

Party Network Research, Factions, and the Next Agenda

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Factional competition and factional relationships are vital phenomena to understand if we want to fully explain political parties. Yet factions are understudied, and undertheorized, in the study of American parties. In this essay, I turn to the question of factions, and suggest that a relatively new perspective on American parties – the party network literature – contains considerable promise on this question. I include a critical survey of the work of party network scholars, and conclude by suggesting ways in which this research could help understand factionalism and speculating on the relationship between parties and their factions.

1.

Consider the battle for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976 – a close, hard-fought contest between the incumbent president, Gerald Ford, and the insurgent campaign of former California governor Ronald Reagan. Political observers generally could characterize Ford and his supporters as mainstream Republicans, while Reagan was the leader of a group that called themselves “conservatives,” and who after losing narrowly in that campaign subsequently became the dominant group within the party. Or, consider the three-way struggle for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984, which pitted (traditional liberal) former vice-president Walter Mondale against (Rainbow Coalition leader) Jesse Jackson and (new democrat) senator Gary Hart). Struggles such as those two examples are instantly recognizable to practitioners and political scientists alike as factional contests. Indeed, factional strife is a recurring theme – perhaps even a central fact of life – for political parties. Serious empirical studies have to grapple with the sources and consequences of such conflict (see for example Ware 2005; Polsby 2005). Yet very little work has been done to understand the nature of such intraparty conflict, or its broader implications. As Casey B.K. Dominguez put it recently, “We

do not know how to conceptualize and identify factions, or how to look for their effects on party structure, strength, and behavior (2005b, 178).

If factional conflict is central to political parties, then political scientists will need to develop a sophisticated framework for understanding it if they hope to develop a clear picture of parties. For example: the Reagan/Ford contest referred to above is generally thought of as one of a series of contests between ideologically defined wings of the Republican party, a battle with remarkable continuity in public policy issues, rhetoric, and personnel from the 1940s through 1976, and only ending with Reagan's triumph in 1980. On the other hand, the Democratic example above, the Mondale/Hart/Jackson nomination campaign in 1984, is a bit less clear. Mondale might be identified as the heir to postwar liberals such as Vice President Hubert Humphrey; Hart with the "New Democrats" of the Democratic Leadership Council who championed Bill Clinton in the 1990s; and Jackson with various minority groups within the party. But is that correct? Hart's "new ideas" doesn't exactly match up with Clinton's "third way." Does it? How would we go about thinking about that? Do common issue positions matter? Overlapping voting constituencies? Alliances with interest groups, such as Mondale's friendship with organized labor?

Or, on the other hand, was there something very specific to Gary Hart in that candidate's campaign? If America does have (at least to some extent) candidate-centered campaigns, then it seems likely that some factions will be highly personal. That does not make them any less "factional." Surely, though, we want to be able to differentiate, both empirically and theoretically, between long-term, interest-based factions and shorter-term, personality-based factions. Of course, some personal-based factions may last quite a bit longer than Hart's career as a presidential candidate; there is at least some evidence that George W. Bush's nomination in 2000 was supported by something like a Bush family faction (Bernstein and Dominguez 2003). And it is possible that interest-based factions might be short-lived, if the public policy questions sparking them fade quickly.

The literature on factions is brief indeed. That is, the literature on party factions. There

is, of course, a long literature on cleavages within the electorate. While these divisions among voters are related to party factions, they do not constitute party factions as such.¹ Another literature seeks to do the same thing for elected officials by examining voting behavior within legislatures. While that kind of finding is closely related to factions – and may be an indication of factional behavior – it is not quite the same thing as studying factions per se. That is, it is perfectly possible to imagine, for example, a legislative body in which members are torn between their constituents' median preferences and their party's position, but without any organized cooperation at the sub-party level.

Of course, the expectation of organized cooperation implies a definition of factionalism, which leads to theoretical studies of the issue. The classical rational choice treatments of parties tend to define the problem away. In Downs's famous definition (a party is "a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office...") we are told explicitly that "by team" Downs posits a group "whose members agree on all their goals" (1957: 25). Which follows from two assertions: that politicians are indifferent to public policy outcomes except to the extent that those outcomes affect their careers, and that politicians are the core of the party. John Aldrich's rational choice theory relaxes the first of those assertions, but not, eventually, the conclusion; Aldrich recognizes that party politicians and their constituencies may have strong policy preferences, but does not consider the case of multiple differing goals among party politicians. More recently, in the rational choice line of argument, Miller and Schofield (2003) see party politicians as monolithically election-oriented, while activists are exclusively motivated by policy; activists, in this formulation, are both constraints on politicians (because politicians depend on their party's activists) and opportunities for politicians (because "flanking moves" can attract new activists). None of these approaches really leaves any room for intraparty factionalism, because ultimately these are theories of politicians, not parties. That is, what these

¹Here I would agree with the rational choice view that excludes voters (as voters) from the party; see Downs (1957) and Schlesinger (1991).

theorists really try to explain are the actions of ambitious politicians, and they become interested in parties as by-products of the actions of politicians. If, instead, we approach parties first (and politicians are thought of as only one of the many components of and influences on the parties they join), then there is no particular reason to suppose that parties exist only to win office or that politicians are the critical actors – and thus no reason to ignore the possibility of either short or long-term intraparty factional dispute.

V.O. Key defined faction as “any combination, clique or grouping of voters and political leaders who unite at a particular time in support of a candidate.” (1949, 16). However, while his study is empirically rich, its theoretical application outside of the one party south is limited for two reasons. First, as Key makes clear, his south is not really about party politics; it is about politics in the absence of parties. And, second, despite its centrality to his analysis, factionalism is not really developed theoretically very far beyond the definition (which, tellingly, is stranded in a footnote). Perhaps the most sustained theoretical treatment is Nelson Polsby’s discussion of factional and coalitional candidates in Consequences of Party Reform (1983). Polsby defines a faction as “a group acting through a political party in pursuit of a common interest” (65). Unlike Key in his definition, Polsby does not limit factions to candidates and elections. Polsby’s “group” is probably equivalent to Key’s “combination, clique, or grouping,” but crucially Polsby is interested in party factions, not just any group that supports a candidate (a distinction irrelevant, probably, in the one-party south but important in a functioning multiparty environment). Traditional American parties are “coalition[s] of interests and groups bound together by many sorts of ties, including the hope of electing a President” (132) which act by “mobilizing...well-heeled backers and...seeking...alliances with territorially identifiable interest groups and state party organizations” (133). Polsby follows Madison’s general discussion of the mixed blessing of faction within the polity; Polsby agrees that interest groups are “fundamental entities in any complex political system” (65) while also quoting Madison on the importance of controlling the “mischief of faction” (66). For Polsby, constitutional majoritarian (and

supermajoritarian) devices push American interest groups into political parties, thereby placing the burden on parties to provide incentives for these groups to enter into coalitions, which are “alliances among groups organized for the purpose of achieving goals common to their constituent parts” (65). Parties can do that in two ways. First, they provide stable rules that prevent factions from achieving their goals without cooperation, and, second, they build strong organizations (65-66). The first of these conditions makes sense, and in some ways the history of presidential nomination politics after 1968 is a demonstration of its importance (see e.g. Cohen et al. 2001; Bimes and Dominguez 2003; Bernstein 2004). But it is the second condition, strong party organizations, that is interesting here. If “where party organizations are strong, coalition-building flourishes” while “where they are weak, the politics of factional rivalry prevails” (66) then party organization is, in a sense, a bulwark against factionalism. Yet since factions are not, by Polsby’s definition, something external to party – factions again are groups “acting through a political party in pursuit of a common interest” – individuals within parties may have something of a dual nature. That is, they may be loyal to their party while also advocating for factional interest. Or perhaps interests; nothing within the definition precludes multiple affiliations.

This is a useful starting point, but it is only a starting point. Several questions remain. Are parties best seen as collections of interests – in which party members mainly think of themselves as motivated by factional concerns, and form coalitions if and only if it advances factional interest? Or do some parties – perhaps those with sufficiently strong organizations – achieve some sort of organizational ballast in which party members begin to identify themselves primarily as party, and not factional, advocates? What of the factions themselves? Are some – regional, economic, personal, or some other classification – more important than others? Does it matter how party factions are organized? Consider the cases of moderate Democrats, who have built an institutional home in the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), compared to the religious right and environmentalists, both of which have several (competing? cooperating?) organized groups, none of which are explicitly within-party organizations, as the DLC is.

I'll return to some of these questions at the end of this essay. For now, I will just note that these and others are both empirical and theoretical questions that are largely unanswered by students of American parties. However, the emerging literature on party networks, which to this point has only made passing reference to the question of factionalism, is in fact an excellent platform from which to launch empirical studies of factions and parties. In the next section, I take a look at the strengths and weaknesses of party network research.

2.

The fundamental insight of the party network literature is that political parties – and especially American parties – are not confined to formal party organizations. Instead, groups of activists, campaign professionals, and others have emerged who may at times be affiliated with formal party organizations, but at other times will be associated only with specific candidate campaigns, legislative or executive branches of government, party-connected interest groups, or otherwise lacking a formal attachment to their party. And these actors are in many cases just as essential to their party as those who report to work in buildings with the words “Democrat” or “Republican” on the walls.

Working from that starting point, a growing group of researchers have begun to describe this party network, including its ties to traditionally recognized formal party organizations.² Party networks thrive, this research has discovered, in a number of critical places within the political system, everywhere from Congressional staff to candidate campaign organizations to

²The terminology is a bit tricky here. The portion of the party studied by scholars in this area has generally been referred to as “networks,” but scholars have used terms such as “party network” (Schwartz 1990), “party matrix” (Monroe 2001), and “expanded party” (Bernstein 1999) to refer to the “whole” party – that is, both formal party organizations and the “networks” beyond those organizations. In this essay, I will use “party network” to refer to the latter – the “non-party parties” that exist outside of formal party organizations, while using “expanded party” for the combination of party networks and formal party organizations, despite Masket’s admonition that network is best reserved for proper networking studies (2004, 27).

campaign donors, and even into party-connected interest groups. Other than their common investigation of parties beyond formal party organizations, these researchers have little in common. Some are responsible party followers of E.E. Schattschneider; others align themselves with his opponents. They deploy a variety of quantitative, qualitative, and formal modeling methods, and study local, state, and national politics. They are increasingly aware of each other's work; however, so far no single piece has tied together their discrete empirical findings into an overall portrait of contemporary party networks and their place in the larger expanded parties. In this section, I will review the party networks literature.

Party networks work arose from the party strength argument, which dominated academic party studies and commentary within the larger political culture in the 1970s and 1980s.³ To oversimplify, pessimists (so considered since most political scientists remain in favor of healthy parties; see Epstein 1989) identified a number of areas in which, as they saw it, parties had been displaced by new forms of organization. In Congress, especially in the House of Representatives, the subcommittee revolution and the growth of personal staff were therefore interpreted as moving from party government to individualism, usually with anecdotes about how Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson could do whatever they wanted in the 1950s (the stereotypical first citation is Broder 1972). In the classic studies from this period, Members of Congress were autonomous re-election and policy-making agents, for whom party was at most a background, mild, constraint (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1978). In elections, the key concept was candidate centered campaigns. According to this view, candidates organized their own campaigns to contest first for nominations and then for general elections (see textbook treatments such as Jacobson 1992). Technical help – polling, advertising, and other specialties – was purchased from consultants who were seen mainly as mercenaries (Sabato 1981). Financing was provided from Political Action Committees, seen as a PAC movement that represented the threat

³J.P. Monroe begins the preface to his book by saying that “this book began out of a sense of frustration with the debate over the health of American political parties” ((2001, ix) and others within the field (myself included) have expressed similar sentiments.

of government by uncontrolled, unorganized, severely fragmented interest groups.

Optimists about party prospects emphasized different developments. For them, the importance of reform in the House was not subcommittees and fragmentation; it was strengthening of the majority leadership, in ways that Rayburn would not have recognized (Rhode 1991; Polsby 2005; Sinclair 1990). Party voting in Congress revived from earlier lows. And people who looked specifically at formal party organizations often found what they considered to be evidence of considerable strength (Cotter, et al. 1984). However, despite impressive empirical findings, the party resurgence scholars were vulnerable to a So What? argument. John Coleman (1994) paints a picture of a “truncated” party in which formal party organizations maintain a steady, even an increasing, level of activity that has little to do with either voters or elected officials. John Aldrich (1995) conceptualizes this as “parties in service” to their candidates.

For many political scientists familiar with practical politics, however, the parties in service model of autonomous politicians who only make use of party assistance from self-interest, while it may have captured the role of formal party organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, missed the larger point. What some political scientists began to notice in the 1980s and 1990s, and what many observers started to discuss by the time of the Clinton impeachment, the contested 2000 election, and the other events of the Clinton and George W. Bush presidencies, was that party had become far more central to the ways that Americans organized their collective lives than the “in service” model could begin to explain. How could it be, they wondered, that party seemed all-pervasive in American politics while scholars were unable to find enough evidence of party strength to dislodge the paradigm of candidate-centered politics (a good example is Masket 2004, 1-2)? The answer wasn't that the critique of the studies of formal party organizations was wrong; instead, what was missing from the entire discussion was the role of informal party organization: the party networks.

The first, and most cited, work is Mildred A. Schwartz's 1990 study of the Illinois

Republican party, The Party Network, a work based on extensive interviews and observation of party actors in that state. Schwartz begins with an assertion that probably unites all those working in this tradition: that “a political party is an organization” (3). Given that definition, it follows for her that the tools needed to study parties are the tools used to study other organizations, from department stores to government agencies. The consequences for her analysis are twofold. First, she joins rational choice theorists and others in treating the “party in the electorate” as the party’s environment; it may impose constraints or incentives to the party, but it is not itself part of the organization (4-7; 42-43; 86-119). Second, using social network analysis methodologies, she finds that not all portions of the formal party structure are central to the Illinois GOP, but that other, informal portions of the party were quite important. Schwartz reports that the core of the party is made up of “seven actors: state senator, state representative, senator, governor, advisor, interest group, and financial contributor” (75), where each of those actors includes those in that position (i.e. state senators as a group, even if not every state senator is central to the party). Overall, she finds a total of twenty-three actors within the party network, including nine categories of elected officials; the state House and Senate leadership; local, state and national committeemen and county chairs; the state and national committees and both sets of legislative campaign committees; a funding group called the United Republican Fund; and advisors, financial contributors, and interest groups. Her data allow her to produce a complex description of the Illinois Republican network, as well as to test a variety of hypotheses about its functions and practices. For example, just as the official party structure is not necessarily central to the party network, neither is it especially powerful within that network (120-132), and while money tends to be used to connect portions of the network, ideology tends to separate the network.

As the first finding in this field, Schwartz’s study is clearly a breakthrough. The critical ideas and findings that will guide subsequent research are here: parties are best thought of as organizations; they have formal and informal components; the formal components are not necessarily the most important elements; links between party actors (in both formal and informal

components) are well worth studying; American parties are robust and “adaptive” (277-284) rather than static, so that “it would be a mistake to confuse loose coupling [of party components] with party decline” (280). Of course, it was limited by the scope of the project – yes, the Illinois Republicans were a network, but what of the other ninety-nine state parties, local parties, and national parties?

A more specific weakness of Schwartz’s study is she provides a sociological, rather than a political, understanding for the boundaries of the party network. Without such an understanding, she does not have the means to make distinctions necessary to differentiate party politics from the surrounding political environment. Thus while she correctly (in my view) includes “advisers” and financial contributors within the party, she has no basis for including them without also making the claim that a host of interest groups have an equivalent in-party status, to the point that those labor unions who made occasional contributions to the Illinois GOP find themselves within the Republican network – regardless of whether those unions are generally more supportive of Democrats. It is difficult to imagine a useful understanding of political parties that would include multiple interest groups within both major parties.⁴

Schwartz’s study, then, left students of parties with a new agenda. Party networks were clearly important, but were not yet fully described. Party scholars needed to explain exactly why party networks were important, how they worked, and what important consequences resulted from their presence.

Schwartz found that various people within the party network talked to each other and worked together. Subsequent research began to sort the party network into several categories, with authors generally specializing in one or more groups of actors within the network: campaign professionals, including consultants and campaign staff; party activists, many of whom volunteer

⁴It is easy to imagine interest groups that support both parties. But party support is not the same thing as party membership, and Schwartz provides no basis for distinguishing between those conditions. It is also possible that an interest group might divide into factions, with each faction joining a different party, but Schwartz does not report that this is the case in Illinois.

for candidate campaign organizations, formal party organizations; the paid staffs of public officials; and donors to parties, their candidates, and party-linked groups. Of course, one of the main points of the “network” idea is that there is considerable interaction and overlap among these groups (and between them and formal party organizations), but nevertheless it proved profitable to study parts of the network separately, with several researchers then generalizing to the overall expanded party.

Three studies have looked at local parties in California. J.P. Monroe’s book, The Party Matrix (2001) is the most limited geographically, using evidence from Los Angeles county. Monroe’s focus is on the staff of elected officials; he identifies about ninety Los Angeles elected officials who employ over fifteen hundred personal staff on the public payroll, and he discovers that these people perform party-like tasks such as recruiting candidates and mobilizing the electorate. This is a marked contrast with previous studies of Congressional staff, which generally look at increased staff capacity, especially district presence, as a means for elected officials to secure their (personal) reelection and therefore as a contribution to candidate-centered politics.

Monroe, who draws on a series of interviews with chiefs of staff, campaign consultants, and formal party officials, details the central political role staffers play in reelection campaigns for their bosses or as future candidates themselves. Moreover, contrary to the candidate-centered model, Monroe finds a pattern of complex and flexible sharing of staff between same-party candidates at all levels of Los Angeles county politics. And he describes a central role for the party caucuses in the California legislature in coordinating those activities.⁵ Monroe, who joins other party network scholars (and many other party scholars) in emphasizing the long-term effects of progressive-era reforms, emphasizes the extent to which formal party organizations are primarily artifacts of those reforms and posits that networks like those he studies, and not formal

⁵Some of the specifics of Monroe’s study may be dated; his data are from 1992, and precede the effects of term limits and other concurrent reforms that severely limited the capacity of the California legislature (Kousser 2005).

organizations, are the norm for American politics (117-119). For Monroe, the shift from formal organizations to informal networks of staffers and campaign professionals is the “reprofessionalization of party politics” (117), and his picture of formal party officials is one of irrelevant amateurs displaced by the people who can actually go out and win elections.

Like Schwartz, Monroe shows that one of the strengths of party network research is that it is able to reveal the way that parties link different offices and different levels of government. Monroe’s group of Los Angeles officeholders includes members of the U.S. House and Senate, the California Assembly and Senate, and the Los Angeles City Council, as well as L.A.’s Mayor and five County Supervisors, and for him interactions between their offices – whether for casework, electioneering, or other tasks – are in important ways party interactions. One potential weakness of Monroe’s study, however, is that he does not provide any test to distinguish actions on behalf of a particular politician from those on behalf of the party, or indeed to discuss how one could go about classifying such actions. That is, unless we are to consider any activity on behalf of a candidate who uses the party label to be “party” activities, then we need to figure out which activities are candidate-centered and which are party. Party network scholars, including Monroe, argue strongly that it is a mistake to set the boundary of party at the line where formal party organization ends. But this only opens up the question of where the boundary is actually found, a question that is far more difficult to solve empirically for party network scholars than for those who only need look for the fingerprints of the formal party organization.

Seth Masket (2002, 2004) has also collected and used evidence from California’s party networks. Masket asserts (page) that informal party organizations are local, not national, entities, and finds strong evidence that these organizations exist and matter in nominations, as well as considerable variation in different locations within California. Masket frames his study as an explicit test of party against candidate-centered politics: “When [Traditional Party Organizations] or [Informal Party Organizations] are strong, the candidate-centered model has little relevance...because...parties interpose themselves between officeholders and voters and often thoroughly dominate the relationship” (2004, 23). Following Schattschneider, he sees

nominations as the key to parties; nominations are the location of the fight for control of a party. Elections are types of “market situations” (56) and the context of the “market” determine who will hold power in the party. The players in that fight fall into familiar rational choice categories including benefit seekers, who seek material gain from public policy; activists, who are ideologically motivated to elect those who share their policy preferences; and brokers, who are “seasoned political players, usually experienced officeholders, lobbyists, or campaign consultants, who help maintain the organization’s connections” (68). Brokers are “motivated by a combination of ideological and material goals” who have the key role of “centralizing money and other resources” (69). Masket’s central story is one that builds on the older arguments of Wilson (1962) and Wildavsky (1965) about ideological activists. Because under current demographic conditions and districting rules most general elections are not competitive, Masket concludes that normal constraints pushing parties to a Downsian center are lifted and purists, usually working through informal rather than formal party organizations, have pushed politics to extremes.

Masket relies on extensive interviews and reviews of press coverage of a set of fascinating cases, all set in the Golden State – Republicans in Orange County, Democrats in two areas of Los Angeles, and both parties in the Fresno area.⁶ He finds a variety of forms, all of which he considers types of informal party organization. Some, such as the late Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley’s group in Los Angeles (now associated with U.S. House Member Maxine Waters) grew out of individual candidate campaign organizations, eventually becoming the critical force behind all nominations in their geographical area. Others, such as the Orange County Republicans “Lincoln Club,” were organized outside of candidate campaign organization politics; the Lincoln Club was a deliberate (and successful) attempt by Orange County business leaders, beginning in the 1960s, to create a conservative Republican party by using campaign

⁶A separate part of Masket’s (2004) project, which is less relevant here but deserves to be mentioned, is an impressive study of party history in California politics, based on a massive data set he created of votes within the state legislature.

funds to determine nominations. Still others are alliances between elected officials and one or more interest group, including Fresno Democrats (for details, see especially 201-258). While their composition and origins are varied, Masket finds them all to be generally hierarchical; there is ultimately one person or one central committee, even if it is not formally organized as a committee, that makes endorsement decisions, and the rest of the group follows (199).

In addition to a nice portrayal of the diversity of informal party organizations, Masket adds an insistence on the political importance of these organizations – that is, their control over nominations and influence on the voting behavior of elected legislators. Another contribution is his efforts to show how parties connect different levels of government (the state legislature, Congress, and others). Beyond the obvious and necessary limitations that comes with case studies, the most striking omission in Masket’s work is the national party network. For Masket, party networks are almost by assumption local entities. Yet several of the other studies discussed here examine national parties and their associated party networks. What is not clear is whether Masket misses the presence and influence of national parties because he is not looking for it; because national party networks are less involved in nominations than other (and still important) aspects of California politics; or because national parties really are uninvolved in California politics.⁷

Joseph Doherty (2003, 2004, 2005) has joined Monroe and Masket in studying party networks in California. His research, which is still developing, uses social network analysis to examine campaign consultants and candidates in California state legislative campaigns during one point in time, the 2000 election cycle. Doherty is explicitly trying to operationalize Joseph Schlesinger’s idea that the basic unit of a political party, or party “nucleus,” is a single effort to win a single office, and that under certain conditions rational candidates cooperate with others to form strong “multinuclear” parties (2003, 4-5). For that project, social network analysis – which

⁷Note that Masket is a coauthor of a study (discussed below) that is primarily about national, not local, party networks.

uses the links between two actors as the dependent variable – is a sensible strategy, and similar to Schwartz’s approach to the Illinois Republicans. The most important difference is that while Schwartz looked at the links between different types of actors, Doherty is examining connections between individual actors.⁸ Therefore he is able, at least within the (relatively narrow) group of candidates and consultants, to both provide a rich description of the party network – defined as “the linkage structure among all candidates in specified time and place” (2005, 17) and to test hypotheses derived from Schlesinger’s theory about conditions that will strengthen parties. In particular, the methodology allows him to identify denseness and clustering with party networks, the distance between campaigns, and the centrality of some campaigns within the network (2004, 18-22), and then explore reasons for variation in the network location of particular campaigns. In the case of California parties, consultant sharing appears to divide each party into about four groups, with the Republican network more densely populated than the Democratic side. However, these groups do not seem to be determined by ideology, or by geographical distance within California.⁹

Doherty’s work provides perhaps a particularly cogent statement of the basic idea of party networks. Not only does he contrast expanded parties (as I am using it here – the combination of formal and informal party organizations) with candidate-centered conceptions that mistakenly assume that all activity outside of formal party organizations must be, by default, signs of a candidate-centered system, but he also separates the idea of expanded parties from research which conceives of consultants and others outside formal party organizations as allies of the parties. Instead, Doherty insists that networks of consultants (or other actors) are just as

⁸That is, individual candidacies and consulting firms, which are considered within the analysis here to be “individuals,” although Doherty is aware (2004) that candidacies contain staff who themselves may be links to other party actors.

⁹Within party networks, the key explanatory variable affecting any two candidates’ connection is whether their elections were competitive. This appears to be an artifact of the research design; candidates without competitive races are less likely to hire any consultants, and therefore will appear peripheral to networks defined by shared consultants.

much “party” as anything happening within the formal organizations, even to the extent that we should reserve judgement on whether formal organizations themselves are necessarily “party” organizations (2003, 2-7). In addition, his use (along with that of Casey B.K. Dominguez, discussed below) of social network analysis promises both analytic rigor and an increased capacity for larger n work than that found in the many case study articles within this field.

On the other hand, Doherty’s work to date employs very limited data, restricted not only to a single election but also to only candidates and consultants, and to candidates at just one level of government. Of course, a wide variety of other links between candidates probably exist, such as shared (directly employed) staff, shared sources of campaign resources, and shared contacts with formal party organizations. And changes over time, not available in this study, are complex to interpret; a candidate peripheral to the network in 2000 because he or she had little competition may have been better connected in 1998 or 2002 when faced with a stiff challenge. Of course, each analysis has to start somewhere, and both the data and the methodology are quite promising.

More problematic in my view is the adoption of Schlesinger’s definition of “multinuclear” parties. As discussed above, I argue that ultimately his conception is a theory of politicians, not parties (see also Bernstein 1999). Because Schlesinger considers any effort by a single politician a party nucleus it is difficult to make the distinction between candidate and party centered politics that many observers find useful; instead, the question becomes whether the multinuclear party is weak or strong – a useful question, but one which I would argue captures only one slice of the party question.

From research focusing on state or local networks, I now turn to studies of national parties and their informal party organizations. My own work has looked at the existence of national party networks, their relationship with formal party organizations, and especially the dividing line between party and candidate centered activity in House, Senate, and presidential campaigns (Bernstein 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004; Bernstein and Dominguez 2003). While I have joined Monroe in looking at staff of elected officials, and Doherty and others in looking at

consultants, my specialty has been candidate campaign organizations, including their staff, volunteers, formal organization, and kitchen cabinets. Within these organizations, I have traced career paths of activists and campaign professionals, showing that a minority remain loyal to just one politician over time, but most move freely from one candidate to another, or between candidates and formal party organizations, or to and from consulting shops. To the extent that party-loyal activists and campaign professionals dominate campaigns, I argue that those campaigns are themselves connected to party networks. I have, then, stressed the difference between candidates – politicians who may be sympathetic to the party but are also self-interested – and candidacies, which are made up of many people, and may be more or less part of a political party's informal organization. I have shown in U.S. House elections that candidates in competitive races, those who are quality challengers, and those in areas with stronger traditional parties are all more likely to belong to party networks, and that those who are involved in informal party organizations are more likely to attract resources from formal party organizations (Bernstein 1999; Bernstein and La Raja 1999). And I have demonstrated that even those who are normally classified as the most obvious evidence of candidate-centered elections, friends and family members of candidates, are often (and particularly in competitive races) well-connected to their party, rather than simply supporters of someone close who happened to run for office. In presidential elections, I have argued that candidates tend to recruit heavily from a national party network, and that parties influence nominations in the postreform era in part by choosing to support candidates by joining their candidacies, as opposed to acting through formal party organizations, as they did before 1972.

Beyond the specifics of these cases, I have argued more broadly that the combination of revived formal organizations and the formation of robust party networks have yielded an era in which parties are central to American politics – a result impossible to see when looking at only formal party organizations, but also one that would be obscured by limiting one's definition of party to purely electoral politics as Downs or Schlesinger would do (1999). In particular, I have tried to guard against mistaking the possible existence of party activity outside of formal party

organizations for what I see as an incorrect conclusion that all attempts to win office must be party activities. In my view, both candidate-centered and party-oriented activity are possible, and one must examine any particular case carefully to determine which is happening.

Casey B.K. Dominguez's work also looks at party networks at the national level (Dominguez 2005a, 2005b; Bernstein and Dominguez 2003; Bimes and Dominguez 2004). She has been one of the few scholars to follow up on two of groups that Schwartz found were part of the party core (at least for Illinois Republicans): financial donors and party-allied interest groups. Instead of following Schwartz's model of considering elite-level fundraisers as a group, Dominguez has paralleled my work on candidate campaign organizations by finding the subset of all contributors who are party-loyal, generally defining them as those who have given to more than one same-party candidate (or organization) without giving anything to opposite-party organizations. She joins Masket in focusing on control of nominations as the key indicator of party strength (see for example 2005a, 11-16), and shows, for example, that donors and party-allied interest groups act in ways that we would expect a Downsian party to act, by rallying to the side of the strongest candidate in open primaries for competitive seats. In a series of case studies of U.S. House and Senate primaries she not only shows the existence of party networks within financial supporters, endorsers, and interest groups, but integrates those networks with the actions of national formal party organizations. In a new project (2005b), Dominguez has expanded her study of informal party organizations and campaign finance, using social network analysis to examine the overlap in donors between various formal party committees, PACs, and 527s. Unlike Doherty's study of candidates and consultants, then, she includes formal party organizations in her research, and in fact finds that party committees are key actors within the expanded party.

Dominguez's material is unusually helpful in several ways. Most importantly, she has extended our knowledge of party networks to include individual donors – a topic that had previously been the subject of much speculation, but no real evidence. Her work covers U.S. House, Senate, and presidential elections, and examines the intersection of party networks and

formal party organizations. A focus on nominations allows her to build from previous party theory (including Schattschneider and Schlesinger), while making the empirical case for the importance of party networks – and at the same time, she has not hesitated to ascribe importance to formal party organizations when she finds that they are important. While some of the technical details necessary to her methodology are still (by her own admission; see 2004, 23) in progress, this is not just preliminary work; she has already advance our knowledge quite a bit. I will address some potential limitations of social network analysis below. Beyond that, one potential limitation in some of Dominguez’s work is her use of rational choice party theories that appear to equate party strength with party unanimity. That is, in several cases (see for example 2005a, 42-55) she tests for the presence of party activity by checking to see whether donors and endorsers conform to rational choice expectations (in the cited case, that parties will unite around the strongest candidate in open primaries for competitive seats). Yet this design takes Downsian parties as a given, a particular problem if parties use primaries to resolve factional disputes. While one might say that factionalized parties are weaker than united parties, I would dispute the assumption that parties with contentious factions are not really parties at all, which might be one implication of her study. On the other hand, Dominguez has also pioneered the search for factions within party networks, which I will discuss further below (2005b; Bernstein and Dominguez 2003).

Scholars often face the “So what?” question when they first present their research. That is not apt to be a problem for the next project, in which Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller (2001) show how party networks utilize endorsements to at least influence, and at best control, presidential nominations. As they have it, parties were faced with a serious problem after the McGovern-Fraser reforms before the 1972 election cycle; formal party organizations were more or less forbidden from playing their traditional role in choosing presidential nominees (see Polsby 1983). What followed was, especially for the Democrats, something close to chaos, in the form of the George McGovern and particularly the Jimmy Carter nominations. How could parties recover at least some of their influence? The formal

party organizations could not take back control from mass electorates in primary elections. Instead, party networks, by controlling important resources that in turn powerfully influenced voters, could play a major role in presidential nominations. The key are endorsements by well-known politicians and other party leaders, which act as a “signaling game that enables leaders to find a widely acceptable candidate in much the same way that bargaining at old-fashioned party conventions once did” (3). Using game-theoretical logic, they show that this game can work; that is, “the combination of the endorsement derby and the high density of political communication in the United States today make it quite possible for party leaders to coordinate on a widely acceptable candidate in the year prior to the primaries” (38). Since endorsements also serve to bring scarce resources to campaigns, including money, campaign professionals, and activists, coordination of party leaders will give the beneficiary of this support a powerful advantage in winning primaries, and thus in winning delegates and the nomination (15-22). And so parties heavily influence nominations, ending the era of chaos and restoring order in the form of candidates such as Walter Mondale, Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, and George W. Bush.

As the subfield of party network studies grows, a number of smaller studies have appeared to complement the major findings. The most fun article is an ingenious study by Gregory Koger, Seth Masket, and Hans Noel. These authors test party networks by subscribing to political magazines and making small donations to interest groups and formal party organizations, and then, using snowball sampling, find out which organizations obtain that information and follow up with a new solicitation (each original contact uses a unique name to make such tracking possible). The particular strength of this study is that it connects formal party organizations with party-allied interest groups and the mass media; indeed, while it is true that the contact in this case is more or less limited to marketing departments of partisan magazines, it is I believe the first effort of any kind to study systematically how these sources of information are linked to political parties.

Richard Skinner (2004, 2005) adds a focus on interest groups, a topic which has received a bit of attention from some authors but has not been a primary research focus until now.

Skinner uses elite interviews to find that many interest groups, including 527s, have overlapping membership and leadership with candidate campaign organizations and formal party organizations, and that they tend to think of themselves as belonging to their parties. Another nice addition to the literature is Anne Beddington and Michael J. Malbin's (2003) look at leadership PACs. Previously, leadership PACs had been looked at primarily in terms of struggles for power within Congress. Beddington and Malbin adopt the language of party network scholars, and argue that leadership PACs have evolved and now contribute to party goals. In an earlier article, Barbara Trish (1994) reports on how formal party organizations work within the expanded party to help campaign professionals avoid the economic risks of a seasonal marketplace. Her work, which looks at local formal and informal party organizations in Ohio and Indiana, shows how the interaction within the expanded party can overcome the potentially anti-party economic incentives introduced when parties include formally independent contractors. Robin Kolodny and David Dulio's work deserves mention here. While perhaps not specifically "party networks" scholars, Kolodny and Dulio (see Kolodny 1998; Kolodny and Logan 1998; Dulio and Kolodny 2001; Kolodny and Dulio 2003; Dulio 2004) have emphasized the degree of cooperation that exists between formal party organizations – especially the Hill committees – and political consultants. Doherty (2004) points out that this only occasionally entails conceptualizing consultants as actually part of the parties themselves (as opposed to close party allies); for example, Dulio accepts the idea that American elections are candidate-centered (2004, 2, 102). However, it is a significant advance both empirically and conceptually from earlier views of consultants as competitors to the parties (for a good discussion, see Dulio, especially 27-29. 101-102).

3.

So far, the party network literature has not paid much attention to the question of factions. Doherty (2005) and Dominguez (2005b), both using social network analysis, have been

moving in that direction; Doherty discovered four factions among California state legislative candidates, but not along ideological lines; Dominguez did not find significant factional patterns in her national contributors data. Dominguez and myself (2003), using quite a bit less sophisticated methodology (we identified senior people within candidacies and constructed biographies including their previous employment and campaign contributions), looked for factions within the presidential candidate campaign organizations of George W. Bush, John McCain, Al Gore, and Bill Bradley. We found some evidence of liberal and “new Democrat” factions within the Democratic parties. On the Republican side, McCain’s campaign appeared to include a moderate Republican faction, while the Bush campaign contained a group we speculated was a Bush-loyal faction that persisted from the first Bush presidency to his son’s campaign. Masket, using elite interviews, found a persistent bifactionalism in California local politics, sometimes based on ideology, sometimes on personal attachments, and in some cases based on little that outsiders could identify. Beyond those efforts, none of which were really the main focus of their projects, the literature only contains occasional references to (mainly ideological) factions. Yet I would argue that these efforts are only the beginning of what could be an excellent match between party network studies and factional analysis. In the remainder of this essay, I will discuss the most difficult problems for party network researchers to overcome, and then connect those problems back to the question of party factions.

Some of the current limitations of party network scholarship have been the natural result of a set of researchers approaching similar problems at the same time without the benefit of reading each other’s work because it hasn’t yet been published, but too often the scholars discussed about seem to be only vaguely aware that there is an emerging and growing literature with overlapping concerns. Part of the goal of this piece is to at least solve that problem.¹⁰ A

¹⁰Even at the most basic level of citations, there are a surprising number of omissions in some of the pieces discussed here – and I share in the blame here.

consequence has been a tendency to assume that only the portion of the party currently under investigation joins with the formal party to make up the entire expanded party. Monroe, who studied the staffs of elected officials, claims that parties are made up of those elected officials' offices, campaign professionals including consultants, and formal party organizations at the state and national level (2001, 9-10), therefore excluding (at least) activists, fundraising networks, and local party officials. Masket (2004) claims that party networks are a phenomenon of only state and especially local politics; Dominguez (2005a) claims that the parties exist as national-level networks.

But other challenges facing research in this area are quite a bit tougher to overcome, because they point to a still underdeveloped conceptual framework. The main issue is defining the boundaries of the party. As discussed above, when party was assumed to mean formal party organizations, the only remaining controversy was the place of voters. Once campaign organizations, consultants, the partisan portion of the press, donors, activists, staff of elected officials, and some interest groups are conceived of as possibly belonging to an expanded party, however, we need some criteria for deciding who is in and who is out. No one seems to find Schwartz's original methodology, which placed entire classes of actors ("advisors," or "interest groups") within the party network a satisfactory solution, but her basic methodological approach – looking for actions that could be described as links, such as communications or campaign contributions – has been adopted by most of these projects. The most notable exceptions are Masket, who used elite interviewing to find evidence of hierarchies outside of formal party organizations, and Cohen et al., who found evidence of a kind of signaling mechanism between party elites which, at that, might be a form of communications link after all. From there it is a short trip to describing the network with the methodology recently employed by both Doherty and Dominguez, social network analysis. Without disparaging that methodology, I don't know that it can answer the question that I think is really the conceptual core here about party boundaries. Let me be a bit more specific. Consider some of the interest groups Dominguez finds are part of the party network: the Sierra Club and MoveOn.org on the Democratic side, and

the National Association of Realtors 527 Fund and Swift Boat Vets and POWs for Truth on the Republican side. I would argue that the strength of the party network idea is that it is easy to see that groups such as MoveOn.org and the Swifties can easily be placed in the “part of the party” box. Indeed, their existence as formally independent “organizations” is, one might say, almost entirely a consequence of the oddities of campaign finance laws, other portions of the legal regime surrounding parties, and perhaps Americans’ propensity for forming new clubs and organizations at the drop of a hat regardless of whether they duplicate existing structure. Quite a few of Dominguez’s groups fall in this category, including America Coming Together (ACT), Joint Victory Campaign, and PunkVoter on the Democratic side, and the College Republican National Committee, Republican Leadership Coalition, and Tom DeLay’s leadership PAC on the Republican side. But what of the Sierra Club and the Realtors? If we find that the Sierra Club is closely linked to the Democrats in any number of ways, should we think of that organization as merely the environmental wing of the Democrats, formally separated only for the reasons that ACT is separate? That doesn’t seem quite right. And it seems even less right for the Realtors, or other Republican groups such as Exxon Mobil, Outback Steakhouse, and International Paper. Surely these are party allies in some way, not party themselves.

To some extent, this may be a specific limitation of the methodology, which seems good at sociological analysis of party networks, but not quite as useful for political analysis. I don’t think that’s the only problem. Social network analysis can give a variety of descriptive measures placing an actor within the network; using a much less sophisticated methodology for analyzing candidate campaign organizations, I merely rated each one on a zero-to-one scale to reflect the percentage of campaign personnel that had backgrounds within the expanded party. However, that still begs the question, in some ways. One can say that it is meaningful that the Sierra Club and the Democratic National Committee share supporters, or that three-quarters of a House candidate’s staff previously worked for the New Jersey Republican Party, or that the Realtors talk regularly to Hill staff and attend insider meetings about the GOP’s agenda. But we still don’t quite have the concepts or even the vocabulary to accurately report what’s going on. As a

preliminary attempt, I think we could define at least three categories. The first, which in this essay I have referred to as “party-linked” or “party-connected” – by which I mean groups such as ACT and the Swifties, leadership PACs and auxiliary groups such as the College Republicans – are purely party actors. Some of these may be ideological, and some may focus on a single interest or political group, but the key here is that their very existence is fully within one party (even if the point of the group is to try to change their party). For the second group, perhaps party-allied is a good term. These groups have a clear existence outside of their party role, but nevertheless are close enough to one party that they function as members, not outsiders seeking to influence what is clearly a separate entity. The third category is for true outsiders, party-supporting organizations that have a clear separate identity, no matter how closely allied with the party they may be at any point in time. In any category, a group or individual may be more or less closely linked to the party network in ways that social network analysis could describe – so it is possible to imagine a party-supporting group that has closer ties to the party than a party-linked group, even though the former retains a separate identity and the latter does not. If these categories are useful, the next step would be to figure out criteria that match the intuitive sense that, again, the Swift Boat Vets are a Republican (party-linked) group in a way that the Realtors (party-supporting) are not.

Note that those groups that are truly within the party will not necessarily agree with other party actors on either strategy or policy; a good example was Club for Growth’s well-known efforts in the 2004 cycle to affect Republican nominations in ways many Republicans thought threatened their prospects in November. That doesn’t mean that we should exclude such groups from our definition of the party; indeed, one of the basic points of the party network literature is that in such cases, there is no reason to assume that any particular portion of the party network, specifically including formal party organizations, is the “true” party. The expanded party – all of it, formal party organizations and other party networks – is the “true” party, even when it has internal disputes.

While this problem of boundaries is easiest to see in the case of interest groups, it is a

critical question across each potential reach of the expanded party. Is Hillary for Senate part of the Democratic Party? Is Senator Hatch's Washington office part of the Republican Party? Is the Weekly Standard part of the Republican Party? Is Talking Points Memo (Joshua Micah Marshall's popular blog) part of the Democratic Party? Again, the current methods in use would almost certainly place all of these examples well within the core of their parties. That's not bad, and it's certainly more useful than research that ignores party networks; this isn't intended as a criticism of the research to date. However, I believe that there's something more to the question than our current methods have caught, and that we still need a bit of conceptual work to get to the proper answers. Or, if not, we need an argument for why party-linked, party-allied, party-supporting, and other possibilities are more or less equivalent, because the notion of party networks forces these kinds of boundary questions.

The answers, in turn, should lead party network researchers to work on factions. Party network research, using any of the methods in the projects discussed here, is well-equipped to examine factions. Unlike older parties, at least to the extent that they were primarily made up of formal party organizations, contemporary expanded parties, as studied by party network scholars, are understood as containing many explicit interests which do not have to fully shed their identities to be important party players (as opposed to influencing parties at a remove by influencing formal party organizations). Moreover, in order to study parties at all, party network scholars believe they have to trace linkages within the party (as opposed to just studying the actions of formal party staff or officials), which will reveal any important cleavages. In short, those who study networks should equip themselves with the tools needed to understand factions. Yet, to return to the beginning, party factions are not well understood. We don't know whether ideological factions are different than those based on personality, geography, economics, social status, or any other basis. We know little beyond anecdotal evidence about the duration of factions, or for that matter about the duration of coalitions. While Key and Polsby, as discussed above, provide some hypotheses, neither breaks down in great detail some of these questions,

which may have to be answered before we get to the hypothesis-testing stage.

When we do get to that stage, both the kind of case studies party network scholars have used and social network analysis, despite my caveats above, should prove useful. And the results should, in turn, help us better understand political parties. Not only will such studies help clarify the relationship between organized interests and political parties, but they will also, we can hope, help resolve other critical issues in party theory, such as the relationship between individual candidates and their political parties, and the related but not quite identical relationship between parties and elected officials. To be sure, none of these areas are unexplored in the general parties literature. However, without understanding factions, we cannot properly understand those broader party relationships. The promise of the party network literature – the next agenda – is to do a better job in understanding not just party networks, but parties themselves.

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