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527 Committees and the Political Party Network

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Abstract: We investigate the links between 527s and other political organizations through the employment histories of 527 staff. We find that 527s are highly central to modern political party networks and are in positions to facilitate coordination within a party and to employ key party personnel. Further, we find important differences between the networks charted out by the two major parties. The Republican Party, the majority party during the period under study, had a more hierarchical network than the Democratic Party did.

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The political organizations known as 527s¹ have grown in number, size, and importance since their inception just a few short years ago. While formed as a campaigning tool, allowing candidate supporters some leniency in fundraising and campaign expenditures, they now figure prominently within political parties, facilitating coordination across different branches of the parties and providing employment for key party actors.

Just how central are these 527s to the parties, however? What do they enable parties to do? And do the parties utilize these 527s equally? It is conceivable, after all, that a minority party would find such a non-traditional party group especially useful, while a majority party could rely on its access to the federal bureaucracy to provide jobs and coordination for its main supporters.

This paper will address the above questions using an innovative dataset: the employment records of the nation's largest 527s between 2004 and 2006. Those employees' other organizational ties are probed, revealing a vast network tying partisan actors together via the 527s. We first examine the overall network charted out by 527s, and then divide it by the partisan affiliations of those organizations. The findings suggest that the Republican Party, the majority party during the period under study, developed a more hierarchical 527 network than the Democrats did. This study further testifies to the central role that 527s play in coordinating party efforts.

The Party Network

¹ So-called "527s" have thrived in the wake of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 and derive their name from section 527 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, which determines the taxation status of political organizations. 527s are considered to be tax-exempt. However, since they do not expressly advocate for or against a candidate, 527s do not fall under the limits on donations and expenditures enforced by the Federal Election Commission.

Political parties today can best be understood not only as a series of committees with offices on Capitol Hill, but as webs of relationships between political actors. Two partisan networks, one Democratic and one Republican, assist candidates, plot campaign strategies, and coordinate governing tasks. While the notion of parties as more hierarchical and formal organizations in the style of Tammany Hall or Mayor Daley's Chicago may have made sense in an earlier age, the network concept helps explain much political activity in the modern era (Bedlington and Malbin 2003; Bernstein and Dominguez 2003; Bernstein 1999, 2000, and 2004; Bimes and Dominguez 2004; Cohen et al 2008; Doherty 2003, 2005, and 2006; Dominguez 2003 and 2005a; Heberlig and Larson 2005 and 2007; Kolodny 1998; Kolodny and Dulio 2001 and 2003; Kolodny and Logan 1998; Masket 2009; Schlesinger 1985, Schwartz 1990; Skinner 2004, 2005, and 2007).

The rapid growth of 527s in the wake of the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in 2002 appears to have bolstered the reshaping of parties as networks. 527s were created by leading operatives in both major parties, using them to fulfill the functions previously supported by soft money: broadcast advertising and voter mobilization. Probably the most notable 527s were those that composed a Democratic "shadow party": America Coming Together, America Votes, and the Media Fund. There were Republican 527s as well, including Progress for America and Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Of course, there were many pre-existing 527 organizations, such as those operated by the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters.

Whatever these groups accomplished, they did not undermine the role of political parties. Party leaders encouraged their formation, longtime party operatives composed their staffs, partisan interest groups lent them assistance and partisan donors contributed their funds. The 527 groups generally pursued strategies compatible with party goals, whether America Coming

Together's mobilization of Democratic-leaning voters or the Swift Boat Vets' criticism of John Kerry's Vietnam record. The 527 groups were not competing with the parties; they were nodes within the broader party networks (Skinner 2005).

527s as "Shadow Parties"

The leadership of the so-called "527" organizations formed after the passage of BCRA – America Coming Together, the Media Fund, America Votes – included not only veterans of the Clinton White House and the Democratic National Committee, but also longtime officials of the AFL-CIO, EMILY's List, and the Sierra Club. Both former President Bill Clinton and Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe strongly encouraged the formation of these entities.

After the passage of BCRA, McAuliffe established a Task Force on BCRA that included Harold Ickes, former deputy chief of staff to Bill Clinton; Michael Whouley, a longtime Democratic operative who worked for both the Al Gore and John Kerry presidential campaigns; John Podesta, former White House Chief of Staff for Clinton; as well as two top officials of the DNC. Ickes devised the Media Fund (to conduct broadcast advertising previously funded by soft money), which he subsequently led; before BCRA became effective, McAuliffe encouraged leading Democratic donors to give to the new organization (Weissman and Hassan 2006).

Ickes also helped devise America Coming Together and America Votes through meetings with top members of the Democratic Party network. These included Sierra Club director Carl Pope, EMILY's List president Ellen Malcolm (who also serves on the DNC's executive committee), SEIU president Andrew Stern, and former AFL-CIO political director Steve

Rosenthal. They agreed on the need to coordinate interest-group electoral operations; this became America Votes (Weissman and Hassan 2006)

Stern and Rosenthal also discussed their desire to create a “ground war” operation funded by unions, and that would apply to the general public the voter-turnout techniques used to mobilize union members. This eventually became America Coming Together; billionaire George Soros and insurance tycoon Peter Lewis pledged \$20 million to fund ACT as long as Rosenthal controlled its operations (Weissman and Hassan 2006). Malcolm and Ickes formed the Joint Victory Campaign to raise money for all three groups. With the assistance of Soros and Bill Clinton, Malcolm and Ickes wooed many of the party’s top donors; Hollywood producer Steve Bing was among the many onetime soft-money givers who helped fund ACT and the Media Fund (Weissman and Hassan 2006).

During the campaign, ACT, America Votes, and the Media Fund, along with two labor-backed 527s, were all headquartered in the same building in downtown Washington, across the street from the AFL-CIO’s headquarters. By the fall of 2004, ACT had 55 offices in 17 states, and 1300 paid canvassers working to turn out Democratic voters (Dwyer et al 2004) Not only was the leadership of the “shadow party” groups deeply embedded in the party networks, their staff was, too. Both the Media Fund and ACT hired the Thunder Road Group, run by former Kerry campaign manager Jim Jordan, to handle their communications. Larry Gold served both as counsel for ACT and for the AFL-CIO. Bill Knapp served as a consultant for the Media Fund before he quit to work for the Kerry campaign (Drinkard 2004). (Due to lack of funding, ACT disbanded after the 2004 election.)

America Votes held bi-weekly meetings of liberal activists to plot strategy. America Votes allowed member organizations to share voter files, survey data, and demographic

information. This allowed America Votes staff to coordinate the efforts of groups such as the Sierra Club, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and the League of Conservation Voters in stimulating voter turnout and contacting swing voters. America Votes targeted 13 battleground states; the organization remained active in later elections at a lower level of activity (Hadfield 2004).² The groups involved in America Votes are central elements in the Democratic Party network; they put the lie to the conventional wisdom that interest groups always undermine political parties.

The Democratic “shadow party” was primarily funded by a few very large donors, many of them who had given large amounts of “soft money” to party committees. These included some leading unions, such as AFSCME, SEIU, the Teamsters, and the American Federation of Teachers. But there were also several large individual donors who had been longtime supporters of the Democratic Party, most notably Soros and Lewis.

A Republican “Shadow”

Republicans were initially reluctant to set up their own 527 organizations; the RNC had never depended as much on soft money as the DNC had, the Bush re-election campaign could raise as much money as it needed, and the legal status of 527’s seemed shaky at first. But eventually a Republican “shadow” emerged. Progress for America, a leading Republican 527 group, was also run by people active in their party network. PFA was founded in 2001 by Tony Feather, political director of the 2000 Bush-Cheney campaign, and ally of Bush advisor Karl

² Members of America Votes included ACORN, the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), ACT, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Association of Trial Lawyers of America (ATLA), the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Clean Water Action, Defenders of Wildlife, Democracy for America, EMILY’s List, Environment 2004, Human Rights Campaign, League of Conservation Voters (LCV), the Media Fund, MoveOn.org, Moving America Forward, Music for America, the NAACP National Voter Fund, NARAL Pro-Choice America, the National Education Association (NEA), the National Jewish Democratic Council, the National Treasury Employees Union, the Partnership for American Families, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Sierra Club, USAction, the Young Voter Alliances, Voices for Working Families, and 21st Century Democrats.

Rove; after a year of inactivity, Feather handed over PFA to Chris LaCivita, former political director for the NRSC. In the spring of 2004, Brian McCabe took over PFA; McCabe was a partner in the DCI Group, a political consulting firm, which later did work for the Bush campaign. Another DCI partner, Tom Synhorst, served as an advisor to PFA; he had worked as an advisor to the 2000 Bush campaign and helped run the 1996 and 2000 Republican national conventions (Weissman and Hassan 2006). Benjamin Ginsberg served as counsel to PFA; he served in similar capacities for both the 2004 Bush re-election effort and Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. The Swift Boat organizers approached PFA, seeking advice; PFA personnel encouraged them to see LaCivita, who became an advisor to the group (Weissman and Hassan 2006; Stone 2003a).

PFA became a 527 organization in May 2004, after the FEC decided not to regulate 527s; Bush-Cheney campaign chairman Marc Racicot and RNC chairman Ed Gillespie soon released a statement urging support for PFA and other sympathetic 527s. PFA quickly gained access to the financial resources of the Republican party network, hiring some well-connected fundraisers (such as Texas public relations executive James Francis), holding an event at the national convention, and gaining the assistance of such party stalwarts as San Diego Chargers owner Alex Spanos (Weissman and Hassan 2006; Drinkard 2004; Cannon 2004). Much like the Democratic “shadow party,” PFA relied on a small number of large donors, most of them longtime supports of the GOP.

Parties and Hierarchies

A number of experimental and observational studies have confirmed important differences between the two major political parties, both as organizations and as collections of

different types of individuals. On the individual level, Republicans appear to be more comfortable than Democrats in leaving important party decisions up to party leaders, while Democrats seem to prefer aspects of internal democracy. Freeman (1986) found important behavior and attitudinal differences between Democrats and Republicans. Perhaps relatedly, Republican Party organizations tend to be more hierarchical than Democratic ones. As Freeman (1986, 329) stated,

The Democratic Party is pluralistic and polycentric. It has multiple power centers that compete for membership support in order to make demands on, as well as determine, the leaders. The Republicans have a unitary party in which great deference is paid to the leadership, activists are expected to be “good soldiers,” and competing loyalties are frowned upon.

Democrats feel comfortable engaging in formal recognition of diversity; Republicans avoid it when they can. Democrats demand open discussion and representativeness; Republicans prefer top-down leadership and demonstrations of unity. Democratic conventions have seen numerous fights over credentials and legitimacy, while the Republicans usually rally around their nominee (Freeman 1986). Shafer (1986) notes differences between the parties’ delegates, with Democrats more given to flamboyant displays of individualism, while Republicans prefer deference to authority and reliance on formal channels of communication.

Klinkner (1995) finds that the Democratic and Republican national committees differ systematically in their responses to electoral defeat. Democrats engage in procedural reform, whether to produce greater accountability or to accommodate the various factions in their oft-fragmented coalition. Democrats are also more likely to

formulate policy-based responses, such as those pursued by the liberal-leaning Democratic Advisory Council of the late 1950s or the centrist Democratic Leadership Council in the Reagan-Bush years. Both responses reflect a willingness to tolerate open disagreement and to make inclusiveness a priority.

By contrast, Republicans prefer “nuts-and-bolts” organizational retooling, epitomized by the pragmatic work engaged in by Ray Bliss after Goldwater’s 1964 loss and by Bill Brock after Watergate. Both chairmen emphasized improving party fundraising, revitalizing the grassroots, and recruiting stronger candidates. In the 1960s and 1970s, as they saw the party apparatus fall under the sway of conservatives (fueled by the rise of direct mail), moderate and liberal Republicans avoided overt attempts to challenge the GOP’s dominant ideology or to gain a stronger voice within the RNC. Open clashes over philosophy rarely occurred among Republicans, even after major defeats. Occasionally, the GOP will woo specific constituencies, as the RNC’s Southern Division did in the 1960s, or as Brock courted Evangelicals and blue-collar workers during the Carter presidency. But overt group consciousness cuts against the grain of a party culture that emphasizes homogeneity and hierarchy (Klinkner 1995).

Democratic culture tends to accommodate groups to a much greater extent. This reflects not only differences in folkways, but also the reality of the internal dynamics of the party. Berry (1999) finds that liberal citizen groups, many of them active in Democratic politics, have far outstripped their conservative counterparts in influence and prestige. The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, especially those involving women and African-Americans, usually preferred to participate in the Democratic party, given its support for activist government and openness to out-groups. By contrast,

Republican women were recruited through pre-existing partisan channels; efforts by GOP feminists to gain greater recognition bore little fruit (Baer and Bostitis 1988). Dark (1998) illustrates a decades-long alliance between organized labor and the Democratic Party; one in which there has been more continuity than change. Indeed, Republican operatives have often envied unions' success at grassroots organizing; both the Christian Coalition and the RNC's "72-Hour Project" were modeled, in part, on labor's turnout efforts.

By contrast, while business has funded the GOP since the days of McKinley and Hanna, corporations otherwise avoid overt political involvement. One prominent lobbyist for a peak business association has commented, "Business traditionally doesn't like politics. I mean, it's just easier to write a check, it's easier to contribute to a candidate, a party" (Skinner 2007). Urban machines long served as a valuable base for the Democratic Party, receiving in return for their labor-intensive operations, not only patronage but also recognition for their ethnic constituents. Republican Party organization has usually been stronger at the state and national levels, and has relied more on capital-intensive techniques like advertising (Erie 1990; Klinkner 1995). Time and again, Democratic volunteers have demanded a greater voice in party councils; one sees similar rhetoric used by "reformers" enamored of Adlai Stevenson, anti-war activists supporting George McGovern, or 21st century liberals backing Howard Dean. Republicans have their own ideological devotees, but they rarely concern themselves with procedural reform. If anything, the rise of conservatism in the 1960s and 1970s only increased the homogeneity within the GOP (Miller and Jennings 1986).

Testing the Network Model

From what we know about party networks from both past scholarship and anecdotal accounts of 527s as shadow parties we develop and test the following hypotheses: 1) 527s are a central component to the party network by being connected to formal party structures and institutions as well as campaigns and other interest groups; 2) 527s facilitate coordination between disparate groups in the party network; and 3) there are important differences in the structure and behavior of the Democratic and Republican party networks.

To begin, we identified a sample of 527 organizations. For this initial analysis, we identified roughly the top 100 527 committees from the 2004 and 2006 elections in terms of spending. These were taken from lists provided by both the Campaign Finance Institute (CFI) and the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP).³ The list of 527s included in this analysis consist of 18 Republican-oriented groups and 67 Democratic-oriented groups. (The fact that the top 100 527s are so dominated by Democrats provides some evidence in support of hypothesis 3.)

Once a sample of 527s was identified, the data used to test the above hypotheses were collected through several stages. First, because we were interested in the connections individuals associated with 527 organizations have to the wider party network, we needed to identify a data source that provided consistent and reliable information on those individuals responsible for starting, the daily operation of, and strategic direction of each 527 organization. We could have done a simple Google search to try and identify key players in each 527, but that would have been too unreliable, as we could not know for sure if we had collected all the key individuals at each organization. Because each are organized differently (for instance, some are more decentralized than others; some are more hierarchical than others; some have larger staff

³ Lists of these committees can be found at the CFI and CRP websites: www.cfinst.org and www.opensecrets.org, respectfully.

structures than others, etc.) we could not be confident that a simple search through an Internet search engine would be exhaustive.

During 2004, 527s did not have to report any of their activity to the Federal Election Commission. Fortunately, 527s, since their inception, have been required to file paperwork with the Internal Revenue Service. These committees must file several types of forms with the IRS, including Form 8871, “Political Organization Notice of Section 527 Status,” and Form 8872, “Political Organization Report of Contributions and Expenditures,” and Form 990 “Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax” (this last form serves basically as a tax return for the committee). Two of these forms – 8871 and 990 – require the 527 to submit names of “officers, directors, trustees, and key employees,” in addition to other form-specific information. We used the individuals listed on these forms as a means of compiling a list of individuals associated with each 527 committee in the sample. Getting to a final list of individuals was also a multi-step process.

One hurdle in identifying individuals associated with each particular 527 was the similarity of the names of many 527 committees. For instance, in the case of labor unions, a search for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) turned up both state-focused organizations and local unions; the same was true for the Club for Growth and many other committees. When originally filing an 8871 form notifying the IRS that a group is claiming 527 status, they are issued a unique Employer Identification Number (EIN). To avoid any over counting or undercounting of individuals, once the main committee was identified, we searched for forms filed under the group’s EIN; this allowed us to be confident that we were only identifying forms associated with the particular group in which we were interested.

Moreover, each group filed multiple forms with the IRS at many different intervals. For instance, the Democratic group Voices for Working Families filed four separate 8871 forms and one 990 form that covered the 2004 election cycle, while the Club for Growth filed three 8871s along with their 990. The 8871, again, is the form a group must file to notify the IRS that they are requesting 527 status; any change to a group, be it an address change, or more importantly for our purposes, a change in the officers or key staff, must be accompanied by an amended 8871; thus the need for multiple filings.

In order to come to a final list of “officers, directors, trustees, and key employees” we examined each of the forms filed by a particular 527 during the 2004 election cycle (defined as January 2003 through December 2004) or the 2006 cycle (defined as January 2005 through December 2006). Any individual appearing on any form filed with the IRS covering these time frames was included as someone associated with the 527. In the vast majority of cases, only a few changes in staff structure took place during each election cycle (even though there is considerable turnover across cycles). For the 527 committees included here, the number of officers and/or key staff ranged from one (The November Fund) to 39 (League of Conservation Voters).

Connections to the party network were determined by researching the employment and/or association history of each of the “officers, directors, trustees, and key employees” for each committee in the analysis. This was done through general Internet searching, although a few sources were more fruitful than others. These included a search of newspapers and publications in the Washington, DC area (*Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Roll Call*, *Campaigns & Elections* magazine, for instance), a particular web site called SourceWatch,⁴ and general web searches that

⁴ According to the SourceWatch site, “SourceWatch is a collaborative project of the Center for Media and Democracy to produce a directory of the people, organizations and issues shaping the public agenda. A primary purpose of SourceWatch is

turned up individuals' biographies and/or employment histories on web sites where they were currently or formerly employed or had an affiliation. For the 527s active in 2004, any related connection to the party network that an individual had during 2004 or before was included in the dataset, and for the 2006 cycle any related connection to the party network that an individual had during 2004 or before was included.

The resulting dataset is, in a way, incomplete. While we know the links between each 527 and its affiliated groups, we are less certain about the links from one affiliated group to another. For example, the 527 EMILY's List is tied to the Human Rights Campaign and the Gore 2000 presidential campaign through personnel. It is certainly possible that HRC and the Gore campaign had personnel in common, as well. However, this dataset does not contain such information.

Results

Our data were collected in the form of a grid, with 527s as columns and the associations to which the 527 employees belonged (henceforth "affiliated groups") as rows. This dataset was then analyzed as a two-mode matrix using UCINET 6.214, NetDraw 2.084, Pajek 1.02, and igraph 0.5.2. Where necessary for the purposes of analysis, the two-mode matrix was converted to a bipartite matrix, with both 527s and affiliated groups appearing in both the rows and columns. The two-mode analysis allows us to see the relationships between the 527s and the other organizations with which they are affiliated. Our data recorded the number of employees

documenting the PR and propaganda activities of public relations firms and public relations professionals engaged in managing and manipulating public perception, opinion and policy. SourceWatch also includes profiles on think tanks, industry-funded organizations and industry-friendly experts that work to influence public opinion and public policy on behalf of corporations, governments and special interests. Over time, SourceWatch has broadened to include others involved in public debates including media outlets, journalists and government agencies. Unlike some other wikis, SourceWatch has a policy of strict referencing, and is overseen by a paid editor. SourceWatch has 37,220 articles"

that 527s shared with affiliated groups, and the networks were therefore analyzed as valued datasets.

We can visually track the links between 527s and organization in Figure 1, which charts out the entire 527 network. For the sake of clarity, isolates (nodes with zero connections) were omitted from this diagram.

This image and others were created using NetDraw's "spring-embedding" algorithm, with nodes repositioned slightly to improve readability. The node sizes are weighted by the nodes' "betweenness" centrality, a measure of connectedness. (Nodes with high betweenness scores in a network are generally interpreted to be acting as "brokers" – they have great influence as conduits in the network (see Hanneman and Riddle 2005). 527s are indicated by blue squares. The affiliated groups are marked by red circles. The most central nodes (those with the highest betweenness centrality scores) are labeled.

Figure 1

One of the more obvious and interesting characteristics of this network is that it is totally dominated by Democratic-leaning organizations. The 527s with the highest betweenness scores are the left-leaning America Votes, America Coming Together (ACT), the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, Twenty-first Century Democrats, Environment 2004, and the League of Conservation Voters (LCV). Two right-leaning 527s – Republicans Abroad and Republican National Lawyers – are labeled in the figure but have much lower centrality scores, each connected to just a few other nodes. Additionally, most of the more connected organizations in this network have a Democratic cant to them, including the DNC and the Clinton administration. The Democratic dominance of this network is no doubt due to the fact that there are many more

(www.sourcewatch.org). We believe the last two sentences are key to having confidence in the information on this site, as opposed to a page such as Wikipedia.

Democratic 527s than Republican ones. Indeed, as mentioned previously, of the 100 largest 527s we examined, 67 were affiliated with the Democrats, 18 with the Republicans.

Another somewhat surprising feature of the network is that it does not appear to be partitioned into liberal and conservative factions. A number of Republican-leaning 527s are linked, via an association, to Democratic-leaning 527s. The conservative Republicans Abroad, for example, is linked to the liberal League of Conservation Voters by having members who have served in the media and on Capitol Hill. In another example, the left-leaning 527 Voices for Working Families is connected to College Republicans. The link there is a woman named Patricia Friend, who at one point ran the Association of Flight Attendants but also served on a post-9/11 safety advisory panel for the Bush Administration. The Bush Administration link creates a path between the leftwing and rightwing 527s. There are enough such individual cases to connect any Republican-leaning 527 to a Democratic-leaning one in just two steps.

Despite the bipartisanship of this network, the structure itself provides insight into the nature of a modern political party. Consistent with the view that a modern party is best thought of as an expanded network of political actors, rather than just a hierarchy within a formal organization, the 527 image shows that interest groups are vital players.

An “egonet” image for one 527, Americans Coming Together, is displayed in Figure 2, and shows just how connected this 527 is. ACT has direct personnel connections to nearly three dozen leading Democratic associations, including presidential campaigns, interest groups, and formal party organizations. This is a group that is clearly pivotal within the party. Rather than a fringe group with only loose ties to partisan actors, it is in a position to broker communications between various groups within the party.

Figure 2

To further examine the network structure of the parties, it is helpful to separate out the networks charted by Republican and Democratic 527s. Direct comparisons between different networks are somewhat challenging, particularly when the networks are of different sizes (Anderson et al. 1999). There exist a number of graph-level indices (GLIs) that could help in comparisons, but common GLIs like density (the number of existing connections divided by the number of possible connections) are easily influenced by the total number of nodes in a network. Nonetheless, researchers have developed various ways to compare networks either by controlling for size (Bonacich et al. 1998) or by using measures that are resistant to changes in N (Faust and Skvoretz 2002, Faust 2006, Snijders 1981, Snijders and Baerveldt 2003). We largely pursue the latter approach.

Our first method involves calculating normalized Bonacich alpha power scores for all the nodes in the networks and then testing to see if those scores are distributed differently across parties (Bonacich 1987). Bonacich power scores essentially determine the influence of each node with respect to its surrounding nodes. The distribution of these scores among the two networks can be seen in Figure 3, a kernel density plot in which each party's scores have been adjusted to have the same mean.

Figure 3

As the figure shows, the Republican network has a somewhat broader range of alpha power scores, while the Democratic nodes are more concentrated around zero. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test reveals that the Republican Party network's power score distribution is significantly different from that of the Democrats' ($P = .000$). Additionally, an F-test confirms that the Republican network's power scores have a higher standard deviation (36.23) than do the

Democrats' (31.70) a difference that is highly statistically significant ($p \leq .001$).⁵ What this suggests is that there is a wider range of power status in the Republican Party and somewhat greater equality of nodes within the Democratic Party, suggesting that the GOP is the more hierarchical of the two.

Another useful way to compare the two parties' networks is through visual illustration. The network charted by the 18 Republican-affiliated 527s in our dataset appears in Figure 4. The 527s are depicted as square nodes and are labeled. The affiliated groups are depicted as circles. This is a relatively thin network (partially due to its small size). For this network, we conducted the community detection algorithm designed by Girvan and Newman (2002) and made available within NetDraw (Porter et al 2009). The nodes have been colored by their affiliations with communities. The Girvan-Newman algorithm detected ten communities (with a Q-value of .756). There appears to be a dominant community in this network, consisting of Republicans Abroad, the GOP National Convention Delegates of 2004, Republican National Lawyers, the National Federation of Republican Women, and the Republican Leadership Coalition. There is a more business-oriented community consisting of GOPAC and the Club for Growth, as well.

Figure 4

Figure 5 shows the network charted by the Democratic leaning 527s. The community detection process identified ten different communities within the Democratic network (with a Q-value of .401). There appear to be three main communities within this network, one (in black) consisting of general interest liberal causes, including the environment, a second one (in green) consisting largely of labor unions, and a third (in gray) consisting of artistic and campaigning pursuits. A few other communities address particular interests within the coalition. There is no obviously dominant community within the Democratic network, unlike within its Republican

⁵ This result holds even when outliers are excluded.

counterpart. Again this lends support for the notion that the Republican party has the more hierarchical organization.

Figure 5

Table 1 provides a set of descriptive statistics for each of the two parties' networks, as calculated by igraph. These statistics are highly informative about the hierarchical nature of each network. They can be defined as follows:

- Degree – The average measure of degree centrality (the number of direct connections with other nodes) for all nodes in the network, with standard deviations in parentheses.
- Degree-degree correlation – The Pearson correlation of the degree centrality for each ego and its alter. If the correlation is highly positive, then nodes tend to be connected to other nodes that are as connected as they are. If the correlation is negative, it suggests a more hierarchical network in which highly connected nodes are linked to relatively isolated nodes.
- Average clustering coefficient – The clustering coefficient measures how closely each node and its immediate neighbors constitute a complete graph (or a “small world”).

The statistics portrayed in this table suggest some similarities and differences across the two networks. The nodes in the Democratic networks, interestingly, have a somewhat higher degree centrality than those in the Republican network, although that difference is much smaller than the standard deviation for either network.

Table 1

The degree-degree correlations for both networks are negative but essentially identical to each other. The clustering coefficients, meanwhile, are small for both parties, suggesting that very few nodes and their immediate neighbors constitute a “small world” in these networks. However, the figure is higher for the Democratic network, indicating a somewhat less hierarchical world. These measures tend toward a conclusion that the Republican Party is the more hierarchical of the two.

Table 2 and Table 3 list the ten most central 527s in the Republican and Democratic networks, respectively. They are listed in declining order of degree centrality (number of connections). However, two other measures of centrality are listed here, as well: betweenness and Eigenvector. In both tables, the highest score in one measure corresponds to the highest in the other two, giving us greater confidence that we have identified the truly important 527s in each party. These appear to be Republican National Lawyers in the GOP and Environment 2004 among the Democrats, although those groups have close rivals.

Table 2 and Table 3

A final bit of analysis involves collapsing the two-mode datasets into one-mode datasets, focusing on the affiliated organizations within each party. This is done to address the question of what 527s allow a party to do. Projecting a one-mode matrix from a two-mode one does have its drawbacks. The main drawback is that such projection tends to exaggerate clustering (Latapy et al 2008, Nyhan 2009). Thus we do not examine these networks for community structures. Nonetheless, these projections are useful for identifying the critical organizations within each party, understanding how they interact with the aid of 527s, and examining differences between the parties.

As with the two-mode network, we calculated normalized Bonacich alpha power scores and examined their distributions, which can be seen in Figure 6. Again, the Republican nodes seem to have a broader distribution of power. An F-test confirms that the Republican power scores have the higher standard deviation (33.61 compared to the Democrats' 27.97), a difference that is statistically significant ($p \leq .001$).

Figure 6

Table 4 shows the same set of statistics that we saw in Table 1, only for one-mode networks that are collapsed around the affiliated groups. Of note is that the degree centrality of nodes is much higher in the Democratic one-mode network than in the Republican one. Interestingly, the degree-degree correlation is higher for Republicans (.270 compared to .045), suggesting that well-connected nodes are more likely to be connected to similarly connected nodes within the Republican network. Similarly, while the clustering coefficients are high in both networks, it is somewhat higher among Republicans, suggesting that “small worlds” are more common within the Republican network. These findings are somewhat mixed as to which party's network has the more hierarchical structure.

Table 4

We next turn to graphical depictions of these projected one-mode networks. Figure 7 shows the organizations tied to each other through Republican 527s. The nodes are weighted by betweenness centrality, again emphasizing those with key positions to facilitate information and personnel transfers throughout the party network. While there are a great many relatively minor groups, both from the political and business communities, the more central ones are easily identified. The RNC occupies a central role in the network, as do the three most recent Republican presidential administrations. Two private groups, the Club for Growth and the

National Council on Crime and Delinquency, seem to act as a pivots between several other groups. These are all obviously important Republican organizations, and the 527s allow them to coordinate.

Figure 7

The Democratic one-mode network, shown in Figure 8, is also similar to what we might expect to see. The key hiring places within the party network are the DNC and the most recent presidential administrations prior to 2009 (Clinton and Carter). The Dewey Square Group (a prominent political consulting firm) also occupies a key place in the party network, as does the AFL-CIO. The combination of government offices, consultants, and unions is the source of electioneering labor in the Democratic Party and is a fair representation of the party's leadership today.

Figure 8

Discussion

This analysis has demonstrated that 527s are important and central to the broader party networks in the American political system. Through their personnel connections, 527s are far from being fringe groups; they are in a position to facilitate collective action among virtually all key party actors. Parties, after all, are not just a collection of activists, donors, and formal party groups; they are all these actors *coordinating efforts*. It appears from this study that 527s do much to enable this coordination.

This analysis was also able to determine the community structure of the party networks, finding important differences between the parties. While both parties maintain some degree of hierarchy, the preponderance of visual and quantitative evidence supports a conclusion that the

Republican network is the more hierarchical of the two. This is actually consistent with much of the literature on the two parties' organizational styles. It is certainly possible that our finding is a function of a particular time period during which the Democratic Party controlled neither the Congress nor the White House and relied extensively upon 527s to aid in party coordination. However, we might expect the Democrats to be the more hierarchical party under such circumstances; it is somewhat surprising to find these historical party traits holding even at a time when hierarchy would have been so advantageous for the Democrats.

By collapsing the two-mode matrices into one-mode ones, we were able to identify the key actors in each party network and to demonstrate how 527s enable collaboration between them. The resulting images were a stark confirmation of the common images of the two parties, with both dominated by presidential administrations and the formal party groups, but the Republicans also reserving a key place for conservative advocacy groups and the Democrats dominated by labor unions.

One of the surprising findings in our study was the level of bipartisanship in the overall 527 network. These cross-party connections may be only superficial in nature – it is doubtful that there is much strategic coordination between the League of Conservation Voters and the Club for Growth – but there are too many of them to dismiss them as mere noise. This may suggest something inherently different about the people who group together as 527s when compared to those who work within the more traditional party groups.

In the future, we hope to examine the different sorts of networks charted out by different types of employees. For example, technical staffers (fundraisers, human resources personnel, etc.) may produce a more bipartisan network than political staffers. We also hope to examine how these networks change over time. The emergence of a new presidential administration in

2009 and a shift in partisan control of both the Congress and the White House present an exciting opportunity to observe the dynamics of party networks.

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Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics for Two-Mode Partisan 527 Networks

	<u>Republican Network</u>	<u>Democratic Network</u>
Average degree	2.24 (5.20)	2.81 (8.15)
Degree-degree correlation	-.110	-.117
Average Clustering Coefficient	.005	.040

Table 2 - Ten Most Central Republican 527s

<u>Name of 527</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Betweenness</u>	<u>Eigenvector</u>
Republican National Lawyers	50	12841.21	0.156
Republicans Abroad	43	10868.34	0.133
Club for Growth	36	8990.43	0.01
Wishlist	24	6365.40	0.015
GOPAC	22	6290.88	0.008
Softer Voices	20	4885.22	0.007
College Republicans	18	5681.62	0.007
Swiftvets	17	4106.24	0.006
Save American Medicine	16	3794.67	0.006
Republican_Leadership_Council	15	3695.66	0.006

Note: 527s are listed in declining order of degree centrality.

Table 3 - Ten Most Central Democratic 527s

<u>Name of 527</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Betweenness</u>	<u>Eigenvector</u>
Environment 2004	107	51316.78	0.101
Twenty-first Century Democrats	87	41521.34	0.042
League of Conservation Voters	84	40313.37	0.068
Gay Lesbian Victory Fund	77	39648.27	0.029
Voices for Working Families	76	38544.97	0.027
America Votes	68	32123.60	0.064
Grassroots Democrats	46	19610.33	0.027
ACT	42	15976.33	0.032
Sierra Club	40	19893.82	0.007
Planned Parenthood Votes	33	14377.09	0.013

Note: 527s are listed in declining order of degree centrality.

Table 4 - Descriptive Statistics for One-Mode Networks

	<u>Republican Network</u>	<u>Democratic Network</u>
Average degree	30.21 (21.25)	68.05 (54.60)
Degree-degree correlation	.270	.045
Average Clustering Coefficient	.958	.916

Figure 1 -- 527s and Associated Groups

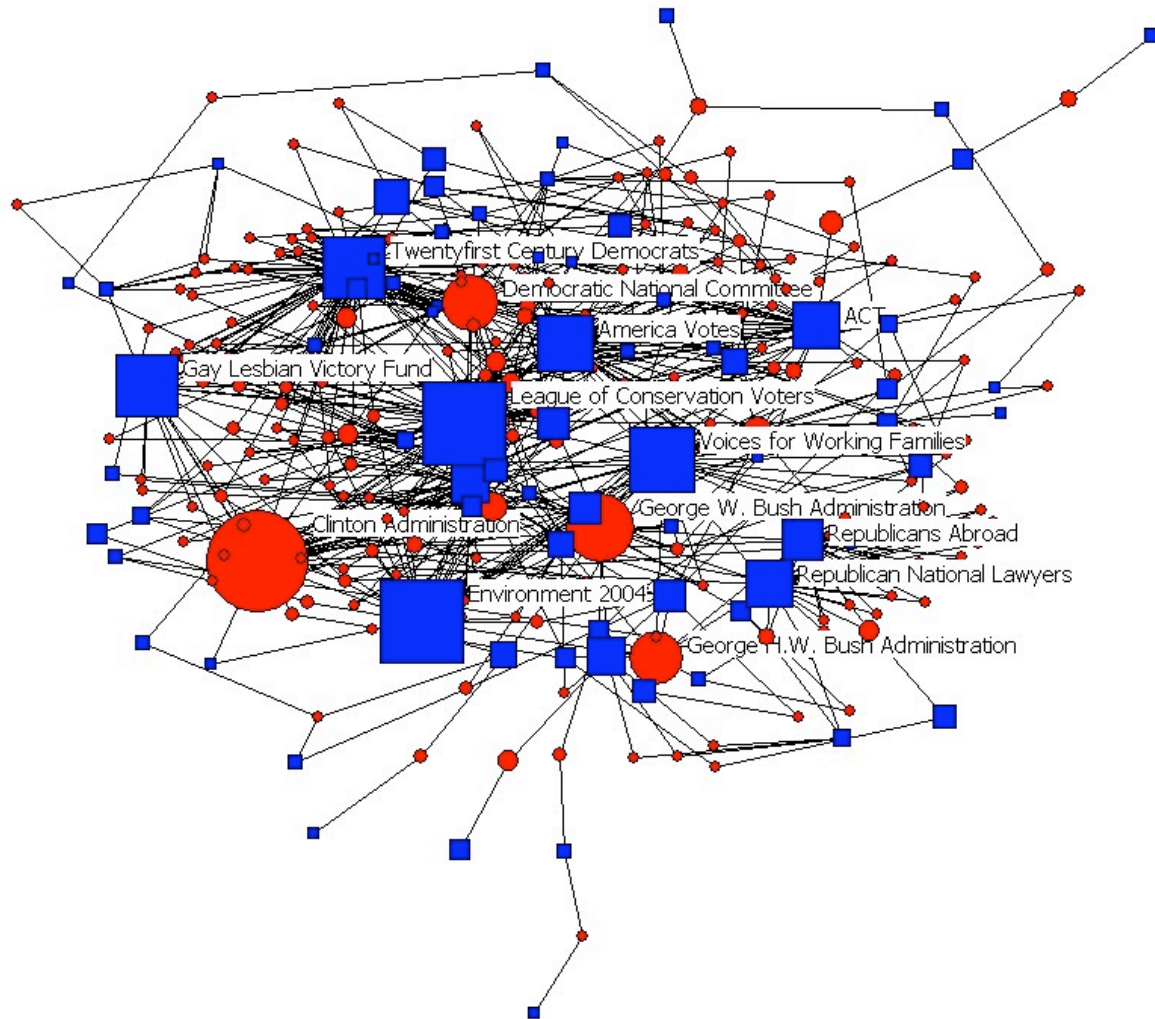
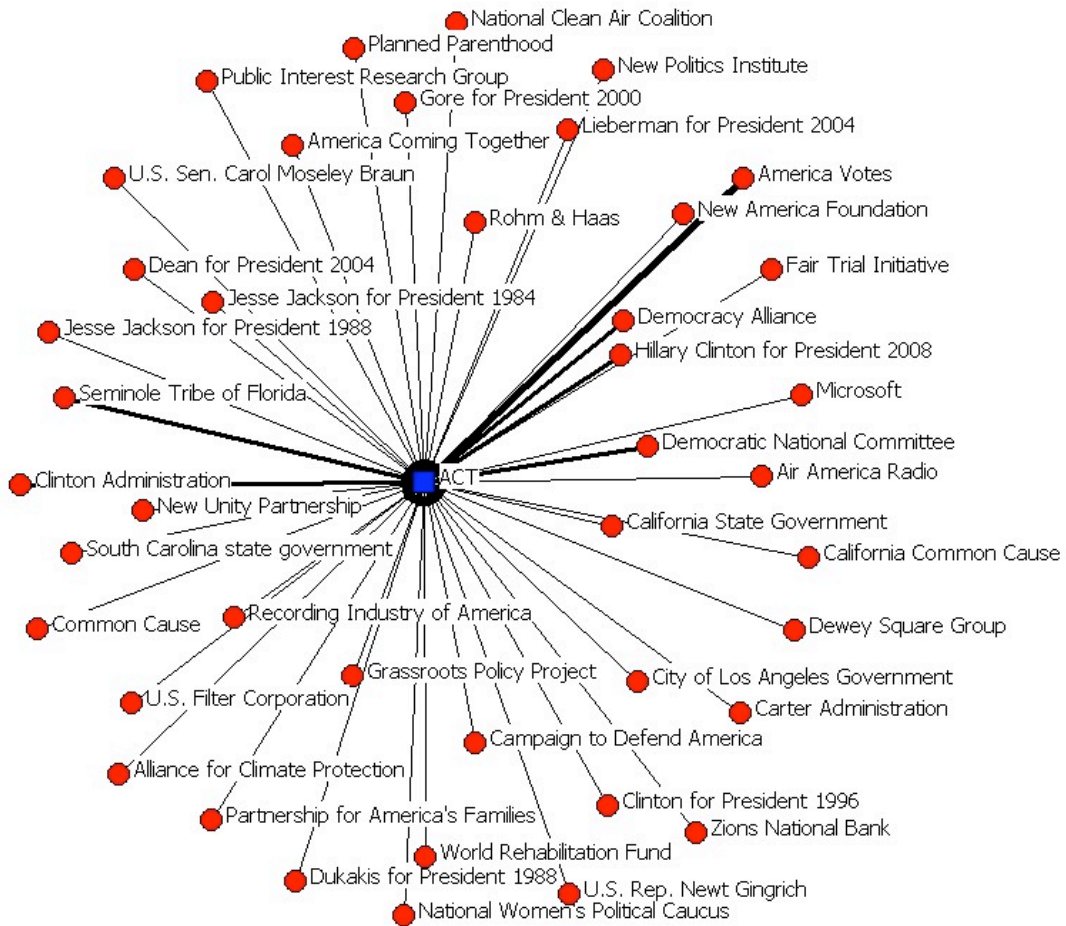


Figure created by NetDraw 2.084. Blue squares indicate 527 organizations; red circles are associated groups. Node sizes are weighted by betweenness centrality. Isolates have been omitted for clarity.

Figure 2 -- Egonet for America Coming Together



Notes: Lines connecting nodes are weighted by number of shared employees.

Figure 3 - Kernel Density Plot of Normalized Bonacich Alpha Scores, Two-Mode Networks

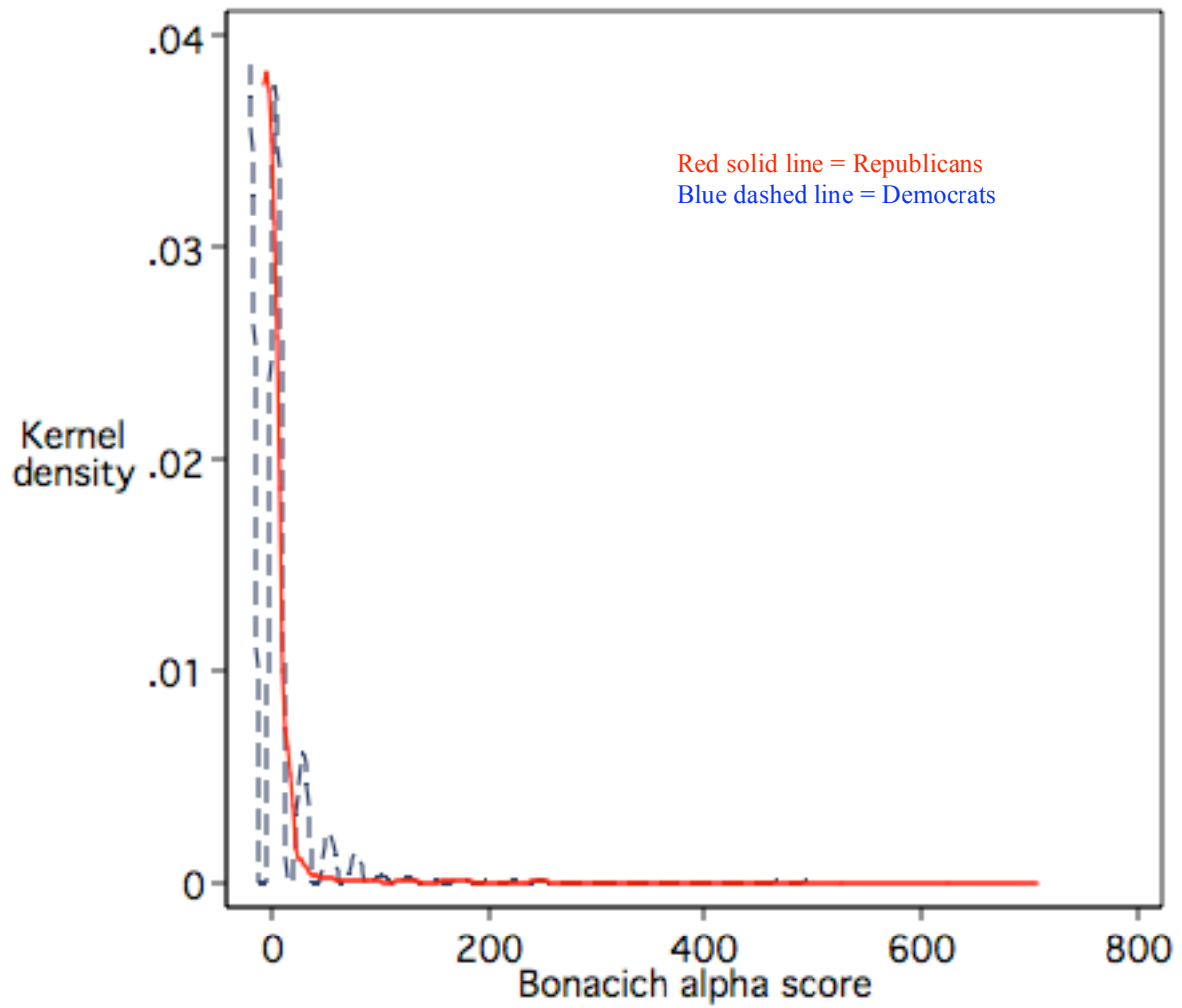
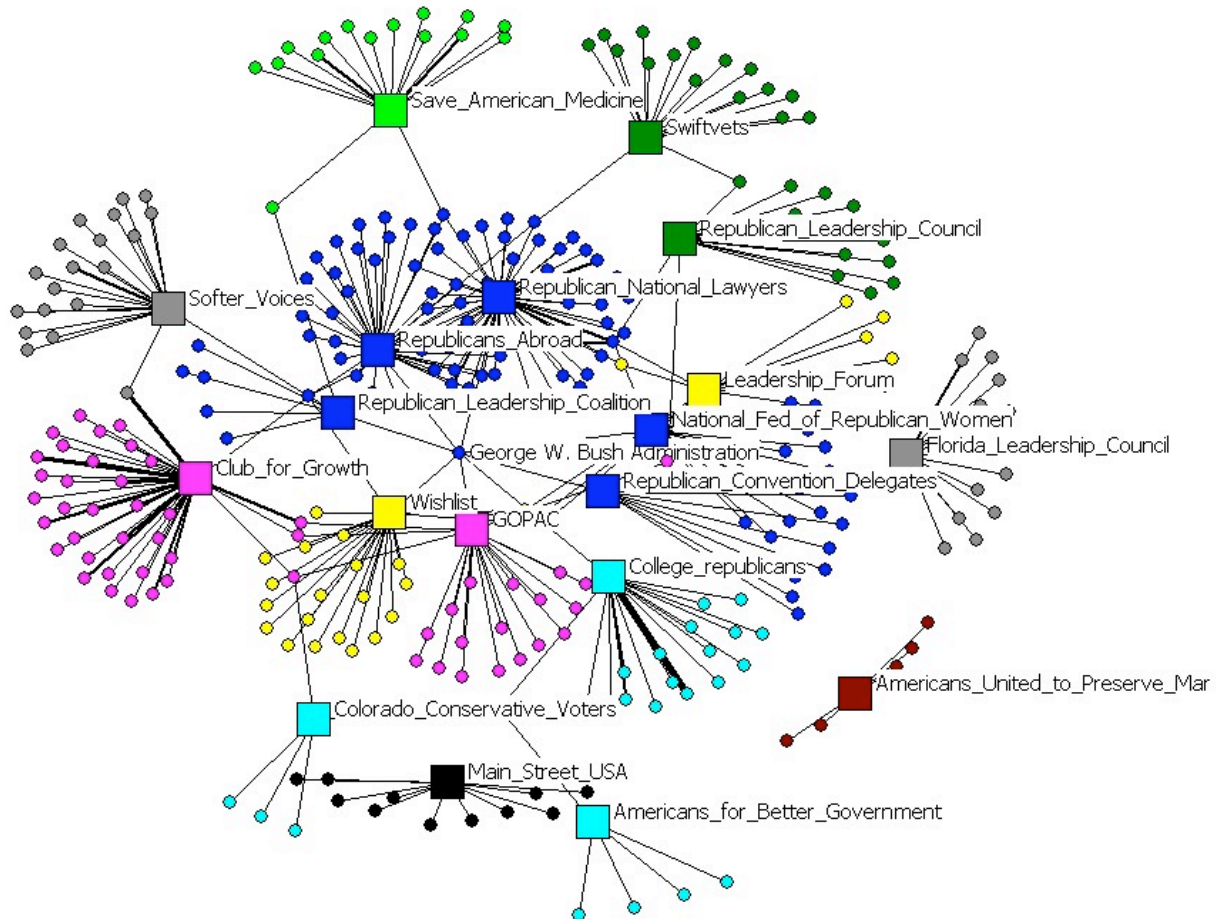
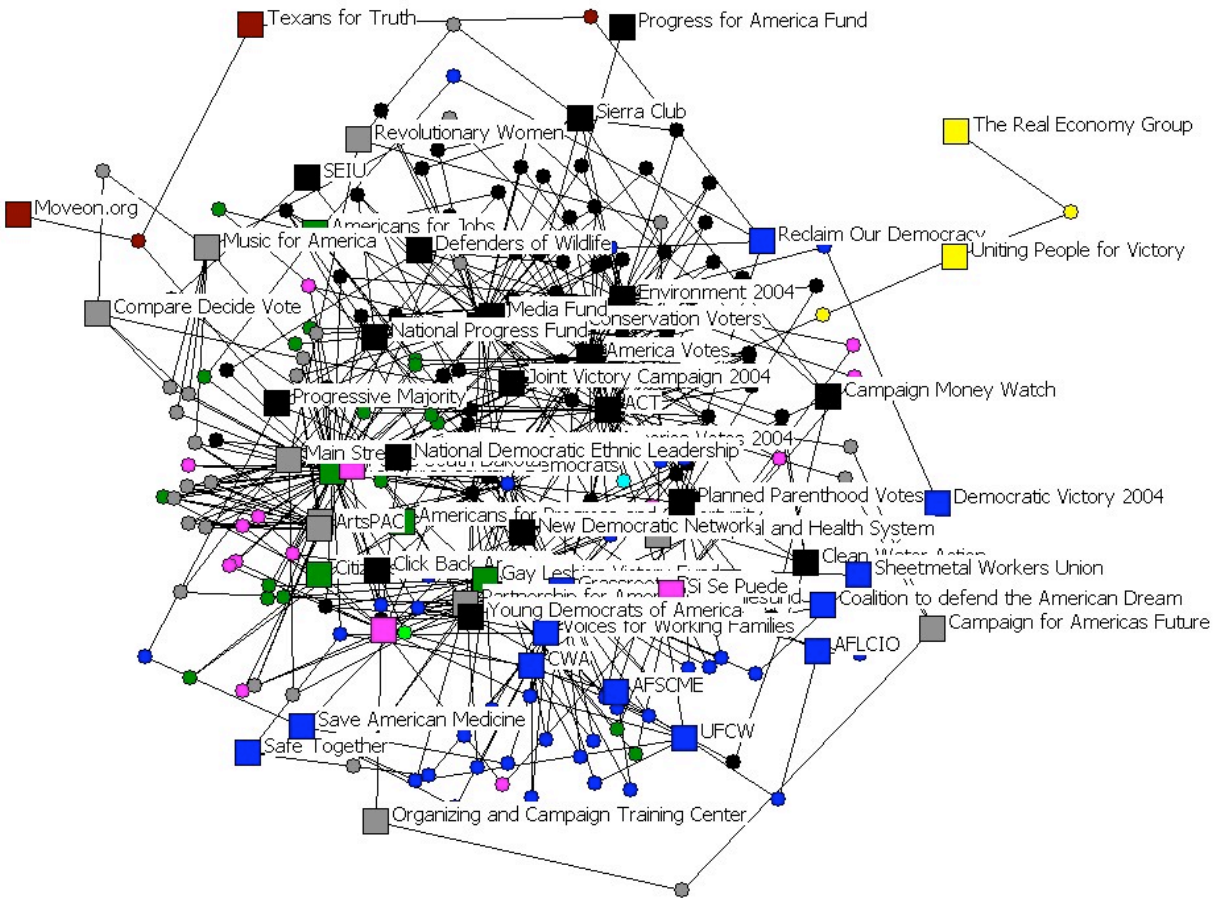


Figure 4 -- Network of Republican-Affiliated 527s



Note: Image created by NetDraw. Squares are 527 organizations, circles are affiliated organizations. 527s are labeled and are color-coded by communities, as detected by the Girvan-Newman algorithm. Isolates have been eliminated for ease of viewing.

Figure 5 — Network of Democratic-Affiliated 527s



Note: Image created by NetDraw. Squares are 527 organizations, circles are affiliated organizations. 527s are labeled and are color-coded by communities, as detected by the Girvan-Newman algorithm. Pendants and isolates have been eliminated for ease of viewing.

Figure 6 – Kernel Density Plot of Normalized Bonacich Alpha Scores, One-Mode Networks

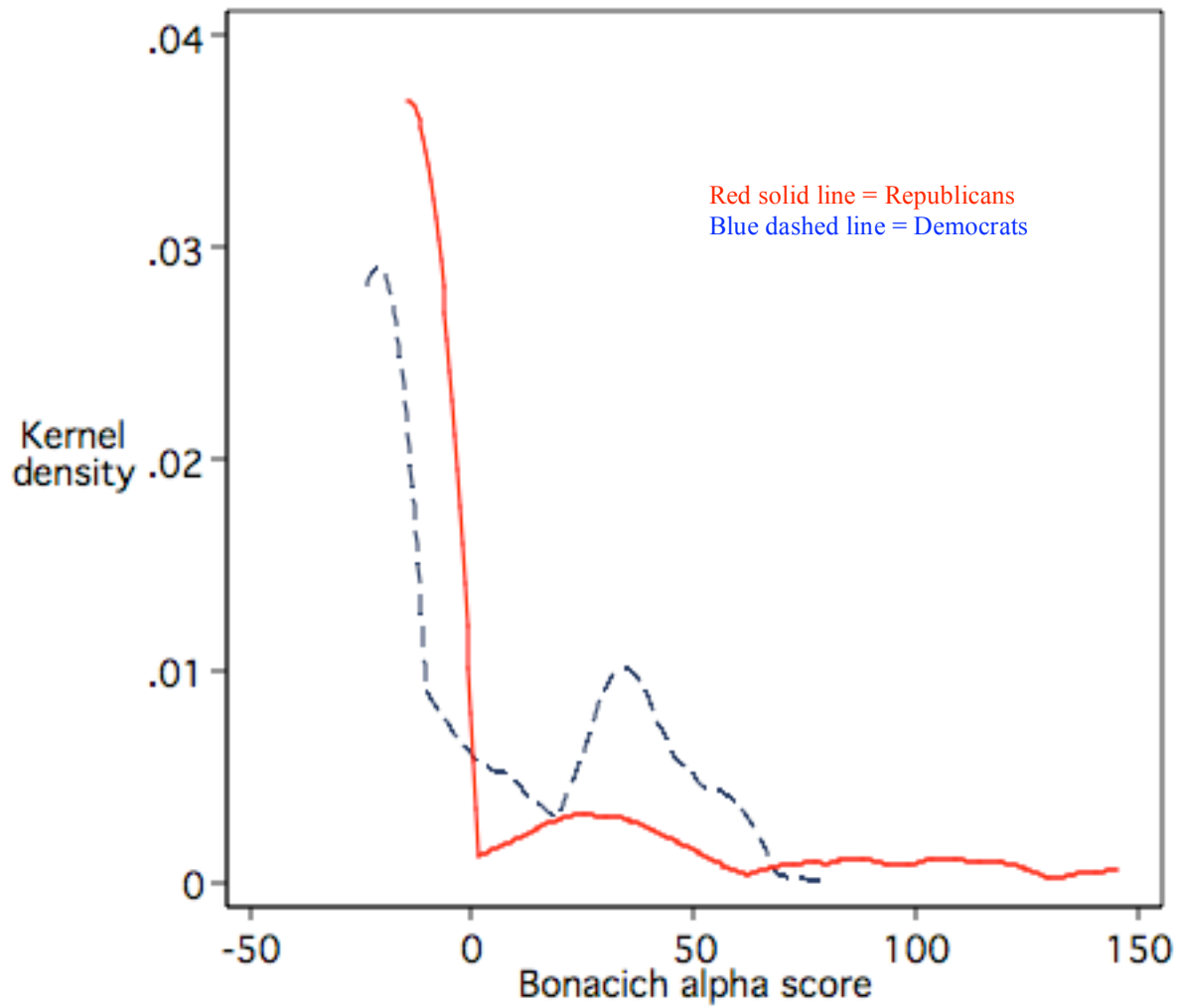


Figure 7 - Organizations Tied by Republican 527s

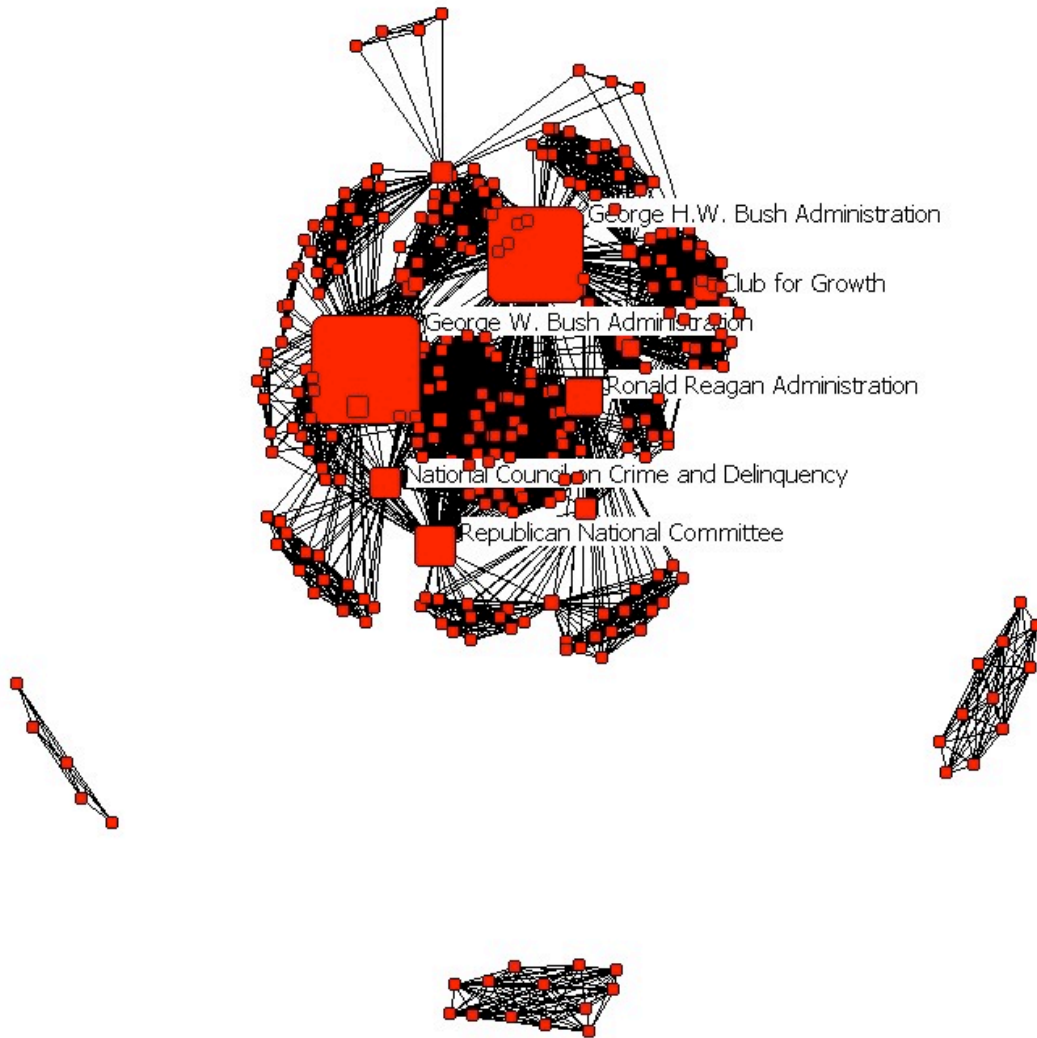


Figure 8 - Organizations Tied by Democratic 527s

