State Political Parties in American Politics: Innovation and Integration in the Party System

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

What role do state party organizations play in twenty-first century American politics? What is the nature of the relationship between the state and national party organizations in contemporary elections? These questions frame the three studies presented in this dissertation. More specifically, I examine the organizational development of the state party organizations and the strategic interactions and connections between the state and national party organizations in contemporary elections.

In the first empirical chapter, I argue that the Internet Age represents a significant transitional period for state party organizations. Using data collected from surveys of state party leaders, this chapter reevaluates and updates existing theories of party organizational strength and demonstrates the importance of new indicators of party technological capacity to our understanding of party organizational development in the early twenty-first century. In the second chapter, I ask whether the national parties utilize different strategies in deciding how to allocate resources to state parties through fund transfers and through the 50-state-strategy party building programs that both the Democratic and Republican National Committees advertised during the 2010 elections. Analyzing data collected from my 2011 state party survey and party-fund-transfer data collected from the Federal Election Commission, I find that the national
parties considered a combination of state and national electoral concerns in directing assistance to the state parties through their 50-state strategies, as opposed to the strict battleground-state strategy that explains party fund transfers. In my last chapter, I examine the relationships between platforms issued by Democratic and Republican state and national parties and the strategic considerations that explain why state platforms vary in their degree of similarity to the national platform. I analyze an extensive platform dataset, using cluster analysis and document similarity measures to compare platform content across the 1952 to 2014 period. The analysis shows that, as a group, Democratic and Republican state platforms exhibit greater intra-party homogeneity and inter-party heterogeneity starting in the early 1990s, and state-national platform similarity is higher in states that are key players in presidential elections, among other factors. Together, these three studies demonstrate the significance of the state party organizations and the state-national party partnership in contemporary politics.
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1. Introduction

What are the implications of federalism for the activities and development of American political party organizations? What role do state parties play in twenty-first century party politics, and what is the nature of the relationship between the state and national party organizations in contemporary elections in the United States? These are the broad questions that frame the three studies presented in this dissertation.

Scholars have long emphasized the centrality of unified state and national political parties to democracy. In the American Political Science Association’s 1950 report, “Toward a More-Responsible Two-Party System,” the members of the APSA Committee, chaired by E.E. Schattschneider, recognized the advantages and disadvantages of American federalism toward achieving representative and responsive political parties. In the report, the committee observed that the state and national parties were independent of one another in most respects and devoted little attention to the development of an over-arching party strategy:

Such independence has led to frequent and sharp differences between state national organizations...Moreover, state party organizations too often define their interests quite narrowly. This does not merely mean substantial disregard of national needs to matters of national interest, but it also means piecemeal as well as one-sided use of state power and state resources. (APSA Committee on Political Parties, 1950, p.26)

In order to remedy this disconnect between the parties at different levels in the federal system, the committee supported a more unified party system which would be accountable to the overall needs of the public and would be better equipped to present and enact a cohesive policy agenda.
Relatedly, V.O. Key, Jr.’s (1949) seminal work on political parties in the South clearly demonstrated the dangers of a party system characterized by disunity to democratic governance. Not only was the Democratic Party in the South holding power without a viable opposition party, but the state Democratic parties acted in isolation from the national party. The party system in the South that existed in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries not only prevented democratic representation from taking hold in the South, but it also thwarted democratic development in the nation at large, because it deepened the rift between the state and national parties and prevented the parties from taking a programmatic approach to politics. From the recommendations of the 1950 APSA Committee for a More Responsible Two-Party System and the works of scholars such as V.O. Key, it is clear that the relationship between the state and national parties has important implications for the study of American politics and democracy; furthermore, these works raise questions about the effectiveness and representativeness of American democracy, especially if the United States continues to operate without a responsible or unified party system.

Undoubtedly, much has changed since the 1950 APSA Committee released its recommendations for achieving a more responsible party system. The Committee’s observations regarding the disconnect between the state and national party organizations were part of a larger argument concerning the decline of political parties, and especially responsible political parties, that many political scientists writing in the
period from the 1950s through the 1980s had observed. As Aldrich (2011, p.12) notes, it is debatable whether parties today are “responsible,” but both Democrats and Republicans can realistically compete in all regions of the country, and government ineffectiveness is more often connected to parties that are perceived as being “too strong” rather than “too weak” in their positions. Similarly, while the state and national parties may not be united on all fronts, research indicates that the state and national party organizations have developed a more interdependent relationship since the 1950s and 1960s (Bibby, 2002; Huckshorn, Gibson, Cotter, & Bibby, 1986). Meanwhile, party organizations have acquired more enhanced candidate-service capabilities and have continued to professionalize over the past 50 years (Aldrich, 1995, 2000; Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, & Huckshorn, 1984). Considering this changing landscape and the significant technological developments that shape politics in the twenty first century, in this dissertation, I seek to revisit these important questions about the organizational development of the state party organizations and the relationship between the state and national parties.

At the 1986 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, the political scientists participating in the roundtable discussion on American state and local political parties concluded that, “…greater attention needs to be paid to the complex relations among party units and between parties and other political organizations. These relationships are changing rapidly, and our research strategy must be flexible
enough to monitor and analyze these changes” (Jewell, 1986, p.864). In many ways, this statement reflects my goals in this dissertation. In this research, I argue that we need to adopt updated measures of party organizational strength to reflect the influence of the Internet and computer technology in the modern campaign environment, and we need to consider the role of recent campaign strategies in assessing the nature of the relationship between the state and national party organizations. Furthermore, technological advances have not only shaped our understanding of politics but should also shape our research strategies, as greater computing power and more sophisticated computer programs allow political scientists to look at data in new ways.

In the chapters that follow, I present research which explores the important and evolving role of the state party organizations in American politics and the nature of the partnership between the state and national parties. In Chapter 2, I present data and analysis which indicates that, on the whole, the state parties have continued to develop stronger, more professionalized organizations in the first decades of the twenty-first century, and the strongest parties are capable of integrating new technology into their organizational structure and activities. In Chapters 3 and 4, I explore the interactions and relationships between the state and national party organizations and uncover the strategic nature of these relationships. In the remainder of this introduction, I summarize these three chapters in greater detail.
1.1 Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity in the Twenty-First Century

Internet technology has revolutionized the practice of politics. Today, successful parties and campaigns develop sophisticated websites, use social media to communicate with and mobilize supporters, hire staff with expertise in new technology, and utilize advanced voter file databases to guide their voter outreach efforts. In this chapter, I argue that the Internet age represents a significant transitional period for the state-level political party organizations in the United States.

In their landmark study of the state party organizations in the 1980s, Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, and Huckshorn (1984) introduced the theory of state party organizational strength, arguing that the strongest state party organizations exhibit both organizational complexity and programmatic capacity. These basic components of state party organizational strength continue to be important in the present era, but the research presented in this chapter demonstrates that the state parties’ capacity to use new technology and the Internet is key to understanding the nature of party organizational complexity and programmatic capacity in the twenty-first century.

Relying on unique survey data collected from a survey of state political party organizations conducted in 2011, this research reevaluates and updates Cotter et al.’s theory of state party organizational strength and demonstrates the importance of new indicators of state party technological capacity to our understanding of organizational strength in the early twenty-first century. In addition, along with this updated
conceptualization of state party organizational strength, the analysis in this chapter
demonstrates that the Democratic state party organizations have now surpassed their
Republican counterparts on most measures of organizational strength. Overall, this
chapter confirms the adaptive capacity of the state party organizations in American
politics.

1.2 Party Building, 50-State Strategies, and the National-State Party Relationship

In 2005, Howard Dean implemented a 50-State Strategy as DNC Chairman, in
which he pledged to support all 50 Democratic state party organizations through the
 provision of staff, training, advanced voter file systems, and get-out-the-vote assistance.
In every election since 2006, either the DNC, the RNC, or both have advertised 50-state
strategies, with the goal of assisting the state parties’ efforts and competing in elections
across the country. These strategies stand in stark contrast to the “battleground state
strategy” observed by campaign finance scholars, in which the national parties primarily
transfer funds to the state party organizations located in presidential battleground
states, largely ignoring states that are not pivotal in national elections.

Considering the different types of assistance that the national parties offer to the
state party organizations, this chapter seeks to answer the following question: Do the
national party committees actually utilize different strategies in supporting the state
parties through 50-state programs and in making fund transfers to the state parties, or
do 50-state strategies serve as an extension of the battleground state strategy, in which
the national parties allocate resources to the most competitive states in national elections? The goal of this chapter is to address these questions and to more closely investigate the strategies utilized by the national parties in allocating resources to the state parties, with a particular focus on the 2010 elections. The 2010 elections marked an important turning point in the development of national-state party relations, as both the DNC and the RNC advertised 50-state strategies during this election cycle, known as “Organizing for America” and “Delaware-to-Hawaii,” respectively.

Analyzing data collected from a 2011 survey of Democratic and Republican state party chairpersons, this chapter shows that a majority of state parties were in fact familiar with the DNC and RNC’s 50-state strategies and reported interactions with the national parties through these programs during the 2010 elections. Furthermore, in directing resources to the state parties through these 50-state strategies, the national parties primarily considered state-level factors, such as state party organizational strength and the state electoral environment, as opposed to considerations related to a state’s competitiveness in national elections. Meanwhile, using data collected from the Federal Election Commission, the analysis in this chapter shows that in transferring funds to the state parties, the national parties prioritize short-term electoral considerations over party building concerns, allocating the most funds to states that were competitive in the 2010 congressional and gubernatorial elections, as well as those states that were likely to be competitive in 2012 presidential contest. Over the last thirty
years, scholars have shown that the state and national party organizations have not only become more nationalized, but also more integrated. Party building programs are significant components of this integrated relationship, and this chapter demonstrates that 50-state strategies represent a serious commitment by the national parties to strengthen the party infrastructure at the state-level and are key to understanding the national-state party relationship in the current period.


Party platforms represent a summary of the principles, policy positions, and proposed actions that party organizations choose to endorse in a particular election year, and, these documents provide us with important insights into the priorities and campaign strategies of party organizations, as well as the relationships between party and campaign organizations and voters. Very few studies have used party platforms to study party strategy and even fewer have examined the relationships between party organizations in the United States through party platforms. The research presented in this chapter leverages a new dataset of more than 1,400 state and national party platform documents, covering the period from 1952 to 2014, to uncover the relationships between party platforms issued by party organizations at the state and national levels and the strategic considerations that explain why state parties develop platforms that are more or less similar to the national parties’ platforms.
National party platforms generally focus on the parties’ traditional principles and positions and address current issues in more moderate tones, as they must appeal to a wide variety of voters and candidates across the nation. The theory and research in this chapter suggest that state parties develop platforms that are more similar to national party platforms when they face a diverse electorate, similar to the diversity encountered by the national parties. Furthermore, many states that are competitive in presidential elections are likely to be more concerned with issues of party unity and the need to support the traditional, national party positions, so as to receive support from the national party and to align themselves with the key issues that the national parties and candidates are presenting to their state electorates. Party platforms are strategic documents created by party leaders and activists; by studying the similarity between state and national party platforms, I am able to examine how state parties utilize their platforms to maneuver the complexities of a federal party system and to leverage their autonomy from or integration with the national parties in their platforms across time.

I use computer-assisted text analysis techniques to understand how the relationship between the state and national party platforms has changed over the past 60 years. In particular, using a term-document-matrix containing the weighted word frequencies from more than 1,400 state and national party platform documents from 1952 to 2014, I employ cluster analysis and measures of document similarity to evaluate, analyze, and explain the connections between the platforms issued by the state and
national party organizations. Overall, the results show that both the Democratic and Republican state parties are becoming more internally cohesive and distinct from one another in terms of their platform content, and while both parties exhibit distinct patterns in terms of their collective relationship with the national platforms, for both parties, the decision to develop a more “national” platform is primarily explained by the role of presidential elections in the state, even for state platforms released during midterm election years.
2. Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity in the Twenty-First Century

“We’re a Palm Pilot party in an iPhone world,” lamented the California Republican Party Treasurer, Mike Osborn, in a blog post reflecting on the performance of his party in the 2012 elections (Osborn, 2013). Osborn’s statement emphasizes the importance of new technology to running successful party organizations and political campaigns, and his blog post essentially serves as a call to action on the technological front for the California Republican Party. Although he acknowledges that the Democrats had the technological edge in the 2012 elections, Osborn goes on to argue that, “Technology is ideologically neutral. But to join the fray in the most effective manner, we must immediately commit to funding and developing new media talent and strategies…Republicans can start bridging the political technology gap with a bold new initiative with its roots here in California.”

Osborn’s recommendations for the California Republican Party reflect an important shift in the focus of state party operations across the United States. The most effective party organizations take advantage of new technology and fully integrate technology into all political endeavors. And according to Osborn, this technological focus is “no longer a luxury. It’s an imperative.” In other words, state parties that approach new technology and the Internet with hesitation will inevitably fall to the wayside; competing in the high-tech political environment of the twenty-first century requires commitment and adaptation.
As this chapter will demonstrate, the advent of the technology-centered state party marks a significant turning point in the evolution of the state party organizations in American politics. It is remarkable to think that, in a little more than one hundred years, we have witnessed state parties as all-powerful party machines around the turn of the twentieth century, state parties fighting for their relevancy in the face of Progressive Era reforms and the rise of a candidate-centered campaign environment, and state parties emerging as technologically-sophisticated organizations in the early twenty-first century. Throughout history, research shows that the state parties have continued to adapt to changes in their social and political context. Although state parties no longer control candidate nominations and election outcomes as they did during the Golden Age, the state parties emerged from the transitional periods of the Progressive Era and the 1960s as professionalized organizations which provide important services to party candidates (Aldrich, 2000; Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson, Cotter, Bibby, & Huckshorn, 1983). This chapter argues that the Internet age represents another crucial transitional period for the state party organizations, and, as with the other periods of party change, the strongest party organizations are those which demonstrate the capacity to adapt.

In their landmark study of the state party organizations from the 1960s through the 1980s, Cotter, Gibson, Bibby and Huckshorn (Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson et al., 1983) established the concept of party organizational strength. According to these scholars, the state parties with the strongest organizations exhibit both organizational
complexity and programmatic capacity, as they are characterized by professionalism, bureaucratic development, and the capability to provide services to candidates and engage in programs crucial to ensuring their parties’ electoral success. These basic components of state party organizational strength continue to be important in the present era, but the research presented in this chapter demonstrates that the state parties’ capacity to use new technology and the Internet is key to understanding the nature of party organizational complexity and programmatic capacity in the twenty-first century.

In many ways, the Internet has revolutionized the practice of politics. Successful parties and campaigns today develop sophisticated websites, use social media to communicate with and mobilize supporters, hire staff with expertise in new technology, and utilize advanced voter file databases to guide their voter outreach efforts. State parties that do not adapt to this new era of digital politics will be severely disadvantaged, and theories of state party organizational strength which do not account for this need for technological advancement by the parties will not accurately represent the nature of state party strength in the twenty-first century.

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of *state party technological capacity* to the study of state party organizational strength. State parties that exhibit technological capacity, especially those that hire technologically-oriented staff and maintain online voter file databases, will be among the strongest state party organizations, because they
will have the capacity to integrate Internet technology into their party operations and adapt to new technology in the fast-paced digital age. I argue that state party organizational strength still consists of the main components of organizational complexity and programmatic capacity that Cotter et al. identified in the 1980s, but state party organizational strength and state party technological capacity are interrelated and overlapping concepts. By including new measures of party technological capacity in an analysis of state party organizational strength, a much clearer picture of party organizational strength in the twenty-first century emerges.

This chapter will rely on data collected from a survey of state party chairs that I conducted in the fall of 2011 to reevaluate state party organizational strength in the twenty-first century. After a review of the study of state party adaptation and organizational strength throughout history, this chapter will first compare the results of the 2011 state party survey to the results from earlier state party surveys, with a focus on evaluating how the parties have changed with regard to the indicators of party organizational strength identified by Cotter et al. in the 1980s. This chapter will then proceed with an analysis which investigates the relationship between party organizational strength and technological capacity.

2.1 Background

When we examine the state party organizations at many of the turning points in American political history over the past century, it is clear that the most organizationally
developed state parties are capable of adapting to changes in the political and social context and that our conceptualization of what constitutes a strong party organization needs to update along with this party adaptation.

Throughout the history of American party politics, the relationship between the effectiveness and adaptive capacity of the state party organizations is clear. Even during the Golden Age of parties around the turn of the twentieth century, known as a “a high-water mark for state organization” (Mayhew, 1986), the strongest party organizations amended their patronage and fundraising tactics in response to political trends at the national and state levels, in order to maintain their electoral influence through machine-style politics (Reichley, 1992). When technological developments such as the railroad and telegraph challenged the state parties’ localistic approach to politics, state party organizations acknowledged the need for stronger national party organizations to facilitate party politics in a more nationalized environment (Klinghard, 2010). In the early twentieth century, Progressive ballot and primary reforms again challenged the state parties, but, in many cases, state party leaders actually supported these reforms, recognizing that new institutions were necessary in order to cope with the expanding population and rising rates of electoral fraud (Ware, 2002).

The 1960s represented another key transitional period for American party organizations, as we witnessed the transition from the pre-1960s campaign environment, in which “the party held an effective monopoly over resources” (Aldrich, 2011, p. 282) to
a candidate-centered system, in which candidates developed their own campaign organizations and hired professional campaign consultants to maneuver the challenges of modern technology and campaign finance (Aldrich, 1995, 2011). The general consensus was that these organizations, which no longer wielded control of candidate nominations, were weak and ineffective, and the few studies which examined state parties during this period found that there was a great deal of diversity in the size and scope of state party organizations (National Municipal League, 1967; Olson, 1971).

In the 1970s, Huckshorn observed state parties in the midst of the transition from a party-centered to a candidate-centered electoral system, noting that party chairs still placed a great deal of importance upon the traditional leadership roles that were valued during the early twentieth century, such as candidate recruitment and patronage; however, party chairs in the 1970s were also engaging in activities that required skills in “new” politics, including public opinion polling, “scientific” fundraising, and data analysis. During this period, party organizations adapted to the candidate-centered campaign environment by becoming parties “in service” to politicians, providing modern campaign services to party candidates (Aldrich, 1995, 2011).

In the 1980s, researchers involved in the Party Transformation Study (Cotter et al., 1984) and the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations’ state party study (1986) developed an interest in assessing the organizational strength and professionalization of the state party organizations. These studies, which were based on
surveys of state party leaders, concluded that the parties showed signs of resurgence in the 1980s, by providing a range of services to candidates and operating with expanded budgets and staffs and more professionalized leadership. Both studies also highlighted the Republicans’ advantage over Democrats, as the Republican parties reported larger budgets and staffs, provided a wider array of services to candidates, and utilized more sophisticated fundraising techniques.

In the Party Transformation Study, Cotter et al. used factor analysis to identify two main dimensions of state party organizational strength: organizational complexity and programmatic capacity. Parties characterized by organizational complexity maintain a permanent, accessible headquarters with professionalized leadership, a diversified staff, and a stable, adequate budget. Parties demonstrating programmatic capacity have the ability to engage in activities that generate support for the party and provide candidate support.

Since Cotter et al.’s research in the 1980s, studies have shown that state parties around the turn of the twenty-first century continued to exhibit high levels of organizational strength. Both Aldrich (2000) and La Raja (2008) conducted surveys of state party leaders in 1999 and 2000, respectively, replicating many of the measures that the Party Transformation Study used to assess party organizational strength. These studies showed that the state parties had become stronger since the 1980s on most measures, especially with regard to party fundraising and campaign activities.
Technological advances undoubtedly played an important role in the state parties’ transition to a candidate-centered electoral system. Even in the 1970s, Huckshorn (1976) found that about half of the state parties were using computers as part of their campaign operations, and in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, it is not surprising that computer use by the parties was widespread (Goodhart, 1999); however many organizations had not yet integrated this technology into their parties’ operations (Farmer & Fender, 2003; Goodhart, 1999; Margolis, Resnick, & Levy, 2003). Thus, around the year 2000, when Aldrich and La Raja were conducting their state party surveys, the state parties were still transitioning to the Internet age.

Since the year 2000, survey research shows that American voters are increasingly using the Internet and new media to learn about and participate in politics. Likewise, political organizations and campaign practices have changed significantly over the past fifteen years with regard to Internet utilization. By the year 2000, “it was becoming more unusual for a party not to have a web presence” (Ward, Gibson, & Nixon, 2003, p. 12), and, over the past decade, campaign practices have become more Internet-centered. The presidential campaigns of Howard Dean and Barack Obama, in 2004 and 2008, respectively, are especially regarded as turning points in the development of web-based campaign practices, as both campaigns used the Internet as a central organizational tool.

1 In 2012, 61 percent of American, adult Internet-users used online sources to obtain political information, compared to 35 percent in 2000 (Pew Research Center, 2012). Nearly 40 percent of American adults engage in political activities on social media (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012).
2 I have emphasized the word “not” in italics.
and demonstrated the potential of e-campaigning to encourage grassroots participation (R. K. Gibson, 2015; Kreiss, 2012); according to Kreiss (2012), these campaigns marked the beginning of a “networked politics.” How have the state parties adapted to this “networked politics,” and how should we conceptualize party organizational strength in light of this changed political environment?

2.1.2 Summary

Through an examination of the history of the study of state party organizational strength, several important trends arise. First, from the evidence presented in this section, it is clear that the state party organizations are significant actors in our political system which have warranted study throughout American history. Although state and local parties no longer provide jobs and welfare services to voters or trade these services for voter support as they did during the Golden Age, the fact remains that subnational parties are more proximate to the voters, thus providing these parties with greater insight into state and local issues and the potential to encourage more interaction between parties and the people. Even after the period of heightened state party influence in the Golden Age, scholars observed that state parties were central players in significant turning points in American politics. Despite concerns during the latter half of the twentieth century that state parties were weak and ineffective, research shows that, heading into the twenty-first century, state parties were professionalized organizations which provided important services to candidates for office.
Second, the research presented in this section demonstrates that parties are capable of adapting to changes in the political and social context in which they are situated. During all of the periods discussed in this section, including the Golden Era, the Progressive Era, and the era of candidate-centered elections, the state parties have adapted to ensure their relevancy. As the evidence shows, at crucial points in their development, state parties have evolved by changing their patronage strategies, influencing nominations reform, developing services for party candidates, and utilizing information technology. Cotter et al. argue (1984) that observers of party politics frequently mistake periods of party transition, such as the rise of candidate campaign organizations and other extra-party organizations during the mid-twentieth century, for party weakness: “The easy response to these developments is to take the general complexity and turbulence of the changing political environment as evidence of the atrophy of parties and decomposition of American politics” (1984, p. 8). Instead, researchers should acknowledge the complexity of these transitional periods and also recognize that “effective party organizations are adaptive” (Cotter et al., 1984, p. 8). Parties may experience periods of weakness, but rather than focusing on this weakness alone, scholars should also acknowledge the potential for party change. The role of the state parties has and likely will continue to evolve, and as the research presented in this section demonstrates, the parties’ adaptive capacity should be viewed as evidence of their resiliency.
Third, because of the state party adaptation that political scientists and historians have observed throughout American history, it is important that we reevaluate and update political science theories regarding what constitutes a “strong” state party. As the discussion in this section demonstrates, scholars’ understanding of party organizational strength has changed throughout history. At the turn of the twentieth century, studies showed that the state parties had become even stronger, according to the components of organizational complexity and programmatic capacity that Cotter et al. identified (Aldrich, 2000; La Raja, 2003, 2008). In fact, in discussing the results of his 1999 survey, Aldrich (2011) observes that the vast majority of state parties fulfill the criteria for organizational strength that Cotter et al. established.

As the previous scholarship discussed in this section demonstrates, party adaptation necessitates new theories of party strength and professionalization. When conducting their state party study, Cotter et al. argued that state parties were stronger than many accounts of their time indicated and that operationalizing party strength according to criteria from the Golden Age would lead to erroneous conclusions (J. L. Gibson et al., 1983, p. 196). Similarly, if the political system has changed significantly since Cotter et al. developed their measures of organizational strength, we need to reevaluate the validity of these measures for the current period.
2.2 Statement of Theory and Expectations

Traditionally, theories regarding the modes of party communication have emphasized people-intensive channels, such as rallies, debates, and town hall meetings, and broadcasting channels, such as television, radio, and newspapers, as the main party communication mediums (Norris, 2005). However, starting in the early 1990s, the Internet has grown to take on such a prominent role in party politics, that Norris (2005) has identified the Internet as a new, third channel of party communication. In order to make the best use of Internet communications, parties must be able to adapt quickly to new technology and to continually update their communication and GOTV strategies, since, “Those who exploit new technologies in innovative ways ahead of their rivals often find that this helps them gain new constituencies or achieve greater credibility among existing supporters” (Norris, 2005, p. 3). This level of technological adaptation requires serious organizational commitment, as the process of adopting new, professionalized campaign practices “involves extensive senior-level decision making, organizational reform, and financial muscle” (R. Gibson & Rommele, 2001, p. 35).

The importance of the Internet in twenty-first century politics means that all parties will likely use the Internet and new media in some way in their organizations, but only some organizations will have the capacity to integrate this technology into their campaign strategies and organizational structures. Borrowing from economics and organization theory, we know that technological innovations within organizations
generally fall under one of two categories: autonomous innovations, which can be adopted without modifying other components of the normal processes or technological systems of an organization, or systemic innovations, which require large-scale modifications throughout the organization (Teece, 1996). Most observers would agree that adapting to “networked politics” in the twenty-first century requires systemic technological innovation. For example, in the year 2000, a state party website primarily served to provide basic information about party leadership and contact information; thus, developing a website did not require an overhaul of party operations. If we observe party websites ten to fifteen years later, we see that these websites are now used to facilitate campaigning, advertising, fundraising, and internal party operations. An advanced party website is often managed by a technology director within the party organization and serves as a one-stop-shop, where supporters can learn about the party and its candidates, sign up for party events, make donations, participate in online communities, contribute ideas to party platforms, obtain voting information, and even access the party’s online voter file system from the field when engaging in door-to-door canvassing. Changes of this magnitude require an over-all shift in party operations. While party websites are only one example of the systemic technological innovations that are occurring in American party organizations, this example demonstrates the fundamental changes that party organizations are undergoing to adapt to “networked politics.”
The success of technologically sophisticated campaign organizations such as Obama for America have especially demonstrated that the most effective political organizations are those which make full use of the Internet, social media, and advanced voter databases and hire staff with the technological expertise to coordinate these efforts. It follows, then, that if the state parties have adapted to provide essential services to candidates over the past several decades and if they will continue to fulfill this service role in the twenty-first century, they also need to develop the capacity to participate in this campaign environment. However, it is important to note that the party organizations that exhibited the highest levels of organizational strength in the past may not be the strongest organizations in the twenty-first century, as “networked politics” reflects a fundamental shift in party culture, practices, and structure. Teece (1996) explains that organizations with strong hierarchical structures are often the slowest to innovate, due to slower decision making and fewer incentives to change. In the Internet age, strong party leaders and organizations must be open to innovation, even if this requires a shift away from traditional organizational structures.

After conducting his 1999 survey of state parties, Aldrich found that nearly all state parties fulfilled the criteria of organizational strength established by Cotter et al. in the 1980s, explaining that, “…the standards for measuring the degree of professionalization of state parties need to change, or we must simply conclude that all state party organizations are fully professionalized, because the established measures
have reached their saturation point” (Aldrich, 2011, p. 288). Given the systemic innovations required to adapt to politics in the Internet age, it is unlikely that all parties are equally strong and professionalized in terms of their capabilities to utilize new technology in the modern campaign environment.

Thus, I expect that organizational complexity and programmatic capacity will continue to surface as the primary dimensions of state party organizational strength in the 2010s, as Cotter et al. observed in their study of state party organizations from the 1960s to the 1980s. However, many of the indicators of organizational strength that Cotter et al. used to define these dimensions likely will not be sufficient to measure organizational strength in the current period, due to the rising importance of Internet communication channels over people-intensive and broadcast channels and the systemic innovations required to successfully adapt to networked politics. In this chapter, I will identify new measures of organizational strength related to the parties’ technological capacity. In particular, previous scholarship indicates that the parties that are most successful at integrating new technology into party operations are those that hire technologically-oriented staff (Elmer, Langlois, & McKelvey, 2013; Kreiss, 2012; Norris, 2005; Owen, 2013; Wring & Horrocks, 2001)

The expectations of this theory of organizational strength and technological capacity are outlined below.
1. As Cotter et al. observed from the 1960s-1980, *organizational complexity* and *programmatic capacity* will arise as the primary dimensions of state party organizational strength. However, many of the measures of organizational strength used by Cotter et al. will not be sufficient to distinguish between strong and weak party organizations.

2. New measures of organizational strength, related to the parties’ *technological capacity*, will be identified and will be related to the *organizational complexity* and *programmatic capacity* dimensions. Party organizations with the capacity to adapt to the technological changes of the Internet age will be those that hire staff focused on new media and technology; thus, whether a party hires a *technology director* will be an important indicator of a party’s ability to provide services related to new media and the Internet. Also, parties that run *online voter file databases* and hire *data managers* to maintain these databases are better equipped to expand their voter outreach and participatory web programs; therefore, these indicators will also be important measures of organizational strength. If a party hires a technology director and data manager and maintains an online voter database, it will have the capacity to adapt quickly to new technology, provide the services needed by candidates, and more
readily identify and mobilize supporters. Therefore, these measures are important indicators of both organizational complexity and programmatic capacity\(^3\).

This research represents the first attempt to reevaluate and update Cotter et al.’s theory of state party organizational strength since they developed their theory in the 1980s. Just as Cotter et al. recognized the importance of evaluating the measures and components of state party strength following the state parties’ transition to the rise of candidate-centered elections, this research reevaluates our understanding state party strength for the Internet age. Because of the central role of the Internet in nearly all facets of politics today, it is especially important to reinvestigate the measures of organizational strength and develop new measures which reflect the state parties’ ability to participate in digital politics. By not acknowledging the significance of the parties’ technological capacity in the measurement of organizational strength, we are ignoring an important piece of the puzzle and misrepresenting the nature of state party organizational strength in the twenty-first century.

\(^3\) In describing the concept of programmatic capacity, Cotter et al. (1984) explain that this dimension of organizational strength is not intended to measure whether parties implement specific programs or engage in specific activities; rather, the indicators they selected were representative of a parties’ ability to engage in a wide variety of activities. Similarly, the indicators of technological capacity described in this chapter are indicative of a parties’ ability to participate in a broad array of Internet activities and adapt to the fast-paced technological environment of the twenty-first century. The literature shows that parties that hire staff specifically geared toward technology and new media and that develop online voter file databases are generally the strongest parties, exhibiting the highest levels of commitment to networked politics; therefore, these are the most suitable measures of a party’s technological capacity.
2.3 Data and Methods

This analysis is conducted using data from a survey of state political party chairpersons conducted by the author during the fall of 2011. Surveys were sent to 100 state parties in total (the Democratic and Republican Parties in each state), and overall, 50 surveys were returned, yielding a 50 percent response rate. Of the surveys returned, 28 surveys (56%) were from Democratic Parties, and 22 surveys (44%) were from Republican Parties. This survey replicated many of the questions from previous state party surveys concerning the structure and activities of the state party organizations and also contained additional questions regarding the parties’ employment of technologically-oriented staff and development and maintenance of voter file databases.

In addition, the analysis in this chapter uses data from previous state party surveys conducted by Cotter et al. and Aldrich. The Cotter et al. (1989) survey data was obtained from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) database and from the book Party Organizations in American Politics (Cotter et al., 1984) and covers the period from 1960-1980. John Aldrich provided the author with the data.

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4 Overall, 11 surveys were completed by states in the Northeast (22%), 11 by states in the Midwest (22%), 16 by states in the South (32%), and 12 by states in the West (24%). U.S. Census regions were used in these calculations. In order to encourage survey responses, state party chairs were guaranteed that only the region in which the state party was located, not the specific state, would be identified in any research resulting from this survey.

5 Appendix A contains more detailed information about the survey design and implementation.

6 Cotter et al. conducted interviews with the party chairs and executive directors from a sample of 54 state parties from 1978-1980 and then distributed surveys to the non-sample parties for this period. Cotter et al. also sent surveys to individuals who had previously served as chairs over the course of the 1960-1975
from his state party survey, which includes data for the year 1999. Together, this data will be used to examine changes in the indicators of state party organizational strength across time and to analyze the components of organizational strength in the present period.

Survey research offers one solution to the data obstacles posed by the study of state party organizations. Starting with the works of Huckshorn (1976) and Cotter, Gibson, Bibby, and Huckshorn (1984; 1983) and continuing with Aldrich’s (2000) research, it has become clear that one of the best ways to obtain data about the state parties is through direct contact with the party organizations, either through interviews or surveys of state party leaders. And now with the 2011 state party survey data presented in this chapter, we can continue to study change among the state party organizations.

Consistent with previous studies (Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson et al., 1983), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is the primary method used to analyze the dimensions of state party organizational strength in this study. Because the goal of this analysis is to determine the components of state party organizational strength from a set of related

period. The dataset covering the period from 1960-1980 has 323 cases, but the sample size for each individual period (1960-1964, 1965-1969, 1970-1974, 1975-1980) is of course significantly smaller. Aldrich’s state party survey was sent to all Democratic and Republican state party organizations in the spring and summer of 1999. Overall, 64 parties returned surveys.
variables, exploratory factor analysis is an appropriate analytical tool for this research. Exploratory factor analysis has been in use for over 100 years (Spearman, 1904), and it is clearly an established method for “refining measures, evaluating construct validity, and in some cases testing hypotheses” (J. M. Conway & Huffcutt, 2003, p. 147). Put simply, factor analysis allows us to simplify a correlation matrix and describe relationships between variables in terms of a smaller number of unobserved factors. Statisticians continue to develop new techniques for factor analysis, especially with the more advanced computing power that is available today. However, despite these advances, researchers across a wide variety of fields continue to use outdated practices or fail to use the appropriate factor analysis techniques for their data (J. M. Conway & Huffcutt, 2003; Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999; Gilley & Uhlig, 1993; Matsunaga, 2010; Schmitt, 2011). In particular, recent research in exploratory factor analysis has emphasized the need to use appropriate methods when working with small sample sizes and dichotomous and polytomous data, both issues which are relevant to the state

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8 A recent article explains the value of exploratory factor analysis in the social and behavior sciences: “The attraction of EFA is its ability to investigate the nature of unobservable behavioral constructs (often called latent variables) that account for relationships among measured variables” (Jung, 2013, p. 90).
9 As MacCallum et al. (1999) demonstrate, the use of arbitrary thresholds to determine adequate sample size for factor analysis is problematic. Instead of considering an absolute sample size, researchers should place more weight on obtaining consistently high communalities, for example (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). While the factor analysis literature indicates that a sample size of 50 is often considered to be an absolute minimum, researchers have shown that factor analysis with samples under 50 is reasonable under the right circumstances, such as when factor loadings are high but the number of factors is low (de Winter, Dodou, & Wieringa, 2009). Overall, considering that the state party survey used in this research has a sample size of 50, it is reasonable to view factor analysis as a suitable technique, but the size of the sample
party survey data being analyzed in this chapter. Considering the recommendations of recent research for analyzing small-sample, categorical data (Forero, Maydeu-Olivares, & Gallardo-Pujol, 2009; Gilley & Uhlig, 1993; Lee, Zhang, & Edwards, 2012), I employ exploratory factor analysis based on polychoric correlations and use ordinary least squares to estimate the parameters. Before presenting the results of this factor analysis, I will examine how the state party organizations have changed with regard to the indicators of organizational strength identified by Cotter et al. in their 1984 study.

2.4 Measuring Change in State Party Organizational Strength

Figure 1 presents the responses of state party chairs to questions concerning their parties’ organizational structure and programmatic activities, comparing the percentage of parties that possess these characteristics or engage in these activities across the 1960-
2011 period. First, looking at the measures of organizational structure presented in Figure 1, it is clear that the parties have generally become stronger or maintained the gains in organizational infrastructure observed in Aldrich’s 1999 survey research. While in the 1960s Cotter et al. found that it was not uncommon to find state parties operating out of the state chairs’ homes or businesses, by the 1970s, nearly all state parties maintained a party headquarters. In 2011, all state parties reported maintaining a headquarters office, and more parties operated out of a headquarters located in a separate office building (52 percent in 2011, compared to 34 percent in 1999), as opposed to shared space in an office building.

Prior to the 1980s, the study of state party organizational strength was severely limited by the lack of comparative data which measured the structure and activities of a wide range of state parties across time. State party scholars began to recognize this need for comparative data (Olson, 1971), and in the late 1970s, Cotter et al. implemented a comprehensive survey of the Democratic and Republican state party organizations (Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson et al., 1983). Other scholars have followed suit (Aldrich, 2000; La Raja, 2003), replicating many of the measures from the Cotter et al. survey, thus allowing political scientists to measure changes in the organization and behavior of these state party organizations across time. Before proceeding with any analysis of the components of state party organizational strength, we need to confirm that by 2011, the
state party organizations had indeed saturated many of Cotter et al.’s measures, as Aldrich found in his 1999 survey.

### 2.4.1 Overall Changes in Organizational Complexity and Programmatic Capacity

Figure 1 presents the responses of state party chairs to questions concerning their parties’ organizational structure and programmatic activities, comparing the survey data across the 1960-2011 period. First, looking at the measures of organizational structure presented in Figure 1, it is clear that the parties have generally become stronger or maintained the gains in organizational infrastructure observed in Aldrich’s 1999 survey research. While in the 1960s Cotter et al. found that it was not uncommon to find state parties operating out of the state chairs’ homes or businesses, by the 1970s, nearly all state parties maintained a party headquarters. In 2011, all state parties reported maintaining a headquarters office, and more parties operated out of a headquarters located in a separate office building (52 percent in 2011, compared to 34 percent in 1999), as opposed to shared space in an office building.

From the 1960s to 2011, the survey data also shows an increase in leadership and staff professionalism. In the 1960s, only 51 percent of state parties hired an executive director, a quantity which steadily increased across time, peaking at 96 percent in 2011. Meanwhile, five percent of state parties hired both an executive director and salaried state party chairperson in the 1960s, and by 2011, this percentage rose to 28 percent of state parties. The percentage of state parties hiring comptrollers and public relations...
directors in 2011 (82 percent and 64 percent, respectively) has even increased since 1999 (from 63 percent and 44 percent, respectively). Furthermore, in the early 1960s, only fifteen percent of state parties employed a field staff, compared to 40 percent in the 1970s, 73 percent in 1999, and 86 percent in 2011.

When looking at the programs and activities operated by the state parties, we again see that the parties have either grown or remained steady on most of these measures since 1999, to the point that a vast majority of state parties now carry out the central party activities that Cotter et al. identified in the 1980s. In 2011, nearly all parties (94 percent) reported recruiting a full slate of candidates, which represents a five-percentage point increase from 1999, and, since the 1960s, a vast majority of parties have consistently operated campaign seminars. When examining party programs, virtually all parties in 2011 implement voter mobilization programs, hold fundraising events, and engage in public opinion polling. Meanwhile, across the 1999 to 2011 period, there was a substantial, 57-percentage-point drop in the number of parties publishing party newspapers. In all likelihood, this change occurred as a result of the general shift from print to online communications.
Notes:
The 1960-1980 measures were compiled from Cotter et al.’s survey of state party chairs, available from the Interuniversity Consortium of Political and Social Research. The 1999 and 2011 measures were compiled from Aldrich and Hatch’s state party chair survey data, respectively.

Figure 1: Overall Changes in Organizational Complexity and Programmatic Capacity Measures, 1960-2011
2.4.2 Comparing State Democratic and Republican Party Changes

From the previous section, it is clear that the majority of state party organizations fulfill many of the criteria that Cotter et al. established for a strong state party organization. However, since the 1960s, scholars have observed a disparity between the Democratic and Republican state parties in terms of organizational strength (Aldrich, 2000; Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson et al., 1983; La Raja, 2003). As Cotter et al. noted in the 1980s, “…Democratic state party organizations are substantially weaker than their Republican counterparts” (1984, p. 30). Similarly, Aldrich observed in 1999 that, “…typical state Republican party is stronger, more professionalized, and better funded than its Democratic counterpart. This edge is, of course, a long-standing one for the GOP” (2000, p. 655). From the 2011 survey results, however, it is clear that this Republican edge has not continued as the twenty-first century has progressed.

In their analysis, Cotter et al. used many of the measures reported in Figure 1 to construct specific indicators of organizational complexity and programmatic capacity, which were then used in subsequent factor analysis to identify the underlying dimensions of organizational strength. Table 1 compares the Democratic and
Republican state parties from 1960 to 2011 in terms of their fulfillment of the indicators of organizational strength that Cotter et al. developed in their study.\textsuperscript{11}

The results presented in Table 1 show that the organizational advantage previously enjoyed by Republican state parties over their Democratic counterparts has largely disappeared in 2011. From 1960 to 1999, both the Democratic and Republican party organizations continued to grow on all of the indicators of party organizational strength listed in Table 1, and the Republican organizations reported higher levels than the Democrats on nearly all measures. In 2011, the story is quite different. The Democratic state parties demonstrated an increase on all measures from 1999 to 2011, except for the measure indicating whether the parties published a newspaper.

Meanwhile, the Republican organizations remained steady on most organizational complexity and programmatic capacity measures from 1999 to 2011. In fact, by 2011, the Democratic organizations reported higher levels than the Republicans on nearly all measures listed in Table 1. Because the Democratic parties exhibited lower levels of organizational strength than their Republican counterparts for much of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that they had more room to grow. Regardless, it is

\textsuperscript{11} The indicators were derived in the same manner used by Cotter et al. (1984) when possible. However, as outlined in Appendix B, due to some differences in the content of the various surveys, the calculations used to derive these indicators varied from Cotter et al.'s approach in some cases.
significant that the Democratic state parties now show signs of having the organizational edge\textsuperscript{12}.

Figure 2 offers further confirmation of the growth observed among all state parties, but especially among the Democratic parties, between 1980 and 2011. In both 1980 and 2011, state parties were asked to identify which services they provided to candidates for various offices, including advertising, polling, research, and get-out-the-vote services, as well as staff assistance. As Figure 2 demonstrates, both Democratic and Republican parties reported an increase in the average number of services offered to candidates for all offices. However, state Democratic parties exhibited much larger increases than their Republican counterparts. Furthermore, in 1980, state Republican parties offered a much larger number of services than Democrats to all candidates, but by 2011, both the Democratic and Republican state parties were nearly equal in terms of the average number of candidate services they provided, and the Democrats actually had a slightly higher average in several cases.

\textsuperscript{12} The results presented in this paper do not track the same party organizations across time, since the same organizations did not respond to each of the surveys. The results represent aggregate trends in state party change.
Table 1: Indicators of State Party Organizational Strength, 1960-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>Reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Election Year Budget</strong> (categories; mean, range 0-10)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Election Year Staff</strong> (mean, range 0-10)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headquarters Accessibility</strong> (% with headquarters in separate building)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professionalism</strong> (% with both salaried chair and full-time executive director)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programmatic Capacity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voter Mobilization Programs</strong> (% with a mobilization program)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Opinion Polling</strong> (% engaging in polling)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication of a Newsletter</strong> (% publishing)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services to Candidates</strong> (% providing no service)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Recruitment Index</strong> (mean, range 0-6)</td>
<td><strong>Dems</strong></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reps</strong></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The values in parentheses are the total number of cases from which the indicator scores were calculated. This table is modeled after Table 2.6 in on pg. 32-33 of Cotter et al. (1984). The 1960-1980 measures were derived from Cotter et al.’s state party survey data, available from the Interuniversity Consortium of Political and Social Research (Cotter et al., 1989). The 1999 and 2011 measures were derived from Aldrich and Hatch’s state party survey data, respectively. See Appendix B for more information regarding the calculation of these indicators.
Notes:
1 These measures all range from 0-6.
2 In both 1980 and 2011, state parties were asked if they provide the following services to candidates for governor, state constitutional offices, US House, US Senate, and state legislature: advertising/media assistance, accounting/compliance, polling, research, voter identification, and staff.
3 The 1980 measures are derived from data collected by Cotter et al. in their interviews with the chairpersons and executive directors of a sample of 54 state parties from 1978-1980. The 2011 measures are derived from data collected in Hatch’s 2011 state party survey of 50 state parties.

Figure 2: Average Number of Services Offered to Candidates by State Democratic and Republican Parties, 1980 & 2011

The state Democratic and Republican parties have also attained similar levels in terms of their party budgets in 2011. Significantly, while Republican party organizations have traditionally been considered the “capital-intensive party” (Aldrich 2000, p. 655), in 2011, the Democrats actually reported a higher average election-year budget than the Republicans ($3,600,000 for the Democrats and $2,600,000 for the Republicans) while
Republicans continued to report a higher average budget for non-election years ($870,000 for the Democrats and $930,000 for the Republicans). Even when looking at the median budget for each party, the differences between the parties noted above for election-year budgets remain, although these median values show the parties to be on more equal financial footing. The important point is that this survey data indicates that Republican state parties no longer have a significant financial advantage over the Democrats.

Overall, the data for 2011 illustrate that the Republican state party organizations have remained steady on most of the measures of organizational strength from 1999 to 2011, while the Democratic state parties have continued to show increases in both organizational complexity and programmatic capacity. Because the Democratic parties exhibited lower levels of organizational strength than their Republican counterparts for much of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that they had more room to grow. Regardless, it is significant that the Democratic state parties now show signs of having the organizational edge.

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13 The median election-year budget for the state Democratic parties was $1,700,000, compared to $1,100,000 for the Republicans. The median non-election-year budgets for the Democratic and Republican state parties were $410,000 and $400,000, respectively.
14 In addition to comparing the Democratic and Republican state parties on individual measures of programmatic capacity and organizational complexity, the indicators of state party organizational strength were also used to develop an index of overall state party organizational strength. The Democratic state parties also surpassed the Republicans on this aggregate index. More information about the calculation of this index and the parties’ index scores are reported in Appendix B.
2.5 Evaluating the Dimensions of State Party Organizational Strength

After examining the 2011 survey data in comparison to the results of previous state party surveys, it is now clear that the number of parties fulfilling Cotter et al.’s measures of party organizational strength has continued to increase, to the point that many of these measures, and especially those related to the parties’ programmatic and voter mobilization capabilities, have become saturated. Furthermore, after the first decade of the twenty-first century, there is greater parity between the Democratic and Republican state parties on these measures; however, an important question remains: Do these indicators identified by Cotter et al. in the 1980s accurately represent the organizational complexity and programmatic capacity of party organizations 2011, especially as the changing communications environment has altered voter outreach and campaign practices? In order to answer this question, I conduct exploratory factor analysis separately for the 1960-80, 1999, and 2011 periods, using the indicators of organizational strength listed in Table 1, which were originally developed by Cotter et al. in the 1980s. A visual representation of the factor analysis results for each of the three time periods under investigation is presented in Figure 3. In each of these graphs, the vertical and horizontal axes represent the separate factors identified in the factor analysis.
analysis, and each variable is represented by a point on the graph, where the factor loadings of the variables on each factor are the coordinates.\textsuperscript{15}

When analyzing factor analysis results, the primary goal is to attain “simple structure” (Thurstone, 1947), or a solution in which each variable only loads on one factor, thus allowing the researcher to distinguish between factors and conceptual dimensions more easily. When the initial factor solution does not yield interpretable results, factor rotation is often used, which essentially rotates the factor axes and then calculates new factor loadings until a clearer solution emerges. Accordingly, the analysis presented in Figure 3 uses oblique rotation\textsuperscript{16}, which assumes that the factors are correlated\textsuperscript{17}.

The first graph in Figure 3 depicts the results of the factor analysis conducted on Cotter et al.’s data for the 1960-80 period. This analysis clearly attains simple structure, as two distinct and interpretable factors emerged from this analysis.\textsuperscript{18} Consistent with the expectations of Cotter et al.’s theory, the budget, staff, leadership professionalism, and headquarters accessibility indicators load highly on the first factor (the x-axis in

\textsuperscript{15} See Appendix C for a table containing the full factor analysis results.
\textsuperscript{16} Promax rotation also yielded similar results.
\textsuperscript{17} As Cotter et al. noted, this is a logical assumption when studying party organizational strength, as we would have no reason to expect that the dimensions of organizational strength are unrelated to one another.
\textsuperscript{18} In each of these analyses, I considered several criteria in deciding on the number of factors to retain: the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser, 1960), scree plots (Cattell, 1966), and Thurstone’s “very simple structure” criterion (Thurstone, 1947).
Figure 3: Plots of Factor Loadings from Exploratory Factor Analysis of Party Organizational Strength Indicators, 1960-1980, 1999, 2011
Figure 3), representing the dimension that Cotter et al. identified as organizational complexity, and the voter mobilization, party communication, and candidate services indicators load on the second factor (the y-axis in Figure 3), which represents the programmatic capacity dimension.\textsuperscript{19}

Of course factor analysis results are only informative if they are interpretable. As Pohlmann explains in his discussion of appropriate factor analysis techniques, “The number of factors decision should be statistically defensible first, and then interpretable” (Pohlmann, 2004, p. 17). When examining the factor analysis results for the 1999 and 2011 periods using the same indicators as were used in the 1960-1980 analysis, the results are largely incomprehensible. As shown in Figure 3, in 1999 and 2011, the “simple structure” criterion is attained, as there are very few cross-loading variables. However, contrary to what we would expect based on Cotter et al.’s theory and data, a mixture of the organizational and programmatic variables load on both the first and second factors. Even if we seek to identify different dimensions with these new factor loadings, the factors that emerge do not have any clear substantive interpretation and thus do not fulfill the interpretability criterion. These results suggest that the indicators developed by Cotter et al. were sufficient to clearly explain the dimensions of

\textsuperscript{19} Cotter et al. (1984) extracted three factors (programmatic capacity, candidate recruitment activity, and bureaucratization/organizational complexity) from their factor analysis of the party organizational strength indicators, likely because they included slightly different indicators in their analysis. Regardless, the analysis presented here confirms the main organizational complexity and programmatic capacity dimensions identified by Cotter et al. in their theory of organizational strength.
organizational strength from the 1960s through the 1980s, but in the twenty-first century, a factor analysis of these indicators no longer allows us to adequately identify components of organizational strength. For this reason, we may need to consider additional measures of state party organizational strength which are more relevant to today’s networked political environment when assessing the appropriate indicators and dimensions of organizational strength.

### 2.6 State Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity

The remainder of this paper will examine indicators of party technological capacity and investigate the significance of these indicators to our understanding party organizational strength. Parties must make a conscious commitment to integrate modern technology into their party operations and campaign strategies, and this commitment is especially manifested by the creation of technologically-oriented staff positions. If a party hires a technology director, this signifies a higher degree of commitment to implementing and adapting to new technologies than a party that assigns technology-related tasks to other party staff.

As Table 2 shows, in 2011, more than half of state parties (56 percent) hired a technology director. Democratic state parties were more likely to employ technology directors than Republican parties by quite a large margin, with three-quarters of the Democratic parties hiring this position, compared to about one-third of the Republican parties. Among those parties hiring technology directors, the average party designates
two primary responsibilities to their technology director, such as managing the party’s website or social networking presence and operating the voter file database. Overall, managing the party website was the most common function assigned to state party technology directors.

Table 2: Indicators of State Party Technological Capacity, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of Technological Capacity</th>
<th>State Democratic Parties</th>
<th>State Republican Parties</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employs a technology director</td>
<td>75.0% (21)</td>
<td>31.8% (7)</td>
<td>56.0% (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains online voter file database</td>
<td>88.9% (24)</td>
<td>86.4% (19)</td>
<td>87.8% (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hires data/voter file manager</td>
<td>48.2% (13)</td>
<td>9.1% (2)</td>
<td>30.6% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter files managed by dedicated staff member (technology director or data file manager)</td>
<td>82.1% (23)</td>
<td>13.6% (3)</td>
<td>52.0% (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology Director Duties (among parties that hire a technology director)</th>
<th>State Democratic Parties</th>
<th>State Republican Parties</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manages state party website</td>
<td>76.2% (16)</td>
<td>100% (7)</td>
<td>82.1% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages state party use of social networking/new media</td>
<td>61.9% (13)</td>
<td>100% (7)</td>
<td>71.4% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages party voter files</td>
<td>90.5% (19)</td>
<td>42.9% (3)</td>
<td>78.6% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.5% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>7.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Values in parentheses indicate the number of cases in each cell.*

Second, quality, accessible voter files are crucial to voter mobilization in the Internet age, as Internet-accessible databases permit the parties to more easily share their voter files with party candidates, to update their databases from the field, and to
integrate their databases with other party voter files. Today, nearly all state parties
operate Internet-accessible voter file databases and utilize the database systems
provided by the national parties to manage their voter files. While nearly all state
parties maintain Internet-accessible voter files, whether a state party hires a dedicated
staff member to manage its voter files is indicative of its capacity to utilize its voter data
to the fullest extent. In 1996, Goodhart’s (1999) research showed that large majorities of
both Democratic and Republican state parties had in-house staff that were capable of
operating their parties’ electronic voter files. However, in 2011, many state parties not
only hire staff who are capable of working with the databases, but employ staff members
who manage party voter files as one of their primary duties. Overall, 52 percent of state
parties (82 percent of Democratic parties and 14 percent of Republican parties) hire a
dedicated staff member (either a data/voter file manager or technology director) to
manage their voter files. While Democratic parties were far more likely to hire a
dedicated staff member to manage party voter files, Republican parties were more likely
to hire voter file vendors or to assign this task to general party staff.

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20 On the 2011 survey, 92 percent of state parties reported that they use voter file systems provided by the national committees to manage and share their voter files.
21 From the responses of the 2011 state party survey, twenty-seven percent of Republican parties reported hiring voter file vendors, compared to seven percent of Democrats. Fifty-nine percent of Republican parties and 19 percent of Democratic parties assigned voter file management to other party staff.
Figure 4 presents the results of exploratory factor analysis that was conducted on the 2011 data using the measures of state party organizational strength identified in Cotter et al.’s research and these technological capacity indicators. As Figure 4 clearly shows, in this factor analysis, as opposed to the factor analysis conducted with the old indicators alone, clear dimensions of organizational strength and programmatic capacity emerge, with the first factor representing party programmatic capacity and the second factor representing organizational complexity.

As expected, the employment of a technology director and dedicated voter file staff member emerge as especially significant variables in this factor analysis. These technological capacity variables load highly on the programmatic capacity factor (the x-axis in Figure 4), which is understandable considering the importance of these measures to the parties’ candidate service and voter outreach efforts. The public relations director variable also loads highly on the programmatic capacity factor, as technology directors, voter file managers, and public relations directors are all important to the parties’ communication and mobilization capabilities. Furthermore, as expected, the candidate services variable also loads on this programmatic capacity factor, clearly representing the parties’ candidate-directed activities. Unexpectedly, the leadership professionalism

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22 See Appendix C for a table containing the full factor analysis results.
23 Some of the indicators presented in Table 1 were excluded from this factor analysis, including the newspaper, mobilization program, and polling indicators; there was not sufficient variance on the mobilization and polling indicators in 2011, and the newspaper variable does not adequately represent the nature of twenty-first-century party communication. A more extensive candidate services variable from the 2011 survey was used in place of Cotter et al.’s more limited measure; see Appendix C for more information.
and staff size variables also load on the programmatic capacity factor, albeit at lower levels than the other variables; however, as Cotter et al. observed in their research, cross loadings are expected to some degree in this type of analysis, since all of these variables represent the underlying concept of party organizational strength (Cotter et al., 1984 177).

The organizational complexity factor largely conformed to expectations, with the headquarters accessibility, staff, budget, and bookkeeper employment indicators loading on this factor, all of which represent the bureaucratization of the state party organizations. Based on the results reported in Figure 4, it is clear that the technological capacity indicators embody a party’s ability to engage in programmatic activities but not its ability to carry out its basic organizational functions. This is not surprising if we return to Figure 1, which makes clear that nearly all party organizations now fulfill the programmatic activity measures developed by Cotter et al. in the 1980s, while there is still room for overall growth across several of the original organizational structure measures identified by Cotter et al. Thus, the most significant party adaptation in response to the Internet age is occurring on the programmatic capacity dimension, as new technology has revolutionized the tools needed to conduct effective voter mobilization and fundraising programs. While nearly all party organizations today run GOTV programs, hold fundraising events, and offer campaign seminars, the best-
equipped party organizations in the twenty-first century have the technological capacity to conduct these activities in both online and offline environments.

Figure 4: Plot of Factor Loadings from Exploratory Factor Analysis of Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity Indicators, 2011

2.7 Discussion and Conclusions

This research has provided an assessment of the nature of state party adaptation and organizational strength, a subject which has not received serious scholarly consideration since before the Internet age. Using data collected from a 2011 survey of state parties, the analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that, together, many of the indicators of party organizational strength identified by Cotter et al. in the 1980s no longer provide a clear picture of the concept of party organizational strength in 2011. When considering indicators of party technological capacity, along with the other relevant indicators of organizational strength, the exploratory factor analysis offers a
much clearer conceptualization of the components of party organizational strength for 2011, as the factor loadings achieve simple structure and have a clearer substantive interpretation. According to this analysis, state party organizational strength consists of dimensions representing both organizational complexity and programmatic capacity, and the indicators of party technological capacity are especially important to our understanding of the parties’ programmatic capabilities, as Internet communications and online voter files have become central to voter mobilization and campaign strategies.

Existing theories in the economics and organization theory literature emphasize the important difference between autonomous and systemic technological innovations within organizations; in particular, systemic technological innovations require large-scale modifications across an organization. The data presented in this paper indicate that adapting to the practices of “networked politics” requires such systemic innovations. Political science research regarding modern campaign practices suggests that political organizations that show a commitment to integrating new technology into organizational operations will be the best equipped to adapt and innovate, and organizations that hire technologically-oriented staff exemplify this type of commitment. This survey research demonstrates that a majority of the state parties surveyed in 2011 hire technology directors and/or data managers, which represents a significant development in the way parties are responding to politics in the Internet age. However,
the Democratic state parties are more likely to engage in these technological advances than their Republican counterparts and, thus far, have provided the clearest evidence of state party adaptation to the online communications environment.

These differences between Democratic and Republican parties are consistent with the trends that have been observed at the national level. Reflecting on the RNC’s technological disadvantage after the 2012 elections, Eric Frenchman, a top digital adviser to Republican presidential candidate John McCain in 2008, noted that the Internet has opened up new possibilities for the use of data in politics and the Democrats have out-paced the Republicans in this area: “I realized [the Democrats] were playing a different game when I saw job postings for analytics experts, data miners, statistical modelers. When I see the RNC making a job post to hire people like that, I will be reasonably optimistic that something is changing” (Eric Frenchman quoted in Friess, 2013). Evidently, Republicans have not shown the same level of commitment to integrating technology into party operations and thus far have been more likely to implement autonomous rather than systemic technological innovations within their party organizations. Based on Teece’s (1996) theory, this is likely due to the more hierarchical structures entrenched in Republican organizations. Unsurprisingly, Republican Party leaders at both the state and national levels have called for greater integration of modern technology into party operations (Osborn, 2013; Republican National Committee, 2013).
Of course, an important question moving forward is whether the conceptualization of party organizational strength presented in this paper has any bearing on electoral processes or outcomes. Considering the significant changes in the campaign finance system brought about by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and the *Citizens United* decision, one might question whether party organizations, and especially state party organizations, are still as influential in the current campaign environment. As Cotter et al. noted in their research, it is quite challenging to test the external validity of measures of party organizational strength in a multivariate model, due to the small sample sizes which are characteristic of most state party studies (Cotter et al., 1984, p. 103). However, in order to begin answering these types of questions, I tested a basic model of voter turnout, with state party organizational strength and other typical controls as explanatory variables\(^{24}\). With a small sample size, the number of control variables is limited and significant results are unlikely; however, the results of this preliminary test are encouraging.

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\(^{24}\) The dependent variable is the state-level voter turnout as a percentage of the voting-eligible population in the state. The 2012 battleground state variable is a dummy variable indicating whether CNN rated a state as a presidential battleground state in January 2012; the data for state median age was collected from the 2010 U.S. Census; state population diversity is the Sullivan Diversity Index, which the author updated using 2010 data; the state electoral competition variable is the Holbrook and Van Dunk state electoral competitiveness index, which was calculated by Carl Klarner as an average of the competitiveness for the previous two biennial elections, 2008 and 2010 (http://www.indstate.edu/polisci/klarnerpolitics.htm). The organizational strength variable was calculated from the 2011 state party survey data. Using the variables included in the factor analysis presented in Figure 4, I calculated an index of state party organizational strength, according to the same general method used by other scholars (Dulio & Garrett, 2007; La Raja, 2008). I normalized each variable and took the average across all of these variables to arrive at an overall organizational strength score for each party. See Appendix B for more information about the construction of this index.
As Figure 5 shows, in a model explaining state-level voter turnout in the 2012 elections, the updated measure of state party organizational strength developed in this paper emerges as a nearly-significant explanatory variable (p=.12), when accounting for other factors such as state diversity, state electoral competitiveness, and state battleground status. These encouraging results lend further support for the updated conceptualization of state party organizational strength presented in this paper and motivate a need for further research in this area.

Figure 5: Plot of Regression Coefficients from OLS Regression Predicting 2012 Voter Turnout in the States

We also need to consider how this research contributes to our broader understanding of the role of political parties in American politics. Brox (2013) argues that political parties should no longer be viewed as strict candidate service organizations but rather as partners with candidates: “Today parties make use of cheap and powerful
technology, as well as greater financial resources, not only to provide services to candidates but also to exert independent influence on competitive races as well as engage in long-term party building” (Brox, 2013, p. 27). New technology expands the opportunities for party influence. While the state parties have long played an important role in the area of voter mobilization, if the state parties continue to expand their capacity to use new technology as a central organizational tool, they will be able to engage in more sophisticated e-campaigning programs, conduct more sophisticated data analysis within their organizations, and thus make greater contributions across the political system.

The list of Bush states we were putting through the paces went as follows, west to east: Nevada, Montana, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and New Hampshire. This is a big list and once again flowed from our belief that we should not follow a conventional playbook. We looked at the Electoral College with fresh eyes, ran the traps, and based our strategy on our analysis, not on preconceived notions about what a Democrat could win. (Plouffe, 2009, p. 250)

This excerpt from Obama Campaign Manager David Plouffe’s memoir about the 2008 presidential election exemplifies what many observers identified as being so unique about Barack Obama’s presidential campaign. Obama utilized his vast financial resources and grassroots network to place field offices and staff across the country, allowing him to conduct extensive get-out-vote operations and win in states that were not traditional “blue” states. Few observers of the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections would disagree about the Obama campaign’s impact in advancing the tools and strategies employed in modern political campaigning. However, when discussing the Obama campaign’s impact and innovations, we also need to acknowledge that Obama benefited from the infrastructure put in place by Howard Dean as DNC Chairman, especially by expanding upon Dean’s 50-State Strategy.

Heading into the 2006 elections, Howard Dean vowed to place DNC staff in all 50 states, to offer staff training workshops across the country, and to support the state parties in red states and blue states alike. Other national party leaders such as Rahm Emanuel and Chuck Schumer expressed frustration and anger regarding the 50-State
Strategy, arguing that Dean was jeopardizing the Democrats’ chances to win back Congress in the 2006 elections and that, as DNC Chair, he should be allocating resources to states with the most competitive races. After the Democrats captured the Senate and House of Representatives in the 2006 elections, many analysts viewed this as a victory not only for the Democrats but for Dean’s 50-State Strategy. After his selection as the Democratic presidential nominee in 2008, Barack Obama declared that Howard Dean would continue as DNC Chair throughout the presidential campaign, and the 2008 elections became the biggest test of the 50-State Strategy. Only one day after Obama won the presidential election, the DNC released a memo praising the 50-State Strategy and the “unprecedented resources” it had developed across the country to supplement Obama’s campaign efforts (Democratic National Committee, 2008a). As a post-election article in Roll Call stated, “…Dean’s 50-state strategy, once widely derided as a costly diversion, is on its way to becoming party orthodoxy” (Gilgoff, 2008).

Since Dean initiated his 50-State Strategy in 2005, these types of strategies have become increasingly common in framing the national party committees’ campaign strategies and their interactions with the state party organizations during elections. Both the DNC and the RNC have implemented 50-state strategies in recent elections, including the 2010 and 2012 elections, promising to send staff, voter mobilization assistance, and other resources to state parties across the country. In many ways then,
since 2005, and especially since the success of the Obama campaign’s extensive ground game, 50-state strategies indeed have become a form of “party orthodoxy.”

Despite the fact that these types of party programs are occurring more and more frequently, political scientists know quite little about them. What do these 50-state strategies tell us about the relationship between the national and state party organizations in the twenty-first century? Do the national parties follow through on their promises and provide assistance to a wide variety of state parties through these programs, or do they continue to operate according to a “battleground strategy,” allocating resources to the most competitive states in national elections? The goal of this chapter is to address these questions and to more closely investigate the strategies utilized by the national parties in allocating resources to the state parties, with a particular focus on the 2010 elections.

In a meeting with RNC members in January 2010, Michael Steele, the Republican National Committee Chairman (RNC) from 2009 to 2011, laid out his party’s strategy for the 2010 elections, urging party members to, “Throw out the old maps, folks. We need you, the American people need you to create a new one. No matter how blue or purple, we must compete for every seat” (Michael Steele quoted in Venkataraman, 2010). According to this plan, the RNC sought to compete in elections across the country, in both red states and blue states, and, in order to compete in this fashion, Steele argued that the RNC would have to commit resources, especially staff and field operations, to
the state parties across the country. Steele called his strategy for 2010 the “Delaware-to-Hawaii (D2H) Victory Campaign,” representing the party’s plan to compete in all states, from the first state to enter the Union to the last.

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) adopted a similar strategy in 2010 through its “Organizing for Action” (OFA) program, seeking to build a party infrastructure based on grassroots support and to supplement the state parties’ efforts in all states in order to compete in elections across the country. OFA was an extension of both the 2008 Obama for America campaign organization and the 50-State Strategy that was instituted under Dean’s DNC chairmanship from 2005 to 2009. Thus, OFA had dual purposes heading into the 2010 elections: to support President Obama’s legislative agenda and to support a nationwide party infrastructure. Like the RNC’s D2H campaign, OFA sought to provide staff, training, and get-out-the-vote assistance in the states and to expand their efforts to non-battleground states.

Considering these similar campaign strategies, the 2010 elections marked an important turning point in the development of national-state party relations, as both the DNC and the RNC advertised 50-state strategies during this election cycle, stating that they intended to support the state party organizations and compete in elections in all 50 states. Through this support, they argued that their parties would benefit in the long run from being able to organize, mobilize voters, and compete in every state. Of course the national parties have offered support to the state parties in the past, transferring
financial resources to the state party organizations and engaging in party building activities, but this assistance has typically been targeted toward the states that are the most competitive in national elections. This expressed intention by both national party committees to provide resources to all of the state party organizations represents a significant development in the relationship between the state and national parties.

In the past, political scientists have primarily relied upon campaign finance data to study national-state party interactions. In particular, scholars have examined the strategies that the national parties utilize in making financial transfers to the state parties (e.g., Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008; R. C. Lowry, 2005; Morehouse & Jewell, 2003). The most recent studies find that the national party committees primarily utilize a “battleground-state strategy” in transferring financial resources to the state parties, offering the most support to parties in states that are pivotal in presidential elections (Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008). There is no doubt that campaign finance and the transfer of financial resources are essential to understanding nearly any aspect of American elections, including the relationships between party organizations; however, it is important to note that these studies regarding party financial transfers examine only one aspect of party interactions. State and national party organizations interact in other meaningful ways which these campaign finance studies do not take into account.

Considering these different types of assistance that the national parties offer to the state party organizations, this chapter seeks to answer the following question: Do the
national party committees utilize different strategies in supporting the state parties through 50-state programs and in transferring funds to the state parties? Previous research has shown that the national parties utilize a battleground-state strategy in allocating financial resources to the state parties, but in advertising their 50-state programs, both the DNC and RNC committed to assisting a broader group of state parties with other types of support, such as get-out-the-vote support, staff, training, and improved voter file systems. In other words, these 50-state strategies emphasize long-term party building over short-term electoral concerns. If the national parties followed through on the promises of their 50-state strategies in 2010, we would expect to see the national parties considering factors besides a state’s competitiveness in national elections in allocating these resources. To date, no scholarly research has examined the implementation and operation of these 50-state strategies, because appropriate data to answer these types of questions is not readily available.

The analysis in this chapter uses data gathered from a survey of Democratic and Republican state party chairpersons conducted in 2011 and campaign finance data collected from the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to more closely examine the strategies used by the national party committees in assisting the state parties in the 2010 elections. This chapter argues that the national parties’ 50-state strategies represent an important form of interaction between the state and national parties and shows that a majority of state parties were in fact familiar with these 50-state strategies and reported
interactions with the national parties through these programs during the 2010 elections. Furthermore, in directing resources to the state parties through these 50-state strategies, the national parties primarily considered state-level factors, such as state party organizational strength and the state electoral environment, moving beyond a simple battleground-state strategy. Meanwhile, in transferring funds to the state parties during the 2010 midterms, the national parties continued to prioritize short-term electoral considerations over party building concerns, allocating the most funds to states that were competitive in the 2010 congressional and gubernatorial elections, as well as those states that were likely to be competitive in 2012 presidential contest.

While other scholars have discussed the benefits of 50-state strategies for the national parties (Kamarck 2006; Kovenock and Roberson 2009), this analysis is the first to examine the actual implementation of these 50-state strategies and to empirically investigate the different strategies used by the national parties in making resource allocation decisions through 50-state strategy programs versus fund transfers alone.

### 3.1 Background

#### 3.1.1 Party-System Nationalization and Party Building

The existence of party building programs is dependent on the national party organizations having the position and resources to conduct these activities. For much of the twentieth century, scholars emphasized the decentralized nature of American
political parties, meaning that modern party building programs are a relatively new phenomenon.

The general consensus among political scientists for most of the twentieth century was that the national party committees were weak, lacked control over the state and local party organizations, and depended on the cooperation and resources of the autonomous state parties to accomplish their goals (Key, 1964). However, increasing presidential power and the growth of the federal government since the 1930s had a nationalizing influence on the party system (Key, 1964; Paddock, 2005). In the 1960s, party organizations and candidates also faced a series of significant rules changes with regard to the presidential primary system, voting rights, and campaign finance which also required some adjustment. Schlesinger (1985) argues that, considering these rules changes and the instability of the electorate at this time, office-seekers eventually started to see the need to turn to collective organizations to maneuver these changes. Thus, Schlesinger explains that, “In the second half of the twentieth century a ‘new’ party has been emerging, one that is more national in scope, more active, and with clear signs of greater linkage among its nuclei” (p. 1162).

Despite the candidate-centered campaign environment that had emerged in the 1960s (Aldrich, 1995), not all candidates were capable of obtaining the information, expertise, and financial resources necessary to compete in modern campaigns, which required more extensive technological and research capabilities. While party
organizations were weakened by many of the political and social changes in the 1960s, the uncertainty inherent in this electoral environment also offered the parties a chance for their revival (Herrnson, 2002). According to Herrnson (2002), “Entrepreneurial party leaders recognized that they might receive payoffs for restructuring the national party organizations so that they could better assist candidates and state and local party committees with their electoral efforts” (p. 52). The Watergate scandal and substantial Republican losses in the 1974 and 1976 elections especially provided the impetus for party leaders at the RNC to work toward goals related to party building and candidate assistance (Bibby, 1979; Herrnson, 2002; Reichley, 1992). Meanwhile, following the tumultuous 1968 Democratic National Convention, the DNC implemented rules changes to democratize the delegate selection process and improve the representativeness of the DNC; these new rules ultimately weakened the state parties’ ability to control the delegate selection procedures in their states, thus representing another significant form of party nationalization that was taking place at this time (Herrnson, 2002; Paddock, 2005). In the 1980s, a number of scholars studied these changes in party rules and party strategy during the 1960s and 1970s to understand the evolution of the state-national party relationship during this time period, noting that national party involvement in state party affairs had increased significantly since the 1960s (e.g., Bibby, 1979; M. M. Conway, 1983; Epstein, 1982; Jackson III & Hitlin, 1981; Longley, 1980b; Wekkin, 1984a, 1984b, 1985).
While Democratic National Committee made significant changes to its convention delegate selection and presidential nomination procedures during the early 1970s, thus asserting national party power over the state parties (Broder, 1974; Ranney, 1975), the RNC took a party-building approach in its attempt to increase national party influence. Most importantly, under the leadership of Chairman William Brock, the RNC significantly expanded its involvement in congressional and state elections in the late 1970s, establishing the electoral importance of the RNC beyond presidential contests (Bibby, 1979).

When Brock assumed the RNC chairmanship in 1977, the Republican Party was the minority in terms of party control of Congress, governorships, and state legislatures, and Brock initiated an extensive party building campaign, believing that the Republican Party’s survival would depend on the strength of the state and local party organizations (Bibby, 1979). The RNC had previously engaged in party building during the 1960s under Chairman Ray Bliss, but Brock’s party building programs were far more extensive than these early efforts to offer assistance to the state parties. As Bibby describes, “Brock went even further than Bliss to interject the RNC directly into state party organizational activities” (Bibby, 1979, p. 231). As one significant example of this direct involvement in

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1 In observing the differences between the RNC and DNC in the assertion of national party power during the 1970s and 1980s, Longley argues that that the Democrats were more focused on creating a mass-based party, characterized by popular participation and elite accountability, while the Republicans' primary goal was to win elections; thus, the Republican strategy did not weaken the confederative nature of the party system but rather worked within this structure (Longley, 1980a).
state party affairs, from 1977 to 1979, the RNC paid the salaries of state party organization directors, with the goal of increasing the professionalization of the state party organizations (Bibby, 1979; M. M. Conway, 1983).

The RNC also dramatically increased its involvement in gubernatorial and state legislative campaigns by expanding the role of the Republican Governors Association and creating the Local Elections Campaign Division of the RNC. The Local Elections Campaign Division was an important component of the RNC’s party building efforts, as the staff in this division worked closely with the state party organizations to collect data about various state legislative races, identify key districts, recruit candidates, and run seminars for candidates and campaign managers. Through frequent contact with state party leaders, Local Elections Division staff pressed the state parties to commit themselves to winning state legislative elections, and the state parties were incentivized to cooperate, due to the potential of receiving financial assistance from the RNC. Given the RNC’s goal to increase its state legislative seat holdings, most of the RNC’s resources were targeted toward states where Republicans were most likely to win control of a state legislative chamber (Bibby, 1979).

Epstein (1982) makes an apt analogy in describing the RNC party building strategy during the late 1970s, comparing it to the federal government’s grant-in-aid system:

Like categorical grants allocated to states and cities that agree to carry out federal programs in accord with federal standards, the RNC funds and other assistance went to
parties and candidates willing and able to maintain organizations or conduct campaigns serving general Republican purposes. No doubt, state parties and candidates also had objectives of their own, but they could still be useful, if elected, in fostering national party objectives. (p. 86)

As Epstein notes, the RNC used their financial resources to influence the activities and structure of the state party organizations, as well as to strengthen the state parties’ role in state legislative and gubernatorial elections. In many ways, then, this party building strategy implemented by the RNC was mutually beneficial for both state and national party organizations. However, Conway (1983) notes that the RNC’s interactions with state party organizations were not as successful as the RNC’s work with gubernatorial and state legislative campaigns, since the financial diversity among the state parties meant that all parties were not equally capable of making the best use of the RNC’s resources.

By the early 1980s, Democratic Party leaders started to respond to their party’s losses in the 1980 presidential and congressional elections, as well as the financial and technological advantages that the RNC had enjoyed over the past several years as a result of their party building efforts. In 1981 and 1982, DNC Chairman Charles Manatt improved the party’s fundraising infrastructure and invested some seed money in assisting one state party organization, the New Mexico Democratic Party. With the help of the consultant hired by the RNC, the New Mexico Democratic Party dramatically expanded its fundraising capabilities, and following this success, the DNC initiated party building programs in more states by 1984 (Reichley, 1992). Similarly, during the
1986 elections, DNC Chairman Paul Kirk sent consultants to 16 states to enhance these state parties’ fundraising and computer voter list capabilities, and this effort was expanded in subsequent elections, as task forces were sent to a larger group of states to assist with fundraising, computer resources, and voter mobilization efforts (Herrnson, 2002).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, both the DNC and the RNC implemented changes which resulted in a more centralized party system, and many scholars have argued that these changes are indicative of party nationalization. By the end of the 1980s, it was more common for scholars to describe an integrated relationship between the state and national parties, as opposed to a nationalized relationship (Huckshorn et al., 1986). As Huckshorn et al. (1986) explain, “Integration involves a two-way pattern of interaction between the national and state party organizations. Integration implies interdependence in the sense that neither level of party is necessarily subordinate to the other” (p. 978). Although scholars initially presented party building programs as a form of nationalization, in many ways, these programs are also consistent with this integration theory. Through these programs, the national party acknowledges that

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2 It is important to note that scholars have used different definitions for the term “nationalization.” Some scholars have emphasized nationalization as a type of hierarchical relationship between the state and national party organizations. For example, Conway (1983) defines party nationalization as, “…the exercise of substantial influence by national party units over important activities and decisions of state and local party units” (p. 3). Meanwhile, Bibby (1979) presents a broader view of nationalization, explaining that, “…party nationalization refers to the process whereby national party organizations carry out functions previously considered in the domain of state and local parties and thereby come to share power and responsibility in these areas of party activity” (p. 230).
stronger state parties are important for achieving broader party sustainability and electoral success, and the state parties also benefit from the resources provided by the national parties. Meanwhile, party organizations at both the state and national levels must fulfill their end of the bargain and run professionalized, capable organizations for party building programs to achieve maximum effectiveness.

Today, both the state and national party organizations run professionalized organizations and rely on mutual support to achieve electoral success. In general, party building continues to be an important goal for both the Democratic and Republican Parties, but what do the national party organizations prioritize in providing support to the state parties? Are the national parties seeking to build a stronger party infrastructure from the local level to the national level, as the phrase “party building” suggests, or are they attempting to leverage the state parties to achieve greater success in national elections? Most recent studies have examined this question through the lens of campaign finance.

3.1.2 Party Building and Campaign Finance

Campaign finance and the financial interactions between party organizations are key to understanding the relationship between the national and state parties and the national parties’ party building efforts. With the rise of soft money during the 1980s\(^3\),

\(^3\) In the amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) that were passed in 1979 and a subsequent Advisory Opinion, the FEC established that party organizations could use funds that were
questions concerning the logistics of party building became more prominent in American politics. Party organizations were permitted to raise unlimited amounts of soft money, especially soliciting larger donations from corporations, unions, and individuals, provided that this money was placed into soft money accounts and used for non-federal activities, such as administrative costs and party building. (MacCleery, 2009). In advocating for these soft money allowances before Congress and the FEC, party representatives argued that party-building activities were important to democracy and that federal laws needed to allow party organizations to participate in elections across levels in the federal system (Corrado, 1997; La Raja, 2003).

By the early 1990s, the national parties were transferring millions of dollars in the soft money that they raised to the state parties, which was mostly used to fund mobilization campaigns⁴. One researcher aptly referred to the 1990s as “the decade of soft money” (MacCleery, 2009), since the “competitive [political] environment led to innovative fund-raising and spending strategies that exploited loopholes in, and tested the boundaries of, federal regulation” (MacCleery, 2009, p. 978). During the 1996

exempt from the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) guidelines, also known as “soft money,” to finance non-federal administrative and party-building activities (R. C. Lowry, 2005; Whitaker, 2004). ⁴ One reason why the national parties transferred soft money to the state parties rather than using it themselves is that campaign finance law dictated that when non-federal activities had the potential to impact federal candidates running for election, parties were required to use a combination of hard money (money regulated under FECA) and soft money (money that is not regulated under FECA). In general, the proportion of hard money required to fund these types of activities was less when the spending occurred under the name of a state party rather than the national party (Brox, 2013; R. C. Lowry, 2005).
election cycle, this “innovative fund-raising” became especially prevalent, as the amount of money transferred by the national parties to the state party organizations dramatically increased. In particular, in 1996, the national parties started to exploit a loophole which permitted the state parties to use soft money to pay for campaign “issue” ads that actually supported federal candidates. In the 2000 elections, the amount of soft money transfers between the national and state parties continued to increase, as the RNC and DNC each transferred over a hundred million dollars to the state parties (La Raja, 2008).

These soft money transfers were more than cut in half during in the 2004 elections, after the passage of the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) (La Raja, 2008), which significantly altered the rules governing the transfer of funds between national and state parties and banned the national parties from raising soft money. Many predictions were made about the impact of the BCRA on national-state party relations. Paddock (2005) predicted that the BCRA would likely lead to “…greater decentralization in intra-party finances and at least partially reverse the trend toward party nationalization” (p. 62). La Raja (2003) agreed that the BCRA would likely decentralize party campaign operations, citing two main reasons. First, due to the ban

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5 The most significant aspects of the BCRA concern the regulation of the use of soft money by political parties. The BCRA banned the national parties and federal candidates and officeholders from raising or using soft money. Under this law, the state parties are also prohibited from using soft money for any federal election activity, including voter registration, get out the vote drives, and ads supporting federal candidates; however, they are allowed to use small amounts of soft money (known as Levin Funds) for grassroots activity.
on soft money, the national party committees are more restricted in the resources they can offer to the state parties and therefore may have more difficulty in directing campaign activities at the state level. Second, for the most part, the BCRA prohibits state parties from using soft money for federal election activities. Because state parties will need to spend more hard money to participate in federal election activities, this may serve as a deterrent to state party participation in national campaigns.

Although the parties originally advocated for laws allowing soft money for the purposes of party building, it is not surprising that the exploitation of soft money loopholes by party organizations and campaigns led some critics to believe that the parties actually valued soft money because it enabled them to circumvent federal campaign finance law and funnel more money into federal election campaigns. Considering this possibility, scholars have asked whether the soft money transferred between the national and state parties was in fact being used for party building (Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008; R. C. Lowry, 2005). In general, these studies indicate that national parties were mostly concerned with short-term electoral considerations in transferring soft money to the state parties (Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008; R. C. Lowry, 2005); however, La Raja (2008) also finds that the state parties that received more soft money also tended to run more professionalized organizations (La Raja, 2008).

In particular, La Raja (2008) examines the relationship between soft money spending by the state party organizations prior to the passage of the BCRA and the level
of state party involvement in campaign activities. According to La Raja’s analysis, the level of soft money spending by the state parties is highly correlated with measures of state party organizational strength, indicating that the state parties that spent the most soft money in federal elections were more active in providing campaign services and recruiting candidates and generally operated more professionalized party organizations. This evidence, La Raja argues, does not support the claim made by many advocates of campaign finance reform, that the “parties were merely empty vessels for soft money” (La Raja, 2008, p. 189).

However, when examining the factors which explain national party transfers to the state parties in a multivariate model, the results are more mixed. La Raja (2008) ultimately finds that both the DNC and the RNC operated according to an “Electoral College strategy” in allocating both hard and soft money to the state parties during the presidential elections from 1992 to 2000, with the number of electoral votes available in a state and the state’s battleground status in the presidential election emerging as the most important predictors. Meanwhile, other factors, such as the size of a state’s population, the competitiveness of state elections, or whether a state party is located in a region that is key to future party success were not significant in La Raja’s analysis predicting national party financial transfers to the state parties. La Raja concludes that, “American political parties are clearly electoral organizations that seek to maximize the potential for helping their candidates win rather than use funds for long-term party building” (2008,
Therefore, while soft money may have helped state party organizations implement candidate services and voter mobilization programs, in transferring soft money to the state parties, the national parties did not prioritize party building over short-term electoral concerns.

The implementation of the BCRA’s soft money ban only intensified the national parties’ Electoral College or battleground state strategy: “After campaign finance reform, both parties in 2004 concentrated even more money in battleground states. Not surprisingly, the ban on soft money under the BCRA did not deter parties from spending in highly competitive states, but it did affect spending in noncompetitive states” (La Raja 2008, p. 185). Furthermore, while both the RNC and the DNC transferred similar amounts of money to the state parties during the 1990s, after the passage of the BCRA, the two national party committees adopted different strategies. While the DNC continued to transfer money to the state parties at similar levels in the pre- and post-BCRA periods, the amount of money transferred by the RNC to the state and local parties decreased from 2004 to 2008, which “clearly shows that a change in the regulatory environment forced them to reconsider if delegating campaign spending to state and local party committees was the best choice for the party” (Brox 2013, p. 36).

Brox (2013) reaches a similar conclusion in his analysis, with a state’s battleground status and the size of the state’s voting-eligible population emerging as the most significant predictors in explaining national party financial transfers to the states from 1996 to 2008.
These changes in national party behavior which occurred after the implementation of the BCRA then raise questions about why a national party committee would transfer money to a start party organization in the first place, especially without the incentives offered by soft money loopholes. Brox (2013) outlines three main reason why national parties would decide to transfer funds to their state-level counterparts: to benefit electorally from the state parties’ knowledge of the local context in the current elections, to strengthen the state party organizations and thus win more elections in the future, or to foster a stronger relationship with the state organizations in order to coordinate on party issue positions, candidate recruitment, and electoral strategy.

Especially since the passage of the BCRA, it has become clear that the national parties prioritize supporting state party organizations so as to benefit from the state parties capabilities in the current election.

Despite these institutions which dissuade national parties from focusing on long-term goals, in recent the elections, both the DNC and the RNC have advertised and implemented party building programs, known as “50-state strategies,” which seem to prioritize the parties’ future electoral success and encourage stronger relationships between the national parties and state party organizations, in battleground and non-battleground states alike. These party building programs, which are the primary focus of much of the analysis in this chapter, will be discussed in the next sections.
3.1.3 Party Building and Howard Dean’s “50-State Strategy”

Decisions regarding long-term versus short-term strategies at the national party level perhaps have never been made public as much as during Howard Dean’s chairmanship of the DNC from 2005 to 2009, and Dean’s party building initiatives set an important precedent for future activities at both the DNC and the RNC. Therefore, the background behind Howard Dean’s 50-State Strategy is key to understanding the 50-state strategies implemented during the 2010 elections.

Facing the Democratic Party’s significant losses in the 2004 elections, Howard Dean’s campaign for DNC Chair was based on his “50-State Strategy,” which promised to “rebuild the Democratic Party, modernize our operations and expand the electoral map” (Democratic National Committee, 2008a). According to Nielsen (2012), this was “a clear swipe at how [former DNC Chair] McAuliffe and his predecessors had let the all-consuming focus on the next election’s likely swing states become the modus operandi of the DNC itself – a supposedly national organization” (p. 520).

As DNC Chairman, Dean had three main goals in order to rebuild the Democratic Party: to improve the party’s voter mobilization capabilities, develop the

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7 In this campaign for DNC Chair which started in earnest in December 2004, several of the candidates expressed a need to strengthen the state party organizations across the country. State party leaders play a large role in choosing the DNC Chair, and many state party leaders were especially frustrated after the 2004 presidential elections, in which Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry had focused his campaign efforts almost exclusively in battleground states. Thus, many of the candidates for DNC chair emphasized the state parties as essential to the Democratic Party’s future. In his campaign for DNC chair, Howard Dean not only emphasized the importance of the state parties but also discussed the need for a “ground up” approach (Balz, 2004).
party’s organizational resources and infrastructure, and construct a new voter file database system (Nielsen, 2012). Dean immediately started reaching out to the state parties across the country, first sending assessment teams comprised of veteran field organizers and former state party officers to every state to evaluate the state parties’ operations and capabilities (Bai, 2006). Depending on the state parties’ needs as indicated in the state party assessments, the DNC provided necessary staff for the state parties, ranging from legal and accounting support to technology directors, communications directors, and press secretaries (Kamarck, 2006), and also offered training services for staff, activists, and candidates during the 2006 midterm elections (Democratic National Committee, 2008a).

Dean’s 50-State Strategy did not receive widespread support from national party leaders, and the divisions between Dean’s supporters and opponents highlight different perspectives concerning the appropriate relationship between the state and national parties. As Kamarck (2006) notes, “the conflict…magnified what was becoming a tale of two parties – one in Washington and one in the states” (p. 3). State party leaders and members of the DNC, who are mostly selected by the state parties, had backed Dean’s candidacy for DNC chairman, but the Washington establishment generally viewed Dean’s politics and plans for the party with skepticism (Kamarck, 2006).

Dean especially faced opposition from Chuck Schumer and Rahm Emanuel, the chairs of the DSCC and DCCC, respectively, who expected Dean to direct DNC funds
toward competitive congressional races in the 2006 elections rather than supporting state parties in states where Democratic candidates had little chance of victory. Schumer and Emanuel were especially frustrated, because, considering the public’s disapproval of the Iraq War and President George W. Bush heading into the 2006 elections, the Democrats had the opportunity to take back control of the House and the Senate (Bai, 2006; Kamarck, 2006). Dean, on the other hand, argued that the Democratic Party’s exclusive focus on battleground states and competitive elections meant that voters and activists in many states were being ignored by the DNC, and building up the party’s infrastructure and field operations across the country would be crucial to party victory in the 2008 elections and beyond (Bai, 2006).

In describing these different views regarding the appropriate role of the DNC, Bai (2006) explains that, “Underneath this clash of field plans and alpha personalities lay a deeper philosophical divide over how you go about rebuilding a party...Did you expand the party by winning elections, or did you win elections by expanding the party?” This observation aligns with the campaign finance research which demonstrates that the national party committees usually allocate their resources to competitive races and states, rather than using resources to engage in long-term party building. Dean’s 50-State Strategy was met with so much opposition from other national party leaders because both they and Dean were on opposite sides of this “philosophical divide.”
In the end, Dean’s strategy was largely deemed a success. Not only did the Democrats win control of the House and the Senate, but they won a significant number of state races and increased the Democratic vote share in many “red states.” For example, Kamarck’s (2006) analysis shows that in congressional districts where DNC staff were assigned to work on the coordinated campaign efforts between state parties and congressional campaigns, the average increase in the Democratic vote share between the 2002 and 2006 midterms was significantly larger than in districts that did not receive this assistance from the DNC. Furthermore, state party leaders in states that are usually ignored by the DNC, especially those in rural Western states, noted that their party organizations benefited greatly from the assistance offered to them through the 50-State Strategy in the 2006 elections.

In addition to developing a party presence in states that had largely been ignored by the national party in the past, under Dean’s leadership, the DNC also developed a new voter file database called VoteBuilder and an online campaign platform called PartyBuilder. Both of these technological advances were crucial to the 50-State Strategy and to party victories in 2006, 2008, and beyond. Although former DNC Chair Terry McAuliffe had invested in a national party voter file database, known as Demzilla, the

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8 For example, according to Jim Farrell, the Executive Director of the Montana Democratic Party from 2005 to 2007, “We have been able to build our party around the state by creating Democratic organizations in every county in the state, for the first time in anyone’s living memory,” and, “Those people criticizing Dean’s 50-state strategy are, by and large, big shot political consultants who have completely lost touch with the grass roots and fail to see its importance” (Jim Farrell quoted in Gouras, 2006).
data and technology behind this system were severely lacking. Furthermore, many of
the state parties’ voter files were also outdated and the format and quality of the data
varied greatly across the state parties (Kreiss, 2012). Cooperation between the state and
national parties is key to developing a successful national voter file database, but when
Dean started as DNC Chair, the system was in disarray:

…staffers at the national and state parties had antagonistic relationships, and there was
little buy-in among the states for McAuliffe’s initiatives. In lieu of any national and
centralized voter file and database system, which the Republicans had developed in the
mid-1990s, data was incompatible across state lines and presidential campaigns had to
rely on many separate systems for their field operations. (Kreiss, 2012, p. 99)

With the goal of helping the party to compete in all 50 states, Dean prioritized the
development of a centralized voter file database. However, the state and national
parties had a strained relationship, according to Kreiss, as the national party’s primary
interactions with the state parties involved planning for competitive federal races and
little else. Dean and his technology team eventually formed “swap agreements” with
the state parties, in which the state parties would provide the DNC with their voter files,
in exchange for access to the DNC’s online database system. Under this agreement, the
state parties retained ownership of their data, as well as the right to determine which
candidates could use their data and at what price. By 2007, the DNC had enrolled a
majority of state parties in the VoteBuilder system and had plans in the works to have
the database infrastructure in place for the 2008 elections (Kreiss, 2012). The VoteBuilder
system has dramatically improved coordinated campaign efforts between the state and
national parties and has strengthened the parties’ technological capabilities.

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Clearly, Dean’s 50-State Strategy marked a significant departure from typical national party operations, at least since the RNC’s large-scale party building programs in the 1970s and 1980s. Like these earlier party building strategies, Dean’s program better represents an integrated as opposed to a nationalized relationship between the state and national party organizations. As the Chair of the DNC, Dean believed that strong state parties were essential to overall party success and recognized the state parties as key players in the party’s electoral endeavors. According to Dean, “State parties are not the intermediaries. If I get them trained right, they’re the principals” (Howard Dean quoted in Bai, 2006). This view of the state parties as the “principals” stands in stark contrast to the “battleground strategy” that guides the national parties’ financial transfers to the state parties. It is this duality in national party strategies in recent years that is the focus of this chapter.

Descriptive accounts of Howard Dean’s 50-State Strategy indicate that significant national party resources were allocated to all state party organizations, regardless of battleground status; however, few if any studies have systematically examined the assistance offered to state parties through the 50-State Strategy. In 2010, both the DNC and the RNC operated 50-state strategies and advertised philosophies that were very similar to Howard Dean’s during the 2006 elections. Using unique survey data collected from the state party organizations, the analysis in this chapter examines the allocation of resources by the national parties to the state parties during the 2010 elections. In the
next section, I discuss the details of the 50-strategies implemented by the national parties in 2010, before turning to a discussion of this chapter’s theory and analysis.

### 3.2 50-State Strategies in the 2010 Elections

#### 3.2.1 “Organizing for America” and the DNC

Following the success of Howard Dean’s 50-State Strategy in 2006, the program was extended for the 2008 presidential election, with the DNC promising to provide staff and to coordinate campaign efforts with all 50 state parties (White House Bulletin, 2007). Although Dean’s program was largely deemed a success after the 2006 elections, the 2008 presidential contest represented the first large-scale, national test of the 50-State Strategy (Stein, 2008b). However, the future of the 50-State Strategy largely depended on the cooperation of the 2008 Democratic presidential nominee. In fact, some Howard Dean supporters viewed the primary contest between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton as a referendum on Dean’s philosophy of campaigning and party building. In many ways, Clinton’s campaign represented the opposite of Dean’s bottom-up philosophy, relying on top strategists rather than grassroots support and securing donations from large donors rather than small donors on the Internet (Berman, 2008). Markos Moulitsas of the *Daily Kos*, a progressive political blog, even deemed Clinton’s campaign strategy the “insult-40-states strategy,” reflecting the Clinton campaign’s tendency to focus efforts on states where victory was most likely (Moulitsas, 2008). Obama’s campaign, on the other hand, was described by a former Dean strategist as
“Dean 2.0” (Berman, 2008); both Dean and Obama were of a similar mindset, sharing a “desire to push the party away from a strictly swing-state mentality,” as well as a “commitment to the nuts-and-bolts of grassroots organizing” (Berman, 2008).

Considering Dean and Obama’s like-mindedness, it is not surprising that Obama strongly supported the 50-State Strategy in his presidential campaign once he was selected as the Democratic nominee; in fact, the similar goals of Dean’s 50-State Strategy and the Obama campaign facilitated the integration of the presidential campaign with the formal party apparatus (Mann, 2008; Trish, 2011). In many ways, the “Obama for America” presidential campaign picked up where Dean left off with his 50-State Strategy. Obama’s campaign vowed to compete in states that were typically ignored by Democratic candidates, improving voter files and sending field directors to traditionally Republican states (Stein, 2008b). Obama’s ability to open field offices and win in some of these “red states” in the West and South was a testament to the success of the “fifty state” mentality⁹, and following the 2008 elections, the DNC distributed a memo which attributed much of the Democrats’ electoral success in 2008 to the 50-State Strategy (Democratic National Committee, 2008a; Stein, 2008a).

⁹ For example, the Obama for America campaign set up a number of offices in Western states like Colorado, which, with the exception of the 1992 election, had not voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1964. Pat Waak, the Chair of the Colorado Democratic Party from 2005 to 2011, noted how the Obama campaign offices improved and supplemented the state party’s campaign efforts: “The thing about the Obama campaign that was interesting is that when they came into Colorado they set up about ten offices in the state. It was great. It reinforced the same effort that we had been working on for the past three years or so. It means that with all the training that we’ve done over the past three years and with our own efforts we are enabled for success in the fall campaign” (Pat Waak quoted in Stein, 2008b). Obama also set up field offices in Idaho, a rare move for a Democratic presidential campaign.
Some Democratic activists worried that the 50-State Strategy would not continue under new DNC chair Tim Kaine, who assumed the chairmanship in January 2009 (Bowers, 2008; Nance, 2009). Once elected president, Obama essentially instituted his own version of the 50-State Strategy at the DNC through a program entitled “Organizing for America.” President Obama introduced Organizing for America, or OFA, to his supporters in January 2009 and presented it as a spin-off of the Obama for America presidential campaign, asking his supporters to build on the movement started by the campaign and ensuring them that OFA would be a grassroots organization. On the OFA website, BarackObama.com, Organizing for America was described as a “special project” of the DNC, and Mitch Stewart, the Director of Organizing for America, explained that there was no legal separation between OFA and the DNC (Schaller, 2010).

As shown in Figure, starting in 2010, the DNC listed both the 50-State Strategy and Organizing for America as party programs on its website. Considering the momentum following Obama’s 2008 campaign, the grassroots base of support it had generated across the country, and the e-mail list of 13 million names it had amassed, Obama’s campaign team had contemplated the future of the Obama for America campaign apparatus. Rather than continuing the campaign as a liberal pressure group, Obama’s campaign manager David Plouffe argued for integrating OFA with the DNC, an idea which Howard Dean strongly supported (Homans, 2010). Dean recognized that
Obama’s grassroots supporters could be used to bolster the state party infrastructure, explaining that, “This is kind of a fusion of the old way of doing things, which is the president putting his stamp on the party, and the fifty-state strategy, which is the new way of doing things” (Howard Dean quoted in Homans, 2010). In the end, OFA was introduced as a combination of a grassroots organization and a party-building project of the DNC, with a guiding mission to support the President’s agenda (Homans, 2010).

Considering the multi-faceted nature of OFA and the secrecy surrounding its operations, it is not surprising that Trish (2011) described OFA as “more elusive” than other political organizations. Nevertheless, organization building was a clear priority for OFA. In the spring of 2009, OFA placed state directors in a handful of states, primarily states which were battlegrounds in the 2008 elections. The state directors were tasked with conducting “listening tours,” in which they met with supporters from the 2008 Obama campaign and local party leaders in their assigned states, in order to determine how to organize OFA within the states (Trish, 2011).

The DNC worked rather quickly to hire and place OFA staff. Some estimates suggest that OFA had around 200 staff working across the country as of October 2009 (Trish, 2011), while other estimates indicate that the DNC had employed 380 staffers nationwide by the fall of 2009, most of whom were hired to support the Organizing for

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10 State directors entered these meetings with the view that these supporters and party leaders had a better understanding of what approaches would work in their local communities and also used these meetings to sign up OFA volunteers (Jackson Advocate, 2009; Suwanski, 2009).
America project (Vogel, 2009). According to one report, by late 2009, OFA had vastly expanded its reach: “…the group has now built a sprawling infrastructure to complement its vast membership. It now has offices, many housed within local Democratic Party outlets in 48 states, staffed by state directors, aides, local organizers and volunteers” (Koffler, 2009a). By early 2010, OFA had placed staff in 49 out of 50 states (Homans, 2010). In fact, the DNC was more successful in hiring staff and placing them in the states more quickly under OFA than the 50-State Strategy, due to the greater availability of funds and the larger network of Obama supporters from which the DNC could draw (Vogel, 2009).

Throughout 2009 and early 2010, OFA primarily concentrated its efforts on building support for President Obama’s health care reform proposals (Koffler, 2009b)11, but moving into the 2010 election season, OFA’s strategy shifted, with the aim to mobilize individuals who were first-time voters in 2008, using OFA’s voter database and vast network of volunteers and field workers to achieve this goal (Good, 2010; Zeleny, 2010). As part of this strategy, OFA organized “Camp OFA” training sessions

11 For example, OFA hosted a “Health Care Reform Week of Action” in July of 2009, during which OFA staff and volunteers engaged in door-to-door canvassing, phone banks, and roundtable discussions across the country to garner support for health care reform (Koffler, 2009b).
Our Party

50-State Strategy

A TV ad disappears the minute you run it, but putting resources into people is an investment that stays far beyond Election Day.

DNC Chairman Tim Kaine

In 2005, Democrats launched the 50-State Strategy—an ambitious effort to build the Democratic Party from the ground up, in every single precinct in the country.

We know that we won’t be able to win everywhere until we are able to compete everywhere, and that means fielding candidates and providing resources to even the most traditionally “red” parts of the country. The DNC works in partnership with state Democratic parties to provide resources for electoral efforts, voter registration, candidate recruitment, volunteer recruitment, and training. Local parties are empowered to hire local organizers who know their communities best.

In a short time, the 50-State Strategy already has a strong record of success. In the 2006 midterm elections, Democrats were able to take back the House of Representatives and pick up Senate seats in traditionally Republican Missouri and Montana. In 2008, President Obama helped expand the electoral map even further, winning states such as Virginia, North Carolina, Indiana, Colorado, Nevada, and Florida.

Under Chairman Tim Kaine today, Democrats continue an aggressive and forward-looking effort based on the belief that if we invest in people, and if we invest in our party, we can turn overcrowded districts and states blue in the elections to come.

Source: http://www.democrats.org/about/fifty_state_strategy; http://www.democrats.org/about/organizing_for_america, October 20, 2010

Organizing for America

A TV ad disappears the minute you run it, but putting resources into people is an investment that stays far beyond Election Day.

DNC Chairman Tim Kaine

After President Obama’s historic election, the volunteers who powered 2008’s campaign made it clear that they weren’t finished with the work of bringing change to our country. As the President said on election night, that victory alone was not the change we seek, but only the chance to make that change.

Embracing that creed as a challenge, grassroots volunteers and Democrats joined together to make the promise of change real. Now based out of the Democratic National Committee, Organizing for America (OFA) is continuing 2008’s movement for change by empowering voters in communities across the country.

Our victory in 2008 represented an extraordinary development in our nation’s politics. Like never before, millions of people dedicated their time and energy toward building networks in their neighborhoods, connecting with voters and registering new folks; and spreading the word about the impact each of us can have in the political process.

Together we have passed historic legislation to move America forward: the Recovery Act, comprehensive health care reform, student loan reform, Wall Street reform, and we are moving forward with clean-energy legislation.

With the November elections around the corner, volunteers are now working to support Democrats who are fighting for change and moving America forward.

Figure 6: Screen Shots of DNC’s “50-State Strategy” and “Organizing for America” Web Pages, 2010
across the country in order to teach community leaders and activists how to mobilize voters, organize events, and utilize technology for grassroots organizing (Bird, 2010). Jeremy Bird, the Deputy Director of OFA, described OFA’s capabilities for the 2010 elections: “With organizers active in all 50 states and 435 Congressional Districts, OFA has built the largest field structure ever assembled in a non-presidential election cycle in the history of the Democratic Party” (Bird, 2010). This “field structure” that Bird describes is part of the $50 million dollars that the DNC planned to spend on the 2010 midterm elections, providing staff, field support, and data assistance in states across the country through the Organizing for America project (Gonzales, 2010; Nielsen, 2012)\(^\text{12}\).

If implemented according to plan, it seems likely that OFA’s influence in the 2010 elections would enhance the mobilization capabilities of the state party organizations; however, there is very little scholarly or journalistic evidence that pertains to this area of inquiry. From journalistic accounts, it is quite clear that OFA was able place a large number of staff members across the country, but what was nature of the relationship between OFA and the state party organizations? And did OFA provide meaningful assistance to the state parties during the 2010 elections?

The answers to these questions are somewhat mixed and unclear based on the existing evidence. OFA has been described as a “top-down machine” and a

\(^{12}\) According to Nielsen (2012), the DNC directed $20 million toward advertising and direct mail efforts and $30 million toward GOTV assistance.
“Whitehouse tool” by some observers, since it is modeled after Obama’s campaign strategy, relies on much of the infrastructure and staff from his campaign organization, and seeks to support President Obama’s legislative agenda (Smith & Isenstadt, 2010).

Some state party leaders have been apprehensive about OFA’s influence in their states. According to William Lynch, Chairman of the Rhode Island Democratic Party from 1998 to 2010, “Numerous Democratic state chairs throughout the country were not, frankly, overly enthused by the plans to unleash OFA across the country” (William Lynch quoted in Providence Journal, 2009). Lynch further explains that:

As the Rhode Island Democratic State Chair, I did not think then, nor do I think now, that it is generally advisable nor beneficial to have a separate and distinct Democratic political organization working in the state of Rhode Island as opposed to joining forces with our existing state party structure. This, however, was not a decision that was left up to me by OFA and, in fact, I have had virtually no input into OFA’s plans here in Rhode Island. (William Lynch quoted in Providence Journal, 2009)

Lynch’s statements indicate that at least in some states, OFA was not well-integrated with the state party organizations and may have interfered with state party operations. On the other hand, another report explains that OFA staffers were well-integrated with the state and local parties and that many state party chairs had expressed positive views regarding OFA’s potential (Homans, 2010).

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13 In addition, in some states, the Democratic state party organizations may have been hesitant to build a strong relationship with OFA, due to OFA’s association with President Obama’s former campaign organization. For example, in Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Republican Party Chairman criticized the Oklahoma Democratic Party for advertising Organizing for America training sessions on its website and for “working hand-in-hand with Obama’s liberal training organization” (Targeted News Service, 2010).
Journalists and scholars alike recognized the 2010 midterm elections as one of the biggest tests of OFA’s relevance and influence (Nielsen, 2012; O’Toole, 2010). In discussing the role of OFA in the 2010 elections, Nielsen (2012) states that OFA was “not as impressive as some had forecast” and was “not enough to turn the tide” (p. 60). At the same time, Nielsen recognizes that OFA offered important assistance to congressional candidates and gave Obama the opportunity to maintain relationships with his supporters and conduct trial-runs of various campaign strategies and new technologies in preparation for the 2012 elections. However, studying the implementation and effectiveness of OFA has been especially challenging because of the lack of available data (Trish, 2011).

3.2.2 “Delaware-to-Hawaii” and the RNC

After the Republican Party faced significant losses in the 2006 and 2008 elections, Republican Party leaders recognized that their party would benefit in the long-run from having the ability to organize, communicate, and campaign in every state. In January 2009, Michael Steele was selected as the Chair of the RNC, and his campaign for the chairmanship demonstrated his commitment to supporting the Republican state parties across the country and strengthening the party’s grassroots infrastructure. A former state party chair himself, Steele used his campaign website, Steeleforchairman.com, to urge his supporters to volunteer for their state party organizations, as shown in the screen shot of his website in Figure 7. Steele continued to push this message after he
was named RNC Chair. In his first month as Chair, Steele announced that he planned to implement a 50-state strategy to strengthen the Republican Party in traditionally Democratic states (Walsh, 2009).

In January 2010, Steele formally announced his 50-state strategy. The similarities between Michael Steele’s proposal and Howard Dean’s strategy were striking, albeit unsurprising, since Steele reportedly praised Dean’s work at the DNC (Wilson, 2010). At the RNC’s Winter Meeting in 2010, Steele prefaced the introduction of his 50-state strategy by stating that, “Americans want their government back,” and the Republican Party needs to “throw out the old map” to respond to the demands of the American people. Introducing the RNC’s program for the 2010 elections, known as “D2H” (or “Delaware-to-Hawaii,” reflecting the RNC’s plan to compete in all states, from the first state to enter the union to the last), Steele explained that, “Republican state parties are going to be empowered to be active in every state from Delaware to Hawaii... Our Republican activists are ready to work and our state parties will have programs in place to harness that energy and win elections from D2H” (Michael Steele quoted in FrumForum, 2010).
Figure 7: Screen Shot of Michael Steele’s RNC Chairman Campaign Website, 2008

Through D2H, Steele and the RNC pledged to expand on the RNC’s Victory program, through which the national committee has traditionally directed the party’s field operations for general elections. In a September 2010 memo, Steele explained that the RNC had provided the state parties with “Victory offices,” advanced voice-over-IP phones, and additional staff. In particular, according to Steele, the D2H program had opened 310 Victory offices in 44 states and had placed approximately 300 staff members across the country. Through D2H, the state parties also continued to have access to the RNC’s data resources, especially Voter Vault, the national party voter file system which was launched in 1995. According to Steele’s memo, significant investments had been
made in all states to update the Voter Vault system for the 2010 elections, and these updates had allowed the party to vastly expand its microtargeting operations from 20 states in 2008 to every state and congressional district in 2010. Steele reported vastly expanded Victory operations through D2H in states such as Illinois, where the RNC had never operated a Victory program in the past. Furthermore, Steele emphasized that the mobilization efforts under D2H would not only assist party candidates in the congressional elections but also candidates lower on the ballot (Steele, 2010).

During the same week that Steele released this memo outlining the “historic opportunity” for Republicans in the 2010 elections and the success of the D2H 50-state strategy, Roll Call (Drucker, 2010) published an article explaining that the Republican congressional and senate campaign committees (the NRCC and the NRSC) did not believe that the RNC would have sufficient resources to assist party candidates running for the House and Senate in 2010. Consequently, Senate and House campaigns were reportedly turning to outside organizations, such as American Crossroads, the Super PAC formed by Karl Rove and Ed Gillespie, to fund crucial get-out-the-vote operations. In essence, other party leaders accused Chairman Steele of mismanaging the RNC’s money and not directing enough of his efforts toward the goal of actually helping

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14 The RNC was far ahead of the DNC in developing a centralized voter file system, as the DNC did not have a functional national voter file system in place until the 2008 elections. Because the DNC started developing its VoteBuilder system in 2006, the Democrats had access to more advanced technology during this formative period. When the RNC developed its Voter Vault system in the mid-1990s, the technological capabilities of database systems were far less sophisticated, and the RNC eventually had to catch up with the DNC’s database infrastructure (Kreiss, 2012).
Republican candidates win office. Steele’s bus tour around the country, which was intended to energize party activists, especially received criticism from party leaders who argued that the money spent on the bus tour should have been allocated toward voter mobilization efforts in competitive districts (Hamby, 2010). As Drucker (2010) noted in his article, the response of the NRCC and NRSC toward Steele’s leadership and plans for the 2010 elections were remarkably similar to the criticism that Howard Dean’s 50-state strategy received from Democratic party leaders during the 2006 elections.

Evidently, debates concerning long-term party building versus short-term electoral considerations frequently surround 50-state strategies for both Democrats and Republicans. However, Steele’s challenges extended beyond these philosophical and strategic differences between party leaders. During 2010, the RNC did not meet its fundraising targets, meaning that Steele only had $10 million to fund his 50-state strategy. With Steele planning to spend at least $35,000 in every state according to one report, states with the most competitive elections in 2010 were not always guaranteed sufficient resources to conduct their get-out-the-vote operations (Martin & Barr, 2010). According to one report, the RNC was “scrambling to open field offices in targeted states as part of its ‘Delaware to Hawaii’ grassroots outreach program” (Miller, 2010); however, Republican pollsters later argued that the RNC’s early investments of money and staff in all states, even traditionally Democratic states, had helped Republicans to
boost voter support, especially since polls indicated that many voters made their vote
choice early in the election season (Wilson, 2010).

To date, scholars have not addressed the implementation or the effectiveness of
Steele’s D2H program at the RNC. While the RNC seems to have raised limited funds to
allocate to D2H and it is unclear whether the RNC assisted parties all states, Steele and
the RNC clearly demonstrated a heightened interest in supporting the state party
organizations at the start of the 2010 election season. In discussing the appropriate
relationship between the state and national party organizations, Steele explained that
when RNC chair, he focused on supporting the state parties’ voter mobilization efforts,
rather than requiring the state parties to adhere to a specific national party plan (Hamby,
2013).

At least in the press releases issued by the RNC and the state parties upon the
announcement of the D2H program, the RNC seems to have followed through on this
customized approach in supporting the state parties’ voter outreach initiatives. For
example, the press release for the Maryland D2H Victory campaign stated that, “In
partnership with the Maryland Republican Party, the RNC is building the in-state
campaign structure to support Republican candidates with funding for staff and offices,
state-of-the-art voter contact technologies, as well as access to the RNC’s vast database
of voter information” (Republican National Committee, 2010b). Meanwhile the press
release for the Maine campaign announced that, “In partnership with the Maine
Republican Party, the RNC is providing funding and resources to augment the in-state GOP campaign structure, support Republican candidates, and promote the conservative messages of low taxes, limited government, and fiscal responsibility” (Republican National Committee, 2010a). These two press releases suggest that the nature of RNC involvement may have been tailored to state needs to some degree. Rather than issuing a single press release for all states, the RNC developed a handful of press releases that were issued in different states, as represented in Table , which presents excerpts from some of the press releases that were available on the RNC website.

According to Ron Nehring, the Chairman of the California Republican Party and the Chair of State Chairmen’s Committee during Steele’s tenure at the RNC, Chairman Steele’s 50-state strategy and his support for the state parties represented a change in culture at the RNC:

A few weeks ago, I sat down with Chairman Steele and my colleagues from a dozen states for a roundtable meeting in which each state party showcased its progress, programs, and challenges. It was an extraordinary session that differed sharply from past RNC events, which were, without exception, top-down affairs. Instead of merely relaying orders, this session, like others Steele has held in recent weeks, was intended to draw out new ideas and innovations and give states an opportunity to share best practices. (Nehring, 2009)

Nehring’s statement suggests that Chairman Steele’s D2H campaign represented a departure from normal interactions between the state and national parties; however, as was the case with the DNC’s OFA program, the lack of available data to date has prevented any systematic study of the implementation of this 50-state strategy.
Table 3: Excerpts from RNC’s “Delaware-to-Hawaii” Press Releases in the States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Party</th>
<th>Text of Press Release Describing Role of “D2H” in State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Republican Party</td>
<td>“Colorado is a critical state in the upcoming elections, and that is why the Republican Party is expanding our voter contact and volunteer programs across the state.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware Republican Party</td>
<td>“Through this program, the RNC and the [State] Republican Party are building the in-state campaign structure to support Republican candidates with funding for staff and offices, state-of-the-art voter contact technologies, and improved voter identification capacity through access to the RNC’s vast database of voter information.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland Republican Party</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Idaho Republican Party</td>
<td>“In partnership with the [State] Republican Party, the RNC is providing funding and resources to build the in-state GOP structure to support Republican leaders. The RNC will devote the resources necessary to enhance the [State] GOP’s ability to effectively reach Republican voters and tap into the state’s grassroots volunteer base.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois Republican Party</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky Republican Party</td>
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<td>Oklahoma Republican Party</td>
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<td>Oregon Republican Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin Republican Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana Republican Party</td>
<td>“In partnership with The Indiana Republican Party (IN GOP), the RNC is providing funding and resources to build the infrastructure to support Republican candidates.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Republican Party</td>
<td>“In partnership with the Maine Republican Party, the RNC is providing funding and resources to augment the in-state GOP campaign structure, support Republican candidates, and promote the conservative messages of low taxes, limited government, and fiscal responsibility.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico Republican Party</td>
<td>“In partnership with the New Mexico Republican Party, the RNC is providing funding and resources to promote strong Republican leadership grounded in small government, low taxes, and fiscal responsibility.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Republican Party</td>
<td>“In partnership with the Republican Party of Texas, the RNC will build the in-state campaign structure to support Republican leaders with funding for staff and offices, as well as access to the RNC’s vast database of voter information. By enhancing the Texas GOP’s ability to effectively reach Republican voters and tap into the state’s grassroots volunteer base, Republican candidates across the state will benefit from increased energy during the campaign and turnout in November.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.gop.com/news/, 2010

**3.3 Theories of Party Building: Battleground Strategies versus 50-State Strategies**

Over the last several decades, party building has received more emphasis in national party politics and in the development of party strategy. Galvin (2010) observes that Republican presidents since Eisenhower have prioritized party building as an important goal, especially given the Republicans’ minority status for much of the
twentieth century. Meanwhile, for most of this time, Democratic presidents focused more on short-term goals, since, due to the majorities they maintained at the local, state, and national levels, party building was not a priority. However, once their majority status was threatened in the 1990s, Democratic leaders such as Terry McAuliffe, Howard Dean, and Barack Obama recognized the need to build a strong party apparatus. Other scholars have also observed that national parties tend to focus on party building after losses in national elections (Klinkner, 1994), but Galvin emphasizes a new trend in party building, explaining that, “…we may have entered an altogether new period of American politics – one wherein both parties will remain intently focused on party building. In this era of competitive uncertainty, both parties have incentives to make investments in their organizational capacities as they probe for opportunities to establish a durable competitive advantage” (Galvin 2010, p. 262). Bolstering Galvin’s argument, although national party organizations have implemented 50-state strategies at least since 2005 and have engaged in party building in various forms since the nineteenth century, the 2010 elections were unique because both the DNC and the RNC advertised 50-state strategies.

Concurrent with this party building trend, the national and state party organizations have developed a more interdependent relationship since the 1970s, in which the state parties receive valuable national party assistance and resources, and the national parties benefit from the state parties’ more-localized expertise and bases of
grassroots support (Bibby, 1979; Cotter et al., 1984; Huckshorn et al., 1986). Political scientists expected that more extensive party building, in both competitive and non-competitive states, by the national parties would be one consequence of this integrated relationship (Huckshorn et al., 1986). While party building likely will continue to be a central component of this interdependent relationship, a philosophical divide persists among party leaders concerning the underlying goals of party building: Should the national party organizations aim to strengthen all state parties in order to develop a long-lasting and far-reaching party infrastructure, or should the national parties target resources to state parties that are most critical to the current election in order to ensure that candidates in competitive races receive sufficient support?

The primary goal of party building since the development of the first mass-based party during the 1820s and 1830s has been to solve an important collective action problem faced by party organizations: the problem of electoral mobilization (Aldrich, 1995). National party organizations rely on state party organizations to mobilize voters in their states, and strong state party organizations are best equipped to achieve these electoral goals. Of course the expectations and methods of party building have varied greatly across time\textsuperscript{15}, but the emphasis on sustaining a broad base of support at the state-level has remained. In his analysis of the Democratic Party’s approach to party building

\textsuperscript{15} For example, during the Democratic Party’s formative years in the early 1800s, the national party sought to support state party organizations that adopted the Democratic Party label and were capable of selecting presidential electors that would support Andrew Jackson’s candidacy (Aldrich, 1995, p.116-117).
in the 1800s, Aldrich (1995) outlines the “strategic parties hypothesis,” in which he argues that, “A strategic party should allocate resources where its efforts could make the difference between winning and losing” (p. 103). Aldrich finds that, during this key era of party development, the national Democratic Party directed its party building efforts toward states where state party organizations were already organized and where the presidential election would be the most competitive. Even during the late nineteenth century, when party bosses and the patronage system were central to party success, federal patronage was strategically allocated to states with a higher number of electoral votes and that were competitive presidential elections (James, 2006), offering further support for the “strategic parties hypothesis.”

The “strategic parties hypothesis” supports the “battleground-state strategy” or “Electoral College strategy” in contemporary elections identified by campaign finance scholars (La Raja, 2008). Although national party organizations may consider some long-term factors in transferring funds to state party organizations, the most important factor in explaining these fund transfers is the competitiveness of the state in the presidential election (Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008; R. C. Lowry, 2005). Again, Aldrich’s strategic parties hypothesis states that we expect parties to allocate resources to states where these “efforts could make the difference between winning and losing;” this certainly seems to be the aim of the national parties in transferring funds to the state parties.
While short-term electoral considerations have motivated much of the party building that scholars have observed throughout history, since Howard Dean implemented his 50-State Strategy in 2005, the DNC and the RNC have continued to advertise 50-state strategies in election years, which aim to support party organizations in all of the states, through the provision of staff, voter file systems, campaign training, and additional funds. These 50-state strategies represent another important form of national-state party interactions, besides the exclusive focus on fund transfers that has dominated the scholarly literature. Similar to what Herrnson (1989) observes in his study of national party support offered to congressional campaigns, most previous studies “are limited in that they apply only to campaign money, which is the mere tip of the iceberg of party campaign assistance” (p. 301). Financial transfers represent a key form of interaction between the state and national parties, and this aspect of the national-state party relationship is easily measured, due to the availability of campaign finance data from the Federal Election Commission and other sources. Other forms interactions, such as the support offered through 50-state strategies, have not been examined as closely, in part due to the lack of available data.

In advertising their 50-state strategies prior to the 2010 elections, the DNC and the RNC emphasized the importance of supporting all state party organizations, not just parties in battleground states, and emphasized the long-term focus of these strategies. Thus, if the parties follow through on the promises made in advertising these programs,
we would expect to see the national parties considering a wide variety of factors, and not just the state’s competitiveness in upcoming national elections, in allocating resources through these 50-state strategies. If the state and national parties have in fact developed a relationship characterized by greater interdependence, we should find evidence that the national parties recognize the importance of strong state parties to overall party goals, for example, by allocating support and resources to a broad group of state parties through their 50-state strategies. 50-state strategies typically involve the provision of staff, training programs, computer technology, and voter file systems to the state parties, indicating that the national parties recognize that party candidates at all levels would benefit from having this infrastructure in place across the country.

In particular, if the national parties are focused on long-term party building and supporting all of the state parties, as their 50-state strategies suggest, we would expect national party resources to be directed to state parties that are organizationally weak, in order to ensure that the party is capable of competing in races across the country. Furthermore, we would expect the national party organizations to consider both national and state electoral factors in allocating resources, as party victories in state-level races will eventually provide experienced candidates for national-level offices and mobilize local voters in support of the party.

It is unlikely that the national parties have completely abandoned the battleground strategy for the 50-state strategy, since party leaders and politicians are
ultimately motivated to win elections. Rather, it is likely that the national parties have cast a wider net in providing support to the state parties through their 50-state strategies. The debate continues among party leaders concerning the benefits of long-term versus short-term party building strategies, and Kovenock and Roberson (2009) put this debate to the test, using a game theoretic model to examine the optimality of a 50-state strategy over a battleground strategy of national party resource allocation. In the end, they summarize their results as follows: “Subgame equilibria are consistent with a hybrid strategy in which swing states are hotly contested, but parties stochastically target non-battleground strategies” (Kovenock & Roberson, 2009, p. 214). Given the significance of short-term electoral considerations to the calculus of resource allocation, it is highly unlikely that the national parties will provide equal resources to parties in all fifty states; nonetheless, Kovenock and Roberson’s model offers support for a hybrid strategy, which targets both battleground and non-battleground states. While party building is not a new phenomenon, 50-state strategies represent a new form of interaction between the national and state party organizations, one which values both short-term and long-term electoral considerations.

The analysis in this chapter will test the following hypotheses with regard to the interactions between the state and national party organizations, using the 2010 midterm elections as a test case:
• *Hypothesis 1*: Since the 1960s, the extent of interactions between the state and national party organizations has increased, particularly in the form of national party support offered to the state parties, consistent with an integrated relationship between the state and national parties.

• *Hypothesis 2*: The national party organizations will primarily utilize a “battleground strategy” in transferring funds to the state party organizations during the 2010 elections, placing more importance on short-term national electoral concerns over long-term party building concerns.

• *Hypothesis 3*: A majority of state party organizations will be familiar with the 50-state strategies implemented by the DNC and the RNC during the 2010 elections and will report interactions with the national party organizations through these 50-state strategy programs.

• *Hypothesis 4*: The national party organizations will utilize a more diversified strategy in allocating resources to the state parties through their 50-state strategies in 2010, directing support to weak state party organizations and parties in states that may be critical to party success in the future.

Both the DNC and the RNC have indicated a need to expand their assistance to the state parties, and by testing the hypotheses listed above, we will have a better understanding of whether the American party organizations are progressing in the development of an
integrated party system, characterized by interdependent state and national party organizations.

3.4 Data

The analysis in this chapter is primarily conducted using data from a survey of state political party chairpersons that I conducted during the fall of 2011. Surveys were sent to 100 state parties in total (the Democratic and Republican Parties in each state), and overall, 50 surveys were returned, yielding a 50 percent response rate. Of the surveys returned, 28 surveys (56%) were from Democratic Parties, and 22 surveys (44%) were from Republican Parties. This survey replicated many of the questions from previous state party surveys concerning the structure and activities of the state party organizations and contained a series of questions regarding the state parties’ interactions with the Democratic and Republican National Committees, both during the 2010 elections and more generally.

In addition, the analysis in this chapter uses data from previous state party surveys conducted by Cotter et al. and Aldrich. The Cotter et al. (1989) survey data was obtained from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) database and from the book Party Organizations in American Politics (Cotter et al., 1984).

Appendix A contains more detailed information about the survey design and implementation.
and covers the period from 1960-1980\textsuperscript{17}. John Aldrich provided the author with the data from his state party survey, which includes data for the year 1999. Furthermore, data regarding the transfer of funds between the national and state party organizations for various years were collected from the Federal Election Commission website.

In the next section, I examine changes in the extent of interactions between national and state party organizations from 1960 to the present, before more closely examining the nature of national-state party interactions in the 2010 elections. I then analyze these interactions through a series of regression models which investigate the state and national electoral factors that explain national party fund transfers to the state parties and the degree of state-national party interactions through 50-state strategy programs in 2010.

3.5 National-State Party Interactions from 1960-2011

Presenting data collected from surveys of state party chairpersons conducted in 1960-1980, 1999, and 2011, Table 4 highlights the changing levels of involvement between the state and national party organizations during this time period. In particular, on all three state party surveys, state party chairs were asked the following question: “As State Chair, how often do you deal with the National Party Committee with regard to the following matters? Federal appointments, speakers, gaining

\textsuperscript{17} Cotter et al. conducted interviews with the party chairs and executive directors from a sample of 54 state parties from 1978-1980 and distributed surveys to the non-sample parties for this period. Cotter et al. also sent surveys to individuals who had previously served as chairs over the course of the 1960-1975 period.
assistance for state candidates, fund-raising, and national convention activities.” On both the 1999 and 2011 surveys, state party chairs were also asked to rate how often they deal with the national party committees in implementing national committee programs, and in 2011, the party chairs were asked to rate their involvement with the national parties with regard to the development of campaign issues and strategy. Table 4 summarizes the responses to these questions.

In general, the results presented in Table 4 confirm Hypothesis 1, showing that the interactions between the national and state party organizations have increased since the 1960s. The percentage of state parties that reported regular interactions with the national parties increased or remained steady in all areas from 1960 to 2011, except for with regard to federal appointments and speakers, where regular national and state party interactions have decreased since the 1960s. Party interactions pertaining to fund-raising have remained relatively stable, with about 40 percent of state parties reporting regular interactions across the 1960 to 2011 period. Meanwhile, the number of state parties that worked with the national parties in terms of gaining assistance for state candidates and national convention activities increased by twelve and fifteen percent, respectively, from 1960 to 2011. Also, the interaction levels related to the implementation of national committee programs remained steady between 1999 and

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18 Party chairmen were given the following response options: Regularly, Occasionally, or Never.
19 While almost no state parties reported working regularly with the national parties in relation to federal appointments, party interactions concerning speakers increased between 1999 and 2011, even though these levels are lower than those reported in earlier periods.
with 41 and 45 percent of parties reporting regular interactions in each of these years, respectively.

Focusing on the interactions between the state and national parties reported in 2011, as shown in Figure 8, the Republican state parties were more likely to interact with the national parties regularly or occasionally across all activity areas than the Democratic state parties, except for in the area of implementing national committee programs. In every activity area except for federal appointments, nearly all state party organizations reported regular or occasional interactions with the national parties. With regard to speakers, state candidate assistance, fund-raising, and implementing national committee programs, the percentage of either Democratic or Republican state parties reporting regular interactions with the national parties in these areas fell within the range of 33 to 50 percent. Likewise, in terms of interactions related to the development of campaign issues and strategy, a new question that was added to the 2011 state party survey, 33 percent of Democratic state parties and 55 percent of Republican state parties worked with the national committees regularly on these types of activities. A majority of both Democratic and Republican state parties (52 percent and 76 percent, respectively) regularly participated in national convention-related activities with the national parties. Thus, the highest levels of national-state party interaction occurred with regard to national convention activities, an activity area which is mostly focused on national politics. However, nearly all state parties reported regular or occasional
interactions with the national parties across a number of activity areas which are relevant to both state and national politics, such as fund-raising, state candidate assistance, and campaign issues and strategy.

In both 1980 and 2011, state party chairs were also asked an additional question which allows us to examine the extent of interactions between the national and state party organizations: “Are there programs or activities that have been implemented by your state party because of National Party Committee recommendations or financial support?” The results pertaining to this question are presented in Figure 9. In general, the percentage of state parties that reported that programs were implemented because of either national party recommendations or financial support remained relatively stable between 1980 and 2011. However, substantial changes were observed in the number of state parties responding that they had received both national party recommendations and financial support in implementing programs or activities. The percentage of Democratic state parties that received both national party recommendations and financial support increased from twelve to 61 percent between 1980 and 2011, while the Republican state parties reporting both national party recommendations and financial support increased more modestly, from 44 to 52 percent. Thus, the national parties increasingly play a role in supporting party programs and activities at the state level, and, in 2011, the levels of national-state party interactions are more similar for the Democratic and Republican organizations than they were during 1980s.
Overall, the percentage of state parties that implemented programs because of recommendations and financial support from the national party organizations doubled between 1980 and 2011. Meanwhile, the percentage of state parties that reported receiving neither financial support nor recommendations from the national parties in order to implement party programs decreased by 20 percentage points. Therefore, not only did state parties report increased interactions with the national parties across a number of activity areas in 2011, as shown in Table 4, but the state parties increasingly receive support from the national party committees to carry out these activities.
### Table 4: Percent of State Party Organizations Reporting Regular Interactions with National Party Committees, 1960-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federal Appointments</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>State Candidate Assistance</th>
<th>Fundraising</th>
<th>National Convention Activities</th>
<th>Implementing DNC/RNC programs</th>
<th>Development of campaign issues/strategy</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-1964</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-1969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1974</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dems</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reps</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The data presented above for 1960-1964, 1965-1969, 1970-1974, and 1975-1980 was taken directly from this Table 4.4 on p. 70 of Cotter et al. (1984). The 1999 values were derived from Aldrich’s 1999 state party survey dataset and the 2011 values from Hatch’s 2011 state party survey dataset.
Figure 8: Percent of Democratic and Republican State Party Organizations Reporting Interactions with National Party Committees across Activity Areas (Regularly, Occasionally, Never), 2011

N=27 (Democrats); N=20 (Republicans)
Source: Hatch’s 2011 state party survey

**Figure 9: Are there programs or activities that have been implemented by the state party because of National Party Committee recommendations or financial support? 1980 and 2011**

In analyzing the relationship between the national party committees and the state party organizations in the 1980s, Cotter et al. (1984) observed that the RNC primarily interacted with its state-level counterparts through the provision of services, while the DNC’s interactions with Democratic state party organizations mostly involved rule enforcement. Although the Republican state parties still report higher levels of interactions with the national parties across most activity areas than the Democratic state...
parties in 2011, the interaction levels across the Republican and Democratic state parties have become more similar across time, and majorities of both Republican and Democratic state parties now receive support from the national parties in order to implement programs and activities.

The results in this section indicate that, as a whole, the national party organizations now place more value on developing a partnership with the state party organizations through the provision of support and services, as opposed to maintaining a position of authority over the state parties through rule enforcement. In the next section, I discuss the interactions between the state and national party organizations during the 2010 elections in particular.

3.6 National-State Party Interactions during the 2010 Elections

Before proceeding with the analysis of the strategies utilized by the national party committees in allocating resources to the state parties, it is first necessary to

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20 As one specific example of this support, both the DNC and the RNC now operate centralized voter file database systems. As I discussed earlier, the development of state-of-the-art national voter file systems have been key to party integration, as both state and national party organizations benefit from data sharing and enhanced voter-targeting capabilities. On the 2011 state party survey, state party chairs were asked whether or not they use the DNC’s VoteBuilder system or the RNC’s Voter Vault system to maintain and store their state parties’ voter files. Among the survey respondents, 89 percent of Democratic state parties and 96 percent of Republican state parties use these national party voter file systems to store and maintain their state parties’ voter files and to share voter files with other party organizations and candidates. While the national parties develop and control the overall voter file system, all state parties reported that they maintain the authority to determine which candidates and organizations are granted access to their state parties’ voter files. More information about the state parties’ use of the national voter file systems, including frequency tables, is reported in Appendix D.
examine the state of national-state party interactions during the 2010 elections, as this is
the election year under examination in the remainder of this chapter.

3.6.1 General Party Interactions

On the 2011 state party survey, the state parties were asked to rate, on a scale
from zero to ten, their involvement with the national party committees during a typical
presidential election year, a typical midterm election year, and during the 2010 midterm
elections. Table 5 summarizes the state parties’ responses to this set of questions.

Table 5: Average Level of State Party Involvement with National Party Committees
during Election Years (Range: 0 to 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democratic Parties</th>
<th>Republican Parties</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>During typical</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presidential election</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year</td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During typical</strong></td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midterm election year</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During 2010 elections</strong></td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of observations upon which each mean calculation is based is presented in
parentheses.

Overall, the average responses presented in Table 5 show that the interactions
between the state and national party organizations were heightened during the 2010
elections, when compared to the state party chairs’ experiences in previous midterm
elections. On average, state parties rated their interactions with the national party
committees during a typical midterm election year at 5.6 out of ten, while the average
rating for the 2010 elections was 6.5, a rating which is on par with the state parties’
average interactions with the national parties during a typical presidential election year. Although the Republican state parties reported a slightly higher level of involvement with the national party committee during the 2010 elections, the Democratic and Republican parties’ rankings followed the same general trend.

As Table 5 shows, state parties generally rate their interactions with national parties at significantly higher levels during presidential election years than in midterm years. This is likely due to the higher stakes of a presidential election and the higher levels of resources available during presidential election years. However, among the state party chairs who responded to the survey, the 2010 elections particularly stood out as a year in which their involvement with the national parties resembled a presidential as opposed to a midterm election year. Of course there are a number of reasons why the levels of involvement between the state and national parties may have been heightened during the 2010 elections\textsuperscript{21}, but the fact that the state parties rated their involvement levels in 2010 so highly is important for the analysis in this chapter, which seeks to determine whether the national parties were highly committed to supporting the state parties through their 50-state strategies in 2010.

\textsuperscript{21} For example, 2010 was widely considered to be a highly nationalized election year e.g., (Jacobson, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Jones & McDermott, 2011), and because of the significance of national issues during this election, the national parties may have been more concerned with state party activities. In addition, both the DNC and the RNC advertised 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections, which indicates that the national committees were planning to increase their assistance to the state parties. Of course these results are based on the state party chairs’ perceptions of their parties’ involvement with the national parties, which is a matter of opinion.
On the 2011 survey, the state parties were also asked to indicate the specific areas in which they interacted with the national parties during the 2010 elections. The responses to this question are presented in Figure 10. The Democratic and Republican state party organizations reported similar areas of interaction with their respective national party committees during the 2010 elections. Overall, the state parties were least likely to interact with the national parties with regard to candidate recruitment and the development campaign issues, with overall interaction rates of thirteen and 22 percent, respectively. The state parties reported moderate levels of interaction in terms of the implementation of national party programs and the development of campaign strategy, with 30 and 33 percent of parties reporting interactions in these areas, respectively. Meanwhile, about half of the Democratic and Republican state parties interacted with the national parties with regard to the provision of party staff and staff training. The highest levels of interaction occurred in the areas of voter mobilization and party finances. Eighty percent of both Democratic and Republican state party organizations worked with the national parties in relation to voter mobilization activities, and 84 percent of Democratic organizations and 62 percent of Republican organizations interacted with the national parties in the area of party finances. Thus, the state and national parties appear to work independently with regard to more locally-oriented campaign activities, such as candidate recruitment and campaign issue development, whereas the state and national parties collaborate most frequently on campaign
activities that are generally beneficial to all party candidates, such as party staff, voter
mobilization, and party finances.

Overall, the results in this section indicate that the state and national party
organizations interacted more frequently in 2010 than is common during typical
midterm election years, and these interactions were most likely to occur with regard to
voter mobilization and party finance activities. While these results provide some insight
into the nature of national-state party interactions during the 2010 elections, in the
sections that follow I examine specific aspects of the relationship between the national
and state parties in the 2010 elections, especially in terms of the assistance offered to the
state parties through financial transfers and 50-state strategies.
### Figure 10: Percent of State Party Organizations Reporting Interactions with National Party Committees in Specific Activity Areas during the 2010 Elections

Source: Hatch’s 2011 state party survey; Note: These calculations exclude the three (2 Democratic parties and 1 Republican party) state parties that answered "Don't know" in response to this survey question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Area</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing National Committee Programs</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of party staff &amp; training</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter contact/mobilization efforts</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate recruitment</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of campaign issues</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of campaign strategy</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party finances</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.2 National Party Fund Transfers to the State Parties in the 2010 Elections

The state party chairs’ responses to the 2011 state party survey indicate that the interactions between the state and national party organizations were heightened during the 2010 elections. When examining national party financial transfers to the state parties during the 2010 elections, do we observe an upward trend in this particular type of party interaction?

Figure 11 shows the total number of funds transferred by the DNC and the RNC to all of the state party organizations in midterm election years from 1994 to 2010, and Figure 12 shows the average number of funds transferred to the state parties across this same time period. By focusing on this time period, I am able to examine how the quantity of national party financial transfers has changed from the pre- to the post-BCRA era in midterm election years. In midterm elections from 1994 to 2002, the total and average number of funds transferred by both the DNC and the RNC steadily increased. This trend is expected given the increasing importance of soft money to overall party campaign strategy during this time period, and it is not surprising that this upward trend also occurred in midterm election years during this period, as this use of

Data concerning national party fund transfers to the state parties for various years were collected from the Federal Election Commission. All values were adjusted to constant 2010 dollars using the CPI Inflation Calculator from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).
soft money became more common\textsuperscript{23}. Starting in 2006, we would expect the national parties to transfer fewer funds to the state parties, since this was the first midterm election after the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which banned the national parties from raising or spending soft money. After taking inflation into account, in 2006, the DNC and the RNC transferred a total of $27.4 million and $40.5 million, respectively, compared to $40.2 and $71.5 million in 2002. Although these 2006 amounts are substantially lower than the total transfers for 2002, the last election before the BCRA had gone into effect, they are similar to the amounts transferred in 1998, in which DNC and RNC transferred the equivalent of $20.8 million and $37.1 million to the states, respectively.

Turning our attention to national party financial transfers in the 2010 elections in particular in Figure 11 and Figure 12, we see that the total and average transfers actually declined between 2006 and 2010. In 2010, the DNC and RNC transferred a combined total of $53.4 million, compared to the equivalent of $67.9 million in 2006. Looking at the graphs more closely, it is clear that this decrease in total national transfers in 2010 is primarily driven by the RNC’s financial activities.

\textsuperscript{23} In this chapter, I exclusively focus on financial transfers during midterm election years, in order to better understand how fund transfers in the 2010 elections compare to other midterm election years, since the 2010 elections are the primary focus of the data analyzed this chapter. The goal of this chapter is not to provide a complete examination of national party fund transfers but rather to compare the strategies utilized by the national parties in allocating resources to the state parties through fund transfers and 50-state strategies. Other scholars have fully analyzed national party fund transfers to the state parties in presidential and midterm election years and have closely examined the differences between hard money and soft money transfers prior to the BCRA (e.g., Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008; R. C. Lowry, 2005).
Figure 11: Total National Party Fund Transfers to State Parties in Midterm Election Years, 1994-2010

Figure 12: Average National Party Fund Transfers to State Parties in Midterm Election Years, 1994-2010
After accounting for inflation, between 2006 and 2010, the RNC’s total transfers to the state parties decreased from $40.5 million to $21.4 million. Meanwhile, the DNC’s state party transfers increased modestly between 2006 and 2010, from $27.4 million to $32.0 million. Overall, an examination of the national parties’ fund transfers to the state parties in 2010 indicates that the interactions between the national and state parties in this area have only fluctuated modestly in the post-BCRA midterm elections of 2006 and 2010. Furthermore, for every other midterm election in the 1994 to 2010 period, the
RNC’s transfers exceeded the DNC’s state party transfers, but in 2010, the DNC actually outpaced the RNC in this area of party interaction\textsuperscript{24}.

Of course, these total financial transfer figures do not provide us with any information about the breadth of national party financial transfers. How were national party financial transfers dispersed across the states? Figure 12 depicts the average financial transfers between the national and state party organizations from 1994 to 2010, and Figure 13 presents a measure of dispersion for these average values: the coefficient of variation, or the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean\textsuperscript{25}.

\textsuperscript{24} The decline in Republican national party transfers can partly be explained by the fund-raising difficulties faced by the RNC and Chairman Michael Steele during the 2010 elections. Because of these difficulties, Republican fund-raising largely fell to other party groups, such as the Republican Governors Association, as well as external groups, such as American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS (Drucker, 2010). For example, Republican Governors Association (RGA) Chairman Haley Barbour explained that the RGA had to raise an extra $10 million that normally would have been invested in governors’ races by the RNC through transfers to the state party organizations (Hallow, 2010). Meanwhile, reports indicated that interest groups spent five times more on the 2010 elections than they did in 2006, especially following the \textit{Citizens United vs. FEC} Supreme Court ruling. An October 2010 \textit{Washington Post} article explained that, “The bulk of [external-group] money is being spent by conservatives, who have swamped their Democratic-aligned competition by 7 to 1 in recent weeks” (Farnam & Eggen, 2010). Meanwhile, in this same article, journalists observed that, “While the interest group money has primarily helped Republicans, Democrats have proved better at raising money for the party itself and for individual candidates.” The RNC’s fund-raising difficulties combined with the expanded role of interest groups meant that state parties and state candidates did not receive as much financial support from the RNC as they did in 2006. Democrats, on the other hand, were less likely to rely on interest group support, partly because President Obama publicly condemned the influence of interest groups in Washington (Farnam & Eggen, 2010).

\textsuperscript{25} In this case, the coefficient of variation, or the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean, is used as a measure of dispersion instead of the standard deviation, because the standard deviation cannot be compared in a meaningful way if the mean values vary greatly across variables (For example, in this case, the average fund transfers vary widely across election years). It is generally recommended to use the coefficient of variation instead of the standard deviation when making comparisons between variables with widely different means or different units. Higher values of the coefficient of variation indicate higher variability.
From 2006 to 2010, the DNC’s average transfer to the state parties increased from $548,000 to $641,000, while the RNC’s average transfer amount decreased from $809,000 to $428,000 over this same period. As Figure 13 shows, the overall coefficient of variation generally increased from the pre-BCRA period (1996-2002) to the post-BCRA period (2006-2010), meaning that, across time, there is greater variation in the financial transfer amount given by the national parties across the states. In 2002, the coefficient of variation remained quite low for the Republicans, while it increased for the Democrats, and in 2006, the level of variation increased for both the Republicans and the Democrats. As we might expect, after the passage of the BCRA, the national parties did not have access to the huge sums of soft money to which they were accustomed and thus seem to have been more strategic in allocating funds to the state parties, which is demonstrated by the higher levels of variation observed in 2006 as compared to the pre-BCRA election years. After the passage of the BCRA, the amount of national party funds transferred to the state parties varied more widely across the states.

In the 2010 elections, the coefficient of variation declined rather sharply for the Democrats and was close to the level of dispersion observed for the Democrats in 1998. Meanwhile, the coefficient of variation increased substantially for the Republicans between 2006 and 2010. These differences between the Democrats and Republicans in 2010 may reflect the RNC’s fund-raising challenges in this election year; because the RNC raised less money than expected in 2010, the party may have been forced to focus
its financial resources in the most competitive states, leaving little to room to transfer funds to state parties in less competitive states. Nevertheless, the fact that the overall level of dispersion has increased across time offers some initial support for the battleground strategy discussed earlier in this chapter, which essentially argues that the parties will be more likely to allocate resources to the state parties that are more significant to party victory in national elections. Under such a strategy, we would expect there to be large differences in the amount of funds allocated to battleground and non-battleground states. However, there are clearly some important differences in the ways that the DNC and the RNC dispersed funds to the state parties in the 2010 elections.

Figure 14 offers further support for the increasing importance of the battleground strategy since the passage of the BCRA. For each midterm election year from 1994 to 2010, the graphs in Figure 14 plot the amount of national party funds transferred to each state party by the margin between the Democratic and Republican vote percentage in the previous presidential election in each state. By examining the relationship between the amount of funds transferred and the competitiveness of the most recent presidential election in the states, we can better understand whether the national parties are targeting more of their resources to presidential battleground states, even during midterm election years. When looking at the graphs in Figure 14 from left to right, the trend is quite clear. Across time, the relationship between national party

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financial transfers in midterm elections and the states’ competitiveness in presidential elections has grown stronger.

In 1994, 1998, and 2002, the highest national party financial transfers were concentrated in states with the smallest presidential vote margins in the previous election, but the differences between financial transfers in states with small and large presidential vote margins were not as stark as in 2006 and 2010. In 2006 and 2010, most of the largest financial transfers were granted to state parties in states with small vote margins in the previous presidential election. For example, in 2006, only two state parties in states with presidential vote margins greater than 20 points received fund transfers of a million dollars or greater, and in 2010, only one state party in a state with a presidential vote margin greater than 20 points received such a fund transfer from the national party. In 2010, the average financial transfer to state parties in states with presidential vote margins less than 20 points was $770,000 for the Democrats and $534,000 for the Republicans, compared to averages of $391,000 and $221,000 for states with presidential vote margins greater than 20 points. In 2006 and 2010, the curves in Figure 14 almost flat line after a state’s presidential vote margin exceeds 25 points, whereas in 1994, 1998, and 2002, there is a less clear relationship between financial transfers and previous presidential vote margin. As the 2010 graph in Figure 14 shows, this relationship between presidential battleground status and financial transfers seems to be especially strong in the case of the RNC during the 2010 elections.
Figure 14: National Party Fund Transfers to the State Party Organizations in Midterm Elections, by Major Party Vote Margin in the Previous Presidential Election, 1994-2010

Source: Federal Election Commission, CQ Press Voting & Elections Collection; Note: Dollars adjusted to constant 2010 dollars
Figure 15 looks at the relationship between state-level competitiveness in presidential elections and national party financial transfers to the state parties from another angle. In Figure 15, the average presidential vote margin in the previous election is plotted for states that were among the top ten and bottom ten states in total financial transfers received from the national parties in midterm election years. In 1998, the average presidential vote margin among the states that received the highest and lowest national party transfers was virtually the same, with a difference of less than half a point between these two groups, and in 1994 the difference was also quite low, at about 5 points. However, in midterm elections from 2002 to 2010, the difference in presidential vote margins for states that received the highest and lowest total financial transfers was about twelve points. Thus, especially since the passage of the BCRA, the national parties have concentrated more of their resources in states that are competitive in national elections.

It is quite remarkable that this strong of a relationship exists between national party financial transfers and a state’s presidential battleground status in post-BCRA elections, even during the midterm elections which are under consideration in Figure 14 and Figure 15. These results suggest that the national party organizations consider a state’s battleground status in presidential elections, even when making fund transfer decisions in midterm elections. In later sections of this chapter, I will more closely
examine this possibility in a multivariate model, but the results in this section offer some initial support for expectations expressed in Hypothesis 2.

Figure 15: Average Major Party Vote Margin in Previous Presidential Election among States that Received Highest and Lowest Total National Party Financial Transfers in Midterm Elections, 1994-2010

3.6.3 50-State Strategies and Party Interactions in the 2010 Elections

The data presented in the previous section suggests that the national parties’ focus on supporting battleground states through financial transfers has only intensified over time, especially since the passage of the BCRA. As I discussed in greater detail in previous sections, in advance of the 2010 elections, both the DNC and the RNC advertised 50-state strategies, the Organizing for America (OFA) program and the Delaware-to-Hawaii (D2H) campaign, respectively, in which they pledged to increase their support for the state party organizations across the country through the provision
of staff, campaign training, and voter mobilization assistance, for example. Since political parties are motivated to win elections and thus increase their support among the public and party members, it is of course possible that the DNC and the RNC advertised these 50-state strategies but did not follow through on their implementation.

For example, a national party may advertise party rebuilding strategies aimed at providing support to the state parties but may lack the resources to carry out these programs or may believe that the party will present a more favorable image simply by publicizing the party’s devotion to state and local politics, even if this advertising is followed by inaction. Following this line of thought, it is first necessary to establish that the state party organizations were actually aware of the national parties’ 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections. The first question that all state party chairs were asked to answer with regard to OFA or D2H on the 2011 state party survey was, “How familiar are you with the Organizing for America/Delaware-to-Hawaii program carried out by the Democratic/Republican National Committee during the 2010 elections?” The state parties’ responses to this question are displayed in Figure 16.

As the results in Figure 16 demonstrate, a large majority of state parties were familiar with the 50-state strategies that the national parties advertised. All Democratic state party survey respondents were very or somewhat familiar with the OFA program, and 86.4 percent of Republican respondents were very or somewhat familiar with the D2H campaign. Democratic state parties were more likely than Republican state parties
to be *very* familiar with the 50-state program, with 78.6 percent of Democrats reporting that they were very familiar compared to 45.5 percent of Republicans. Nevertheless, it is important that, on the whole, most state parties were aware of the national parties’ 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections.

![Graph showing the degree of state party chair familiarity with the national parties' 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections.]

Source: Hatch’s 2011 state party survey

**Figure 16: Degree of State Party Chair Familiarity with the National Parties’ 50-State Strategies during the 2010 Elections (the DNC’s “Organizing for America” program and the RNC’s “Delaware-to-Hawaii” campaign)**

Next, state party chairs were asked the following question about the national parties’ 50-state strategies: “To your knowledge, has the DNC/RNC been active in your state through the Organizing for America program/Delaware-to-Hawaii Victory Campaign?” The responses to this question are summarized in Figure 17. Overall, majorities of both Democratic and Republican state parties reported that the national parties were active in their states through the OFA or D2H programs; 73.5 percent of all
state parties reported that these national party programs were very or somewhat active in their states. However, Democratic state parties were far more likely to report 50-state strategy activity in their states. With 50 percent of Democratic state parties reporting that the DNC was very active in their states through OFA and 39.3 percent reporting that the DNC was somewhat active, a total of 89.3 percent of Democratic state parties reported OFA activity in their states. Meanwhile, one-third of Republican state parties reported that D2H was very active in their states and 19.1 percent reported that the RNC was somewhat active through this program, for a total of 52.4 percent of Republican state parties reporting interactions with D2H in the 2010 elections.

It is also important to note the number of state parties that did not know whether the national parties were active in their states through the 50-state programs; seven percent of Democratic state parties reported that they did not know whether OFA was active in their state, compared to one-third of Republican state parties that selected “I don’t know” in response to this question. Also, 9.5 percent of Republican state parties reported that D2H was not at all active in their states, while no Democratic state parties indicated a complete lack of OFA activity in their states.
Evidently, based on the results reported in Figure 17, the DNC was far more active in the states through its 50-state program than the RNC, and the Democratic state parties were more aware of the DNC’s activities through this program than the Republican state parties. While the RNC may not have been as successful in implementing and advertising its 50-state program in the states, it is noteworthy that a majority of Republican state parties still reported interactions with the RNC through D2H in 2010.

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26 Considering the facts that RNC Chairman Michael Steele did not receive widespread support from other party leaders in implementing D2H, and the RNC faced significant fundraising difficulties in 2010, it is not surprising that the DNC’s OFA program, with the backing of President Obama’s massive email list and campaign apparatus, was more successful in its implementation.
Through their 50-state strategies, the DNC and the RNC indicated that they would support the state party organizations by providing such services as additional staff, campaign training, and voter mobilization assistance. However, due to a lack of available data, to date no analysis exists which examines the types of services that the national parties actually provided through their 50-state programs. On the 2011 state party survey, state party chairs were asked the following question: “If the Organizing for America program/Delaware-to-Hawaii Victory Campaign has been active in your state, in what areas was this program influential?” The areas in which the state parties reported interactions with the national parties through OFA or D2H are presented in Figure 18.\footnote{The response totals for this question should be viewed with some caution, since a relatively small number of respondents answered this survey question.}
Figure 18: Percent of State Parties Reporting Interactions with National Parties in Various Areas through the National Parties’ 50-State Strategies during the 2010 Elections

Source: Hatch’s 2011 state party survey; Note: These calculations exclude the nine state parties (2 Democratic parties and 7 Republican parties) that answered “Don’t know” in response to this survey question.
By far, the high levels of interaction between the state and national parties through the national parties’ 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections occurred in the area of voter contact and mobilization efforts, with 91.7 percent of Democratic state parties and 75.0 percent of Republican state parties reporting involvement in this area. As the results in Figure 18 indicate, the state parties reported that the next most influential area of national party involvement in their states through the 50-state strategies occurred with regard to the provision of party staff and staff training, with one-third of all state parties that responded to this question reporting these types of interactions. Meanwhile, about one-quarter of state parties reported interacting with national parties on the development of campaign issues and campaign strategy through the 50-state strategies. The lowest levels of involvement occurred in the area of candidate recruitment, with less than ten percent of state parties reporting interactions in this area.

While the results for most of the activity areas were quite consistent between the Democratic and Republican state parties, the reported interactions with regard to party finances were more mixed between parties. A majority, or 58.3 percent, of Republican state parties reported interactions with the national parties in the area of party finances, compared to only 16.7 percent of Democratic state parties. Of course these results should be viewed with caution, due to the small sample size, but it is worth noting that this is the only area where the implementation of OFA versus D2H seemed to diverge...
substantially. If we return to Figure 10, which presented the areas where the state parties reported interacting with the national parties more generally during the 2010 elections, large majorities of both Democrats and Republicans (84 percent and 62 percent, respectively) reported interacting with the national parties in terms of party finances. Among the Democratic state parties, many of the state party chairs that reported interacting with the national parties with regard to party finances during the 2010 elections more generally did not report party finance interactions through OFA.

At least for the Democrats, then, it seems that national-state party interactions through OFA were distinct from more general party interactions in some activity areas, as a majority of Democratic state parties interacted with the national party with regard to party finances but these interactions apparently did not occur through the OFA program. These differences between the Democrats and Republicans in terms of party finance interactions may reflect the different structures of OFA and D2H. While OFA was presented as a “special project of the DNC” and thus may have been more clearly separated from normal DNC operations, D2H was primarily a campaign strategy directed by RNC Chairman Michael Steele.

Looking more closely at those parties that answered both the “2010 interaction” question reported in Figure 10 and the “50-state strategy interaction” question reported in Figure 18, 21.1 percent of Democratic state parties that reported interacting with the national parties in terms of party finances during the 2010 elections also reported interacting with the national parties with regard to party finances through OFA. For the Republicans, 71.4 percent of those parties that reported general national party interactions in terms of party finances during the 2010 elections also reported these types of interactions through D2H.
In the previous section, it was clear that the national parties were more likely to transfer larger amounts of funds to state parties located in presidential battleground states. As this chapter ultimately seeks to compare the strategies utilized in national party financial transfers versus the allocation of assistance through 50-state strategies, we also need to consider whether battleground states were more likely to receive support from the national parties through 50-state strategies in the 2010 elections. Table 6 displays the average 2008 presidential vote margin by the level of interaction that the state parties reported with the national parties through OFA or D2H.

**Table 6: Average 2008 Major Party Presidential Vote Margin, by the Level of Reported Interactions between the National and State Parties through 50-State Strategies, 2010 Elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Interaction with OFA/D2H</th>
<th>Average 2008 Major Party Presidential Vote Margin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic Parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very active</td>
<td>15.0 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat/Not very active</td>
<td>16.7 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all active</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>20.0 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of observations upon which each mean calculation is based is presented in parentheses. The average presidential vote margin among all states in 2008 was 16.5 points, with a range of .14 to 46 points. In the sample of states that responded to the 2011 state party survey the average presidential vote margin in 2008 was 16.6 points, with a range of 1 to 45 points.

Although these results should be viewed with caution due to the small number of cases in each cell of Table 6, these mean calculations suggest that parties with the smallest presidential vote margins in the previous presidential election were not substantially more likely to receive support through the national parties’ 50-state
strategies in the 2010 elections. Although the state parties who reported that OFA or D2H was very active in their states had slightly lower average presidential vote margins in the previous presidential elections, the average values are still within one to two points of the mean presidential vote margin for states that reported that OFA or D2H activity in their states. In other words, presidential battleground states may have been more likely to receive high levels of support through the national parties’ 50-state strategies, but the figures reported in Table 6 do not represent a “battleground strategy,” in which the battleground states receive significantly more support, as we observed with national party financial transfers in the previous section.

In order to examine the relationship between national party financial interactions and interactions through the 50-state strategies, Table 7 shows the average national party financial transfer to the state parties, by the level of interaction reported between the state and national parties through OFA or D2H. Overall, the state parties that reported the highest levels of interactions with the national parties through OFA or D2H also received larger national party financial transfers, on average, than state parties that reported lower levels of interaction. Among the Republican state parties, those who reported no involvement with the national party’s 50-state strategy or did not know whether their party interacted with the national party through this program received the lowest levels of national party financial transfers.
Table 7: Average National Party Fund Transfer, by the Level of Reported Interactions between the National and State Parties through 50-State Strategies, 2010 Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Interaction with OFA/D2H</th>
<th>Democratic Parties</th>
<th>Republican Parties</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very active</td>
<td>$783,000 (14)</td>
<td>$337,000 (7)</td>
<td>$634,000 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat/Not very active</td>
<td>$374,000 (12)</td>
<td>$651,000 (5)</td>
<td>$455,000 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all active</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>$48,000 (2)</td>
<td>$48,000 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>$685,000 (2)</td>
<td>$76,000 (7)</td>
<td>$212,000 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of observations upon which each mean calculation is based is presented in parentheses.

The average national party transfer received among all states and parties in 2010 was $534,000, with a range of $35,000 to $4,800,000. In the sample of states that responded to the 2011 state party survey, the average national party transfer received in 2010 was $463,000, with a range of $38,000 to $2,590,000.

Overall, the results in this section indicate that a majority of state parties were familiar with the national parties’ 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections and majorities also reported interacting with the national parties through these strategies; however, the Democratic state parties were more likely than the Republican state parties to report familiarity and interactions with these national party programs. Furthermore, the results from the 2011 state party survey show that by far the most significant national-state party interactions through these 50-state strategies occurred in the area of voter mobilization. Overall, these results support the expectations laid out in Hypothesis 3. While there is some indication from the descriptive statistics presented in the previous two sections that the national parties are more likely to operate according to a battleground strategy in transferring funds to the state parties than in offering assistance through their 50-state strategies, in the next sections I more closely examine
the strategies utilized by the national parties in allocating different types of resources to
the state parties.

3.7 National Party Resource Allocation Strategies during the 2010 Elections

This section seeks to uncover the strategies utilized by the DNC and the RNC in
allocating resources to the state parties during the 2010 elections, through a multivariate
analysis of both national party financial transfers to the state parties and the levels of
interaction between the national and state parties through 50-state strategies. In
particular, the analysis in this section investigates the expectations laid out in
Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4, which essentially argue that the national parties will
primarily utilize a battleground strategy in making financial transfers to the state parties
but will employ a more diversified strategy in offering assistance to the state parties
through 50-state strategies, considering such factors as the parties’ organizational
strength and competitiveness in state and national elections.

In particular, this section will include two sets of multivariate models to explain
party activities in the 2010 elections: one explaining the national parties’ financial
transfers to the state parties and the other explaining the level of interaction between the
state and national parties through the national parties’ 50-state strategies. Both sets of
models will include the same independent variables, in order to compare the strategies
used by the national parties in providing different types of support to the state party
organizations. The unit of analysis for all of these models is the state party, and because
both sets of models rely on variables that were measured using data from the 2011 state party survey, these analyses only include the 50 state parties that responded to the state party survey29.

In the first set of models, the dependent variable is the amount funds transferred by the DNC or RNC during the 2010 election cycle to each state party in the dataset30. These financial transfers will be analyzed using ordinary least squares regression. In the second set of models, the dependent variable is the level of involvement of the national parties with each state party through the national parties’ 50-state strategies during the 2010 elections. On the 2011 state party survey, state party chairs were asked the following question: “To your knowledge, has the DNC/RNC been active in your state through the Organizing for America program/Delaware-to-Hawaii Victory Campaign?” The dependent variable for this set of models is coded as follows: “3” if a national party was very active in a state through the 50-state strategy, “2” if a national party was somewhat or not very active in state through the 50-state strategy, and “0” if a state party reported that the national party was not active in the state or did not know if the national party was active in the through the 50-state strategy. Because the dependent variable in this case consists of ordered categories ranging from “not

29 Refer to Appendix A for more information about the sample of state parties that responded to the 2011 state party survey.
30 Among the sample of states that responded to the 2011 state party survey, the average national party transfer received in 2010 was $463,000 and the median was $250,183, with a range of $38,000 to $2,590,000.
active” to “very active,” an ordered logit model will be used to analyze the level of 50-state strategy activity in the states\textsuperscript{31}.

The first independent variable included in these models is a measure of state party organizational strength. This measure was derived using the state parties’ responses to a series of questions pertaining to the parties’ organization complexity, programmatic capacity, and technological capacity on the 2011 state party survey; higher values of this index indicate higher levels of organizational strength\textsuperscript{32}. It is expected that state party organizational strength will not factor into the national parties’ financial transfer decisions, because financial transfers have traditionally been focused on supporting state parties in states that are competitive in national elections. However, in advertising their 50-state strategies, both the DNC and the RNC emphasized a need to support parties in all states so that the party could be competitive across the country. Because 50-state strategies are often presented with the goal of party building in mind, it is expected that the national parties will be more likely to be active through their 50-state strategies in states with low state party organizational strength scores.

The next independent variable is the state’s competitiveness in the 2008 presidential election. This is measured as the major party presidential vote margin in

\textsuperscript{31} Among the sample of state parties that responded to the state party survey, 43 percent reported that the national party was very active in their states through the 50-state strategy, 35 percent reported that the national party was somewhat or not very active, and 22 percent indicated that the national party was not active through the 50-state strategy.

\textsuperscript{32} The state party organizational strength index ranges from .11 to 1, with a mean value of .60 and a median value of .66. Information about the construction of this index can be found in Appendix B.
the 2008 election in each state\textsuperscript{33}. Previous research has shown that a state’s battleground status is a significant predictor of national party financial transfers, and the exploratory analysis presented earlier in this chapter suggests that this was also the case during the 2010 midterm elections. Thus, it is expected that the national parties consider the competitiveness of the states in recent presidential elections in allocating financial resources to the state parties, with the assumption that these states may also be competitive in the current midterm election and upcoming presidential election.

In a midterm election year, it is possible that the national parties could view a state’s presidential election competitiveness retrospectively, considering the results of the previous presidential election, or prospectively, considering a state’s expected level of competitiveness in the upcoming presidential election. In order to test whether the national parties were acting prospectively in transferring funds to the state parties, another battleground variable is included in these models which measures the states’ expected battleground status in the 2012 presidential election. In December 2011, CNN issued its first list of expected battleground states that would likely be most critical in the 2012 presidential election. CNN included sixteen states in its early battleground assessment\textsuperscript{34}. For this variable, states that were listed as expected battlegrounds were

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{33} Among the state parties that responded to the state party survey, the average presidential vote margin was 16.6 percentage points, with a median value of 15.0 and a range of 1 to 45 points.

\textsuperscript{34} These battleground rankings for December 2011 were found at \url{http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2012/electoral-map.html}. Although these estimates were issued one year after the 2010 elections, which is time period under investigation in this analysis, given the large number of
\end{flushleft}
coded as “1” and those that were not listed as expected battlegrounds were coded as “0”35. It is expected that both variables measuring state battleground status will be especially significant in predicting the national parties’ financial transfers to the states.

In order to measure the states’ competitiveness in the 2010 elections, three separate variables were included which measure the competitiveness or significance of the states’ state legislative, gubernatorial, and congressional elections. Note that these variables are intended to indicate the expected competitiveness of state- and national-level elections in the states, as measured prior to the 2010 elections, in order to capture the state electoral environments that the national parties would have encountered in making resource allocation decisions. It is expected that the state legislative and gubernatorial election variables will be most significant in predicting the national parties’ activity levels through their 50-state strategies, because one of the goals of these strategies was to ensure that the party was competitive up and down the ballot. On the other hand, it is expected that national party financial transfers to the state parties will be more focused on the states’ competitiveness in national elections, including congressional elections.

35 Among the states that answered the 2011 state party survey, 24 percent of state parties were located in states listed as expected 2012 battlegrounds in CNN’s early assessment.
In order to measure the significance of the 2010 state legislative elections in a state, a variable is included which measures the proportion of state senate seats that were up for election in each state in 2010. It is expected that the national parties will be more likely to allocate resources, especially 50-state strategy resources, to the states which have a higher proportion of state senate seats up for election. In order to measure the competitiveness of the 2010 gubernatorial elections in the states, state parties were coded as follows: “0” for parties in states with no gubernatorial election in 2010; “1” for parties in states where the gubernatorial election was rated as “safe” or “likely” for one party; “2” for parties in states with a “leaning” or “tossup” gubernatorial election. In order to measure whether a state had competitive congressional elections in 2010, a variable was created which indicated the number of U.S. House or U.S. Senate races in a state that were rated as tossup or leaning elections by Roll Call.

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36 The data for this variable was obtained from Klarner’s (2011) State Partisan Balance dataset. Four states in the sample did not have any state senate seats up for election in 2010. The average value for the states included in this analysis is a proportion of .63. The proportion of state house seats up for election was not included in this model because, in nearly all states, all of the state house seats were up for election in 2010; thus, there was not enough variance on this variable to result in any meaningful analysis.

37 These ratings were based on the majority rating given to the gubernatorial elections in each state by five separate sources: NPR, CQ-Roll Call, Cook Political Report, Rothenberg Political Report, and Sabato’s Crystal Ball. The gubernatorial election ratings from all of these sources were obtained from, http://www.npr.org/elections2010/scorecard/gubernatorial.php. Among the sample of state parties included in this analysis, 28 percent did not have a gubernatorial election in their states in 2010, 18 percent faced “safe” gubernatorial elections, and 42 percent were located in states with a “leaning” or “tossup” gubernatorial elections.

38 These congressional election rating were located at http://www.rollcall.com/politics/race_rating_change_tracker_chart.html. Among the states that answered the 2011 state party survey, the number of tossup or leaning congressional races in 2010 ranged from zero to seven.
Last, a control for a state’s 2010 population was also included in these models, since the national parties may target more resources to states with larger populations. The state parties in these larger states have the potential to mobilize more voters in support of the party, and states with larger populations also have a larger number of congressional seats and Electoral Votes at stake in national elections39.

3.7.1 Explaining National Party Fund Transfers to the State Party Organizations during the 2010 Elections

Table 8 presents the results of the regression analysis explaining the funds transferred by the DNC and the RNC to the state party organizations during the 2010 midterm elections. The first column presents the regression results for a model pooling all cases, while the second and third columns present separate models for the DNC and RNC.

Turning to the regression results concerning all parties in the first column of Table 8, there are several explanatory variables of particular interest: the 2008 presidential vote margin in each state, the number of leaning or tossup congressional races in each state in 2010, and the competitiveness of the 2010 gubernatorial election in each state. As expected, the presidential vote margin in the previous presidential election is a significant variable in explaining the amount of funds transferred by the national parties to the state parties.

39 In the sample of state parties included in the 2011 state party survey, the average population from the 2010 U.S. Census was 5.6 million, with a median of 2.9 million and a range of 626,000 to 37.3 million.
Table 8: Explaining National Party Fund Transfers to the State Party Organizations during the 2010 Election Cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>All Cases</th>
<th>DNC</th>
<th>RNC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 presidential vote margin</td>
<td>-15,270.25*</td>
<td>-26,152.39*</td>
<td>3,313.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6,384.06)</td>
<td>(10,640.33)</td>
<td>(4,358.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 presidential election battleground status</td>
<td>219,034.30</td>
<td>48,363.56</td>
<td>476,080.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(169,497.90)</td>
<td>(279,348.10)</td>
<td>(108,410.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010</td>
<td>153,215.90***</td>
<td>149,048.70**</td>
<td>175,627.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>congressional elections</td>
<td>(38,204.06)</td>
<td>(51,370.77)</td>
<td>(28,636.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party organizational strength</td>
<td>461,630.10+</td>
<td>-66,367.87</td>
<td>269,238.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(255,132.50)</td>
<td>(474,355.70)</td>
<td>(263,545.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of state senate seats</td>
<td>-198,884.10</td>
<td>-268,644.60</td>
<td>-220,289.70+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up for election</td>
<td>(160,074.60)</td>
<td>(256,467.90)</td>
<td>(122,502.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of 2010</td>
<td>463,358.80***</td>
<td>543,281.60**</td>
<td>219,277.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gubernatorial election</td>
<td>(96,332.52)</td>
<td>(177,542.10)</td>
<td>(81,308.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 state population</td>
<td>-5,702.26</td>
<td>12,382.12</td>
<td>-22,777.54**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8,830.64)</td>
<td>(15,383.89)</td>
<td>(5,585.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-95,589.01</td>
<td>456,009.50</td>
<td>-210,260.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(219,794.30)</td>
<td>(459,989.10)</td>
<td>(181,503.70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 45 25 20
Adjusted R² .73 .81 .88
F F(7,37)=18.2, p≤.000 F(7,17)=16.0, p≤.000 F(7,12)=20.7, p≤.000

Notes: Entries are ordinary least squares unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Asterisks signify significance levels of coefficients: + p≤.10, * p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001

Holding all other independent variables constant, for every one unit increase in the 2008 presidential vote margin in a state, the amount of money transferred by the national party to the state party in that state decreases by approximately $15,300. Thus, state party organizations located in states with smaller presidential vote margins in recent elections are more likely to receive higher fund transfers from the national parties. However, the coefficient for a state’s expected battleground status in the 2012 presidential elections is not significant. Thus, when controlling for both retrospective
and prospective presidential battleground measures in the same model, the retrospective evaluations of a state’s competitiveness in presidential elections are given more weight by the national parties than prospective evaluations during a midterm election year\textsuperscript{40}.

In addition, as would be expected from a national party organization during a midterm election year, a state’s competitiveness in the congressional elections is important in explaining the amount of funds received by a state party from the national party. As the number of leaning or tossup U.S. House and Senate races in a state increases by one, a state party in that state is expected to receive an additional $153,200. Comparing these two national-level effects, the standardized regression coefficients indicate that the competitiveness of the current congressional elections are nearly two times more important in predicting national party transfers in 2010 than the competitiveness of the previous presidential election in the state\textsuperscript{41}.

In addition, the results in column 1 of Table 8 indicate that state parties located in states with competitive gubernatorial elections are more likely to receive larger fund

\textsuperscript{40}In order to examine the effects of the 2008 presidential vote margin and expected 2012 battleground status separately, separate models were run containing each of these presidential election competitiveness measures. When separate models are estimated for the retrospective and prospective presidential battleground measures, both measures of presidential election competitiveness are significant and in the expected direction. All of the other substantive conclusions from these separate models are the same as those discussed with regard to column 1 of Table 8. The variance inflation factors for the model presented in Table 8 were also examined and do not indicate any significant problems with regard to multicollinearity, even though the presidential competitiveness variables are highly correlated (polyserial correlation= -.82). The correlation matrix and variance inflation factors for all of the variables in Table 8 can be found in Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{41}The standardized coefficients for these regression models are reported in Appendix C.
transfers from the national parties\textsuperscript{42}. Holding all other variables constant, an increase in the competitiveness of the gubernatorial election by one unit results in an additional $463,400 in financial transfers to the state party in that state. Comparing the standardized regression coefficients indicates that the effect of gubernatorial election competitiveness is about equal to that of congressional election competitiveness.

Meanwhile, the coefficient for state party organizational strength is positive and nearly significant at conventional levels, indicating that the national parties are more likely to transfer larger sums of money to state parties that have a strong organizational infrastructure.

Due to the small sample size in this study, it is not advisable to draw any strong conclusions about the different fund transfer allocation strategies utilized by the DNC versus the RNC during the 2010 elections. Nevertheless, separate regression analyses were also run for the DNC and RNC’s financial transfers to at least determine if the results reported in Table 8 were confirmed on these party subsets. These results are reported in columns 2 and 3 of Table 8. For the DNC model, the 2008 presidential vote margin is negative and significant, and the congressional and gubernatorial election competitiveness variables are positive and significant. In the case of the RNC model, the expected 2011 presidential battleground status in a state is positive and significant.

\textsuperscript{42} A dummy variable indicating whether a state had a gubernatorial election in 2010 was also included in place of the gubernatorial election competitiveness measure in another version of this model. The coefficient for this dummy variable was also positive and significant, and the inclusion of this variable did not significantly change the results of the model.
along with the congressional and gubernatorial election measures. In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that the RNC was sending fewer funds to states with a higher proportion of state senate seats up for election. For the most part, these results confirm the results from the full model, except for the fact that the state party organizational strength measure is not a significant predictor of financial transfers when considering the DNC and RNC separately.

Overall, the results in presented in Table 8 indicate that the national parties consider national- and state-level factors in making fund transfers to the state parties. Most previous studies of national party financial transfers exclusively focus on presidential election years or pool presidential and midterm years in their analyses (e.g., Brox, 2013; La Raja, 2008), making it difficult to examine party strategy during midterm years in particular. Furthermore, the conference papers that have more closely examined fund transfers in midterm years (Brox, 2008; R. C. Lowry, 2005) do not account for a state’s competitiveness in presidential elections. While it may seem counterintuitive to include a measure for a state’s presidential battleground status in a model explaining fund transfers in midterm years, it is likely that the national party organizations would always be mindful of the next presidential election in deciding where to allocate resources.

The results indicate that the national parties consider a state’s competitiveness in presidential elections in making fund transfer decisions, even during a midterm year.
Furthermore, as would be expected during a midterm election, the national parties especially valued a state’s competitiveness in the 2010 congressional elections; previous analyses of fund transfers during presidential elections did not generally find a strong or significant effect for congressional election competitiveness. These results confirm the expectations laid out in Hypothesis 2 that the national parties would be especially concerned with transferring funds to states that are competitive in national elections and would prioritize short-term electoral concerns. In presidential election years, previous analyses have shown that the national parties almost exclusively focus on a state’s battleground status and electoral votes, at the expense of state-level electoral considerations. The results presented in Table 8 indicate that the national parties also considered the competitiveness of a state’s gubernatorial and congressional elections during the 2010 midterm elections. In the next section, I use the same set of independent variables to explain the national parties’ interactions with the state parties through 50-state strategies.

3.7.2 Explaining Interactions between the National and State Party Organizations through 50-State Strategies during the 2010 Elections

Table 9 presents the results of the ordered logit model explaining 50-state strategy activity in the states. Due to the small sample size, both Democratic and Republican parties are included in the same model.
Table 9: Explaining National Parties’ 50-State Strategy Activity Levels with the State Party Organizations, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient/Standard Error</th>
<th>Change in Probability (Minimum to Maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 presidential vote margin</td>
<td>.08* (.05)</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected 2012 presidential election battleground status</td>
<td>1.68 (1.27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010 congressional elections</td>
<td>-.05 (.27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party organizational strength</td>
<td>7.77*** (2.20)</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of state senate seats up for election</td>
<td>2.57* (1.23)</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election</td>
<td>-1.91** (.77)</td>
<td>-.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 state population</td>
<td>.06 (.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-33.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood-ratio chi-square</td>
<td>(\chi^2(7) = 24.7, \ p \leq .001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood-ratio test of proportionality of odds</td>
<td>(\chi^2(7) = 8.7, \ p \leq .275)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Entries in the first column are ordered logit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Asterisks signify significance levels of coefficients: + \( p \leq .10\), * \( p \leq .05\), ** \( p \leq .01\), *** \( p \leq .001\). Entries in the second column are changes in the probability of a national party being very active, somewhat active, and not active in a state through the 50-state strategy, by moving from a variable’s minimum to its maximum value and keeping all other variables set to their medians.

After estimating the model for 50-state strategy activity, I calculated predicted probabilities for the variables with significant coefficients in order to compare the magnitude of the effects of these variables on 50-state strategy activity levels in the states. In particular, I calculated the change in the probability of a national party being very active, somewhat active, and not at all active in a state through a 50-state strategy,
by moving from the minimum to the maximum value of the variable of interest and holding all other variables at their median values\textsuperscript{43} \textsuperscript{44}.

In Table 9, three key variables of interest emerge: state party organizational strength, the proportion of senate seats up for election, and the competitiveness of the gubernatorial election. The state party organizational strength coefficient is positive and significant. The calculated predicted probabilities indicate that moving from a state party with the lowest to one with the highest level of organizational strength, the probability that a national party will be very active in a state through a 50-state strategy increases by 75 percentage points. This result is contrary to what was expected. Given that OFA and D2H expressed a commitment to party building in all 50 states, it was expected that these 50-state programs would target resources to weaker state party organizations, or at least balance interactions across strong and weak parties, in order to strengthen these organizations’ capabilities. Instead, the national parties were more likely to direct the greatest number of resources toward state parties with higher levels of organizational strength. It is possible then, that through their 50-state strategies, the national parties actually aimed to provide resources to organizationally strong state

\textsuperscript{43} These probabilities were obtained from simulations using CLARIFY (King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000).
\textsuperscript{44} The median values and ranges for all of the variables in Table 9 (median; min-max) are as follows: 2008 presidential vote margin (15; 1-45); expected 2012 presidential election battleground status (0; 0,1); number of tossup/leaning congressional elections (1; 0-7); state party organizational strength (.66; .11-1); proportion of state senate seats up for election (.52; 0-1); competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election (2; 0-3); 2010 state population (2.94 [million]; .63-37.25).
party organizations, because these organizations would be best equipped to utilize the provided resources most efficiently and effectively. Ideally we could assess the relationship between 50-state-strategy activity and change in state organizational strength, which is not currently possible with the existing data.

The two state-level election variables were also significant in the ordered logit model. The coefficient for the variable measuring the proportion of state senate seats up for election in 2010 was positive and significant. Holding all covariates at their median values, the ordered logit model predicts that when moving from a state with no state senate seats up for election to a state where all seats are up for election, the probability that the national party will be very active in the state increases by 39 points. This result is consistent with expectations. Through their 50-state strategies, the national parties emphasized the need for their parties to be competitive in elections all across the country and up and down the ballot. Consistent with the goal of party building, helping state and local party candidates achieve victory will not only strengthen the party in the current election but will also allow the party to field experienced candidates in future elections. Thus, we would expect the national parties to consider state-level elections in deciding where to offer their support through their 50-state strategies.
In addition, the coefficient for the variable measuring the competitiveness of the gubernatorial election was negative and significant\(^45\). Moving from a state with no gubernatorial election in 2010 to a state with a highly competitive gubernatorial election increases the likelihood of a state party reporting no interaction with the national party’s 50-state strategy by about 56 points, and moving from a state with a safe gubernatorial election to state with a highly competitive gubernatorial election increases the probability of no 50-state strategy interactions by 38 points. At first glance, these results seem to be contrary to expectations, as we would expect the national parties to send more support to state parties in states with competitive gubernatorial elections in 2010. However, it is also important to note that the coefficient for the 2008 presidential vote margin in the state was positive and nearly significant at conventional levels (p<.10), suggesting that the national parties were also more likely to be active in states that were less competitive in the previous 2008 presidential election\(^46\). Therefore, it is possible that these results offer some support for the claim that the national parties were allocating resources to a wide variety of state parties through their 50-state strategies, not just the parties with the most competitive elections. Perhaps the national parties were seeking to

\(^45\) A dummy variable indicating whether a state had a gubernatorial election in 2010 was also included in place of the gubernatorial election competitiveness measure in another version of this model. The coefficient for this dummy variable was also negative and significant, and the inclusion of this variable did not significant change the results of the model.

\(^46\) Ordered logit models were also estimated which considered the 2008 presidential vote margin and 2012 expected battleground status separately, rather than including in the same model. In these models, all of the variables that were significant in Table 9 continued to be significant and the coefficients were in the same direction. Neither the 2008 presidential vote margin nor the 2012 battleground status variables were significant when included in separate models.
build a stronger party infrastructure in states which are typically ignored by the national parties.

In order to test this possibility, another set of ordered logit models were estimated which examined one key interaction effect: the interaction between the proportion of state senate seats up for election and the state’s expected battleground status for the 2012 presidential elections. If the interaction terms are found to be positive and significant, this would indicate that the national parties were focusing on winning state elections in presidential battleground states, instead of operating a 50-state strategy, aiming to strengthen the party in states that are typically ignored by the national parties. The results of these models are presented in Table 10.

Examining the first column in Table 10, we see that the interaction between the proportion of state senate seats up for election and the state’s expected battleground status is negative but not significant. However, the constitutive term for the proportion of state senate seats up for election is positive and significant. This result indicates that, among states that were not presidential battleground states, the national parties were more likely to send 50-state strategy resources to states with higher proportions of state senate seats up for election. In non-battleground states, moving from a state with no state senate seats up for election to a state with all state senate seats up for election increases the predicted probability that a national party will be very active in a state through the 50-state strategy by 42 points.
Table 10: Explaining National Parties’ 50-State Strategy Activity Levels with the State Party Organizations, 2010, Interaction Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient/Standard Error</th>
<th>Change in Probability (Maximum — Minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 presidential vote margin</td>
<td>.08*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected 2012 presidential battleground status</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of state senate seats up for election</td>
<td>2.85*</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State senate seats up for election*2012 presidential battleground</td>
<td>-.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election</td>
<td>-1.98**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010 congressional elections</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party organizational strength</td>
<td>7.86***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 state population</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-33.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood-ratio chi-square</td>
<td>χ²(8)=24.9, p≤.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood-ratio test of proportionality of odds</td>
<td>χ²(8)=8.7, p≤.366</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Entries in the first column are ordered logit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Asterisks signify significance levels of coefficients: + p≤.10, * p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001. Entries in the second column are changes in the probability of a national party being very active, somewhat active, and not active in a state through the 50-state strategy, by moving from a variable’s minimum to its maximum value and keeping all other variables set to their medians.

These results suggest that, through their 50-state strategies, the national parties were not necessarily most concerned with supporting the state parties in states that are most competitive in national elections. While winning state legislative seats often is not
a top priority of a national party, especially in a state that is not competitive in national elections, building a strong party presence in the state legislature is not only important for issues such as redistricting but also for recruiting future party candidates for higher office and for building support for the party within the state for future elections. If the national parties’ 50-state strategies represented a continuation of the battleground strategy, then we would expect to see the national parties focusing on states with competitive congressional and gubernatorial elections, as well as those that are likely to be competitive in presidential elections. On the contrary, the results in this section indicate that the national parties’ 50-state strategies direct support to state parties with a higher degree of organizational strength and to state parties where there is an opportunity build support in traditionally non-competitive states. In models which controlled for several factors pertaining to the states’ competitiveness in national elections, the state-level variables are the most significant variables that emerged in predicting high levels of national party 50-state strategy activity in the states, a finding which supports many of the expectations laid out in Hypothesis 4.

47 In order to examine whether the national parties were particularly targeting resources to state parties with high levels of organizational strength in battleground states, a model including an organizational strength-battleground interaction was also estimated but yielded no significant results for either the interaction or constitutive terms.

48 For the financial-transfer and 50-state-strategy regression models presented in this chapter, a number of different model specifications were tested. Research indicates that the voting-eligible population should be used to study voter turnout (McDonald, 2002), and because the parties may consider the voting-eligible population in a state when allocating resources, all of the OLS and ordered logit models were run using the 2010 voting-eligible population in the states, instead of the 2010 population from the U.S. Census; the inclusion of the voting-eligible population variable did not change the reported results. The reported
3.8 Discussion and Conclusions

Over the last thirty years, scholars have shown that the state and national party organizations have not only become more nationalized, but more integrated. As part of this integrated, interdependent relationship, the state and national party organizations no longer operate as part of a fragmented party system, and they rely on one another for mutual support. Furthermore, their interactions have increased since the 1960s, as the data presented in this chapter clearly shows. Starting in the early 1970s, national-state party interactions were mostly characterized by a hierarchical relationship, exemplified by the DNC’s rule enforcement over the state parties. However, since the party building programs implemented by the RNC during the late 1970s, both the RNC and the DNC have placed more emphasis on party building as an important goal. Party building implies that the national parties recognize the need for stronger state party organizations and that the functions of the state party organizations are viewed as being significant to the achievement of overall party goals.

models rely on measures of state competition in recent and current elections. In order to test whether long-term party competition in the states influences national party assistance to the state parties, the Ranney Index (Ranney, 1976) and Holbrook and Van Dunk party state party competition measure (Holbrook & Van Dunk, 1993), as measured by Klarner (2013), were included in the models but did not have a significant relationship with national party financial transfers or 50-state strategy activity and did not alter the substantive conclusions of the results from these models. As noted earlier, a dummy variable indicating whether or not a state had a gubernatorial election in 2010 was included in the models, instead of the variable which measures the competitiveness of the 2010 gubernatorial elections in the states; the inclusion of the gubernatorial election dummy variable did not change the reported the results.
Most previous scholarship has examined party building through the lens of campaign finance. In the mid-1990s, the national parties argued that soft money was essential to their party building goals. However, a number of studies have shown that decisions regarding national party financial transfers to the state parties were mostly dictated by a battleground-state strategy or Electoral College strategy, not party building. By and large, in this soft money era, the soft money raised by the national parties was not directed toward state parties that were organizationally weak or where the parties had the potential to increase party support at the state level; instead, these soft money resources were used to fund advertisements in states that were significant in presidential and congressional elections. After the passage of the BCRA, which banned the use of soft money by the national parties, the national parties continued to operate according to a battleground strategy in transferring funds to the state party organizations. Thus, based on the scholarly research concerning the financial relationship between the state and national party organizations, the national parties’ emphasis on soft-money party building in the 1990s and early 2000s seems to have been nothing but a ruse to justify spending on advertisements to support federal candidates.

Starting with Howard Dean’s 50-State Strategy, which operated for Dean’s tenure at the DNC from 2005 to 2009, the national parties again started to engage in more dialogue concerning party building. Dean’s 50-State Strategy sought to place DNC staff in all 50 states and offer various types of support to all Democratic state party
organizations, recognizing that party viability at the state level was essential to future party success. When Barack Obama assumed the presidency in 2009, he essentially extended Dean’s 50-State Strategy through Organizing for America (OFA), a special project of the DNC aimed at supporting the president’s legislative agenda and providing staff, training, and voter mobilization assistance to supplement the state parties’ efforts across the country. In 2010, the RNC followed suit, as Chairman Michael Steele implemented his Delaware-to-Hawaii (D2H) Victory Campaign, vowing to support the state parties and compete in all 50 states. Even though these 50-state strategies have become a common component of party strategy in the twenty-first century, no studies to date have examined the specific types of assistance offered by the national parties to the state parties through these programs or the strategies utilized by the national parties in making resource allocation decisions as part of these programs.

Because national party financial transfers and 50-state strategies are the two most important forms of party building utilized by the national parties over the past decade, it is important to examine the differences and similarities between them and the implications they have for the relationship between the state and national parties. Focusing on the 2010 elections, this chapter analyzed the national parties’ 50-state strategies and financial transfers to the state parties and uncovered very different patterns in these two forms of national party resource allocation and party building.
First, the analysis in this chapter focused on the national parties’ financial transfers to the state parties during the 2010 elections. The amount of money transferred between the national and state parties has generally declined in midterm elections since the 1990s but has remained relatively stable between 2006 and 2010, which are post-BCRA midterm election years. Also, as the amount of total financial transfers has declined, the national parties increasingly focus financial transfers on states located in competitive presidential battleground states. While other scholars have found a relationship between a state’s battleground status and the level of national party financial transfers received by a state party, the research in this chapter is unique, because it exclusively focuses on a midterm election year. During a midterm election year, would the national parties still focus on presidential battleground states in deciding how much money to transfer to the state parties, or would state-level elections factor more prominently in this calculus? The campaign finance and political parties literature has not yet addressed this question. The multivariate models presented in this chapter demonstrate that, even in a midterm election year such as 2010, the national parties are more likely to consider factors related to national elections and short-term electoral concerns in directing financial transfer to the state party organizations.

In particular, the results indicate that national parties evaluate the competitiveness of a state in the previous presidential election and a state’s expected battleground status in the upcoming presidential election in making fund transfer
decisions. In addition, the competitiveness of a state’s congressional elections in the current midterm election is also significantly related to national party financial transfers; this result distinguishes this study from most studies of transfers during presidential elections, in which congressional election competitiveness is not particularly significant when compared to presidential election competitiveness. Furthermore, during the 2010 midterm elections, the national parties also directed more financial resources to states with competitive gubernatorial elections. Thus, the financial assistance offered to the state party organizations by the DNC and the RNC is not only motivated by national-level electoral concerns. Nevertheless, the national parties’ financial transfer strategies indicate that the national organizations are most concerned with short-term electoral considerations, and not long-term party building, in sending funds to the state parties.

After establishing the fund transfer strategies utilized by the national parties during the 2010 elections, this chapter then turned to an analysis of the 50-state strategies operated by the DNC and the RNC during the 2010 elections, known as OFA and D2H respectively. In promoting their 50-state strategies, both national parties emphasized the need to compete in elections across the country and support the state parties’ efforts in order to do so, promising get-out-the-vote assistance, as well as additional staff. Despite this emphasis on party building, an important question to ask is whether the national parties actually followed through on these promises. Analyzing data from my 2011 state party survey, I found that a majority of Democratic and
Republican state parties were familiar with the national parties’ 50-state strategies implemented during the 2010 elections and reported interactions with the national parties through these strategies; however, Democratic state parties were more likely to report interactions with OFA than Republican state parties were to report interactions with D2H. In particular, the most frequent areas of interaction between the state and national parties through 50-state strategies occurred in the areas of voter contact and mobilization efforts and the provision of party staff and training.

In predicting which state parties received the highest levels of support through the national parties’ 50-state programs, the multivariate models in Section 3.7.2 indicate that the national parties were more likely to consider state-level factors in allocating resources through their 50-state strategies. The proportion of state senate seats up for election, the organizational strength of the state party organization, and the competitiveness of the gubernatorial elections were the three significant factors that emerged in explaining the level of 50-state strategy activity in a state, even when controlling for national-level electoral factors such as competitiveness in presidential and congressional elections. However, contrary to what might be expected under a party building plan, the national parties were more likely to be very active with state parties that already demonstrated high levels of organizational capacity. Presumably, state parties with high levels of organizational strength would be best equipped to coordinate with the national parties through the 50-state strategy and use national party
resources most effectively. However, this model does not account for the relationship between national-state party interactions and changes in party organizational strength across time, which should be a goal for future research in this area.

At the same time, the national parties were more likely to direct 50-state strategy resources toward states that were not facing competitive gubernatorial or presidential elections. Therefore, while the national parties may not have been particularly focused on supporting state parties with a weak organizational infrastructure through their 50-state strategies, they were focused on assisting the “safe” states that are ordinarily ignored by the national parties. The national parties targeted 50-state strategy resources to states with a higher proportion of state senate seats up for election, particularly in states that were not presidential battleground states; therefore, the national parties may have been targeting states where there was room to build a strong base of party candidates and party support for future elections. Rather than sending 50-state strategy support to state parties with the most competitive congressional, gubernatorial, and presidential elections, the national parties were interested in supplementing the efforts of strong state parties in the 2010 elections, as well as establishing a party infrastructure in states that are typically ignored by the national parties in making fund transfer decisions.

What do these results tell us about the nature of party building and the relationship between the state and national parties in American politics? The results
presented in this chapter support Aldrich’s “strategic parties hypothesis” for the most part. Again, in explaining this hypothesis, Aldrich states that, “A strategic party should allocate resources where its efforts could make the difference between winning and losing” (Aldrich, 1995, p. 103). Even in midterm election years, it is clear that the national parties direct financial resources to state parties that are located in states that are critical to party victory in current elections, including the current congressional and gubernatorial contests and the upcoming presidential election. And with regard to the national parties’ 50-state strategies, the national parties are most interested in supporting state parties who have the organizational capability to use national party resources most effectively. Based on this evidence, there is little doubt that the national parties are offering support to the state parties that are critical to party electoral success.

However, the analysis of the national parties’ 50-state strategies indicates that the national parties are not only concerned with short-term electoral success, but also long-term success and viability. In many ways, the data and analysis presented in this chapter demonstrate that the national parties followed through on many of the promises expressed in advertising their 50-state strategies. First, the fact that a majority of state party chairs were familiar with and reported interactions with the national parties’ 50-state strategies indicates that OFA and D2H represented serious efforts on behalf of the national parties to expand their interactions with state party organizations. The interactions between the state and national parties have increased over the past 50 years,
and the national parties’ followed through in carrying out many of the goals of their 50-state strategies, suggesting that the national parties view the state parties as partners in working to achieve overall party goals. Second, based on the analysis in this chapter, the national parties clearly prioritize state-level electoral concerns in allocating resources through their 50-state strategies. This focus on state-level factors represents a departure from the battleground state strategy which shapes the financial interactions between the state and national parties. Apparently, the national parties recognize the importance of supporting state party efforts to bring about party victory in state elections as part of achieving overall party growth, from the bottom up.

In implementing 50-state strategies, national party chairs often receive criticism from other party leaders, who argue that party resources should be used to assist candidates in competitive races, rather than to support party organizations across the country. This disagreement ultimately boils down to different philosophies of party building, one based on short-term electoral considerations and the other based on long-term party development. Based on the evidence presented in this chapter, where do the national parties’ 50-state strategies actually fall along this philosophical divide? Many party leaders and strategists fear that 50-state strategies are wasting party resources on states where party victory is unlikely. According to the analysis presented in this chapter, 50-state strategy assistance is not being sent to states that are crucial to immediate party victory in national elections. Not only are the national parties
prioritizing state-level factors in offering assistance through 50-state strategies, but they are actually focusing on building party support in states that are not especially competitive in presidential or gubernatorial elections. At the same time, the national parties are concentrating their support, including voter mobilization assistance and staff, in states where the state parties already have the infrastructure in place to make the best use of these resources. These results suggest that 50-state strategies operate according to a concern for both short-term electoral victory and long-term party building.

Based on the past four elections, it is clear that 50-state programs have been an important component of party strategy in the first decade of twenty-first century, and if the national parties are going to continue to engage in this type of party building in future elections, then it is important that political scientists understand the operation of these programs and their implications for party interactions, voter mobilization, and campaigns and elections.

Looking forward, 50-state strategies likely will play an important role in future elections49. In 2013, current RNC Chairman Reince Priebus announced a new RNC 50-state strategy50, as part of the RNC’s Growth and Opportunity Project. The Growth and Opportunity Project Report, a 100-page document released by the RNC in March 2013,

49 While the Republicans did not officially announce a 50-state strategy during the 2012 elections, the RNC set aside funds to aid “orphan state parties” in non-battleground states where the parties were traditionally weak and where the Republicans faced competitive House or Senate races in 2012 (Martin & Burns, 2012).
50 Former RNC Chairman Michael Steele has argued that Priebus’ 50-state strategy is not new at all, but rather is an extension of D2H and the infrastructure he put in place while serving as RNC chair (Hamby, 2013).
clearly outlines the RNC’s overall strategy heading into the 2014 and 2016 elections. In
the report, the party explains that in addition to reaching out to voters in battleground
states, the party plans to “target and convert lower propensity voters” (Republican
National Committee, 2013, p. 36) and to commit staff and resources to “assist all 50
states, not just battleground states” (p. 82). By the summer of 2013, the RNC had already
placed state directors in several states to coordinate efforts between the state party
organizations and the RNC and had laid out plans for RNC staff to be sent to every
state. In particular, the RNC is portraying this 50-state strategy as an opportunity for the
national and state parties to work in a “partnership” and to collaborate to identify areas
where party infrastructure can be improved on a state by state basis (p. 88).

During the 2012 elections, Organizing for America continued to operate as a
special project of the DNC. In the months leading up to the 2012 elections, the DNC
posted a page on its website promoting the 50-state strategy and Organizing for America
and presenting these two programs as a joint effort, as shown in Figure 19; however, it is
unclear to what extent OFA operated according to a 50-state-strategy mentality in 2012.
In part due to the broad base of support that OFA had developed at the state and local
level since the 2008 presidential campaign, OFA and the Obama campaign far out-
numbered the Romney campaign in terms of the number of field offices placed across
the country (Avlon & Keller, 2012). At least in swing states, the DNC and the Obama
campaign transferred large sums of money to state parties to fund OFA offices across
the states, and the Democratic state parties in swing states were far better funded than
their Republican counterparts (Blumenthal, 2012). Therefore, while it is not clear how
active OFA was in non-battleground states, news reports suggest that OFA was
integrated with at least some state parties during the 2012 elections.

Figure 19: Screen Shot of DNC’s “50-State Strategy” Web Page, 2012

In January 2013, the Obama team announced the creation of “Organizing for
Action,” also referred to as OFA, which is essentially the next manifestation of
Organizing for America. Unlike Organizing for America, Organizing for Action is an
issue advocacy group which exclusively seeks to support President Obama’s legislative
agenda and is not affiliated with the DNC or a 50-state strategy. At this point, then, it is
not clear whether the DNC will operate a 50-state strategy moving forward, and it remains to be seen whether the DNC will devote any resources to long-term party development during these upcoming elections. However, discussions among party leaders suggest that the Democrats may implement a 50-state strategy in the near future. Following the 2012 elections, the Association of State Democratic Chairs, a branch of the DNC which is comprised of all Democratic state party chairs and vice chairs, held a meeting to discuss the 2012 elections and to look forward to 2014 and 2016. The future of the 50-state strategy emerged as an important topic of discussion and it was expected that it would receive widespread support moving into the next elections (Hamburger, 2012).

It seems likely, then, that the national parties will continue to operate 50-state strategies in future elections. If anything, both the DNC and RNC’s experiences during the 2012 elections demonstrated the value of long-term party building. The national parties and presidential campaigns faced great difficulties, even in some swing states, when state parties faced internal difficulties and were not prepared to support the

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51 However, if the Democratic Party seeks to gain ground in Republican strongholds such as Texas, it is clear that the party cannot only rely on the changing demographics in these states as a path to victory, but will also need to engage in extensive party building (Parker, 2013).

52 Howard Dean also emphasized the need to renew the 50-state strategy in upcoming elections. In a June 2013 interview, Howard Dean discussed the best way for the Democrats to win the House in 2014, explaining that, Organizing for Action is “well-intended,” but “You would have to renew the 50-state strategy... The 50 state strategy was designed for the long term, not the short term. Because it was very successful—and because we have a Democratic President who tends to view the DNC as part of their reelection apparatus—the strategy has gone by the wayside. It’s a mistake to abandon long-term electoral strategy” (Dean, 2013).
presidential campaign efforts in their states. For example, in Nevada, the RNC and the Romney campaign implemented a separate party operation in the state to coordinate voter mobilization efforts, as conflicts within the Nevada Republican Party indicated that the state party would not be equipped to handle this task (Drucker, 2012; Joseph, 2012). Meanwhile, in North Carolina, the DNC and the Obama campaign largely bypassed the North Carolina Democratic Party Chairman, whose chairmanship was plagued by an internal sex scandal, instead working with other staff at the state party organization and developing a separate campaign apparatus which joined national and state Democrats. While the DNC was confident that they still had a strong party infrastructure in the state to which they could turn, due to the work of OFA53 (Burns & Haberman, 2012), there is little doubt that both the DNC and the RNC would have benefited from having stronger and more integrated state party organizations in these states.

As this chapter demonstrated, the Organizing for American program and the Delaware-to-Hawaii campaign represented legitimate national party strategies implemented during the 2010 elections. While this study represents an important step in our understanding of 50-state state strategies, party building, and the relationship

53 According to DNC Communication Director Brad Woodhouse, “Through Organizing for America, we’ve been building an unrivaled organization in North Carolina over the past several years — registering voters, testing our organization in down ballot races, and enlisting the support of thousands of volunteers. Those efforts continue and stand in stark contrast to the Republicans who have declined to build any ground game in North Carolina” (Brad Woodhouse quoted in Burns & Haberman, 2012).
between the state and national parties, more work is needed to understand these types of programs, especially as both national parties are likely to implement 50-state strategies in upcoming elections.

Future studies should focus on gathering data for a larger group of state parties with regard to their interactions with these party building programs, in order to better distinguish between differences in the implementation of the Democrats and Republicans’ 50-state strategies. Also, if possible, survey data should be supplemented with other forms of data regarding national-party activity in the states, beyond financial-transfer data, which does not capture various forms of party interactions. In addition, while this study has established that a majority of state parties receive assistance from the national parties through these party building programs, more research is needed to understand the logistics of these operations. For example, it is important to investigate to what degree these 50-state strategies are integrated with the existing state party infrastructure, and as these 50-state strategies continue to operate, we need to ask how the 2010 implementation of OFA and D2H compares to 50-state strategies which operate during presidential elections. In addition, as Super PACs and other groups outside of the formal party apparatus have taken on a larger role in fundraising and voter contact efforts, especially since the Citizens United decision, some state parties have struggled to maintain their competitive edge (Tau, 2014). Considering this trend, will the national parties continue to build their party infrastructure at the state level through interactions
with the state party organizations, or will they turn to Super PACs and non-profit groups? Many of the complexities of these party building programs still remain to be studied.

In many ways, these 50-state strategies now seem to be a part of “mainstream” party campaign strategy. Howard Dean initiated the 50-State Strategy at the DNC, and his efforts were continued under President Obama and Organizing for America. Similarly, Michael Steele’s Delaware-to-Hawaii campaign paved the way for the RNC’s Growth and Opportunity Project planned for the 2014 and 2016 elections. The debate concerning short-term assistance versus long-term party building likely will continue, but this chapter demonstrated that the state parties are no longer just conduits for national party money or pawns in the national parties’ battleground-state strategies. While the national parties increasingly prioritize a battleground strategy in transferring funds to the state parties, through their 50-state strategies, they provide assistance to a majority of state parties, battleground and non-battleground states alike, in the form of staff, technology, or voter mobilization assistance.

54 The Association of State Democratic Chairs has proposed a series of changes to campaign finance and elections law that would make it easier for the state parties to run voter mobilization programs for federal campaigns and is seeking support from the DNC on these measures (Tau, 2014). Meanwhile, in the RNC’s 2013 Growth and Opportunity Project Report, the RNC notes that, “The system is choking state parties making it harder than it should be to raise money, engage in grassroots activities, and meet the complex compliance requirements thrust upon them at the federal level...State parties are suffering the most under the current campaign finance laws. It is critical that we provide more support to state parties to allow them to do more with scarcer resources in the current environment” (p. 67-68). Therefore, there is some evidence that the national parties may continue to support the state parties, even in light of the current campaign finance environment.
In the 1980s, Huckshorn, Gibson, Cotter, and Bibby (1986) noted that the state and national parties had become more integrated and had thus developed a relationship of interdependence and mutual support. In discussing the potential of this integrated relationship for party system change in the future, they explained that, “Perhaps the most significant such implication is that as the state and national parties become more closely integrated, party resources can be diverted toward organization maintenance in areas of the country in which the electoral fortunes on the party are dragging” (Huckshorn et al., 1986, p. 989). The research presented in this chapter indicates that the type of party building that Huckshorn et al. described in the 1980s is now occurring as a result of the changing national-state party relationship and offers strong support for the view that the state-national-relationship is more closely approaching a partnership.
In 1996, the Alabama Democratic Party composed a party platform for the first time in its history; the party chairman, Joe Turnham, explained that the party felt that it was necessary to address important issues in the state and describe the party’s principles and issue positions “in a way that the majority of Alabamians could understand.” However, when the Alabama Democrats released their platform during the week of the 1996 Democratic National Convention, the DNC and the Clinton presidential campaign expressed concern about its content, especially because the Democratic National Platform was about to go up for a vote before the convention delegates. According Chairman Turnham, the party leaders at the DNC were reassured upon reading the Alabama platform: “They understand that we’re party building in Alabama. They also understand we’re falling in basically with what’s going on here in Chicago.” As the journalist reporting on this situation described, the Alabama Democratic Platform “seeks to accommodate diverse positions within the party’s ranks” (Gordon, 1996).

This incident regarding the 1996 Alabama Democratic Platform demonstrates the informal yet important exchanges that occur between the state and national party organizations during the party-platform-development process. While both state and national parties have their own plans and processes for platform development, the nature of politics in the United States’ federal system also means that state and national
platforms are often intertwined. In making decisions about platform content, the state party organizations seek to find a middle ground between state and national political concerns and attempt to represent their party in a way that highlights their party’s beliefs and policy proposals, without alienating diverse constituencies within their states. Meanwhile, the national parties develop platforms that will support the presidential nominee and appeal to voters across the nation, but they are mindful of the actions of state party organizations that might either jeopardize or bolster their campaign efforts.

Ronald Walters, a political scientist and Democratic Party activist who was involved in party platform operations in national campaigns, noted that party platforms serve three main purposes: as political documents, they provide a base of issues for party candidates in campaigns, they bind various party campaigns together, and they unite party constituencies, providing a common ground upon which voters can mobilize and hold party candidates accountable (Walters, 1990). Platforms represent a summary of the principles, policy positions, and proposed actions that party organizations choose to endorse in a particular election year, and, as Walters emphasizes, these documents provide us with important insights into the priorities and campaign strategies of party organizations, as well as the relationships between party and campaign organizations and voters.
While a number of scholars have sought to understand party ideology and
government action through the lens of party platforms (Bradley, 1969; Budge &
Hofferbert, 1990; Coffey, 2011; Ginsberg, 1972; Kidd, 2008; King, Laver, Hofferbert,
Budge, & McDonald, 1993; Paddock, 2005; Pomper, 1968), very few studies have used
party platforms to study party strategy and even fewer have examined the relationships
between party organizations in the United States through party platforms. The research
presented in this chapter leverages a new dataset of more than 1,400 state and national
party platform documents to uncover the relationships between party platforms issued
by party organizations at the state and national levels and the strategic considerations
that explain why state parties develop platforms that are more or less similar to the
national parties’ platforms. I use computer-assisted text analysis techniques to
understand how the relationship between the state and national party platforms has
changed over the past 60 years. In particular, I use cluster analysis and measures of
document similarity to evaluate, analyze, and explain the connections between the
platforms issued by the state and national party organizations.

In her research about party coordination in federal systems, Thorlakson (2009)
explains that the relationship between state and national party organizations in the
United States is characterized by both integration, or organizational and strategic
linkages between parties at the different levels, and autonomy, or the freedom of state
parties to operate without national-party interference. This structure of the American
party system is key to understanding the relationships between state and national party platform documents. The state and national party organizations create platforms according to their own rules, processes, and political needs and are under no obligation to develop platforms that bear resemblance to one another. At the same time, the state and national parties may face similar constituencies and electoral concerns, and, at times, it may benefit them to develop similar platform documents. In other words, as strategic organizations who use party platforms to inform voters about party issue positions and to help party candidates win elections (Pomper, 1967, 1988), state party organizations leverage their autonomy from and integration with the national party organizations in different ways in developing party platforms.

National party platforms tend to present the party’s stance on the most important party issues at the time in a more moderate tone, as they must appeal to a wide variety of voters and candidates across the nation (Kidd, 2008). Journalists, scholars, and party elites alike have noted when observing platform development that sometimes broad or vague platform statements, rather than statements about narrow issues or controversial topics, are necessary so as not alienate certain voters or candidates running under the party label (Associated Press, 1996; Bergholz, 1964; Combs, 1950; Hanna, 2006; Linkins, 2010; Paulson, 1994; Pomper, 1988; Walters, 1990),

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1 According to a journalist describing the national platforms during the 2000 elections, “…both major party platforms aim for a soothingly centrist tone, reflecting the broad consensus that things are going relatively well and most changes should be attempted on a fairly modest scale” (Barabak, 2000).
and these considerations likely factor prominently into decisions of state parties that develop broad, more nationally-oriented platform documents as well. For example, in the 1996 elections, the Iowa Democratic Party Chair explained how his party decided to develop a platform that focused on “mainstream issues” such as jobs, the economy, and education and removed more controversial issues from its platform, such as support for same-sex marriage: “The goal here is to unify Democrats around principles that have been the traditional values of our party” (Michael Peterson quoted in Associated Press, 1996).

Throughout American history, there are many examples of state and national parties struggling to strike a balance between specific and broad statements and state and national political considerations in their platforms. In the Civil Rights Era, state parties struggled to maintain party unity throughout the debate over civil rights issues, while also presenting an image of their state parties that would not jeopardize success in state elections. For example, a newspaper article from the time describes how the Florida Democratic Party “turned their backs on the national party platform,” writing a state platform that supported segregation rather than the more liberal civil rights policies espoused by the Democratic National Committee (Chicago Daily Tribune, 1960). When adopting broad, national party issue positions in their platforms, some state parties have received harsh criticism from the opposition. For example, during the 1958 elections, *The Chicago Daily Defender* newspaper criticized the Illinois Republican Party
for “rehashing sterile national policy,” rather than proposing resolutions to solve social problems such as discrimination, segregation, and unemployment (Chicago Daily Defender, 1958).

More recently, social issues such as abortion and gay marriage have caused problems for state parties that might normally model their platforms after the national party platform. For instance, during the 2012 elections, the Massachusetts Republican Party decided to table a vote on whether to adopt the national party platform until after the November elections, recognizing the trouble this platform would cause for state candidates in competitive races; in contrast to the 2012 Republican National Committee Platform, the Massachusetts Republican Platform generally avoids discussions of social issues such as abortion and gay marriage, and several state candidates were concerned about the reception to the national platform in the state (Ebbert, 2012a, 2012b). Also in 2012, a group of Democratic state party chairs urged the Democratic National Committee to explicitly endorse gay marriage rights in its 2012 platform, arguing that the national party’s broad statement of “support for the full inclusion of all families, including same-sex couples” (Democratic National Committee, 2008b) in its 2008 platform did not go far enough in promoting equality. Meanwhile, the Republican National Committee also faced challenges from state parties who questioned the national party’s moderate platform, as Tea Party supporters infiltrated the 2010
Republican state platform convention in Maine, and Ron Paul’s backers took hold of platform deliberations in various states.

From these examples, it is clear that party platforms are ultimately campaign documents; in making decisions about platform content and whether to associate themselves with the national party platforms, state party organizations must behave strategically, responding to the political context to achieve their goals. From the existing research, political scientists know very little about the relationships between party platforms at different levels in the federal system and the factors that explain these relationships. Previous research about state party platforms has been limited to studying platforms from only a few election years or a limited number of states. The new platform dataset that I have compiled, which contains platforms from 1952 to 2014 from a large number of states, coupled with the power of computer-assisted text analysis techniques, finally allows us to investigate these types of questions.

The following questions guide the research that I present in this chapter: How has the relationship between the state and national party platforms changed over the past 60 years? And what factors explain whether a state party creates a platform that is more or less similar to the national party platform? The analysis demonstrates that, as the platform content$^2$ of Democratic and Republican state parties has become more

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$^2$ As will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, this comparison of platform content involves an analysis of word usage within platform documents. On the whole, parties that share similar ideologies and issue positions likely use similar words within their documents; however, this research compares
distinct over time, especially starting in the early 1990s, the Republican state and national platforms have become more alike, while, on average the Democratic state parties have developed platforms that are less similar to the national platform. Furthermore, state party platforms vary in their degree of similarity to the national platform, depending upon the population diversity and political competition in their states and the significance of their states in presidential elections.

4.1 Background

Few voters read party platform documents, and parties and candidates are not bound in any way to their platform positions and proposals, which led scholars such as Ostrogorski (1964), an observer of American political parties at the turn of the twentieth century, to conclude that platforms are meaningless documents in which “everybody can find something to suit him, but in which nothing is considered as of any consequence by the authors of the document” (p. 138-139). Later scholars such as Ginsberg (1972) and Pomper (1988) address these types of critiques. In his research concerning national party platforms in the United States, Ginsberg (1972) writes:

Platform statements will be taken to represent an amalgamation and distillation of the principles, attitudes, appeals and concerns of the party as a whole, or at least its dominant factions. Changes in the character of platform statements over time are, thus, likely to reflect changes within the party and/or changes in the segment of the electorate to which the party appeals. In the absence of survey data, we must infer, given such similarities in word usage across documents and does not explicitly measure the ideology or issue positions represented in these documents.
evidence as the periodic committee and convention fights over platform statements, that
the content of these statements is important enough to party leaders to warrant treating
changes in content of party platforms as valid indicators of party changes. (p. 607)

Pomper (1988) echoes this sentiment in his research in the area of party platforms: “If
platforms are meaningless, it seems odd that they should bring, as they have, severe
intraparty disagreement, and the attention of interest groups, mass media, and practical
politicians” (p. 144). While most voters do not read party platforms, Pomper argues that
platforms trickle down to the voters through more indirect means, such as the media
and the media’s coverage of party candidates and current issues.

In the United States, party platform development does not occur according to a
single set of rules; rather, these processes vary according to the rules, by-laws, and
traditions of each party organization, and in the case of the state party organizations,
the platform-development processes vary widely across organizations, which
contributes to the difficulty of grasping the meaning and significance of party platforms
in American politics. Writing about state party platforms and platform-development
processes at the state level, Nowlan (1980) expresses his frustration with the lack of
attention given to state platform development by some journalists and party leaders and
emphasizes the importance of the actual exercise of platform writing for state party

3 Maisel (2002) provides an in-depth look at the different platform-development processes of the national
Democratic and Republican party organizations.
4 For example, the platform-development processes may vary by party in the extent to which parties allow
party members and convention delegates to vote on platform planks or place control over platform content
in the hands of party leaders or platform committee members. Some party organizations also open up the
platform process to general voters and party members, holding hearings across the state or otherwise
allowing people to submit ideas for consideration.
leaders and observers of state politics. According to Nowlan, the openness of the platform development process can indicate important differences in the priorities of party organizations, and party leaders can learn a great deal about support for various policies among party members through their involvement in the platform development process.

Despite the lack of voter attention to platform documents and the variety of processes that govern platform development, a party platform represents a party’s public representation of its principles and positions and thus warrants our attention. As Ginsberg, Pomper, and Nowlan indicate, party organizations expend a great deal of energy on the development and discussion of party platforms, thus rendering them an important component of party advertising and campaign strategy. Platforms serve as an important representation of party behavior, party decision-making, and party principles in a given election year and furthermore provide us with a means to measure party change.

Further demonstrating the significance of party platforms, in his earlier research examining national party platforms from the 1940s through the 1970s, Pomper concludes that parties in government act upon a vast majority of their platform pledges (Pomper, 1968; Pomper & Lederman, 1980), a finding which is also confirmed by Elling’s (1979) research at the state level. Pomper (1967, 1988) also establishes the “rational platform” theory, arguing that party platforms are “rational” in the extent to which they
further the goals of voter and parties: “The platform is a campaign document. Its characteristics are rationally derived from the party’s goal of victory. In order to win elections, the party must also promote, in part, the cause of voter-rationality” (1988, p. 164). Party organizations, and their leaders, activists, and candidates, are strategic political actors, who not only seek to implement many of their policy proposals but also view their platforms as strategic campaign documents used for the purpose of winning elections. As campaign documents, platforms are not complete statements of party principles, proposals, and positions; however, through the study of party platform content and how this content has changed across time, political scientists can learn a great deal about the image that parties choose to present to the public and how they choose to situate themselves relative to other political actors in these elections.

In the American politics literature, the vast majority of party platform research has focused on the study of the national party platforms. These studies of national party platforms have focused on various topics, such as the reflection of public opinion in party platforms (Monroe, 1983), the role of presidential candidates in shaping platform content (Fine, 2003; L. S. Maisel, 1993), the extent to which parties in government act on platform promises (Bradley, 1969; Budge & Hofferbert, 1990; King et al., 1993; Pomper, 1968), the policies and issues advocated by parties in their platforms (Ginsberg, 1972; Pomper, 1988), the ideologies represented by party platforms (Gerring, 1998; Kidd,
(1989; Feinstein & Schickler, 2008).

Studies of state party platforms are far less frequent, most likely due to the fact that state platforms are not as accessible as national party platforms. While national party platforms from 1840 to the present are available through resources such as “The American Presidency Project,” housed at the University of California at Santa Barbara, as well as in various books and anthologies, state party platforms are not readily available from a single source. State party platforms were frequently published online on the state parties’ websites starting around the year 2000, but most state parties only publish their most recent platforms on their websites. Platforms published prior to the year 2000 are even more challenging to locate; some of these documents are published in local newspapers and state “blue books,” while others exist in state archives, state and university libraries, and the personal archives of party leaders and politicians that are housed at some of these libraries. In addition to the fact that state party platforms are difficult to locate, state parties also develop platforms according to different schedules, with some organizations developing platforms every two years and others writing platforms every four years; meanwhile, others do not release platforms at all or issue platforms sporadically, thus further complicating data collection procedures.

Considering the many challenges associated with obtaining state party platforms, it is not surprising that a smaller number of studies have analyzed state platforms or state platform development processes, when compared to platforms at the national level. The earlier research concerning state party platforms primarily provided general descriptions of the laws and processes surrounding platform development (Boots, 1923) and analyses regarding the extent to which state platform statements are fulfilled through legislative action (Elling, 1979). Among the more recent research that examines state party platforms, the majority of these studies focus on assessing state party ideology and polarization through the content analysis of state party platforms (Bensel, 2000; Coffey, 2011; Paddock, 1992, 2005). Bensel’s (2000) research represents a comprehensive analysis of more than 1,100 state party platforms from 1877 to 1900, in which he measures the percentage of planks in each platform that address a set of key issues, including immigration, prohibition, race, railroad regulation, currency, and the tariff. According to Bensel’s work, economic rather than cultural issues dominated the platforms from all parties in this time period, and party divisions primarily occurred around the issue of the tariff.

Paddock (1992, 2005) and Coffey (2011) analyze state platform ideology in the contemporary period. Coffey (2011) codes each platform sentence as either liberal or conservative to derive an overall ideology score for each state platform document; his research is based on 121 platforms collected for the years 2000 to 2004. In Paddock’s
(2005) study, which is based on the platforms from eleven states and covers the years 1956 to 2000, he codes the ideological orientation of each platform paragraph within seven different issue categories (capitalism, redistribution, internal sovereignty, labor, universalism, social issues, and foreign/defense). After measuring state party platform ideology, both Coffey and Paddock conclude that Democratic and Republican state party platforms are polarized in recent years; these conclusions regarding state platforms contrast with Kidd’s (2008) research comparing the ideology expressed in Democratic and Republican national platforms, in which he finds a lack of strong ideological differences between Democratic and Republican national platforms from 1996 to 2004.

Coffey’s research, which focuses on the early years of the 2000s, concludes that, on average, the Democratic state platforms demonstrate a liberal ideological score and Republican platforms represent a conservative ideological score, with no Democratic or Republican parties crossing over onto the other side of the ideological spectrum. Paddock’s research, which covers a longer time span, confirms these findings, showing that the “pragmatic model of party politics,” in which state parties on both sides sought to represent the middle ground, started to dissipate by the 1970s, as divisive social issues emerged on the scene. When describing the ideological differences between the parties in the 1990s and 2000s, Paddock (2005) writes, “Republican platforms in Kansas, North Carolina, and Texas read like conservative manifestos. And while none of the eleven
state Democratic parties in our analysis was quite so ideological, most took clearly left-of-center positions on many issues” (p. 121). Looking within states, in the 2000 to 2002 period, Paddock finds the greatest polarization between Democratic and Republican parties in the states of the Pacific Northwest, Upper Midwest, and New England with moralistic political cultures. Despite this polarization that he observes, Paddock’s analysis shows no clear trend of increasing intra-party integration across time, in terms of ideology, leading him to conclude that, even in the early 2000s, the party system was characterized by decentralization.

In his research on state platform ideology, Coffey (2011) highlights the different findings that emerge in studies of polarization at the state and national levels, noting the higher degrees of polarization in state politics. Coffey’s findings raise important questions about the relationship between the state and national party organizations. In a federal system such as the United States, the state and national parties do not operate in isolation of one another, and it is important to consider the relationship between the party platforms that are released by parties at different levels in the federal system. Despite their separate spheres of influence, state and national party organizations share the same party labels and partly the same constituencies and offer support and services to many of the same party candidates. Given the integration between the state and

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6 Paddock defines political culture in terms of Elazar’s (1984) moralistic, traditionalistic, and individualistic political cultures. According to Elazar, in states with a dominant moralistic political culture, politics is seen as a means to achieve the common good, and consequently, all citizens should participate in politics and play a role in working to achieve a better society.
national parties that has been observed over the course of the last 30 years (Bibby, 2002; Huckshorn et al., 1986), do the state and national party platforms also show signs of greater integration?

Political science research has not yet provided an answer to this question. Lacewell and Werner (2012) come the closest to following this line of inquiry, coding the ideology of state and national platforms from 2008 and 2010. From this small set of platforms, the authors confirm the findings of Coffey (2011), Paddock (1992, 2005), and Kidd (2008), finding polarization between the Democratic and Republican state platforms and state parties that are more ideologically extreme than the national parties. However, with the small number of cases from 2008 and 2010, Lacewell and Werner are not able to examine the factors that explain the varying relationships between state and national platforms or to make comparisons across time.

Feinstein and Schickler (2008) examine the different issues and policy positions advocated by state and national parties using platform data, although under a very specific set of circumstances, since their research is focused on investigating the civil rights realignment through state platforms issued from 1920 to 1968. Feinstein and Schickler contradict the findings of previous research which portrayed partisan realignments as phenomena grounded in the decisions of national party elites (Carmines & Stimson, 1989). Instead, they argue, through their analysis of coded state party platform positions on civil rights issues, that the civil rights realignment can be
attributed to bottom-up forces within the Democratic Party. Democratic parties at the state level provided the impetus for the national party to take more liberal stances on civil rights issues, as non-Southern Democratic platforms adopted more liberal civil rights positions than Republican platforms starting in the 1940s and 1950s.

Overall, there is a stronger tradition of studying sub-national and regional party platforms or manifestos in other countries (Alonso, Gomez, & Cabeza, 2013; Klingelhofer, 2014; Libbrecht, Maddens, Swenden, & Fabre, 2009; Muller, 2009, 2013; Pogorelis, Maddens, Swenden, & Fabre, 2005), and perhaps the most widely-used dataset and coding scheme for assessing the policy preferences contained in party manifestos was developed in the field of comparative politics, as part of the Comparative Manifestos Project7. Scholars in this field have also developed and used computer-assisted text analysis methods such as Wordscore (Laver, Benoit, & Garry, 2003) and Wordfish (Proksch & Slapin, 2009) to assess party ideology from party manifestos. Although the study of state party platforms in the United States is more limited, when scholars have had the opportunity to study these party platforms, they generally find that trends in party politics are more nuanced than what is learned from studies of national party platforms alone. There is a clear need for a comprehensive study of state party platforms and the connections between state and national platforms.

7 See https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/.
in American politics, and the research presented in this chapter represents an important step toward achieving this goal.

4.2 Theory

As public statements of party priorities, a close examination of party platforms and the connections between different platforms allows us to understand how party organizations perceive their role within the American political landscape and how the state-national party relationship is represented in the image that parties present in these documents.

In 2011, I conducted a survey of state party chairpersons\(^8\), and the results of this survey motivated the theory underlying this study of the connections between state and national party platforms. First, I will present some of the relevant survey data that informed my thinking throughout this research. I will then discuss the other theoretical arguments that serve as the foundation for this study.

Grynaviski (2010) establishes that party elites strive to achieve the appearance of party unity, because it allows them to uphold their party’s brand name; this brand name communicates key information about party candidates to voters and thus plays an important role in the party’s electoral success. Party platforms serve as one mechanism that party leaders use to achieve the appearance of party unity and to control the party’s

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\(^8\) See Appendix A for a description of this survey and the survey methodology. The results of the survey are discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.
brand name. Using data collected from surveys of state party organizations, we can better understand the connections between party platforms and these priorities of party leaders. In their surveys and interviews of state party leaders who served in the 1960-1980 period, Cotter et al. (1984) asked party chairs the following question, which I also repeated on my 2011 survey: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Controversial positions should be avoided in a party platform in order to insure party unity.” This issue of party unity is especially important when thinking about the similarity between state and national party platforms, as we would expect state parties that value party unity to place more emphasis on aligning their platforms with the national platform in order to maintain the overall party brand name. Figure summarizes the responses to this question from 1960-2011.

From the 1960-1980 period, the data show that responses were nearly split, with about half of parties agreeing and half of parties disagreeing that controversial issues should be avoided in platforms to insure party unity. However, moving from 1980,
Figure 20: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Controversial positions should be avoided in a party platform in order to insure party unity.”

which is the last year for which Cotter et al. collected data, to 2011, which is the year that I conducted my state party survey, we observe a sharp decline in the percentage of party chairs who agreed that controversial platform positions should be avoided. Meanwhile, the percentage of party chairs who expressed neutral opinions with regard to this issue increased by more than 40 percentage points from 1980 to 2011; about 3% of parties selected the “neither agree nor disagree” response option in the 1975-1979 period, compared to just over 50% in 2011. With half of state party chairs neglecting to express a clear opinion on this issue on the 2011 survey, we do not have a good sense of how state parties feel about the promotion of party unity in their party platforms. However, when surveying party leaders on matters which relate to party strategy, it is not

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9 The responses to this question do not vary substantially by party; thus, the party breakdown for this question is not shown in this section. The responses to this question by party can be found in Appendix E.
surprising to receive neutral responses. The fact that the proportion of parties providing neutral responses to this question rose so dramatically from 1980 to 2011 may indicate that party leaders in the twenty-first century are more likely to feel that this issue is important, complex, and controversial and thus are hesitant to provide a direct answer; on the other hand, it may also indicate they are not concerned with the question of party unity in general.

In order to provide more insight into these findings regarding party unity, on the 2011 state party survey, I also asked state party leaders to answer questions about how they weigh the importance of state and national issues in developing their platforms. First, party chairs were presented with the following question: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In developing a state party platform, focusing on policy issues relevant to the state political environment should be a primary concern.” As shown in Figure 21, state parties overwhelmingly agreed with this statement, with 82% of Republican parties and 86% of Democratic parties selecting the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” response options. Then, state party chairs were asked about the importance of developing platforms that are consistent with the national platform: “In developing a state party platform, maintaining consistency with the positions outlined in the national party platform should be a primary concern.” In this case, as the
Figure 21: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In developing a state party platform, focusing on policy issues relevant to the state political environment should be a primary concern.”

results shown in Figure 22 demonstrate, a large majority of Republicans (76.2%) agreed with this statement, while 52% of Democratic parties agreed and 44% neither agreed nor disagreed (compared to only 14 percent of Republicans who selected the neutral response option). These results indicate that, on the whole, parties prioritize both state and national considerations in their platform development, but state concerns are especially important. Furthermore, Republicans leaders were more likely to place importance on the issue of national party unity in their platforms than Democrats.

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10 For example, when I look at parties that strongly agreed with these statements, nearly a third (30 percent) of all state parties surveyed strongly agreed that state political issues should be a primary concern in platform development, while only 8 percent strongly agreed that consistency with the national platform should be a primary consideration.
State party leaders then received a follow-up question, which asked, “If you had to choose, which concern is most important in developing a state party platform? Focusing on issues relevant to the state political environment or maintaining consistency with the national party platform.” The responses to this question are shown in Figure 23. As we might expect considering the responses to the previous questions, a large majority of party leaders indicated that state political issues were the most important. However, Democratic parties were more likely than Republican parties to indicate that state political concerns take priority over consistency with the national platform, by a margin of 20 percentage points (96.3% of Democrats compared to 76.2% of Republicans). While large majorities of both Democrats and Republicans prioritize state over national considerations in their platforms, nearly a quarter of Republican parties (23.8 percent)

Figure 22: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In developing a state party platform, maintaining consistency with the positions outlined in the national party platform should be a primary concern.”
responded that maintaining consistency with the national platform was more important than focusing on state political concerns, compared to only 3.7 percent of Democratic parties.

![Figure 23](chart.png)

Figure 23: “If you had to choose, which concern is most important in developing a state party platform? Focusing on issues relevant to the state political environment or maintaining consistency with the national party platform.”

These survey responses indicate that state parties today may be less concerned about using party platforms to achieve party unity than in the past. Because a majority of parties in 2011 prioritize state political concerns over consistency with the national platform in developing their platforms, state party platforms today, and especially Democratic state platforms, are likely to be less similar to the national platform than in the past. However, in order to confirm these hypotheses, we need to examine the content of state and national platform documents across time and to consider the
reasons why state parties may develop platforms that vary in their degree of similarity to the national platforms; these are the primary goals of this research.

Thorlakson’s (2009) research regarding party integration and autonomy in federal systems helps us to understand the structure behind this complex relationship between the state and national parties and the platforms they develop. The state and national party organizations in the United States are both autonomous and integrated. Integration refers to the structural components that link state and national parties together; Thorlakson defines integrated state and federal parties as those in which state parties are incorporated into the party governance structure, and state and federal parties share a common party membership, thus resulting in an interdependent relationship between parties at the different levels. Meanwhile, autonomy refers to the state parties’ ability to carry out party functions without national party interference. State parties with the highest levels of autonomy have the freedom to develop their platforms, to recruit and select candidates and party leaders independently, and to operate without the threat of being disciplined or dissolved by the national party. Thorlakson classifies the party system in the United States as being integrated with a high degree of autonomy. In the case of American party organizations, Thorlakson explains that integration especially occurs in the campaign tasks and candidate services that are shared between parties at different levels, while individual party organizations maintain the freedom to make decisions about platform content and party leadership.
American party organizations develop their platforms according to processes established in the constitutions and by-laws of each individual party organization; no formal or legal process exists in the American party system that requires all Republican or all Democratic party organizations to consult with one another in platform development or to compose a cohesive set of platforms. While the national party platform is often perceived as representing the party as a whole, and especially the views of the party’s presidential nominee (L. S. Maisel, 1993), some state parties develop platforms that are radically different from the national party’s in terms of issue representation, position-taking, language usage, and overall format and presentation. Meanwhile, other state party platforms are closely aligned with the national platform, and some state parties even forgo the platform-writing process entirely; oftentimes, these parties will adopt the national platform, which, as “presidential candidate-centered platforms” (Maisel, 1993, p. 697), typically contain broad language and discuss a wide range of nationally-salient issues in order to attract the median voter (Kidd, 2008). Thus, state parties leverage the autonomy and integration within the party system in different ways in their approaches to platform development.

Pomper’s theory of party rationality provides insight into the reasons why state parties vary in the degree to which they create platforms that resemble the national party platform. Pomper (1967, 1988) explains that, in theory, platforms serve two main purposes: to inform voters and to help parties (and thus, party candidates) win elections.
In his theory of party rationality, Pomper argues that it is important to examine both “voter rationality” and “party rationality” when studying platform content. Platforms that satisfy voter rationality present voters with sufficient information to evaluate which party will bring them the greatest individual benefit if its candidates are elected into office. Meanwhile, platforms characterized by party rationality are positioned to help party candidates achieve electoral success. According to Pomper, an overall “rational platform” furthers the interests of both the voters and the party. However, the nature of political campaigns requires parties to make strategic decisions in terms of platform content, and there is often a disconnect between content that will provide voters with a complete picture of party principles and issue positions and that which will help a party achieve electoral success across the state.

Because state party organizations ultimately seek to support state party candidates, it seems logical to assume that state parties primarily focus on state political issues within their platforms and that a state platform characterized by voter rationality would provide voters with a clear sense of where the party stands on the most significant issues facing the state. Many state party platforms follow through on this expectation, a fact which becomes obvious with even a quick glance at a number of different state party platforms. For example, the 2012 South Dakota Republican Platform contains an extensive discussion of issues ranging from South Dakota’s mining, forestry, and agricultural industries, protection of the Missouri River reservoirs, the
quality of health care in rural South Dakota, and the state’s common core standards for K-12 education; these issues are relevant to voters in the state of South Dakota, as opposed to voters in the nation at large. However, other state parties choose not to touch on state-specific issues, instead discussing party positions on broad party issues and more nationally-salient topics. For example the 2012 South Carolina Republican Platform touches on broad party principles and positions in areas such as limited government, gay marriage, abortion, and fiscal responsibility and even discusses party positions on foreign policy, which veer farther outside the realm of state politics. While the 2012 South Dakota Republican Platform is more clearly identifiable as a platform relevant to South Dakota voters, the 2012 South Carolina Republican Platform more closely resembles a national party platform, with its discussion of broader party issues.

V.O. Key’s (1964) observations about party platforms offer important insight into these variations in state party platforms. Key describes platforms as “electioneering documents, not blueprints for action” in which the national platforms generally focus on the parties’ traditional positions, and strong differences between the parties are often obfuscated by the language and phrasing within the document (p. 421). As Key explains, the national parties describe their traditional issue positions with “forthrightness,” while positions on current issues are typically “camouflaged for the generality by their phrasing in a language clear only to the politically sophisticated” (p. 421). Thus, as I have argued in this section, the national platforms have a tendency to
represent traditional party issues, using broad language. Key also observes the strategic

nature of party platforms:

On some contentious issues intraparty differences dictate an ambiguity in platform
pronouncements. The construction of a coalition with a chance to win an election may
require the suppression or the subordination of divisive questions. The maintenance of
unity in support of a presidential candidate may be facilitated by the platform’s escape
clauses for some sectors of the party and by its silence on other matters. (Key, 1964,
p.421)

In this passage, Key emphasizes the strategy involved in platform development,

describing how the national parties may choose to address controversial issues by using
vague language or ignoring these issues completely in their platforms, so as to maintain
key parts of their coalition and garner support for the presidential candidate. Applying
Key’s arguments to this research, state parties also face similar challenges within their
states and may develop platforms that are similar to the national platforms for similar
reasons.

Depending upon political and electoral circumstances, state parties will leverage
their autonomy from and integration with the national party organizations in different
ways in the development of their platforms in order to achieve platform rationality, and
especially party rationality, to use Pomper’s terminology. For example, if a party faces a
particularly diverse electorate or a competitive electoral environment, it may choose to
compose a platform consisting of broader language, more similar to the national
platform, as this may ultimately appeal to more groups in the electorate. While this type
of platform may not inform voters about a party’s position on state-specific issues, its
broad language and discussion of nationally-salient issues is likely to be more palatable to a diversity of state candidates that run under the party label and consequently their respective constituents. Meanwhile, a party that faces a more homogeneous constituency or predictable electoral environment will have more opportunities to tackle narrower (and potentially more controversial) issues and thus use more targeted language without jeopardizing its electoral chances and the party rationality of its platform; these types of platforms will likely be less similar to the national platform and will provide more information to voters about the party’s stance on issues within the state; however, they may not have a significant impact on the election of party candidates in a non-competitive electoral environment. Other state parties may consider the needs of the presidential candidates and national parties in developing their platforms and choose to develop platforms that are more similar to the national party’s, especially if the party represents a key state in the presidential elections.

According to Ginsberg (Ginsberg, 1972), party platforms “represent an amalgamation and distillation of the principles, attitudes, appeals, and concerns of the party as a whole, or at least its dominant factions” (p. 607). Because platforms represent all of these different components to varying degrees, platforms in the United States are not complete statements of a party’s principles and issue positions; instead, they represent the issues and concerns that a party decides to emphasize during a particular election cycle. As Pomper’s rational platform theory establishes, party platforms are
strategic documents created by party leaders and activists; by studying the similarity between state and national party platforms, we are able to examine how state parties utilize their platforms to maneuver the complexities of a federal party system and to leverage their autonomy from or integration with the national parties in their platforms across time. The results of this research will offer important insights into our understanding of the balance between autonomy and interdependence within the party system, the evolving relationship between the state and national parties, and the professionalization and development of the state party organizations.

In this research, I argue that an examination of word choice within documents is sufficient to measure the overall similarity between the content of platform documents; in particular, I use weighted word frequencies to compare the similarities between the content of state and national platform documents across time. In fact, text analysis research shows that “a simple list of words, which we call unigrams, is often sufficient to convey the general meaning of a text” (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013, p.6). Other researchers have established that methods which analyze the relative words frequencies within platforms and manifestos can provide us with sufficient information to make meaningful comparisons between documents (Kidd, 2008; Laver et al., 2003; Proksch & Slapin, 2009).

Critics of this type of text analysis argue that the study of word frequencies fails to account for context (Coffey, 2011). If we are going to count the frequency with which
words such as “taxes,” “abortion,” “education,” and “freedom” are used, for example, how can we adequately compare documents by looking at word frequencies instead of the sentences or paragraphs that surround these words? First, as Grimmer and Stewart (2013) emphasize, “quantitative [text analysis] methods augment humans, not replace them” (p. 4). As with any quantitative analysis, the results are essentially meaningless without the theoretical and contextual understanding provided by humans, and, in the case of text analysis, it is the responsibility of the researcher to be mindful of the content in his or her corpus and the historical context in which the documents are situated before assigning meaning to the results of any analysis.

Additionally, while a word-frequency-based text analysis does not account for word order and sentence structure, it does account for context in a less direct sense. Because this type of text analysis is based on the frequencies of nearly all words in a document, we are not just examining the frequency of the word “taxes,” for example, but the frequency of the words that surround it. While a Democratic platform and a Republican platform might use the word “taxes” with a similar frequency, the other words that provide context to the discussion of “taxes” are also accounted for in the analysis and would likely distinguish between these two documents. Especially in longer documents such as party platforms, the concerns regarding word order and

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11 See the Methods section for a discussion of how decisions are made with regard to which words to include in the text analysis.
context will balance out after accounting for all of the other words that appear in a document (Proksch & Slapin, 2009). Of course, if the goal of this research were to understand specific tax policy positions in party platforms, then this word-frequency-based approach would not be particularly insightful; however, since this platform analysis aims to understand overall platform similarity, a holistic examination of word usage is more appropriate.

The goal of this research is not to compare the ideology or specific issue positions contained within state and national party platforms but rather to assess the overall similarity between state and national party platform content; this distinguishes this research from other analyses of party platforms and manifestos (Coffey, 2011; Kidd, 2008; Laver et al., 2003; Paddock, 1992; Proksch & Slapin, 2009). In order to determine party ideology from platform documents, researchers need to take on a number of costs and assumptions. While hand-coding the ideology of platform statements may be more reasonable with a smaller set of documents (Coffey, 2011; Paddock, 1992), the research in this chapter incorporates more than 1,400 platform documents across a 60-year time period, making this type of hand-coding impractical.

Meanwhile, other researchers who have used computer-assisted, word-frequency-based approaches to assess platform ideology have developed methods where the researcher needs to select reference texts which represent the key policy dimensions that will be used to measure platform ideology (Laver et al., 2003) or needs
to assume that each party platform represents an encyclopedic statements of party policy positions (Proksch & Slapin, 2009). When examining platforms across a large number of states and years, these approaches pose a number of challenges. How can we assign a reference platform for each election year when dealing with parties across different geographic boundaries and at different levels in the federal system? And how can we assume that party platforms represent encyclopedic statements of party policy positions, when we know that parties make strategic decisions about what content to include when writing their platforms, rather than providing a full description of party positions and principles?

While there may be ways of minimizing the costs associated with these methods for future state party platform research, the goal of this analysis is to leverage this unique state party platform dataset to assess state and national platform content similarity on a larger scale than what was possible in previous research; measuring ideology is not necessary to assess content similarity, and introducing the problems associated with measuring ideology would detract from the goals of this research. In this analysis, I am asking if party platforms that share the same party label “look” similar, based on the collection of words contained within the documents.

Based on Thorlakson’s theory of party autonomy and interdependence and Pomper’s theory of platform rationality, in this research I expect to find that state party platforms will vary in their degree of similarity to the national platforms, in part,
because of the strategic decisions that parties make to cope with a competitive or diverse electoral environment. Meanwhile, the results from state party surveys indicate that over the past 50 years, state party chairs have become more conflicted about the discussion of controversial issues within their platforms, and the percentage of state chairs who agree that controversial positions should be avoided in platforms to achieve party unity has especially declined, with more chairs expressing neutral opinions on this issue. According to 2011 survey data, we also know that both Democratic and Republican state parties place more weight upon discussing important state issues within their platforms, but Republicans are more likely than Democrats to consider consistency with the national platform as a primary concern. I expect these findings from survey research will be confirmed in the following analysis of platform content, with Republican state parties exhibiting higher levels of similarity to their national platform than Democratic state parties.

4.3 Data and Methods

This research involved the collection, processing, and analysis of more than 1,400 documents and takes advantage of the advances in computer-assisted text analysis to examine the relationship between state and national party platforms over the past 60 years\textsuperscript{12}. Because each step of the data collection and analysis involved a number of

\textsuperscript{12} Grimmer and Stewart (2013) importantly explain that computer-assisted text analysis methods augment humans but do not replace them. While computer-assisted text analysis offers numerous benefits for the
methodological decisions, each of the major steps in this text analysis process (document collection, document processing, text processing, similarity calculations, cluster analysis, and regression analysis) will receive a brief but thorough explanation in this section.

4.3.1 Document Collection

The goal of this data collection effort was to collect Democratic and Republican state party platforms from the 1950s to the present day; the contemporary period in American politics is an important period in which to examine the relationship between the state and national parties, especially due to the increasing polarization between the Democratic and Republican parties and the increasing professionalization of both the state and national party organizations during this time. Furthermore, while large-scale platform studies have been conducted using data from the nineteenth century (Bensel, 2000; Feinstein & Schickler, 2008), research regarding party platforms in the contemporary period has been more limited.

Unlike national party platforms, which have been catalogued and published in a variety of places, there is no single repository of state party platforms, and the availability of platforms varies widely across the states and even across parties within states. The availability of state party platforms depends on whether a state party
regularly composes a party platform, whether the organization publishes and distributes that platform to a broad audience, and whether party organizations, archives, libraries, and universities in the states have maintained records of state party platforms across the years.

Over the course of several years, I collected state party platform documents from a variety of sources. Many platforms from the late 1990s to the present were collected from current party websites, as well as from past state party websites, through the use of Internet archives. Platforms from the mid-1990s and earlier were primarily collected from “state blue books” or from extensive searches of the holdings at state archives, libraries, and universities across the country. Other scholars, especially Joel Paddock and Daniel Galvin, were also extremely generous in sharing the platform documents that they had collected for their research. Joel Paddock provided a large number of platforms that he had collected across multiple decades.13

It is virtually impossible to obtain a “complete set” of state party platforms. First, one has to define what a “complete set” even looks like, as party organizations do not create platforms according to the same schedule (for example, parties may compose platforms every 2 or 4 years), and some party organizations do not compose party

13 More detailed information about the particular sources from which individual platform documents were obtained is available from the author.
platforms at all or do not release them on a regular schedule. Furthermore, some states publish every party platform in state blue books, simplifying the process of collecting platforms for parties in those states, while other platforms have not been published or archived regularly, if at all. In the end, more than 1,400 state and national Democratic and Republican party platforms were collected by the author and are included in the dataset, or corpus, that is analyzed in this chapter.

The figures that follow contain a summary of the state party platforms collected for the Democratic and Republican parties in each state; this set of platforms is included in all of the analyses presented in this chapter. Figure 24 display the total number of state party platforms collected for each presidential election year and the subsequent midterm election year combined. Again, it is difficult to determine what proportion of state party platforms are represented in this corpus, because of the variations in platform development processes and platform availability across the states. Nevertheless, as Figure 24 shows, more than 50 state platforms were collected for every presidential-midterm-election-year grouping from 1952 to 2014. The 1964-1966 period contains the most platforms in this dataset, with 123 platforms, followed by the most recent election years of 2004-2006, 2008-2010, and 2012-2014, with 113, 115, and 107 platforms, respectively. The smallest number of platforms are available for the 1952-

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14 See Appendix E for data from the 2011 state party survey, which indicates the frequency with which state parties reported creating platform documents.
15 Among the 1,413 platforms in this corpus, 1,381 are state party platforms and 32 are national party platforms.
1954 and 1976-1978 periods, with 55 and 59 platforms respectively. On average, 86 platforms were collected for each presidential-midterm-election-year grouping.

Figure 24: Total Number of State Party Platforms Collected for Each Midterm-Presidential-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014

![Figure 24: Total Number of State Party Platforms](image)

Figure 25 and Figure 26 represent the state party platform dataset by party. As Figure 25 shows, Democratic state parties are somewhat over-represented in the dataset, with Democratic state platforms encompassing 54.8 percent of the total number of state platforms collected and Republicans 45.2 percent. Figure 26 shows the party composition of the data by presidential-midterm-election-year grouping; with the exception of 1964-1966 when the number of Republican state platforms collected exceeded Democratic platforms, Democratic platforms represent a larger proportion of the total number of documents across years. Because this gap between the number of
Democratic and Republican platforms remains relatively consistent across time, even in the most recent years when most state party platforms are available on party websites and thus are easy to collect, this likely indicates that Republican state parties are not as likely as Democrats to create platforms or are not as likely to make their platforms accessible to the general public.

![Figure 25: Total Number of State Party Platforms Collected for Each Party](image)

Figure 25: Total Number of State Party Platforms Collected for Each Party
Figure 26: Total State Party Platforms Collected for Each Party, by Midterm-President-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Figure 27: Total State Party Platforms Collected for Each Region, by Midterm-Presidential-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Figure 28: Total State Party Platforms Collected for Each Region, 1952-2014

Figure 27 and Figure 28 graph the regional distribution of the state party platform dataset. As Figure 28 shows, when viewing the collection of documents as a whole, Midwestern state party platforms represent the largest percentage of documents, at 37 percent, followed by Western state platforms at 25 percent, and Northeastern and Southern platforms, which represent just below 20 percent of the corpus apiece. Figure 27 graphs the regional distribution of platform documents by presidential-midterm-election-year grouping. From 1952-1954 to 1988-1990, the Midwestern state platforms constitute the largest percentage of platform documents, after which point the Western

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16 U.S. Census regions are used to categorize the data by region in Figure 27 and Figure 28.
17 The regional distribution by Democratic and Republican state platforms is nearly the same as the distribution shown in Figure 28. See Appendix E for graphs of regional platform distribution by party.
state platforms represent the largest group, followed closely in some years by the Midwestern platforms. In the pre-1984 period, the Western platforms represent 20 percent or less of the platforms collected for each year-grouping, but after the mid-1980s, 30 percent or more of the available platforms are from Western state parties. For nearly all of the years in this corpus, the Northeastern platforms encompass approximately 20 percent of the platform documents, until the late 1990s and 2000s, when the Northeast represents approximately 15 percent of the platforms in each election-year grouping.

For much of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the West and the South represent the smallest proportions of platforms in each election-year grouping. However, by the early 1980s, the South and Northeast represent similar proportions of the platforms collected, and by 1996-1998, the Southern platforms actually outnumber those from the Northeast, approaching or exceeding 20 percent of the platforms collected for these years; this represents a large increase from the 1952-1954 to 1972-1974 period, when the South represented around 10 percent of platforms in many years. By the late 1980s, the West and the Midwest are more comparable in their platform proportions, with each representing approximately 30 percent of the collection in each year-grouping.

Given the variation in political culture and party competition across the states and regions of the United States, we likely would not expect to find an equal number of platforms across the regions of the country in each election-year grouping. For example, considering the lack of party competition and party organizational development in the
South for much of the first half of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that party platforms from Southern state parties were less frequent during this period. Nevertheless, each region is represented in the platforms collected for each election-year grouping in this collection, and the regional distribution of platforms reaches a greater balance in the period after the mid-1980s.

4.3.2 Document Processing

In order to take advantage of the sophisticated text analysis computer programs that are available today, the party platform documents need to be available in an electronic, machine-readable format. Thus, any documents that were not available electronically first had to be scanned. In order to generate machine-readable files, all documents that were scanned, as well as platforms that were originally saved electronically in image file formats, then had to be run through optical character recognition (OCR) software, followed by a manual error checking process. While current OCR software is quite sophisticated and accurate when it comes to reading clear copies of a text, many party platform documents originated from old newspapers and photocopies, which required a great deal of manual correcting of OCR results.

As other scholars have explained as well (Proksch & Slapin, 2009), document processing can be a laborious and often mundane task, but the quality of any computer-
assisted text analysis depends on the quality of the texts. If documents are filled with errors, the results of the analysis will not accurately represent the corpus of documents. Thus, document processing is a crucial and incredibly time-consuming step in this process.

### 4.3.3 Text Processing

After the documents are collected, text analysis generally involves two pre-analysis processing steps: document processing (described above) and text processing. In order to obtain meaningful results from the text analysis and to run computations at an efficient speed, the text contained within the documents needs to be reformatted and pared down, so that the text analysis program only analyzes meaningful content.

The text analysis in this research is ultimately based on the word frequencies within each document. Before inputting these word frequencies into a text analysis program, it is important for the researcher to process the texts; ultimately, texts should be analyzed in their most basic form, stripped of all extraneous formatting and words. As part of this process, all capital letters were changed to lower-case letters using a text processing program\(^\text{19}\), to ensure that the computer program did not incorrectly count the same words as different words, due to capitalization alone. All words were also

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\(^{19}\) The program *RapidMiner* was used to conduct all text processing in this analysis.
stemmed, using a common stemming algorithm;\(^{20}\) in this process, all words were reduced to their root words. For example, consider the root word, “elect;” the word “elect” can be appended with an assortment of suffixes, to form words such as “elected,” “electing,” and “election.” A stemming algorithm removes the suffixes from these words, so that each of these words is counted as an instance of the root word “elect” in all documents. Stemming ultimately allows for more efficient estimation and interpretation.

The text processing program also removed stop words from the documents. In text processing, stop words are words that are filtered out pre-analysis, usually because they are so commonly used that they have no information-value. For example, prepositions, pronouns, and conjunctions are so frequently used in the English language, that they would dominate the word frequency lists of any document; however, they would not tell us much about document content. Oftentimes, it is also necessary to use a “purpose tailored” stop-word list (Feinerer, Hornik, & Meyer, 2008). Words that are very common to a certain corpus of documents but also provide no meaningful information about document content are often removed from analyses that use word frequencies to distinguish between documents (Manning, Raghavan, & Schutze, 2008). For example, in a corpus of party platform documents, words such as

\(^{20}\) In this research, the “Snowball” stemming algorithm in RapidMiner was utilized, which is based on Martin Porter’s widely-used “Snowball” framework for writing stemming algorithms (http://snowball.tartarus.org/index.php).
“platform,” “plank,” “propose,” and “recommend,” appear so frequently in many platforms that they are essentially meaningless and refer more to document structure than document content. Party names (i.e., “Democrat” and “Republican”) and state names (i.e. “North Carolina”) and state nicknames (i.e., “North Carolinian”) are also problematic for this analysis. State and party names are repeated so many times throughout most state platforms that they rise to the top of word frequency lists, without providing information that allows for meaningful comparisons between party platforms. Dhillon and Modha (2001) refer to all of these words that are removed pre-analysis as “function words:” “eliminating function words removes little or no information, while speeding up the computation” (p. 147). In addition to common English language stop words, the common “platform words” described above were also removed from the analysis. This type of word removal is common practice in other analyses of party platforms and manifestos (Proksch & Slapin, 2009).

4.3.4 Term-Document Matrix

The basic input for the text analysis in this chapter is a term-document matrix, in which each row is the file name of one of the 1,416 party platform documents included in the corpus and each column is a word that appears in any of the documents.

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21 For example, if we are comparing the North Carolina Democratic Party platform to the National Democratic Party Platform in a given year, we are not particularly interested in the fact that the North Carolina Democrats mention the name “North Carolina” more than the national party, nor do we want the results of statistical analyses that we use to compare documents to be driven by the use of these state names.

22 A list of words removed the analysis is available from the author.
(excluding the stop-words that were removed, as described earlier). Each cell or element in the matrix contains the frequency of each word in each document. Thus, each document is represented by a vector of term frequencies.

While this term-document matrix based on simple term frequencies can be used as the input for further text analysis, at this point in the process, it is often recommended that researchers implement a weighting algorithm to account for the relative importance of certain words. In their textbook on information retrieval and text classification, Manning et al. introduce this step with the following question and answer statement: “Are all words in a document equally important? Clearly not” (p. 117). They go on to explain that when using simple term frequencies as the input, the researcher assumes that all terms are equally important in distinguishing between documents, when, “In fact certain terms have little or no discriminating power in determining relevance...To this end, we introduce a mechanism for attenuating the effect of terms that occur too often in the collection to be meaningful for relevance determination” (p. 117-118). Even though unimportant are excluded from analysis at the stop-word-removal phase, there are still many words that occur so frequently in a corpus of documents that they are not very useful in grouping and distinguishing between documents; however, these words are not removed as part of the stop-word-removal process, because they are not obviously “function words.”
To account for this problem, the “term-frequency inverse-document-frequency” weighting scheme, commonly referred to as “tf-idf,” is used in this analysis to weight terms according to their relative importance. The tf-idf scheme essentially weights each word in a document by not only accounting for the number of times a word appears in a particular document but also by accounting for the percentage of all documents in which that word appears.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, tf-idf weights are lowest when a term occurs in most documents in a collection and highest when it occurs frequently within a small subset of documents (Manning et al., 2008). After running the tf-idf algorithm, the word frequencies in the term-document matrix are converted to tf-idf scores.

Recall that in this analysis, the goal is to determine the similarity between each state party platform and its respective national party platform during a given election year. As such, I am concerned with the relative importance of terms that appear in platform documents released over a two-year period (the presidential election year through the subsequent midterm election year); thus, tf-idf weights are calculated across documents that pertain to the same presidential-midterm-election-year-grouping. As Laver et al. point out, the political and policy context of certain words varies across time.

\textsuperscript{23} The tf-idf weighting scheme and variants of it have been used extensively in information retrieval, text mining, and text analysis for the past several decades. Determining the tf-idf weight for a term $t$ involves the following calculation: $\text{tf-idf}_{t,d} = \text{tf}_{t,d} \times \text{idf}_t$, where $\text{tf}_{t,d}$ is the frequency of term $t$ in document $d$ and $\text{idf}_t$ is the inverse document frequency of a term $t$. The inverse document frequency is calculated as $\text{idf}_t = \log(N/d_t)$, where $d_t$ is the number of documents in a corpus that contain term $t$ (Manning et al. 2008, pp. 117-119). In this analysis, the goal is to determine the similarity between each state party platform and its respective national party platform for a given election year; thus, the $d_t$ term is the number of documents in each two-year period (the presidential election year through the subsequent midterm election year) that contain a term $t$, not the number of documents in the entire corpus that contain term $t$. 

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and relative word frequencies should only be compared across documents that share this context (Laver et al., 2003). National parties develop their platforms during presidential election years and keep that platform as the standing platform for the next four years, until the next presidential election. Some state parties also develop their platforms during presidential election years, while others compose platforms in midterm years or off-election years, and some even write platforms in both midterm and presidential years. Because the national Democratic and Republican party platforms pertain to both presidential and midterm election years across the four-year period, when making comparisons between state and national platforms, any state platforms that are developed during this presidential-midterm-election-year cycle share a similar context with the national platform released in that presidential election year; thus, tf-idf weights are calculated within these presidential-midterm-election-year groupings. For example, within the term-document matrix, tf-idf weights were calculated for all state and national platforms released during the 2012 or 2014 election cycles, based on the distribution of words in these 2012-2014 platforms only; meanwhile, the term-frequency vectors for platforms developed for the 2008 or 2010 elections were converted to tf-idf weights using the word distribution from 2008-2010 platforms; this process was carried out for all presidential-midterm-election-year groupings from 1952-2014.
4.3.5 Document Similarity and Cluster Analysis

Recall that the ultimate goal of this analysis is to examine the relationship between state and national party platform documents from the 1950s to the present. Computer-assisted text analysis will allow me to analyze the content similarity of large numbers of documents across election years from 1952 to 2014. This analysis will primarily examine the relationships between state and national party platforms using measures of document similarity and cluster analysis.

As the name implies, cluster analysis groups documents into “clusters,” or groups of “like” documents, and, ideally, these clusters should be internally cohesive and clearly distinct from one another. Unlike classification, which requires humans to assign individual documents to particular groupings, cluster analysis is a form of unsupervised learning, which uses the distribution of data in the term-document matrix, rather than human classification, to determine the appropriate clustering of documents (Manning et al., 2008). Depending on the research question, one could conduct cluster analysis on a variety of document groupings, in order to better understand the underlying structure within this group of documents. Again, in this analysis, word frequencies in the term-document matrix were weighted using “tf-idf” weights within each presidential-midterm-election-year grouping, because platforms created during these years share a similar context. When performing cluster analysis, a separate analysis was conducted using the subset of the term-document-matrix pertaining to the
platforms developed within each presidential-midterm-year cycle from 1952-2014, resulting in sixteen separate cluster analyses in total. I conducted cluster analysis on all platforms developed during each election-year grouping, as an initial step to identify overall trends in the state-national-platform relationship.

While the actual cluster membership is calculated in an unsupervised fashion (i.e., documents are classified into groups without human input), as with all steps in text processing and analysis, cluster analysis also requires the researcher to make a number of decisions along the way. What type of cluster analysis will I use? On what distance measure will I base my clustering? How many clusters will I seek to identify? As Grimmer and King have observed (Grimmer & King, 2009), all of these decisions can be overwhelming and introduce a great deal of complexity into the cluster analysis process. As with all statistical analysis, great care must be exercised to ensure that the chosen methods are best suited to the research question and the nature of the data.

In deciding on the type of cluster analysis to use in this research, two main characteristics of the term-document matrix were especially important to consider. First, the word count varies widely across platform documents and some methods are better suited to mitigate the effects of document length on the results of the analysis. Second, across the more than 1,400 documents, more than 10,000 words appear in the term-document matrix, even after removing stop words. Thus, the vector created for each
document from the term-document matrix is high-dimensional but also sparse, since most documents only contain a small proportion of all of the words in the matrix.

Standard k-means clustering is one of the most commonly used clustering algorithms, in a large part, due to its simplicity. Using the vector of term weights generated for each document from the term-document matrix, the standard k-means algorithm places documents in appropriate clusters by minimizing the average squared Euclidean distance of documents from the cluster center, also known as the centroid (Manning et al., 2008, p.360). However, standard k-means is problematic when document length varies widely across the corpus, as the Euclidean dissimilarity measure over represents long documents.

The text analysis literature points to spherical k-means clustering as an appropriate algorithm when dealing with data characterized by widely varying document lengths and a sparse, high-dimensional term-document matrix (Dhillon, Fan, & Guan, 2001; Dhillon & Modha, 2001; Hornik, Feinerer, Kober, & Buchta, 2012). The spherical k-means clustering algorithm retains much of the simplicity that we gain from standard k-means but uses a different technique to deal with varying document length and matrix sparsity. Most importantly, instead of utilizing Euclidean distance to determine cluster membership, spherical k-means employs a cosine dissimilarity measure. The cosine dissimilarity measure is based on the angle between the document

24 In most cases, the centroid is the mean vector of documents in a cluster (Dhillon & Modha, 2001).
vectors and is not susceptible to the problems associated with standard k-means and Euclidean distance calculations that were discussed above (Dhillon & Modha, 2001; Hornik et al., 2012).

Rather than minimizing the Euclidean distance between documents and the cluster centroids, the spherical k-means algorithm minimizes the cosine dissimilarity measure between documents and cluster centroids, to identify the appropriate cluster for each document. The resulting clusters are used to examine how the state and national party platforms are grouped as a whole across time and to identify overall changes in the relationship between state and national platforms. In this research, “soft” or “fuzzy” clustering is used rather than “hard” or “crisp” clustering. In the case of hard clustering, each document is assigned to exactly one cluster. With soft clustering, on the other hand, each document is assigned a degree of membership in each cluster, ranging from 0 to 1, with 1 representing sole membership in a single cluster. Thus, the

\[ \sum_{i} (1 - \cos(x_i, p_{c(i)})) \]

25 The spherical k-means algorithm minimizes the following equation, where \( x \) is the term-weight vector and \( p \) is the prototype, or centroid: \[ \sum_{i} (1 - \cos(x_i, p_{c(i)})) \]. In spherical k-means, the cluster center is referred to as the “concept vector,” \( p_{c(i)} = \frac{m_{i}}{||m_{i}||} \), where \( m \) is the mean vector or centroid of a cluster (Dhillon & Modha, 2001; Hornik et al., 2012). According to Dhillon and Modha (2001), “The concept vector may be thought of as the vector that is closest in cosine similarity (in an average sense) to all the document vectors in the cluster” (p. 7).
membership values for each document represent the association between the document and each cluster, and, in summarizing the data, documents are assigned to the cluster in which they exhibit the highest membership value. With the goal of cluster analysis being to identify clusters that are dissimilar from one another and yet internally cohesive, a cluster analysis that yields higher membership values is preferable. In reality, the relationships between party organizations and party platforms are likely to be complex, and “fuzzy” clustering better represents this complexity than a “hard” clustering algorithm.

In addition to its use for determining cluster membership, the cosine dissimilarity between documents that is calculated as part of the spherical k-means process provides a measure of the “dissimilarity” between each state party platform and its respective national party platform in a given presidential-midterm-election-year grouping. Cosine similarity measures are commonly used in information retrieval processes, and similar algorithms are used to determine the similarity between documents in many Internet search engines, where pairs of documents or webpages with the lowest cosine dissimilarities are considered to be most “like” each other, and thus will be suggested alongside one another in search results (Manning et al., 2008). Likewise, in this research I am trying to identify state party platforms that are most

\[ 1 - \cos(x, p) = 1 - \frac{\langle x, p \rangle}{\|x\|\|p\|} \]

where the numerator is the inner product, or the dot product, between the document vectors, and the denominator is the product of the vectors’ Euclidean lengths (Hornik et al., 2012; Manning et al., 2008).
“like” the national platforms. This cosine measure is used in this analysis to determine the degree of similarity between state and national party platforms; as a measure of similarity that is unaffected by document length, it is especially appropriate, as the word count of party platforms varies widely.

By looking more specifically at the degree of similarity between state and national party platform documents through the cosine dissimilarity measure, I can examine trends in the national-state-party-platform relationship by party, region, and time and ultimately use this cosine dissimilarity measure as the dependent variable in a regression analysis to explain these trends.

4.4 Results and Analysis

4.4.1 Cluster Analysis Results

Cluster analysis, the first step in this analysis, is used to identify overall trends in the relationship between state and national party platforms across time. Recall that a separate cluster analysis was conducted for each presidential-midterm-election-year grouping, including all state and national platforms issued by both Democratic and Republican parties in those years. Before even starting with cluster analysis, the platform data have obvious groupings that we might expect to observe; for example, it seems likely that groups of “like” documents might include platforms from the different parties (Democratic and Republican), from different levels in the federal system (state and national), or parties from different geographic regions of the country. Cluster
analysis is particularly valuable as an initial step in this research to determine if these are actually the predominant groupings that emerge from the data and if these groupings remain consistent across time, as we attempt to understand the relationship between state and national platforms.

Choosing the Number of Clusters

Cluster analysis is an extremely useful tool to identify the underlying structure of textual data; however, considering the many clustering algorithms available to researchers today and the different assumptions and technicalities associated with each algorithm, decisions regarding the correct algorithm to use and the appropriate number of clusters to extract can pose a number of problems (Grimmer & King, 2009). As I explained earlier in the methods section of this chapter, the text analysis literature points to spherical k-means clustering as an appropriate algorithm when dealing with data characterized by widely varying document lengths and a sparse, high-dimensional term-document matrix (Dhillon et al., 2001; Dhillon & Modha, 2001; Hornik et al., 2012), and, after considering and testing a number of different clustering methods, I ultimately identified spherical k-means clustering as a suitable approach for this research.

Deciding on the appropriate number of clusters into which the party platforms would be classified proves to be somewhat more challenging. A variety of tests have been developed to assess the appropriate number of clusters, and decisions about the number of clusters to choose should be based on the examination of a variety of criteria.
and cluster plots. When using a fuzzy clustering method, such as spherical k-means, which assigns each document a membership value in each cluster, rather than strictly classifying each document, these membership values provide a valuable means through which to evaluate the strength of the cluster analysis results. In particular, the membership values indicate whether a document is strongly associated with its cluster or whether “there is a ‘second best’ cluster that is almost as good as the ‘best cluster’” (Everitt, Landau, & Leese, 2001, p.164). An examination of the margins between the membership values in the “best cluster” and “second best cluster” provides one means to assess whether a cluster model with a certain number of clusters produces higher membership values on average. Higher membership margins indicate a better fitting cluster model.

Figure 29: Average Cluster Membership Margins for 2, 3, and 4 Spherical K-Means Clusters, Classifying State and National Platform Documents, 1952-2014
Figure 29 shows the average membership margin, or the difference in membership values between the “best” and “second best” clusters, for party platforms in each midterm-presidential-election-year subset. From this plot, we can draw a few conclusions. First, the membership margins generally increase across time, indicating that the cluster analysis better explains the structure of the platform data in later years. Second, the average membership margins do not vary substantially when looking at models with different numbers of clusters. Thus, the average membership margins suggest that there is not a substantial advantage in choosing to examine two, three, or four clusters.²⁷

Another useful measure of cluster quality and validity is the silhouette width, which uses measures of the dissimilarity between a document and objects in its own cluster and the dissimilarity between a document and objects in the nearest cluster to determine whether a document is actually closest to its assigned cluster. As Everitt et al. (2001) note, an examination of the average silhouette width for a cluster analysis is especially useful for determining the appropriate number of clusters in fuzzy clustering, because fuzzy clustering naturally raises questions about “best” and “second best” clusters. When examining silhouette width, higher values indicate higher quality clustering and negative values indicate that documents likely have been misclassified, as

²⁷ Membership margins can pose problems as a measure of cluster validity, however, because they tend to increase as the number of clusters increases (Hoppner, Klawonn, Kruse, & Runkler, 1999). Therefore, it is important to consider a variety of cluster validity measures.
this means that the average distance to documents in the same cluster is greater than the
distance to documents in the other cluster (Tan, Steinbach, & Kumar, 2006).

Figure 30 plots the average silhouette width for the clustering of platforms from
each midterm-election-year grouping, comparing the average silhouette width for
spherical k-means clustering using two through seven clusters; in these silhouette plots,
the location of a bend or “knee” in the graphs may provide some indication as to the
appropriate number of clusters (Tan et al., 2006). In some of the plots included in Figure
30, the average silhouette width remains relatively constant as the number of clusters
increases, indicating that there is not a clear cluster solution that best describes the data.
In other years, such as 1972-74 and 1982-84, the average silhouette width starts to
increase at the three-cluster mark, and in some years such as 2008-10 and 2012-14, the
average silhouette width starts to decrease around three or four clusters. In general, the
average silhouette width values are higher in later years, again demonstrating the
potential challenge in modeling the structure of the platform documents from the 1950s
and 1960s. Nevertheless, the “knee” that is visible around the three-cluster mark on
many of these plots indicates that this may be an appropriate number of cluster to use.
Several other cluster validity measures, such as the Separation Index and Xie-Beni Index,
were also examined to determine the number of clusters. As with the silhouette width,
these validity measures also indicated that three clusters may be appropriate in a
Figure 30: Average Silhouette Width for 2-7 Spherical K-Means Clusters, Classifying State and National Platforms, 1952-2014
Figure 30: Average Silhouette Width for 2-7 Spherical K-Means Clusters, Classifying State and National Platforms, 1952-2014
number of election years; plots of the Separation Index and Xie-Beni Index across election years and number of clusters can be found in Appendix E.\textsuperscript{28}

In this platform cluster analysis, I am analyzing the cluster structure for sixteen different election periods, and it is unlikely that only one solution will emerge that can be used to explain the structure of the data. Ultimately, cluster analysis requires the researcher to estimate the number of clusters in the best way possible using available validity methods and his or her knowledge of the data. As with many classification and data reduction techniques, the number of categories to analyze is partly grounded in statistical tests and benchmarks, but it is also grounded in finding interpretable and meaningful results. Thus, in addition to considering cluster validity measures, it is also important to ask how the number of clusters chosen fits with the goals of the research.

For example, if the goal of this research were to provide a detailed explanation about variations in platform content related to a specific election year, we might want to break the documents into as many groups as possible, in order to understand the current issues and groupings during that election. However, in this research, I seek an explanation for the relationship between platform documents at the state and national levels and ask how this relationship has changed across time; the broader goals of this research are better suited to a broader cluster structure that will uncover important

\textsuperscript{28} See Everitt et al. (2001) and Hoppner et al. (1999) for more information about various cluster validity measures.
trends across years. In addition to the cluster validity methods which indicate that a three-cluster model might be appropriate, this number of clusters also seems suitable to examine the relationship between Democratic and Republican and state and national platforms. For example, given the nature of the platform data, we might expect the Democratic and Republican state platforms to occupy different clusters in many years, but we also might expect the national platforms to occupy a different space from the state platforms. While two clusters may not explain enough of the variation in the data, three clusters seems more suitable to uncover patterns in the data both within and across election years.

**Cluster Analysis Results**

The use of two-dimensional plots to evaluate cluster analysis results is a common method to view the results and to visually validate the cluster solution (Everitt et al., 2001). On the pages that follow, Figure 31 shows the plots of the spherical-k-means cluster analysis results for each presidential-midterm-election-year grouping; in these figures, the three-cluster solution is plotted in two dimensions, using the first two principal components. Using the colors blue and red to denote Democratic and Republican platforms, respectively, and different shapes to represent membership in one of the three clusters, the figures provide a general sense of the structure of the cluster analysis results. Clusters that contain both national party platforms are labeled with the
letter “N,” and platforms that contain a majority of Democratic or Republican state platforms are denoted with “D” and “R” respectively.

Considering the evidence from the validity measures discussed earlier, the cluster plots confirm my expectations regarding model fit for the earlier decades from the 1950s through the 1970s. The Democratic and Republican platform documents are quite scattered across the space in these years, and, in many cases, the cluster members are not tightly grouped together; although not shown here, when plotting the solution in two or four clusters, rather than three, these conclusions remain the same. In fact, across a number of cluster configurations, a clear cluster structure does not emerge until the early 1990s. By 1992-94, the documents are more tightly grouped within their clusters and there is less evidence of point-scattering. Furthermore, when looking at Figure 31, it is hard to miss the stark difference between the pre- and post-1992-94 period; starting in 1992-94 and continuing through 2012-14, a clear separation between the Democratic and Republican state platforms emerges, while, prior to this period, the clusters contain a greater mix of Democrats and Republicans.

Looking more closely at the plots in Figure 31, in nearly all years (with the exception of 1964-66 and 1988-90) both the Democratic and Republican national party platforms occupy the same cluster. Furthermore as Figure 32 shows, in a cluster analysis with three clusters, both the Democratic and Republican national platforms
Figure 31: Plots of Three-Cluster Spherical K-Means Cluster Solution, Displayed in the Space of First Two Principal Components for Each Presidential-Midterm-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Figure 31: Plots of Three-Cluster Spherical K-Means Cluster Solution, Displayed in the Space of First Two Principal Components for Each Presidential-Midterm-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Figure 31: Plots of Three-Cluster Spherical K-Means Cluster Solution, Displayed in the Space of First Two Principal Components for Each Presidential-Midterm-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Figure 31: Plots of Three-Cluster Spherical K-Means Cluster Solution, Displayed in the Space of First Two Principal Components for Each Presidential-Midterm-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
exhibit nearly equal membership values. Membership values for the national Democratic and Republican platforms are especially similar in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s; while the membership values are also close in the other decades, the Democratic national platform exhibits slightly higher membership values for most of these earlier years. Nevertheless, across time, both national platforms are strongly associated with the “National Party Cluster.” With the exception of 1992 for both parties and 1968 for the Democrats, the membership values for both national platforms in the “National Party Cluster” is consistently above .7, indicating that the national platforms are strongly associated with their assigned cluster. In the 14 years where the national platforms are classified in the same cluster, the national Democratic and Republican platforms are characterized by high average membership margins of .89 and .86, respectively, and the membership values have remained relatively stable across time.

Recall that the spherical k-means clustering algorithm minimizes the cosine dissimilarity measure between documents and the cluster center, with the goal being to retrieve clusters that are characterized by intra-cluster similarity and inter-cluster dissimilarity. The fact that the national platforms are classified in the same cluster in nearly all election years and their cluster classification is characterized by high membership values
Figure 32: Membership Values of National Party Platforms in “National Party Cluster,” 1952-2014

suggests that the national platforms are generally more similar than different, in terms of their platform word usage\(^{29}\).

In the three-cluster model, the “National Party Cluster” contains both national parties in 14 out of the 16 years, as well as a group of state parties. It is also important to ask which state parties are grouped in the national party cluster, as these parties’ platforms are more likely to be similar to the national platform. As Figure 33 shows, the composition of the “National Party Cluster” has fluctuated across time, in terms of the

\(^{29}\) See Appendix E for a plot of the cosine dissimilarity between the Democratic and Republican national party platforms across the 1952 to 2012 period. The degree of dissimilarity between the national platforms fluctuates across time, and there is no evidence of an overall trend in this measure.
state party platforms from the different geographic regions\textsuperscript{30} that are grouped into this cluster\textsuperscript{31}. From 1952 to 1980, a majority of the state party platforms classified into the “National Party Cluster” were from Midwestern state parties, with the exception of 1968, where Midwestern parties represented a near-majority (48 percent) of this cluster; on average, Midwestern platforms comprised 65 percent of the membership in the “National Party Cluster” in this period. State parties from the other regions comprised 30 percent or less of the state party membership in these years; on average, from 1952-1980, platforms from the Northeast, West, and South represented 13 percent, 16 percent, and 6 percent of the “National Party Cluster,” respectively. After 1980, Midwestern state parties continue to occupy the “National Party Cluster” at relatively high levels, compared to the other regions, encompassing 33 percent of the “National Party Cluster” membership, on average, from 1984 to 2012; however, Midwestern state platforms no longer dominate the “National Party Cluster,” as Southern and Midwestern platforms are represented in this cluster at nearly equal levels in this period. From 1984 to 2012, Southern state platforms encompass an average of 31 percent of state party membership in the “National Party Cluster,” and from 2004 to 2012, the South actually represents a larger percentage of this cluster than the Midwest. Northeastern and Western

\textsuperscript{30} State are categorized into regions based on the U.S. Census region definitions.

\textsuperscript{31} Note that the 1964-66 and 1988-90 election-year-groupings are excluded from these discussions of the “National Party Cluster.” Both national parties did not group into the same cluster in these years, thus complicating the identification of a clear “national party cluster.” In these years, it is more likely that a two-cluster model is more appropriate, with each cluster containing some combination of Democratic and Republican platforms.
Figure 33: Proportion of State Party Platform Members in “National Party Cluster” from 1952-2014, by Region

State platforms continue to occupy the “National Party Cluster” at similar levels in this period, representing an average of 20 and 16 percent of this cluster, respectively.

Upon further examination of the state party platforms that are classified into the “National Party Cluster,” it is clear that Democratic state platforms are far more likely to appear in this cluster than Republicans. As Figure 34 shows, in nearly all years, a majority of state platforms that grouped into the “National Party Cluster” are Democratic platforms. On average, from 1952 to 2012, Democratic platforms represent 73 percent of the state platforms in this cluster, while Republican platforms represent 27
percent. Republican platforms represent a majority of state platforms in the “National Party Cluster” in only one year-grouping, 1968-1970; in this year, Republican platforms encompass 78 percent of state platforms in the “National Party Cluster,” compared to 22 percent of Democratic platforms.

If, in the three-cluster model, the Democratic and Republican national platforms are classified into the same “National Party Cluster” in 14 out of the 16 election years, then, of course, the other two clusters are comprised entirely of state party platforms. Looking at the composition of the “State Party Clusters” across these 14 years, a very clear pattern emerges. As I mentioned earlier, from the 1950s through the 1980s, each of the two “State Party Clusters” contains a mix of Democratic and Republican state parties; however, by the early 1990s, the two “State Party Clusters” are almost completely divided, if not completely divided, between Democratic and Republican state platforms.

Figure 35 shows the margin of party classification in the two “State Party Clusters” from 1952 to 2014, again excluding the two years in which no distinct state and national party clusters emerged from the cluster analysis (1964-66 and 1988-90). The margin of party classification is the margin between the proportion of platforms in
Figure 34: Proportion of State Party Platform Members in “National Party Cluster” from 1952-2014, by Party

“State Party Cluster 1” that are Democratic platforms and the proportion of platforms in “State Party Cluster 2” that are Democratic platforms; a small margin indicates that the Democratic platforms for a given election-year grouping are divided between the two “State Party Clusters,” while a large margin indicates that the Democratic platforms are concentrated in one of the “State Party Clusters.” In Figure 35, it is clear that from 1952 to 1984, the margin of party classification in the two state party clusters is rather small,

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Margin of party classification in state party clusters = Absolute Value[(Proportion of platforms in “State Party Cluster 1” that are Democratic) – (Proportion of platforms in “State Party Cluster 2” that are Democratic)]
ranging from a low of .06 in 1972-74 (where the Democratic and Republican platforms are nearly equally divided between the two “State Party Clusters”) to a high of .33 in 1952-54. These patterns stand in stark contrast to what emerges in the 1992 to 2014 period. Starting in 1992-94 and extending through 2012-14, the margin of state party classification rises dramatically, with a margin of .93 or higher in these years. In 2000-02, 2008-10, and 2012-14 the margin of state party classification is equal to 1, meaning that one “State Platform Cluster” is entirely composed of Democratic state platforms, and the other “State Platform Cluster” is entirely composed of Republican platforms. From 1992-94 to 2012-14, these “State Party Cluster” can be accurately labeled as the “Democratic State Party Cluster” and the “Republican State Party Cluster.”

In addition to observing a clearer division in classification into the “State Party Clusters” by party across time, we also observe stronger membership values in the “State Party Clusters” in more recent years. Recall that in a fuzzy cluster analysis, membership values indicate the strength of association between a document and the cluster. Figure 36 presents descriptive statistics regarding the membership values of those platforms that were classified into either of the “State Party Clusters” from 1952-2014. First, on the left-hand side of the figure, it is clear that the average membership values in the “State Party Clusters” has generally increased across time for both Democrats and Republicans. On average, both Democratic and Republican platforms
Figure 35: Margin of Party Classification in “State Party Cluster 1” and “State Party Cluster 2,” 1952-2014

received their lowest membership values in the “State Party Clusters” in the period from the late 1950s to the early 1980s; the lowest membership values emerged in 1960-62, with averages of .57 and .53\textsuperscript{33} for Democrats and Republicans, respectively, in this year-grouping. Meanwhile, Democratic platforms received their five highest average membership values in years ranging from the mid-1980s through the 2010s, with the highest value occurring in 1992-94 and 2012-14, where the average was equal to .79. The five highest average membership values for Republican platforms occurred in the period

\textsuperscript{33} Membership values range from 0 to 1.
from the mid-1990s to the 2010s, with Republican state platforms receiving the highest average membership in 2012-14, with an average of .84.

Figure 36: Average and Standard Deviation of State Platform Membership Values in “State Party Clusters” from 1952-2014, by Party

On the right-hand side of Figure 36, we see that the standard deviation of the average membership value in the “State Party Clusters” is characterized by a general downward-trend from the mid-1980s through the 2010s, for both Democratic and Republican platforms. Thus, in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, we generally observe “State Party Clusters” that are more internally cohesive, as the average membership values in these clusters increase and the standard deviations of these average values decrease.
Furthermore, as Figure 37 shows, even when examining the average membership values in the “State Party Clusters” by region, this general upward-trend in average membership generally holds true across the regions, in particular in the case of the Southern and Midwestern platforms; the trend appears to be weakest among the Northeastern and Western states, where the average membership values remain fairly steady from the mid-1980s through the 2010s.

Figure 37: Average of State Platform Membership Values in “State Party Clusters” from 1952-2014, by Region
4.4.2 Measuring Dissimilarity between State and National Party Platforms

The cluster classification is useful to identify overall trends in the grouping of state and national party platforms across time. Over time, I uncovered more distinct and well-defined clusters from the cluster analysis and identified some key characteristics of state party platforms that were classified into the “National Party Cluster.” However, the cluster analysis does not provide sufficient information about the overall similarity between state and national party platforms as a whole, across all state parties. As part of the spherical k-means process, the cosine dissimilarity is calculated between each pair of platforms in a given presidential-midterm-election-year grouping. For the purposes of this analysis, I am particularly interested in the cosine dissimilarity between each state party platform and its respective national party platform from the most recent presidential election year.

In Figure 38, the average cosine dissimilarity between Democratic state platforms and the Democratic national platform from the most presidential election year is plotted on the left-hand side, and the same information is plotted for Republicans on the right-hand side; the bars included in the graphs represent the standard deviation of state-

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34 Recall that the cosine dissimilarity measure is based on the cosine of the angle between the term-document vectors and ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a higher degree of dissimilarity between the documents. See Section 4.3.5 Document Similarity and Cluster Analysis for more information about the cosine dissimilarity measure.

35 State party platforms released during a presidential election year are compared to the national party platform from that presidential election year, while state party platforms released during midterm election years are compared to the national party platform from the previous presidential election year, because national party platforms cover a period of four years, from one presidential election to the next.
national-platform cosine dissimilarity for each year. This figure gives us a general sense of how the dissimilarity levels between state and national platforms have fluctuated throughout time. Keeping in mind that higher cosine dissimilarity values indicate that the state and national platforms are *less* similar, the summary statistics plotted in this figure indicate that, on average, the Democratic state and national platforms have become less similar across time, while the Republicans state platforms have become more similar to the Republican national platforms. The graphs indicate that the average cosine dissimilarity levels have shifted in a stepwise fashion for both parties; from 1952...
to 1984, the Republicans exhibit higher levels of dissimilarity between their state and national platforms than the Democrats, while from 1986 to 2014, we observe the reverse, with Democrats exhibiting higher levels of state-national-platform dissimilarity and Republicans exhibiting lower levels. From Figure 38, it also appears that the average dissimilarity levels between the Democratic state and national platforms are characterized by higher standard deviations in most years than the Republicans, especially in the 1952 to 1986 period; the standard deviations also represent the varying degrees of state-national-platform dissimilarity across the states.

In Figure 39, Figure 40, and Figure 41, we can view these trends in greater detail, as these figures separate the mean, median, and standard deviation of the state-national-platform dissimilarity into midterm and presidential election years, by Democrats and Republicans. From the average dissimilarity values shown in Figure 39, we can draw a number of conclusions. First, it is clear that Democratic state and national platforms are characterized by similar average dissimilarity levels for platforms released in midterm and presidential election years, whereas for Republicans, starting with the 1980 and 1982 elections and extending through the 2012 and 2014 elections, the dissimilarity levels between state and national platforms are higher in midterm election years than in presidential election years. In addition, across both midterm and presidential election years, we observe the same general trend that emerged from the data presented in Figure 38: the average dissimilarity between Democratic state and national platforms
has increased across time, while the average dissimilarity between Republican state and national platforms has decreased across time.

The dissimilarity levels fluctuate by election, however, and in Figure 39, a few points stand out which deviate from these general trends. Starting in 1986, we observe average dissimilarity levels for Democratic platforms which are higher than the Republicans’ and also higher than levels observed for Democrats in previous years; however, the platforms from the 2008 and 2010 elections stand out as exceptions to this general trend. In 2008 and 2010, the Democats’ dissimilarity levels are substantially lower than the levels observed in other elections in this 1986-to-2014 period; in fact, in 2008 and 2010, the Democratic and Republican state platforms are characterized by similar levels of state-national platform dissimilarity; on average, both Democratic and Republican state platforms are more similar to their national platforms in 2008 and 2010 than in most other election years included in this analysis. From 1986 to 2014, Republican state and national platforms exhibit a downward trend in their dissimilarity levels, with the exception of platforms from the 2004 and 2006 elections, in which the state and national platforms are characterized by higher-than-average dissimilarity levels for Republicans across the 1986 to 2014 period. In 2004 and 2006, Democratic and Republican platforms again exhibit similar levels of state-national-platform dissimilarity, although the Republicans are characterized by higher dissimilarity levels
than Democrats in 2006. Note that we observe the same general trends if we examine median cosine dissimilarity values, which are depicted in Figure 40.

![Image of Figure 39: Average Cosine Dissimilarity between Democratic and Republican State and National Platforms in Midterm and Presidential Election Years, 1952-2014]

The standard deviations plotted in Figure 38 suggested that the cosine dissimilarity values between Democratic state and national platforms were more dispersed than those for the Republican platforms, especially in the period from 1952 through the mid-1980s; this finding is generally confirmed in Figure 41. Figure 41 plots the standard deviation of the cosine dissimilarity values for Democrats and Republicans.

Figure 39: Average Cosine Dissimilarity between Democratic and Republican State and National Platforms in Midterm and Presidential Election Years, 1952-2014

The standard deviations plotted in Figure 38 suggested that the cosine dissimilarity values between Democratic state and national platforms were more dispersed than those for the Republican platforms, especially in the period from 1952 through the mid-1980s; this finding is generally confirmed in Figure 41. Figure 41 plots the standard deviation of the cosine dissimilarity values for Democrats and Republicans.

Figure 40: Median Cosine Dissimilarity between Democratic and Republican State and National Platforms in Midterm and Presidential Election Years, 1952-2014

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in both midterm and presidential election years. With the exception of the 1952 and 1980 presidential elections, from 1952 to 1986, the dissimilarity values between Democratic state and national platforms are characterized by higher standard deviations than the dissimilarity values for the Republicans’ platforms. Overall, after 1986, the Democrats and Republicans are characterized by more similar standard deviation values.

As Figure 41 shows, the standard deviation of the dissimilarity values for Republican platforms demonstrated an upward trend in presidential elections from 1956.
to 2000; however, since 2000, the standard deviation values in presidential years have been declining for Republicans, indicating that in recent years, as the state Republican platforms have become more similar to the national platform on average, they have also become more closely clustered around these mean values. In presidential years, the Democrats’ standard deviation values steadily increased from 1992 to 2008 but declined in 2012; overall, for much of the 1990s and 2000s, as the Democrats’ average cosine dissimilarity values increased, they also became more dispersed about the mean.

Especially when considering the most recent election years from 2000-2014, the Republicans’ dissimilarity values are characterized by higher standard deviations in midterm elections years than in presidential elections years, and the standard deviations exhibit an upward trend in midterm elections years from the 1950s through the 2000s. Democratic platform dissimilarity levels are characterized by higher standard deviations in presidential elections than in midterm elections in the most recent period from 2000 to 2014, but, otherwise show no obvious trend in midterm versus presidential years in terms of standard deviation.

The geographic region of the state parties figured prominently in the cluster analysis discussion, and it is again important to consider how average state-national-platform dissimilarity varies by region. When viewing the average dissimilarity between state and national platforms within each region in Figure 42, some of
the same trends emerge that we had observed previously in the cluster analysis. Recall that throughout much of the 1952 to 2014 period, Midwestern states made up a large percentage of the state parties that were classified into the “National Party Cluster,” and in the most recent election years, both Midwest and Southern states comprised the largest percentage of “National Party Cluster” membership. Unsurprisingly, then, from the 1950s to the early 1980s, Midwestern state parties, and especially Democratic Midwestern state parties, were characterized by average cosine dissimilarity values that
were consistently on the lower end of the spectrum, compared to state parties from the other regions. In the period from the mid-1980s to 2014, Republican Midwestern and Southern platforms exhibited some of the lowest average dissimilarity values.

The average cosine dissimilarity values for Southern state parties, and Southern Republican parties in particular, started to decline in the early 1990s. By the early 1990s, the cosine dissimilarity values between Southern Republican state platforms and the national Republican platform were lower than the average dissimilarity values observed for Midwestern, Western, and Northeastern Republican state parties, which was not the case prior to this point in time. Southern Democratic platforms do not demonstrate an obvious trend in their relationships with the national Democratic platform across time; unlike their counterparts from other regions, Southern Democratic platforms have maintained a relatively consistent degree of cosine dissimilarity from the national platform, on average.

36 These results should be accepted with some degree of caution, however, since the Southern state parties were not as well-represented in the dataset in the earlier decades. Due to the lack of party competition and party development in the region, it is not surprising that Southern party platforms from the mid-twentieth century as are not as available as platforms from the other regions.
Republican platforms from the Northeast consistently exhibit rather high average dissimilarity values with the national Republican platform across the entire period, but these values have started to decline in the last decade, especially starting around the 2008 elections, when Northeastern Republican platforms and the national Republican were more similar, on average. The dissimilarity levels between Northeastern Democratic platforms and the national Democratic platform have been sporadic across the 1952 to 2014 period, with the lowest dissimilarity values occurring in the early 1970s; in the 1990s and 2000s, the average state-national platform dissimilarity for Democratic
platforms from the Northeast are generally on par with those for Democratic parties from the Midwest. In general, Western Republican platforms have exhibited relatively high average dissimilarity values with the national platform, but these values started to decline starting in the late 1980s. Western Democratic platforms have been characterized by sporadic trends in their average dissimilarity with the national platform but show evidence of a general upward trend in average dissimilarity from the mid-1970s to the present, with the exception of the 2008 and 2010 elections.

The map plots in Figure 43 highlight many of the trends that I have discussed in this section and provide more insight into the specific state party platforms that exemplify these patterns and changes. In the map plots, the blue-shaded maps represent the dissimilarity between Democratic state and national platforms, averaging the cosine dissimilarity values across decades, and the red-shaded maps represent the same for Republicans. In all maps, darker shades represent greater dissimilarity between the state and national platforms and lighter shades indicate greater similarity. First, when quickly scanning the Democratic and Republican maps across decades, it is clear that the Democratic maps generally become darker across time, while the

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37 This dissimilarity between the national platforms and Western state party platforms might be expected, when considering Gimpel’s (1996) work which characterizes the Western states as having autonomous party systems. According to Gimpel’s argument, states with autonomous party systems, such as those in the West, may not be characterized by the same electoral cleavages and party cleavages at the state and national levels, thus insulating state party politics from national politics.

38 Note that these map plots do not show the dissimilarity measures for Alaska and Hawaii.
Figure 43: Map Plots of Average Cosine Dissimilarity between State and National Platforms, by State, Party, and Decade

Note: Darker shades indicate higher levels of average dissimilarity between the national platform and the state platform issued by the Democratic or Republican Party in the state during the specified decade.
Figure 43: Map Plots of Average Cosine Dissimilarity between State and National Platforms, by State, Party, and Decade
Figure 43: Map Plots of Average Cosine Dissimilarity between State and National Platforms, by State, Party, and Decade
Republican maps become lighter, representing the different trends in overall document dissimilarity across time. These maps plots also highlight the regional trends that were discussed earlier in this section, with the Southern and Midwestern platforms showing the highest similarity values between Republican state and national platforms in recent decades. For Democrats, the higher dissimilarity values for Southern and Western platforms over the past twenty years especially stands out in these maps.

Recall from the cluster analysis discussion that we learned that distinct state and national platform clusters emerged in nearly all of the election years under examination, with the two national platforms sharing membership in the same cluster, along with a small group of state platforms that were also classified into this “National Party Cluster;” a majority of the state parties classified into this “National Party Cluster” were from the Midwest, as well as the South in more recent decades. Prior to the 1990s, the “State Party Clusters” were not characterized by a very clear structure, as a mix of Democratic and Republican state platforms from various regions were classified into each of the state party clusters. However, starting in 1992 and continuing through 2014, the cluster analysis assumed a very clear structure: the Democratic and Republican state platforms separated into distinct clusters and the two national platforms continued to classify into a separate third cluster, along with a small group of state parties. Within the “State Party Clusters,” the state platforms’ membership values within their assigned clusters showed overall improvement from earlier years and standard deviations of
membership values decreased, indicating that the Democratic and Republican platforms were more strongly associated with their clusters respective “State Party Clusters” and that these clusters were more internally cohesive.

At the same time, starting in the mid-1980s, the average cosine dissimilarity values between the state and national platforms from each party started to show evidence of an overall shift, with Democratic state platforms becoming less similar to their national platform and Republican platforms becoming more similar to their national platform. In the 1990s and 2000s, Republican state and national platforms exhibited relatively low average dissimilarity values and standard deviations during presidential election years in particular, and Republican state platforms from Southern states were characterized by the greatest similarity with the national platform. Overall, over the course of the past three decades, the average dissimilarity values between Democratic state and national platforms are higher than those of Republicans, especially in the presidential elections of the 1990s and the most recent presidential election in 2012. While both Democratic and Republican state parties have formed more distinct and internally coherent state party clusters starting in the 1990s, they have maintained different relationships with their national platforms, as Republican state platforms are generally more similar to their national platform and Democratic state platforms are generally less similar. Keeping these overall trends in mind, a key question emerges: what factors influence the degree of similarity between state and national platforms?
4.4.3 Explaining State-National Platform Similarity

Party platforms present the key issue positions that a party decides to emphasize in a given election year in a publicly available format, and decisions about platform content are important to party strategy related to messaging and campaigning. What can we learn about party platform strategy and the connections between state and national party organizations by examining the factors that explain state-national-platform dissimilarity? In order to address these questions, in this section, I discuss a regression model in which the cosine dissimilarity measure between state and national platforms is the dependent variable.

In order to examine the factors that influence state-national-platform dissimilarity and how these factors may vary between parties, regression equations were estimated for Democratic and Republican platforms, with the cosine dissimilarity between each state party platform and its respective national party platform as the dependent variable. The regression analysis was conducted in two steps, first using a pooled cross-section design\textsuperscript{39} to understand the overall factors that influence state-national-platform dissimilarity by party and next estimating separate equations for each

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\textsuperscript{39} The dataset collected for this research does not represent true panel data, because platforms do not exist or could not be collected for all state parties in all years from 1952 to 2014. Instead, this data is better characterized as cross-sectional time series data, in which the data for each election year is comprised of cross sections (i.e., states), but these cross sections are not consistent across all election years or across both parties. In order to deal with the omitted variable bias from characteristics relevant to specific election years that might explain state-national-platform dissimilarity, this model includes election-year dummy variables. The regression model was also run using standard errors clustered by state.
decade to more closely examine how these factors relate to platform dissimilarity across the different time periods.

As discussed in earlier sections, state party organizations are likely to develop platforms that are more or less similar to the national party platform, depending on the social and political context that they face. According to Pomper’s (1967, 1988) rational platform theory, “party rationality,” or the extent to which a platform furthers a party’s electoral success, is an important consideration for parties in developing their platforms. As I laid out in the theory section of this chapter, depending upon political and electoral circumstances, state parties will leverage their autonomy from and integration with the national party organizations in different ways in the development of their platforms in order to achieve platform rationality. For some parties, especially those who face a particularly diverse electorate or competitive electoral environment, it may be more beneficial to issue platforms that are “like” the national platforms, consisting of broad discussions of general party issue positions, so as not to alienate certain constituencies. Other state parties that face a more predictable electoral environment, with a less diverse population or less competitive elections, will be more likely to have the space to address more controversial topics or state-oriented issues. Meanwhile, for some state parties, national political considerations may factor into their platform strategies more prominently, especially if they represent key states in presidential elections. As such, the key explanatory variables in these regression models include state-level variables
that represent the aspects of the political and social context that are likely to influence the degree of similarity between a state party’s platform and its respective national party platform. These explanatory variables are explained in more detail below.

**Diversity of the state population.** In states that have a higher level of population diversity, I would expect that the state parties and state candidates are required to accommodate a more varied constituency than states with lower levels of population diversity. Similar to the issues that the national parties face in addressing the needs of a diverse national constituency, state parties facing high population diversity must appeal to a wide variety of voters. Therefore, states with more diverse populations are expected to develop platforms that are more similar to the national party platform, in order to cope with this diversity and be inclusive of as many groups as possible. In these regression models, population diversity is measured using the Sullivan Diversity Index, which accounts for social, economic, ethnic, and religious diversity in the states by decade. Sullivan (1973) developed and published this diversity index using data regarding educational attainment, income level, occupation, housing, ethnicity, and religion in the states from the early 1960s. I developed updated diversity indices based on the same measures for the remaining decades needed for this analysis: the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. In the regression analysis, the diversity index for the most recent decade is utilized; for example, the 2000 diversity index applies to platforms

**Competitiveness of state parties.** As with population diversity, in states with more competitive parties and elections, I would expect the state parties to develop platforms that are more similar to the national party platforms. When faced with competitive state elections, state parties have to be especially strategic in their platform development, so as not to jeopardize the chances of party candidates through the issue positions and language contained in their platforms. As such, when faced with these circumstances, state parties are likely to adopt state party platforms that focus on issues that are generally accepted by the party at large and are thus more similar to the national party platform. Meanwhile, in states where one party is more likely to control government, the state parties are likely to have more latitude to discuss a wider variety of topics and to be under less scrutiny. In these regression models, the Ranney Index is used to measure the degree of competition between the parties in state government and elections. The Ranney Index accounts for the Democratic popular vote for governor, the percentage of state senate and state house seats held by Democrats, and whether state government is under unified Republican control, Democratic control, or neither.⁴¹ The

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⁴⁰ According this system, the 1960 diversity index is applied to platforms released in 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, and 1964. The 1960 index is also applied to platforms from 1952 and 1954, because data from the 1950s was not readily available for all of the measures needed to create the index.

⁴¹ The Ranney Index measures were calculated by Carl Klarner (https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/cklarner). Klarner calculated the Ranney Index as a four-year
Ranney Index measure that was calculated following the most recent election is applied to each state platform in the dataset.

**Minor-party voting in the states.** As the major parties in the American party system, the Democratic and Republican organizations in each state must also contend with minor party organizations. Minor party organizations are often credited with proposing policy changes and issue positions that are ignored by the major parties, and many minor parties are highly motivated by issues and ideologies, thus raising awareness for their positions, even if they do not successfully win seats in government. Furthermore, although minor parties rarely win elections in the United States, the major parties must pay attention to the minor party vote share that otherwise might have gone to their parties’ candidates (Hershey, 2013). What influence might the presence of minor parties in a state have on party platform content? In states where the electorate is more supportive of minor parties, this willingness to vote for minor parties might indicate that the people are generally more accepting of alternative viewpoints, and thus parties in these states, whether they are major or minor party organizations, might be more

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moving average. In order to account for the competitiveness heading into an election, the Ranney Index that was calculated following the previous election is applied to each case in the platform dataset. Note that in measuring whether state government is under unified control, the Ranney Index traditionally only accounts for whether state government is under unified Democratic control. Klarner’s measure represents an alternate form of the traditional Ranney Index, because it recognizes that the difference between unified Republican control, unified Democratic control, or split control is significant; this more appropriate measure of party competition in government was used in this analysis in place of the traditional Ranney Index.
encouraged to veer from conventional ideas and issues. If this is the case, we would expect Democratic and Republican state parties in states with a higher level of minor-party voting to develop platforms that are less similar to the national platforms.

On the other hand, minor parties also relieve the major parties of the need to tackle controversial topics in their platforms, since the minor parties might fulfill the needs of those segments of the electorate that demand attention to some of these issues. According to this explanation, we would expect the major state party platforms in states with more electoral support for minor parties to develop platforms that are more similar to the national platforms, as mainstream party beliefs are more likely to appeal to a majority of voters. Based on the work of Hirano and Snyder (2007), minor party electoral support is measured by the overall vote share for minor party candidates in the states, by decade.42

**Gubernatorial election years.** As the figureheads of the state party organizations, gubernatorial candidates often have influence over the content of state party platforms during gubernatorial election years, much as presidential candidates shape national party platform content. For this reason, we might expect state party platforms issued

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42 Minor party vote share in the states is measured as the total number of votes cast for non-major-party candidates in statewide elections for governor and U.S. Senate in each state by decade, divided by the total number of votes cast in the elections for governor and U.S. Senate in each state by decade. Because the vote share was calculated by decade, each state platform in the dataset is assigned the minor-party vote share value for the decade in which it was released. Minor party votes for president are not included in these calculations; as Hirano and Snyder (2007) point out, support for minor party presidential candidates is generally grounded in the individual personalities of the candidates and thus does not clearly indicate support for minor parties in the states.
during gubernatorial election years in their respective states to reflect the priorities of the party’s gubernatorial candidate, rather than those of the national party. A dummy variable is included in the regression model, indicating whether each state held a gubernatorial election in each year.

Vote margin between Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. In addition to the competitiveness of state elections, the competitiveness of presidential elections is also likely to be an important strategic consideration in the platform development process. In states with a narrower vote margin between the presidential candidates in the most recent presidential election, we would expect national party considerations to play a larger role in state party politics, because these states are more likely to be considered presidential battleground states. State parties in presidential battleground states are likely to play a larger role in national party strategy and are more likely to see the benefits of aligning themselves with the national parties. The national parties are more likely to be concerned with the public’s perception of the parties and candidates in these states, and we might expect that the national parties and candidates are more likely to view the state party platforms and other campaign strategies from these state parties as being more consequential for national elections. Considering the prominence of national party politics in these states, state parties in states with lower presidential vote margins are expected to develop platforms that are more similar to the national party platform. The presidential vote margin is measured
as the margin between the percent of the two-party vote received by Democratic and Republican presidential candidates in the previous presidential election.

**Number of electoral votes held by the state in presidential elections.** Similar to the discussion of the presidential vote margin above, states that hold a higher number of electoral votes in presidential elections are more likely to play a critical role in presidential elections and receive more influence and pressure from national party organizations and candidates. Due to this higher level of interaction with the national parties, state parties in states with more electoral votes are expected to release more nationally-oriented platforms, so as not to jeopardize the chances of national party candidates in their states or the support that they receive from the national party. This variable is measured as the number of electoral votes held by the state in the upcoming presidential election.

**Pooled Regression Analysis**

The pooled regression results are displayed in Table . In many ways, the findings from this analysis conform to the expectations outlined above, although many of these factors are more likely to emerge as significant in explaining national-state-platform similarity for the Democrats rather than the Republicans. As shown in the regression results for the Democratic platforms on the left-hand side of Table , all of the explanatory variables outlined above emerge as key predictors of national-state-platform dissimilarity in the expected direction, with the exception of the variable
indicating whether there was a gubernatorial election in the state. In explaining the degree of similarity with the national platform, both state and national strategic considerations emerged as significant.

First considering the factors related to state elections, on the whole, for Democrats, state diversity has a negative relationship with cosine dissimilarity, keeping in mind that higher values of the dependent variable indicate higher degrees of dissimilarity between the state and national platforms. As expected, Democratic state parties facing higher levels of population diversity are more likely to develop platforms that are more similar to the national platform. As the diversity index in a state increases by one unit, the cosine dissimilarity between the state and national platforms decreases by .37 units; considering that cosine dissimilarity values range from 0 to 1, the effect of state diversity is considerable, in addition to the fact that this relationship is statistically significant (p<.05). The degree of party competition in the state is also a negative, nearly-significant (p<.10) predictor of state-national-platform dissimilarity, with platform dissimilarity decreasing by .09 units for every one unit increase in party competition, indicating that in states confronting more intense party competition, Democratic state parties create platforms that are more similar to the national party platform. The minor-party support variable emerged as a negative, significant (p<.05) predictor of national-state-platform dissimilarity; for every one unit increase in the minor-party vote share in a state, the cosine dissimilarity measure decreases by .15 units.
Overall, the relationship between state diversity, party competition, and minor-party voting indicate that, when faced with a higher degree of diverse and competing ideas in government and in the electorate, the Democratic state parties cope with this diversity by releasing platforms that are more similar to the national platforms.

**Table 11: Explaining the Degree of Dissimilarity between State and National Party Platform Content, 1952-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Diversity Index</strong></td>
<td>-.372*</td>
<td>.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.155)</td>
<td>(.155)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State party competition</strong></td>
<td>.093*</td>
<td>-.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.056)</td>
<td>(.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presidential vote margin in previous presidential elections</strong></td>
<td>.001**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral Votes in the state</strong></td>
<td>-.003***</td>
<td>-.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gubernatorial election in the state</strong></td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vote share received by minor party candidates</strong></td>
<td>-.149*</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.067)</td>
<td>(.095)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>.957***</td>
<td>.698***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.064)</td>
<td>(.063)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>727</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R²</strong></td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>F(6, 46)=15.99, p≤.001</td>
<td>F(6, 47)=3.38, p≤.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The dependent variable is the cosine dissimilarity between the state and national party platforms from 1952 to 2014; cosine dissimilarity measures can range from 0 to 1 and higher values indicate a higher degree of dissimilarity between documents. Entries are ordinary least squares unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Standard errors are clustered by state. Asterisks signify significance levels of coefficients: + p≤.10, * p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001.

Both variables representing the significance of a state in presidential elections also emerged as significant predictors of Democratic platform dissimilarity (electoral votes variable, p<.001; presidential vote margin variable, p<.01). As the presidential vote
margin in a state in the previous presidential election increases, the dissimilarity between the state and national Democratic platforms also increases. Meanwhile, as the number of electoral votes held by a state in presidential elections increases, Democratic state and national platforms are more likely to be characterized by a higher degree of similarity. These results support the argument that when states play an important role in presidential elections, the parties are more likely to develop platforms that are more comparable to the national platform.

For Republicans, a smaller subset of variables emerged as significant predictors of state-national platform dissimilarity; nevertheless, the findings that emerged conformed to expectations. Among the state-election-related factors, the variable indicating whether a state held a gubernatorial election in that year was a positive, nearly significant (p<.10) explanatory variable. Moving from a state without a gubernatorial election to a state with a gubernatorial election, the measure of cosine dissimilarity between the state and national platform increased by about .01 units, holding all other variables constant. Turning to the factors related to presidential elections, the electoral votes variable emerged as a negative, significant (p<.01) predictor of platform dissimilarity, with an increase of one electoral vote in a state leading to an decrease in the dissimilarity measure by .002 units. Among the Republican state parties, the significance of major elections, such as those for gubernatorial and presidential
candidates, is more likely to influence state-national-platform similarity than characteristics of the electoral or political system.43

**Regression Analysis by Decade**

As is shown on the following pages in Figure 44, when the regression analysis is conducted by decade, using the same variables that were presented in the previous section and again estimating separate equations for Democratic and Republican platforms, all of the variables emerge as significant predictors of state-national-platform dissimilarity; however, the key explanatory variables vary by decade and party. Figure 44 summarizes the results of these regression analyses. Each plot displays the regression results for one of the five decades, showing the magnitude and significance of the regression coefficients.45

In the 1952 to 1962 period, very few variables emerge as significant predictors of state-national-platform dissimilarity. For the Democrats, the presidential vote margin is the only significant variable that emerges; the presidential vote margin is positively

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43 Separate models were also examined for presidential and midterm years, to determine if different factors emerged in these different types of election years. For the Democrats, the results were substantively the same in both presidential and midterm years with what is displayed in the pooled model in this section; the largest difference that emerged is that the state diversity variable dropped below conventional levels of statistical significance in both models (p<.10 in both the midterm and presidential models). For Republicans, the gubernatorial election no longer approaches statistical significance in either the presidential or midterm election-year models, but the other substantive conclusions remain the same.

44 Year dummy variables are again included to account for omitted variable bias due to factors related to specific election years. Standard errors are clustered by state.

45 Calculating the typical standardized, or beta, coefficients when using clustered standard errors is not generally advisable. However, for the purposes of plotting the coefficients on a common axis, regression coefficients in these plots were standardized by dividing all coefficients by two standard errors.
related to platform dissimilarity, as expected. For Republicans, none of the variables emerge as significant or near-significant, and the model is characterized by poor fit overall. These weak findings may indicate that the explanatory variables are not the most appropriate variables to explain the relationship between the state and national platforms in this time period. However, these results are not surprising, considering that the cluster analysis results for this period were also characterized by a lack of structure and clarity, with no clear relationships emerging from the cluster classification. It is possible that the relationship between state and national platforms in this 1952 to 1962 period is not characterized by any identifiable structure.

Turning to the results from the 1964 to 1974 period, among both Democrats and Republicans, the minor-party vote share variable was a significant (p<.001 for the Democrats and p<.01 for the Republicans), negative predictor of state-national-platform dissimilarity. These results indicate that as the minor-party vote share increases by one unit, the platform dissimilarity measure decreases by .53 units for Democrats and .35 units for Republicans. Among Democrats, the party competition variable also emerged as a negative and significant (p<.01) predictor of platform dissimilarity, and for Republicans the presidential vote margin variable was a positive, significant predictor (p<.05).
Figure 44: Plots of Regression Coefficients from OLS Regression Predicting State-National Platform Dissimilarity by Decade
Figure 44: Plots of Regression Coefficients from OLS Regression Predicting State-National Platform Dissimilarity by Decade
Figure 44: Plots of Regression Coefficients from OLS Regression Predicting State-National Platform Dissimilarity by Decade

The results for the 1976 to 1986 period tell a similar story. For both parties, the minor-party vote share variable is characterized by a negative, significant (p<.01) relationship with platform dissimilarity. For Democrats, the party competition, presidential vote margin, and electoral vote variables emerge as significant, with coefficients in the expected direction, and among Republicans, gubernatorial election variable surfaces as an important explanatory variable as well.

In the ten-year period from 1988 to 1998, a number of variables demonstrate significant relationships with platform dissimilarity for the Democratic platforms, as was the case with the pooled model in the last section. State population diversity
(p<.05), electoral votes (p<.001), and minor-party vote share (p<.01) all emerge as significant predictors, with relationships in the expected direction. Among Republicans, the electoral votes variable is the only variable that significantly explains platform dissimilarity (p<.001). By the 2000 to 2014 period, the electoral votes variable is the only significant variable to emerge for both parties (p<.001 for Democrats and p<.01 for Republicans.

Overall, some interesting trends emerge from this regression analysis by decade. The minor-party vote share variable is an important explanatory variable for both parties throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and it continues to be significant for Democrats throughout the 1990s. These results suggest that a significant presence of minor party candidates may relieve the Democratic and Republican parties of the need to address some of the narrower constituencies in their states in their platforms. As was the case in the pooled models, population diversity and party competition are not important in explaining Republican state-national-platform dissimilarity, but for Democrats, these factors are more crucial to platform strategy, in particular from the mid-1960s through the late 1990s, in which the party competition variable is significant across all of these decades and the population diversity measure emerges as an especially important factors for Democrats in the 1988 to 1998 period. For Republicans, at least one of the factors related to presidential elections is significant in all decades, with the exception of the 1952 to 1962 and 1976 to 1986 periods. Among Democrats,
other than the 1964 to 1974 period, at least one of the presidential-election variables
emerges as significant in all of these time periods. Remarkably, by the 2000s and 2010s,
these variables related to presidential politics are the only significant predictors of state-
national-platform dissimilarity.  

4.5 Discussion and Conclusion

The research presented in this chapter represents the most comprehensive study
of state party platforms in the contemporary period to date. The first hurdle I
encountered in this research was collecting a reasonable number of state party platforms
across the 1952 to 2014 period. In a large majority of states, state party platforms from
previous years are not readily accessible, and I devoted a significant amount of time
over a period of several years to the collection of these documents. Once I obtained a
reasonably large collection of documents, the next challenge was transferring these
documents, many of which were in the form of low-quality photocopies, into an
electronic format and then error-correcting the text extracted from the scanned

46 The pooled and decade regression models were also tested including a control for state ideology, using
Erikson, Wright, and McIver’s (1993) state ideology measure. Overall, the inclusion of this control did not
change the substantive conclusions of the results. In the pooled model, the only difference between the
model with and without the ideology control is that the state population diversity variable was no longer
significant at conventional levels (p=.19) for Democrats when the ideology variable was included. In the
decade models, the state ideology variable did not change the substantive conclusions of the models;
however, the state ideology measure was positive and significant in the 1952-1962 period, suggesting that as
the state population becomes more liberal, the Republican state platforms are less similar to the national
platform. The state ideology measure was negative and significant for Democrats in the 1976-1986 decade,
indicating that Democratic parties in states with more conservative populations were more likely to develop
platforms that were similar to the national platform. The state ideology variable was not a significant
predictor of state-national platform dissimilarity in the other three decades for either party and was not
significant in the pooled model.
documents. This data collection effort was necessary in order to advance the research in state party platforms beyond studies which are limited to only a few elections years or a small number of states and to make it possible to meaningfully compare state and national platforms across time.

Using a term-document-matrix containing the weighted word frequencies from more than 1,400 state and national party platform documents from 1952 to 2014, the analysis presented in this chapter contains three primary components: computer-assisted cluster analysis to uncover the underlying structure in the platform data across time, an examination of the trends in the cosine dissimilarity between the state and national party platform content across the past 60 years, and regression analysis to examine the factors which explain the degree of state-national-platform dissimilarity.

The cluster analysis demonstrated that the national party platforms occupy the same cluster in nearly all years in this study, while a majority of state party platforms are classified into one of two “State party Clusters.” While the Democratic and Republican state parties shared membership in the same clusters for much of the 1952 to 1990 period, by the 1992 and 1994 elections and extending through the 2012 and 2014 elections, the Democratic and Republican state platforms are classified into separate “State Party Clusters,” with little or no overlap. As the Democratic and Republican state platforms separate into distinct clusters, their association with their assigned clusters also improves, and these “State Party Clusters” became more internally cohesive.
Also starting around the early 1990s, the patterns in the degree of dissimilarity between the state and national platform documents exhibit an overall shift. Using measures of the cosine dissimilarity between the platform documents’ weighted-term vectors, the data show that, prior to the late 1980s and early 1990s, the degree of dissimilarity between Democratic state and national platform content was lower, on average, than that of Republicans. Around the early 1990s, a shift occurred in these dissimilarity patterns, with Democratic state and national platforms demonstrating higher average dissimilarity levels than Republicans. These overall trends were confirmed when examining state platforms released in presidential and midterm election years separately, although, unlike Democrats, Republican state platforms demonstrate greater similarity to the national platform in presidential years than in midterm years, on average.

These results indicate that the Republican state platforms have become more similar to the Republican national platform in more recent decades, while the Democratic state platform have become less similar to the Democratic national platform. The differences between Democratic and Republican platforms in terms of their relationship with the national platforms largely confirm the state party survey data that was presented earlier in this chapter, which suggested that Republican state party leaders in 2011 were more likely to place importance on maintaining consistency with the national platform in their state platforms than Democrats, who were almost-
universally in agreement that concerns relevant to the state political environment should take precedence over national factors.

These trends in platform similarity provide important insights into the relationship between state and national platforms and how this relationship has changed throughout time; however, further analysis was needed to better understand why state parties develop platforms that are more or less similar to the national platforms. Using the measure of state-national-platform dissimilarity as the dependent variable and a collection of explanatory variables related to the political context in the states, the regression analyses presented in this chapter seek to understand how the state political context shapes the state parties’ strategic considerations in developing platforms. Across both Democratic and Republican parties, multiple election years, and various model specifications, factors related to the competitiveness of presidential elections in the states emerged as significant predictors of state-national-platform similarity, indicating that in states where presidential elections figure more prominently, the state parties are more likely to develop platforms that are similar to the national platforms. This relationship may be due to the fact that states that are more competitive in presidential elections are more likely to be subject to national party influence and are generally more concerned with their role in promoting the presidential candidate and national party’s goals. On the other hand, states that play a less significant role in presidential elections are less likely to see a need to maintain consistency with the
national platform. These variables related to presidential electoral competitiveness became especially significant in the 1990s and 2000s.

Other explanatory variables related to the state electoral environment, such as the diversity of the state electorate, the competition between parties in state government, and voter support for minor parties in the state, also play an important role in explaining the degree of similarity between state and national platforms. Overall, when examining the relationships between these variables and state-national-platform dissimilarity, the results show that when state parties are faced with a need to respond to more varied interests and diverse populations, they are more likely to develop platforms that are similar to the national platforms. This suggests that, much as the national parties create broad and moderate platforms that are more likely to appeal to a wide variety of constituencies, state parties facing competitive and diverse electoral environments are likely to adopt a similar approach in coping with this complexity. These state diversity and competition variables were especially important in explaining the relationship between Democratic state and national platforms, which is not surprising when considering the fact that support for the Democratic Party is derived from a more diverse coalition; as a result, Democrats may be more concerned with appealing to a wider variety of groups through their platforms. Despite the significance of these state electoral factors, by the 2000s, only the presidential-election-related factors are significant predictors of state-national-platform dissimilarity for both parties.
Combined, these results all point to the early 1990s as a turning point in the relationship between party platform documents at the state and national levels. Across the 1952 to 2014 period, Democratic and Republican state platforms became more distinct in terms of their platform content, with high degrees of separation between parties starting in the early 1990s; however, for Republicans, this intra-party cohesion occurred alongside greater similarity between the Republican state and national platforms, while, for Democrats, as the party platform content generally became more cohesive across states, Democratic state and national platforms demonstrated greater dissimilarity, relative to the similarity levels between state and national platforms in the pre-1990 period. Meanwhile, further analysis shows that, starting in the 1990s and 2000s, state parties that develop platforms that are more similar to the national platforms are more likely to be located in pivotal states in presidential elections; this contrasts with earlier decades when other factors related to the state electoral environment explained the level of state-national platform dissimilarity, in addition to the competitiveness in presidential elections. Overall, both the Democratic and Republican state parties are becoming more internally cohesive and distinct from one another in terms of their platform content, and while both parties exhibit distinct patterns in terms of their collective relationship with the national platform, for both parties, the decision to develop a more “national” platform is primarily explained by the role of presidential elections in the state, even for state platforms released during midterm election years.
What do these results tell us about party strategy and party integration? In many ways, these results support Pomper’s platform rationality theory, and in particular, the concept of “party rationality,” in which parties, as strategic organizations, use platforms to further their own electoral goals. State parties clearly vary in the extent to which they develop platforms that are similar to the national parties, and a number of factors related to the political context that state parties confront are significant in explaining this variation across time; this indicates that state parties develop a broader, more “national-type” platform when they have reasons to believe it will benefit them electorally to do so, and in the most recent years, this benefit is greatest for parties in states that are competitive in presidential elections. Thorlakson (2009) argues that parties in the United States are both integrated and autonomous. The results of this research support the argument that, as part of this party system, the state parties leverage their autonomy from and integration with the national parties in different ways in making decisions about platform content, depending upon the electoral environment that they face.

In many ways, these findings support Gimpel’s (1996) theory of autonomous state politics. Gimpel argues that in states where the state and national party electorates are similar, or what he refers to as electorally congruent states, this leads to greater cohesion between state and national parties, while in states where the state and national parties experience different political alignments, there is a greater disconnect between
state and national party politics. According to Gimpel, in states with congruent state and national politics, “State party elites…can ‘piggyback’ their mobilization efforts on the national parties. Unsavory national-level candidates need not be differentiated from the more attractive local-level candidates” (Gimpel, 1996, p.5). This argument can be applied to the research presented here about state and national party platforms; state parties can also “piggyback” their platform efforts on the national platform, when their political environment does not require them to distinguish themselves from the national party platform and when the adoption of a “national-like” platform is likely to benefit them.

Gimpel also describes the opposite situation, when state and national parties face incongruent electorates and uses examples such as the states of Oregon and New York to make his point. As he explains, when compared to the national population, the state of Oregon is characterized by significantly less economic and racial diversity, and, “In settings such as these, national cleavages on redistributive and racial themes make rural populations homogeneous. Local party divisions form around issues of local concern” (p. 15). Meanwhile, the state of New York is characterized by much greater diversity, and, therefore, “the state’s party coalitions more closely reflect the national parties” (p. 15), thus resulting in greater cohesion between the state and national parties. These arguments closely align with the theory presented in this chapter which argued that states facing a more diverse population, much like the population faced by the national
parties, will be more likely to develop platforms that are more similar to the national platform.

V.O. Key (1964) describes how the national party platforms tend to clearly describe their traditional positions, while current issues are more likely to be “camouflaged.” According to Key, it is not uncommon for the parties’ positions on controversial issues to be expressed in ambiguous terms or ignored completely in order to appeal to key constituencies and build unity behind the presidential candidate. Building on Gimpel and Key’s arguments, the theory and research in this chapter suggest that state parties develop platforms that are more similar to these traditional and broad national party platforms when they face a diverse electorate, similar to the diversity encountered by the national parties. Furthermore, many states that are competitive in presidential elections are likely to be more concerned with issues of party unity and to feel that it behooves them to support the traditional, national party positions, so as to receive support from the national party and to align themselves with the key issues that the national parties and candidates are presenting to their state electorates.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, state and national party organizations have developed a more integrated relationship (Bibby, 2002; Huckshorn et al., 1986), and, in general, this analysis of party platforms offers support for this overall trend. In particular, the Republican state party platforms have become more similar to the national platform, on
average, over the past several decades, indicating that we can observe this integration through an analysis of platform content. Even among Democratic state parties, whose platforms are less similar to the national platforms than Republicans in later years, considerations related to the parties’ role in presidential elections emerge as the most significant factors in explaining the degree of similarity between state and national platforms starting in the 2000s.

It is important not to overstate the evidence for this integrated relationship, however, as the state platforms vary in their degree of similarity to the national platforms, and as the cluster analysis results show, the state and national platforms occupy different spheres, especially in more recent years. State party organizations may occupy very different ends of the spectrum, in terms of their similarity to the national platform. In the most extreme form of loyalty to the national parties, for example, the Pennsylvania Democratic and Republican Parties not only support the national party platform in many years, but on their websites over the past five years, they have explicitly stated that they support the national party platform, rather than developing their own platform documents. Based on the analysis presented in this chapter, it is

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47 In the 2012 and 2014 elections, seven state parties did not post a state party platform on their website but explicitly stated their support for the national platform on their state party’s website or at least posted or linked to the national party platform: the South Carolina Democrats, Pennsylvania Democrats, Pennsylvania Republicans, Delaware Republicans, Georgia Republicans, Kentucky Republicans, Louisiana Republicans, and Michigan Republicans. Note that these state parties were not included in the 2012-2014 platform analyses, because they did not adopt a state party platform to compare to the national platform. These parties, and parties in similar circumstances in other election years, were also removed from the analysis, because, in general, it is not always clear when a state party adopts or supports the national party platform.
not surprising that Pennsylvania is a key battleground state in presidential elections.

Meanwhile, on the opposite end of the spectrum, in states such as Kansas, the state Democratic Party seeks to distinguish itself from the national party in this Republican stronghold, because the state and national electorates simply do not align; in addition to supporting more conservative positions in its platform than the national party, in 2015, the Kansas Democrats actually contemplated changing their party name to the “Red State Democrats” to create further separation from the national party (B. Lowry, 2015).

Thus, despite the overall trends reported in this chapter, there is a great deal of diversity across the state parties, in terms of the connections that they build with the national platforms.

Some of this diversity across the state parties can be explained in terms of regional variations. Based on the cluster analysis, the degree of similarity between the state and national platforms in the Midwestern states is especially high for most of the 1952 to 2014 period, and, among Republican parties, the Southern and Midwestern platforms are most similar to the national parties starting in the 1990s, when compared to parties from other regions. Meanwhile, Western and Northeastern state platforms are less similar to the national platforms, on average. This regional variation in state-

versus instances when state parties do not adopt or endorse any platform at all. It is possible that a state party might choose to adopt the national party platform, without indicating so on their website. Furthermore, just because a state party posts the national party platform, this does not necessarily mean that they have formerly adopted that platform.
national-platform dissimilarity highlights the interplay between party integration and autonomy that Thorlakson discusses.

As became clear in both the cluster analysis and the regression results, the platform data lacked a clearly-identifiable structure in the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout these earlier decades, the three-cluster model, and other models that were tested but not presented in this chapter, did not yield clearly interpretable results, and the association between state platforms and their assigned clusters was not as strong as in later years. In addition, the regression analysis in the 1952-1962 period was characterized by poor fit and a general lack of significant findings. The uncertain results from these years indicate that more work is needed to identify a model that better fits the platform data for this period from the 1950s to the 1960s, but, in some ways, the lack of clear findings confirms what we might expect, based on the existing knowledge of party organizations in these years.

Party organizations in the 1950s and 1960s were generally less nationalized, less professionalized, and less ideologically polarized than in the later decades of the twentieth century, and considering these known trends in party development, it is not terribly surprising that the state party platform data in these decades did not yield a very clear cluster structure or set of factors to explain state-national-platform dissimilarity. Especially in the 1950s and 1960s, the state parties varied widely in terms of their organizational development and capacity to engage in campaign activities.
(Cotter et al., 1984), and, correspondingly, there may not have been any overall trend in the ways that parties developed their platforms. The relationships between the state and national parties were also notoriously weak during the early- to mid-twentieth century, and considering this tenuous relationship, the degree of similarity between state and national platforms in this period might have fluctuated randomly. As Lunch (1987) clearly explains:

> There was for a surprisingly long period – at least a century, probably longer – a decentralized, two-party system in American politics, based on local and state parties that mainly went about the business of winning elections and governing from city or the statehouse, only occasionally pausing to nominate candidates for president and send emissaries to Congress. (Lunch, 1987, p.256)

Considering this structure of the party system, in which state parties were operating in isolation of one another and the national parties, the rationality behind state platform development likely varied widely across states, and the parties likely dealt with very different strategic considerations than parties in the latter part of the twentieth century⁴⁸.

Not only does this research contribute a unique platform dataset and represent the first attempt to examine the similarity between state and national platforms in American politics, but, unlike earlier state party platform studies which primarily relied on hand-coding to analyze the documents, this analysis utilizes computer-assisted text analysis techniques to compare platform content across parties. Using computer-

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⁴⁸ For example, Nowlan (1980) describes how the Illinois Democrats in this period were expected to consider the political objectives of the Daley Machine in developing their platforms, which would likely result in a very different platform from states that did not have this culture of urban party machines and from the platforms developed by the national parties.
assisted text analysis allowed me to analyze a larger number of documents than would be reasonable with hand-coding and to utilize appropriate methods to both classify documents and assess and analyze document similarity.

Furthermore, unlike previous state party platform studies which sought to measure state party platform ideology and policy positions, my goal in this research was to compare overall party platform content using the weighted word frequencies from each platform document. Despite the different goals of these studies, the cluster analysis presented in this chapter revealed similar polarization patterns between the state platforms as earlier studies of state platform ideology (Coffey, 2011; Paddock, 2005), with stark polarization between the Democratic and Republican state platforms emerging in the early 1990s through the 2000s. The fact that this text analysis technique based on word frequencies identified known patterns in party polarization, observed at the state level through the study of party platforms (Coffey, 2011; Paddock, 2005) and also state legislatures (Aldrich & Battista, 2002; Shor & McCarty, 2011), lends more credence to the use of these types of techniques to analyze and compare political texts. Of course, this word-frequency-based approach that I implemented is not explicitly measuring party ideology, but the cluster analysis methods are able to identify clear differences between the parties’ platform content according to expected patterns, offering support for the argument that “a simple list of words...is often sufficient to convey the general meaning of a text” (Grimmer, 2013, p.6).
As computer-assisted text analysis techniques continue to improve and further data collection efforts enhance the coverage of this state platform dataset, the potential uses of this party platform data will continue to expand. This study represents the first attempt to analyze a state party platform dataset from the contemporary period of this magnitude and thus seeks to uncover broad trends and explanations for state platform content and national-state-platform dissimilarity; however, beyond the research presented in this chapter, this dataset can be used to answer a wide variety of questions related to party politics, policy diffusion, agenda setting, electoral politics, political representation, and federalism.

This research demonstrates the importance of recognizing the relationship between the state and national parties when analyzing platform content and raises many important questions for future research which follow this line of inquiry. One question that arises when considering the relationship between state and national platforms and the role of state party platforms concerns the matter of issue innovation. When we observe important shifts in party issue positions, under what circumstances are these changes mirrored at the state and national levels, and when do the shifts in state party platform positions precede those changes in the national platforms? Feinstein and Schickler (2008) investigate a similar question in studying the civil rights realignment through state platforms published from 1920 to 1968. With a more expansive dataset from the contemporary period, this line of inquiry can be extended.
presidential candidates, the research presented in this chapter raises further questions about the interplay between presidential and gubernatorial politics in the states and how these different considerations are reflected in state party platforms.

Writing about party platforms in 1964, V.O Key stated that, “Platforms become objects of cynical regard, yet their qualities mirror the characteristics of the party system itself: the platforms are as they are because the party system is as it is” (1964, p.421). V.O Key’s observation certainly rings true in this research, where the study of state and national party platforms provides significant insights into broader trends in American party politics, such as party professionalization, polarization, and integration.
Appendix A: State Party Survey Design and Implementation

Studying the state political party organizations in the twenty-first century raises a number of important questions about the professional and technological development of these organizations and the relationship between the state and national parties. However, answering such questions is not an easy task, due to the lack of available data about political party organizations, and most especially, the state party organizations. While political scientists study changes in the behavior and background of politicians by collecting candidate biographies, roll call votes, or campaign speeches, for example, party organizations do not leave such an accessible record of their actions and characteristics. These data challenges are compounded when studying the state political party organizations, because, ideally, comparable data needs to be collected for a large sample of the parties in all 50 states.

In discussing the value of surveys to political science research, Brady (2000) states, “Surveys have the great virtue of allowing researchers to ask the questions they want to ask when and where they want to do so. And, by asking the same questions across places and over time, researchers can engage in comparison and trend analysis – two of the basic activities in any science” (p.48). In this case, when studying state party organizations, survey research permits political scientists to obtain information directly from state party leaders about the activities and structure of their organizations. Additionally, other scholars have used surveys to study the state parties in the past (Aldrich, 2000; Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson et al., 1983), allowing for the type of
comparison that Brady describes. In this thesis, I follow in this research tradition, using a survey of the state political parties that I conducted to study the state parties’ organizational strength, technological development, and interactions with the national party organizations. In the sections that follow, I will describe my survey methodology and provide some basic descriptive information about my survey sample. Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss the results and analysis of this survey research.

**Survey Methodology**

This state party survey was conducted in the fall of 2011. This time frame was selected with the hopes that state party chairs would be more likely to answer a survey during an off-year election year. The survey was distributed using a mixed method strategy, giving respondents the option to complete the survey by mail or online. First, a hard copy of the survey was mailed to the chairpersons of the Democratic and Republican Parties in each of the 50 states, along with an introductory letter, which included information about the purpose of the study, my background and contact information, as well as an informed consent statement. In addition, the party chairs received a stamped return envelope with the survey mailing. In the introductory letter, the party chairpersons were also informed that I would be contacting them soon via e-mail with a link to access an electronic version of the survey, in case they found an online format to be more convenient. In the e-mail that I sent to each of the state party chairpersons the following week, I reminded them about the details of the study and informed consent agreement and provided them each with a unique hyperlink to access
the survey online, using the Qualtrics online survey program. The party chairpersons who had not yet completed the survey were sent two reminder e-mails containing information about both the mail and electronic surveys over the next month, from September to October 2011. A second wave of mail surveys were distributed to the party chairs who had not yet submitted the survey in November 2011. A third reminder e-mail was sent out in January 2012. I received completed mail and online surveys from the state parties from September 2011 through March 2012.

The hardcopy and electronic versions of the survey contained the same questions, presented in the same order. Of course completing a survey on paper or on a computer may lead to different experiences for the respondents, as the electronic survey was constructed with branching logic, while respondents taking the paper survey had to read specific instructions about which questions they should complete, based on their responses to previous questions. Because this survey did not contain any experimental treatments, these slightly different survey formats were not a major concern and providing respondents with the option to take either a paper or electronic survey was selected as one strategy to potentially increase the response rate.

Research shows that both Internet and mail surveys have their advantages and disadvantages. Mail surveys are generally more cost effective than telephone surveys, but achieving a higher response rate usually requires several mailings, which may be difficult due to financial and time limitations. Furthermore, mail surveys require respondents to not only fill out the survey but to remember to mail the completed
survey (Fisher & Herrick, 2013). Some important advantages of Internet surveys include greater time and financial efficiency for the researcher. Furthermore, Internet surveys are often less burdensome for survey respondents. One study shows that respondents often prefer Internet surveys because they are faster to complete and submit (Orr, 2005). On the other hand, online surveys can only be distributed to individuals with Internet access, and respondents may have a negative association with online surveys, due to concerns about spam and security on the Internet (Orr, 2005).

Considerations regarding Internet access are less of a concern when studying political elites, such as party leaders, who are highly likely to be frequent Internet and e-mail users. Nevertheless, both mail and Internet surveys were used in this study to appeal to respondents who may prefer different survey mediums and to increase the points of contact between the researcher and the party chairs, who likely receive large quantities of both mail and e-mail on a daily basis.

In a recent study, Fisher and Herrick (2013) investigated whether Internet and mail surveys of political elites, in this case state legislators, were characterized by different response rates and levels of representativeness. Their results show that, in comparison to Internet surveys, mail surveys had a much higher response rate but were not more representative of the population of state legislators in their study. Furthermore, they found that the mail and Internet surveys yielded similar results in terms of the characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes that legislators reported. Although Fisher and Herrick did not investigate mixed method surveys in particular, their
findings offer support for the use of both mail and Internet surveys in this study of state party chairpersons.

It must be acknowledged that the survey distribution methods used in this research may have resulted in sampling and measurement error. First, this sample does not represent a random sample of the state Democratic and Republican Parties in the United States. Additionally, although correspondence regarding this party survey was addressed to state party leaders, there is no way to verify that the surveys were actually completed by top officials within the party organizations, such as the party chairs or executive directors. This is a concern with most surveys of political elites, however, and is a source of error that cannot be avoided without conducting in-person or telephone interviews (Huckshorn, 1976).

**Survey Responses**

Surveys were sent to 100 state parties in total (the Democratic and Republican Parties in each state), and overall, 50 surveys were returned, yielding a 50 percent response rate. Of the surveys returned, 28 surveys (56%) were from Democratic Parties, and 22 surveys (44%) were from Republican Parties. The online survey was completed at a higher rate, with 31 state parties (62%) completing the survey online and 19 (38%) completing it by mail. The survey completion rate by region was fairly balanced, although the response rate was higher in the Southern states. Overall, 11 surveys were
completed by states in the Northeast (22%), 11 by states in the Midwest (22%), 16 by states in the South (32%), and 12 by states in the West (24%).

Table shows how the state Democratic and Republican Party survey responses were broken down by survey medium and region. Democratic state parties were slightly more likely to complete the survey online than the Republican state parties. The party response rate by region shows that nearly equal numbers of Democratic and Republican Parties from the Northeast and Midwest completed the surveys. However, just about twice as many Southern Democratic parties completed surveys as Southern Republican parties, and a slightly higher number of Western Republican parties returned surveys than their Democratic counterparts.

Despite the fact that this sample does not represent a random sample of the state Democratic and Republican parties in the United States, with a 50 percent response rate and a fairly balanced distribution of responses by party and region, the sample obtained from this survey allows for a meaningful study of the state parties.

1 U.S. Census regions were used in these calculations. In order to encourage survey responses, state party chairs were guaranteed that only the region in which the state party was located, not the specific state, would be identified in any research resulting from this survey.
Table 12: State Democratic and Republican Party Survey Completion, by Survey Medium and Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Medium</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed Survey Online</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Survey by Mail</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Design**

This survey contained a total of 41 questions that were divided into three general issue areas: party organizational strength, party technological capacity, and national-state party interactions.

**Party Organizational Strength**

As was previously noted, scholars have conducted surveys of the state parties in the past to assess the organizational structure and strength of the state party organizations (Aldrich, 2000; Cotter et al., 1984; J. L. Gibson et al., 1983). One goal of my survey research is to reexamine the organizational strength of the state parties. For this reason, many of the survey questions included in this survey were repeated from Cotter
et al. and Aldrich’s previous surveys. In order to assess change in the party system, this replication was a necessary step.

The survey questions that were repeated from the Cotter et al. and Aldrich surveys ask about the salary and tenure of the position of state party chair, the ownership of the state parties’ headquarters buildings, the parties’ budgets and staff, the contributions and services offered to candidates by the parties, the parties’ involvement in candidate recruitment, the various fundraising and voter mobilization programs offered by the parties, and the types of positions hired as state party staff by the parties.

**Party Technological Capacity**

The previous state party surveys were conducted prior to the start of the twenty-first century, before the Internet and computer technology played such a central role in the business of politics and the conduct of political campaigns. For this reason, these earlier studies of the state party organizations did not account for the role of technology in assessing and defining state party organizational strength. Therefore, another major goal of my state party survey was to fill this void, and a number of questions included in this survey were intended to understand the state parties’ use of technology and the Internet.

The survey questions that focused on the parties’ technological characteristics and behaviors inquire about the parties’ staff positions that are exclusively focused on the parties’ use of technology or the Internet, the format and operation of the parties’
voter file databases, and the ways in which the parties utilize their websites and social media sites.

**National-State Party Interactions**

In their 1983 survey, Cotter et al. included some questions that allowed them to study patterns of integration between the state and national party organizations. Aldrich (2000) also replicated some of these questions which ask the state parties about their dealings with the national party committees. My survey expands upon this previous research by asking additional questions about the interactions between the state and national party organizations.

In addition to replicating the questions that Cotter et al. and Aldrich asked the state parties about their dealings with the national party committees, in this survey, I also ask the state parties about the regularity of the interactions between the state and national parties with regard to the development campaign strategy, the state parties’ familiarity and engagement with the national party committees’ 50-state strategy programs during the 2010 elections, the nature and degree of the interactions between the state and national parties during the 2010 elections and more generally, the importance of state versus national issues in drafting state party platforms, and the state parties’ use of the national parties’ voter file systems.
Appendix B: Indicators and Indices of State Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity

This appendix describes the indicators of state party organizational strength that are represented in Table 1 and used in the factor analyses in Figure 3 and Figure 4. In addition, this appendix discusses the development of an overall index of state party organizational strength based on the indicators outlined in this appendix.

Indicators of State Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity

All of the indicators discussed in this section were also used by Cotter et al. in their factor analysis of organizational strength, and all of these indicators were derived according to the methods used by Cotter et al. (1984), except where noted. In the cases when the Cotter et al. calculation methods were used, the data in Table 1 for the 1960-1980 period was taken directly from Table 2.6 on p. 32-33 of Cotter et al. (1984). It was important to use the Cotter et al. measurement techniques whenever possible, to maintain consistency between the previous studies of state party organizational strength. Even when slightly different measurement techniques had to be used, due to differences in the questions asked on the 1960-1980, 1999, and 2011 surveys, every attempt was made to preserve the intent of the indicator originally used by Cotter et al.

Three of the indicators of organizational strength used by Cotter et al. in their factor analyses were not used in this study. The Cotter et al. indicators for the number of staff divisions and issue leadership were not included in this analysis because similar questions were not asked on the 2011 survey. The “money contributions to candidates”
indicator was not included in this study, because there were too many missing cases on this variable in the 2011 survey. However, due to other measures included in the factor analysis which account for the parties’ assistance with candidates’ campaign finances, it is not expected that the exclusion of a separate “money contributions to candidates” indicator poses a major problem for this analysis. As noted in the text, a new candidate services indicator was used in the organizational strength/technological capacity factor analysis presented in Figure 4. This indicator accounted for the party services offered to candidates in the following areas: advertising/media, accounting/compliance, fundraising, polling, strategy, research, get-out-the-vote, staff, and campaign management. Because this candidate services variable is more expansive than the one used by Cotter et al., and even accounts for the parties’ fundraising assistance offered to candidates, the exclusion of a separate “money contributions to candidates” indicator should not be problematic. In fact, the 2011 survey responses indicate that using a “money contributions to candidates” indicator may not accurately reflect the organizational strength of the parties in 2011. Both the Democratic and Republican state parties from one Southern state noted that their ability to contribute directly to candidates was severely limited by ethics reform passed by their state legislature. As the executive directors from one of these parties explained, “You may find it odd that we do not give directly to candidates. In [our state], there is a ban on PAC to PAC transfers so direct contributions are prohibited. Most support to campaigns comes in the form of ‘in-kind’ contributions.” Thus, including an indicator for “money contributions
to candidates” in the factor analysis may imply that some states do not contribute
directly to candidates because they do not have the organizational capacity to do so,
when in reality, some of these parties may be restricted by campaign finance legislation
in their states. Asking whether parties offer fundraising assistance to their candidates,
as was done with the candidate services measure described above, likely provides a
more accurate picture of the parties’ abilities to help candidates finance their campaigns.

Table 13: Measurement of the Indicators of State Party Organizational Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of State Party Organizational Strength</th>
<th>Measurement of Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicators (Organizational Complexity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Election Year Budget</td>
<td>State parties were asked to list their budget for a typical non-election year. Based on Cotter et al.’s (1984) measure, parties’ budgets were then coded into the following categories: 0 - $0-$49,000 1 - $50,000-$99,999 2 - $100,000-$149,000 3 - $150,000-$199,999 4 - $200,000-$249,000 5 - $250,000-$299,999 6 - $300,000-$349,999 7 - $350,000-$399,999 8 - $400,000-$449,000 9 - $450,000-$999,999 10 - $1,000,000 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Election Year Staff</td>
<td>State parties were asked to indicate the number of full-time and part-time staff they hired in non-election years. Consistent with Cotter et al.’s (1984) measure, the value for this variable was derived from the following calculation: (Number of Full-Time Staff) + (.5*Number of Part-Time Staff).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters Accessibility</td>
<td>State parties were asked if the party headquarters were located in a separate office building or in a space in an office building. This measure was coded as follows:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Leadership Professionalism | Parties were asked if they paid their party chairperson a salary and if they hired an executive director. This measure was coded as follows:  
1 – party pays the party chair a salary AND hires an executive director  
0 – party does not fulfill both of these criteria  
This measures of headquarters accessibility is slightly different from the one used by Cotter et al. Cotter et al. also accounted for whether a party chair was full-time or part-time, but the 2011 survey did not ask this question. |
| Indicators (Programmatic Capacity) | Parties were asked if they operated a voter identification program. Consistent with Cotter et al.’s measurement, this variable was coded as follows:  
1 – party operates voter identification program  
0 – party does not operate voter identification program  
Public Opinion Polling | Parties were asked if they commissioned public opinion surveys. Consistent with Cotter et al.’s measurement, this variable was coded as follows:  
1 – party operates commissions public opinion survey  
0 – party does not commission public opinion survey  
Publication of a Newsletter | Parties were asked if they published a party newspaper or magazine. Consistent with Cotter et al.’s measurement, this variable was coded as follows:  
1 – party publishes newspaper  
0 – party does not publish newspaper  

1 – Headquarters located in separate office building  
2 – Headquarters not located in separate office building  
This measures of headquarters accessibility is slightly different from the one used by Cotter et al. Cotter et al. measured headquarters accessibility by combining measures indicating whether the headquarters was located in a separate building and whether the party headquarters moved to the home city of a new party chairman. The 2011 survey did not ask parties about the moving of the party headquarters, so this measure could not be included.
| Candidate Recruitment Index | Parties were asked if they recruited candidates for the following offices: governor, other state constitutional offices, U.S. Senator, U.S. House, state legislature, and county/local offices. Consistent with Cotter et al.’s indicator, this variable was coded as the sum of these six variables:  
6 – recruits for all six offices  
5 – recruits for five offices  
4 – recruits for four offices  
3 – recruits for three offices  
2 – recruits for two offices  
1 – recruits for one office  
0 – recruits for no offices |
| Services to Candidates (1) | Parties were asked if they hired a field staff and if they conducted campaign seminars for candidates and campaign managers. Consistent with Cotter et al.’s measurement, this variable was coded as follows:  
10 – Party hires a field staff and conducts campaign seminars  
5 – Party engages in only one of these activities  
0 – Party engages in neither of these activities  
This candidate services indicator was used in all of the calculations presented in Table 1, as well as in all of the factor analyses reported in Table 2. |
| Services to Candidates (2) | Parties were asked if they provided the following services to candidates for governor, other state constitutional offices, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, state legislature: advertising/media, accounting/compliance, fundraising, polling, strategy, research, get-out-the-vote, staff, and campaign management. This indicator represents the average number of services that state parties provided to candidates and was measured as follows:  
(Number of services offered to governor + Number of services offered to other state constitutional offices + Number of services offered to U.S. Senate + Number of services offered to U.S. House + Number of services offered to state legislature)/5  
This candidate services indicator was used in the factor analysis reported in Table 4. |
The table below describes the measurement of the indicators of party technological capacity used in this study.

**Table 14: Measurement of the Indicators of State Party Technological Capacity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of Party Technological Capacity</th>
<th>Measurement of Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party employ technology director</td>
<td>Parties were asked whether they employed a technology director. This variable was coded as follows: 1 – hires a technology director 0 – does not hire a technology director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter files managed by dedicated staff member (technology director or data file manager)</td>
<td>Parties were asked whose responsibility it is to maintain the state parties’ voter files: a data/voter file manager hired by the state party, a technology director hired by the state party, other state party staff, or an outside voter file vendor. This variable was coded as follows: 1 – voter files managed by technology director or data/voter file manager 0 - voter files not managed by technology director or data/voter file manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party maintains online voter file database</td>
<td>Parties were asked about the format of their parties’ voter files: a computerized voter database that is available via the Internet, a computerized voter database that is not available via the Internet, or a voter database that is not available in an electronic format. This variable was coded as follows: 1 – party maintains a computerized database that is available via the Internet 0 – party does not maintain a computerized database that is available via the Internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index of State Party Organizational Strength**

Based on the factor analysis presented in Chapter 2, I identified the relevant measures of state party organizational strength from the 2011 state party survey. In order to more directly compare party organizations across all of these measures and to develop a single measure of state party organizational strength which could be used in
subsequent analyses, I created an aggregate index of state party organizational strength using the variables included in the factor analysis presented in Figure 4.

Organizational strength scores were calculated according to the same general method used by other scholars (Dulio & Garrett, 2007; La Raja, 2008). After determining which variables were relevant to the measurement of organizational strength using exploratory factor analysis, I transformed each variable to a range of 0 to 1. I then took the average across all of these variables to arrive at an overall organizational strength score for each state party. This method was chosen to generate an organizational strength index for several reasons. Because this method has been used by other scholars to measure state party organizational strength, the use of this method allows for consistency between studies of organizational strength. The factor analysis presented in Figure 4 was used to identify the relevant measures of state party organizational strength, which were then included in the state party organizational strength index calculations; however, due to the small sample size, these results are more exploratory in nature, and it is not advisable to use the factor loadings to calculate an overall factor score. As Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) note, “For many research purposes, this ‘quick and dirty’ estimate of factor scores is entirely adequate” (p. 650).

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1 Furthermore, “non-refined” methods for calculating indices, such as the one used in this case, are considered to be more stable across samples than “refined” methods of calculating factor scores, such as Bartlett or regression scores (DiStefano, Zhu, & Mindrila, 2009). Also, when the ratio of factors to variables is low, the correlations between factors and the factor scores derived from “refined” methods are also lower (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).
The aggregate state party organizational strength index was calculated by averaging the state parties’ values (on a range from 0 to 1) on the following variables: headquarters accessibility, leadership professionalism, candidate services, candidate recruitment, employs public relations director, employs bookkeeper, employs technology director, and employ dedicated voter file staff. The resulting index had a mean value of .60, a median of .66, a standard deviation of .21, and a range from .11 to 1.

Overall, these organizational strength scores confirmed the findings presented in Chapter 2, that, on the whole, the Democratic state parties have achieved higher levels of organizational strength than their Republican counterparts. Figure presents the average organizational strength scores for the Democratic and Republican state parties. The average score for the Democratic state parties was .69 and the average for the Republicans was .47. Also, the organizational strength scores did not vary significantly by region. When the parties are categorized into U.S. Census regions, the regional averages are as follows: Northeast, .56; Midwest, .62, South, .62; West, .60.

Note that the budget and staff variables were excluded from the final calculation of this organizational strength index. These variables were excluded because a large number of state parties did not provide data about their budget and staff, and these parties then would have been counted as missing cases in the calculation of the organizational strength index. Because budget and staff are so closely related to the other measures of organizational strength, the exclusion of these variables did not significantly alter the overall organizational strength scores. When the organizational strength scores were calculated both with and without the budget and staff variables, the correlation between these two separate organizational indices was .98.
Figure 45: Average Organizational Strength Scores for Democratic and Republican State Parties, 2011

Figure 46 depicts the results from regressing this index of state party organizational strength on a number of controls. Among the controls included in the regression, the most important predictors of state party organizational strength are whether the state party is a Democratic party and the average level of reported involvement between the state party and the national parties during election years.

While this model cannot tell us whether national party involvement causes higher levels of state party organizational strength or vice versa, this model confirms that the

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3 The State Democratic Party variable is a dummy variable indicating whether a state party was a Democratic party. On the 2011 state party survey, the state parties were asked to rate their level of involvement with the national parties during a typical presidential and midterm election year, on a scale from 0 to 10; the Level of National Party Involvement variable is the average of these two scores. The State Population and State Median Income variables were collected from the 2010 U.S. Census. The Gubernatorial Vote Margin variable is the major party vote margin in the states’ most recent gubernatorial elections, as of 2011. The Change in State Electoral Competition Variable represents the difference between the states’ Holbrook and Van Dunk electoral competition indices (Holbrook & Van Dunk, 1993) from 1981 to 2011; these figures were collected from Carl Klarner’s dataset (Klarner, 2013).
strongest state parties are indeed those who report the highest levels of interaction with the national party organizations.

Figure 46: Plot of Standardized Regression Coefficients from Ordinary Least Squares Regression Explaining State Party Organizational Strength
### Table 15: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Party Organizational Strength Indicators, 1960-1980, 1999, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Communality</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Communality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Staff</strong></td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headquarters</strong></td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobilization</strong></td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polling</strong></td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publish Newsletter</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Services</strong></td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion Variance Explained</strong></td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td></td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation between Factors</strong></td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

1. The results above are from EFA based on polychoric correlations and with OLS estimation of parameters. These are the factor loadings found after an oblique, oblimin rotation; promax rotation was also attempted and yielded similar results.

2. Factors were retained after considering several criteria: the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser, 1960), scree plots (Cattell, 1966), and Thurstones’s “very simple structure” criterion (Thurstone, 1947).

3. The voter mobilization programs indicator was not included in the 1999 or 2011 factor analyses, because there was too little variation on this variable.
Table 16: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity Indicators, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F1: Programmatic Capacity</th>
<th>F2: Organizational Complexity</th>
<th>Communality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Staff</strong></td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headquarters Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Professionalism</strong></td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Services</strong></td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Public Relations Director</strong></td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Bookkeeper</strong></td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Technology Director</strong></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Dedicated Voter File Staff</strong></td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion Variance Explained</strong></td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation between Factors</strong></td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The results above are from EFA based on polychoric correlations and with OLS estimation of parameters. These are the factors loadings found after an oblique, oblimin rotation; promax rotation was also attempted and yielded similar results. Factors were retained after considering several criteria: the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser, 1960), scree plots (Cattell, 1966), and Thurstone’s “very simple structure” criterion (Thurstone, 1947).
### Table 17: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Party Organizational Strength and Technological Capacity Indicators, 2011 (with Online Voter File indicator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F1: Organizational Complexity</th>
<th>F2: Programmatic Capacity</th>
<th>Communality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Staff</strong></td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headquarters</strong></td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-.50</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professionalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Services</strong></td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Public Relations Director</strong></td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Bookkeeper</strong></td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Technology Director</strong></td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ Dedicated Voter File Staff</strong></td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voter File Online</strong></td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.49</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion Variance Explained</strong></td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation between Factors</strong></td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** The results above are from EFA based on polychoric correlations and with OLS estimation of parameters. These are the factors loadings found after an oblique, oblimin rotation; promax rotation was also attempted and yielded similar results. Factors were retained after considering several criteria: the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser, 1960), scree plots (Cattell, 1966), and Thurstone’s “very simple structure” criterion (Thurstone, 1947).
Table 18: Variance Inflation Factors for Variables Included in Table 8 OLS Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 presidential vote margin</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 presidential election battleground status</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010 congressional elections</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party organizational strength</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of state senate seats up for election</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 state population</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 19: Correlation Matrix for Variables Included in Models in Table 8, Table 9, and Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010 national party financial transfers</th>
<th>50-state strategy activity levels in states</th>
<th>2008 presidential vote margin</th>
<th>2012 presidential election battleground status</th>
<th>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010 congressional elections</th>
<th>State party organizational strength</th>
<th>Proportion of state senate seats up for election</th>
<th>Competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election</th>
<th>2010 state population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 national party financial transfers to state parties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-state strategy activity levels in states</td>
<td>.36(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 presidential vote margin</td>
<td>- .36(^a)</td>
<td>-.11(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 presidential election battleground status</td>
<td>.77(^b)</td>
<td>.40(^c)</td>
<td>-.82(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010 congressional elections</td>
<td>.59(^b)</td>
<td>.31(^c)</td>
<td>-.32(^b)</td>
<td>.70(^c)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party organizational strength</td>
<td>.47(^a)</td>
<td>.61(^b)</td>
<td>-.32(^a)</td>
<td>.65(^b)</td>
<td>.28(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of state senate seats up for election</td>
<td>- .02(^a)</td>
<td>.09(^b)</td>
<td>.22(^a)</td>
<td>-.04(^b)</td>
<td>-.01(^b)</td>
<td>-.13(^a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election</td>
<td>.50(^b)</td>
<td>-.13(^c)</td>
<td>.32(^b)</td>
<td>.33(^c)</td>
<td>-.00(^c)</td>
<td>.09(^b)</td>
<td>.43(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 state population</td>
<td>.43(^a)</td>
<td>.21(^a)</td>
<td>-.13(^a)</td>
<td>.22(^b)</td>
<td>.55(^b)</td>
<td>.21(^a)</td>
<td>-.07(^c)</td>
<td>.20(^b)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \(^a\)=Pearson correlation, \(^b\)=polyserial correlation, \(^c\)=polychoric correlation
Table 20: Explaining National Party Financial Transfers to the State Party Organizations during the 2010 Election Cycle, Standardized Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>All Cases</th>
<th>DNC</th>
<th>RNC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 presidential vote margin</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 presidential election battleground status</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of leaning/tossup races in 2010 congressional elections</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party organizational strength</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of state senate seats up for election</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of 2010 gubernatorial election</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 state population</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Entries are ordinary least squares standardized regression coefficients.
Appendix D: State Party Usage of National Party Voter File Systems

Both the DNC and the RNC now operate centralized voter file database systems. The development of state-of-the-art national voter file systems have been key to party integration, as both state and national party organizations benefit from data sharing and enhanced voter-targeting capabilities. On the 2011 state party survey, state party chairs were asked whether or not they use the DNC’s VoteBuilder system or the RNC’s Voter Vault system to maintain and store their state parties’ voter files.

As shown in the tables below, among the survey respondents, 89 percent of Democratic state parties and 96 percent of Republican state parties use these national party voter file systems to store and maintain their state parties’ voter files and to share voter files with other party organizations and candidates. While the national parties develop and control the overall voter file system, all state parties reported that they maintain the authority to determine which candidates and organizations are granted access to their state parties’ voter files. While the state parties have retained a great deal of control over their parties’ voter files, they have also cooperated with the national parties’ efforts to centralize the overall voter file system. As an example of this coordinated effort, among the state parties that use VoteBuilder or Voter Vault, 88 percent of Democratic state parties and 86 percent of Republicans offer VoteBuilder or Voter Vault training sessions for members of party organizations and campaigns in their states.
Table 21: “In what capacity does your state party use the VoteBuilder/Voter Vault system to maintain and store your voter file database?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses to store and maintain voter files and share voter files with party organizations and candidates</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses to store and maintain voter files and share voter files with party organizations and candidates</td>
<td>88.9% (24)</td>
<td>95.5% (21)</td>
<td>91.8% (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes voter files to the national system but uses its own system in running state party campaigns and GOTV operations</td>
<td>7.4% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not contribute to or use this system</td>
<td>3.7% (1)</td>
<td>4.6% (1)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (27)</td>
<td>100% (22)</td>
<td>100% (48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The number of cases in each cell is entered in parentheses.
Source: Hatch’s 2011 State Party Survey

Table 22: “Does your state party possess the right to determine which candidates and organizations are granted access to your state voter files?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (26)</td>
<td>100% (22)</td>
<td>100% (48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hatch’s 2011 State Party Survey
Table 23: “Please specify which candidates/campaigns, if any, are charged a fee to access your party’s voter file database.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Candidate</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County- or local-level candidates</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gubernatorial candidates</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State legislative candidates</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. House candidates</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Senate candidates</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential candidates</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State party does not charge a fee for party access</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 27, 21, 48

Notes: The number of cases in each cell is entered in parentheses.
Source: Hatch’s 2011 State Party Survey

Table 24: “Does your state party offer VoteBuilder/Voter Vault training sessions for members of party organizations and campaigns in your state?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 100%, 100%, 100%

Notes: The number of cases in each cell is entered in parentheses.
Source: Hatch’s 2011 State Party Survey
## Appendix E: State Party Platforms and Cluster Analysis

### Additional Survey Responses to Party Platform Questions

Table 25: “How often does your state party create a new party platform?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 4 years</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 8 years</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The number of cases in each cell is entered in parentheses.  
Source: Hatch’s 2011 State Party Survey
Table 26: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Controversial positions should be avoided in a party platform in order to insure party unity.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hatch’s 2011 State Party Survey
Note: The number of cases in each cell is shown in parentheses.
Figure 47: Total Platforms Collected for Each Region, by Party, 1952-2014
Figure 48: Total Republican State Party Platforms Collected for Each Region, by Midterm-Presidential-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Figure 49: Total Democratic State Party Platforms Collected for Each Region, by Midterm-Presidential-Election-Year Grouping, 1952-2014
Additional Platform Clustering Plots

Figure 50: Cosine Dissimilarity between Democratic and Republican National Party Platforms, 1952-2012
Figure 51: Xie-Beni Index for 2-7 Spherical K-Means Clusters Classifying State and National Platforms, 1952-2014
Note: For the Xie-Beni Index, smaller values represent better clustering solutions.

Figure 51: Xie-Beni Index for 2-7 Spherical K-Means Clusters Classifying State and National Platforms, 1952-2014
Figure 52: Separation Index for 2-7 Spherical K-Means Clusters Classifying State and National Platforms, 1952-2014.
Figure 52: Separation Index for 2-7 Spherical K-Means Clusters Classifying State and National Platforms, 1952-2014

Note: For the Separation Index, larger values represent the better clustering solutions.
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Biography

I was born on March 19, 1985 in Windham, Connecticut, USA and grew up in Chatham, Massachusetts. I attended college at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island and received the Dean’s Scholarship for all four years of study. At Providence College, I was inducted into Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, and Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Spanish Honor Society. In 2007, I graduated summa cum laude from Providence College with a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in Spanish. I received a M.A. in Political Science from Duke University in 2009. As a graduate student at Duke University, I received a full fellowship for my first five years of study and received awards including the Aleane Webb Dissertation Research Award from the Graduate School at Duke University and the James W. Prothro Student Paper Award, which was awarded by the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at UNC-Chapel Hill, in conjunction with the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Southern Association for Public Opinion Research. My publications include two articles: “Party organizational strength and technological capacity: The adaptation of the state-level party organizations in the United States to voter outreach and data analytics in the Internet age,” which is forthcoming at the journal Party Politics and “Blame, Responsibility, and the Tea Party in the 2010 Midterm Elections,” which I published in the journal Political Behavior in 2014, along with my co-authors, John H. Aldrich, Bradford H. Bishop, D. Sunshine Hillygus, and David W. Rohde.