

ArkPSA

Arkansas Political Science Association

The Natural State in a Time of Change: A Survey-Based Analysis of State Party Organizations in Arkansas, 1999-2013

Author(s): John C. Davis

Source: *The Midsouth Political Science Review*, Volume 15, Number 2 (2014), pp. 81-102

ISSN: 2330-6882 [print]; 2330-6890 [online]

Published by: Arkansas Political Science Association

Website: <http://uca.edu/politicalscience/midsouth-political-science-review-mpsr/>

The Natural State in a Time of Change: A Survey-Based Analysis of State Party Organizations in Arkansas, 1999-2013

John C. Davis
University of Missouri

Over the last fifteen years, Arkansas' political environment has undergone considerable change. A part of the once "Solid South," Arkansas – as of 2014 – is represented by Republicans in five of six federal offices. Additionally, for the first time since Reconstruction, Republicans enjoy majorities in both state legislative chambers. This paper addresses what, if any, changes occurred to the state's party organizations over this time. I compare survey data from a 1999 study to a 2013 examination of state party organizations to evaluate the changes that have taken place with regard to the operations and organizational strength of both state parties in a time of political change in the Natural State. My analysis reveals that changes undergone over this period by each state party organization resulted in stronger, more capable political parties. I conclude this study by offering an explanation for the increased organizational strength exhibited by today's state parties in Arkansas: increased electoral competition.

Introduction

In 1999, Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin conducted the "State Party Organizations Study." This survey assessed the role of state party organizations in an increasingly candidate-centered environment. More recently, in 2013, Davis and Kurlowski (2014) sought to update and build upon this previous work to evaluate the changes that have taken place with regard to the operations and organizational strength of state parties. By comparing the results of these two surveys, this paper analyzes the Arkansas Democratic and Republican state party organizations over a period of significant change, from 1999 to 2013. The electoral success enjoyed by Arkansas Republicans over the last few election cycles is nothing less than historic. In addition to holding five of the six federal offices – as of 2014 – Arkansas has a Republican majority in both state legislative chambers for the first time since Reconstruction. While it is beyond the scope of one paper to attempt to explain the Republican Party's recent electoral success, the question of whether or not the state party organizations have changed during this pivotal time is a puzzle worthy of consideration.

In addition to evaluating the changes these two state party organizations have undergone since the late 20th century to today, this paper addresses the organizational strength of these parties with a particular focus into their institutional characteristics, degree of coordination with their respective

national committees, roles in campaign issue development, candidate recruitment, and candidate support. The more recently collected data used in this paper are derived from an ongoing survey project by Davis and Kurlowski (2013) concerning the organizational characteristics of state political parties. Respondents from this most recent survey include the Democratic Party of Arkansas and the Republican Party of Arkansas. In order to assess the changes undergone in these two state party organizations, I report the survey results of each and compare the findings with those of Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999). Additionally, I use Dulio and Garrett's (2007) party organization strength index which enables me to assess the extent to which changes among these two party organizations have occurred since the late 1990s.

Following my analyses of these two party organizations, I conclude that—according to the conventional measures of state party organizational strength—both parties have become stronger organizations over the last fifteen years. Finally, I offer an explanation for the increased organizational strength exhibited by both parties today: increased electoral competition in Arkansas. Consistent with existing literature, political developments have increased interparty competition in the state and pushed both state parties' organizations to enhance their abilities to support and assist their respective candidates.

State Party Organizations

Downs (1957) described a political party as a group of individuals seeking control of government collectively. In order to achieve these ends, political parties—seeking strength in numbers and the advantages of pooled resources—form party organizations. Wilson (1973) contended that political party organizations in the United States were decentralized, since most elected offices and political resources are found at the local and state-levels. Additionally, Wilson suggested governmental reforms of the 20th century had reduced the benefits such organizations had once offered in the form of patronage. This—along with a growing middle class—had resulted in weaker state and local level organizations. At the time, Wilson's assessment was a common one among the discipline as political scientists continued to observe lower voter turnout, increased ticket-splitting, and a decline in self-reported partisan identification among the public in the 1970s (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979). These factors led many to suggest that American party organizations were waning in strength. However, Bibby (1979) found evidence suggesting that the national organizations for the Democratic and

Republican parties had actually strengthened over this time. Likewise, Bibby (1979), Cotter and Bibby (1980), Cotter et al. (1984), and Huckshorn (1976) provided evidence to the contrary at the state and local levels. Around this same time, Kayden and Mahe Jr. (1985) proposed that a growing reliance upon professional staff – among state and national party organizations – and the rise of political action committees had strengthened state party organizations. Overall, scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s showed that states' party organizations' strength – measured most often by operating budget, number of paid staff, and institutional capacity – had become stronger as they adapted to their changing environments.

Specifically, Cotter et al.'s (1984) *Party Organizations in American Politics* provided evidence to suggest state party organizations had become stronger in the 1960s and 1970s – directly refuting the conventional wisdom of the day. In addition, their survey-based effort to describe and assess the bureaucratic characteristics of state party organizations became the method of choice for ensuing studies on the topic. In 1999, Aldrich and his colleagues' examination of state party organizations allowed for cross-sectional comparisons with Cotter et al.'s study (Aldrich 2000) and have served as a model for the most recent survey effort by which this paper's data are collected.

1999 State Party Organization Survey

In 1999, Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin facilitated a survey-based study of state party organizations. Reaching out to all 100 major state party organizations, the study boasted a 64% response rate. Survey questionnaires were mailed specifically to state party chairs. Aldrich and his colleagues' effort was a useful update to Cotter et al.'s (1984) work and accounted for the condition of state party organizations leading up to the 21st century. Unlike the data collected by Cotter and his colleagues, this survey's state-identifiable results are publicly available¹. The 1999 study reported data which had been collected over the course of several years.

2013 State Party Organization Survey

¹ The state-level data from the Cotter et al. (1984) survey – available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political Science and Social Research – has been censored for privacy issues. The author's attempts to acquire the state-identifiable results have failed.

In late 2013, Davis and Kurlowski began distributing an updated state organizational survey in order to assess changes which had taken place over the nearly fifteen years since the effort by Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999). Unlike the earlier study, the questions for this survey were not directed to any one staff member of the state party organization—enabling state chairpersons, executive directors, or anyone else knowledgeable and authorized to participate in the survey.² While some of the surveys were conducted over the phone, the majority of responses were completed online using Qualtrics. It is important to note that despite the differences in survey delivery systems, the question wording was identical. The Republican Party of Arkansas' survey was conducted over the phone while the Arkansas Democratic Party's was online. As was agreed before the administering of each survey, the names and positions of the individuals who participated remain anonymous. The survey codebook is provided in Appendix 1.

Institutional Characteristics

Existing literature on state parties examine their institutional characteristics as a means to more fully understand the day to day operations and assess organizational strength. Additionally, these details might also offer insight into the priorities and purpose of these institutions. The following reports the findings from the 2013 survey, and assesses the changes in the institutional characteristics of Arkansas' state party organizations.

The respondent for the Democratic Party of Arkansas reported that the organization's chairperson serves at a full-time capacity, but does not receive a salary. Earlier, in the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) study, the position was reported to have been a part-time position. In 2013, the chair position remained term-limited. Regarding office staff, the party currently maintains a public relations director and a full-time executive director. As of 2013, the Democratic Party of Arkansas reported employing a field staff, conducting

² On the one hand, broadening the pool of potential respondents within each organization presents the opportunity for a higher response rate. On the other hand, expanding the potential pool of respondents beyond state party chairpersons, exclusively, might introduce bias when comparing the results of this survey to those of Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999). However, considering both state parties in this analysis were led by different chairpersons in 2013 than in the 1999, the potential for respondent bias could not have been avoided if Davis and Kurlowski (2013) had limited their potential pool of respondents to chairpersons. While it is possible that a party's chairperson and its executive director could give different answers to survey questions, given the objective nature of the questions posed in both surveys, it is assumed that each respondent answered the questions honestly and to the best of his or her knowledge.

direct mail fund-raising, operating “get out the vote” (GOTV) programs, and conducting public opinion surveys all in the last year. In terms of party contributions to different campaigns for state and congressional office, the party reported giving to all levels except local positions—consistent with the party’s reported contribution behavior in 1999.

Another aspect of the survey which addresses the institutional characteristics of the state party office is the staff and budget differential between election years and non-election years. During election years, the Democratic Party of Arkansas reported in 2013 an estimated budget of \$3.5 million and a staff of 73 employees (70 full-time, 3 part-time). In a year which no regular elections are held, the party cuts back significantly with a budget estimation of \$750,000 and a staff of 6. The scaling down during non-election years is consistent with the average calculated from all respondents for the 2013 survey.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas reported one of the highest numbers of election-year staff of any participating state party organization in the Davis and Kurlowski (2013) survey. The discrepancy in election year funding and staffing to that of non-election years offers insight into the priorities and purpose of the organization and is worth closer investigation. The dramatic increase in reported election year staff is—in part—explained by the Democratic Party of Arkansas’ use of a coordinated campaign. The Democratic Party’s respondent offered the following regarding the coordinated campaign,

The Party operates a coordinated campaign in election year [*sic*] which campaigns buy into [*sic*] but it’s normally not included in the campaign budget. They raise money for the coordinated campaign and then gain the benefits of a strong coordinated campaign. (Davis and Kurlowski 2013)

This coordinated effort between the party organization and its candidates explains the high number of election year staff reported in the 2013 survey (73 total)—as these individuals serve to assist those Democratic candidates who invest in the coordinated campaign. In addition, the fact that candidates reportedly “buy into” the coordinated campaign suggests their own investments into the program provide a portion of support required for such an increase in election year staff.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the party’s institutional characteristics

Table 1 Democratic Party of Arkansas Institutional Characteristics

Institutional Characteristics	Davis & Kurlowski (2013)	Aldrich, Gomez, & Griffin (1999)
Chair Position Full-time	Yes	No
Chair Position Term-Limited	Yes	--
State Party Chair Salaried	No	No
Annual Salary	--	--
Contributed to Governor	Yes	Yes
Contributed to Other Constitutional Offices	Yes	Yes
Contributed to Congressional Offices	Yes	Yes
Contributed to State Senator	Yes	Yes
Contribute to State Legislator	Yes	Yes
Contributed to County or Local Offices	No	No
Held Fund-Raising Event	Yes	Yes
Direct mail Fund-Raising Program	Yes	Yes
Employed Research Staff	Yes	No
Employed Public Relations Dir.	Yes	No
Employed Full-time Executive Dir.	Yes	Yes
Employed Field Staff	Yes	Yes
Employed Comptroller/Bookkeeper	Yes	Yes
Conducted Campaign Seminars	Yes	Yes
Recruited Full Slate of Candidates	Yes	Yes
Publish Newspaper/Newsletter/Magazine	Yes	Yes
Operated Voter Registration Programs	Yes	No
Conducted Public Opinion Surveys	Yes	Yes
Typical Election Year Budget	\$3.5 million	\$2,097,451.98 ³
Typical Election Year Full-time Staff	70	8
Typical Election Year Part-time Staff	3	4
Typical Non-Election Year Budget	\$750K	\$699,150.66 ⁴
Typical Non-Election Year Full-time Staff	5	4
Typical Non-Election Year Part-time Staff	1	0

between the findings of the 2013 Davis and Kurlowski survey and the 1999 Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin study. In the earlier survey, the party reported that it did not employ research staff or a public relations director. Apart from the growth in staff over the last several years, the organization's budget has also increased – a prerequisite for the dramatic increase in the number of overall election-year staff. While a modest increase in reported non-election year budget is reported between the two studies (just short of \$700,000 in 1999 – adjusting for inflation – to \$750,000 in 2013), the party's election year budget has dramatically increased from nearly \$2.1 million – adjusted for inflation – reported in 1999 to \$3.5 million in 2013. The party now reports

³ In 1999, the Democratic Party of Arkansas' reported an election-year budget of \$1.5 million. The amount presented in Table 1 adjusts for inflation (USD 2013)

⁴ In 1999, the Democratic Party of Arkansas' reported a non-election year budget of \$500,000. The amount presented in Table 1 adjusts for inflation (USD 2013).

employing research staff and a public relations director – increasing its level of organizational sophistication. Additionally, the increased budget and staff during election years suggests strong electioneering efforts on behalf of the state party organization.

A representative for the Republican Party of Arkansas also provided information regarding the party's institutional characteristics, allowing for a comparison of the party today to the organization at the time of the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) study.

The chair of the Republican Party of Arkansas is a paid, term limited, and full-time position. Unlike the Democratic Party's chair, who does not receive a salary, the Republican state organization most recently reported paying the chairperson between \$50,000 and \$75,000 annually. This is a change from what the organization reported in 1999. At the time of the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) study, the survey participant selected the answer option reading, "State party considered job part-time but it is actually full time." At that time, the Republican Party chairperson did not receive a salary.

In 2013, the Republican Party of Arkansas reported that it contributes to all levels of state office and U.S. Congress, but does not contribute to local races – a change from the organization's reported actions in 1999. The extent of involvement in contributing to different levels of office is of interest particularly given the changing nature of campaign contributions in American politics over the last several decades. Between the end of the "soft money" era and the proliferation of advocacy group spending, one might expect state party organization involvement in financial contributions to have changed since the 1990s.

Much like the Democratic organization, the Republican Party hired additional specialized staff since the earlier survey. In 2013, the party reported having a public relations director. A comparison of the party's reported election year budget to non-election year budget is not possible as the non-election amount was not reported. The reported non-election year budget in 1999 was \$500,000 or – accounting for inflation – \$699,150.66 at the time of the 2013 survey. Accounting for inflation, the reported election year budget appears to have increased only modestly from \$2,097,451.98 in 1999 to approximately \$2.2 million in 2013. The numbers of overall election year and non-election year staff did not change over this time period. Unlike the Democratic Party, the Republican Party does not report a change in the

overall number of staff from election to non-election years. Table 2 provides a comparison of the Republican Party's institutional characteristics between the findings of the 2013 and 1999 studies.

Table 2 Republican Party of Arkansas Institutional Characteristics

	Davis and Kurlowski (2013)	Aldrich, Gomez, & Griffin (1999)
Institutional Characteristics		
Chair Position Full-time	Yes	No
Chair Position Term-Limited	Yes	--
State Party Chair Salaried	Yes	No
Annual Salary	\$50K-75K	--
Contributed to Governor	Yes	Yes
Contributed to Other Constitutional Offices	Yes	Yes
Contributed to Congressional Offices	Yes	Yes
Contributed to State Senator	Yes	Yes
Contribute to State Legislator	Yes	Yes
Contributed to County or Local Offices	No	Yes
Held Fund-Raising Event	Yes	Yes
Direct mail Fund-Raising Program	Yes	Yes
Employed Research Staff	No	Yes
Employed Public Relations Dir.	Yes	No
Employed Full-time Executive Dir.	Yes	Yes
Employed Field Staff	Yes	Yes
Employed Comptroller/Bookkeeper	No	Yes
Conducted Campaign Seminars	Yes	Yes
Recruited Full Slate of Candidates	Yes	Yes
Publish Newspaper/Newsletter/Magazine	Yes	Yes
Operated Voter Registration Programs	Yes	No
Conducted Public Opinion Surveys	Yes	Yes
Typical Election Year Budget	\$2.2 million	\$2,097,451.98 ⁵
Typical Election Year Full-time Staff	8	5
Typical Election Year Part-time Staff	0	3
Typical Non-Election Year Budget	--	\$699,150.66 ⁶
Typical Non-Election Year Full-time Staff	4	3
Typical Non-Election Year Part-time Staff	0	1

Both party organizations have changed somewhat with regard to institutional characteristics since the late 1990s. The Democratic Party of Arkansas reports a significantly larger election year budget and election year staff between the two surveys. The dramatic increases in election-year budget and staff is likely explained by the party's unique coordinated campaign effort whereby candidates reported "buy into" the effort in order

⁵ In 1999 the Republican Party of Arkansas reported an election-year budget of \$1.5 million. The amount presented in Table 2 adjusts for inflation (USD 2013)

⁶ In 1999, the Republican Party of Arkansas reported a non-election year budget of \$500,000. The amount presented in Table 2 adjusts for inflation (USD 2013).

to benefit from the sources of the party organization. While the survey data provide little insight into the direct relationship of budgetary capability and staffing, the increase in election-year staff reported by the Democratic Party strongly suggests a large portion of the organization's increased budget has funded the coordinated campaign effort. The Republican Party of Arkansas reports only slight changes in the number of staff and even less in regard to budget, but boasts a full-time, salaried chair and other traits of increased institutional sophistication including the addition of a public relations director. Overall, a comparison of institutional characteristics suggests each state organization is stronger today than they were at the end of the 20th century. The organization that has undergone the most change in regards to these measures is the Democratic Party of Arkansas.

Candidate Recruitment

Given that parties seek to gain control of government by winning elections, recruiting candidates for office is a natural role of any state party organization. While the literature on the topic continues to enhance our knowledge of alternative origins of candidate recruitment—such as groups of citizens and political elites (Ehrenhalt 1991; Fowler and McClure 1989; Moncrief, Squire, and Jewell 2001) and state legislative leaders (Sanbonmatsu 2006), previous studies surveying those within party organizations report active involvement in recruiting (Gibson et al. 1983). However, the issue might suffer from response bias—as studies asking candidates to report the nature and extent to which state parties actively recruit individuals have called parties' involvement into question. Kazee and Thornberry (1990) raise doubts that state parties play particularly active roles in recruiting candidates for Congress, specifically. Additional evidence of limited state party recruitment for seats in the U.S. House, specifically, is found in Kazee's (1994) edited volume (specifically, see Herrnson and Tennant 1994, 70 and Kazee and Roberts 1994, 111-12). Thus, it is possible state party organizations overstate their involvement in recruiting efforts. With this caveat, I will report results from both state party organizations from the 2013 survey concerning candidate recruitment and compare them to the reported levels of involvement from the 1999 study (Table 3 and 4). Each survey respondent was prompted with the following question, "Please describe the level of involvement of the state party in recruiting candidates for the following offices as Active, Limited, or Not Involved."

In 1999, the Democratic Party of Arkansas reported active involvement in recruiting at all levels of government except for local and county offices.

In 2013, the party's survey participant reported limited party involvement in recruiting for Governor, and U.S. Senate and active recruitment efforts for local and county offices. Why the change? It appears the party focused its attention on recruiting for offices highest on the ballot in 1999, but has since shifted the organization's attention more toward recruiting and cultivating political talent at the local level. Term limits—enacted in the state in 1992—began to impact the Arkansas House and Senate in 1998 and 2000 (Kurtz 2013), respectively, and have likely directed more attention to recruiting state legislators over the last fifteen years.

Table 3 Democratic Party of Arkansas Involvement in Candidate Recruitment

	Davis and Kurlowski (2013)	Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999)
Candidate Recruitment		
Governor	Limited	Active
Other State Constitutional Offices	Active	Active
U.S. House	Active	Active
U.S. Senate	Limited	Active
State Legislator	Active	Active
Local and County Offices	Active	Limited

While the survey results from the state Democratic organization suggest a shift in recruiting efforts, the Republican Party of Arkansas, as reported in 2013, claims the same levels of involvement in candidate recruitment reported in the earlier Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) study. As it did before, the Republican Party reports active involvement at the gubernatorial level, other state constitutional offices, as well as all legislative levels, and reports limited involvement at the local and county level.

Table 4 Republican Party of Arkansas Involvement in Candidate Recruitment

	Davis and Kurlowski (2013)	Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999)
Candidate Recruitment		
Governor	Active	Active
Other State Constitutional Offices	Active	Active
U.S. House	Active	Active
U.S. Senate	Active	Active
State Legislator	Active	Active
Local and County Offices	Limited	Limited

Campaign Issue Development

One question asked by Aldrich and his colleagues (1999) was, "During your tenure as state party chair, has the state party organization developed campaign issues or has this normally been left to the candidates?" This

question was asked again by Davis and Kurlowski (2013) without specifically addressing the respective state party organization’s chair. In both surveys, the Democratic Party of Arkansas reported to jointly develop campaigns issues with candidates. The Republican state party organization reportedly left the development of campaign issues to their candidates in in 1999, but reported being jointly involved with the process in 2013.

Candidate Support

In addition to institutional characteristics, previous literature suggests the level of support a party organization provides its candidates is a function of its organizational strength (Dulio and Garrett 2007). Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) asked party chairpersons to report whether or not they performed several electioneering and party building activities with county party organizations. However, Davis and Kurlowski (2013) sought to learn the extent of coordination between the state organization and its candidates. Therefore, the 2013 survey question regarding candidate support read, “Has the state party organization participated in any of the following activities with candidates?” The difference in word usage from “county party organizations” to “candidates” could potentially produce different survey responses.

Table 5 Comparison of Reported Candidate/County Committee Support Activities

	Davis and Kurlowski (2013)		Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999)	
	Democratic Party of AR	Republican Party of AR	Democratic Party of AR	Republican Party of AR
Candidate Support				
Shared Mailing				
Lists	No	Yes	Yes*	Yes*
Joint Fund-Raising	Yes	Yes	No*	No*
Participated in GOTV	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes*
Voter Reg. Drives	Yes	Yes	No*	No*

Note: * indicates Aldrich et al. survey response to question regarding support offered to county committees

The results are presented for comparison in Table 5. Overall, both party organizations indicate providing more candidate support today than they did in 1999. The Democratic Party of Arkansas reported coordinating joint fund-raising, GOTV efforts, and voter registration drives with its

candidates⁷. The Arkansas Republican Party reportedly carries out all four types of candidate support – as indicated in the 2013 survey.

Coordination with National Committee

Cotter and Bibby (1980), Huckshorn et al. (1982), and Jackson and Hitlin (1981) reported increased collaboration between the two national parties and their respective state organizations. Cotter et al. (1984) provided convincing cross-sectional evidence of state-national party integration. However, the topic is complicated by interparty differences between Democratic and Republican committees. Crotty (1978) asserts that – with regard to party rules concerning delegate selection – the Democratic Party reforms in the 1970s empowered the Democratic National Committee while diminishing the autonomy of the party’s state organizations. However, Longley (1980) warns against overstating the party centralization thesis. Citing disputes related to national convention delegate selection, Wekkin (1984, 1985) proposes these changes in the Democratic Party power structure created a “two-way street” (1985, 24) conceptualized within Wright’s (1982) framework of intergovernmental relations. Regarding the Republican Party, Bibby (1979) observes:

Unlike the Democratic National Committee, which has asserted control over the presidential nominating process, the RNC has achieved increased power and an enlarged role in the political system by performing or supplementing the campaign functions previously thought to be the exclusive domain of state party or candidate organizations. (235)

Aldrich and his colleagues (1999) asked the state chairpersons how often they dealt with their respective National Committees on the following issues: federal appointments, speakers, assisting state candidates, fund-raising, national convention activities, and implementing national committee programs. This same question was asked more broadly by Davis and Kurlowski (2013) and Table 6 and Table 7 report these surveys’ results regarding this line of questioning for the Democratic Party of Arkansas and Republican Party of Arkansas, respectively. While both surveys neglect the issue of organizational interactions concerning presidential nominations, specifically, much can be assessed from the data available.

⁷ The Democratic Party of Arkansas provides a ‘Voter File’ for candidates and county committees for a fee.

Table 6 Democratic Party of Arkansas’ Coordination with the National Committee

	Davis and Kurlowski (2013)	Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999)
Coordination with National Committee		
Federal Appointments	Never	Occasionally
Speakers	Regularly	Regularly
Assisting State Candidates	Regularly	Occasionally
Fund-Raising	Regularly	Regularly
National Convention	Regularly	Regularly
Implementing Nat'l Cmte. Programs	Occasionally	Regularly

The Democratic Party of Arkansas – in both surveys – reports regular coordination with the Democratic National Committee (DNC). The results of the 2013 survey suggest the existence of a lasting, integrated partnership between the state party organization and the DNC. With exception to federal appointments and patronage and the implementation of national committee programs, the state party reported to regularly coordinate with the DNC.

The earlier Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) data report the Republican Party of Arkansas never coordinated with the Republican National Committee (RNC) regarding federal appointments. While the party reported to regularly reach out to the RNC to gain assistance for state candidates and general fund-raising, the state party only occasionally worked with the organization to obtain political speakers, assist in the implementation of RNC committee programs, and coordinate national convention activities.

Table 7 Republican Party of Arkansas’ Coordination with the National Committee

	Davis and Kurlowski (2013)	Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999)
Coordination with National Committee		
Federal Appointments	Occasionally	Never
Speakers	Regularly	Occasionally
Assisting State Candidates	Regularly	Regularly
Fund-Raising	Occasionally	Regularly
National Convention	Regularly	Occasionally
Implementing Nat'l Cmte. Programs	Regularly	Occasionally

Overall, the state party’s responses to the same questions posed in 2013 suggests increased levels of coordination. Most recently, the Republican Party of Arkansas reported to occasionally coordinate with the RNC concerning federal appointments and patronage and fund-raising. Additionally, the state organization now reports regularly working with the RNC to obtain speakers (at the time of the interview, the survey respondent volunteered that the state party was hosting Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky),

assist state candidates, implement RNC programs, and participate in national convention activities. In short, a comparison of these two surveys suggests an increased interdependence between the RNC and the state party organization—circumstantial evidence in support of Bibby’s (1979) earlier conclusion.

Party Organization Strength

Existing literature on party organizations assesses strength based largely on the institution’s characteristics and ability to provide resources to their candidates. It is believed that stronger state party organizations possess the institutional capacities to attain their electoral ends. Using the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) survey data, Dulio and Garrett (2007) created an index of state party organizational strength. In their study, responses from what I have categorized as *institutional characteristics*, *candidate recruitment*, and *candidate support* were each given a value of 0 or 1, where the combined minimum score of overall organizational strength was 0 out of 15 and a maximum score was 15 out of 15. Based on the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) survey data, the Democratic Party of Arkansas scored a 9 out of 15 and the Republican Party of Arkansas scored a 10 out of 15 when surveyed in 1999.

Using the 2013 survey data and assessing the two state party organizations on the same criteria as Dulio and Garrett (2007), the Democratic Party of Arkansas scores 13 out of 15 and the Republican Party of Arkansas scores 15 out of 15⁸. A simple quantification, Dulio and Garrett’s (2007) index allows me to compare the organizational strength of these two parties in two points in time. The results provide further evidence that both state parties are stronger organizations today than they were at the close of the 20th century.

Conclusion

Much can be gleaned by comparing the data from these two state party organization surveys. A great deal has changed in Arkansas’ political landscape since the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) study. The Republican Party of Arkansas has enjoyed unprecedented success in the state over the last few elections. As recently as 2008, the party had difficulty

⁸ The 2013 responses under the category of “candidate support” are used in place of the 1999 study’s measures of county support.

convincing viable candidates to challenge incumbent congressional Democrats. As of fall 2014, five of the state's six congressional seats are held by Republicans. Similar success has also been enjoyed at the state legislative level. The goal of this paper has been to address what, if any, changes have occurred to the state's party organizations over this time.

The survey analysis I have presented leads me to conclude that the Democratic Party of Arkansas and Republican Party of Arkansas have each strengthened in terms of staffing, budget size – to varying degrees, and organizational sophistication. The Democratic Party's reported increase in election year budget and overall election year staff is the most noteworthy change between the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) and Davis and Kurlowski (2013) surveys. The increase appears to be explained by the organization's utilization of a coordinated campaign effort whereby candidates collaborate in order to collectively benefit from the resources of the party. I can also report that both parties appear to have increased their means of candidate support. While some may see the Democratic Party of Arkansas' self-reported decrease in candidate recruitment at the gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate levels as evidence of lost influence in the political processes of state politics, I believe it is more likely the case that term limits – which were applied to state legislators in the late 1990s – have prompted more focus on recruitment for these impacted positions. Despite term limits taking effect, the Republican state organization reports being actively involved in all levels of candidate recruitment with the exception of local and county offices. Of course, as previously stated, findings regarding party organization involvement in recruiting need to be presented with caution, as previous studies on candidate recruitment suggest the possibility of response bias.

Can the electoral gains by Republicans, resulting in increased two-party competition, indirectly explain the increased party organizational strength exhibited by both state party organizations? It is easy to assume the Arkansas Republican Party's state organization has gained in its ability to assist its candidates for office over the last fifteen years. It is perhaps more difficult to accept the idea that the Democratic Party of Arkansas has also improved in terms of organizational strength over the same time period, given the same recent political developments in the state. However, Dwaine Marvick (1980) once wrote, "In any electoral democracy, there are reasons why rival party organizations in the same locality will look somewhat alike. There are functional grounds for expecting considerable performance symmetry" (65). Since the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) survey, the

Democratic Party has not only increased its election-year budget, but dramatically retooled its electioneering efforts which have resulted in a significantly larger number of election year staff via the coordinated campaign. This paper provides an additional case in support for previous studies which have reported a positive relationship between state two-party electoral competition and organizational sophistication (Bibby 2002; Morehouse and Jewell 2005).

The Republican Party's recent state-level electoral gains have increased interparty competition in Arkansas. Austin Ranney (1976) wrote that Southern states, such as Arkansas, in the middle 20th century, possessed moderate to weak party systems. This lack of party strength in the region is attributed to the long-term Democratic Party domination in Southern states. Key (1949) writes that the region was almost entirely Democratic and, despite strong interparty factions, Southern states were dominated by Democratic politics. This one-party domination led to unorganized Democratic Party and non-existent Republican Party structures until the 1960s (Aldrich 2000). Over the last three decades, several Southern states have experienced increased two-party competition. Morehouse and Jewell (2005) contend this increase has resulted in more disciplined and capable parties. This paper is not intended as an empirical test of the relationship between organizational strength and intraparty competition. However, the reported changes undergone by Arkansas' Democratic and Republican state party organizations over the last fifteen years provide circumstantial evidence supporting previous studies on this relationship – particularly among other Southern states.

Appendix 1: Survey Codebook

1. State of respondent _____
2. Party of respondent
0=Democratic; 1=Republican
3. Is the job of State Party Chair a full or part time position?
0=Part-time; 1=State party considers job part-time but is actually full-time; 2=Full-time
4. Is the job of State Party Chair a term limited position?
0=No; 1=Yes
5. Is the job of State Party Chair Salaried?
0=No; 1=Yes
6. What is the annual salary?
0=Below \$10,000; 1=\$10,000-\$20,000; 2=\$20,000-\$30,000; 3=\$30,000-\$40,000; 4=\$40,000-\$50,000;
5=\$50,000-\$75,000; 6=\$75,000-\$100,000; 7=Above \$100,000
7. Does the State Party currently make contributions to the campaigns of any of the following candidates:
 - a. Governor--0=No; 1=Yes
 - b. State Constitutional Offices--0=No; 1=Yes
 - c. U.S. House--0=No; 1=Yes
 - d. U.S. Senate--0=No; 1=Yes
 - e. State Legislature--0=No; 1=Yes
 - f. County or Local Offices--0=No; 1=Yes
8. What percent of the campaign budget of these offices comes from party funds in the typical election?
 - a. Governor: _____
 - b. State Constitutional Offices: _____
 - c. U.S. House: _____
 - d. U.S. Senate: _____
 - e. State Legislature: _____
 - f. County or Local Offices: _____
9. Which of the following items describe the State Party organization during recent years?
 - a. Held at least one major fundraising event per year--0=No; 1=Yes
 - b. Operated a direct mail fundraising program--0=No; 1=Yes
 - c. Employed research staff at headquarters--0=No; 1=Yes
 - d. Employed a PR director--0=No; 1=Yes
 - e. Employed Executive Director--0=No; 1=Yes
 - f. Is the job of Executive Director full-time or part-time?--0=Part-time; 1=Full-time
 - g. Employed a field staff--0=No; 1=Yes
 - h. Employed a Comptroller or Bookkeeper--0=No; 1=Yes
 - i. Conducted campaign seminars for candidates and managers--0=No; 1=Yes
 - j. Sought to recruit a full slate of candidates at the State, Congressional, and Courthouse Levels--0=No; 1=Yes
 - k. Published a Party newsletter or magazine-- 0=No; 1=Yes

Appendix 1 continued: Survey Codebook

9.(continued) Which of the following items describe the State Party organization during recent years?

- l. Operated Voter ID programs--0=No; 1=Yes
- m. Conducted or Commissioned public opinion surveys--0=No; 1=Yes

10. During a typical election year and non-election year, please estimate the size (number of individuals) of the state party headquarters and the typical state party budget (in dollars).

- a. Election year full-time staff: _____
- b. Election year part-time staff: _____
- c. Election year budget: _____
- d. Non-election year full-time staff: _____
- e. Non-election year part-time staff: _____
- f. Non-election year part-time budget: _____

11. Which of the following best describes the party rule or practice of pre-primary endorsements currently?

1=Pre-primary endorsements required by law; 2=Pre-primary endorsements required by party rules; 3=Pre-primary endorsements allowed by law; 4=Pre-primary endorsements allowed by party rules; 5=We do not make pre-primary endorsements but they are allowed by rule or law; 6=Pre-primary endorsements are not allowed by party rule; 7=Pre-primary endorsements are not allowed by law

12. In an average election year, in how many races does the party usually endorse a candidate? 1=0-25%; 2=25-50%; 3=50-75%; 4=75-100%

13. Could you please elaborate more on why the party does not make pre-primary endorsements? _____

14. Have there been discussions within the party regarding changing party rules or attempting to change state law regarding pre-primary endorsement rules? _____

15. Does the state regularly, occasionally, or never collaborate with the National Committee on the following types of State Party matters?

- a. Federal Appointments and Patronage--0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Regularly
- b. Speakers--0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Regularly
- c. Gaining Assistance for State Candidates--0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Regularly
- d. Fund-Raising--0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Regularly
- e. National Convention Activities--0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Regularly
- f. Implementing National Committee Programs--0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Regularly

16. Has the State Party Organization developed campaign issues or has this normally been left to the candidates?

0=Party develops issues; 1=Left to candidates; 2=Joint party-candidate activity; 3=Party and candidates operate separately

Appendix 1 continued: Survey Codebook

17. I will now read a list of offices. Please describe the level of involvement of the state party in recruiting candidates for the following offices as Active, Limited, or Not Involved.

- a. Governor—0=Not involved; 1=Limited; 2=Active
- b. Other State Constitutional Offices—0=Not involved; 1=Limited; 2=Active
- c. U.S. House—0=Not involved; 1=Limited; 2=Active
- d. U.S. Senate—0=Not involved; 1=Limited; 2=Active
- e. State Legislature—0=Not involved; 1=Limited; 2=Active
- f. County and Local Offices—0=Not involved; 1=Limited; 2=Active

18. Has the State Party Organization participated in any of the following activities with candidate?

- a. Shared mailing lists of contributors or party members--0=No; 1=Yes
- b. Conducted joint fundraising--0=No; 1=Yes
- c. Participated in get out the vote drives--0=No; 1=Yes
- d. Participated in registration drives--0=No; 1=Yes
- e. Other joint activities:_____

19. Do you have any other insights into the operation of your state party that you would like to share with us at this time? Also, if you would like to elaborate on any of your previous answers, feel free to leave those comments below.

References

- Aldrich, John H. 2000. "Southern Parties in State and Nation." *Journal of Politics* 62:643-70.
- Aldrich, John H., Brad Gomez, and John Griffin. 1999. "State Party Organizations Study, 1999; State Party Chair Questionnaire." Duke University.
- Bibby, John F. 1979. "Political Parties and Federalism: The Republican National Committee," *Publius*: 229-36.
- Bibby, John F. 2002. "State Party Organizations: Strengthened and Adapting to Candidate-Centered Politics and Nationalization." In Sandy L. Maisel ed., *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns*.
- Cotter, Cornelius, John F. Bibby. 1980. "Institutional Development of Parties and the Thesis of Party Decline." *Political Science Quarterly*. 1-27.
- Cotter, Cornelius, James L. Gibson, John F. Bibby, and Robert J. Huckshorn. 1984. *Party Organizations in American Politics*. New York: Praeger.
- Crotty, William. 1978. *Decision for the Democrats*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Davis, John C., and Drew Kurlowski. 2013. "State Party Organization Survey." University of Missouri.
- Davis, John C., and Drew Kurlowski. 2014. "Campaign Inc.: Data From a Field Survey of State Party Organizations" University of Missouri. Typescript.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Dulio, David A., and R. Sam Garrett. 2007. "Organizational Strength and Campaign Professionalism in State Parties." In *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, eds. John C. Green and Daniel J. Coffey. 5th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 199-216.
- Ehrenhalt, Alan. 1991. *The United States of Ambition: Politicians, Power, and the Pursuit of Office*. New York: Times Books.
- Fowler, Linda L., and Robert D. McClure. 1990. *Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run for Congress*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Gibson, James L., Cornelius P. Cotter, John F. Bibby, and Robert J. Huckshorn. 1983. "Assessing Party Organizational Strength." *American Journal of Political Science* 27:193-222.
- Herrnson, Paul S., and Robert M. Tennant. 1994. "Running for Congress Under the Shadow of the Capitol Dome: The Race for Virginia's 8th District." In *Who Runs for Congress? Ambition, Context, and Candidate Emergence*, ed. Thomas A. Kazee. Washington: CQ Press, 67-81.
- Huckshorn, Robert J. 1976. *Party Leadership in the States*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Huckshorn, Robert J., Cornelius P. Cotter, John F. Bibby, and James L. Gibson. 1982. *The Social Background and Career Patterns of State Party Leaders*. Unpublished Manuscript.
- Jackson, John S. III., and Robert A. Hitlin. 1981. "The Nationalization of the Democratic Party." *Western Political Quarterly*, 270-86.
- Kayden, Xandra, and Eddie Mahe Jr. 1985. *The Party Goes On: The Persistence of the Two-Party System in the United States*. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- Kazee, Thomas A. 1994. *Who Runs for Congress? Ambition, Context, and Candidate Emergence*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Kazee, Thomas A., and Mary C. Thornberry. 1990. "Where's the Party? Congressional Candidate Recruitment and American Party Organizations." *Western Political Quarterly*, 43:61-80.
- Kazee, Thomas A., and Susan L. Roberts. 1994. "Challenging a "Safe" Incumbent: Latent Competition in North Carolina's 9th District." In *Who Runs for Congress? Ambition Context, and Candidate Emergence*, ed. Thomas A. Kazee. Washington: CQ Press, 101- 118.
- Key, V.O Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics*. New York: Random House.
- Kurtz, Karl. 2013. "The Term-Limited States." February 11. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/chart-of-term-limits-states.aspx> (August 25, 2014).
- Longley, Charles. 1980. "Party Reform and Party Nationalization: The Case of the Democrats." In *The Party Symbol: Readings on Political Parties*, ed. William Crotty. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company.

- Marvick, Dwaine. 1980. "Party Organizational Personnel and Electoral Democracy in Los Angeles, 1963-1972." In *The Party Symbol: Readings on Political Parties*, ed. William Crotty. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Moncrief, Gary F., Peverill Squire and Malcolm E. Jewell. 2001. *Who Runs for the Legislature?* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Morehouse, Sarah M., and Malcolm E. Jewell. 2005. "The Future of Political Parties in the States." <http://www.csg.org/knowledgecenter/docs/BOS2005-PoliticalParties.pdf> March 10, 2014.
- Nie, Norman H., Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik. 1979. *The Changing American Voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ranney, Austin. 1976. "Parties in State Politics." In *Politics in the American States*, 3rd. eds. Herbert Jacob and Kenneth N. Vines. Boston: Little Brown.
- Sanbonmatsu, Kira. 2006. "The Legislative Party and Candidate Recruitment in the American States." *Party Politics*, 12:233-56.
- Wekkin, Gary D. 1984. "National-State Relations: The Democrats' New Federal Structure." *Political Science Quarterly* 99:45-72.
- Wekkin, Gary D. 1985. "Political Parties and Intergovernmental Relations in 1984: The Consequences of Party Renewal for Territorial Constituencies." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 15:19-37.
- Wilson, James Q. 1973. *Political Organizations*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wright, Deil S. 1982. *Understanding Intergovernmental Relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

