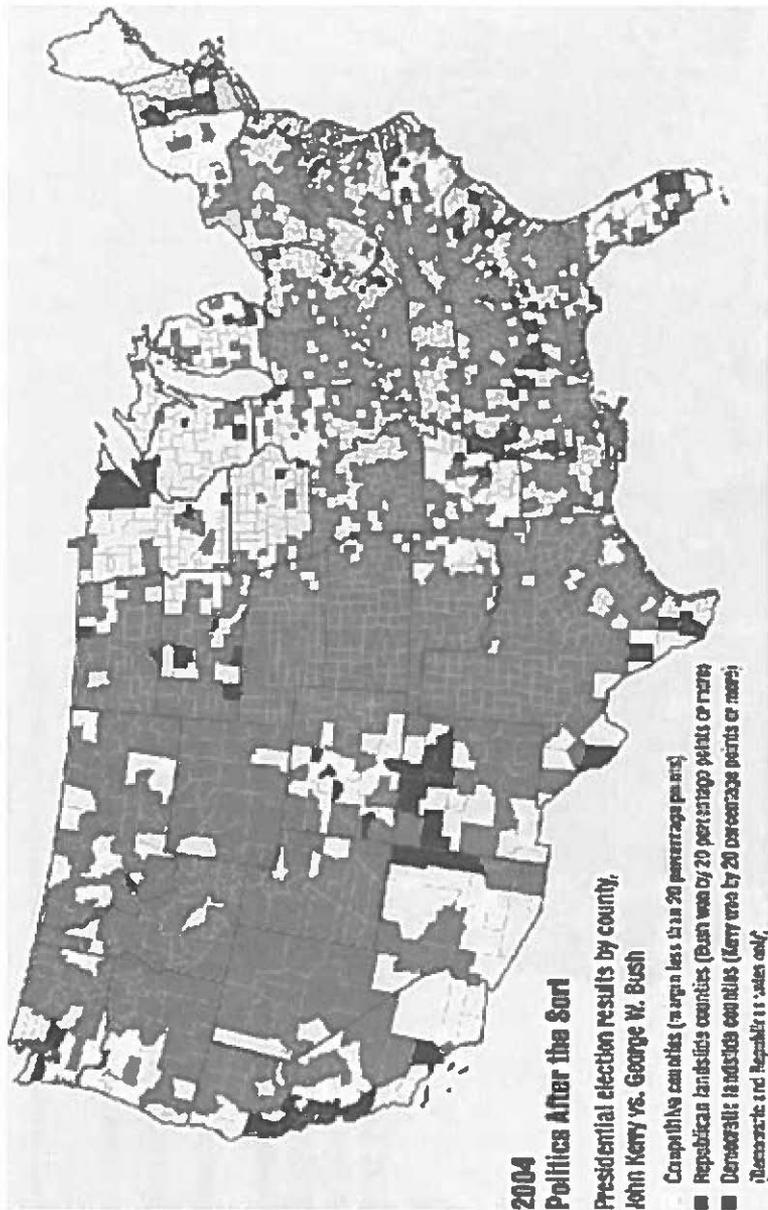
FIGURE 18.2
2004: Presidential election results by county, John Kerry versus George W. Bush.

2012
The Sort Gets Stronger
Election Results by County
Barack Obama v. Mitt Romney

☐ Competitive Counties (Margins less than 20 points)

■ Republican Landslide (Romney by more than 20 points)

■ Democratic landslide (Obama by more than 20 points)

(Democratic and Republican votes only)
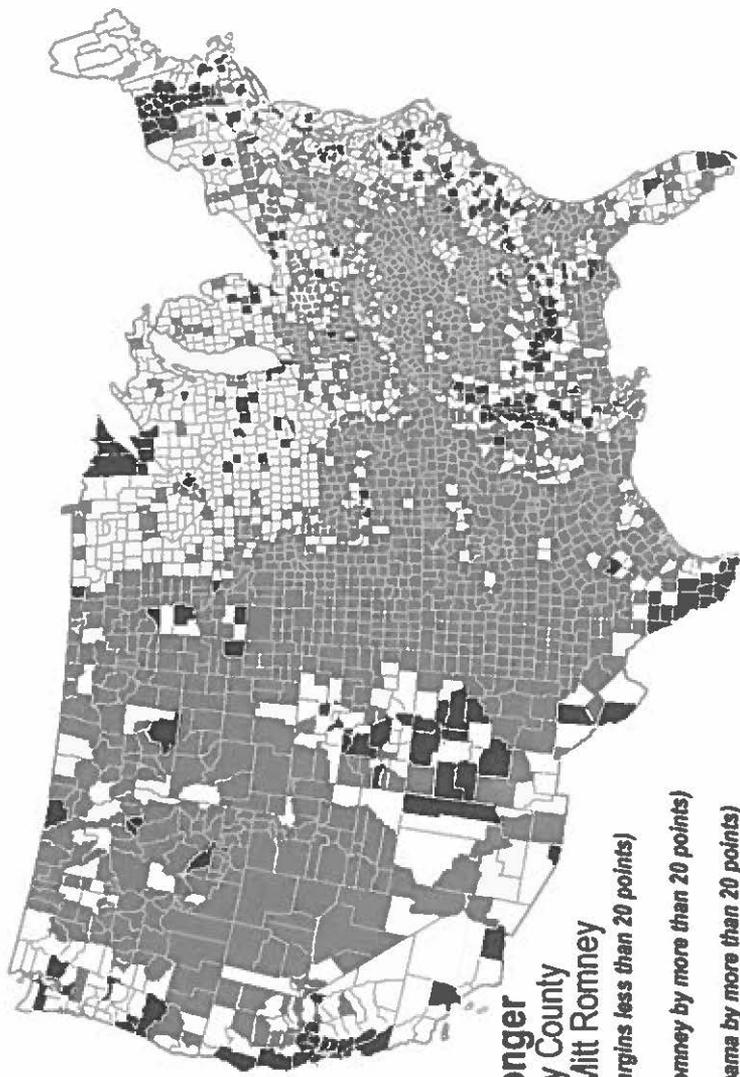
FIGURE 18.3
2012: Election results by county, Barack Obama versus Mitt Romney.

2012: Political Divide Widens
Communities Continue to 'Sort' Politically in Obama/Romney Election

Chart shows standard deviation of Republican vote in nation's 3114 counties, weighted by population, in all Presidential elections since 1948.
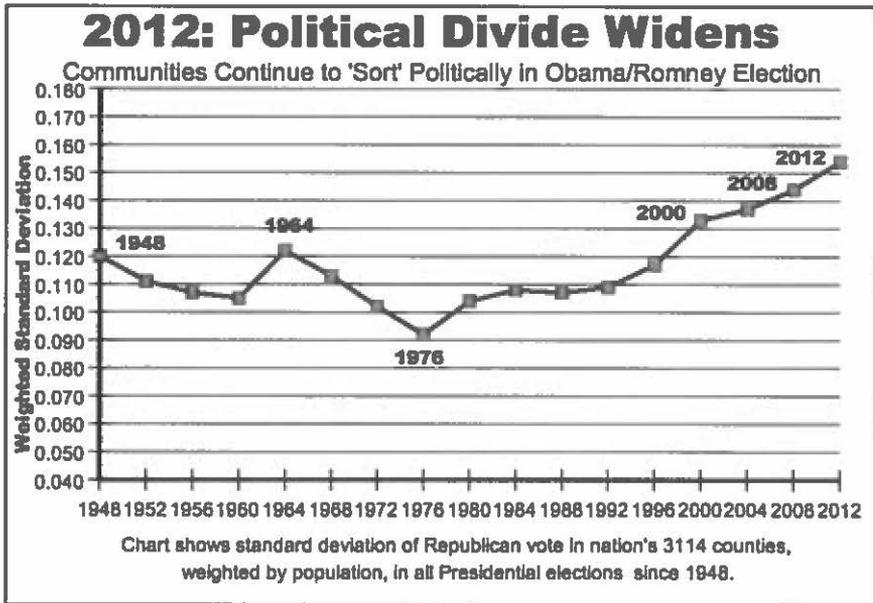
FIGURE 18.4
Perception of political engagement in community percent say "more engaged" (overall, 43%, N = 452).

But how is sorting conceptually different from electoral competition? Numerous studies have used electoral competition as an interval variable, again echoing Key's notion that higher completion will lead to organizational innovation. But sorting is conceptually different, and likely best understood as a nominal variable. One might suggest a crucial mass or a tipping point where the ideological composition of a community becomes pervasive. At that point a number of changes may occur. For example, policy compromise may become rare as beliefs become more extreme. There is evidence to support the notion that like-minded groups not only reinforce conformity but also foster extremism. Social psychological research has identified what is called the "risky shift phenomenon." Whereas we might expect group decisions to reflect the average opinions of those in the group, group positions become more extreme than the average position of its members. In other words, our positions become more radical as we merge with like-minded partisans (Hawley 2013). In politics, the implication is that a group's policy position will become more extreme over time, particularly if these positions are symbolic, continually reinforced by a partisan media, and rarely challenged. Columnist David Brooks put it this way: "Once politics became a contest pitting one identity

group against another, it was no longer possible to compromise. Everything became a status war between my kind of people and your kind of people" (2011, 319).

The third and final supposition is that election returns are valid means to assess ideological preferences. It is true that voting data also reflects candidate differences (Abrams and Fiorina 2012), but party registration is rife with problems, namely that it can lag way behind changed ideological preferences (McGhee and Krimm 2009). Additionally, the meaning and weight of party registration varies based on each state's primary voting regulations. The implications of party labels in open primary states are much different than they are in closed primary states.

The Data

An email survey was sent to 2,000 randomly selected county party chairs in the summer of 2011, yielding a usable sample for this analysis of 452. Slightly more GOP chairs returned the instrument, but overall the sample seems rather balanced in all important controls.

Respondents were asked a range of questions about their party committee and their outlook regarding electoral politics. There are traditional measures of vitality, such as the number of volunteers and if they have a headquarters and website, as well as a host of questions regarding party activities. A second area of questioning explored issues related to the electoral context, such as the role of outside money and the polarization of voters in the county. Finally, respondents were asked a set of questions designed to explore their general outlook toward local party politics.

Electoral information for each county was then introduced in the data set, including the 2012, 2008, and 2004 presidential election results. These data were used to create a measure of ideological sorting: Did the respondent live in a county where the Democratic candidate (Obama or Kerry) netted either less than 40 percent or over 60 percent of the vote? These counties were dubbed "sorted," and all others "competitive."

Findings

As noted above, some scholarship and traditional wisdom would suggest county party committees in areas dominated by one party would more likely be organizationally weak compared to those in competitive counties. With little competition comes few incentives to build the organization; there are

few incentives to innovate and expand. And yet, data present in the following table 18.1 suggests party committees in sorted areas are no weaker in organizational terms than are those in competitive areas. Electoral competition does not seem to shape organizational vitality. Contrary to expectations, for example, a relatively large percentage of Republican leaders in sorted Democratic counties noted that they had full-time headquarters. One exception might be full-time staff positions. Whereas 8 percent of Democratic leaders in competitive counties noted that they had full-time staff positions, none from sorted Democratic counties suggested the same.

TABLE 18.1
Party Committees: Organizational Characteristics

	Republican Party Leader (196)	Democratic Party Leader (249)
% Full-Time Headquarters (26% overall)		
Sorted Republican (216)	20	19
Competitive (184)	14	30
Sorted Democratic (45)	33	20
% Full-Time Staff Positions (7% overall)		
Sorted Republican (216)	8	8
Competitive (184)	5	8
Sorted Democratic (45)	0	0
% Website (57% overall)		
Sorted Republican (214)	61	56
Competitive (182)	68	70
Sorted Democratic (45)	58	70
% Use Facebook (4% overall)		
Sorted Republican (216)	5	3
Competitive (184)	5	2
Sorted Democratic (45)	17	0
% Operating Budget $5,000 or less (43% overall)		
Sorted Republican (210)	46	48
Competitive (180)	42	20
Sorted Democratic (45)	42	55
% Operating Budget $5,000 to $20,000 (35% overall)		
Sorted Republican (210)	34	41
Competitive (180)	32	18
Sorted Democratic (45)	30	41

TABLE 18.2
General Condition of the Party Percent
Answering "Much Better" (Overall, 48%, N = 440)

	Republican Party Leader (196)	Democratic Party Leader (249)
Sorted Republican (214)	53	42
Competitive (183)	54	35
Sorted Democratic (45)	33	30

Of particular interest is table 18.2. Here respondents were asked a sum-
mary question regarding the general condition of their party committee:
The question read, "Thinking about the past decade, which of the following
statements best describes the general condition of your local party commit-
tee?" There were five response options, ranging from "much better" to "much
worse." First, it is telling that nearly 50 percent of all the party leaders sug-
gested their committee was doing much better. Leaders of organizations are
generally optimistic about that group's condition, but given the torrent of po-
tential competitors to local party committees—from campaign consultants,
social media, and Super PACs—one might have expected a less sanguine
assessment. Second, there is only a modest degree of variance in responses
when controlled by our sorting variable. Republican leaders in heavy GOP
areas and in competitive counties are more positive than those in sorted
Democratic areas, but one-third still believe they are doing "much better."
Some 42 percent of Democratic chairs in sorted Republican areas believe their
committee is "much better" than in the past.

A second area of analysis is the ideological makeup of party activists in the
respondent's county. Is there evidence to support the view that like-minded
groups foster extremism? In other words, might an individual's positions
become more radical when they merge with others sharing similar views?
Does moderation evaporate when individuals are part of an ideologically
homogeneous community? Hawley (2013), for example, found that attitudes
toward presidential candidates were shaped, in part, by electoral context. In
local party politics the question might be whether chairs from landslide com-
munities are more ideologically extreme than are chairs from competitive
areas. This view is not supported by our data in table 18.3, however. There
seems to be very little difference in the ideological disposition of party lead-
ers in sorted versus competitive counties. One modest exception might be
Republican leaders in sorted Democratic districts. Perhaps because they face
stark obstacles in winning elections, minority party leaders in sorted areas

TABLE 18.3

Ideological Intensity. Percent Saying They Are "Moderate" or "Somewhat" Liberal/
Conservative (Overall, 51%, N = 430)

	Republican Party Leader (196)	Democratic Party Leader (249)
Sorted Republican (210)	33	57
Competitive (180)	36	61
Sorted Democratic (45)	50	65

might feel as though they have the luxury of being extreme. Another possibility is that there is little competition for leadership in these party committees, leaving these posts open to anyone interested. Perhaps only "true believers" wish to head up a party committee that faces such an uphill struggle.

The next step was to explore the respondent's view of levels of political engagement in their community. Indeed, levels of engagement have become an important aspect of the polarization debate (Abramowitz 2010). Do chairs in sorted counties perceive voters in their area as less engaged, for example? Based on Downsian rationality, if elections are rarely competitive, we would expect less engagement. On the other hand, if the risky shift phenomenon exists, we might find levels of engagement in sorted counties to be on par or even higher than in competitive counties. Reinforced by others in the community, highly partisan voters might flood polling places regardless of any close election rationality. Interestingly, that is precisely what the data suggests. As table 18.4 shows, chairs of both parties in sorted counties are more likely to say voters in their county are *more* engaged than in the past than are chairs from competitive counties.

Are chairs who oversee committees in sorted areas less likely to want their elected officials to find compromise solutions than chairs in competitive

TABLE 18.4

Perception of Political Engagement in Community. Percent Saying "More Engaged"
(Overall, 43%, N = 452)

	Republican Party Leader (196)	Democratic Party Leader (249)
Sorted Republican (210)	51	39
Competitive (180)	47	44
Sorted Democratic (45)	41	54

Now let's turn to levels of political ENGAGEMENT. Would you say that citizens in your own community are more or less engaged than in the past?

areas? The traditional wisdom is that compromise in Washington is illusive because too many legislators come from landslide areas—communities where voters want them to reject concessions. Our data adds support for this view as shown in table 18.5. Overall, most county party chairs want their elected officials to compromise, but party differences are stark: upward of 73 percent of Democratic leaders favor compromise positions, but just 48 percent of GOP leaders said the same. Also, the rejection of compromise is higher in sorted districts than in competitive areas. This holds true for both parties. The lowest levels of support for compromise positions were found among GOP leaders in sorted Democratic areas. This is consistent with the ideological measure noted in table 18.3.

Finally, a series of questions were asked to measure the leader's attitudes regarding his or her party committee's goals and objectives. While not referring specifically to the rational/responsible party theoretical models, these questions tap into what scholars traditionally view as key distinctions. For example, each respondent was asked whether it is more important to support candidates that have broad electoral appeal or those that support the party's official policy positions. Does the party leader place winning elections (rational) ahead of the promotion of a policy agenda (responsible)? Is it more important for the party committee to help candidates win elections or to help voters develop a long-term attachment to the party? Further, a question was asked in an attempt to tap into perceptions of the proper conduct of party affairs: whether local party committees are best run by professional operatives (a rational view) or by rank-and-file party members (a responsible-party perspective).

Identical questions were asked in a survey conducted by this author in 2003 and reported in Shea, Strachan, and Wolf (2012). As noted in table 18.6, there are some partisan differences, especially a rather dramatic 28 percent increase in the number of Democratic chairs that believed their party should back candidates with broad appeal. Conversely, there was a big jump in the number of

TABLE 18.5
Willingness to Compromise. Percent Saying Compromise Is More Important Than Standing Firm (Overall, 64%, N = 452)

	Republican Party Leader (196)	*Democratic Party Leader (249)*
Sorted Republican (210)	44	76
Competitive (180)	48	73
Sorted Democratic (45)	35	71

Which do you think is more important in a politician: the ability to compromise to get things done, or a willingness to stand firm in support of principles?

TABLE 18.6
Perceptions of Party Goals and Objectives, 2003 and 2011

	2003		2011		Change 2003–2011	
	D	R	D	R	D	R
Help Candidates or	59 %	66 %	59 %	63 %	+ 0	- 3
Help Voters	41 %	34 %	41 %	37 %	+ 0	+ 3
Broad Appeals or	42 %	38 %	70 %	25 %	+ 28	- 13
Consistent Policy Positions	58 %	62 %	30 %	75 %	- 28	+ 13
Professional Model or	42 %	47 %	35 %	32 %	- 7	- 15
Amateur Model	57 %	52 %	65 %	68 %	+ 8	+ 15

Note: 2003 N = 806; 2011 N = 475.

GOP chairs who believe their parties should back candidates with consistent policy positions. This would be consistent with other findings noted in this chapter, as well as the story of polarization discussed throughout this volume.

The final step was to merge these rational/responsible party questions with the sorting dimension. The results are noted in table 18.7. Overall, the effect of sorting appears to be modest. There does seem to be a modest shift in the rational direction for both Democratic and Republican leaders in competitive districts. Conversely, chairs in sorted areas are somewhat more likely to favor responsible party goals. For example, only 21 percent of GOP leaders in sorted Republican counties favored supporting candidates with a broad appeal over those with consistent issue positions. The most interesting finding appears to be that GOP leaders appear much more "responsible" than their Democratic counterparts regardless of their electoral context. Again, this is quite consistent with other findings both in this chapter and in the volume.

Discussion

The concept of geographic ideological sorting is rather controversial. Bishop introduced the idea, but as with most provocative claims, much work needs to be done to verify and to explore controls and correlates. Many seem ready to accept sorting through anecdotal evidence (perhaps their own experience) and because it seems a logical explanation of why a shrinking number of local elections are competitive. There seems to be little disagreement that areas

TABLE 18.7
Rational versus Responsible Outlook:

Which do you think should be given priority by local party organizations?

A. helping candidates win elections or helping voters develop long-term attachments?

	Republican Party Leader (190)	Democratic Party Leader (246)
% Saying More Important to "Help Candidates Win"		
Sorted Republican (205)	62	55
Competitive (177)	67	57
Sorted Democratic (42)	53	61

B. supporting candidates with broad electoral appeal or supporting candidates with consistent issue positions?

% Saying "Support Candidates with Broad Appeal"		
Sorted Republican (210)	21	73
Competitive (180)	29	76
Sorted Democratic (45)	34	71

C. supporting candidates with broad electoral appeal or supporting candidates with consistent issue positions?

of the United States are becoming more "red" and others a deeper shade of "blue." But some scholars caution us against jumping to conclusions, or at the very least to be careful about spurious causal models. Perhaps voters are moving to particular communities because of lifestyle choices, completely independent of partisan considerations. The outcome might be ideologically homogeneous communities without individual voters ever considering partisan factors. How one might gauge "sortedness" is also a hot topic.

And yet, local political parties are confronting a radically different political environment than a few decades ago. In February of 2014, for example, there was a story in *Politico* dubbed "Last Call for State Parties?" (Tau 2014). The piece charts the exceptional role that Super PACs are playing in recruiting and funding candidates at the state and local level. In that piece, Ken Martin, chairman of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, noted, "If you're a donor and you can write a million-dollar check to an outside group

with little or no disclosure and focus it on very specific activity and have no [regulatory] urgency or burdens in terms of disclosure hanging over your head, why wouldn't you go that way and give a contribution?" On top of this, one has to wonder about the growing use of social media to link and energize voters. Local parties have, in some ways, adapted to technological issues (Shea, Strachan, and Wolf 2012), but the pace of change seems staggering.

This chapter addresses another potentially momentous change: a dramatic reconstitution of the partisan balance of voters in local communities. Abramowitz (2010) and others have drawn our attention to the "disappearing center" at the national level, and there is mounting evidence that it is happening at the local level as well. How will local parties operate in this new electoral environment, where winning elections are vastly easier or nearly impossible? Will this impact their viability? Will they once again change, or simply fade away? How will it shape their activities and goals in the coming years?

This research, while preliminary and descriptive, suggests that while declining electoral competition might *not* impact local party strength, it may shape the rationale for local party activities. As suggested above, parties in sorted communities appear to be more policy focused. For decades scholars lamented the rational approach of parties (Epstein 1967; 1986), but lately record high-party-line voting in legislatures and the accompanying gridlock—and the disgust of voters—might signal that a dose of moderation and pragmatism might be in order.

Note

1. These figures were compiled by Bill Bishop and provided to the author on February 2, 2014.
2. This figure was also supplied to the author by Bill Bishop on February 2, 2014.

19

A Report from Mahoning County

Consequences and Causes
of Local Party Endorsements

*William C. Binning, Melanie J. Blumberg,
and John C. Green*

A N ENDURING CONTROVERSY IN AMERICAN politics is the role of major
party organizations in nominating candidates. The presumed power—
and perfidy—of party "bosses" in nominations was central to the develop-
ment of the direct primary (Ware 2002). And while primary elections reduced
party leaders' impact on nominations in some respects, it also made endorse-
ment by party organizations potentially influential with voters (Binning,
Esterly, and Sracic 1999). A century after the introduction of primaries, the
value of party endorsements is still debated and relevant to a highly polarized
politics (Cohen et al. 2008).

This chapter describes the endorsement policies of the Democratic Party
in Mahoning County, Ohio (where Youngstown is located), from the New
Deal to the Obama era. We find considerable variation in policy over this
long period, ranging from the origin of endorsements in the 1940s to a policy
of nonendorsement in the 1990s and a return to endorsements in 2006. This
account describes the consequences and causes of endorsements, both for
candidates and the party organization.[1]

The Value of Party Endorsements

In a recent study of formal party endorsements in California, Kousser et al.
(2013, 6) asked a key question:

When parties make endorsements in primary elections, does the favored candidate receive a real boost in her vote share, or do parties simply pick the favorite who is already destined to win? That is, do parties act as kingmakers who swing elections, or cheerleaders who merely root on the winning side?

These authors answered the question in the affirmative. In competitive races between high-quality candidates, endorsements were often crucial, allowing party leaders to function as kingmakers. At the same time, party leaders were more likely to endorse higher-quality candidates over lower-quality ones, thus often serving as "cheerleaders" for candidates that were likely to succeed anyway. Although methodological sophistication sets these findings apart from previous research, the conclusion fits with the literature: endorsements of many kinds—including by party organizations—are positively associated with winning elections of all kinds (Kousser et al. 2013; Cohen et al. 2008).

A cogent explanation for these patterns is that endorsements provide useful information to voters, particularly those with low levels of information about candidates (Bawn et al. 2012). In this regard, party endorsements can be especially useful to primary voters, where candidates do not have party labels and are likely to have similar issue positions and backgrounds. Such information may be even more valuable in one-party areas, where winning the majority party nomination is the most important step toward a general election victory (Key 1984).

However, the information provided by endorsements can also have a negative effect on voters, as illustrated by the extensive literature on divisive primaries (Kinney and Rice 1988). After all, a common narrative in primary campaigns is "insurgent" candidates challenging the "establishment," and the leadership of major party organizations is frequently identified as the latter (Jewel and Olsen 1988). Hence, party organizations may choose not to formally endorse primary candidates, a policy followed by the national party committees in the present day. However, a nonendorsement policy does not necessarily eliminate the informal influence of party leaders in nominations (Masket 2009)—which could likewise be crucial, beside the point, or counterproductive.

Thus, parties face a strategic choice when it comes to an endorsement policy (Alvarez and Sinclair 2012). On the one hand, endorsements can foster party unity, help win elections, and strengthen party organizations. But on the other hand, they can encourage factionalism, hurt at the ballot box, and weaken organizations. Much depends on the political context and endorsement procedures used.

Over the last eighty years, the Mahoning County Democratic Party has had several kinds of endorsement policy, including nonendorsement. At various

times, the party has been a kingmaker, a cheerleader, and a failure in nomination as well as general election contests. But in two eras (1942–1976; 2006 and thereafter), the endorsement policy was closely linked with greater party unity, electoral success, and a stronger organization. In the intervening era, the decay and end of endorsements was closely linked with party disunity, failure at the polls, and a weaker organization.

Before describing these cases, a brief word about Ohio law is in order.[2] The direct primary was adopted for Ohio state and local offices in 1920. Although the details have evolved over time, the basic feature is the same: the state government confers major party nominations on the candidate who receives a plurality of the vote in a publically administered election. A similar feature obtains for the governing bodies of the major party organizations, where state law empowers members of the county central committees elected in primaries to organize for legal and political purposes. Once organized, the party executive committees recommend party appointments to the county Boards of Elections (two from each major party), recruit precinct election judges (an equal number from each major party), and fill vacancies in local offices (previously held by a member of the party).

Beyond these requirements, central committees have considerable leeway as to their internal organization, including the choice of a chair and other leaders, the creation of an executive committee to manage day-to-day affairs, and approval of the committee's operating policies. Formal endorsement of candidates is an example of an operating policy. Because such endorsements are not mentioned in state law, they carry no special legal advantage, such as easier ballot access or special notice on the primary ballot. Instead, endorsements provide political information to voters.

Party Endorsements Begin

After the direct primary came to Ohio in 1920, the Mahoning County Democratic Central Committee did not endorse primary candidates. The committee was primarily an arena for squabbling over political patronage, which was often limited during Republican administrations. With the coming of the New Deal, the squabbling became more intense as patronage expanded. Despite the fact that Franklin Delano Roosevelt carried Mahoning County by large margins in 1932, 1936, and 1940, the Democrats made insignificant gains in local offices (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996).

In January 1942, a small group of Democratic committeemen met at the Mahoning County Board of Elections and endorsed nine local candidates for the upcoming Democratic primary (Gorman 2014). This innovation

had three goals. The first was to unify a fractious central committee, where grudges from primary elections hurt Democratic candidates in general elections. The second was to win elections by translating the strong Democratic presidential vote into Democratic victories in local offices. And the third was to improve the quality of the local Democratic organization. Key leaders of the group were John Vitullo, the Democratic county chairman, and John (Jack) Sulligan, his successor as chairman.

According to Joe Gorman Sr., an insightful and long-serving party official, the group had just enough money for one "campaign tactic" in 1942: a 40,000 postcard mailing to voters with the names of the endorsees.[3] They knew more resources would be needed, so the group set about selling the rest of the central committee on the nine candidates they had endorsed as well as a general theory of endorsements. Then the group campaigned for the endorsed candidates—a daunting task. As Gorman recalled:

> Remember also that there were only 35 men concerned, and some were saddled with as high as 20 precincts instead of the three to six precincts that captains handle today. Last of all, consider, that as a pre-primary endorsements had never been made before, no one had any clear idea as to what kind of a campaign was called for. (Gorman 2014)

All nine endorsed candidates won nomination in 1942. The group endorsed more candidates in 1943, and a major accomplishment was achieved when the endorsed candidate for mayor of Youngstown won the nomination and the general election. In 1944, the group endorsed 18 candidates, and 16 won both the nomination and the general election. By then, the group had expanded to 75 committeemen and they were soon known as the "Democratic captains." In 1944, there were 322 precincts in Mahoning County, so the captains made up less than one-quarter of the central committee (*Youngstown Vindicator* 1944).

Once in office, endorsed candidates were expected to make patronage appointments to the benefit of the local party, expanding its campaign resources. These new resources made the organization more effective in campaigns, which in turn, made party endorsements more attractive to potential candidates. Due to this innovation, Chairman Vitullo quickly became prominent in the state Democratic Party circles and was attempting to organize state-level preprimary endorsements before his death in 1949.

The endorsement process was formalized under Jack Sulligan, who succeeded Vitullo as Democratic county chairman. Sulligan was a full-time party mechanic, who held important patronage jobs. He was a quiet, behind-the-scenes operator who rarely engaged in public debate (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996). This low-key style characterized the endorsement process.

Typically, Sulligan and a few of the top party leaders would agree on candidates, with input from the captains, and the word was passed to the executive committee (appointed by the chair). The executive committee would then formally endorse a slate of candidates, and the slate would then be taken to the central committee meeting for final approval.

Chairman Sulligan rarely expressed his preferences publically at central committee meetings. Instead, party leaders would cue the committee to the favored candidate. Scripts were written for these meetings, indicating who was to speak, when they would speak, and what they would say. As one observer put it, "If George got up and said he was for John Doe, all of Sulligan's soldiers knew that John Doe was the guy." The central committee took public, standing votes for the endorsement of candidates, and if requested, a roll-call vote was taken.[4] Because the vote was public, committee members could be held accountable.

The goal of the captains was to assemble a competitive slate of candidates. According to Gorman, "Popular and perhaps lightly opposed candidates were teamed with candidates with more serious campaigns, so that [their popularity] rubbed off on the other candidates, theoretically giving them a campaign boost." The leaders sought to develop a "farm team" of office seekers that could move up from local to county offices, discouraging primary challengers to the party's endorsees and persuading would-be candidates "to wait their turn" or run for another office (Gorman Jr. 1996).

The endorsed slate of candidates was expected to run as a team and appear at events together. The team concept extended to rank-and-file central committee members. The leaders interviewed committee members and asked: "Are you for the whole slate? If you're not for the whole slate, step aside—it's time to quit. Someone will pick up the lists, give them the money, tell them to work that precinct; you can come back next time" (Cox and Cox 1997).

The party did not neglect the recruitment of allied central committee members, also elected in primaries. An undated manual prepared for central committee members, written by Joe Gorman Sr. and entitled "So You Have Opposition!" advised:

> It is easier for the voter to associate your name with the office if he has been given something concrete to recall you by, A FEW such reasons might include: (a) It is important in helping you KEEP YOUR JOB. (If you hold a political or public position this appeal is ALWAYS extremely effective.) (b) It would HELP you in your field or profession (attorneys, businessmen, salesmen, etc.). (c) It would aid you in securing a political appointment that you have been interested in. (d) It would help a member of your family to secure such an appointment. In the same manual in describing the duties of the committee members. (e) "To aid precinct Democrats who are desirous of securing public or political positions." (Gorman Jr. 2013)[4]

The motto of the Captains organization was "Every day is Election Day." There were primaries and general elections every year, and campaigns for both kinds of elections were run the same way. There was an elaborate budget, sometimes up to $40,000, to get out the vote, including pay for campaign workers. Chairman Sulligan gave each committee member a target vote total for the precinct for which they were responsible. The pay to the committee members was tiered: if they exceeded their targeted vote total, they received extra pay. In addition, there were many types of special campaign committees: ethnic committees, labor committees, and so forth. One interesting committee was called the "canganger" committee. The cangangers were the alcoholics and derelicts that lived under the bridges. The party would register them in a hotel room address and see that they voted.

Although the organization actively recruited candidates, it almost always endorsed incumbents. For example, a mainstay of the party's slate was U.S. Representative Michael Kirwin, who was elected in 1936 as a Roosevelt Democrat and served until 1970. But there were some exceptions as well. In 1948, the party chose not to endorse a long-serving county sheriff because organized labor opposed him. The labor-endorsed candidate won and soon became a mainstay of the party's slate (Beck 1974). And if a "renegade" Democrat won the primary or the general election, as happened for mayor of Youngstown in 1959, the party quickly came to terms with the successful candidate (Knight 1959).

Thus, the Captains organization was established and maintained by a small group of entrepreneurial party leaders. They choose candidates to endorse in private and then sold their choices to the central committee. The party was often a kingmaker because the party endorsement was critical to strong candidates in competitive races, especially in primaries. But it was often a cheerleader because it routinely backed strong candidates in uncompetitive contests, particularly office holders with broad electoral appeal. And it also had some failures, but it quickly adapted to the results at the ballot box. Despite this range of electoral outcomes, the endorsement policy was largely successful in unifying the party, winning elections, and strengthening the party organization.

Party Endorsements Falter and End

The Captains organization began to weaken in the 1970s. One factor was a change in the political context, including the waning of the New Deal coalition and serious economic problems in Mahoning County. Partly as a consequence, a Republican was elected mayor of Youngstown from 1969 to 1977,

and in 1978, a Republican was elected to Congress. Other changes mattered as well, such as the decline of patronage. Yet another factor was generational change, symbolized by the death of Chairman Sulligan in 1975 (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996).

In 1978, Sulligan's immediate successor as chair, an aged party stalwart and County Auditor Stephen "Bushel" Olenick, was ousted in close contest within the central committee. The winner was Donald Hanni, a noted criminal defense attorney, sitting precinct committee member, and a long-time party renegade. Known as the "bull moose" because of his large stature, confrontational style, and brash statements, Chairman Hanni was a sharp contrast to Sulligan's low profile. Hanni soon became the public—and controversial—face of the county party (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996).

In his campaign for party chair, Hanni addressed discontent among central committee members by promising a new endorsement policy. The new policy eliminated the executive committee as the initial endorser; the central committee endorsed by secret ballot rather than a standing or roll call vote; each endorsements required a 50 percent plus one vote; and absent a majority, a runoff was held between the top two candidates (Gorman Jr. 1996).

Thus, control of the endorsement process passed from party officials to factional leaders of which Hanni soon became the most prominent. Because of the secret ballot, it was difficult to hold committee members accountable, and because of the majority vote in each race, slate building became more problematic.

Although Hanni fancied himself as a kingmaker, his initial efforts were as a cheerleader (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996). In 1980 and 1982, he led the party to endorse popular Democratic officeholders to regain the congressional seat lost to the Republicans in 1978. Both candidates failed to win the general election. A bigger defeat occurred in 1980: the endorsed candidate for county sheriff was defeated in the primary by James Traficant. A colorful and notorious maverick, Traficant ran against the Hanni-led party and was elected sheriff. In 1984, Traficant took on the party again, securing the congressional nomination and defeating the Republican incumbent. Hanni never fully came to terms with Traficant, who served in Congress until his expulsion on corruption charges in 2002. Another kind of problem occurred in 1983. The Hanni-led party endorsed City Councilman Patrick Ungaro for mayor of Youngstown, but after winning the primary and the general election, Ungaro disowned Hanni and the party. Ungaro served as mayor until 1997, and Hanni repeatedly ran endorsed candidates against him without success. Hanni's motto became "The only thing worse than a candidate is an officeholder" (Hanni 2014).[5]

Chairman Hanni responded to this problem with a mix of heavy-handed inducement, harsh intimidation, and incessant intrigue. An example of the

latter was filing "cutters" in the primary—candidates with surnames similar to the candidate he was trying to defeat. When asked where he found the cutters, Hanni replied, "in the phone book." The trick seldom worked, but he persisted. Hanni also began to recruit lower quality candidates that he could control, but who were poor competitors (Hanni 2014).

Hanni's troubles included four revolts from within the central committee between 1984 and 1988. He prevailed each time, but at a high cost to the organization. In 1990, Hanni took advantage of a lull in party infighting to abolish the secret ballot for party endorsements. This change did not, however, produce positive results: in 1992, two renegade Democrats were elected as Mahoning County commissioners.

Well-schooled in party mechanics, Hanni actively recruited candidates and central committee members and aggressively managed campaign operations. But in contrast to the Captains organization, the factional organization tended to make public decisions about endorsees and then sell them to the central committee privately. The factional organization was unable to regularly deliver enough votes for endorsed candidates to win nominations or general elections. As a consequence, high-quality candidates and office holders had incentives to bypass the endorsement process altogether, further weakening the incentives for cooperation. This endorsement policy produced an increasing number of failures.

In 1992, a group of anti-Hanni office holders led by County Commissioner David Engler began organizing a new kind of revolt: a takeover of the central committee from the outside by electing new members. The group recruited a local attorney, Michael Morley, to lead the effort by running for party chair. Slight, agreeable, and soft-spoken, Morley provided a sharp contrast to the flamboyant Hanni in the 1994 primary (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996).

Dubbed "Democrats for Change," the group worked tirelessly to recruit people to run for the central committee, ultimately filing 325 candidates—a mix of political neophytes, civic reformers, and Hanni opponents. Then the group orchestrated an extensive and expensive campaign. It included TV and radio spots, telephone banks, direct mail, print advertising, door-to-door campaigning, and public appearances by Morley—all at a cost of some $160,000. Hanni and his allies were stunned by the energy of the campaign and fought back as best they could. Democrats for Change won a decisive victory in the primary, electing 275 candidates, about two-thirds of central committee members. Among the losers was Chairman Hanni himself. Six weeks later, Morley was elected party chair without opposition (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996).

The new party leadership wasted little time in reforming the party. A notable change was the elimination of party endorsements. Drawing on the Progressive tradition, many Change supporters argued that rank-and-file

Democrats would choose good candidates if the party stopped serving as a "selectorate" between candidates and voters. Morley concluded that the central committee should be a "level playing field" where potential candidates could seek the support of individual precinct committee members rather than the chair or other party officials. "There will be no deals to be made," Morley said, "if you are not endorsing" (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996). Instead, he regularly met with committee members (over 90 meetings in 1994) and urged them to "get involved" in campaigns that were consistent with their personal values and interests. True to his word, Morley made the same party resources available to candidates seeking Democratic nominations: bulk mail rate, use of party headquarters, use of phones, voter lists, and so forth.

The nonendorsement policy fit well with Morley's efforts to modernize the party by providing general election services to party general election candidates (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 1999). A good example was the development of a full-time headquarters. As with the Change campaign, most of the funds for the new services came from candidates and the interests that backed candidates. This pattern resembled the "service" organization run by state and national party committees (Aldrich 1995, chap 9). But it proved difficult to build and maintain such services at the county level, and the local party campaign efforts began to decline under Morley's leadership.

The end of endorsements shifted control of the endorsement process from factional leaders to candidates and office holders. Initially, Chairman Morley had considerable informal influence in this process. Like Hanni, Morley was the public face of the party, but unlike Hanni, he involved himself in popular economic development efforts. Thus, Morley's support was valuable to a potential candidate, and because he was interested in "good candidates," he regularly engaged with a wide range of aspiring office holders. This process was most evident in appointments made by the central committee to fill vacancies in local offices, including the party chair (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1996; Blumberg, Binning, and Green 1999).

Morley unexpectedly resigned as party chair in 1999—about five years after the enormous effort to take control of the central committee. His successor was David Ditzler, an ally of the Change movement. Chairman Ditzler was a local government official and had a full-time job, so he had neither the time nor the inclination to follow Morley's role as public figure and informal leader. The party continued its nonendorsement policy, but informal influence mattered, such as the appointment of Change leader John Reardon as county treasurer in 1999. Under Ditzler, the party became dormant as an electoral organization (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003).

After the 2000 election, it was clear that Ditzler would not continue as chair, and in 2002, the Change leaders replaced him with another one of their own, Lisa Antonini, a long-time party activist and deputy director for County Treasurer Reardon. Like Ditzler, Antonini's party work was limited by her full-time local government job, which required all political activities to take place on her own time. Antonini proved to be a skillful political mechanic, reviving the party's campaign activities. She also was perceived as promoting the interests of her boss, who had higher ambitions (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2007). Both kinds of effort paid off in 2007, when Treasurer Reardon obtained a patronage appointment with the Ohio Department of Commerce in the administration of the newly elected Democratic Ohio governor Ted Strickland. The central committee then filled the vacancy by appointing Antonini to succeed Reardon as County Treasurer. Antonini then ran and won a full term as treasurer in 2008. Her new duties eventually led to her resignation as party chair in April 2009, after serving seven years (Blumberg et al. 2011).

Under the nonendorsement process, the party was more of an informal cheerleader for popular candidates than a kingmaker. However, the influence of party chairs and other notables was often crucial in the filling of vacant local offices and sometimes influential in close primary elections. The party had its share of failures as well. Informal support for primary candidates involved public cues and private decisions by committee members. This pattern reinforced the trend toward independence of local office holders that had vexed Chairman Hanni and that continued under the Change chairs. For example, Democrat George McKelvey was elected mayor of Youngstown in 1997 and 2001, but he endorsed Republican George W. Bush for reelection 2004. McKelvey's successor in City Hall was Jay Williams, who bypassed the Democratic primary and was elected as an independent in 2005. Mayor Williams was Youngstown's first African American mayor and won reelection as a Democrat in 2009. The local party organization became increasingly less relevant in campaigns (Blumberg et al. 2011).

Endorsements Return

Whatever its virtues, the nonendorsement policy limited the ability of Change chairs to manage factionalism, win elections, and strengthen the party organizations. These limitations were particularly problematic for Chairwoman Antonini, who lacked the public stature of Chairman Morley and was closely tied to an ambitious office holder. As a consequence, Antonini and other party leaders began considering restoring party endorsements. The opportunity

came in 2006, when two local office holders sought state-wide Democratic nominations—Treasurer Reardon for state auditor and State Senator Marc Dann for Attorney General (Tullis 2006). In April 2006, the central committee amended the party rules to allow endorsements. The party then endorsed U.S. congressman Ted Strickland for governor—Reardon had withdrawn from the primary for state auditor and supported Strickland for governor—and Dann for Attorney General. Both of the endorsed candidates won the nominations and the general election.

However, the party chose not to endorse for local races in 2006 or in 2008. The latter decision was viewed as a "big error" by Antonini, who passed up the opportunity to help her own candidacy for county treasurer and that of allied office seekers. Of particular note was Antonini's personal endorsement of Marty Yavorcik, an independent, in his failed effort to beat County Prosecutor Paul J. Gains, the Democratic incumbent. Yavorcik had been a member of the Democratic Executive Committee until he decided to run as an independent (Skolnick 2008).

Antonini's successor as party chair was David Betras. A well-known local attorney in private practice, Betras was a former law partner of Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann. Betras was not a party insider, but after a vigorous effort within the central committee, he was elected to complete Antonini's term as chair in May 2009 (Skolnick 2009). Nicknamed "Bombastic Dave," Betras was "pushy, loud, and brash," reminiscent of Chairman Hanni. And like Hanni, he appealed to discontented central committee members by promising to make the Mahoning Democratic Party "relevant" in elections. Key elements of his program were raising money for party services and pursing party endorsements.

Under Betras, the endorsement rules were similar to the Hanni party, but implemented in the spirit of the Change movement (Betras 2013). On the first count, endorsements were made by a majority, secret ballot vote of the central committee. But on the second count, Betras instituted a formal process open to all competing candidates. The party held well-publicized, public endorsement meetings, where all candidates seeking an endorsement were invited to address the central committee before the endorsement vote was taken. With rare exception, Betras did not endorse particular candidates publically or behind the scenes. All things being equal, he preferred that the party endorse incumbents on pragmatic grounds. He did very little to recruit candidates, but he allowed self-recruited office seekers, incumbents as well as challengers, equal access to the endorsement process.

One difference in policy was the expectation that the party *would* endorse in all competitive nomination races, with a two-thirds vote required to *not endorse* in a particular race. If only one candidate was seeking the nomination,

he or she was endorsed by acclamation, and any candidate that won the Democratic primary was automatically endorsed for the general election. The Betras-led party was willing to endorse in all races, in odd as well as even years. Once party endorsements were made, Betras put the party organization's resources behind the candidates in the primary and general elections. In aid of this process, Betras appointed all incumbent Democratic office holders to the party executive committee. But these leaders were expected to support the endorsed candidates or face removal from the executive committee—a policy reminiscent of Chairman Sulligan.

In Betras's view, this process made the party "relevant" in elections because the endorsements did not come from the chair or other leaders but from the governing body of the party as a whole. Thus, control over endorsements passed from candidates and office holders to central committee members, insulated by formal procedures and backed up by strong party services. Indeed, the Betras endorsement process could be seen as a special kind of party "service."

Although Betras did not recruit candidates, he actively recruited members for the central committee. One reason was maintaining support for his chairmanship and another was to mobilize activists for grassroots campaigning. Betras noted that face-to-face contact, "through a screen door," was the most effective way to mobilize voters. He was able to improve the party's GOTV efforts. In addition, Betras was able to provide more party services to endorsed candidates, including reduced mailing cost and access to the party "infrastructure"—the use of party headquarters, telephones, computers, and voter lists. The new services were paid for by a substantial increase in party fundraising by Betras.

For the 2010 primary, the Betras-led party endorsed a full slate of candidates for local offices. The most significant endorsement was Carol Rimedio-Righetti for county commissioner over the incumbent David Ludt. She and the entire slate won the primary, and she went on to win the general election. This victory was a feather in Chairman Betras's cap. He was soon reelected for a full term as party chair and named "Ohio's Democratic Chairman of the Year."

Chairman Betras's neutrality toward candidates was tested in 2011 when the central committee met to fill a vacancy for county treasurer after the resignation of Lisa Antonini,[6] the former party chair. Betras was an outspoken critic of one candidate seeking the appointment, Dan Yemma, calling him the "worst public official in Mahoning County." Betras and Yemma had a previous run-in: Yemma refused to support an endorsed candidate for a local office, and Betras removed him from the executive committee. Despite the chair's opposition, Yemma easily won the appointment as county treasurer.

Unlike Hanni, who seldom made peace with opponents, but like Sulligan, who brought successful renegades into the party, Betras accepted the outcome and said, "I will support Dan Yemma as the incumbent. He has the full weight and support of the party, and he'll be back on the executive committee I assure you" (Skolnick 2011).

In 2012, the party also endorsed a full slate of local candidates, but with mixed results (Skolnick 2012). On a positive note, the committee endorsed challenger Patrick Ginnetti over incumbent County Engineer Richard Marsico. The result was the best results a party committee can hope for: Engineer Marsico withdrew as a candidate and Ginnetti was nominated and elected without opposition. A similar pattern held for the endorsed candidates for county treasurer—Dan Yemma, an incumbent recently appointed by the party—and for County Commissioner David Ditzler, the former party chair who won an open seat.

On a negative note, the committee endorsed Youngstown City Prosecutor Jay Maceyko over incumbent County Prosecutor Paul Gains. A nasty primary fight followed, with the incumbent Gains prevailing in a close vote. Afterward, Chairman Betras had to make peace with Prosecutor Gains. Betras also faced difficulty when attorney Mark Hanni, the son of the former chairman and Betras rival, was the only Democratic candidate to file for the Ohio Seventh District Court of Appeals. However, Betras asked the party to endorse Hanni and then supported his candidacy. Hanni was the only candidate on the Democratic slate that lost in November 2012, in a banner year for the Democrats.

Betras faced a persistent problem of executive and central committee members supporting nonendorsed candidates in primary or general elections. He regularly disciplined wayward leaders by removing them from the executive committee. In 2013, Betras proposed a change in party rules to allow the dismissal of precinct committee members (elected by voters in the party) for a lack of party discipline as well as other offenses. The proposal was met with little enthusiasm and was tabled by the central committee (Skolnick 2013a).

Controversy over party discipline deepened when the party decided to endorse in the 2013 Youngstown mayor race. After much discussion, the party endorsed John McNally over Tito Brown, an African American candidate. In May, McNally won the Democratic primary by a surprisingly small margin (142 ballots), with the vote sharply divided along racial lines (Skolnick 2013b). This result raised questions about the party organization's capacity to generate turnout for endorsed candidates. It also prompted DeMaine Kitchen, an African American, a former city council member, and the administrative assistant to the sitting mayor, to run as an independent in the general election.

Kitchen was following the path of former mayor Jay Williams, who had won City Hall as an independent in 2005 (Skolnick 2013c).

In the general election, three prominent African American party leaders—two sitting and one former city council members—backed Kitchen over the Democratic nominee McNally. Chairman Betras removed all three from the party executive committee. The action led African American civic and religious leaders to speak out against Betras with "not so subtle racial accusations" (Skolnick 2013d). These events increased the stakes in the mayoral election, and Betras redoubled his effort on behalf of the endorsed candidate—even going door to door to muster votes. On Election Day, Democrat McNally bested the independent candidate Kitchen by 5,802 to 4,582 votes. McNally had increased his margin significantly over the primary vote, and Betras avoided a potentially career-ending embarrassment (de Souza 2014).

The Betras-led party again endorsed candidates in the May 6, 2014, primary. All the endorsed office seekers were nominated, and, in addition, the "Team Betras" slate of party officers was victorious in the precinct committee elections. Betras was then reelected to his second full term as party chair on June 7, 2014 (Skolnick 2014). Shortly thereafter, the Mahoning County Democratic Committee was found to be out of compliance with the rules of the National and Ohio Democratic parties. A key issue was a prohibition of secret ballots in party decision making. Despite some controversy, the central committee amended its by-laws to eliminate secret ballots on June 17, 2014 (*Youngstown Vindicator* 2014). In this regard, the local party may return to the public endorsement votes used by the Captains organization of the 1940s—a change that may strengthen the endorsement process in the future.

Under the renewed endorsement policy, the party is *both* a cheerleader and a kingmaker. As in the past, the success of the party slate is due in large part to incumbents and other high-quality candidates. The party is a kingmaker in close contests, and when it discourages primary opposition against endorsed candidates. The Betras-led party had its share of failures, although the endorsement policy coupled with the enforcement of party discipline and renewed party resources certainly has made the Mahoning Democratic Party more relevant in elections. The endorsements are, in effect, the sum of private decisions of central committee members conducted in a public process. A key feature of the endorsement policy has been Betras's role as a neutral manager of the endorsement process; however, this role limited his ability to recruit candidates, influence candidacies, and build unity among party leaders. It will be interesting to see if this role for party chair persists in the future.

Consequences and Causes

What effect did party endorsements have on candidates in Mahoning County? As we have seen, the party was sometimes a kingmaker, more frequently a cheerleader, and often a failure. The kingmaker role was most common under Chairman Sulligan, followed by Chairman Betras, the Change chairs Morley, Ditzler, and Antonini, and the least common under Chairman Hanni. But these patterns reflect the overall success of these chairs. The Captains organization was quite effective for more than two decades, and the Betras-led party was, at least initially, effective as well. The Change chairs and Hanni were markedly less so.

Overall, these cases suggest that the endorsement policies of the Mahoning County Democratic Committee were associated with party unity, victory, and strength—for good or for ill. Under Sulligan and Betras, the endorsement process fostered consensus in the central committee but held members accountable for their decisions and behaviors. These features produced greater success at the polls and allowed for more effective campaign organization. In this context, high-quality candidates had strong incentives to seek endorsements and work within the party. The local party was clearly relevant in elections.

In contrast, the endorsement process under Hanni did not build consensus among committee members, which eventually undermined electoral success and weakened the organization's campaign capacity. Strong factional pressure combined with a lack of accountability among committee members result in ineffectiveness. Once on this path, office seekers had few incentives to seek endorsement or work within the party. The nonendorsement policy under the Change chairs had similar effects, only with candidates and their allies at the center of the process. In effect, the central committee became an arena for squabbling over offices, much as the committee had been an arena of squabbling over patronage before the 1940s. Although both approaches sought to empower committee members, they fostered disunity, defeat, and decline. Simply put, the local party became less relevant in elections. The irony of this situation is that Hanni and the Change chairs were often good political mechanics.

What caused these changes in endorsement policy? A key factor was alterations in the political context in which the party operated. The Captains organization arose in the context of the New Deal realignment and the desire to translate the strong Democratic presidential vote into victories in local offices. Party endorsements became valuable for party leaders, candidates, and voters. By Chairman Hanni's time, the political context had changed: the New Deal coalition had declined along with the industrial economy that

had supported it. Additional institutional changes, such as the reduction in patronage, forced alternations in party operations. Party endorsements were no longer valuable to party leaders, candidates, and voters. The Change movement addressed these issues by reforming and modernizing the local organization. Its mistake was not replacing endorsements with something of similar value—and the return to party endorsements under Betras did just that. The new endorsement process addressed the same problems as the original Captains organization in a fashion consistent with the circumstances of the twenty-first century. Party endorsements were once again valuable to party leaders, candidates, and voters.

These patterns reveal that the Mahoning Democratic Party made strategic choices with its endorsement policies. At times, these choices were productive and at times just the opposite. This reminds us of the great adaptability of local party organizations as they seek unity, victory, and strength (see chapter 17 in this volume on party adaptation). These lessons are worth pondering in an era of intense polarization, dysfunctional politics, and organizational fragmentation.

Notes

1. This chapter draws on past research on the Mahoning County Democratic Party pushed in previous editions of this volume: Binning, Blumberg and Green 1996; Blumberg, Binning, and Green 1999, 2003, 2007; Blumberg et al. 2011.

2. On Ohio election law, see http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/35 and http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Direct_Primaries?rec=1564.

3. Mahoning Democratic Party, "Order of Meeting, Saturday, Feb 26, 1964."

4. Joe Gorman Sr., "So You Have Opposition!" Although undated, the document makes reference to a 1955 voter list.

5. This motto was often repeated by Don Hanni to one of the authors.

6. Country Treasurer Lisa Antonini resigned due to a campaign finance scandal. Her predecessor, John Reardon, was also forced to resign from the state government in an unrelated campaign finance scandal. Attorney General Marc Dann was forced to resign because of a sexual harassment scandal.

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