Party Organizational Response to Electoral Change: Texas and Arkansas

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This article examines the ways in which state parties have responded to changes in patterns of electoral competition. We contend that parties have tended to alter their organizational practices not only in anticipation of future elections, but also as a function of previous ones. The data are formed by case studies of the Republican parties in Texas and Arkansas in the 1960s and 1970s. The sources of much of these data were the records of the parties themselves. This time period was chosen as it represents a dynamic period for Southern parties when the electoral landscape of the region was transformed. Both Republican party organizations were faced with opportunities that resulted from unanticipated election victories; however, the Texas party was more successful in capitalizing on this opportunity. We explain this by a number of organizational attributes.

Introduction

The politics of the U.S. south have changed so dramatically over the past forty years, a reasonable observer may argue, that the period and region must be considered unique and of little help in understanding more general political processes. We contend, to the contrary, that the dynamic nature of the past two generations of southern politics offers a natural historical laboratory for exploring a host of important theoretical questions. This article reports the results of a pilot study for a larger project that seeks to explain sources of response and innovation in political party organizations. As the South transformed from the one-party politics described by Key in 1949 to "sustained two-party competition" in many races and most states (Black and Black 1987, 292), the parties were forced to respond and innovate in order to compete. Of course, not all parties did so at the same rate or with the same success. As a result, we can learn much about party transformation by finding consistent patterns in southern party behavior, while at the same time explaining variation across the states.

The major expectation of our study is that parties do not simply alter their organizations to become more competitive—a behavior treated as
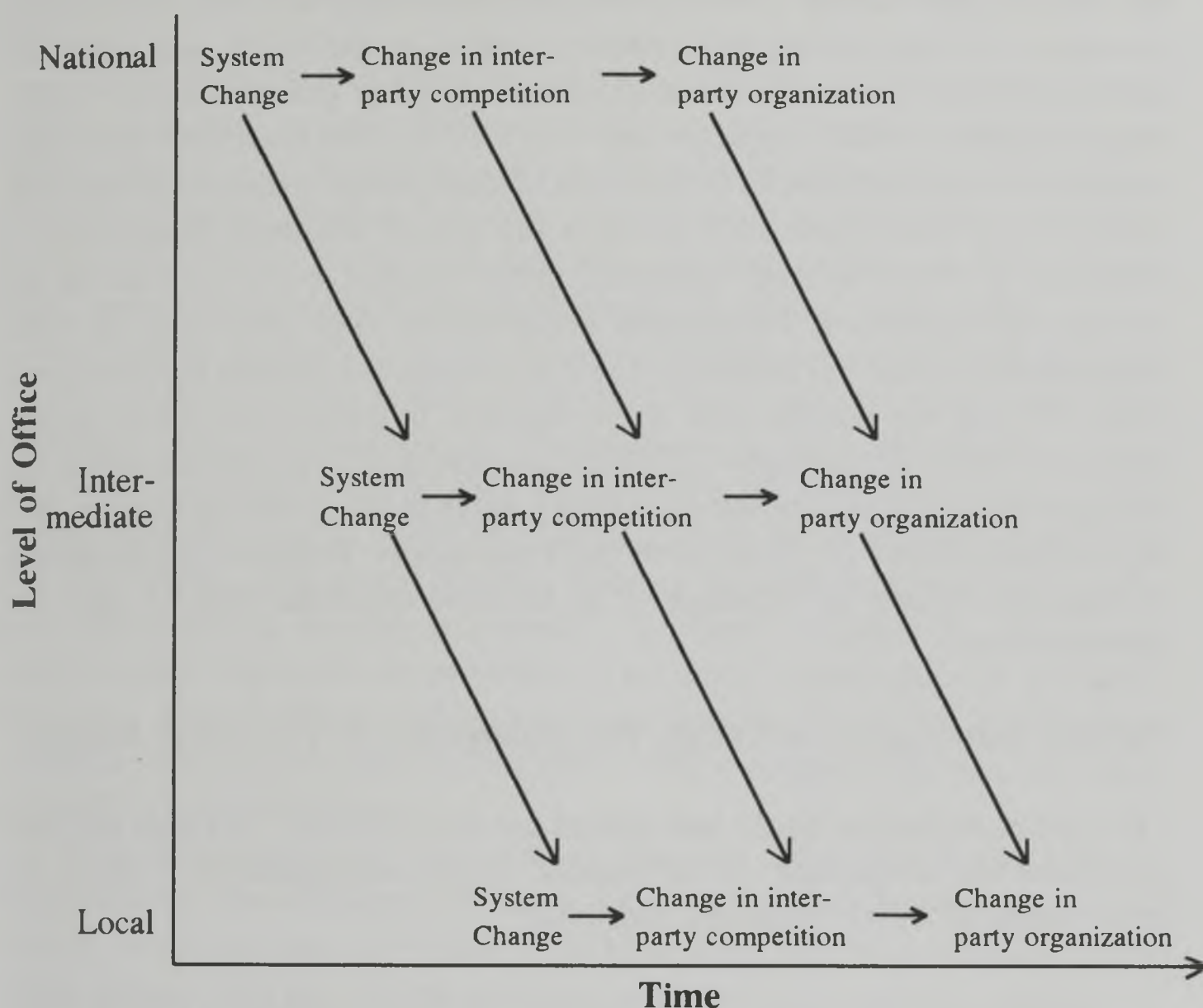
obvious by party scholars—but also *in response to previous changes in competitiveness*. That this latter condition may also be true has been assumed by some scholars, yet there is little hard evidence by which to accept or reject such a proposition. Moreover, we narrow the question by focusing not on whether parties respond to unexpectedly poor electoral performance, a fairly trivial expectation, but instead on how parties respond to unanticipated electoral success. There has been some work at the national level on party response, broadly defined, to changing environments (e.g., Maisel 1990, Crotty 1983, and Harmel and Janda 1982). At the state level, the work of Key was predicated on the existence of such a relationship. More recently, Cotter et al. (1984) formulate the hypothesis that state party organizational strength is dependent on prior patterns of inter-party competition, though they do not test this hypothesis directly. Our concerns build upon this body of literature, and we seek to explain trends demonstrated by these authors.

In a model (Figure 1) that we have proposed previously (Appleton and Ward 1993), we envisage the process of "party nationalization" that most observers agree occurred in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s as being captured, at the state level, by the relationships among three components of the party system across two dimensions. Our working assumption in this model is that party organizations are adaptive and isomorphic; that is, they alter their structures and behaviors in response to variation in their environment and they acquire new properties as a function of that environment. Thus, in the horizontal dimension of our model, we believe that change in party organization is *preceded* by change in the electoral market; we further assert that changing patterns of electoral competition in this process occurred *subsequent* to change in the systemic environment. We do not claim recursivity nor monotonicity in these relationships, simply that this sequence captures the process of nationalization.

The second dimension of our model is intended to emphasize the importance of hierarchy in the transformation under scrutiny. Here we assert that timing of the key changes in any one of the three components of the model occurred as a function of the kind of office that is being considered. We believe that the nationalization of the party systemic environment, of patterns of electoral competition, and of party organization can be observed earliest in the quest for office at the federal level and latest in the pursuit of local office. It is to be emphasized that we are analyzing changes at the state level; thus, for example, if we are to consider a hypothetical party A in state X, we believe that change in the organizational components of the party dedicated to winning federal office, $A_{x(f)}$ will exhibit change prior to any change in organizational efforts aimed at the capture of state office, $A_{x(s)}$, which in turn precedes similar change in local organization, $A_{x(l)}$. It is these

Figure 1. Model of Party Organizational Response

National | System Change → Change in inter-party competition → Change in party organization

Level of Office

Inter-mediate | System Change → Change in inter-party competition → Change in party organization

Local | System Change → Change in inter-party competition → Change in party organization

Time

Source: Appleton and Ward 1993.

sequences of change that we have chosen to label *party response*. The time line for our article is from the beginning of the 1960s to the mid-1970s. The terrain is the state Republican party organizations in Arkansas and Texas. For both of these states, we are interested in the manner in which the Republican party responded to unheralded breakthrough victories, by John Tower in Texas and by Winthrop Rockefeller in Arkansas. The data that we will use in our analysis have been collected from party records. In both cases, the state party organization granted us access to their documents from this period. In future work, we intend to use these records to construct longitudinal data that will allow for a more finely tuned statistical analysis of party response to electoral performance.

Below, we explore organizational response to electoral opportunity in these two state Republican parties. Like all southern states, Arkansas and Texas experienced external shocks to their electoral systems from the early

1960s through the 1980s. U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 1962 and 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the full emergence of the presidential primary system in the 1970s and 1980s all contributed to a general "nationalization" of party politics (Lunch 1987; Black and Black 1987; Appleton and Ward 1993). But these two states also experienced internal shocks in the form of unexpected statewide Republican victories, by John Tower of Texas in 1961 and by Winthrop Rockefeller of Arkansas in 1966. Without question, these victories were *not* built on the existing foundation of Republican organization. Our interest is in what followed during the next decade. The case studies are framed by three questions: (1) Did the parties view those victories as indicators of new opportunity and adapt accordingly? (2) Were the parties able to institutionalize the changes brought about by the momentary excitement of victory and the taste of political power? (3) Why were the post-victory Republican experiences in these two states so different? It is to these questions that we turn our attention next.

Political Earthquake in Texas: The Emergence of Two-Party Politics

"If a political Richter Scale had existed on May 27, 1961, it could not have registered the magnitude of the sudden, fierce earthquake that shook the entire state of Texas" (Knaggs 1986, 1).

In May of 1961, John Tower became the first Republican United States Senator from Texas since 1877 and the first to hold statewide elective office since 1874 (Casdorph 1965, 223). Many idiosyncratic explanations could be offered for the stunning victory, including voter apathy toward a special election and the lackluster campaign of his opponent. Whatever the causes of that jolt, however, the aftershocks would be felt for the next two decades, a period during which the Republican Party of Texas transformed from a "cult" or "lodge" (to borrow from V.O. Key) into a legitimate competitor for power in the state.

The move toward competitiveness in Texas actually began nearly a decade before Tower's victory, though electoral evidence of those efforts was scarce below the presidential level. Texas Republicans had no particular reason to expect 1960 to be very different, especially with a native, Lyndon Johnson, on the national ticket for the Democrats while running simultaneously for reelection to the U.S. Senate. His opponent for reelection was a college professor who was "too young, too short, cool and aloof, . . . [and had] never held an elected office" (Knaggs 1986, 3). Johnson was reelected, but John Tower made a respectable showing with 41.5 percent of the vote,

carrying twenty-six counties. Along with victory for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, however, came a Republican opportunity—the Special Election of 1961.

Tower immediately announced that he would challenge for the seat against appointed senator William Blakley in the April special election, taking advantage of an already activated campaign organization. The structure of the special election, a single primary open to both parties followed by a runoff between the top two finishers, advantaged Tower. With Democratic votes sharply split in their traditional liberal and conservative camps, he was able to finish first in the primary, making the runoff with Blakley. Tower's narrow victory in the runoff (50.45 percent) was a watershed that had electoral and organizational consequences for state Republicans. Later in 1961, following Tower's win, the Republicans won two Texas House special elections, and in 1962 the party's gubernatorial primary drew over 115,000 voters, with many counties holding their first primary ever. The party succeeded in electing a second U.S. House member in 1962 and a total of seven Texas House members. The party's gubernatorial nominee, Jack Cox, made a strong (46 percent) but unsuccessful effort against John Connally. Despite this defeat, the 1961-1962 election cycle was the most successful in party history.

It is no coincidence, we believe, that the same period was one of organizational development for the party. Shortly before Tower's runoff victory, outgoing state GOP chair Thad Hutcheson had important advice for his successor, Tad Smith, and other party leaders:

> We are entering a new phase in the development of our party. . . . [T]here was a long period up until 1950 in which our party was not fully discharging its responsibility as a minority party. . . . Now we can say that most people . . . recognize us as a political party. . . . Buttressed by the 500,000 straight party votes that came to us in 1960, *the party can now concentrate on refinements of organization in particular areas.* The detailed structural organization is important . . . to cut down the negative margins (RSEC 16 January 1961, emphasis added).[1]

Among the initial organizational changes following Tower's election was the transfer of party headquarters from Houston to Austin. While innocuous on the surface, the presence of the party headquarters in a state capital has been cited as a significant step in the process of party institutionalization (Cotter et al. 1984). Linkages between the organizational and legislative components of the party are best drawn under these circumstances, and access to the state's principal political media personnel is enhanced. In the case of Texas, the latter concern was foremost, given the paucity of legislative representation.

Another significant move by the party in 1961 was the hiring of a full time executive director for organizational purposes, Jim Leonard. Leonard viewed his role as one of promotion, making ample use of his access to the state's political press (Knaggs 1986, 18). The Executive Committee also authorized increased funds for the state chair and other party officials to make trips around the state for party promotion. The importance of these moves is that they occurred in an off-year. As noted earlier, parties naturally organize around elections, but a central characteristic of an institutionalized party is off-year activity. The new state chair, Tad Smith recognized this need when he proposed a four-phase "Program for Texas" at the mid-year party gathering in 1961.

> The Republican victory for John Tower on May 27, plus the dynamic upsurge of Republicanism all over the State in the past eight months, proves without any doubt that Republicans in Texas can win IF WE ORGANIZE!
> Elections are won by supreme organizational efforts carried on during non-campaign periods *between* elections. In other words, the Republican program must be a continuing, year-round operation (RSEC 24 June 1961, emphasis in original).

In order to institute such an operation, Smith made a number of specific recommendations. At the grass roots level, where the party was weakest, this included voter identification, poll tax registration, and get-out-the-vote efforts. A second organizational thrust was in the area of candidate recruitment, for which a Republican Candidate Committee was established. The stated goal of the committee was to provide a full slate of non-token candidates. The third point of emphasis was public relations. These efforts were aimed at informing district and county leaders about federal and state issues and getting the party's message out to the general public.

The final, and perhaps most important, aspect of the 1961 organizational restructuring was the establishment of a United Republican Fund program, designed to integrate the fundraising efforts of the state and county party organizations. The problem, according to Chairman Smith, was that party workers "get counties organized during the 30 to 45 days preceding election. Thereafter, county organizations collapse, not to be reorganized until the next election" (RSEC 24 June 1961). To remedy this situation, budget and finance committees were set up to include regional representation by district and county finance chairs. In addition, a quota system was inaugurated, whereby each state senate district was given a dollar amount that was to be raised and contributed to the state party. This program was expected to provide an ongoing source of financial sustenance for organizational activity. This burst of organizational activity so soon after Tower's victory could well represent unbridled enthusiasm that would soon be reined

in by political reality. The efforts appear to be genuine, however; one indication is the party organizational budget, which nearly doubled from $74,240 in 1961 (RSEC 16 January 1961) to $138,865 in 1962 (RSEC 12 March 1962); the latter figure excludes campaign related spending).

The electoral successes of 1962, described above, were accompanied by further organizational development in the Republican Party during that year. One significant event was the election of Peter O'Donnell, former Dallas county GOP chairman, as state chair. O'Donnell was known for his organizational skills and immediately brought in an executive director, Marvin Collins. The two new party leaders immediately announced a goal of hiring full-time staffers to handle matters of finance, law, research, public relations, press, youth outreach, women's activities, Latin American affairs, and Negro affairs (RSEC 26 September 1962). Alhough these ambitious goals were not entirely accomplished, organizational divisions for finance, research, and public relations were established, and staff support was given to the Federation of Republican Women and Young Republicans. The party established an extensive field staff, as well, with eight employees traveling the state to assist local Republicans in organizing their efforts and raising funds (Knaggs 1986, 32). Of course, as the organization grew, so did its financial needs.

Early in 1963, steps were taken to meet the ongoing financial obligations of the party and to build a long-term financial base. A "Key Republican" program was established that would provide special benefits (e.g., newsletters, meetings with members of Congress, and invitations to executive committee meetings) to individuals contributing $1,000 or more to the state party (RSEC 9 February 1963). A goal of 200 participants was set. The party also would publish the Texas Government Almanac and Business Guide, an annual compendium of information about Texas governmental affairs. Of the $319,000 raised by the party in 1963, 47 percent ($150,000) came from the Key Republican program and 14 percent ($44,000) from sales of the Almanac. Thus, the organizational changes brought in by new leadership were accompanied by fiscal innovation.

The political calendar provided further good fortune for the Republican party in 1963. Three special state legislative elections allowed the party to build on its recent electoral, organizational, and financial successes by winning all three races and establishing momentum for the critical 1964 campaign. A contemporary observer and participant in these events characterizes the period:

> Those were heady days for Texas Republicans. Days of challenge, of commitment and confidence. Days of hard work, with daily rewards in the certain knowledge that their party was more disciplined, better organized, and more effective in support of its

> candidates and their campaigns. . . . Their momentum was strong and growing stronger every day (Knaggs 1986. 35).

The tragic events of 23 November 1963, combined with the subsequent presidential campaign, would halt that momentum and stall the drive toward competitiveness for the remainder of the decade.

The death of President Kennedy put the White House in the hands of a Texas Democrat, and all hopes of organizing a strong statewide campaign around an attractive Republican national ticket were dashed. Not only would Lyndon Johnson attract Texas voters, but he also succeeded in quieting, if only briefly, internal battles plaguing the Democratic party (Weeks 1965, 9). For example, Johnson dissuaded several potentially serious candidates, including former U.S. Representative Lloyd Bentsen, from challenging U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough in the Democratic primary. A divisive ideological battle among Democrats might have turned the defeated faction toward an attractive Republican candidate, Houston businessman George Bush, who presented the party with its best hope of statewide victory in 1964 (Weeks 1965, 26). Instead, Bush ran an impressive, but unsuccessful campaign in an otherwise dismal electoral season for Texas Republicans. The party lost both of its seats in the U.S. House and ten of eleven seats in the Texas House, leaving a lone Republican to fend off 180 Democrats in the state legislature.

The organizational efforts of the Republican party in 1964 reflect more the optimism of 1963 than the political reality that followed. A budget of $1.1 million was proposed, about half for campaign expenditures and half for organizational operations (RSEC 18 January 1964). It is not surprising to find that party expenditures on field operations, public relations, and campaign functions increased in a presidential election year compared to a congressional election year, but a comparison of *strictly administrative* budgets between 1962 and 1964 shows a remarkable 54 percent increase. Clearly, electoral success provides an incentive to organize, but such organization does not guarantee immediate payoffs at the next election cycle. An important and interesting question is whether such organization can be sustained in the wake of electoral failure.

The intention of the state chair, Peter O'Donnell, was to continue the strengthening of the headquarters operation in Austin. In the chair's *post-mortem* on the 1964 election, Republican failures were attributed to weaknesses in public relations and advertising, rather than to grass roots organization, financing, or candidate recruitment (RSEC 16 January 1965). Several concrete steps were taken to remedy these difficulties. Foremost, the party established its first full-time research effort. According to the research director, Lance Tarrance, the endeavor would entail

an extensive library, filing cabinets, regular mailings, compilation of remarks by Texas Congressmen . . . [and] plans to compose an extensive report on the activities of the 59th Legislature, secure information on opponents of our candidates, find out how other states operate their research departments, write a pamphlet . . . , provide information on various areas such as agriculture . . . (RSEC 16 January 1965).

The party also was concerned with its internal structure. With the assistance of a former Texas Instruments executive, the state chair produced a proposal to "strengthen the organizational structure of the party" (RSEC 16 January 1965). The major addition to the organizational chart would be five Deputy State Chairmen from distinct geographical regions, appointed by the chair with the approval of the executive committee. The deputy chairs would report to the state chair, but would have responsibility for coordinating their regions. The apparent goal that drove the regional notion was to free the state chair from extensive interaction with county leaders, who now would funnel their ideas, complaints, or requests through the appropriate deputy. In order to assist the party in its new organizational efforts, state leaders decided to implement a new distribution formula for contributions received by the state party. Previously, 60 percent of such funds were sent to the counties, 30 percent to the national party, and only 10 percent was retained by the state headquarters. Arguing that the national party had improved its own fundraising abilities through direct mail campaigns, the finance director suggested that the state should keep 30 percent and send 10 percent to the national party. The proposal was adopted (RSEC 16 January 1965).

One significant strategic change in 1966 was the decision to focus almost exclusively on the Tower reelection campaign. The party offered just token opposition in the gubernatorial and lieutenant governor's races, which recently had been designated as the capstones of party competitiveness. Below these two positions, candidates for other statewide and national offices were not encouraged to run unless there was a legitimate chance for victory (Knaggs 1986, 57). This was a major shift from the 1964 effort to offer a full slate of conservative Republican candidates. The principal reason for this new strategy was to assure Tower of victory—an uncertainty following the 1964 electoral debacle. In order to accomplish this, Republican leaders preferred to leave the potentially damaging Connally machine dormant for the election cycle (Knaggs 1986, 75). Further evidence of the "Tower only" strategy can be found in the reduction of Texas House candidates run by the Republican party in 1966, which was fewer than half of the 74 who ran in 1964. With a single-minded focus on Tower's reelection, close cooperation between the state party and Tower campaigns resulted in weekly meetings at the state headquarters in Austin. Tower's ultimate victory, with

57 percent of the vote, provided the party with its rallying point for another six years. U.S. House wins by George Bush and Bob Price gave further encouragement to party leaders. With no other Republican statewide elected officials and Democratic control of all 254 county courthouses, however, a loss by Tower could have proved debilitating for the party. Instead, Republicans could point to their first statewide general election victory in the 20th century, and continued organizational development.

The Republicans' off-year program in 1967 continued to be ambitious, with plans to (1) continue a vigorous public relations campaign and associated research effort; (2) pursue county organizational growth through the field and regional deputy chair programs; (3) follow through on the Latin American program with further development of the Mexican-American Republicans of Texas (MART) organization; (4) create a Negro voter organization modeled after MART; and (5) set aside funds to assist candidates for the state legislature in special election races later in the year (RSEC 14 January 1967). In September, the party organized a get-out-the-vote drive with a goal of increasing the Republican vote by 10 percent in every precinct in the state (RSEC 22 September 1967). These efforts would not go unrewarded, as the party gained four Texas House seats in eight special elections, and earned a convert when a conservative Democratic state House member, Bill Archer of Houston, announced that he would run for reelection as a Republican (Knaggs 1986, 116-17). The 1966-1967 election cycle, although modest compared to 1961-1962, was considered by party leaders to be a political comeback of significant proportions, again raising expectations for 1968.

The role of the state headquarters in sustaining the party through a time of crisis cannot be overestimated. That the Tower campaign and state party were not synonymous allowed the party to gear up its machinery for off-year elections and to lend support to other strong candidates, such as George Bush, in the general election. On the other hand, the continuing presence of Tower as a figurehead for the state party, lending support to other candidates and legitimacy to party leaders, allowed the party to continue building, even when electoral fortunes were meager.

The 1968 election cycle began with some optimism after the successful off-year elections. In the end, however, the Republicans struggled to recruit a viable gubernatorial candidate, with Tower and Bush declining to run. Paul Eggers, a local party operative, was selected by party leaders, but he ran a late-starting and under-funded campaign. Only half of the more than $1 million budgeted for the gubernatorial campaign was raised and spent (RSEC 12 January 1968; Knaggs 1986, 136-137). Despite funding problems, Eggers ran a surprisingly strong campaign, earning more votes than any

Republican in state history, though still just 43 percent of those cast. Otherwise, the party held steady, maintaining its three U.S. House seats, two state senate seats, and the same number of Texas House seats (eight). If Republican progress was not showing in election outcomes, at least the party could point to increasing numbers of voters willing to pull the Republican lever.

The election of Richard Nixon as president in 1968 returned the state party to a role it had played prior to the drive toward competitiveness: patronage dispenser. State Chair O'Donnell took full control of the patronage operation, strengthening his position in the party (Knaggs 1986, 138). Despite the return to national leadership by the party, the end of the 1960s appears to have been a period of retrenchment for Texas Republicans. The 1969 budget was roughly one-quarter that of 1968 (RSEC 22 February 1969). Moreover, significant internal strife seems to have hampered party operations for a short time. Chairman O'Donnell engaged in a struggle with long-time national committeeman Al Fay, who was forced to resign from that position in favor of O'Donnell (RSEC 3 May 1969). In addition, the recurring feud between Harris County (Houston) and Dallas Republicans became more strident, with Houstonians accusing Dallas native O'Donnell of inept patronage distribution (Knaggs 1986, 138).

Perhaps the most important change to befall Texas Republicans in the 1960s was the party's capacity to enter most election seasons with some hope of competing at the statewide level. The 1970 campaign provides a good example. Despite Democratic incumbents running for reelection as governor and U.S. Senator, Republicans had high hopes for victory. Paul Eggers was expected to run a stronger, better financed second campaign, and George Bush was considered a very strong challenger to Senator Ralph Yarborough. In reality, Eggers again suffered from financial trouble and Yarborough lost the Democratic primary to Lloyd Bentsen, who was able to steal Bush's conservative base. Both Eggers and Bush won 47 percent of the vote—impressive, but nonetheless insufficient. Again, as in 1968, the party's contingent in Congress and the statehouse remained stable.

The party as an organizational entity remained stable as well, despite changes in leadership. Ten years after Tower's shocking victory, the Republican party appeared to have reached a level of competitiveness that placed it below that of a true two-party state, but better off than traditional southern Republicanism. The following decade brought more growth to the party, larger congressional and statehouse delegations, an historical breakthrough to the governor's mansion, and the conversion of a Democratic icon, former governor John Connally, to the Republican party. The party would suffer some financial difficulties in the early 1970s following the Watergate

scandal, but the foundation of organization, new and converted voters, and increasingly strong candidates would help sustain the party through that period. In the 1980s, Texas Republicans achieved a second gubernatorial victory and the retention of John Tower's seat after his retirement. The latter event signaled the end to the era of building for the Republican party in Texas, ushering in a period of full competitiveness that now finds the state represented by two Republicans in the U.S. Senate.

The Rise and Fall of Two-Party Politics in Arkansas

"In '66 the people were not necessarily voting for me. Certainly they weren't voting for a Republican. They were voting against a system they had wearied of" (Winthrop Rockefeller, quoted in Ward 1978, 65).

Republican politics in Arkansas in the 1950s did not look much different from the situation in Texas at the same time. "Post Office Republicans" dominated the party, which was "led lethargically by a small coterie of elderly businessmen and lawyers who were primarily interested in dispensing patronage during the tenure of Republican presidents" (Dillard 1981, 229). V.O. Key identified Arkansas as the prototypical one-party state, and little had changed in the decade following Key's study. The party was dominated by the same figures who had controlled it since the 1930s, but over time, newer and younger leadership was drawn to the party as a result of Eisenhower's popularity. The rapidly growing business interests in the state were a natural incubator of Republican support, and the foremost example of this trend was Winthrop Rockefeller, grandson of billionaire John D. Rockefeller (Yates 1972, 268).

Drawn to the state in 1953 by business and personal interests, Rockefeller first became involved in state politics when governor Orval Faubus appointed him to the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission two years later. From that position, "Rockefeller came to believe that many of Arkansas' problems could be directly attributed to the lack of a competitive two-party system" (Dillard 1981, 230). By 1960 he was more closely tied to the state Republican party, although he led a nominally nonpartisan Committee for a Two Party System. Rockefeller explained his nonpartisan approach in a letter to his brother:

> The concept of drumming for a two-party system—as against talking straight Republicanism—has been most effective, for in many parts of Arkansas the word Republican is still a dirty word. Under the guise of a new name we have been able to bring out Independents and many Democrats who are disgruntled with the present situation (Urwin 1991, 34).

There also is evidence that Rockefeller's assistance was not entirely welcomed by Republican party leaders. His wife, Jeanette, described the party as "a few old men, sitting on a porch, waiting to dispense patronage when there was a Republican in the White House" (Starr 1987, 57). As part of his efforts to bring professionalism to the party, Rockefeller brought in a public relations adviser from California who suggested a "coup" in which "younger elements" of the party be placed in positions of leadership (Urwin 1991, 33-34). Rockefeller was able to generate enough support within the party to be elected national committeeman in 1961. From that perch, he poured significant resources into party revitalization, opening a state headquarters in his own downtown Little Rock office building and hiring a professional staff (Dillard 1981, 230).

Although "old guard" Republicans enjoyed the financial resources provided by Rockefeller, they were reluctant to hand over control of the state organization and the patronage system. Rockefeller's goal of turning the party into a vote-getting entity that could challenge Democrats at every level of office was acceptable to party leadership, as long as all such efforts were run through the state headquarters and chairman William Spicer (Urwin 1991, 39-40). Instead, Rockefeller acted independently, hiring a personal assistant who was sent to travel the state in a party-building effort. When Spicer refused to recruit field men to help build the party at the precinct level, as suggested by the national party, Rockefeller hired and paid them himself. In a direct rebuke of Rockefeller's efforts, the state executive committee voted to move the headquarters out of Rockefeller's office building into smaller and more costly rental space (Urwin 1991, 42-43). By 1963, however, there was evidence that Spicer was being bypassed by the national party, which was contacting Rockefeller directly (Ward 1978, 14). Finally, in 1964 Rockefeller gained full control of the executive committee, and continued to exercise that control for the next seven years.

Rockefeller's supporters hoped that a gubernatorial run would accompany his assumption of party leadership, and he did not disappoint them. Not only did Rockefeller seek and win the party's nomination, but his presence invigorated other Republicans, and the party offered more candidates than they had since Reconstruction (Urwin 1991, 39). Although Rockefeller's first race (1964) against incumbent Orval Faubus was unsuccessful, he managed to lay the groundwork for his subsequent victory two years later.

Like Tower's victory in Texas five years earlier, Rockefeller's 1966 capture of the governor's mansion can be attributed as much to a confluence of circumstances as to a well-organized partisan effort. Rockefeller, like Tower, was able to draw upon an organization begun during a recent,

unsuccessful campaign, although in this case Rockefeller's campaign organization essentially was transformed into the state party organization. This allowed the candidate to avoid the infighting that had plagued the party between 1961 and 1964, and to capitalize upon Democratic disarray. Governor Faubus withdrew from the race late in 1966, and the Democratic nomination fell to an arch-segregationist, state Supreme Court Justice Jim Johnson. Rockefeller had built up considerable personal popularity among moderate Democrats through his business and party-building activities. Appalled by Johnson's extremism, these moderates combined with regular Republicans and approximately 90 percent of the black voters to give Arkansas its first Republican governor since 1874. The 1966 election was not solely a personal victory for Rockefeller, however. Maurice "Footsie" Britt was elected Lieutenant Governor, and state GOP chair John Paul Hammerschmidt was elected to the U.S. House.

The primary question of interest for the post-election period was whether the Republican victories were random shocks with little long-term political implications, or could the party use the victory as a springboard toward achievement of a truly competitive two-party system, as Republicans in Texas had done? Rockefeller's campaign was among the first in the South to make extensive use of the tools of modern campaigning, such as radio and television advertising and public opinion polling (Dillard 1981, 231). If such innovations could be transferred to the party organization there would be hope for Republican growth. In fact, Rockefeller linked his campaign organization closely to the state party by staffing offices with campaign holdovers in the office building where party headquarters was located (Ward 1978, 79).

Republicans ran their most professional campaign ever in 1968, contesting every statewide race with a vigorous and well-financed campaign. Rockefeller's own campaign made use of data processing and computer technology, including extensive targeting-and-contacting of potential supporters (Yates 1972, 287). To the degree that results mirrored those of 1966, they were neither encouraging nor discouraging. That voters did not return to historical voting patterns was a positive sign for Republicans, but the coalition that brought Rockefeller into office—moderate Democrats, regular Republicans, and blacks—was not holding for other Republican candidates. Moreover, after years of personally financing the party, Rockefeller was losing control. Rockefeller was viewed by many as a lame duck, having pledged during his initial campaign to serve just two terms. After his reelection, some party leaders recognized the need to "dispel the image of the party as a one-man operation" (Urwin 1991, 169). One step in this direction was to move the party headquarters out of Rockefeller's office

building again. The problem for the Republicans approaching the 1970 election was more than imagery, however. In fact, "after a decade of hard work, the Republican Party in Arkansas still had significant strength only at the top" (Yates 1972, 291). Moreover, it did not have a plan for the post-Rockefeller era.

When Rockefeller broke his pledge and ran for a third term, the already growing divisions in the party became more intense. Although he received no serious opposition for the nomination, the enthusiasm of previous races was gone. Perhaps most importantly, the Democrats had made a transition of their own and nominated a young, independent, moderate candidate, Dale Bumpers. Rockefeller's devastating loss, combined with a near shutout throughout the state, was a severe blow to the Republican party. Not only did it signal the end of the first Republican administration in the century, but without either a Republican in a statewide elected office or Rockefeller's financial patronage, the party was without direction and resources. The subsequent battle for the position of state party chair brought further conflict. Rockefeller chose not to seek the position, and when his major rival, Charles Bernard, was elected overwhelmingly, "Rockefeller's aides felt like Bernard and the party had kicked Rockefeller's teeth in" (Urwin 1991, 190). One of Rockefeller's top aides suggested that Rockefeller withdraw from the party:

> I feel very strongly that you should NOT participate financially in the party under Charles Bernard to the extent that you have done in the past. . . . The party needs to revert to whatever it will be without your help. It needs to fall back to a new beginning . . . (Ward 1978, 187; emphasis in original).

The problem for the party was that Rockefeller's "help" had amounted to over $10 million in less than a decade (Bass and DeVries 1976, 89). There was no apparent alternative source of such funding for the party.

The new direction of the party became clear soon after Rockefeller's withdrawal from state politics. Bernard announced that the party would not challenge Governor Bumpers' reelection in 1972, and Republicans competed in just one Arkansas House race that year. Although it maintained a large office and staff, ten years after Rockefeller's election as state committeeman the party could claim nothing more than one congressman and four state legislators. It is worth exploring briefly how the party responded to this new reality, having squandered an opportunity to convert Rockefeller's success into a legitimate two-party system.

The final days of the Rockefeller era were not without some attempts to build a statewide organization that would stand independently of the governor. For example, in April 1970, the party executive director, Neal

Sox Johnson, issued the first ever "Arkansas GOP Roster" to Republicans throughout the state. In his foreword to the volume Johnson explained, "we believe that this detailed listing—which is an innovation for the Republican Party in the state—will be invaluable in providing needed information regarding officers, party organization, platform, etc." (GOP Roster 1970). The volume contained listings of state and county party leaders, Arkansas Federation of Republican Women leaders, Young Republican League of Arkansas members, locations of campaign headquarters, rules of the party, the party platform, a calendar of events, and relevant election laws, among other information. The roster appears to be an attempt to build linkages between Republican candidates and leaders, which had been lacking to that point.

Johnson also was attentive in 1970 to the party's failure to create a permanent organizational structure below the governor's staff and state headquarters. He posed both the problem and a solution in a memorandum to Rockefeller and other Republican leaders:

PROBLEM: How to get the most prestigious and upstanding citizens of our state involved in the Republican effort, particularly as officers and members of our Republican county committees.

SOLUTION: Positions on the county committees should be the most influential offices to hold in the county in order to be effective in dealing with the Republican administration, particularly in regard to the many forms of patronage (Memorandum 25 March 1970).

This memorandum, the GOP roster, and additional documents outlining the job description of various county and state party positions serve to demonstrate the executive director's genuine interest in the organizational aspects of the party. Apparently, however, these efforts were too late, and occurred in the midst of an increasingly polarized party.

By 1972, the post-Rockefeller trauma for the Republican party was full-blown. Following another disastrous set of election returns, state chair Bernard announced that "comments heard over the state from some felt that the Party was dead . . . we should start now to re-establish priorities and prove that we are not dead." Among the recommendations for party revitalization were the establishment of a paid state chair position and "a symposium, inviting people from other states to attend and to reassess ourselves" (RSEC 18 September 1972). Even without internal conflict and negative public perceptions, it is difficult to see how the party could have

implemented a revitalization program without the resources it enjoyed during the Rockefeller period. Comparing equivalent administrative budget items (including salary, office expenses, and travel) from 1968 with those from 1974, we find a reduction in funding from $339,000 to $98,000, controlling for inflation (RSEC documents, undated). Overall, the budget shrank from $554,000 in 1968 to $142,000 six years later. Comparing off-years 1969 and 1975, respectively, there is a decline in comparable categories from $113,000 to $28,000, and overall from $151,000 to $31,000 (RSEC documents, undated). Much of the party's effort during the early to mid-1970s would be directed toward enhancing financing.

Although the Texas Republican party went through a similarly trouble-some period in the early 1970s, they enjoyed the continued presence of John Tower at the top of the party and the periodic post-reelection boost that he provided. Arkansas' Republicans were in a continuous mode of "renewal" following Rockefeller's demise. The difficulty of maintaining a strong organization can be attributed to internal strife, loss of a financial patron, and revitalization of the Democrats; however, the lack of an electoral incentive must be noted as well. By the mid-1970s, the party seemed to have overcome some of its infighting, turning to new leadership in Ken Coon as state chair and Bob Luther as executive director. Apparently less ideological than previous chair Charles Bernard, the new leadership focused on building the party at the county level. A new "regional concept" was put into place, the goal of which was to activate 75 county committees (Letter 1 May 1975). The task would prove more difficult than it may have been a decade earlier, had the party focused then on grass roots organization rather than relying on the popularity and resources of one individual. Instead, ten years after Rockefeller's initial victory, the party was not much more competitive than it had been in the early 1960s. Unlike the Texas Republicans, the Arkansas GOP could not count on a competitive race at the statewide level, and was making little if any progress at lower levels of office. The scholarly consensus about Arkansas politics during this period is striking:

> Without doubt [Rockefeller's] greatest defeat was the failure to develop a viable two-party system. The governor succeeded in building a large personal following, but he was unable to transfer that support to his party (Dillard 1981, 234).

> In the early days of Rockefeller's attempt to build the Republican Party nobody could have known that the Democratic Party would in the long run be the principal beneficiary of the effort. The Democrats took some deserved lumps along the way, but the only lasting effect of Rockefeller's brief tumultuous foray into office-seeking was the liberation of the Democratic Party from the machine (Starr 1987, 57).

> Rockefeller, more than any other person, played the key transitional role in turning Arkansas around, politically and economically, but Republican development receded

with his defeat in 1970 and subsequent death. . . . [O]ne-party Democrat dominance has returned to Arkansas, but with dominant figures who are moderate, young, and progressive (Bass and DeVries 1976, 89).

For a brief period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with Rockefeller pouring money and enthusiasm and organizational capacity into the Republicans, and the Democrats smarting from two successive gubernatorial defeats, both state party organizations took their first tentative steps into becoming what parties are supposed to be. Rockefeller's death and the Democrats' return to seemingly easy dominance in the 1970s temporarily thwarted this emerging development, leaving the Republicans with a state headquarters but little else . . . (Blair 1988, 99).

The largely unsuccessful efforts at rebuilding the party in the 1970s demonstrate the importance of electoral shocks for organizational development, such as the Tower and Rockefeller victories. Though a state organization can stand independently, it is unlikely to be efficacious without continued enthusiasm poured in from the grassroots level. And that enthusiasm normally results from victory—particularly unexpected victory.

Conclusion

In the introduction to the article, we posed three questions concerning the experience of the Republican parties of Texas and Arkansas. From the data and analysis presented above, it is possible to provide at least partial answers to each.

Did the parties view the victories of Tower and of Rockefeller as indicators of opportunity, and adapt accordingly? The adaptive nature of party organizations is a topic of much interest among scholars at the moment, and is central to our model of party development. Studies of state party organizations generally have been unable to tell us whether the parties themselves sensed the opportunities for party-building offered by such "shocks," given the inattention to the records of those parties. There is little doubt from our reading of party records that, in both of the selected cases, the state party organization perceived the chance for change ushered in by these stunning episodes. Thad Hutcheson's advice to Tad Smith in Texas and Neal Sox Johnson's 1970 organizational efforts in Arkansas, cited above, are but two small indicators of this perception.

However, there is no doubt that the answer to our second question— *were the parties able to institutionalize the changes brought about*—is different across the two cases. The Texas Republicans, as we have shown, were able to use the window opened by the Tower victory as an entrance to the state party system. While we cannot classify Texas as a true two-party system in 1970, the Republicans certainly were faring much better than they

had in the past, and better than their Southern counterparts. The Texas GOP emerged from the 1960s competitive not only in national elections but at the state level, endowed with a supply of good candidates, and equipped with a solid organizational structure across the state. In contrast, the Arkansas Republican party essentially failed to institutionalize in the same manner. Certainly, change was occurring, and the party's leaders sensed the opportunities. Yet, despite the evidence of quite active party-building efforts, the Arkansas GOP continued to suffer from its inability to win at the state level, the lack of good candidates, and the continual struggle to activate its own organizational elements. Charles Bernard was correct in characterizing the 1970 rumors of the party's demise as 'greatly exaggerated;' nevertheless, the organizational efforts of the Arkansas GOP up until then largely went for naught.

Why were the post-victory Republican experiences in both states so different? One part of the answer to this question lies in the nature of the respective electoral coalitions of Tower and Rockefeller. We have not stressed this part of the analysis, as we wished this article to focus more explicitly on the questions of party organizational response and the conditions of that response. We have noted above, however, that Tower was able to attract many conservative Democrats who were abandoning their party over civil rights and the New Frontier, while the liberal wing of the Democratic party used the opportunity to attempt to take over the state organization. While Lamis (1990) reminds us that the conservatives continued to control the Texas Democratic party in subsequent elections, Tower's victory was built on an electoral coalition that foreshadowed subsequent trends in the South. In Arkansas, however, Rockefeller's breakthrough was effected with an entirely different coalition, that included many independents, liberal democrats, and blacks. Once the Democratic party had lost office and itself became the object of reform, many of these coalition elements—which had never forsworn loyalty to the Democratic party in national elections—went back to the fold. Thus, Rockefeller trounced a worn Democratic machine in 1966, only to be humiliated by Bumpers and a revitalized, more liberal Democratic party in 1970. The relationship between these electoral coalitions and party efforts to organize, we have argued elsewhere, is consistent with our model.

However, the second explanation for the success of the Texas Republicans at institutionalization, and the failure of the Arkansas GOP to achieve the same plateau, relates to respective abilities to define consensual party goals. In the case of Texas, the state party was united around the goal of building a strong organization in the wake of Tower's victory. A key factor in this effort was the clear distinction between campaign activity and

candidates, on the one hand, and party activity and party leaders on the other. In contrast, the Arkansas Republican party had split bitterly from the first signs of Rockefeller's involvement. While no one could—or wanted to—rival Rockefeller as the gubernatorial candidate, his attempts to build the party organization were threatening to many. Indeed, we have cited cases where the Arkansas GOP deliberately attempted to wean itself from Rockefeller's largesse, fearing his grip on party activities. Yet, at the same time, the lack of good candidates demanded that party leaders run for office. Thus, state GOP chairs John Paul Hammerschmidt, Odell Pollard, Charles Bernard, and Ken Coon all made election bids. With the same people involved at both ends of the recruitment process, and with resources suddenly made available through Rockefeller's (and Hammerschmidt's) victories, the state party was paralyzed by factional strife and a constant internal struggle for control of those resources.

It was not until the death of Rockefeller and the withdrawal of Bernard from the party leadership that this internal strife began to subside. It is significant that the glimmerings of the institutionalization of the party begin in the mid-1970s, during the leadership of Lowe and Luther—neither of whom ran for office, and neither of whom had to cope with the parallel organizational efforts of a Rockefeller. We would argue that a party's ability to institutionalize is based not just on qualitative or quantitative change in previous habits, but in its ability to innovate and to introduce substantially new methods and operating procedures. Our results inform us that innovation is not an automatic process, but depends on choices determined by political and social factors. *Factionalism*, we would argue, is an obstacle to innovation; it prevents clear definition of party goals and inhibits the search for new methods by which to accomplish those goals. Related to this, a clear distinction between organizational and programmatic party activities and personnel is more likely, we contend, to favor innovation.

Our interest in the past of these parties is not historical. What we are interested in doing, in the long term, is to build a fully predictive model of party response. For this pilot study, we deliberately have chosen clear cases of dramatic changes in the competitive environment of two state parties for which we have the data necessary to evaluate their responses. We have learned a number of things from our study: parties indeed do adapt, party organizations were more active within these southern states than sometimes has been assumed, and a party's ability to capitalize on success is in part dependent upon its willingness and capacity to innovate. In future work we intend to build on these findings by expanding the scope of inquiry to include parties operating under different sets of conditions. How do parties in power respond to the sudden fortune of their previously moribund

opponents? How do parties, particularly non-competitive parties, evolve without the impetus provided by a Tower or a Rockefeller? In competitive systems, what factors induce change? As we develop more comprehensive longitudinal measures of party organization, the answers to these questions will begin to emerge.

NOTES

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[1]The designation 'RSEC' refers to minutes of the Republican State Executive Committee, dates following.

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