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Networking the Parties:

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Abstract: Parties-as-networks is an emerging approach to understanding American political parties as decentralized, nonhierarchical, fluid systems with porous boundaries among a wide array of actors. Parties-as-networks include interest groups, social movements, media, political consultants, and advocacy organizations, in additional to the usual suspects of elected officials, party officials, and citizen-activists. This approach ameliorates several deficits of the traditional, tripartite view of parties in government, in elections, and as organizations. The authors apply the parties-as-networks approach using data from surveys of delegates at the 2008 Democratic and Republican national conventions. Analysis of delegates' memberships in a wide variety of organizations demonstrates that Democrats have larger networks than do Republicans; Republican networks tend more toward hierarchy than do Democratic networks; and the content of Democratic networks is tilted toward labor and identity organizations, while Republican networks are more populated by civic, religious, and professional organizations. The parties-as-networks view is a potentially revealing source of insight on the dynamic evolution of party coalitions. Theoretically, approaching parties as networks deepens the understanding of how intermediary institutions matter to the functioning of democratic politics.

Keywords: Parties-as-networks; party in government; party in elections; party organization; national party conventions; Democratic Party; Republican Party; interest groups; social movements; social network analysis.

President Bill Clinton's remark that, in electoral politics, "Republicans like to fall in line and Democrats like to fall in love" (Will 2007, p. B7) is oft-quoted because it is highly evocative of the behavior of modern American political parties. While it purports to describe the attitudes of partisans, it captures something essential about the structures of the two parties, as well. For generations, the Democratic Party has been described as the less organized of the two, with interest groups occasionally aligning – but often warring – over the choice of nominees, policy stances, and the direction of the party. The Republican Party, meanwhile, is typically lauded for its internal discipline and top-down command structure. These stereotypes, which posit the existence of uniform "cultural" differences, capture only part of the difference between the parties (Freeman 1986). Is it possible to move beyond aphorisms to *models* that depict – fairly and realistically – the organizational tendencies of the Democratic and Republican parties?

This paper draws upon an emerging consensus that the organizing processes of American political parties are seen more clearly through the lens of social networks analysis. The parties-as-networks perspective extends the traditional view of parties in government, parties in the electorate, and parties as organizations to incorporate the roles of interest groups, social movements, consultants, 527s, and other organizations and activists that help to keep the parties' machinery in motion (or sometimes grind it to a halt). We add to this perspective by arguing that differences between the parties can be understood, in part, according to variations in network size, structure, and content. Using original data from in-person surveys conducted at the 2008 Democratic and Republican National Conventions, we

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show how an analysis of delegates' memberships in a wide variety of political organizations forms the basis of a compelling view of the parties and their differences.

The paper begins by situating the parties-as-networks perspective in the broader literature on party structure and organization. Second, we describe the methods used to measure networks among Democratic and Republican convention delegates in 2008. Third, we systemically compare the networks of the Democratic and Republican parties according to their size, structure, and content. We conclude by arguing that parties-as-network perspective is especially useful for the interpreting the role of external actors within parties. This approach yields significant insights on power, evolution, and culture within the party.

From the Tripartite Party to Parties-as-Networks

Generations of political science students have learned about political parties through the lens that V.O. Key built (1952: 329). His partitioning of parties into the "party in government," "party in the electorate," and "party as organization" captures several fundamental truths about American political parties. First, a party is not a single organization. It is cobbled together and decentralized among its supporters in the electorate, officials elected under the party banner, and employees across 50 states. Second, no one person runs a party. The President may be the titular head of his/her party, though this position does not come with the formal authority to direct all the activities of the party. The party not in control of the presidency has no clearly agreed upon leader, though high-ranking congressional or national committee officials may vie for that role. Third, the bulk of the work of the party is not accomplished through formal authority, but through informal interactions among myriad

players who each struggle to control the direction of the party. Thus, viewed through Key's framework, a party is far removed from an ideal-typical corporate body. Rather, it is a polycephalous creature with ambiguous boundaries.

A classic representation of Key's tripartite structure is given by Sorauf (1980, p. 9). He depicts the party as a simple network of three actors (the party organization, the party in government, and the party in the electorate). This model, represented in Figure 1, highlights the interactive element of Key's view. The parts of the party are arrayed nonhierarchically, with each actor giving and receiving feedback from the others.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Despite the usefulness and intuitive appeal of the tripartite framework, some scholars point to its inadequacies in explaining party behavior. For example, Aldrich (1995) stresses that the tripartite perspective fails to capture the evolution of the parties, especially as exemplified by the rise of self-identified independents in the electorate, candidate-centered campaigns, and parties-in-service to candidates. Similarly, scholars investigating trends in party polarization present a more complex portrait of the party than is offered by the tripartite framework. Rather than seeing cohesion within the parts of the party, they contend that party "elites" (including elected officials, convention delegates, campaign staffers, and opinion leaders) are polarizing along with the most active voters (Abramowitz and Saunders 2005; Hetherington 2001; Jacobson 2004; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2008), while ordinary voters are not polarizing (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2004).

The tripartite model is limiting for several reasons. First, it assumes that the actors in party politics are well defined in advance. It is neglects the possibility that important actors

fade in and out of the party, analogous to what Heclo (1978) describes in his analysis of "issue networks." Second, it assumes that the roles of party actors are stable and uncontested. Thus, it fails to identify the emergence of new tactics and ways of undertaking party politics. Third, it omits ostensibly "nonpartisan" actors, such as interest groups and social movements, from the structure of the party. Many organizations that have legal statuses as nonpartisan, in fact, are aligned with one party and devote considerable resources to advancing (or undermining) that party's fortunes. In order to appreciate more fully either the statics or dynamics of party organization, a new model is needed.

The parties-as-networks perspective has emerged in recent years as an alterative to the tripartite view. Building on work by Schlesinger (1985) to incorporate office seekers and benefit seekers into the definition of a party, it conceives of a party to include its candidates and officeholders, formal party officers, loyal donors, campaign staffers, activists, allied interest groups, social movements, and friendly media outlets. Formal party organizations, including the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee, are prominent members of these networks (Koger, Masket, and Noel 2009), but they are only part. Power in these networks may be centralized or decentralized, featuring actors or factions that simultaneously cooperate to beat the opposing party, compete to affect nominations, and struggle to shape the future of the party (Skinner 2005).

Empirical studies have begun to address basic questions about the structure and functions of party networks. Schwartz's (1990) investigation of Republican elites in the state of Illinois shows that the loose coupling of party networks promotes adaptation needed to achieve goals in an evolving environment. Bernstein (1999) and Doherty (2006) demonstrate that

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political consultants, contrary to popular views (Sabato 1981), are more loyal to their party than to individual candidates and can be thought of as part of an expanded party network. Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller (2008) reveal that an alliance of donors and elite endorsers in each party have controlled presidential nominations since 1980. Masket (2009) uncovers evidence of this sort of coordination inducing legislative polarization, even in an ostensibly weak-party system. Dominguez (2005), meanwhile, finds evidence of a network of donors and endorsers who coordinate to promote some candidates in congressional primaries and prevent others from winning. Strolovitch (2006, 2007) and Frymer (1999) show how interest groups link into parties as representatives who push parties to incorporate interests. Other research adds lobbyists (Koger and Victor 2009), interest group coalitions (Grossman and Dominguez 2009), social movements (Heaney and Rojas 2007), and 527s (Skinner, Masket, and Dulio 2009) to the pantheon of actors in the party networks.

Expanding upon the parties-as-networks tradition, Grossman and Dominguez (2009) and Skinner, Masket, and Dulio (2009) use social network analysis to examine purported differences between the parties. Grossman and Dominguez exploit patterns of donations and endorsements by interest groups to primary candidates to tease out the role of interest groups in the parties. Their findings show the Democratic Party to be no more factious than the Republican Party, with labor unions providing a great deal of organization. Skinner, Masket, and Dulio, meanwhile, study the personnel links between 527 organizations and affiliated political groups, finding the Republican Party to be the more hierarchical of the two. Taken together, the cumulative findings of this research program are pushing the field toward a

consensus that informal networks are at the heart of modern American parties (Bernstein 2005).

A simple image of the party-as-network is depicted in Figure 2. The figure includes elected officials, party officials and organizations, interest groups, social movements, media, consultants, campaign workers, and citizen-activities. In principle, other kinds of actors could be added as well, consistent with the framework. We intend to highlight several points with this graph. First, there is a power structure within the network. Some actors are more central, powerful, and resourceful. However, this power is not derived entirely from formal position, but also from informal interactions. Which actors matter may change over time. Many participants in the network relate on an equal basis. Second, multiple kinds of actors are relevant in this network. Interest groups and social movements may be weighty players in this network, sometimes even more so than elected officials. Third, the boundaries of the party are porous – at the minimum – and arbitrary in many respects. Actors outside the party are connected to those inside the party and may have the potential to influence events inside the party. Some of these connections may be indirect. Over time, these outside actors may come inside, as other insiders occasionally find themselves on the outside. Howard Dean, for example, found himself as a relative outsider in the Democratic Party in 2004, but by 2005 he was Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

If American political parties are well characterized as networks, then it is important to understand better how these networks are constructed. Which are the leading actors? Who is connected to whom? How do the parties differ in the ways that they build their networks? In

the next section, we describe an empirical study that examines the Democratic and Republican

parties using the party-as-networks perspective. While it is impossible to capture all of the

features of the network within one research project, our results illustrate some of the insights

to be gleaned from network analysis.

2008 Convention Surveys

We measured networks among Democratic and Republican party delegates using

surveys conducted on-site at the 2008 Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

National political conventions provide a unique setting within which to assess and compare

partisan behavior (Shafer Forthcoming). Although parties are decentralized and divided into a

multiplicity of loosely-coupled components, conventions bring the various elements of the

party together in one place. Almost all leading party officials are in attendance and delegates

are invited to participate on a largely representative basis, providing the opportunity to study a

wide range of party activists and activities.[1] For these reasons, political scientists have long

turned to convention delegates as an important group to help understand the state of the

parties (e.g., Carsey, Green, Herrera, and Layman 2006; Clark, Elliott, and Roback 1991; Costain

1978; Dodson 1990; Herrera 1993; Jackson, Bigelow, and Green 2007; McGregor 1978; McVeigh

2001; Munger and Blackhurst 1965; Nice 1980, 1983; Pomper 1971; Reiter 1980; Roback 1975a,

1975b; Soule and Clarke 1970; Soule and McGrath 1975; Wolbrecht 2002).

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[1] No doubt, there are many biases in the way in which national convention participants are selected, with the nature of those biases differing between the parties. Yet there is no other gathering which convenes a less biased, more representative cadre of party activists. Thus, we claim that a study of convention delegates provides a good picture of the mobilized party. While party delegates are more ideological extreme than party voters, these activists are particularly important in party decision making (Miller and Jennings 1986).

We surveyed party activists on-site at the conventions for several reasons. First, the surveys conducted in-person at political events tend to secure a high response rates because they confront a relatively captive audience (Fisher, Stanley, Berman, and Neff 2005; Goss 2006; Heaney and Rojas 2007). Second, surveying at an event ensures that respondents were actually in attendance and eliminates the need to obtain reliable lists of delegates from external sources, which may include nonparticipants and/or exclude actual participants. Third, surveying delegates at the conventions ensures that they are relatively more focused on party concerns than might be the case either before or after the convention, when myriad other activities compete for respondents' attention. Fourth, surveys conducted at the conventions are limited to a narrow window of time, reducing the risk that external events unfolding over a campaign influence respondents. Although there are many merits to the alternative methods of Internet, mail, or telephone surveys, the in-person survey compares favorably in obtaining high response rates of the actual participants at the convention while they are paying attention to the party, with minimal problems of time inconsistency.[2]

To conduct the surveys, we hired a team of 21 surveyors at the Democratic National Convention in Denver and 24 surveyors at the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Surveyors were systematically distributed in a representative manner throughout the events and meeting spaces of the conventions, including hotel lobbies, delegation breakfasts, caucus meetings, receptions, and the convention hall. Surveyors approached individuals

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[2] It is impossible to eliminate completely problems such as time inconsistency. For example, it is possible for an event to take place during a convention that alters the way participants view politics, such as a breakthrough speech or a riot outside the hall. We argue that such disruptions are less likely to occur during the narrow window of a convention survey than during the longer intervals often allowed for Internet, mail, and telephone surveys. In the event that disruptions do take place during a convention, it may be possible to model them directly in the analysis of the survey as a kind of quasi-experiment.

wearing convention-credential name badges and invited them to participate in a 15-minute survey. The surveys were six pages in length with a total of 47 questions each.

We obtained surveys of 546 delegates (504 with valid network data) at the Democratic National Convention and 407 delegates (369 with valid network data) at the Republican National Convention.[3] These totals yielded a sample that was 12% of the population of Democratic convention delegates and 17% of the population of Republican convention delegates. Of the delegates approached by our survey team, 72% of those at the Democratic National Convention, and 70% of those at the Republican National Convention, agreed to participate in the survey. Since social network analysis is especially sensitive to differences in the size of networks analyzed (Anderson, Butts, and Carley 1999), we randomly resampled delegates (from our original sample) at the Democratic National Convention to ensure that both networks contained exactly 369 valid network observations. This approach produces equivalent samples of Democratic and Republican delegates, allowing for a direct comparison between the two networks.

To construct the network analyzed here, we use the following open-ended question: "Are you a member of any political organizations, social movement organizations, interest groups, or political advocacy groups?; If yes, which ones?"[4] This question reveals which

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[3] To determine if network data were valid, we assessed whether respondents not listing organizational memberships intended to answer "no" or if they failed to answer the question. If the respondent answered that, "yes", she or he was a member of a political organization, but did not list the name of the organization, then we coded the organization as missing. If the respondent left the space blank while also failing to indicate yes or no, then we looked at other questions on the page to distinguish between missing data and "no" answers. If the respondent skipped only the membership question, then we coded the answer to indicate a "no". However, if she or he skipped other questions on the page, then we coded the answer as missing.

[4] While some people might think of social movements as a product largely of the liberal side of the political spectrum (e.g., civil rights, women's, anti-war), social movements have been increasingly salient to conservatives in recent years. Movements for homeschooling (Stevens 2001), against abortion (Munson 2008),

organizations are the most numerous in the network and which organizations tend to share

members.[5] The overlapping memberships among organizations are the links in the network.

Co-membership demonstrates which organizations are closely tied to one another and which

organizations are not so closely tied to one another. First, sharing members among

organizations may facilitate their collaboration in coalitions and influence their choice of

causes, as common members act as brokers and foster trust between the organizations

(Heaney and Rojas 2008). Second, these network ties facilitate the flow of information – useful

news as well as destructive gossip between the organizations (Burt 2005). Third, as Truman

(1951, pp. 156-187) explains, overlapping memberships deeply affect cohesion within political

organizations. Overlapping memberships may provide a source of stability for the party if, for

example, closely aligned sub-groups within the network support the party leadership's agenda.

Alternatively, cohesive groupings may serve to excite factionalism if they seek to drive

conflicting agendas. These considerations suggest that overlapping organizational

memberships within a party are relevant to understanding its informal political structure.

In the next three sections, we compare the Democratic and Republican Party networks

along three dimensions: size, structure, and content. Comparisons of size reveal differences in

the extent to which party activists turn to political organizations, social movement

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and for Christian values (Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2003) have been especially important. Further, these
communities have not shied away from using the term "movement." For example, the National Right to Life
Committee (the nation's preeminent anti-abortion group) refers to itself as part of the "pro-life movement"
(National Right to Life 2009).

[5] We recorded all organizations that the respondent wrote in answering this question. If the respondent
wrote "Democratic Party" or "Republican Party", then we discarded these responses, since such membership is
self-evident from the individual's selection as a party delegate and is not particularly helpful in assessing networks
within the parties. If the individual noted a particular party club (e.g., Long Beach California Republican Club), we
noted that information.   If we could not read a person's handwriting, we coded that survey as a "missing" case.
We used Internet searches to help identify organizations in ambiguous cases.

organizations, interest groups, or political advocacy groups. Comparisons of structure

illuminate variations in how the parties organize their networks into a broader political system.

Comparisons of content yield insight into which political interests utilize party networks and

shed light on the raw materials used to assemble coalitions within the party.

Network Size

Differences between the parties begin at the level of the individual activist. Some

delegates may have a greater propensity to join political organizations than do other activists.

In our survey, 43.90% of delegates did not have any memberships in political organizations,

27.51% had a membership in one organization, and 23.82% had memberships in more than one

organization. On average, each respondent joined 1.08 organizations. At the maximum, one

respondent indicated that she had memberships in eight political organizations.[6]

The results of our survey indicate that Democratic and Republican delegates join

political organizations at different rates. On average, Democratic delegates join 1.24 political

organizations per person, while Republican delegates join 0.92 political organizations per

person. Thus, Democrats join 34.78% more political organizations per person than do

Republicans. This difference of means is statistically significant (t=3.3896, p=0.001).

The difference between Democratic and Republican delegates' organizational affiliations

remains statistically significant (t=2.9691, p=0.003) in a multivariate model. We estimated a

regression model where the dependent variable is the number of organizations joined by a

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[6] This rate of participation in political organizations (56.10%) is of the same order of magnitude as
reported in other studies of activist participation. For example, Heaney and Rojas (2007, p. 447) find that 63% of
antiwar protesters held some kind of organizational membership.

person and the independent variables are party membership, sex/gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and income. The results, reported in Table 1, reveal that delegates join more political organizations if they are Democrats and if they are women, but no other variables are statistically significant.[7]

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The results in Table 1 demonstrate that Democratic delegates have larger personal networks (referred to as "ego networks") of political organizations than do Republican delegates. This finding – that Democratic delegates are more likely to be members of political organizations – is consistent with the view of the Democratic Party as the party of interest groups (Freeman 1986). This difference may be due to several factors. First, national-level delegate-selection rules matter. Democratic delegate-selection rules ensure that male and female delegates are equivalent in number, while the Republicans have no such rule. As a result, our sample at the DNC is 53.49% women and 46.51% men, while our sample at the RNC is 68.27% men and 31.73% women. Since women are significantly more likely than men to report memberships in political organizations in our sample (t=4.5053, p=0.020), the gender imbalance between parties helps to tip network size to the Democrats.[8] At the same time, gender does not explain the difference entirely. The multivariate model reported in Table 1

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[7] We estimated the regression with a Negative Binomial Model because this is an appropriate model when the dependent variable takes the form of a "count" (Cameron and Trivedi 1998: 70 –72). We imputed missing data using complete case imputation (constrained to the possible intervals of the data) to avoid the selection biases caused by "dropped" observations (Wood, White, Hillsdon, and Carpenter 2005). More sophisticated imputation routines, such as Bayesian multiple imputation, are not required in this case because missing cases are a relatively small percentage of the sample (King, Honaker, Joseph, and Scheve 2001).

[8] Note that this finding is a departure from some previous studies which show that men are more active participants than women in political organizations. See, for example, Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995, p. 225, Figure 8.4).

shows that both gender and party are significant predictors of membership, thus indicating that being Democratic still matters, even after controlling for gender.

Second, state-level delegate-selection rules matter (Carsey, Green, Herrera, and Layman 2006). While organized interests play a key role in delegate selection in both parties, they play a relatively more extensive role within the Democratic Party than within the Republican Party (Shafer 1988, pp. 108-147). More interest-group recruitment of delegates at the DNC thus yields more interest-linked delegates in the Democratic Party.

Third, opportunities matter. While conservative-leaning citizens advocacy organizations have been on the rise in recent years, liberal-leaning citizens advocacy organizations still greatly outnumber them (Berry 1999). Thus, Democrats have more chances to join organizations that support their causes, increasing the average number of organizations joined by Democratic delegates.

These three observations highlight that there is some circularity in the party-group joining process. Our findings show that Democrats join more political organizations than do Republicans. At the same time, the Democratic Party does more to encourage members who are part of groups to become delegates. In general, there are more opportunities of this type for liberals than for conservatives. To some extent, then, interest group participation is the way that Democrats "fall in line" within their party.

Despite the fact that Democrats report a greater number of memberships in political organizations, we do not claim that Democrats are, in general, "more networked" than are Republicans. Rather, our result shows that Democrats are more likely to participate in a particular network – the network of formal political organizations – than are Republicans.

Indeed, Republicans may participate in other kinds of politically relevant networks to a greater degree than do Democrats. For example, our survey showed that Republicans attend religious services with a significantly greater frequency than do Democrats, with 47.14% of Republicans attending services every week, and only 21.68% of Democrats attending services that often (t=7.5367, p=0.000). Clearly, some (if not many) individuals attending worship services on a regular basis are likely to build networks that are politically relevant through these events (Wilcox 2005). One might even imagine churches to be political organizations that should be listed in response to our question. In fact, less than one half of one percent of our respondents listed a church in response to our open-ended question, as churches are not explicitly political organizations (in most cases). Churches were listed in response to our question three times by Republicans (a Presbyterian church, a Southern Baptist church, and one unspecified local church), while no Democratic respondent listed any church as a political organization. Thus, to understand religious networks more completely, we would have had to ask an additional question focused on identifying specific houses of worship and/or denominational affiliations. Given the data that we actually collected, we interpret our network analysis as pertaining to one very important kind of network among delegates but, still, only one kind of network.[9]

Regardless of the explanation for why Democrats are more closely connected with political organizations than are Republicans, the differences between Democrats and Republicans at the ego-network level matter at the whole-network level. Since each Democrat

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[9] Network analysts stress that networks are "multiplex", which means that actors have many kinds of overlapping network ties (Gould 1991). Actors may have networks pertaining to friendship, resource exchange, kinship, co-membership, and so on. Network studies always focus on some subset of these ties which the researchers judge to be important. However, it is impossible (and undesirable) to attempt to measure all possible network ties in a single study.

joins more organizations, on average, than each Republican, the overall Democratic network is

larger than the Republican network. The main component (plus one organization) of the

combined Democratic-Republican network is depicted graphically in Figure 3.[10] Blue circles

represent organizations mentioned by Democratic delegates, red squares represent

organizations mentioned by Republican delegates, and purple triangles represent organizations

mentioned at both conventions. The size of the shapes is scaled according to the number of

mentions that they received in both networks, with the thickness of the links between the

organizations determined by the number of delegates with co-memberships in these

organizations.[11] While any one particular link in this network may simply be a random

occurrence, we present this diagram because we believe that the overall pattern of connections

is revealing of the nature of linkages among organizations within and between the parties.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

Immediately apparent from the graph in Figure 3 is that organizations connected with

the Democratic Party outnumber those connected with the Republican Party, with 238

organizations affiliating only with the Democratic Party, 184 organizations affiliating only with

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[10] The main component of a network is the largest, fully connected part of a network (J. Scott 2000). Consider that a single network may be made up of several components, some of which contain many nodes, others of which contain few nodes. The advantage of examining only the main component in a graph is that it allows the viewer to see the "main action" of the network without including minor actors. While the mathematical analysis of the network should include all nodes, it may be illustrative to only present the main component in a diagram. In this case, we have presented the main component of the network plus the Campaign for Liberty, since this is a relevant organization, even though it is not in the main component of the network.

[11] The spring-embedding algorithm in Netdraw 2.046 was used to position organizations close to one another in the network if they have a similar pattern of memberships among delegates (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2009).

the Republican Party, and 12 organizations mentioned by delegates at both conventions.[12] The

Democrats' numerical advantage exists both because each individual joins more organizations,

on average, and because their joining is dispersed more widely among different organizations

rather than being concentrated on a few peak organizations, as is the case in the Republican

region of the network.

Network Structure

Democrats and Republicans differ not only in the size of their networks, but in the way

that they organize their networks. We expected that Republican networks would exhibit a

more hierarchical pattern, while Democratic networks would exhibit a more egalitarian pattern.

These expectations derive from historical analyses of party behavior. For example, Freeman

(1986) notes that Democratic Conventions have seen numerous fights over credentials and

legitimacy, while the Republicans usually rally around their nominee. Similarly, Shafer (1986)

observes that Democratic delegates are more given to flamboyant displays of individualism,

with Republicans preferring deference to authority and reliance on formal channels of

communication.

Our analysis of hierarchy refers to a particular organization of the network structure.

Specifically, it is the tendency for overlapping memberships to be organized into levels such

that many people are members of one peak organization (or a series of peak organizations), but

not co-members of the same secondary organizations (Morris 2000; Siegel 2009). Consistent

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[12] Not all of these organizations are visible in the graph because we have reported only the "main component" of the graph. A complete representative of the graph – minor components and isolates included – is available from the authors upon request.

with W. Scott (1998, p. 91) and others who study organizations as "open systems," our concept of hierarchy is one based on "clustering and levels."

When examining the organizational structures of networks empirically, we are not looking for purely hierarchical organizations. Indeed, the very concept of "network" is built, at its core, on a rejection of strict hierarchies (Powell 1990). Nonetheless, we can talk about a network having an organizational structure that is "more hierarchical" or "less hierarchical."

Returning to Figure 3, a visual inspection of the graph suggests a difference between the organizational logics in the Democratic and Republican regions of the graph. In the Democratic region of the graph, egalitarian ties appear more prevalent. No one actor dominates the network too much, with peers connecting with each other widely across the graph. Organizations appear to connect with one another without needing to channel those contacts through a broker.

The Republican region of the network, in contrast, displays a stronger hierarchical tendency. The National Federation of Republican Women, the National Rifle Association, the National Right to Life Committee, and the Republican National Committee are relatively dominant actors in the network. They garner a disproportionate share of mentions from the delegates, with numerous actors connected to the network only through these leading organizations. This hierarchical pattern is replicated among smaller, less dominant actors, such as the Heritage Foundation and Concerned Women for America, which serve as bridges for a variety of less-commonly-mentioned organizations.

Differences in the degree of hierarchy between the Democratic and Republican networks can be understood, in part, by considering the leading organizations in both

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networks. Table 2 reports the top 11 organizations in the Democratic network and Table 3

reports the top 10 organizations in the Republican network, in terms of the number of times

the organizations were cited by delegates. As is evident in Table 2, no single organization

dominates the Democratic list, as the leading five organizations are roughly at parity with one

another. In contrast, Table 3 reveals that the National Federation of Republican Women not

only dominates the Republican network, but bests any Democratic organization in absolute

terms. Similarly, the Republicans' second-ranked National Rifle Association draws more

support than any single organization in the Democratic network. We visualize this difference in

Figure 4, which shows the sharp falloff in citations in the Republican network relative to the

Democratic network. These findings are especially notable given that Republicans have an

overall lower propensity to join organizations than do the Democrats.   Republicans may be less

likely to join political organizations but, when they do so, they are drawn to a small number of

leading organizations.

INSERT TABLE 2, TABLE 3, AND FIGURE 4 HERE

Variations in the tendencies toward hierarchy may make a difference in which

organizations are able to access the center of the network. For example, two of the four

organizations at the center of the Democratic network – MoveOn and the Stonewall Democrats

– are relative upstarts, having been founded as recently as 1998. In contrast, all of the leading

four organizations in the Republican network had at least 35 years of history at the time of the

survey in 2008. The fifth- and sixth-ranked organizations in the Republican network – the

Young Republicans of America and the Campaign for Liberty – are both recent inventions.

However, it is worth noting that the Campaign for Liberty – an organization founded by

18

Republican Congressman Ron Paul to advance his agenda – is frozen out of the main component of the Republican network.[13] This finding illustrates how party challengers are very much treated as outsiders by the Republican Party.[14]

To formalize our analysis of hierarchy, we conducted a statistical test of the hierarchical tendencies of the Democratic and Republican networks. Given that "network degree" is the number of ties an organization has to other organizations, we define a "hierarchical tendency" of a network to exist when organizations with "high degree" (lots of network ties) are likely to connect with organizations of "low degree" (few network ties), but not with other organizations of equivalent degree. In contrast, a network has more ties among equals when organizations connect with organizations of equivalent degree. This measure reflects our notion of hierarchical networks as more divided into levels than focused on ties among peers. The statistical measure that we use is degree-degree correlation, in which the degree of each actor is compared to the degree of the other actors to which it is tied (see Han, Qian, and Liu 2009 for explication and justification). A correlation of positive one would indicate a network among perfect equals (every actor has an equal degree), where a correlation of negative one would indicate a network of extreme inequality (the highest degree actor is tied only to the smallest actors). Thus, if a correlation is relatively closer to positive one, when we can say that a network is comparatively more egalitarian, while being closer to negative one makes it comparatively more hierarchical.

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[13] In general, we have not included organizations outside the main component of the network in Figure 3. However, we have done so in the case of the Campaign for Liberty because it was cited by eight delegates, despite its disconnected status.

[14] See Koger, Masket, and Noel (2009) for a similar finding regarding Howard Dean vis-à-vis the Democratic Party in 2004.

Analysis of the Democratic network yielded a degree-degree correlation of 0.353, while the Republican network yielded a 0.101 correlation. Thus, the Democratic network displays a significantly greater tendency toward connections among equals, while the Republican network displays a significantly more hierarchical tendency (t= 3.4229, p=0.001). When considering only the main component (which is depicted in Figure 3), the degree-degree correlation is 0.170 for the Democrats and -0.055 for the Republicans. This analysis also supports the expectation that the Republican network is significantly more hierarchical (t=2.4648, p=0.014).

While hierarchy is only one characteristic of network structure, it is an important one in this context. A more hierarchical structure may be superior for achieving coordination, unity, and dissemination of information. A more egalitarian structure, in contrast, is prone to factionalism and the incorporation of diverse points of view.

Examination of differences in their networks yields some insights into the comparatively disciplined behavior within the Republican Party and the comparatively factional behavior within the Democratic Party. Within the Democratic Party there is no clear center of power but, rather, a few close clusters of actors. The Young Democrats and the College Democrats lead a cadre of young delegates on the far left part of the network. NARAL Pro-Choice America and the Human Rights Campaign are closely connected toward the center of the Democratic network. MoveOn and the Progressive Democrats of America are located proximate to important advocacy groups such as Amnesty International, the National Alliance for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Sierra Club. Somewhat surprisingly, organized labor operates on the periphery of the network, with Big Labor (AFL-CIO, Change to Win) in the north central region, and organizations such as National Education Association occupying the south

left. The marginality of labor indicates that labor delegates tend to work with their unions but are less inclined to join other major advocacy organizations than are other delegates.   This multi-cephalous pattern suggests a partial explanation for why Democrats are less likely than Republicans to marshal interest groups successfully on behalf of party-driven causes. It further hints at the possibility that information may diffuse slowly or ineffectively through the Democratic network.

Within the Republican Party, the centers of power are with a few key organizations. The National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW), especially, is critical to guiding women's participation within the Republican Party. The National Rifle Association and the National Right to Life Committee are unambiguously the leading interest groups. Formal party organizations, such as NFRW, the Republican National Committee, and the Young Republicans have a comparatively stronger position within the Republican Network than comparable organizations have within the Democratic network. These patterns offer a partial explanation for why Republicans are more likely than Democrats to use their allied organizations for a clear political advantage. It also provides a basis for believing that information flows more rapidly and effectively within the Republican Party than within the Democratic Party.

Network Content

Networks are not mechanistic structures that dictate political outcomes. Rather, networks are frameworks within which strategic political actors pursue their objectives. Understanding the role of networks, thus, requires knowing something about who those actors are. What are their origins? What are their organizational forms? What are their goals? To

gain such an appreciation, this section discusses the similarities and differences of the

organizations in these networks.

The most obvious difference in the content between the two parties' networks is that

they do not share many actors in common. The two networks contain 436 organizations in

total, yet only share 12 organizations in common – a mere 2.75%. Five of these organizations

were listed by respondents as generic organizational types (e.g., arts, education), leaving only

seven specific organizations in common, which are reported in Table 4.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

The seven overlapping organizations listed in Table 4 are revealing of the parties'

coalitions. Each of these organizations is at least 47 years old, with the mean age being 102

years at the time of the survey in 2008. They did not emerge amid the political conflicts of the

current era. Further, the degree of overlap is slight in each case. The National Rifle Association

drew citations from delegates at both conventions, but 22 of its 23 citations came from

Republicans. Similarly, 7 of the 9 citations of the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People came from Democrats. Thus, even among these cross-party organizations there

is relatively little bipartisanship. Thus, part of the explanation for why the parties have become

increasingly polarized in recent years may be the lack of cross-cutting political organizations

that have the potential to force the parties to converge on key issues (cf. Mutz 2002). If there

were organizations with strong ties to both parties, then it is possible that these organizations

could act as brokers on difficult policy issues. Such brokerage might occur informally as well.

For example, the more that Democrats and Republicans inhabited the same organizations, the

greater basis would exist for shared values and common understanding. But, given the stark

division in the network between the parties, promises of cooperation appear quite bleak. This

point is the corollary of Truman's (1951) argument discussed above: where there are few

overlapping memberships, there is little basis for cohesion.

Beyond the identities of specific organizations in these networks, an analysis of the

types of organizations in the networks is revealing of the parties' similarities and differences.

We coded organizations into 13 different organizational types – reported in Table 5 – while

allowing individual organizations to be coded under multiple types. The most apparent

similarity is that both networks display the actor heterogeneity postulated by the parties-as-

networks view. Both networks feature party auxiliary organizations (e.g., College Democrats,

National Federation of Republican Women), traditional interest groups (e.g., National Rifle

Association, NARAL Pro-Choice America), professional associations (e.g., National Association of

Realtors, American Medical Association), civic associations (e.g., Rotary International, the Boy

Scouts of America), and a variety of other organizational types. At least some (if not all) of

these organizations are likely to be important to party decision making because they command

the loyalties of key activists within the parties. The tripartite view of parties largely ignores

these party participants, while the parties-as-networks view embraces them as central to the

parties' informal organizational structures.

Considering the differences, we found that the Democratic network is significantly more

likely than the Republican network to contain organizations promoting organized labor

(t=3.5633, p=0.000) or representing groups based on their social identities (e.g., gender,

race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age; t=2.0923, p=0.037). Further, the results show that the

Republican network is more likely to include civic associations (t=3.1244, p=0.002), religious

organizations (t=3.4652, p=0.001), and professional associations (t=2.5622, p=0.011) than is the

Democratic network. Neither network has a statistically significant advantage in drawing

support from organizations designed to support parties, campaigns, ideological points of view,

the environment, single-issues, veterans, students or youth, or governmental bodies (e.g., city

parks commission).

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Analysis of the content of the parties' networks may suggest where old conflicts

between the parties may come to rest, while new disagreements may arise. For example,

parity between Democrats and Republicans in environmental memberships may signal

potential for collaboration on environmental issues. However, differences between the parties

in the prevalence of religiously-focused organizations may be a harbinger of continued, values-

driven strife.

Conclusion

The parties-as-networks framework differs most starkly from the tripartite perspective

in that it envisions a significantly greater role for external actors – interest groups, social

movements, media, political consultants, and advocacy organizations – than does the tripartite

view. If these actors are truly important to the governance of parties, then we need to know

more about how they interact within the party system. This paper adds to our understanding

of parties not only by highlighting the relevance of external actors, but also my modeling how

they relate to the party vis-à-vis party organizations. Although the Democratic Party is

commonly thought of as the party of interest groups, such organizations clearly play a role in both parties. Our network analysis yields important insight on how exactly that happens.

First, network analysis exposes the informal centers of power of the party. Our analysis reveals that any investigation of the interest group-party ties with the Republican Party ought to begin with the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC). The NRA is solidly connected with other major Republican organizations, including NRLC, the National Federation of Republican Women, the Republican National Committee, and smaller organizations active in Republican politics. At the same time, it has connections with non-partisan and liberal organizations, such as Rotary International, the AARP, the Sierra Club, the American Medical Association, and Progressive Democrats of America. NRA's political power appears, then, to come not only from its important position among Republicans, but also from its cross linkages with other organizations at a time when such overlapping memberships are uncommon. In contrast, NRLC is more deeply embedded within the Republican network than the NRA, and is only connected with other Republican interests. These observations suggest that these two conservative interest groups are likely to garner different patterns of support within the party, potentially affecting the ways in which they influence the party agenda.

Second, systematic analysis of external actors within the party generates an additional dimension for analyzing party differences. Political scientists have long observed differences in the "culture" of the parties. For example, they have noted that Republicans tend 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). More recently,

differences between the parties have been shown to be related to the genetic characteristics of their members (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005; Settle, Dawes, and Fowler 2009; McFarland, Ageyev, and Hinton 1995; Sales and Friend 1973; Kemmelmeier 2004). The parties-as-networks approach offers a framework for interpreting variations in culture in terms other than purely essential differences at the individual or group level, but through the interactions and practices of party members (cf. Wedeen 2002).

Third, network analysis provides a window into the evolution of the party. Although we do not have access to visualizations of party networks from prior conventions, organizational age yields partial insights on evolution. This kind of change is most clearly evident within the Democratic network. The movement of MoveOn.org and Stonewall Democrats to the center of the network only ten years after their foundings reflects important evolution. MoveOn's rise is especially notable, given its Internet origins and informal organizational structure – it represents the "netroots" as a new kind of constituency within the Democratic Party (Chadwick 2007). A slightly different interpretation might be given to the rise of Stonewall Democrats, founded in 1998 by a high-ranking party-insider, Congressman Barney Frank. It suggests that lesbian and gay interests – which have long struggled for a meaningful voice within the party – today find themselves at least at a position of parity with many other Democratic interests.

Insight on evolution may also be gained from which organizations are not central to the network. We were stunned not to see the National Organization for Women (NOW) place highly among Democratic interest groups (in fact, only one delegate mentioned it).[15] Such a

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[15] The failure to identify many NOW activists was not the fault of the research design. Over half of our sample came from female delegates. Moreover, we conducted surveys at meetings of the women's caucus.

finding would have been inconceivable in the 1970s and 1980s when NOW was a major mover

in the Democratic agenda (Barakso 2004). This result may reflect the desire of many

contemporary women activists to find ways beyond traditional feminism of representing

women *as women* (Goss and Heaney 2009). Thinking about the strategic place of interest

groups within parties – groups' goals and how those relate to the parties or not – is essential to

understanding party evolution over time (Clemens 1997; Heaney Forthcoming).

More research is needed to understand party network evolution more thoroughly.

Including network-oriented questions in quadrennial surveys of delegates would be a first step

in this direction. It is important to sort between the elements of party network structure that

are fairly stable and those that vary depending on the candidate offered by the party in a

particular election. For example, how would the Republican network change if the party

nominated Mike Huckabee as its candidate in 2012? Would religious organizations become

more central to the Republican network? How much more central? Replication of our analysis

at future conventions could yield insight into these kinds of questions.

The tripartite view of parties offered by Key (1952) is not so much wrong as it is

incomplete. By neglecting the informal roles of actors formally external to parties, the tripartite

perspective neglects an important aspect of representation in American politics. Parties,

interest groups, social movements, and other political organizations interact within the spaces

created by parties to attempt to advance issues, interests, and personalities. The parties-as-

networks framework helps to generate a more coherent view of interaction as these actors co-

evolve with one another, adapting to changing demands for representation across varied

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Eleven delegates listed memberships in NARAL Pro-Choice America and six listed Planned Parenthood, so the
opportunity to list women's organizations was certainly there.

dimensions (e.g., interest, issue, ideology, race, class, gender, geography, industry). Knowledge

of the differences between the parties in the size, structure, and content of their networks

provides a step toward fuller understanding of the evolving representative functions of

American political parties.

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Figure 1. The Three-Part Political Party

Party Organization

Party in Government

Party Committees, Officials, Workers

Party Candidates for Public Office and State, Local, and National Officeholders

Adapted from Sorauf (1980, p. 8)

Voters with Loyalty to, Identification with Party

Party in the Electorate

Figure 2. The Party as Network

Elected officials

Party officials and organizations

Interest groups, movements, media

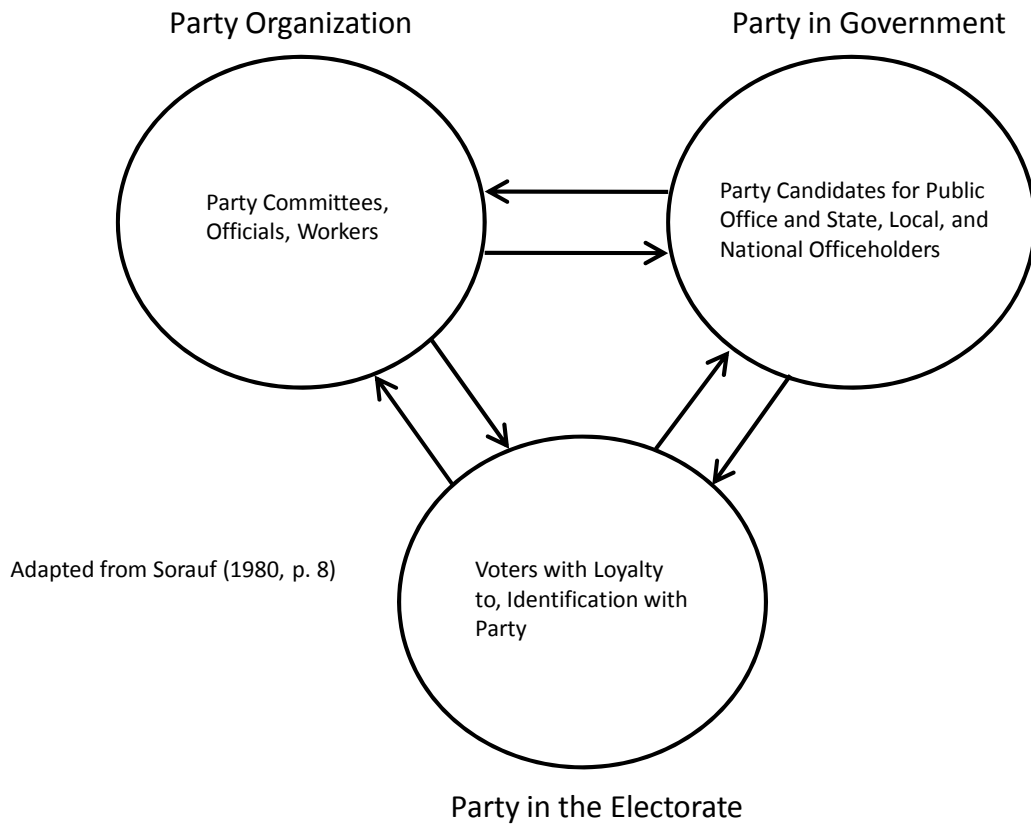Consultants, campaign workers

Citizen-activists
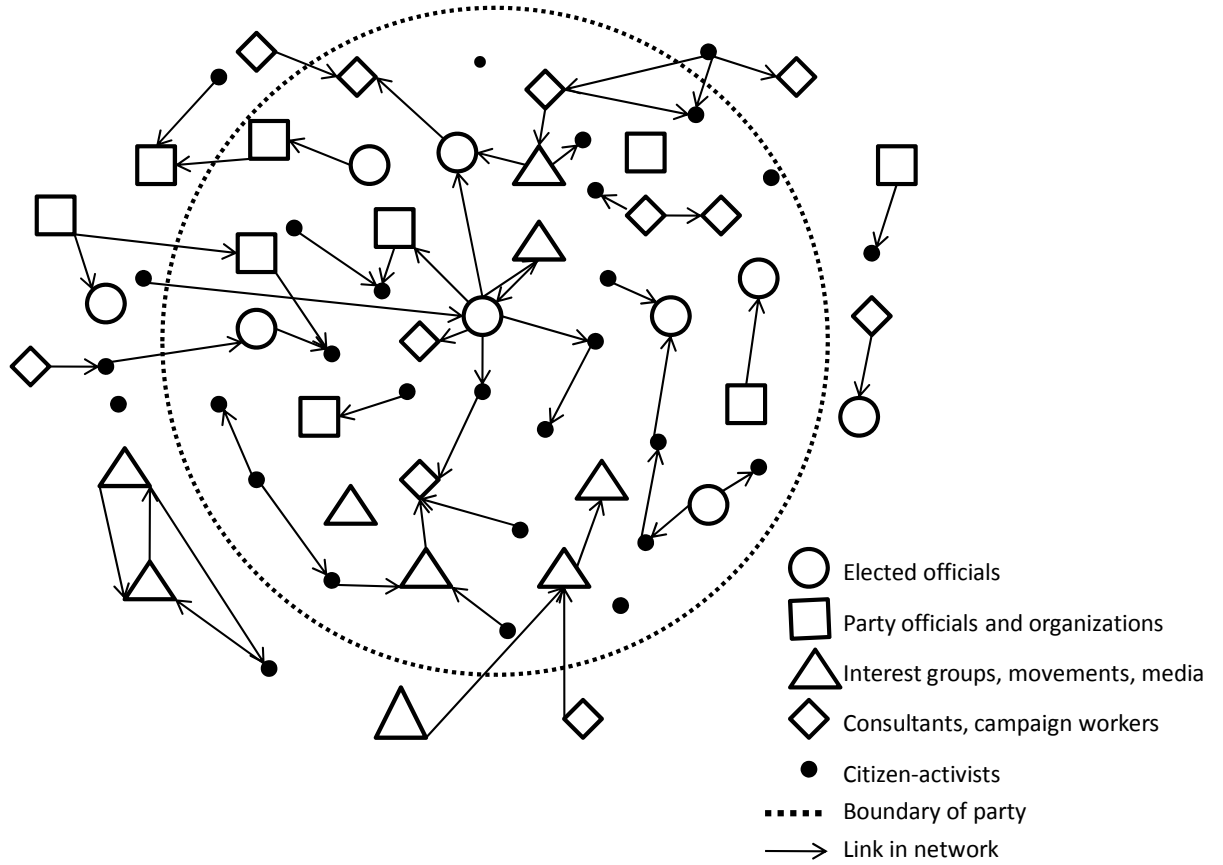
Boundary of party

Link in network

Table 1. Determinants of Delegates' Propensities to Join Political Organizations
Negative Binomial Estimation with Complete Case Imputation

Dependent Variable	Regression Results			Descriptive Statistics		
Number of Memberships in Political Organizations	*Coefficient*	*Std. Err.*	*Test Statistic*	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*	*Percent Imputed*
Party = Democratic	0.2889	.0973	**2.97****	0.5000	0.5003	0.00%
Sex/Gender = Woman	0.2224	.0952	**2.33***	0.4246	0.4807	7.76%
Age in Years	0.0040	.0033	1.22	49.3167	14.7136	10.39%
Race/Ethnicity						
Native American/Indian	-0.0230	.1905	-0.12	0.0889	0.2836	8.08%
White/Caucasian	0.1203	.1508	0.80	0.7406	0.4256	8.08%
Black/African American	-0.2250	.2017	-1.12	0.1054	0.2978	8.08%
Latino/Hispanic	-0.1384	.1706	-0.81	0.1378	0.3437	8.08%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0060	.2110	0.03	0.0778	0.2671	8.08%
Level of Education	-0.0098	.0364	-0.27	4.7133	1.3232	10.28%
Level of Income	-0.0451	.0246	-1.83	5.1684	2.0746	16.26%
Constant	-0.1564	.2566	-0.61			
Dependent variable (μ,σ)	1.0786	1.3124				
N	738					
α	0.5000	.0873	**66.74*****			
Likelihood Ratio χ^2(df=10)			**31.17*****			
Log Likelihood	-1039.7262					

Note: *** denotes p <0.001

   ** denotes p<0.010

   * denotes p<0.050

Figure 3. Organizational Co-memberships of Democratic and Republican Delegates, 2008
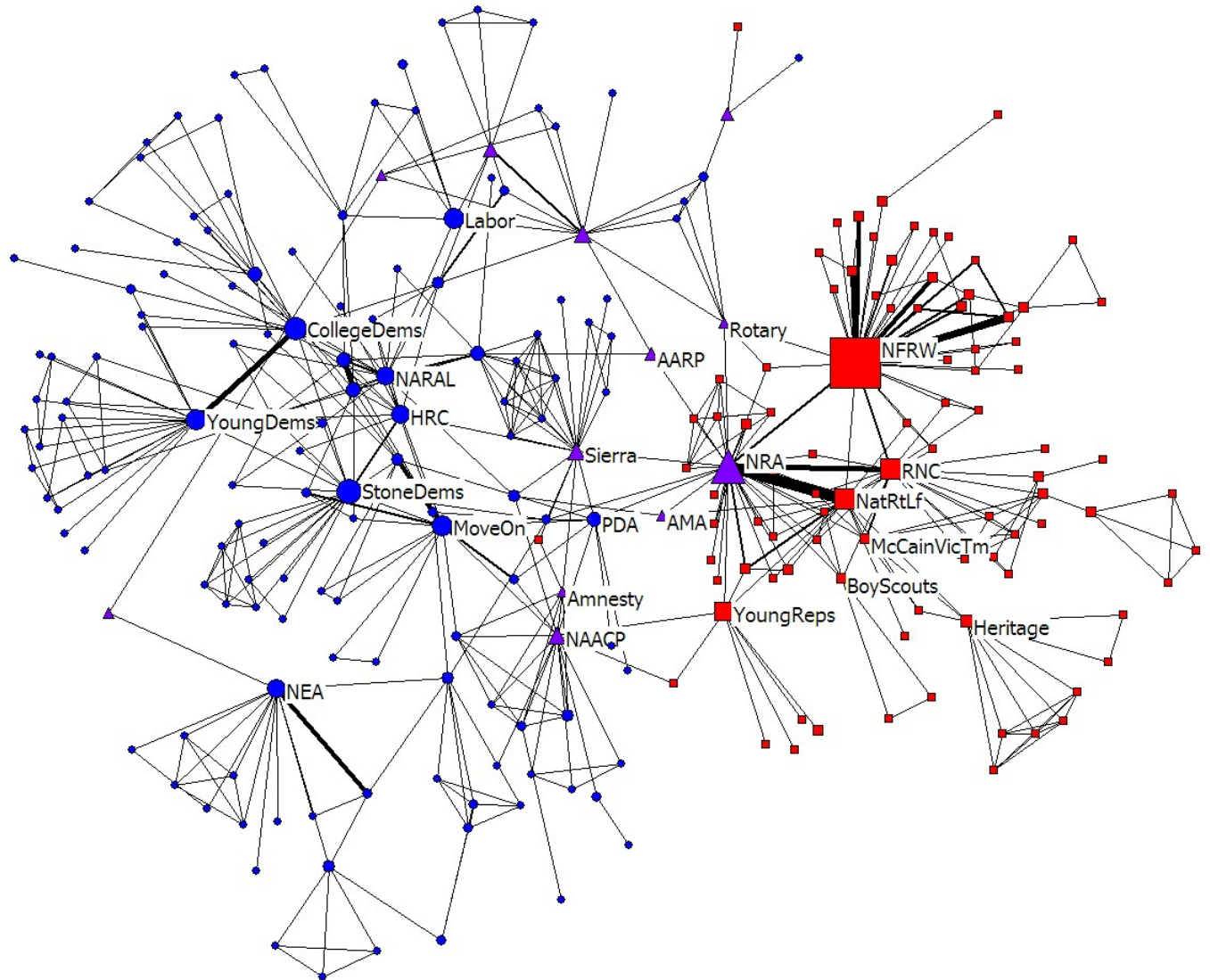
Legend

⬤ Organization Mentioned by Democratic Delegate(s)

■ Organization Mentioned by Republican Delegate(s)

▲ Organization Mentioned by Both Democratic and Republican Delegates

━ The Organizations Connected by Lines Share a Member or Members

Table 2. Organizations Most Frequently Cited by Democratic Delegates

Rank	Organization	Citations	Year Founded	Abbreviation In Figure 3
1	Stonewall Democrats	16	1998	StoneDems
2	College Democrats of America	14	1932	CollegeDems
3	Organized Labor (AFL-CIO, Change to Win)	12	1886	Labor
3	Young Democrats of America	12	1932	YoungDems
3	MoveOn	12	1998	MoveOn
6	National Education Association	11	1857	NEA
6	Human Rights Campaign	11	1980	HRC
6	NARAL Pro-Choice America	11	1968	NARAL
9	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	7	1909	NAACP
9	Sierra Club	7	1892	Sierra
9	Progressive Democrats of America	7	2004	PDA

Table 3. Organizations Most Frequently Cited by Republican Delegates

Rank	Organization	Citations	Year Founded	Abbreviation In Figure 3
1	National Federation of Republican Women	38	1938	NFRW
2	National Rifle Association	22	1871	NRA
3	National Right to Life Committee	13	1973	NatRtLf
4	Republican National Committee	12	1856	RNC
5	Young Republicans of America	10	2006	YoungReps
6	Campaign for Liberty	8	2008	Camp4Lib
7	Heritage Foundation	4	1973	Heritage
8	Boy Scouts of America	3	1910	BoyScouts
8	McCain Victory Team	3	2008	McCainVicTm
10	Multiple Organizations	2	Varies	None

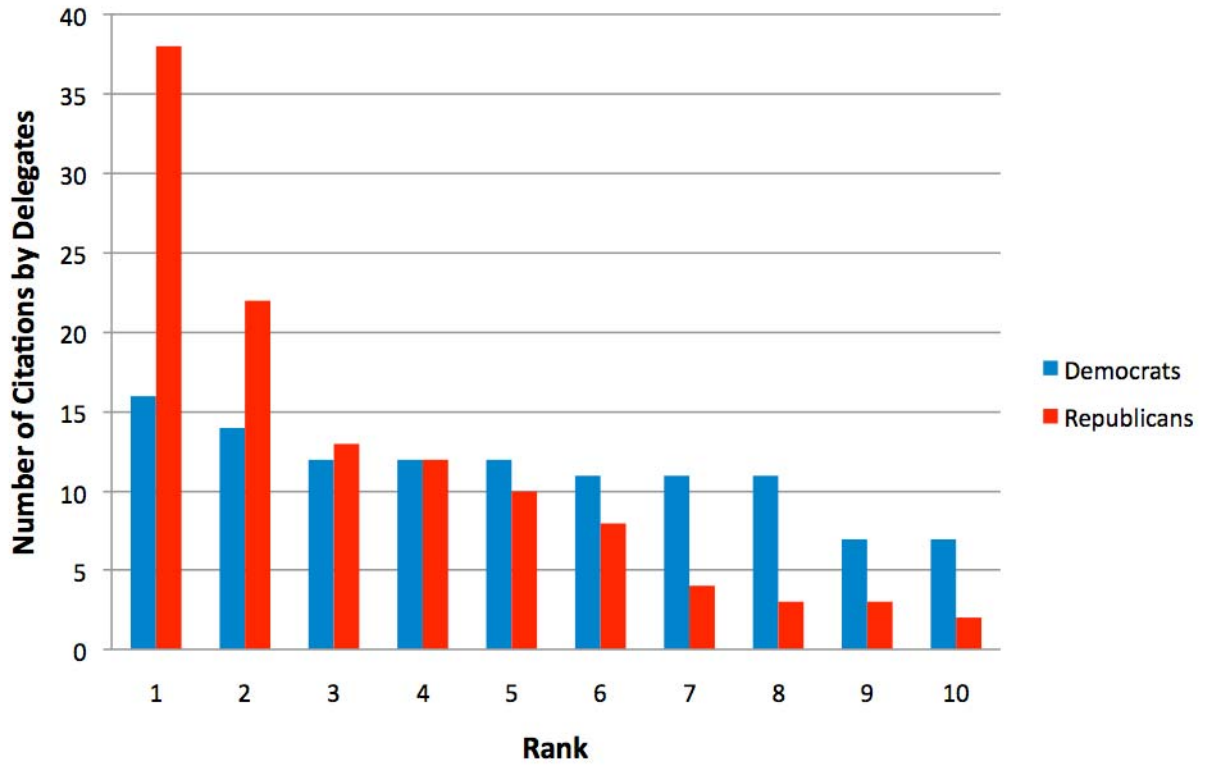**Figure 4. Number of Citations for Most Highly Ranked Organizations**

Table 4. Organizations Cited Both by Democratic and Republican Delegates

Rank	Organization	Democratic Citations	Republican Citations	Year Founded	Abbreviation In Figure 3
1	National Rifle Association	1	22	1871	NRA
2	National Association for Advancement of Colored People	7	2	1909	NAACP
3	Sierra Club	7	1	1892	Sierra
4	AARP (formerly American Association for Retired Persons)	3	1	1958	AARP
5	American Medical Association	2	1	1847	NRA
5	Rotary International	1	2	1905	Rotary
7	Amnesty International	1	1	1961	Amnesty

Table 5. Differences in Network Composition

Organizational Type	Democratic Network Percentage of Network	Republican Network Percentage of Network	Difference of Means T-Statistic
Party Auxiliary Organization	39.92%	42.93%	0.62
Campaign Organization	3.36%	3.80%	0.24
Labor Organization	10.08%	1.63%	**-3.56*****
Identity Organization	28.99%	20.11%	**-2.09***
Environmental Organization	4.20%	3.26%	-0.50
Civic Association	1.26%	7.07%	**3.12****
Religious Organization	0.84%	7.07%	**3.47*****
Ideological Organization	4.62%	8.70%	1.70
Issue Organization	18.07%	15.22%	-0.77
Professional Association	5.88%	13.04%	**2.56***
Veterans Organization	1.68%	0.54%	-1.07
Student or Youth Organization	6.72%	4.34%	-1.04
Governmental Body	2.10%	0.54%	-1.34

N=422

Note: Includes only organizations that do not appear in both networks.

*** denotes $p < 0.001$

** denotes $p < 0.010$

* denotes $p < 0.050$