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Campaign Inc.: Data from a Field Survey of State Party Organizations

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This paper continues the tradition of the State Party Transformation studies of the 1980s and the State Party Organization study of the 1990s to yield insight into the activities of state party organizations. This survey pays particular attention to bureaucratic professionalization vis-à-vis staffing, primary endorsement decisions, candidate recruitment, and other electoral activities. Generally, we find that state parties continue to operate on similar or higher levels of professionalization than those found in previous work. We examine party organization through the lens of the candidate-centered political environment that currently exists, and find evidence that parties are playing a smaller role in candidate recruitment for major office compared to lower level offices and have increased efforts to provide resources to candidates at all levels – all the while operating with fewer financial resources than previously recorded.

"We are basically a campaign management company…"
-State Party Executive Director

Introduction

Discussing state party organizations, a party operative related the story of a visit to a Cook County Democratic Party office some years ago. Far from notions of a bustling, professional office, this individual described a single elderly woman answering the telephone as the entirety of the office's bureaucratic sophistication. For a party machine that has captivated the attention of party scholars and commentators alike, how could this be? The study of political party organizations has taken scholars down many avenues over the past several decades. Unfortunately, the changing nature of state party organizations and our incomplete understanding of how they operate leave a considerable dearth of information regarding what state parties do and how they operate. Following in the steps of previous scholars, this essay attempts to replicate surveys of state party organizations with a focus on recruitment activities and organization.

In this essay, we will present the results of a survey presented to all 100 state party organizations and attempt to place our findings in context with

previous research. This survey is the first of its kind since Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin in 1999. Given that it has been fifteen years since a similar evaluation into the forms and functions of state party organizations, we think the topic is worthy of attention. Specifically, we are concerned with answering three questions: How have the bureaucratic structures of party organization changed over the past two decades? What role do state parties play in candidate recruitment? How prevalent are party endorsements and what factors play into endorsement decisions? Finally, does the balance of evidence favor a view that state party organizations continue to be in decline? This essay will proceed by covering the extant literature on state party organizational strength, candidate recruitment efforts, and primary endorsements, before introducing the survey instrument and methodology. Finally, we will discuss our findings, which show stability in many aspects, evolution in others, and—overall—persistent relevance for state parties in our candidate-centered American political environment.

State Party Organizations

The study of state party organization has a long but sporadic lineage. Dating back to the 1970s, scholars concerned with declining parties began seeking out information on these relative unknowns. Perhaps the first major study of state party organizations came via a series of surveys and questionnaires conducted by Cotter and colleagues in the 1980s. The surveys sought to capture the behavior of state party chairpersons and the activities of state party organizations (1984). Following in this line, Aldrich's survey of state party leaders in the 1990s attempted to bring a longitudinal aspect to our understanding of state parties. In this same vein, this project attempts to replicate some of the survey instruments of these past studies, however, it is important to correctly operationalize party organizational strength before embarking on such an endeavor.

Scholars since V.O. Key (1964) have seen party organization as a collection of bureaucratic characteristics. Distinct from Schattschneider's (1942) definition of party, which focused on the goal of gaining power, Key began to investigate the multi-faceted entity that is party. Indeed, the majority of scholarly work on state party organizations has featured the bureaucratic institutions that Key described in his party-as-organization. This essay pays particular attention to one critical feature party: organizational strength—namely the ability of parties to recruit and secure the nomination of candidates under their label. As our opening anecdote suggests, bureaucratic sophistication (or lack thereof) does not necessarily

equate to party organizational strength. One needs only to recall the stories of Mayor Daley creating his slate to understand that much of the true power of parties rests in candidate nomination. This view is not a novel one. The rise of the direct primary and subsequent loss of party control over nominations is often cited as a key factor in the decline of parties. Epstein (1986) makes this claim through the lens of the party as public utility. The degree to which a party is able to recruit candidates for office and secure their nomination must be seen as an integral factor of party organization. Given this aim, our survey not only features questions regarding bureaucratic operations, but questions regarding candidate recruitment, primary endorsement, and financial support of candidates in order to unpack the specific activities of the formal party organization.

Moving past the hierarchical model of party organization, we must also consider parties through the lens of informal networks. Schlesinger (1985), Schwartz (1990), Cohen et al. (2008), Masket (2009), Herrnson (2009), and others, describe coalitions that extend beyond formal party organization. Cohen et al. (2008) describe a group-centered model of party, focusing on 'policy demanders' outside the traditional party framework. While we do not discount the claim that party should be conceptualized more broadly than the traditional, hierarchical model, we feel that it is still important to describe and investigate the functions of the formal party apparatus. Our goal here, is not to adjudicate between competing models of party, but rather to shed light on the state of formal party organizations, whether they are framed in a more traditional model, or—alternatively—in a group-centered model. It is our hope that this survey research could lend helpful insight into how party networks are organized, and while our preliminary findings suggest that state party organizations facilitate relationships between candidates and informal party structure; it is not our proximate goal to settle this question.

Candidate Recruitment

While growing scholarly consensus suggests that candidates emerge from pools of interested citizens, rather than being chosen by party officials (Fowler and McClure 1989; Kazee and Thornberry 1990; Ehrenhalt 1991; Moncreif, Squire, and Jewell 2001), others contend that candidate recruitment (especially in state legislative races) has shifted from state party organizations to state legislative party leadership (Sanbonmatsu 2006). Other recent literature, including Cohen et al. (2008) suggests that party leadership and other informal party structures engage in an 'invisible primary' to weed

out ideologically incompatible candidates. We engage this literature by further examining candidate recruitment by state party organizations at all sub-presidential office levels. By probing party officials as primary sources of data, rather than relying on secondary or tertiary accounts, we are able to further unlock the recruitment efforts of party, versus other narratives of candidate emergence. These secondary accounts largely focus on successful candidate recruitment and may miss important, but failed efforts to recruit. Additionally, this speaks directly to party organization in a unique way, as we have thus far been unable to distinguish successful recruitment versus attempted recruitment. Accounts of party decline that cite candidate recruitment may be more nuanced than they seem if a perceived decline in recruitment is actually a decline in recruitment success and not an overall decline in recruitment effort by party organizations. Further, while the literature on the invisible primary is compelling at the presidential level, there are unique opportunities available to state parties—such as primary endorsements—that are not available to the national party in a presidential nominating contest. Thus, opportunity costs exist for state parties in a way that they do not for the national party, warranting an investigation of the invisible primary thesis at the state level.

Primary Endorsements

While not an option available to all state parties, primary endorsements remain one of the strongest ways in which party organizations can influence nomination of candidates. Previous research focuses on the relative successes or failures of these endorsements and have report changes in state law and party rule (Jewell and Morehouse, 2001). Thad Kousser and his colleagues (2013) have recently done work examining the causal effects of endorsements as well and their paper offers a good review of this literature.

We examine primary endorsements to fill a void in the literature in terms of party thoughts, considerations, and views of the endorsement procedure. While the literature cited above works to catalog and explain the effects of endorsements, we have not found work that discusses, or attempts to show how party leaders feel about the endorsement process, and why they opt in or out of endorsing in their state. Again, this fills a unique void in extant literature, as we cannot disentangle the unwillingness to endorse from an inability to endorse.

While work on the invisible primary has suggested that parties willingly refrain from primary interference, it is not clear how this mechanism works

at the state level. Two confounding factors are immediately apparent. First, informal party networks or networks of activists may not be as strong at the state level, or have as much influence in nomination politics. Second, we previously mentioned potential opportunity costs for state parties, which do not exist at the national level. This suggests, at the least, that we ought to treat state parties different from their national counterpart and investigate the matter in more depth.

Finally, we know very little about party efforts to change existing rules to allow or disallow endorsements in the various states. We are hopeful that this research can help unlock these endorsement efforts and further contribute to a larger narrative of party organization and party power.

Methodology

During the fall of 2013 we contacted all 100 state party organizations and solicited their responses to a short survey. Following the questionnaire sent out by Aldrich and his colleagues in their state party organizations study, we set out to ask some of the same questions that state party leaders were asked 15 years ago, paying particular attention to candidate recruitment and state party endorsements. As our survey did not focus on state party chairs themselves (as in previous work by Cotter et al. 1984), our survey reached state party chairs, executive directors, communication directors, and other party officials. We did not discriminate in terms of which official responded to this survey, we merely attempted to solicit at least one response from each state party organization. Of the responses we received, 68% were in response to requests targeted directly at the known email address of a state party chair. However, the survey instrument itself did not preserve any personally identifiable data, so we are unsure if party officials, staffers, or volunteers filled out the survey itself. Given the nature of our questions, we feel confident that there should not be any bias in our answers since we are generally asking for fact reporting, rather than opinion.

Our success in gathering responses was mixed. Due to resource constraints, we initially distributed this survey by e-mail, delivering the survey instrument via Qualtrics to e-mail addresses mined from the websites of state parties. In some instances we were able to get direct e-mail addresses to state party leaders. However, in some instances, we were forced to send this survey to a generic recipient (info@stateparty.com). After two rounds of e-mail contacts we began calling state party offices in order to solicit more responses. Thus, the delivery method for the survey varies across

respondents; however, question wording, order, and response choices did not vary between the two delivery mechanisms. In some cases, state party organizations specifically declined to participate in the survey, and others simply failed to respond. We do not differentiate between these two types of non-response. Our sample was nearly evenly split between Democratic and Republican organizations, with 53.8% of our responses from Democratic organizations. For the sake of comparison, Aldrich's original sample was 59.3% Democratic, meaning that the partisan breakdown of our sample is comparable to his original survey.

Our survey instrument solicited responses to a number of questions on topics such as the nature of the office of state party chair, party activities, candidate recruitment and funding, Pre-primary endorsements, in collaboration with the national party. A complete list of all survey questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Finally, we acknowledge the possibility for self-selection bias in this survey due in part to the capacity of state parties to participate in the survey. It may be the case that the very measures we are investigating have a direct bearing on the capacity of the party to participate in the survey. The ubiquity of executive directors in our sample may be evidence of this, as the availability of these staff members may be a factor in whether or not the party has the time or resources to participate in our survey. Additionally, we are wary of making claims of statistical significance due to low sample size. Although the universe of respondents is equally small, we did not reach a response threshold which would have allowed for meaningful statistical comparison between our survey and previous findings. With caution, nevertheless, we examine and compare key findings from our survey with those of Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) using means tests for statistical significance. Additionally, we believe that general comparisons in the data are insightful, and that the open- ended response questions can add a richness and depth to our study not found in previous efforts.

Findings

We received responses from 32 state party officials, which yielded interesting and insightful information about the nature of state party organizations. In order to present these summary findings, we will review three facets of party organization: bureaucratic structures, recruitment and endorsement activities, and finally, other electoral activities.

Organizational Structures

Examining bureaucratic structures, we see the existence of similar trends to those reported in earlier studies in the 1980s and 1990s. In terms of party leadership, the growth of salaried executive directors is apparent, with 96% of surveyed party organizations employing one. It is notable; however, that only 35% of state party chairs in our sample received a salary. This suggests that while bureaucratic leadership has grown over the past 30 years, this growth has taken place through the development of executive offices, rather than state party chairs—who remain largely part time and unpaid. Other staff members do play somewhat of a role in party organizations, but this is extremely dependent on election cycles. Table 1 shows the average number of full time and part time staff in the surveyed parties. It is worth noting that two of the states in our sample conduct odd-year elections. While this may present a problem in the distinction of the term 'non-election year,' these states do indeed have years without elections, and in keeping with the original wording of the Aldrich survey, we retain the term in our survey.

Table 1: Average Full and Part Time Staff

	Election Year (Davis and Kurlowski)	Election Year (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin)	Non-Election Year (Davis and Kurlowski)	Non-Election Year (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin)
Full Time Staff	36.7	7.46	5.96	5.59
Part Time Staff	7.22	7.4	1.48	7.46

As Table 1 shows, much of the staff of state parties is dependent on the election cycle. Average full time staff increases six-fold in election years. While we cannot confirm the causality of this relationship, it seems confirmatory of the conventional wisdom that state party organizations are highly focused on electoral activities, and much less so on off-year party building activity.

Figure 1 depicts the changes in staffing between the 1999 survey and our own. The significant increase in the average number of election year overall staffing—from 15 in 1999 to nearly 40 in 2013—is particularly noteworthy. We see this dramatic increase in staff hires during election years as indicative of a shift in the role of state party organizations. Between the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) survey and our own, the "coordinated campaign" gained in popularity as candidates and party pooled monetary resources in

Figure 1: 95% Confidence Interval for Mean Staffing

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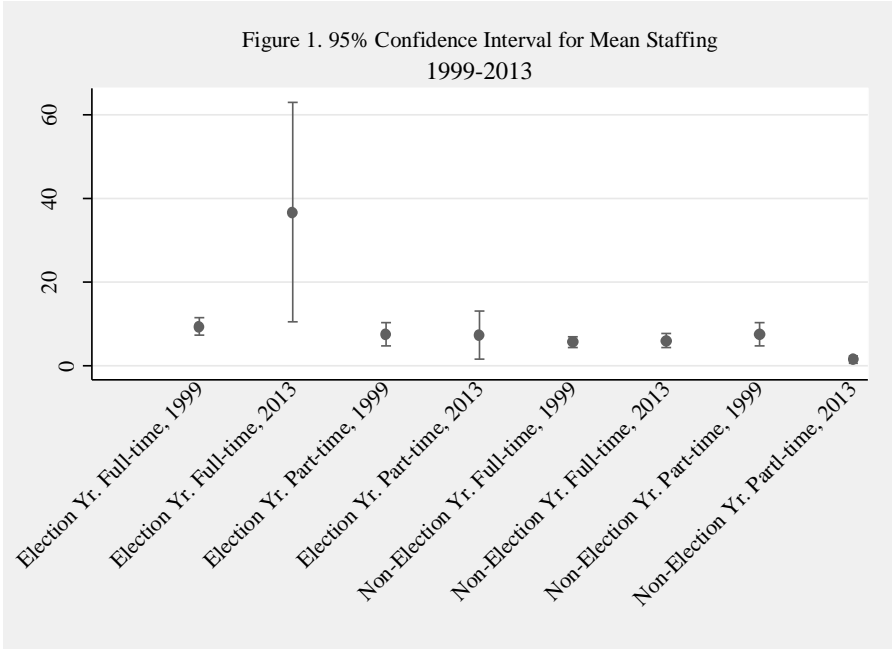
Note: Confidence intervals represent the standard error of the mean.

order to more efficiently collaborate (Davis 2014). The coordinated campaign effort might also explain—in part—why the increase in staffing occurs exclusively during the election year since the candidates themselves are the sources driving the number of staffers in their efforts for gaining offices. In non-election years, when a coordinated campaign would not be of any practical use, average staff size remains relatively low in both surveys and actually decreases between 1999 and 2013.

We report and compare election year and non-election year budgets in Table 2 and Figure 2. A comparison among each survey's full samples indicates a rather large decrease in average budget for election and non-election years—adjusted for inflation. However, a more useful comparison can be made when the sample of 2013 survey respondents and the sample matched with the earlier Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) are considered. In order to control for various party and state-specific effects, we identified a subset state/party responses in both our dataset and those in Aldrich's sample. Here, our survey reports increases in election-year budget from 1999—adjusting for inflation—of approximately $500,000. Interestingly, the

parties' average non-election year budgets decreases by approximately as much between the time of the two surveys — from approximately $1.1 million to $600,000. The small sample of cases (14) notwithstanding, the reduction in average non-election year budgets during this time period — coupled with both the increase in average election-year budget and staffing – provides circumstantial evidence of the implementation of so-called coordinated campaigns and a general trend toward more enhanced service-oriented roles for state parties.

Table 2: Budget Size of State Party Organizations (in dollars)

	Budget (Davis and Kurlowski Full Sample)	**Budget*** (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin Full Sample)	**Budget** (Davis and Kurlowski Matched Sample)	**Budget*** (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin Matched Sample)
Election Year	2,214,706	3,971,445	2,300,000	1,823,250
Non-Election Year	983,353	1,265,992	604,188	1,172,779
N	17	53	14	14

*Adjusted for Inflation using CPI

Figure 2: 95% Confidence Interval for Average Party Budget, 1999-2013

Figure 2. 95% Confidence Interval for Avg. Party Budget 1999-2013
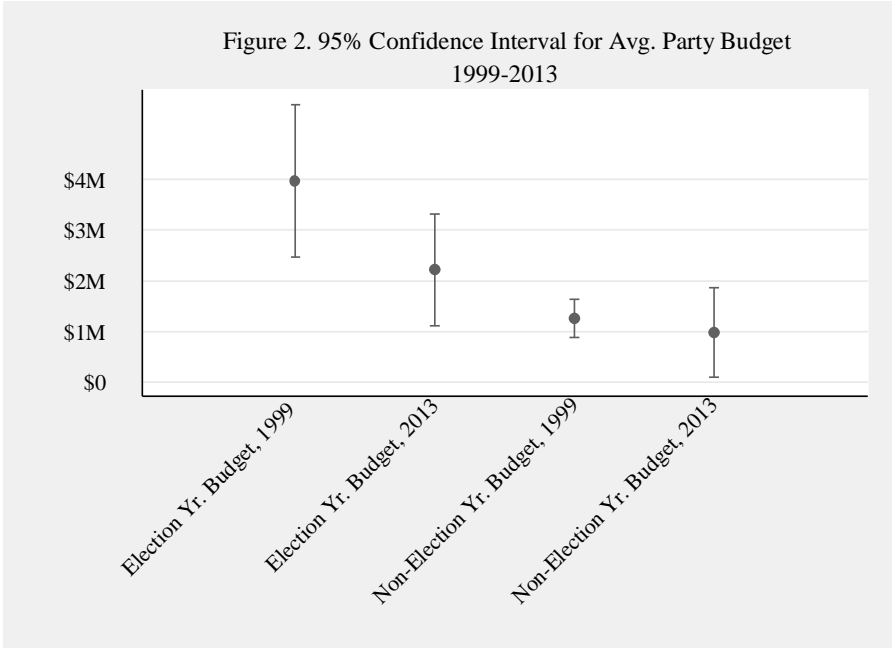
Note: Confidence intervals represent the standard error of the mean.

Unraveling bureaucratic structures, we inquired about basic staff positions. While previous studies of party organization often investigated structures such as a permanent office, leasing versus owning office space, or having a sign marking the office, we feel the pertinent structures that lead to bureaucratic professionalization are rooted in staffing. Thus, to investigate staffing sophistication, we asked whether or not parties employ an executive director, public relations (PR) director, field staff, comptroller or bookkeeper, and research staff. Table 3 shows the percentage of party organizations employing staff in these positions. It is interesting to note that full-time Executive Directors are nearly ubiquitous in our sample. Many of the positions listed in Table 3 seem to be in line with earlier data, suggesting only moderate change over the past 15 years. It is, however, worthwhile to point out the three examples of larger change. It seems that there has been recent growth in PR directors and research staff. While these differences are not statistically significant at $\alpha = .05$, the respective probabilities of an increase in mean were .7 and .84, respectively. We report these so that readers may make their own judgments on the significance of these differences.

Table 3: Employment of Various Staff in State Party Organizations (in percent)

	Employment (Davis and Kurlowski)	Employment (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin)	Difference
Executive Director	96.1	95.3	+0.8
(If Exe. Direct.) Full Time?	100.0	93.4	+6.6
PR Director	57.7	51.6	+6.1
Bookkeeper/Comptroller	73.1	82.8	-9.7
Research Staff	61.5	50.0	+11.5
Field Staff	76.9	73.4	+3.5

Looking at the one instance of a decline in staffing, we remain perplexed. While representing a statistically insignificant difference at $\alpha = .05$, the probability of a decrease in the existence of a bookkeeper is .85, higher than any other difference reported here. Unfortunately, we are not sure what this difference represents, but have suggested two possibilities. First, financial management may be contracted out at increasing rates. If this is the case, survey respondents may not have reported a bookkeeper as staff. Second, there may be confusion over the use of the terms bookkeeper/comptroller as opposed to treasurer. This highlights one issue with the conflict between our desire to maintain the same survey instrument that Aldrich utilized and

changing times and terminology. A visual depiction of the changes and stability with regard to staffing positions is provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3: 95% Confidence Interval for Reported Staff Positions, 1999-2013

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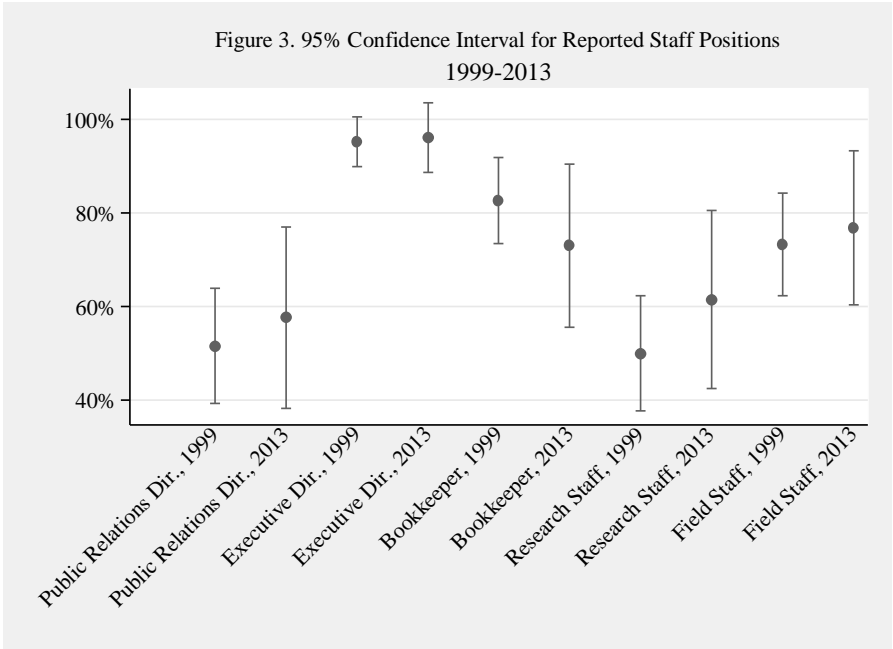
Note: Confidence intervals represent the standard error of the mean.

Overall, these data seem to suggest only moderate, if any change in staffing since Aldrich's survey. It is, however, worthwhile to note the possible increase in research and PR staff – a finding we will discuss further in the following section.

Electoral Activities

Examining electoral activities, we investigated pre-primary endorsement rules and behavior to examine this potentially strong influence of parties. In 67% of the parties in our sample, pre-primary endorsements are allowed by state law and party rule. Revealingly, however, only 35% of these state parties reported actually making a pre-primary endorsement. It is worth noting that we left this question open, asking about endorsements generally, and not in any specific circumstance (such as an open seat race, or when an incumbent is running). While we expected to see some acknowledgement of

the endorsement of incumbents, no respondent mentioned this practice. Rather, when asked to elaborate on the factors that go into the decision to endorse a candidate in the pre-primary period, many respondents mentioned other circumstances under which the party would endorse. Multiple officials cited consensus in the decision to endorse, with one noting "A two-thirds vote is required by the members of the [STATE] [PARTY] Committee. If a two-thirds vote is not received there is no endorsement." Another noted, "A pre-primary endorsement is most likely if one of the primary candidates is known to not really espouse the party platform." Overall, party officials seemed hesitant to discuss any overt pre-primary endorsement practices. While we are uncertain why this practice seems so infrequent in our sample, later comments from the respondents proved enlightening.

When pressed to elaborate on the decision not to endorse, most respondents cited the need for party neutrality. One party official responded, "It is a good idea to let the people in the party sort that out as to not show favoritism", while another said "It's the [party] voters, not the party leaders, who select our nominees." Even when states were allowed by law or bylaw to endorse, many avoided the practice, with one party official explaining the need to maintain the integrity of the electoral process, stating, "Now, in order to increase party unity we don't endorse. We choose not to endorse." Another official told us "We are allowed to make endorsements per our constitution. However, we don't traditionally get involved when 2 [party members] are against one another". The general consensus among these officials was that general election chances were better served by the party staying out of a nomination battle. One official confirmed this, stating, "At the end of the primary season, the Party must get behind whichever candidate wins. [State] is a small state and we are better served going into the general election with a unified team."

Interestingly, two party organizations mentioned internal discussions about changing rules or laws to allow pre-primary endorsements. In both cases, the states declined to offer specifics on the extent of the debate within their parties. However, is important to reiterate the overwhelming consensus that party officials seemed wary about the use of such a strong-handed technique. A fitting summary of this position was offered by one respondent who remarked "If a small group of leaders decide who the best candidate is, rather than the voting public, then we are Chicago-style backroom operators. That's not why I'm a [member of my party]."

Among the roughly 20 state parties which gave information about contributions to candidates for office, it seems that the majority of these efforts are concentrated in state legislative races. Table 4 shows a breakdown of those state party organizations that reported contributing to candidates for office and recruiting candidates for office. These data suggest a slightly decreased role in state party organizations' involvement in campaign contributions between 1999 and 2013. However, reported contribution remains quite high—particularly when compared to Gibson, Cotter, and Bibby (1983) survey data which predates both surveys at focus in this analysis. Overall, it appears the primary focus on contributions is not on visible and high profile races, but on state legislative races. In our discussion section, we suggest this may be related to the varying need of candidates at different levels, and the ability for high profile candidates to 'take care of themselves' in a candidate-centered political environment. The party, then, steps in to assist with lower visibility races and less experienced candidates.

Table 4: State Parties Reporting Contributions at Various Office Levels (in percent)

|	Contribution (Davis and Kurlowski)	Contribution (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin)	Contribution (Gibson, Cotter, Bibby)
Governor	85	89	47
Other Statewide	60	80	44
House	80	82	48
Senate	80	83	(Congressional)
State Legislative	90	92	47
City/Local Office	55	67	--

Additionally, it is important to note the active involvement of parties in recruiting state legislative candidates. Again, this suggests divergent strategies depending on the level of political office. One surveyed official noted that they heavily recruited for state legislative seats due to the high turnover induced by term limits, which—in the case of many states—were commonly executed in the time between the Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin (1999) survey and our own (ncsl.org). The official said that 70% of the open seats in their state legislature were due to term limits. As a result they were "recruiting heavily statewide for those seats. With term limits we have a lot to do in the election." Another noted the need to recruit at lower levels, stating "One recent goal is to go down to the local level and recruit more candidates for countywide office. They can become the next generation, so to speak." Table 5 compares the rates of reported state party organizations' "active" recruitment efforts by office.

Table 5: State Parties Reporting Active Recruitment at Various Office Levels (in percent)

	'Active' Recruitment (Davis and Kurlowski)	'Active' Recruitment (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin)
Governor	46	52
Other Statewide Office	57	54
House	50	56
Senate	37	45
State Legislative	67	78
City or Local Office	42	24

Figure 4 presents the 95% confidence intervals for the average reported "active" recruitment for various levels of elected office. Examining our findings, it seems that the majority of recruitment activity is taking place at the state legislative level. Indeed, with 67% of state parties reporting active involvement, it is the most common recruitment activity reported in our

Figure 4: 95% Confidence Interval for Average Active Recruitment, 1999-2013
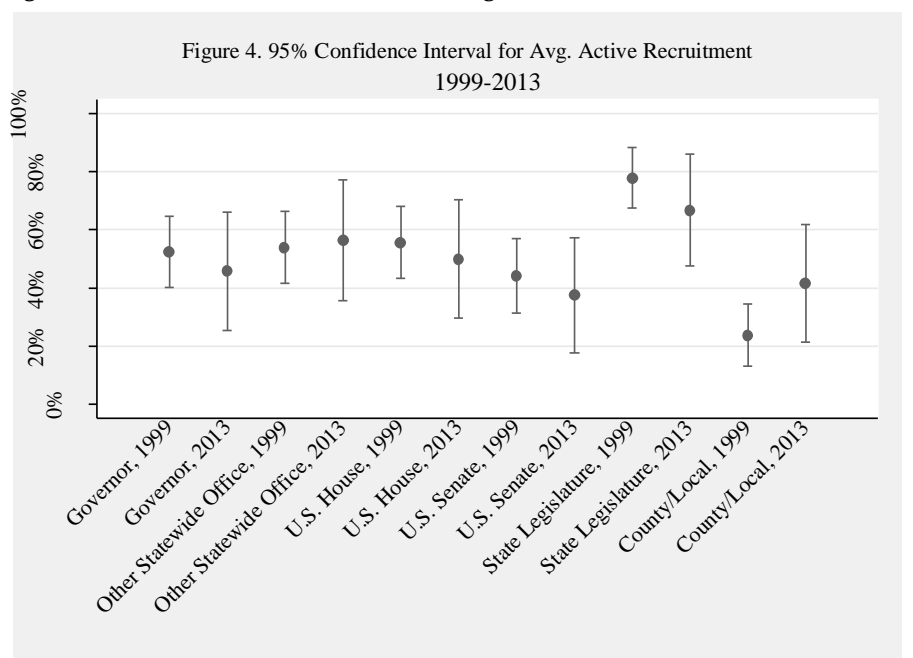
Note: Confidence intervals represent the standard error of the mean.

survey. We expected this rate to have risen due to the implementation of term limits in several states (15 states enacted term limit statutes throughout

the 1990s, however the vast majority did not take effect until after 2000). However, reported active recruitment in state legislative races was lower in 2013 than in 1999. Beyond this, the largest and only statistically significant ($\alpha \leq .1$) difference in active state party recruitment between the surveys is for city and local offices. We believe this might also be related to term limits in state legislatures as county and municipal offices provide entry into partisan politics for new talent.

We also inquired about other electoral activities, including contributions to campaigns, sharing of data, fundraising efforts, campaign management seminars, and GOTV efforts. These results are presented in Table 6. Again, while aspects of our data seem similar to the results of Aldrich's earlier surveys, important exceptions exist—such as party contributions to candidates. In this case, our data are much more in line with early party surveys conducted by Gibson, Cotter, and Bibby (1983). While we cannot be sure of the causal mechanism for this change, a likely culprit is campaign finance reform. While the data from the late 1970s coincides with a time before the wide scale exploitation of soft money loopholes and the rise in financial importance of parties, the data from the late 1990s captures the height of this trend. While these rule changes did not directly affect a party's ability to contribute to candidates, it seems reasonable that the larger budget, facilitated by increases in soft money donations to parties, would have reduced the relative financial burden of direct contributions to candidates. With campaign finance reform in the years between Aldrich's survey and ours, it is not surprising that our data show a return in the financial importance of parties to pre-soft money levels. While we cannot be sure that this is the linkage between the change in these data (and acknowledging that they may be caused by sample size issues to a certain extent) it is suggestive and warrants further investigation.

Examining a subsample of our data which matches state/party observations with the Aldrich data, we can identify six questions posed to 22 states (with 2 missing data points from the Aldrich dataset) for a total of 130 observations of contributions to a specific office within a state and party. Of these 130, 42 (32%) reported no longer contributing to campaigns of a particular office in our new survey. None of the 130 question pairs showed contributions to a campaign which did not occur in Aldrich's early data. This matched subset addresses concerns regarding the sampling of state parties and corroborates our aggregate evidence of a decrease in the financial support offered by parties.

Table 6: Participation in Other Electoral Activities (in percent)

	Participating in Activity (Davis and Kurlowski)	Participating in Activity (Aldrich, Gomez, Griffin)
Joint Fundraising Effort	65	--
Held One Major Fundraiser	100	98
Sharing Mailing Lists	71	--
Participating in GOTV Efforts	100	--
Voter Registration Drives	96	--
Campaign Seminars	88	95
Public Opinion Surveys	77	78
Direct Mail Fundraising	71	84
Publish Newspaper/Newsletter	69	89

Table 6 presents results from both our survey and Aldrich's 1999 survey. For some of these activities, there is no comparable data from the Aldrich dataset, however, we report our new findings on their own. For three of the five comparable categories (fundraising, campaign seminars, and public opinion surveys) there was no statistically significant difference in our findings. However, there were statistically significant declines in the percentage of those parties participating in direct mail fundraising and publishing a newspaper or newsletter. We believe this is likely due to changing technology and the increasing use of the internet as a channel for fundraising. One alternative explanation is that the parties outsource some of these tasks to contractors or consultants. While it is not clear that there is a substantive difference between the parties conducting the mailing in-house, or paying a contractor to conduct the mailing, we must acknowledge the possibility that the use of contractors and consultants may be at the heart of some of these changes, rather than a change in underlying strategy. Another interesting feature of Table 6, which lists rates of participation in various electoral activities, is the low rate of sharing party mailing lists. Due to the growth of 'big data,' we expected to see high rates of data sharing and the use of sophisticated party contact lists. Anecdotal evidence from parties who did not report sharing these data suggest we may have incorrectly captured this activity due to our question wording. Some state parties who said they did not share mailing lists did report selling these lists to campaigns and candidates. This could indicate that the growth of 'big-data' activities has led to an increase in the transfer of information from party to candidate, but this collaboration has transformed from one where data is readily shared to one where the activity has been monetized.

Discussion

Given these preliminary results, where can we place state party organizational strength in today's political environment? For the last several decades, we have seen the emergence of the "candidate-centered campaign." The findings presented in Tables 1, 3, and 5 depict behaviors consistent with organizations intent on providing important campaign services to their party's various candidates. The quote offered by a state party leader at the beginning of this paper lends anecdotal evidence of this perception of state party organizations directly from the source. It would appear that these organizations' primary focus is providing paid staff and additional resources to aid their party's candidates in election years. When one election cycle ends, most state party offices are reduced to mere shells of their election-year selves.

Overall, our findings regarding candidate recruitment are consistent with the notion that today's state parties play a diminished role in candidate recruitment compared to fifty years ago (Cotter et al. 1984; Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin 1999). Given this, these organizations focus primarily on recruiting at the state legislative and local levels, and are less active in scouting potential talent for governor and the respective state's congressional delegation. We contend that term limits—in part—explain the trend of focusing on more localized elected positions. This observation might also be a product of the candidate-centered environment in which these organizations operate. Experienced candidates often fill races for higher office (such as governor or U.S. Senate). These upwardly mobile candidates have already established their own networks of supporters inside and outside of the formal party organization. Conversely, we see the state party actively seeking out and developing new talent for state legislative races. These fresh faces are likely more dependent upon the party organization's staff, financial contributions, and campaign expertise.

It is also worth noting that the use of pre-primary endorsements, while allowed in many states, is rare. Open ended responses confirm the reluctance of party officials to involve themselves in internal party conflict in order to maintain neutrality and avoid favoritism. This presents an interesting quandary, as pre-primary endorsements are quite possibly the strongest nominating tool available to parties. If we are to be concerned with the decline of party organizations' power over nominations—and if party leaders share this concern—we should be very surprised at their reluctance to use such a powerful tool. While it could be argued that a pre-primary

endorsement is too heavy-handed a technique for a responsible party, it remains an available, yet underused option. This trend also underscores a key difference between the national party and state party organizations vis-à-vis the invisible primary. This survey has shown us that state parties are opting out of a key nomination process (endorsement), suffering a large opportunity cost. This is not the case at the national level, which does not enjoy the same ability to play favorites officially. This key difference between national and state party abilities suggests that states are actively forgoing a role in nomination, a feature of a party-in-service. Keeping this interesting difference in mind, we do not, however, refute the argument that activists and interest groups play an increasing role in filtering candidate.

Finally, further research on insurgent TEA Party candidates may do well to investigate a potential resurgence in the use of the pre-primary endorsement if Republicans continue to face internal fracturing in primary races. This highlights the important distinction in the power of state and national parties, and it will be interesting to see how the Republican Party deals with a continuing insurgent presence from TEA Party contenders.

A second area worth discussing is the impact of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) on state party organizations. As we stated earlier, nearly 15 years passed between the Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) survey and our own. Fortunately, the 2002 implementation of this law splits our data with that collected by Aldrich is in-line with what would generally be expected. As we mention in our findings, it does seem that inflation-adjusted budgets seem to be down across the states we surveyed, especially in election years. During this time, state parties have gone form the "soft money" era to adjusting to the constraints thrust upon them by this law enacted in 2002. Of course, more recently, changes have been made which have diminished BCRA restrictions on candidate fundraising. Despite this, those who operate within state party organizations have reported decreased authority regarding their abilities to monetarily influence the elections process as court rulings such as Citizens United v. FEC and McCutcheon v. FEC empowered individual and corporate donors to directly contribute to more money to candidates (npr.org).

As we noted earlier, we believe collective action issues—among state party organizations and their candidates—are being addressed differently today than in 1999. Specifically, we contend the rise in popularity of the "coordinated campaign" has resulted in increased election year staff sizes—as these individuals are essentially shared between a party's candidates and

its organization. This effort not only allows state party organizations the opportunity to efficiently pool resources between a candidate's campaign team and the party's technical knowledge and labor force, it might also enhance the role of the party in the electioneering process — even at a time when budgets are lower than they were in the 1990s.

Conclusion

First and foremost, it is important to note through anecdotal and empirical results, the lack of participation in recruitment, yet the involvement of state parties in general election races. Our findings suggest a model of state party organization in which party plays little role in nomination and candidate recruitment (beyond state legislative races), and a supporting role in linking candidates to resources in general election contests. As noted above, a common response from state party officials was that they see themselves as a resource for candidates. Even in cases where actual money and services are not being provided by the state party organization, state parties seem to be playing a role in facilitating the link between consultants and other service providers and the candidate. While previous research suggests this type of activity, we did not expect it to play such a central role in state party leaders' assessments of their organizations.

Second, a general comparison with data from Aldrich's study does not show what we consider a significant increase in party professionalism over the past 15 years. Salaried state party chairs, executive directors, and other staff seem to be as prevalent now, as they were in the late 1990s. Although data do suggest an increase in overall staff size, inflation adjusted budgets do not seem to have increased either. This seems to comport with recent developments regarding coordinated campaigns (for staff size) and campaign finance restrictions placed against parties. While it is difficult to draw causal conclusions from these data, our supportive anecdotal evidence, gleaned from open-ended questions, leads us to believe that while the appearance of bureaucratic structures, budgetary increases, and staff sophistication have not changed, the way in which these resources are used are very different today. As stated earlier, our evidence supports a view of parties as campaign service organizations for candidates.

Finally, this study has yielded interesting insight into state party endorsements in primary contests. It seems that while the option is readily available to many state parties, its use during the pre-primary window is limited. While Kousser et al. (2013) asked whether parties were kingmakers

or cheerleaders, it seems that outside of the non-partisan primaries of California, parties are interested observers, neither king making nor cheerleading, but staying out of the fray. This finding deserves more inquiry, as endorsements may provide one of the strongest avenues for parties to influence nominations and exert power. The relative lack of interest among parties to exercise this option presents an interesting paradox of party power.

Contributing to the existing survey research on state party organizations, we have added a revealing time point to a growing set of data on the evolution of parties over the last 50 years. While Gibson, Cotter, and Bibby (1983) describes parties in transition, adapting to a modern political environment, Aldrich, Gomez, and Griffin (1999) capture parties at the apex of this growth. Our data show the parties have changed in meaningful ways. While state party organizations have, and will continue to change and adapt to different political circumstances, they remain relevant institutions in American electoral politics, playing an important role in connecting candidates to electoral resources. What remains to be seen is how parties evolve in the next decade.

Appendix 1: State Party Organization Survey

1. State of respondent_____
2. Party of respondent
    0--Democratic
    1--Republican
3. Is the job of State Party Chair a full or part time position?
    0--Part-time
    1--State party considers job part-time but is actually full-time
    2--Full-time
4. Is the job of State Party Chair a term limited position?
    0--No
    1--Yes
5. Is the job of State Party Chair Salaried?
    0--No
    1--Yes
6. What is the annual salary?
    0--Below $10,000
    1--$10,000-$20,000
    2--$20,000-$30,000
    3--$30,000-$40,000
    4--$40,0000-$50,000
    5--$50,000-$75,000
    6--$75,000-$100,000
    7--Above $100,000
7. Does the State Party currently make contributions to the campaigns of any of the following candidates
    a. Governor
        0--No
        1--Yes
    b. State Constitutional Offices
        0--No
        1—Yes
    c. US House
        0--No
        1--Yes
    d. US Senate
        0--No
        1--Yes
    e. State Legislature
        0--No
        1--Yes
    f. County or Local Offices
        0--No
        1--Yes
8. What percent of the campaign budget of these offices comes from party funds in the typical election?
    a. Governor: _____
    b. State Constitutional Offices:_____
    c. U.S. House:_____
    d. U.S. Senate:_____

    e. State Legislature:_____

    f. County or Local Offices:_____

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

    a. Held at least one major fundraising event per year

        0--No

        1--Yes

    b. Operated a direct mail fundraising program

        0--No

        1—Yes

    c. Employed research staff at headquarters

        0--No

        1--Yes

    d. Employed a PR director

        0--No

        1--Yes

    e. Employed Executive Director

        0--No

        1--Yes

    f. Is the job of Executive Director full-time or part-time?

        0--No

        1--Yes

    g. Employed a field staff

        0--No

        1--Yes

    h. Employed a Comptroller or Bookkeeper

        0--No

        1—Yes

    i. Conducted campaign seminars for candidates and managers

        0--No

        1--Yes

    j. Sought to recruit a full slate of candidates at the State, Congressional, and Courthouse Levels

        0--No

        1--Yes

    k. Published a Party newsletter or magazine

        0--No

        1--Yes

    l. Operated Voter ID programs

        0--No

        1--Yes

    m. Conducted or Commissioned public opinion surveys

        0--No

        1--Yes

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

    a. Election year full-time staff:_____

    b. Election year part-time staff:_____

    c. Election year budget:_____

    d. Non-election year full-time staff:_____

    e. Non-election year part-time staff:_____

    f. Non-election year part-time budget: _____

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

      1--Pre-primary endorsements required by law

      2--Pre-primary endorsements required by party rules

      3--Pre-primary endorsements allowed by law

      4--Pre-primary endorsements allowed by party rules

      5--We do not make pre-primary endorsements but they are allowed by rule or law

      6--Pre-primary endorsements are not allowed by party rule

      7--Pre-primary endorsements are not allowed by law

12. In an average election year, in how many races does the party usually endorse a candidate?

      1--0-25%

      2--25-50%

      3--50-75%

      4--75-100%

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

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

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

    a. Federal Appointments and Patronage

        0--Never

        1—Occasionally

        2--Regularly

    b. Speakers

        0--Never

        1—Occasionally

        2--Regularly

    c. Gaining Assistance for State Candidates

        0--Never

        1—Occasionally

        2--Regularly

    d. Fund-Raising

        0--Never

        1—Occasionally

        2--Regularly

    e. National Convention Activities

        0--Never

        1—Occasionally

        2--Regularly

    f. Implementing National Committee Programs

        0--Never

        1—Occasionally

        2--Regularly

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

      0--Party develops issues

      1--Left to candidates

      2--Joint party-candidate activity

      3--Party and candidates operate separately

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

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

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

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

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

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