Grassroots Party Activity in the South

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For months leading up to the 2004 elections, supporters of the Democratic party registered new voters, organized door-to-door, telephone, and e-mail canvasses, and prepared to mobilize an army of voters on behalf of presidential nominee John Kerry and other candidates. Their efforts were coordinated with campaigns of various party candidates, party organizations at the national, state, and local levels, and party-affiliated groups such as labor unions and MoveOn.org. Their hard work paid off on election day: Kerry received 8 million more votes than Al Gore received in winning the popular vote in 2000. There was only one problem with the Democrats' plan. While turnout in support of Democratic candidates in 2004 exceeded previous levels, it paled in comparison to the success enjoyed by Republicans. Republican candidates, party organizations, and affiliated groups were able to increase votes on behalf of George W. Bush by 11.5 million compared to his initial election four years prior. Overall, turnout increased from 55 percent of the voter-eligible population in 2000 to 60 percent in 2004 (McDonald 2005).

The increase in voter turnout between 2000 and 2004 can be attributed to a number of factors, including the war in Iraq and the controversy surrounding the 2000 election outcome. Record amounts of money were spent on television advertising in 2004. In some ways, though, the 2004 election represents a return to an older style of electioneering. Both parties made use of face-to-face mobilization, which many political scientists and campaign strategists argue is more effective at getting out the vote. While various groups participated in voter mobilization efforts, the linchpin of such efforts has traditionally been local party organizations. The efforts to mobilize voters in 2004 suggest that local party organizations continue to be useful and important to both the Democratic and Republican parties.

This study attempts to add to our knowledge of local political party organizations. We believe that these organizations are worthy of study. They remain relevant components of the party system. Their significance may have been diminished by new campaign technology and more candidate-centered campaigns. Local party organizations may now be less important than the party's elected officials, or the party's state and national organizations, or the major political contributors to the party. Nevertheless, these local party organizations still contribute to the overall strength and vitality of the party organization. They can and do influence the recruitment of candidates for local offices, provide workers for election campaigns and voter mobilization activities, and help to define the party image to the electorate (Frendreis, Gibson, and Vertz 1990; Frendreis et al. 1996; Frendreis and Gitelson 1999).

Research on Party Organizations

Considerable research into American political parties has been devoted to analyzing the strength and vitality of the two major parties. Much of the recent research on this topic attempts to refute the thesis that American political parties are in decline. For example, numerous studies have found that the national party organizations are stronger now than they were several decades ago (Corrado 1996; Herrnson 1988; 1994; 1998; Kayden and Mahe 1985). Other studies have concluded that the state party organizations also have gained in strength overall, although there naturally is variation in the vitality of these organizations across the states (Appleton and Ward 1996; Bibby 1994; 1998; Francia et al. 2003; Gibson et al. 1983; Goodhart 1999; Morehouse and Jewell 2003). The scholarly consensus is that during the 1980s and 1990s the national and state organizations of both the Democratic and Republican parties developed into strong service parties that are better equipped to assist the candidates of these parties than they were before.

Less attention has been paid to the contemporary strength of local party organizations. The few fairly recent studies that have focused on this question have found more active local party organizations than many people may have expected, given the decline of powerful urban political machines and the rise of modern campaign technology and professional consultants. Surveys of county party chairs in the early 1980s found that local party organizations had not declined in strength and continued to engage in meaningful activity (Frendreis and Gitelson 1999; Gibson et al. 1985; Gibson, Frendreis, and Vertz 1989). Several case studies of local party activity support this conclusion (Crotty 1986; Burrell 1986). The research in this area is limited, however, so our understanding of local party organization is not as thorough as our knowledge of state and national party organizations (Frendreis and Gitelson 1993). We still do not have a clear picture of the contemporary strength of local party organization in the U.S.

Our study presents some new information on the strength of local party organizations in the early twenty-first century. It does so by examining the reported behavior of county party chairs in the eleven southern states, drawing primarily from our 2001 survey of grassroots party activists in the South. We focus on county chairs because they are the key party officers at the local level. The responses of county party chairs should provide us with good information about the state of county party organizations. If the county chair is inactive, the county party organization probably is not very active (Norrander 1986). This strategy of focusing on county party chairs follows a path taken by many other researchers (Cotter et al 1984; Frendreis et al. 1996; Gibson, Frendreis, and Vertz 1989; Maggiotto and Weber 1986; Schwartz 1990).

Our data are only on southern county party organizations, which obviously limits what we can say about local party organizations overall. However, the South is a particularly interesting region for studying party organizations because of the substantial changes that have

taken place in the region over the past few decades. The old one-party South began to erode during the 1950s in presidential elections (Bartley and Graham 1975; Black and Black 1992). Subsequent decades produced greater change, first in important state-wide contests, such as for governor or U.S. Senator, then further down the ballot (Aistrup 1996; Bass and DeVries 1976; Black and Black 2002; Lamis 1984; Lublin 2004; Scher 1997). The 1990s were a particularly important decade for Republican growth in the less-prominent but still important U.S. House and state legislative elections. At the start of the decade, Republicans held only one-third of the southern congressional seats, and they were a minority--often a very small minority--in every state legislature. Following the 2000 elections, 58 percent of the southern U.S. Representatives were Republicans, and the GOP was much stronger than in the past in most state legislatures, controlling both houses in three states, splitting legislative control in a fourth state, and constituting a competitive minority in several other states. It was during the 1990s that a competitive two-party system fully emerged in the South (Bullock and Rozell 2003; Lamis 1999).

The growth of two-party competition in the South has been accompanied by the development of political party organizations. During the Solid South era of Democratic domination, state party organizations were weak. Democrats had little need to establish a strong party organization, and they usually were heavily factionalized at the state level, making cohesive organization difficult (Key 1949, 298-311). Republicans were too weak to provide the resources necessary for an effective state party organization (Key 1949, 277-297). At the local level, significant party organizations may have existed in some areas, often because of the power of a prominent politician, but overall the situation was one of weak party organizations (Mayhew 1986, 104-142).

During the last three decades of the twentieth century, both parties improved their organizations, especially at the state level (for state summaries, see Clark and Prysby 2003; Hadley and Bowman 1995). Republicans were anxious to create significant state party organizations because they needed the organizational support to recruit and assist candidates (Aistrup 1996, 65-89). Democratic efforts to improve their party organizations were largely a response to a growing Republican threat. While efforts focused more on improving the state party organizations, especially for Republicans, who followed a top-down strategy, both parties became concerned about county party organizations as well (Stanley 1995).

The dynamics of partisan change in the South suggest that studying the current state of local party organizations is worthwhile. The central question of this study is whether the parties have been able to establish stronger county party organizations in the region. The state of these local party organizations after the 1990s, a decade in which the Republicans made great gains lower down the ballot, should be particularly interesting.

Data and Methods

The data employed in this study come primarily from the 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists (SGPA) project, which surveyed over 7,000 county-level party activists in the eleven southern states in the spring and summer of 2001.[1] Respondents were almost evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. The target population in each state consisted of the county chairs and other members of the county executive committees for both parties. Our analysis in this study uses only the responses from the county chairs (approximately 600 Democrats and 700 Republicans), for the reasons discussed above. There are about 1200 counties in the South, so our sample would represent about 50% of the Democratic chairs and nearly 60% of the

Republican chairs if every county had a chair from both parties, an assumption that does not quite reflect reality.

This paper also uses data from the original SGPA study, which surveyed over 10,000 grassroots activists in the South in 1991, including about 1200 county chairs.[2] Many of the same questions were asked in both surveys, allowing for an examination of change over time. As discussed above, there was substantial change in party competition in the South between 1991 and 2001, particularly for congressional and state legislative races, and it therefore seems worthwhile to examine the changes that occurred in the local party organizations during a period of increased Republican electoral success.

Throughout our analysis, we rely on several indices that combine the responses to several items into a single score. In each case, the component items are conceptually related (at least in our eyes) and empirically correlated. Each of these indices is a better measure of the underlying concept than is any one of the component index items. Some readers may find the index scores to be too abstract and not easily translated to objective levels of behavior. While the indices are more precise, reliable, and valid measures, we also present the percentage of chairs who respond in certain ways to the individual items, largely because doing so may give the reader a better sense of the actual level of activity. For example, we calculate an index of communication with party and elected officials, which is based on the county chair's reported frequency of communication with local, state, and national party officers and elected officials. On this index, which runs from 1.0 to 4.0, with a higher score indicating more frequent communication, both Democratic and Republican chairs average about 2.6 in 2001. This index score is very useful for comparing chairs of the two parties and for examining change between 1991 and 2001. However, it may not convey a clear sense of the absolute level of communication, so we also

include the percent of chairs who report communicating “very often” or “often” with each of the target groups, and these percentages may help some readers to interpret the index scores.

Analysis and Results

Role Definitions

The starting point for our analysis is an examination of how the county chairs define their roles. What tasks do they see as an important aspect of their job as county chair? These questions have been examined by others. Norrander (1986) found that the role definition of county party chairs was an important determinant of county party activity. Chairs with a more ambitious and expansive definition of their role pushed the party to be more active across a range of activities. Role definitions of party activists also have been investigated by Bowman and Boynton (1966) and Eldersveld (1964).

The 2001 SGPA survey included a set of items that asked respondents how important various tasks were as part of their job; responses to these items were arrayed on a four-point scale, running from very important to not at all important. We divide these tasks into two groups, one dealing directly with election and campaign activity, the other with more general party maintenance activity. Campaign activities are often viewed as more critical, especially if we view parties as service organizations for candidates, and they consequently have been studied more (Hogan 1998). However, ongoing party maintenance activity also is seen by analysts as important for maintaining party strength and effectiveness (Feigert and Todd 1998). For both groups of items, we present the percent of county chairs in each party who thought that the task was very important. We also calculate an index score for each group of items, which is based on the four-point response scale to each item in the group; a high index score indicates more importance. The index is a superior overall measure of role definition and we therefore shall

focus on the mean index scores. The percentage figures for individual items are included because they may aid in the interpretation of the index scores, as explained above. They also allow us to see difference between the individual items that are not captured in the index score. The data are displayed in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

Responses from county chairs indicate that they place a high priority on both types of tasks. Roughly nine out of ten chairs rated all five campaign and election tasks and four of the six party organizational tasks as being "very important" or "somewhat important" with only slight differences between Republicans and Democrats (data not shown). When only very important responses are considered some minor differences become clear (see Table 1). Democrats are more concerned with registering voters and contacting new voters. Republicans place a slightly higher priority on recruiting candidates and party workers and on party organizational work. Chairs in both parties are less concerned with raising money and policy formulation. The composite index of campaign and election tasks, which ranges between 1 and 4, is a substantial 3.49 for Democrats and 3.43 for Republicans. The party organizational tasks index is a bit lower for Democrats (3.37) and virtually the same for Republicans (3.42). In each case, the differences between parties are too small to be meaningful.

Campaign Activity

Table 1 reports the importance placed on various activities by county chairs in the South. Perhaps a better test of importance is whether they spent time performing campaign related tasks. The data in Table 2 represent the percentage of chairs who reported that they had engaged in specific campaign activities in recent election campaigns. We selected these activities from a

longer list because they involve management activities more than hands-on campaigning and better reflect the unique role of the chair in county party activities (Clark, Lockerbie, and Wielhouwer 1998). The composite index of campaign responsibility shows that, on average, the chairs of both parties performed slightly more than half of the six campaign activities. Most chairs organized campaign events, organized fund-raising events, and dealt with the media. Almost half organized telephone banks. Slightly fewer organized a door-to-door canvass of voters or conducted a registration drive, activities that may have fallen to candidates themselves or to outside groups that support the party. There are some differences between Democratic and Republican chairs--for instance, Democrats were more likely to conduct registration drives while Republicans were more apt to organize fundraisers--but these differences are small.

[Table 2 about here]

Political parties are organized along meaningful political boundaries in order to help candidates win elections. County party organizations are chiefly responsible for local elections, but they assist in the campaigns for higher level offices as well. The index of campaign activity measures the relative importance placed on involvement in different types of elections (see Table 3). It shows that Republican chairs are more likely to claim to be active than Democrats (3.62 to 3.50). More than 70 percent of the chairs in both parties report being very active in local elections. For Republicans, activity in state and national campaigns reaches comparable levels. Among Democrats, however, there is a pronounced decline at the state and national levels. Only about half of Democratic chairs report being very active in national election campaigns compared to two-thirds of GOP chairs. Only a few southern states have been competitive in recent presidential elections, most notably Florida in 2000. In the absence of competition at the top of the ticket, it appears that Democrats turn their attention to other races. Given the attention

paid to the presidency by potential activists, this tendency may lead to dire long-term consequences for the party's ability to recruit future volunteers.

[Table 3 about here]

Intraparty Communication

In order for various levels of the party to coordinate their activities, county leaders must communicate regularly with leaders at other levels of the party, with candidates running for office under the party label, and with affiliated groups who support the party's goals. Schwartz (1990, 16) describes these webs of contacts as "networks of relations." She writes, "A party network is not an atomized set of actors. No matter how poorly defined its boundaries, loosely linked its participants, or varied the interpretation of its goals, it remains an organized entity." The likelihood of electoral success increases when various levels of the party can cooperate with each other and avoid dysfunction (Trish 1994). Communication is not only significant itself; it also is associated with other forms of organizational activity (Bruce and Clark 2004). The importance of communication patterns also is discussed by Eldersveld (1964, 357-358) and Brodsky and Brodsky (1998).

Table 4 displays the levels of communication between county chairs and other levels of the party organization and party-in-government. Most chairs communicate often with members of their party executive committee and with local government officials. Majorities in both parties report frequent contact with state government officials and somewhat less with state party leaders (especially for Democrats). Among Republicans, one in three chairs communicated often with national government officials, compared to less than one in five Democrats. There is little contact between chairs and the national party organizations. Responses to these seven

items were combined into an index of communication level. On average, Republicans scored slightly better on this index than Democrats (2.82 to 2.74).

[Table 4 about here]

Comparing Indices

To this point, we have constructed five indices that reflect various areas of party activity. Any one of them--or any of the items used to construct them--could be used as a measure of a party chair's activity and, we assume, the activity of their organization. Can we be sure that these measures are tapping into the same underlying level of activity? To test this, we correlated each of the indices with the other four. All of the indices are scored so that a higher score indicates more activity. Thus, a positive correlation coefficient indicates that higher activity on one dimension is associated with higher activity on the other dimension, and a negative correlation coefficient indicates that the two dimensions are inversely related.

Table 5 displays the correlation matrix resulting from this analysis. All of the coefficients are positive and substantial, which shows that the five indices are related to one another in the expected direction. County chairs who perform more campaign activities (the index of campaign responsibility), for example, are more likely to communicate regularly with other levels of their party, and this pattern holds for the other indices as well. The highest coefficient is between the indices for campaign tasks and party organizational tasks. The strength of this correlation may be inflated by the similarity in the wording of the items used to construct the indices, yet it also suggests that chairs do not view their roles as trading off one for the other. Chairs who recognize the importance of campaigning also recognize the importance of the maintaining their organizations, and those who are less engaged in one area are likely to

be less engaged in the other. The results shown in Table 5 increase our confidence in the validity of our measures as reflecting differences in party organizational vitality.

[Table 5 about here]

We noted earlier that the decade of the 1990s was one of dramatic change in the electoral fortunes of the two parties in the South. How were changes in electoral competition reflected in the activity performance of county chairs? Table 6 displays the mean scores by party for the indices of campaign responsibility, campaign activity, and communication level in 1991 and 2001. The aggregate differences are generally small, although there is substantial variation from chair to chair at each time point. Other than a slight drop for Republicans in campaign responsibility, the data reflect a small overall increase in party activity across the decade. The indices of communication level show the largest increases, especially among Republicans.

[Table 6 about here]

Variations in Activity

What may not be obvious from our discussion so far is that there is substantial variation in the activity of county chairs. For example, the mean score for both Democrats and Republicans on the index of campaign responsibility is slightly over 3.0, indicating that on average a county chair has recently engaged in about three of the six campaign tasks. However, about one-fourth of both the Democratic and Republican chairs reported engaging in no more than one activity (about one-seventh said that they did none of the tasks), which certainly indicates a minimal level of activity. At the other end, about one-fourth of the chairs engaged in five or six tasks, a very high level of activity. A similar picture is obtained by looking at communication levels. The mean score on the communication level index is about 2.7 for

Democratic chairs and 2.8 for Republican chairs. However, around 25 percent of the Democrats and 30 percent of the Republicans have mean scores of 3.2 or higher, well above the average. Moreover, as we discussed above, many of the chairs do not communicate frequently with state party officers or elected officials, limiting their regular communication to those at the local level.

What accounts for these variations in the activity levels of county chairs? Is it just idiosyncratic, or does it fit some expected patterns? We suspect that activity levels may be related to characteristics of the local political environment. Our hypothesis is that variations in demographic and political context contribute to variations in the strength of local party organizations. Specifically, we look at urbanization and electoral change.

The level of urbanization has changed dramatically since World War II. Rural dominance in most southern states has been replaced by the development of medium-to-large cities in every state. We predict that highly urbanized areas will have higher levels of activity. The larger number of potential activists and leaders should ensure that the party will be able to find an energetic county chair and support that individual with others who are actively engaged. In smaller and more rural counties, it will be more difficult to always find a good county chair and more likely that the county party will contain too few highly engaged activists. State and national parties have incentive to support local parties in urban areas, too, since they are likely to devote resources to places where the votes are.

To test this hypothesis, we divided counties into three groups. A highly urbanized group consisted of all counties that were part of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and either contained a city of at least 100,000 people or had a total population of 250,000 or more.[3] A medium urbanized group included all counties that were part of an MSA but did not meet the other criteria listed above. The third group, designated as low in urbanization, included all

counties that are not included in an MSA. We then calculated the mean scores on each of our five indices of county party chair activity by party for each of these groups of counties. The results are in Table 7.

[Table 7 about here]

Surprisingly, there is little tendency for county chairs in less urbanized counties to be less active on any of these dimensions. Chairs in the more rural counties do not have a less expansive definition of their role as county party chair, nor do they display lower levels of communication. There is no discernable difference in campaign activity across levels of urbanization. The only area in which the party chairs in more rural counties are less active than their colleagues in more urban counties is in the extent of campaign responsibility. This index, which measures the number of campaign tasks the chair organized or was responsible for carrying out, does show that the chairs in more rural counties assumed leadership for a smaller number of tasks than did those in more urban counties. The pattern is especially clear among Democrats. The lack of a stronger relationship between the urbanization of the county and the overall activity level of the county party chairs is surprising to us. We can only speculate that most chairs share a common understanding of their roles in the party. To the extent that variations do occur, they tend to be based on idiosyncratic factors rather than the demographic environment.

A second possible explanation for the variation in activity levels takes into account the change in the political landscape in the South. Specifically, we look at the change in electoral support in each county. We measure the change in two ways. First, we compare levels of activity in relation to the change in the two-party presidential vote between 1992 and 2000. Overall, voting patterns show considerable stability across the two elections, with a maximum

change of only 10 percentage points. We divided chairs into two categories, one where Democrats gained strength and one where Republicans gained strength. Only a small number of chairs--fewer than ten percent in each party--represent counties where Al Gore won a larger share of the vote than Bill Clinton in his first presidential bid. In every other county, George W. Bush did better in 2000 than his father eight years earlier.

There were no meaningful differences among Democrats across the two categories. Among Republicans, three categories showed differences, but neither is in the expected direction. GOP chairs in the few counties where Democrats gained strength performed more campaign tasks and had higher levels of intraparty contact than in the many counties where their party gained strength. They also gave slightly higher priority to organizational maintenance tasks. Two caveats are necessary to explain the direction of these findings. First, the stability of presidential vote reflects the fact that realignments at the presidential level predate our comparison. By 1992, Republican candidates for the presidency were consistently winning votes in some places that only rarely supported Republicans in races farther down the ticket. Second, the small number of counties where Democrats gained strength are probably unusual due to demographic trends that may be related to activity performance.

We can compare electoral trends in a different way by asking the chairs to assess the change in their party's electoral strength in their counties. In contrast to the presidential vote, we expect the chairs to focus their assessments on down-ticket elections where more change has taken place. As shown, chairs place at least as much effort on local elections as on state or national elections (and, for Democrats, considerably more). Local elections are more proximate to their geographic areas, and chairs are the top party organizational officials in those areas. On the other hand, the self-report of electoral change measure is more subjective than actual vote

totals analyzed above. Nearly all the Republican chairs report that their party has increased in strength or, at worst, had little change. Democrats were fairly evenly distributed across the categories of gaining strength, losing strength, or showing little change.

The comparisons of our indices across the self-reported party change categories are displayed in Table 8. For nearly every index, chairs in counties where their party is gaining strength were more active than those in counties that are losing strength. The magnitude of the differences vary, but the pattern is clear. Less clear is the explanation for this chicken-and-egg relationship. Do candidates do better in counties where their party is active? Or does the improved performance of candidates breathe life into the party organization? Our best guess is that elements of both explanations can be found across the region.

[Table 8 about here]

Conclusion

Recent elections have demonstrated the importance of grassroots mobilization efforts in election campaigns. Although many groups work to turn out the vote, such efforts traditionally have fallen to local party organizations. The evidence we present here indicates that county parties--at least in the South--continue to be active in a variety of ways. Moreover, our indices of activity reveal increases in activity across the decade of the 1990s. This ten-year period is especially important in the region due to the dramatic shift in party fortunes at the electoral level.

Our analysis of the variation in activity across county party organizations leaves much to be explained. County chairs in urban areas were not too different from those in rural areas in terms of their approach to the role of chair. The only meaningful difference was in terms of the index of campaign responsibility: chairs in urbanized counties performed more campaign tasks

than those in rural counties. Changes in support for the party's presidential candidate mattered only for Republicans, and the differences found there were limited by the small number of counties where Democrats won a larger share of the vote in 2000 than in 1992. The chairs' own assessments of electoral change in their counties shows promise as an explanatory variable. Improvement in electoral strength is associated with higher levels of party activity on several of our indices.

Despite the traditional importance of local party organizations for voter mobilization, there is no guarantee that parties will perform this role in future election cycles. Other organizations, including candidate campaigns and party affiliated groups, may prove to be more efficient and effective at this task. Our guess is that, in some way or another, local parties will persist. Party organizations at all levels have been forced to accept a larger role of providing services to candidates, and they continue to adapt to changes in the rules governing campaign finance at the national and state levels. Indeed, adaptation has been a hallmark of party system in the United States. Challenges to party organizations are mirrored by challenges to the researchers who seek to understand them, leaving ample opportunity for future researchers to make their contribution to our understanding of the evolving party system.

Notes

1. The 2001 SGPA project was funded by NSF grants SES-9986501 and SES-9986523. John A. Clark and Charles Prysby were the principal investigators. The surveys in the eleven states were administered by a set of state investigators. See Clark and Prysby (2004) for more information on the project. While most of the surveys were completed during the spring and summer of 2001, two states (Georgia and Virginia) were delayed in their surveying and did not complete the data collection until early 2002.

2. The 1991 SGPA project was funded by NSF grant SES-9009846. Charles D. Hadley and Lewis Bowman were the principal investigators, and the surveys in the eleven states were administered by a set of state investigators, many of whom also participated in the 2001 SGPA project. See Hadley and Bowman (1995) for more information on the project.

3. We include in the highly urban group counties in an MSA with a city of 100,000 people or more, as these counties are the core urban areas in their MSA. We also include counties with a population of 250,000 or more, even if there no single city in the county has a population of over 100,000 people, because in some very large MSAs, such as Atlanta or Washington, there are very urbanized and densely populated counties that do not contain a large city, and these suburban counties seem more appropriately placed in the highly urban group.

Table 1
Role Definitions of County Chairs

	Democrats	Republicans
Campaign and election tasks:		
1. Contacting voters	66%	62%
2. Registering voters	66%	53%
3. Contacting new voters	59%	48%
4. Campaigning	55%	55%
5. Recruiting candidates	56%	64%
Index of campaign and election tasks:	3.49	3.43
Party organizational tasks:		
1. Raising money	42%	44%
2. Participating in party meetings	64%	65%
3. Recruiting workers	59%	64%
4. Party organizational work	66%	72%
5. Public relations	59%	56%
6. Policy formulation	34%	35%
Index of party organizational tasks:	3.37	3.42
(Overall N)	(590)	(715)

Note: The entries are the percent of county chairs who see each task as a very important part of their party position, except in the case of the two indices, where the mean scores are reported. Each index is the mean score for the set of items in the group and is based on the four-point response scale in the original question (4 = very important; 1= not important at all). The overall N indicates the number of county chairs from each party. The Ns for individual items are slightly lower, due to a small amount of missing data.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

Table 2
Campaign Responsibilities of County Chairs

Percent who did the following in recent election campaigns:	Democrats	Republicans
1. Organized canvass of voters	39%	37%
2. Organized campaign events	66%	70%
3. Organized fund-raising events	54%	62%
4. Organized telephoning	48%	49%
5. Conducted voter registration drive	43%	34%
6. Dealt with the media	53%	60%
Index of campaign responsibility:	3.03	3.11
(N)	(590)	(715)

Note: The entries are the percent of county chairs who engaged in the specific activity in recent election campaigns, except in the case of the index, where the mean score is reported. The index is the total number of different activities engaged in. The N for the individual items and the index is in parentheses.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

Table 3
Campaign Involvement of County Chairs

Percent who were very active in recent election campaigns:	Democrats	Republicans
Local election campaigns	75%	71%
State election campaigns	62%	72%
National election campaigns	52%	67%
Index of campaign activity:	3.50	3.62
(Overall N)	(590)	(715)

Note: The entries are the percent of county chairs who were very active in recent election campaigns at the specified level, except in the case of the index, where the mean score is reported. The index is the mean score for all three items and is based on the four-point response scale in the original question (4 = very active; 1= not active). The overall N indicates the number of county chairs from each party. The Ns for individual items are slightly lower, due to a small amount of missing data.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

Table 4
Communication Levels of County Chairs

Percent who communicated often with the following:	Democrats	Republicans
1. County party executive committee members	86%	90%
2. State party chair	29%	32%
3. State party executive committee members	37%	47%
4. National party committee members	10%	13%
5. Local governmental officials	83%	84%
6. State governmental officials	54%	60%
7. National governmental officials	19%	33%
Index of communication level:	2.74	2.82
(Overall N)	(590)	(715)

Note: The entries are the percent of county chairs who said that they communicated often or very often with the specified individuals, except in the case of the index, where the mean score is reported. The index is the mean score for all seven items and is based on the four-point response scale in the original question (4 = very often; 1= never). The overall N indicates the number of county chairs from each party. The Ns for individual items are slightly lower, due to a small amount of missing data.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

Table 5
Correlations Among the Indices

Index of campaign tasks	--			
Index of party organ. tasks	.66	--		
Index of campaign responsibility	.33	.39	--	
Index of campaign activity	.42	.41	.40	--
Index of level of communication	.37	.41	.48	.47
	Index of campaign tasks	Index of party organ. tasks	Index of campaign respons.	Index of campaign activity

Note: Entries are pearson correlation coefficients. The Ns range from 1274 to 1297, depending on the item pair.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

Table 6
Activity of County Chairs, 1991 and 2001

	1991		2001	
	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans
Index of campaign responsibility	2.95 [1.98]	3.19 [1.87]	3.03 [1.98]	3.11 [1.90]
Index of campaign activity	3.51 [.53]	3.55 [.52]	3.50 [.55]	3.62 [.49]
Index of communication level	2.57 [.50]	2.49 [.55]	2.74 [.52]	2.82 [.57]
(Overall N)	(619)	(611)	(590)	(715)

Note: Entries are mean scores on the indices, with standard deviations in brackets. The overall N indicates the number of county chairs by party and year. The Ns for some indices are slightly lower, due to a small amount of missing data.

Source: 1991 and 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists surveys.

Table 7
Activity of County Chairs by Urbanization of County

	Urbanization Level of County		
	High	Medium	Low
Democrats:			
Index of campaign tasks	3.43	3.54	3.50
Index of party organ. tasks	3.36	3.51	3.34
Index of campaign responsibility	3.71	3.37	2.81
Index of campaign activity	3.50	3.60	3.48
Index of level of communication	2.73	2.76	2.75
(Overall N)	(55)	(138)	(368)
Republicans:			
Index of campaign tasks	3.37	3.44	3.44
Index of party organ. tasks	3.35	3.51	3.40
Index of campaign responsibility	3.34	3.65	2.87
Index of campaign activity	3.69	3.66	3.60
Index of level of communication	2.92	2.95	2.76
(Overall N)	(62)	(189)	(463)

Note: Entries are mean scores on the indices. The overall N indicates the number of county chairs by party and county urbanization level. The Ns for some indices are slightly lower, due to a small amount of missing data. See the text for an explanation of the levels of urbanization.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

Table 8
Activity of County Chairs by Change in Strength among Voters

	Change in Strength among Voters		
	Stronger	Little Change	Weaker
Democrats:			
Index of campaign tasks	3.65	3.44	3.54
Index of party organ. tasks	3.53	3.27	3.31
Index of campaign responsibility	3.54	2.58	2.96
Index of campaign activity	3.65	3.44	3.42
Index of level of communication	2.96	2.65	2.63
(Overall N)	(191)	(167)	(220)
Republicans:			
Index of campaign tasks	3.46	3.23	3.23
Index of party organ. tasks	3.44	3.32	3.42
Index of campaign responsibility	3.23	2.32	2.65
Index of campaign activity	3.64	3.46	3.33
Index of level of communication	2.86	2.62	2.47
(Overall N)	(620)	(62)	(20)

Note: Entries are mean scores on the indices. The overall N indicates the number of county chairs by party and self-reported change in support among county voters. The Ns for some indices are slightly lower, due to a small amount of missing data. See the text for an explanation of change in voting support.

Source: 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists survey.

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