Party Brands and the Democratic and Republican National Committees, 1952-1976

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Abstract

Political scientists have traditionally dismissed the Democratic and Republican National committees as 'service providers' – organizations that provide assistance to candidates in the form of campaign funding and expertise but otherwise lack political power. I argue this perspective has missed a crucial role national committees play in American politics, namely that national party organizations publicize their party's policy positions and, in doing so, attempt to create national party brands. These brands are important to party leaders – especially when the party is in the national minority – since they are fundamental to mobilizing voters in elections. In case studies covering the DNC and RNC in the period 1952-1976, I show that minority party committees prioritize their branding role and invest considerably in their publicity divisions, inaugurate new publicity programs, and create new communication tools to reach out to voting groups. Additionally, I show that in cases where the party is out of the White House, the national committees have considerable leeway in deciding what party image to publicize. Rather than being mere powerless service providers, I show that party committees have played crucial roles in debates concerning questions of ideology and issue positioning in both parties.

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Introduction

While parties have been the focus of extensive research regarding their role in Congress, in the electorate, and as coalitions of groups,[1] political scientists have mostly ignored national party organizations.[2] Even scholars who *have* studied the Democratic and Republican national committees as independent political institutions have concluded that they lack relevance in the political system. Identifying the DNC and RNC as 'service providers,' these scholars have concluded that the committees are subservient to the parties' candidates – relevant only by providing assistance in the form of campaign funding and expertise. However, since candidates receive these services in largely equal measure, and because the committees lack the power to make decisions on candidate selection, the assessment has been that national party organizations engage in (to use the title of the first major study of national committees) politics without power.[3]

But while political scientists have mostly dismissed the DNC and RNC as party institutions, party leaders themselves seem to have a different perspective. Studies of American political parties from a historical institutionalist perspective have shown that a myriad of party actors – including presidents, other elected officials, and party activists – pay considerable attention to their national committees, and frequently compete for control of these organizations.[4] What explains this disconnect between the assessment of national commit-

[1] For the two main building blocks of this 'UCLA school' of political parties, see: Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008); Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, and Hans Noel, "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* vol. 10, no. 3 (2012) 571-597.

[2] The national party organization here specifically refers to the national committees of both parties and any organizations linked to them (such as the youth organizations or the women's federations of both parties). It does not include Congressional party institutions such as the Democratic or Republican Congressional Campaign Committees. For more on the DCCC and RCCC, see: Robin Kolodny, *Pursuing Majorities: Congressional Campaign Committees in American Politics* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

[3] See: Cornelius P. Cotter and Bernard C. Hennessy, *Politics Without Power* (New York: Atherton Press, 1964); Cornelius P. Cotter and John F. Bibby, "Institutional Development of Parties and the Thesis of Party Decline," *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (1980) 1-27; Paul S. Herrnson, "The Evolution of National Party Organizations," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*, edited by Louis Sandy Maisel and Jeffrey M. Berry. (Oxford; New York: University Press, 2010) 245-264; Paul S. Herrnson, *Party Campaigning in the 1980s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[4] See: Philip A. Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Daniel J. Galvin, *Presidential Party Building: Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010); Daniel Klinghard, *The Nationalization of American Political Parties, 1880-1896* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Daniel J. Galvin, "The Transformation of Political Institutions: Investments in Institutional Resources and Gradual Change in the National Party Committees," *Studies in American Political Development* 26 (April 2012) 50-70; Brian

tees provided by most political scientists and the apparent value politicians place on the committees?

I argue that we can explain the relevance of national committees in the eyes of party leaders by engaging a specific subset of services the DNC and RNC provide: publicity of the party's policy positions. These publicity services are important to party leaders because they believe that they help shape a national party brand – that is, an understanding among voters as to what the party's positions are at a given moment in time. Such brands, or party images, are important to parties and candidates because they provide voters with information that lowers the cost of becoming informed about individual candidates. As a result, it is easier for parties to mobilize voters during election campaigns. The national committees – in the eyes of party leaders – therefore have a clear and important role in the political system: providing voters with information on the party's positions.

Importantly, the extent to which party leaders rely on their national committees to provide these publicity services is dependent upon the party's electoral performance. More precisely, it depends on whether parties perceive themselves to be in the minority or majority on a national level. I follow Goldman in defining national majority parties as having

> majority status in at least four places simultaneously: (1) the electoral college, derived from pluralities in a sufficient number of states, that is, the party-in-the-electorate; (2) the presidency; (3) the Senate; and (4) the House of Representatives.[5]

When not all of these conditions are met, I will – like Goldman – consider a party to be the national minority party. This means that whenever there is a divided federal government, there is no national majority party but instead two minority parties.

Thinking of party status in this regard helps explain when we see national committees invest in party branding activities. When a party is the national majority, it has managed to produce a winning coalition, and party leaders are less reliant on the DNC or RNC, and the committees' publicity programs decrease. This decline is the product of three connected reasons. First, presidents have personal incentives to want their party to be in the majority, and invest in party building activities to achieve this goal. When the party is already a national

M. Conley, "The Politics of Party Renewal: The "Service Party" and the Goldwater Republican Right," *Studies in American Political Development* vol. 27, no. 1 (2013) 51-67.

[5] Ralph M. Goldman, *The National party Chairmen and Committees: Factionalism at the Top* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1990) 569. Note that while (1) and (2) are intended to distinguish the party-in-the-electorate from the party-in-government, they are essentially the same – that is, a party has a majority in the electoral college they by definition also hold the White House.

Table 1: National Committee Branding Activities by National Party Status

	House and Senate	
White House	*Majority*	*Minority*
In-Party	National Majority Party Decline in branding programs	National Minority Party Investments in branding activities
Out-Party	National Minority Party Investments in branding activities	National Minority Party Investments in branding activities

majority, presidents lack the incentive to make such investments.[6] Second, national majority parties can more easily produce a brand through other venues – most notably, through legislation and governance.[7] Finally, national publicity programs – as the cases below will show – can be disruptive to the party's coalition by explicitly taking sides in intra-party conflicts. Majority parties (and their presidents) may be hesitant to rely on committee publicity activities out of concern they could disrupt their existing coalition. In contrast, when a party is a national minority party, leaders expect their committees to step up their publicity efforts in order to convince voting groups that rejected the party in the previous election to (re-)join their coalition in the future. The committees of national minority parties prioritize their branding role by investing considerable shares of their budgets in their publicity divisions, inaugurating new publicity programs, and creating new communication tools to reach out to voting groups (see Table 1).

However, party brands are not consistent and frequently contested: parties face major internal debates regarding what policy positions to pursue, and which groups to target to gain national majority status. Who within the national minority party decides what groups the committee targets is also a product of the party's electoral performance. When a party is in the minority in Congress but holds the White House, the president has de facto control over the national party organization and committees will engage in publicity activities but will follow presidential preferences with regard to what *kind* of image it promotes. But in cases where the party does not control the White House, national committee chairs have

[6] Galvin defines party building in this regard as: providing campaign services, developing human capital, recruiting candidates, mobilizing voters, financing party operations, and supporting internal activities (Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 5.). See also: Galvin, "The Transformation of Political Institutions."

[7] This assumption is perhaps controversial: Mayhew argues that divided government has no impact in the provision of major legislation. Binder has countered that divided government does produce gridlock but that the cause is in part inherent to the design of the House and Senate. From the perspective of branding, it still seems likely that a national majority party can claim full responsibility for legislation more effectively. See: David Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking and Investigations, 1946-2002* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, 2nd edition); Sarah A. Binder, *Stalemate: Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2003).

considerable leeway to decide exactly what image to project. This means that national committee chairs of out-parties can take sides in intra-party conflict and publicize a specific party brand that benefits one side of the party over others.

Combined this means that national party organizations, in the eyes of party leaders, have considerably more relevance than the general label of 'service provider' would have us believe. By engaging in a variety of programs intended to inform and persuade voting groups, the national committees are participants in one of the fundamental elements of national party activity: creating a party brand. Additionally, when parties find themselves in the minority and out of the White House, national committee chairs have the freedom to prioritize promotion of a specific type of image. Therefore, while national committees do not have the power to select candidates, they can and do attempt to promote the party brand they prefer. As a result, the national committees have been in the center of major intra-party debates concerning questions of party ideology and issue positioning.

To illustrate this argument, I present historical case studies of national committee branding activity in the period 1952-1976. I rely extensively on archival sources – including internal committee correspondence and transcripts of committee meetings – to show not just the type of publicity programs the committees produced, but also the arguments party leaders used to explain the need for these programs. I show that in this period, losing presidential elections (for the Democrats, 1952-1960; for Republicans, 1960-1966) resulted in national committees inaugurating innovative publicity programs intended to promote the party to specific voting groups. Crucially, the national committees in these cases also sought to produce a brand that took a clear side in ongoing intra-party conflict. For example, under Chairman Paul Butler (1955-1960), the DNC aggressively promoted the Democratic Party as supporting civil rights and other liberal policy positions – to the frustration of Southern conservatives in the party. In the RNC, under the control of conservative chairs Bill Miller (1961-1964) and Dean Burch (1964-1965), the RNC focused its publicity activities on white voters in the South – against the wishes of Republican moderates.

Victories in presidential elections changed committee behavior to the extent that a party also had a majority in House and Senate. After Democrats regained the White House and national majority party status in 1960, the DNC eliminated many of the publicity programs it had created while the party was in the national minority. In contrast, under Nixon and Ford, Republicans remained in the minority in Congress and the RNC continued to invest in new publicity programs intended to help build the party into a national majority. However, the party image the RNC promoted in this period was strongly connected to the preferences

of the party's presidents.

Party Brands and Educational Campaigns

Rational choice theories of American political parties rely heavily on the importance of party brands.[8] The basic assumption underlying these theories is that candidates for public office join parties because they lower the costs of mobilizing voters. Candidates and elected officials want to get (re-)elected, but doing so requires voters to turn out and vote the 'right' way. To do so, voters need information about the candidates' positions to identify which voting options best fit their own views or needs. Gathering such information is more costly for voters if candidates run solely on a personal image. Parties provide a solution by creating a 'party brand' – best understood as the combination of positions the average voter understands the party to hold on policy issues at a given moment in time. By connecting themselves to a political party, candidates provide voters with a heuristic that lowers the amount of information they would otherwise need to collect to make an educated vote.

For this heuristic to be meaningful, however, a party brand must have predictive value. That is, if politicians simply identify as members of a political party, but that party does not have a brand that is consistent across its members, knowing that a politician is a Democrat rather than a Republican does not solve voters' information problem.[9] American political parties have limited tools to force members to take on the same positions.[10] In cases where there is a natural consensus, this is not a problem. However, American parties are big tent coalitions of voting groups which (historically) have frequently been strongly divided on

[8] See: D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Delegation Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); James M. Snyder and Michael M. Ting, "An Informational Rationale for Political Parties," *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 1 (2002) 90–110. Jeffrey D. Grynaviski, *Partisan Bonds. Political Reputations and Legislative Accountability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 51.

[9] Jeffrey D. Grynaviski, *Partisan Bonds. Political Reputations and Legislative Accountability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[10] Congress scholars have argued that the party leadership has the power to constrain its membership – most notably through "negative agenda control." For more on when and how parties in Congress succeed in constraining their members see, among many others: Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jeffery A. Jenkins, "Examining the Robustness of Ideological Voting: Evidence from the Confederate House of Representatives," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 2000) 811-822; James M. Snyder and Tim Groseclose, "Estimating Party Influence in Congressional Roll-Call Voting," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2000) 193-211; James M. Snyder and Michael Ting, "Roll Calls, Party Labels, and Elections," *Political Analysis* 11 (2003) 419-444.

issues. Therefore, parties can face substantial internal differences among members on policy. When members break from the modal party position – through voting, media appearances, and campaign activities – they dilute the national party brand. As a result, voters can end up confused about what the party's 'true' brand is and may stay home on election day.

To ensure that the party's brand is as consistent as possible, congressional scholars have argued that individual members of Congress cede control over the legislative agenda to party leaders.[11] As such, the literature has also mostly assumed that legislative achievements in Congress create these party brands. This is true to a point, but I argue that congressional actions are not alone in shaping those brands. Other signals, such as party platforms, public statements by party leaders, actions by presidents, and publicity on behalf of the party are likely to influence voters' perceptions of the party's policy positions as well. The party's national committee is especially relevant in this regard because providing publicity for the party on a national level is among the most important services it provides.

As Klinghard and others have argued, it was the emerging need – produced by reforms of the Progressive Era in the late 19th century– within parties to educate voters on national policy positions that instigated a modernization of the national committees.[12] While national committees initially only organized their parties' national conventions, a combination of Progressive Era reforms meant that parties could no longer rely exclusively on their traditional approach of mobilizing voters through vote buying (made possible by the use of ballots printed by political parties in distinct colors and sizes and the fact that the act of voting itself was public) and organizing 'spectacles' (parades with marching companies and fireworks intended to bind voters to their party). The introduction of the secret ballot, the rise of non-partisan newspapers, and the increase in the number of interest groups pushing for national (rather than predominantly local) policy issues pushed parties towards 'educational campaigns' in which candidates and parties mobilize voters by providing them with information about their policy positions.[13]

[11] Note that according to the theory of conditional party government this only occurs when there is already sufficient homogeneity among members of Congress. See: David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Post-Reform House* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); Aldrich, *Why Parties?*.

[12] Klinghard, *The Nationalization of American Political Parties*.

[13] Michael McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Richard Bensel, "The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity and the Polling Place in the Mid Nineteenth-Century," *Studies in American Political Development* 17 (2003); Alan Ware, *The American Direct Primary: Party Institutionalization and Transformation in the North* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Scott C. James, "Patronage Regimes and American Party Development from 'The Age of Jackson' to the Progressive Era," *British Journal of Political Science* vol. 36, no. 1 (2006) 39-60; Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1998) 174-182; Daniel J. Tichenor and Richard A. Harris, "Organized Interests and American Political Develop-

This meant that parties developed an incentive to invest resources in producing *national* campaigns to instruct voters on their positions. With the committees being the sole national body of the party, party leaders turned to the DNC and RNC in the 1880s to produce and execute such educational campaigns.[14] In the 1890s and early 20th century, local party organizations continued to demand that the national committees expand their production of campaign materials and publicity for the party as a national institution. This period thus resulted in a fundamental reappraisal of the powers and responsibilities of both national committees: with the DNC and RNC now enabled "to shape national campaign strategy more effectively than ever before,"[15] they placed themselves in the center of the parties' activities related to funding, organizing, and publicizing election campaigns on the national level. Contemporaneous political observers noticed this expansion of committee influence: journalist Rollo Ogden, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1902, noted the "quiet and almost unperceived usurpations of political power by the party National Committee, during the past fifteen or twenty years."[16]

In the 20th century, the expansion of the national committees continued. In response to the decline of local party machines, the national party organization gained in stature and expanded the number and type of services it provides to members of the party. The national committees as modern 'service providers' are thus active in fundraising, training candidates and campaign workers, and providing candidates with advice and assistance with running their election campaigns. However, 'educational campaigns' – informing voters of the party's policy positions through a variety of communication tools like campaign ads, press releases, and public statements by party officials – remain a fundamental subset of national committee 'services' today.

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ment," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (2002) 587-612. For just two examples of the role of interest groups in pushing for national policies in this time period, see: Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

[14] In one of the first major expansions of committee activities during the 1888 campaign, the RNC organized a set of Republican 'clubs' which – in the assessment of party organizer Joseph H. Manley – were tasked with "educating the people on the great questions which should absorb their interest" through "the circulation of newspapers, the distribution of public speeches, and the encouragement of public discussion." See: McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics*, 82.

[15] Klinghard, *The Nationalization of American Political Parties*, 113.

[16] Similarly, political scientist Jesse Macy, writing in 1904, concluded that "historically speaking, the committee has grown in consequence and power with the growth of the party" and "supplanted the irregular and self-appointed agencies of the early days and assumed prestige and authority." See: Rollo Ogden, "New Powers of the National Committee," *The Atlantic Monthly* (January, 1902) 76; Jesse Macy, *Party Organization and Machinery* (New York: The Century Company, 1904) 65.

Electoral Success and (the Lack of) Publicity Activities

While these publicity services are important to their parties, national committees do not produce these at an equal level across time. Additionally, who decides what these publicity activities look like is also not constant. Historical institutionalist studies of the national committees have found that the extent to which the DNC and RNC are active is correlated with the electoral success of the party.[17] Meanwhile, presidents – as leaders of their party, and through their control of the chairmanship of the national committee – play a fundamental role in deciding what kind of publicity activities (if any) the committees engage in, and what exact image they promulgate.

As studies by Philip Klinkner and Daniel Galvin have shown there is considerable difference in national committee activity between different types of parties. Klinkner has shown that, all else equal, 'out-parties' (that is, parties that do not control the White House) are more active than 'in-parties'. Galvin has shown that party organizations are also quite active under presidents of national minority parties in the realm of party building. Partly, this is the product of presidential preferences: national minority party presidents are willing to invest considerable time and resources in their party's organizations to help improve its electoral performance. But when their party is already the national majority, presidents lack incentives to do so, resulting in a decline in committee activities. Additionally, it appears likely that in the case of publicity programs, national majority parties may prefer to focus their attention on legislation and governance. Finally, publicity activities by the national committees can be disruptive to the party's coalition when it takes sides in intra-party conflict. National majority parties (and their presidents) may be hesitant to rely on such activities out of fear of disrupting their existing coalition – preferring instead to maintain the 'winning team' that put them in a national majority position in the previous election.

Modern presidents' domination of national party organizations also affects decisions regarding the type of publicity programs the committees produce.[18] Since presidents have the power to select and replace national committee chairs, the DNC and RNC have come to reflect the president's preferences. This means that in situations when the party is the national minority but controls the White House, the committee will invest in new branding activities, but will promote the president's view of what the party's national image should be. In contrast, when a party is in the minority *without* holding the White House, na-

[17] See Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*; Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*.

[18] Sidney M. Milkis, *The Presidents and the Parties: The Transformation of the American Party System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

tional committee chairmen have considerable freedom to chart their own course and decide what kind of programs the committee should invest in, and what type of image the party organization should project.[19]

Combined, a party's level of electoral success and whether it holds the White House or not produces a set of clear expectations as to what kind of branding activities the committees should engage in. If a party is the national minority, it should invest in new or existing publicity programs, and use those programs to target specific voting groups to help it become the national majority party. However, when the party is the national majority, publicity programs will decrease, even if other party building activities (such as fundraising) continue. Additionally, if a party holds the White House but does not control Congress we should see committees engage in new publicity efforts but to do so in a way that mimics the president's preferences. In contrast, if the party is in the minority but does not hold the White House, we should expect committees to engage in branding efforts but to have the freedom to act independently as to what the party image it projects looks like.

Case Selection

To test this theory I present four case studies from the period 1952-1976 (see Table 2). In the first set I focus on parties that have lost presidential elections. The first case, centering on the Democrats under the Eisenhower administration, assesses a party that – with the exception of the 83rd Congress – had majorities in both House and Senate, but did not control the White House. In the second case, I look at the RNC's activities during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, during which Republicans were out of the White House and in the minority in Congress. The next set of case studies focuses on the period following presidential election victories for Democrats in 1960 and Republicans in 1968. Crucially, only the Democratic presidential victories resulted in a national majority party. The Democrats not only won the White House but also held majorities in the House and Senate throughout the period 1960-1968. In contrast, Republicans remained in the minority in Congress after the 1968 and 1972 presidential elections. Consequently, we should see a difference in national committee activity for these two in-party cases: while the DNC is

[19] Cordell Hull, DNC chair between 1921-1924, described this important difference between in- and out-parties in his autobiography, noting that "with the Party out of power and in the minority in both Houses of Congress, whoever occupied the office of chairman of the National Committee was in the highest position of Democratic Party leadership in the nation" (Cordell Hull and Andrew Henry Thomas Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948) 113).

Table 2: Case Study National Minority and Majority Party Status

	White House	*% House Seats*	*% Senate Seats*	*Party Status*
Democrats				
1952	OUT	49.0	49.0	Minority
1954	OUT	53.3	50.0	Minority
1956	OUT	53.8	51.0	Minority
1958	OUT	65.1	66.7	Minority
Republicans				
1960	OUT	40.0	36.0	Minority
1962	OUT	40.0	34.0	Minority
1964	OUT	32.2	32.0	Minority
1966	OUT	43.0	36.0	Minority
Democrats				
1960	IN	60.0	64.0	Majority
1962	IN	59.3	66.0	Majority
1964	IN	67.8	68.0	Majority
1966	IN	57.0	64.0	Majority
Republicans				
1968	IN	44.1	43.0	Minority
1970	IN	41.4	44.0	Minority
1972	IN	44.1	42.0	Minority
1974	IN	33.1	38.0	Minority

Source: *Congressional Quarterlys Guide to U.S. Elections* (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2010).

expected to have decreased its publicity activities after the 1960 and 1964 elections, the RNC should have continued its branding programs throughout the Nixon and Ford presidencies. Crucially, however, the RNC's publicity activities should follow the party image preferred by its presidents.

A limitation of concentrating on party organizations in the same time period is that the external validity of any findings may be constrained. That is, committees may have behaved differently outside of this period. However, there are also considerable benefits to the selection of these particular cases with regards to internal validity. First, assessing party activity in these decades allows for comparison of a case representing each 'type' of party, while simultaneously controlling for potential differences inherent to the parties themselves (see Table 3). Second, by comparing cases within the same time period it is possible to control for potential confounding variables – such as major changes in the media landscape

Table 3: Theory Predictions of National Committee Branding Activities

	House and Senate	
White House	*Majority*	*Minority*
In-Party	Democratic Party (1960-1968) President controlled decline in branding programs	Republican Party (1968-1976) President controlled investments in branding activities
Out-Party	Democratic Party (1954-1960) DNC controlled investments in branding activities	Republican Party (1960-1968) RNC controlled investments in branding activities

and campaign finance rules.[20] Given the existing literature on the long-term development of national committees this is particularly relevant since we would expect to see major differences between the size and extent of committee programs across time regardless of party status.[21] Third, the period 1952-1976 covers the high point of a major ideological party realignment. Because different ideological and regional wings of both parties were in open conflict with each other in this period, it is possible to identify instances in which national committees take sides in these controversial debates and illustrate the kind of independence national committees can have to promulgate specific types of images. Finally, these cases are appealing because considerable archival resources from the national committees themselves are publicly available. It is therefore possible to assess not merely what national committees did, but also to identify the reasoning political actors *within* the committee provided as to why they believed such programs were necessary.

National Minority Party Committees and the Expansion of Branding Activities

In the cases in this section I look at committees of parties that did not control the White House. The first case focuses on the DNC's activities during the Eisenhower administration. While Democrats – with the exception of the 83rd Congress – had majorities in the House and Senate in this period, Republican control of the White House meant the Democratic

[20] Note that one major change in this regard – campaign finance regulations passed in the wake of Watergate – did not go into law until 1976 at the tail end of the last case study. See: Robert E. Mutch, *Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[21] That is to say, a national minority party in the 1920s should engage in more publicity programs than a national majority party at the same time, but would have engaged in fewer publicity programs than a national committee in a similar electoral position in the 1970s due to the ongoing expansion of both committees over time.

Party was still a national minority party in this period. The second case concerns the RNC's activities during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. During this period, the Republicans were also in the minority in House and Senate. In both cases, the DNC and RNC invested considerably in new publicity programs. Importantly, because neither committee was under presidential control, DNC and RNC chairmen in these periods had considerable power to decide what party image to promote, and they used this power accordingly. The DNC – in the second half of the 1950s – publicized the Democratic Party as a liberal, pro-Civil Rights party. The RNC switched back-and-forth between promoting the GOP as a conservative or moderate party – depending on which wing controlled the national committee.

DNC, 1952-1960: The Liberalization of the Democratic Party

In the eight years in which Democrats were locked out of the White House, the DNC focused on (in the words of DNC chairman Stephen Mitchell (1952-1955)) "broadening our Party and reviving it where necessary with new ideas and new leaders."[22] In the wake of the 1952 election, Democratic leaders identified a lack of national party publicity as a key concern moving forward. For example, Stephen Spingarn (an aide to President Harry Truman), in a letter to defeated presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, called for a "strong, resourceful and imaginative leadership at the Democratic National Committee," as well as "a strong Research Division" and "an equally strong publicity division."[23] Springarn's assessment was broadly shared in the party and in January 1953 Mitchell announced that the DNC would operate its "public affairs activities – publicity, research, speaker's bureau – at campaign tempo"[24] throughout the Eisenhower years. A newly organized "Public Affairs" division became particularly active and – aside from releasing a constant stream of press releases – introduced a variety of new approaches to inform voters on the Democratic Party's positions

[22] Stephen Mitchell to Lawrence M.C. Smith, January 7, 1954, Container 24, Folder 4, Stephen Mitchell Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (hereafter cited as Stephen Mitchell Papers). Note that the Republican Party was in a minority status throughout most of the 1950s as well: after Democrats regained control of the House and Senate in the 1954 midterms, the RNC (under direction of Eisenhower) invested in a variety of new publicity programs including promoting the Republican Party in the South. See: Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 41-70; Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008) 47-48.

[23] Stephen J. Spingarn to Adlai E. Stevenson, November 6, 1952, Container 413, Folder 1, DNC Chairman's Files 1956-1960, Records of the Democratic National Committee, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (hereafter cited as DNC Chairman's Files 1956-1960).

[24] "Report to Members of the Democratic National Committee and State Chairmen," January 20, 1953, Container 219, Folder 2, Records of the DNC.

throughout the 1950s.

The most notable of these concerned a new monthly magazine: the *Democratic Digest*. While a publication with the same name had existed previously, the *Digest* introduced in May 1953 was fundamentally different than anything previously produced by a national committee of either party. With the new *Digest* available through subscription services and on newsstands at 25 cents per issue, the national committee now communicated directly – without interference of the media or even Democratic elected officials – with Democratic voters. The *Digest* was under the editorial control of the DNC, which meant it could engage any issue it believed was central to the party's national agenda. The *Digest* was thus presented as "the voice of the Democratic party,"[25] with its principle task identifying "the campaign issues for the party and [projecting] them in terms easy for the public to understand."[26]

In the assessment of political scientist Roger H. Marz, writing in 1957, the *Digest* was "an essentially new form of activity in the American party arena."[27] The *Digest* had a successful early launch with 20,000 subscribers before the first issue was published, and a run of 100,000 copies per issue.[28] Newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune* regularly reported on articles published in the *Digest*.[29] Clayton Fritchey, who served as the *Digest's* first editor, in 1954 argued that the magazine was followed "by editors and publishers, by columnists and commentators, by political writers, educators, clergymen, civic leaders, lecturers, by the producers of radio and TV forums which have audiences in the millions."[30] The DNC also actively pushed news organizations to cover what the *Digest* published: Fritchey, in April 1953, described how "when one of the news services failed to carry a story on the issue of the *Democratic Digest* a few days ago, when it came out, we got in touch with friendly publishers. They brought

[25] "Pocket Sized Digest Planned by Democrats," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 31, 1953; "Democrats to Issue 'Digest' Monthly 25-Cent Magazine," *The New York Times*, May 31, 1953.

[26] "In the Nation," *The New York Times*, July 19, 1955.

[27] Roger H. Marz, "The Democratic Digest: A Content Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (1957) 696.

[28] Report to Members of the Democratic National Committee and State Chairmen, September 4, 1953, Container 114, Folder 4, Democratic National Committee Meeting Transcripts, Democratic National Committee Records, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (hereafter cited as DNC Meeting Transcripts).

[29] The DNC did not intend the *Digest* to be a money making venture: while it had an impressive run from its introduction on, the *Digest* was never financially self-sustaining. Nonetheless, the DNC happily paid the *Digest's* deficit due to the value it placed on this new communication tool.

[30] See: "Proceedings DNC Executive Meeting," May 5, 1954, Container 223, Folder 5, Records of the Democratic National Committee, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (hereafter cited as Records of the DNC). The *Digest* also attracted other interested parties: early subscribers included the Eisenhower White House, General Motors, and the Soviet Union's embassy in Washington DC ("Democratic Digest Has a Broad Reader Appeal," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1953).

pressure to bear and we had the story out to 2,000 more papers than it would have gone out to otherwise."[31]

Throughout the 1950s, the division between Southern conservatives and Northern liberals within the Democratic Party provided crucial context to the strategic choices the DNC made. In the wake of the 1952 defeat, the DNC attempted to placate Southern Democrats by relying on a 'unity' approach. This meant that the party image the DNC promoted during the first Eisenhower administration was designed to be non-offensive to Southern Democrats. For example, in campaign materials for the 1954 midterm elections, the DNC attacked the Republican Party by focusing on the economic downturn and negative campaign tactics by "Old Guard" Republicans in Congress and Vice-President Richard Nixon.[32] The DNC also countered Senator Joe McCarthy's (R-WI) ongoing attacks on (perceived) communist influences in the Democratic Party.[33] At the same time, the committee carefully avoided issues related to civil rights.[34]

After the 1954 midterms, Mitchell resigned to focus on assisting Stevenson in winning the presidential nomination. Paul Butler, Mitchell's replacement, continued to invest in branding programs while maintaining the 'unity' approach. During his acceptance speech, Butler pledged that he was "against any sectionalization of our Party by any issue, activity or any proceeding" and would "serve the Party and all members of the Party, all sections of our Country, with the same degree of understanding and appreciation of their problems in their local areas as they certainly are entitled to at all times."[35]

After the 1956 election, however, the DNC radically adjusted the party image it promoted. While Democrats managed to retain their slim majorities in Congress despite Stevenson's

[31] Transcript Meeting of the DNC Executive Committee, April 1, 1953, Container 114, Folder 1, DNC Meeting Transcripts.

[32] "Democrats Aim '54 Drive at Downswing," *Washington Post*, February 23, 1954; "Democrats Meet On Fall Strategy," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1954.

[33] "Truth Kits Sent to Fight McCarthy," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1954; "Mitchell Assails 'Hate' Campaign," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1954.

[34] The *Digest* rarely mentioned civil rights in this period. Only two exceptions during the first Eisenhower term exist. The first concerned a short article in the Democratic Digest of November 1953. This condensed reprint of a Cincinnati Post article discussed African American POWs who were separated from white POWs by their North Korean captors. The article praises the black soldiers for withstanding attempts at indoctrination: "For once, [the African American POWs] are proud of their country on the issue of segregation. The army has abolished segregation. Communists practiced it" ("Communists Failed to Convert Negro POWs," Democratic Digest No. 4 (November 1953) 102). Meanwhile, the July 1954 issue included an article condensed from the book Breakthrough On The Color Front by Lee Nichols which argued the Korean War was evidence of successful racial integration of the Armed Services ("All Americans Can Fight," Democratic Digest, No. 12 (July 1954)). In both cases the *Digest* defended a policy instituted by the last Democratic president.

[35] "Transcript of DNC Meeting," December 4, 1954, Container 223, Folder 7, Records of the DNC.

second landslide loss to Eisenhower, liberals in the party were concerned by the "large-scale defections of Negroes and laborers from the Democratic fold."[36] More generally, liberals were frustrated that Southern Democrats had control over the Congressional agenda due to pro-Southern bias inherent in the seniority system.[37] The result was that conservatives managed to veto the creation of a liberal national Democratic brand.

In late November 1956, during a meeting of the DNC's executive committee, liberals voiced their dismay that Republicans could start outperforming Democrats on civil rights, and their concern on how this would affect Democrats in future elections.[38] During this meeting the liberals also expressed their frustration at being unable to produce an alternative liberal Democratic brand to counter the conservative image outside of the South. DNC member and mayor of Pittsburgh David Lawrence argued that the dominance of Southern members of Congress had made it impossible for Democrats in the North to connect with black and union voters:

> "There isn't any question that in a great many areas in the north we lost a substantial colored vote and labor vote; and the arguments about [Senator James] Eastland [D-MS] on the one hand, and [Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor Graham A.] Barden [D-NC] on the other hand were just unanserable [sic], you couldn't answer them. [. . .] We could go into all the details of what Roosevelt did for the colored people, and what Truman did, and what we have done in cities and in states for them. But that was too long-drawn-out. They just say "Eastland"; they say "Barden"; and that answered all kinds of arguments."[39]

[36] "Democratic Row: Northern 'Liberals' Prepare to do Battle With the South for Control of the Party," *Wall Street Journal*, December 14, 1956. Political strategist Samuel Lubell described the 1956 election as representing the peculiar situation of having "the Negro and the white Southerner could cast a protest vote against one another by voting for the same man, Dwight D. Eisenhower." Butler's own analysis of the 1956 election also indicated considerable Republican success among black, Catholic, and union voters – all previously reliable Democratic non-Southern voting blocs. See: Sean J. Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press 2004) 36.

[37] As Butler explained in a 1959 TV interview, "members of the Democratic Party from Southern states, both members of the Senate and House, have longer service, longer tenure than Democrats generally from Northern Congressional Districts, or Northern States for Senators, and the seniority system lends itself to the build up of power and influence, control of committees; by Southern Democrats, when the Democrats are in control of Congress. And this point of view generally expressed by these Southern leaders does not represent the national point of view" (Celebrity Parade, WMAL-TV, July 5, 1959, Container 460, Folder 21, Chairman's Files, 1956-1960).

[38] For example, California DNC member Paul Ziffren expressed his concern that "the Republican Party is going to pose [. . .] as a great liberal party, a champion of civil rights" (Transcript DNC Executive Committee Meeting, November 26-27, 1956, Container 119, Folder 4, DNC Meeting Transcripts).

[39] Ibid.

To help solve this problem, the DNC voted to create a new party institution, the Democratic Advisory Council (DAC). The DAC consisted of party leaders in- and outside of Congress, chaired by Butler, and the DNC decided it would have the power to set policy positions for the Democratic Party as a national body. The DNC created the DAC with the purpose of countering the regional Southern congressional Democratic brand with a national liberal one to ensure that Democrats outside of the South could reconnect with black and union voters. Southern members of the executive committee abstained in protest.[40] In the press release announcing the DAC, the DNC stressed the importance of a national brand, describing the new party institution as being "a vehicle for rallying national support behind constructive programs and organizing and giving voice to opposition to unwise programs which ill-serve the national interest."[41] The *Washington Post*'s assessment of the DAC was that "the National Committee in the past had seldom exercised such a voice"[42] and that the creation of the council represented a major expansion of DNC power.[43]

In early December of 1956, Butler announced the preliminary list of proposed DAC members: party elders such as Harry Truman, Stevenson, and Eleanor Roosevelt were joined on this list by Congressional leaders such as Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn (D-TX), Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (D-TX), and House Majority Whip Carl Albert (D-OK). Additionally, liberals such as senators Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), Mike Mansfield (D-MT), John F. Kennedy (D-MA), and governors Averell Harriman (D-NY), G. Mennen Williams (D-MI), and Ernest W. McFarland (D-AZ) were included. However, all members of the Democratic congressional leadership rejected Butler's invitation – a protest move liberals in the DNC had expected.[44] In selecting the members that did accept, Butler ensured that the DAC had a strong liberal slant, with even the Southern members identified as progressives.[45] The DAC's steering commission – consisting of five members involved in

[40] Ibid.

[41] Publicity Division Press Release B-1491, April 9, 1957, Container 449, Folder 1, Chairman's Files, 1956-1960.

[42] "Democrats Set 'Liberal' Goals," *The Washington Post*, November 28, 1956.

[43] The creation of the DAC was, in part, inspired by calls from political scientists for more nationalized political party organizations. In the classic 1950 APSA report, *Towards A More Responsible Party System*, the authors of the report called for the creation of a 'party council' which would "consider and settle the larger problems of party management" – including proposing a draft of the party platform and interpreting the platform in between national conventions. In 1953, Butler had received a copy of the report from Paul Willis, an Assistant Professor of Government at Indiana University. See: *Toward A More Responsible Two-Party System* (New York: Rinehart, 1950); George C. Roberts, *Paul M. Butler: Hoosier Politician and National Political Leader* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 36.

[44] "Democrats Name 20 to Chart a Program," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1956; "Rayburn Balks Party Plan to Sit As Adviser," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 9, 1956.

[45] "Democrats Name 20 to Chart a Program," *The New York Times*.

the day-to-day planning of the new commission – included only one Southerner, while the other members (Stevenson, Harriman, Williams, and California DNC member Paul Ziffren) were all outspoken liberals.[46]

The DAC immediately came out in strong support of civil rights and called on Democrats in Congress to "redeem party pledges by supporting civil rights legislations" and for "legislation to end discrimination of all kinds."[47] The DAC also criticized the Eisenhower administration for its failure to stand up to Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus (a Democrat) in the Little Rock school controversy, and passed a resolution criticizing anti-labor right-to-work legislation – a rebuke of Senator John L. McClellan (D-AR), who had attempted to include a right-to-work amendment as a poison pill to the 1957 civil rights bill.[48]

Butler himself also became a vocal supporter of civil rights, and an equally vocal critic of Southern Democrats. In September 1958, Butler called out Governors Faubus, James Almond (D-VA), and Marvin Griffin (D-GA) for their failure to implement civil rights reforms, stating that these Southern Democrats did "not represent the position of the Democratic Party."[49] During a TV interview a month before the 1958 midterms, Butler went even further, telling Southern Democrats that "if they did not like the party's official stand in favor of integration they could find asylum either with the Republicans or in a third political party."[50]

The 1958 midterm results strengthened the liberals' conviction that the party's move to the left was paying off. In both the House and Senate, the class of 1958 represented an important first wave of newly elected liberals. In the House, the "large influx of northern liberal Democrats"[51] inspired the creation of the Democratic Study Group, which would go on to push for increased power for the party leadership at the expense of the seniority system. In the Senate, the class of 1958 included liberals such as Edmund Muskie (D-ME), Philip

[46] Gravel, the DNC member from Louisiana, was the sole Southern member on the DAC's steering committee. Gravel was ousted by the Louisiana Democratic Party for being too liberal on civil rights in 1958. Remarkably, the DNC voted to allow Gravel to remain on the committee regardless. See: "Democrats Press Civil Rights Bills, *The New York Times,* February 18, 1957; "Party Ousts Louisianan," *The Washington Post,* October 9, 1958; "Butler Rejects Removal of Aide," *The New York Times,* October 10, 1958.

[47] "Democrats Agree on Rights Policy," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1957.

[48] See: DNC Publicity Division Press Release B-1560, September 15, 1957, Container 449, Folder 1, Chairman's Files, 1956-1960; Democratic Advisory Council Press Release, October 21, 1957, Container 449, Folder 1, Chairman's Files, 1956-1960; Transcript of Meeting of the Advisory Council of the Democratic National Committee, May 5, 1957, Container 121, Folder 7, DNC Meeting Transcripts. See also: "M'Clellan Scored On Right-To-Work," *The New York Times*, May 9, 1957.

[49] "Butler Assails Southern Governors," *Daily Defender*, September 9, 1958.

[50] "Smathers Chides Butler on Rights," *The New York Times*, October 22, 1958.

[51] Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*, 7.

Hart (D-MI), and Eugene McCarthy (D-MN). As Sinclair has noted, these "new Democratic senators differed from their senior party colleagues in region of origin, ideological proclivities, and electoral security" and were a "markedly liberal group."[52]

After the liberal successes in 1958, Southern Democrats expressed their frustrations with the DNC's attempts at liberalizing the Democratic image. Rayburn, speaking in February 1959, warned that he had "no patience with people who claim to be Democrats who say they want to run other people who claim to be Democrats out of the party."[53] Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) cautioned Butler in a personal letter that "if we hope to be victorious next year, we should and we must adopt unity as our watchword," and reminded the chairman that if the Democrats would "[seek] to cast out all of the liberals, or, conversely, all of the conservatives, then it will cease to be the Democratic Party."[54] Senator Spessard Holland (D-FL) advised Butler that "the great bulk of our members are distinctly out of sympathy with the pronouncements of the Advisory Council which seems to be running directly counter to the efforts of the leadership and the majority of the Democrats in both Senate and House."[55] Other Southerners vowed to repeat their 1948 bolt during the 1960 convention, and to free their presidential electors to vote against the Democratic ticket and turn a potentially close 1960 presidential election to the House of Representatives.[56]

These Southern protests did little to slow down the DNC-DAC's attempts to rebrand the Democratic Party as a liberal national party. In 1960, the DAC introduced a new subcommittee on civil rights chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt to draft a civil rights plank for the 1960 convention. The subcommittee called for Democrats in Congress to go "squarely on record as opposed to racial segregation in public schools" and "to enact additional laws to protect [...] rights of American citizens to register and vote free of discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin."[57] Despite protests from Southern members of the DAC and Southern Democrats in Congress, the convention incorporated the DAC's civil rights proposal into the party platform. The DNC's push for a liberal brand, in James

[52] Barbara Sinclair, *The Transformation of the U.S. Senate* (Baltimore; The Johns Hopkins University Press), 31.

[53] "Follow Steps of F.D.R., Party Urged," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1959.

[54] Robert C. Byrd to Paul Butler, July 10, 1959, Container 449, Folder 7, Chairman's Files, 1956-1960.

[55] Spessard L. Holand to Paul Butler, July 10, 1959, Container 449, Folder 7, Chairman's Files, 1956-1960.

[56] See: "Dixiecrats Set Up Worry For Party," *The New York Times*, March 29, 1959. In response, Butler had the DNC readopt the 1956 convention rules which required state party organizations to ensure that the national party candidate would be on the ballot in their state ("Butler Presses '56 Rule for '60," *The New York Times*, August 26, 1959; "Southerners Score Butler's 1960 Plea," *The New York Times*, September 5, 1959; "Revised Delegate Plan Approved by Democrats," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 17, 1959).

[57] "Democratic Split on Rights Widens," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1960.

Sundquist's analysis, was therefore fundamental in signaling to voters that neither the 'moderation' of Johnson and Rayburn, nor the "outright defiance" of Southern Democrats was the "Democratic party's position."[58]

Throughout the 1950s, the DNC invested in new publicity programs to help produce an image that could improve the party's electoral performance. However, with the committee lacking presidential control, the *type* of brand the party promoted depended upon who controlled the DNC. After the 1952 election, Mitchell believed the key to improving the party's performance was in presenting a 'unity' image aimed at reincorporating Southern voters frustrated with the Democratic Party's early support for civil rights under Truman. This strategy, however, alienated other groups in the Democratic coalition – most notably blacks and union members. Thus, after the 1956 election, Butler and other liberals in the party changed their strategy: while still relying on (new) branding activities, the DNC now used its publicity division and the DAC to promote a *liberal* party brand. The DNC's focus on publicity in this period continued despite Democratic successes in Congressional elections in the 1954 midterms and beyond. That is, as long as Democrats did not control all branches of government the national party organization continued to expand its publicity programs.

RNC, 1961-1968: Moderates vs. Conservatives

Like Democrats after the 1952 elections, Republican party leaders looked to their national committee after Nixon's 1960 loss. While the GOP was divided between moderates – predominantly Northeastern Republicans, such as Governor Nelson Rockefeller (R-NY) – and conservatives – such as Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) – members of both wings of the GOP agreed that the RNC should be in charge of creating a new national image. Goldwater argued that the RNC should "re-establish itself to its rightful positon as the governing body of the Party."[59] Similarly, Rockefeller argued that "the actual agency heading the Party in the next four years"[60] should be the national committee.

But such a consensus was missing when it came to identifying what image the RNC should promulgate, and which voting groups it should target. Moderates' believed the 1960 loss was a result of the party's dismal performance in major cities among black and ethnic

[58] James L. Sundquist, *Politics and Policy. The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1968) 409.

[59] Paul Kesaris, Blair Hydrick, and Douglas D. Newman, *Papers of the Republican Party* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1987), Series B, Reel 1, Frame 280.

[60] "Nixon, Rockefeller Discuss Role of Party in Leadership Dilemma," *Washington Post*, December 3, 1960.

voters. Senator Thruston Morton (R-KY), Richard Nixon's selection as RNC chair during the 1960 campaign, concluded that "when you lose in the cities by 1.8 [million votes] and you lose an election by 112,000 clearly we have a job in certain metropolitan areas."[61] In contrast, conservatives contended the lack of a consistent conservative party brand and the strategic failure of not focusing on the South caused Nixon's defeat.[62] In particular, conservatives noted that the Republicans' poor performance in Congress was a direct result of Democratic domination of the South: break the solid South, conservatives argued, and the GOP could win presidential elections *and* majorities in Congress.

With Morton as chairman, the RNC initially followed the moderates' prescription, and created a fourteen member committee to improve the Republican performance in big cities.[63] However, Morton announced his resignation in the spring of 1961 to focus on his own reelection in 1962. The RNC voted to replace him with conservative Congressman William E. Miller (R-NY).[64] Among Miller's first projects as chairman was to propose major investments in the RNC's public relations division. Speaking at an RNC meeting in January 1962, Miller argued that

> "In the area of publicity and promotions, I know you will agree with me that there is room for improvement, today, in the public image of the Republican Party. I propose that we go about creating more interest by effectively presenting these Republican leaders and Republican issues to the voters of the 50 states. The short-range public relations objective will be to use promotional techniques to aid us in the 1962 elections, but also to keep them consistent with the long-range public image that we must create in the general."[65]

Miller connected the need for such publicity programs to the GOP's national status, noting that "we are a minority party. We do not have the White House. We are not in control

[61] Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 1, Frame 88.

[62] Goldwater argued that the 1960 election identified the "necessity for a return to a vigorous, forward-looking, dynamic conservative philosophy which will clearly identify the Republican Party and Republican candidates as supporters of a concept of government totally different from that which Mr. Kennedy and his people offer the nation." ("The Republican Party's Choices are Conservatism or Liberalism," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1960.)

[63] "G.O.P. Names Panel to Scan Urban Vote," *New York Times*, January 29, 1961.

[64] "G.O.P. is Expected to Name Miller," *New York Times*, May 27, 1961. Ray Bliss – the moderate chairman of the GOP in Ohio – was the only other candidate but withdrew his candidacy before the vote. Despite concerns by some Republicans that Miller's "views were too conservative and that the party needed a full-time chairman" (Ibid) this left Miller as the only acceptable candidate and the RNC voted unanimously to elect Miller as its new chair in its June meeting.

[65] Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 1, Frame 623.

of the House or Senate."[66] Other party leaders and advisors agreed; in a presentation to the RNC in January 1962, advertising executive Duke Burgess advised the committee that "now is the time to create a public image of the word 'Republican' [...]. Now is the time to sell the resurgent Republican Party. It will cost far less now; it is easier to sell now."[67] The RNC followed this advice and dedicated a considerable part of its budget to publicity: in 1962, the divisions that made up the RNC's publicity arm combined 33.3% of its monthly operating budget.[68] The RNC used these funds to produce a bi-weekly publication (*Battle Line* - sent to 100,000 subscribers), speech kits for Republican candidates, and *Ratio* – a weekly radio program sent to independent and small affiliate radio stations that lacked correspondents in Washington DC.[69]

However, the *type* of voting groups the committee targeted changed. To be sure, the RNC did not abandon black and ethnic voters in big cities entirely.[70] In January 1962, the RNC approved a six point plan to recruit black leaders, increase organization activities in states with a large black population, and recruit black women to work for the party in their communities. Additionally, the RNC planned to reach out more regularly through black owned media. Finally, the committee also produced more publicity materials aimed at foreign language newspapers and radio stations.[71] Still, under Miller the committee downgraded expectations considerably. Miller believed a small improvement among black voters would be enough – noting in a 1963 press conference that "all we need to do is get a fair percentage of the votes. If we get 25 or 30 per cent of the vote in Philadelphia we can carry Pennsylvania."[72]

Miller was far more concerned that the party improve its performance in the South since, as Klinkner argues, he "knew that the Republicans' only chance to capture the House was to win seats in the South and that a big city strategy offered no such hope."[73] Miller noted

[66] Ibid., Frame 562-563.

[67] Ibid., Frame 770.

[68] This consisted of the Public Relations, Research, and Speaker's Bureau divisions. Combined, these three publicity divisions counted for $339,400 of the RNC's total $1.3 million 1962 budget – the largest subset within the budget. Within publicity, Public Relations represented more than 61% of expenses. See: Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 2, Frame 484.

[69] Ibid., Frames 636-638.

[70] Additionally, proponents of the Big City approach were not blind to the value of Republican investments in the South; Ray Bliss, the chairman of the Big City committee, for example, supported "long-range" party building programs in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas with an eye on creating a two-party South in the future. See: Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 1, Frame 694.

[71] "GOP Designs Program, Hopes to Win Negro Vote," *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 18, 1962.

[72] Kesaris, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 3, Frame 8.

[73] Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*, 54. The RNC had begun investing in the South after the Dixiecrat walkout in 1948, but despite Eisenhower's success in winning Southern states in both 1952 and 1956, the

Table 4: RNC Campaign Division Expenditures, 1962

Activity	*Expenditures*
Southern Division	$40,000
Special Events	$20,000
Labor Division	$18,000
Minorities Division	$18,000
Business and Professional Groups	$15,000
Senior Citizens Division	$13,000
Nationalities Division	$10,000
Big City Panel	$4,000

Source: Philip A. Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994) p. 59.

the surprise victory of Texas senatorial candidate John Tower in the race to win Lyndon Johnson's old senate seat in 1961, and saw it as evidence that the GOP could indeed make the South competitive. As a result, the RNC expanded its Southern strategy accordingly. A large element of this expansion included using the committee's publicity division to target Southern white voters and push a conservative party brand aimed at convincing them to switch their allegiance. Operation Dixie was a crucial element in the RNC's strategy during the 1962 midterm campaign and Southern expenditures represented a considerable part of the RNC's budget (see Table 4). In April 1962, the RNC began producing *The Republican Southern Challenge*, a newsletter aimed at Southern whites. By 1964, the newsletter had become a monthly publication with a distribution list of 39,000 people, which "emphasized 'conservatism,' and [...] pushed hard for a two-party system in the South."[74] Additionally, the RNC ran ads in Southern newspapers and magazines criticizing the Democratic Party for neglecting Southern needs.[75]

The Committee believed these investments paid off: during the 1962 midterms Republicans performed well in the South – gaining 5 new House seats in the former Confederacy.[76] In its analysis of the midterm results, the RNC's research division concluded that "the most impressive aspect of the 1962 election was the sharp increase in Republican strength in the South," noting a popular vote increase of 243.8% there in comparison to the 1958 midterms.[77]

1950s the RNC's Southern outreach program (known as "Operation Dixie") saw relatively little congressional success. See: Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right*, 45-68; Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 63-67.

[74] Cited in Klinkner, *The Losing Parties,* 55.

[75] Ibid.

[76] "GOP Snaps 1-Party Grip in the South," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1962.

[77] Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 88th Congress, 1st Session, 1963 Vol. XIX (Congressional Quarterly

At the first RNC meeting following the 1962 midterms, Miller strongly defended all party-building elements of Operation Dixie, boasting that "we worked to find good candidates, and we provided the money – more than a quarter of a million dollars – to help them get started, as well as supporting them with tailor-made campaign materials. You have seen the results."[78] Given these results, the RNC ramped up its Southern strategy and approved a "massive 1964 GOP assault on Democratic strongholds in the segregationist South."[79]

Still, Operation Dixie was controversial among moderates in the party. *Advance*, the magazine of the Young Republican organization, criticized the GOP for supporting segregationist candidates in the South, and Senator Kenneth Keating (R-NY) warned that the Republicans would be "forever a minority party" if they were to adopt segregationist policies in their effort to win in the South.[80] In contrast, conservatives in the party believed that – as the *Washington Post* summarized their views - "the Republicans are impractical fools to worry about the Northern Negro voters, because nothing will tempt the Negroes from their solid Democratic allegiance."[81] Miller remained steadfast in his support of the Southern strategy, arguing that "our successes in the South need no apology. They are the product of hard and intelligent efforts on the part of people dedicated to the Republican principle of freedom and sound government."[82] Thus, instead of prioritizing black voter outreach in major cities, the RNC continued to engage white voters in the South.

Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign complemented the RNC's strategy well.[83] In June, days after narrowly defeating Rockefeller in the California primary, Goldwater was one of only six Republican senators to vote against the 1964 civil rights act. While Republicans had been pivotal in the passage of the bill in both the House and Senate, Goldwater's opposition meant that "the credit – even the glory – that the Republican Party should have enjoyed" for supporting it "was effectively negated."[84] Goldwater's opposition to civil rights was based on his belief in states' rights – not support for segregation. Nonetheless, his stance

Service, Washington DC, 1963) 1168.

[78] Kesaris, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 2, Frame 577.

[79] "GOP Leaders Approve All-Out Drive in South," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1962.

[80] "G.O.P. is Attacked for Its Aid to Segregationists in the South," *New York Times*, November 26, 1962; "Keating Urges G.O.P. to Shun Segregation in Bid for the South," *New York Times*, December 1, 1962.

[81] "The Southern Strategy," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1962.

[82] "GOP Leaders Approve All-Out Drive in South," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1962.

[83] Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 83-84.

[84] Ibid, 101. Goldwater's no vote inspired another moderate – Pennsylvania governor William Scranton – to announce his candidacy for the presidential nomination, with Rockefeller dropping out in support. This last ditch effort to derail Goldwater's presidential nomination was too little and too late: Goldwater had secured an unsurmountable majority in delegates.

carried over to the Republican convention and the general election campaign in an attempt to recruit Southern whites. During the convention, Goldwater successfully demanded that the party abandon a proposed plank confirming that the civil rights act was constitutional, and stated that no person "should violate the rights of some in order to further the rights of others."[85] During the general election campaign Goldwater and the RNC – now under the chairmanship of Goldwater's aide Dean Burch[86] – embraced Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond, who switched his party identification to Republican.[87]

The Southern strategy of the RNC and the Goldwater campaign resulted in one of the largest defeats in Republican Party history – with LBJ beating Goldwater with slightly more than 61% of the popular vote.[88] Moderates saw in the 1964 defeat evidence that the Southern strategy as applied by Goldwater, Miller, and Burch, had backfired. Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen (IL) blamed the 1964 loss squarely on the RNC's publicity programs, arguing that "we failed to present a clear-cut image and sell it to the voters. [...] It was the fault of those whose business it was to project the true Republican image. It was the national committee's business and it flubbed the job."[89]

After the 1964 elections, moderates in the RNC used the defeat to force Burch to resign as chairman, and replaced him with Ray Bliss, the chair of the Republican Party in Ohio. The change in leadership did not affect the broader committee publicity strategy. Bliss –like Miller and Burch before him – announced that the RNC would run "a 12-month a year, 24-hour a day" permanent election campaign.[90] The RNC requested a budget of $4.6 million for 1965, the bulk of which it spent on advertising ($3.5 million) – an extraordinary investment in party brand building for a non-election year.[91] Additionally, the RNC created the Republican Coordinating Committee (RCC) – a new party institution inspired by the DAC.[92]

[85] "South's GOP Chiefs Reassured on Rights," *Washington Post*, July 11, 1964.

[86] Notably, Goldwater selected RNC chairman Miller as his running mate.

[87] Burch welcomed Thurmond to the party, describing him as "a man of rare honesty, courage, and integrity" and noted that Thurmond's "fundamental American principles have led him into our party." See: "Thurmond Given Praise and Scorn," *New York Times*, September 17, 1964.

[88] The one silver lining in an otherwise bleak election was that Goldwater did indeed do well in the South: of the mere six states Goldwater won nationally, five were in the South. Additionally, Goldwater came within 5 points of winning two other Southern states (Florida and Virginia), and received 49% of votes cast in the former Confederate South – breaking the previous records Herbert Hoover and Eisenhower had set for Republican presidential candidates in 1928, 1952, and 1956.

[89] "Dirksen Puts Onus on Republican Committee," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1964.

[90] "G.O.P. Told Why Barry Lost," *Chicago Tribune*, January 24, 1965.

[91] "Balk 'Convention' Plan of G.O.P.," *Chicago Tribune*, January 22, 1965.

[92] Outgoing chairman Burch during the January 1965 RNC meeting that voted to create the RCC noted that during the Eisenhower years "the Democrats had a committee – I don't even recall the name of it. [...]

Under Bliss, the RNC initiated several major national publicity projects. Most notably, the radio program introduced under Miller was renamed *Comment* and was expanded from 170 radio stations in 1965 to 2,000 by 1968 – one-third of all stations in the United States.[93] *Comment* consisted of a five minute radio spot that stations could either play in its entirety or split up and use as separate clips in their news reporting. RNC Director of Public Relations Fred Morrison argued the format allowed the national party to "give the greatest possible impact to [issues] which the leaders of the party are attempting to drive home on a national scale."[94] Based on the RNC's own figures, by 1968, 1,600 stations that received the material used parts of it, and 400 played the entire program each week.[95] In 1967, the RNC also introduced a television version of *Comment*, and by February 1968, 42% of all TV stations received the weekly program.[96]

While Bliss's image was one of an organizer interested in nuts and bolts politics rather than ideology, the new RNC chair fell on the moderate side of the party split. Within weeks of taking office Bliss fired a number of Goldwater-era appointees and replaced them with moderates.[97] Similar hires occurred throughout Bliss's term in office, with (Southern) conservatives frequently passed over in favor of moderate Republicans.[98] Under Bliss's leadership the RNC also began providing financial support to the Republican Governors Association – then the center of moderate Republican power – by paying for full-time national headquarters in Washington DC for the organization – and providing moderate Republicans with more direct influence in the national party.[99]

The RNC also refocused its attentions on black voters in major cities. In February 1966, the committee announced a major new push for black votes, with Bliss appointing an

You may further recall that Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn black-balled this particular organization – would not participate in it. Nevertheless, this Advisory Committee did function. It did release its reports and got considerable attention in the press. The press looked at the stature of the people on this committee. As I recall, Eleanor Roosevelt, Adlai Stevenson, people of that nature and they gave a good deal of attention to their deliberations and to their report." See: Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 4, Frame 647.

[93] See Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 4, Frame 909; Reel 5, Frame 830-831.

[94] Ibid., Reel 5, Frame 456-457.

[95] Ibid, Reel 6, Frames 622-623.

[96] Ibid, Reel 6, Frames 340-341; 624.

[97] "Bliss Starts Shuffle of G.O.P. Staff Jobs," *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1965.

[98] "Supporter of Scranton Given Key GOP Post," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1967. Bliss also expelled the conservative "Rat Fink" faction of the New Jersey Young Republicans organization, and opposed conservative Phyllis Schlafly's attempts at becoming the chairwoman of the National Federation of Republican Women. See: "Bliss Curbs YR Clubs, Acts to Expel 'Finks'," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1966; Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism. A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 155-162.

[99] "G.O.P. to Give Party Governors $100,000 for Office in Capital," *New York Times*, December 20, 1966.

advisory committee consisting of 12 black Republican leaders. The committee was to help Bliss "prepare a program to strengthen Republican support among Negroes."[100] Bliss hired a special assistant – Clarence Lee Townes Jr. - and three additional black staff members to help "recruit Republican voters among the nation's Negro population."[101] In December 1966, the RNC announced Junius Griffin, an aide to Martin Luther King, had joined the RNC to further assist it in connecting with black voters. As an RNC staffer, Griffin advised Republican candidates such as John L. Waner – the GOP candidate in the Chicago mayoral election of 1967.[102] With national black Republican support up in 1966 (19% of the vote in comparison to 13% in 1964), Townes and the RNC set their goal for 1968 at 30%.[103]

The RCC, under Bliss's leadership, also attempted to "moderate the party's image."[104] Like the DAC before it, the RCC produced a considerable number of policy papers supporting moderate policy issues on topics such as transportation, metropolitan planning, water pollution, poverty, aid for the elderly, and strengthening the United Nations. The positions the RCC took deviated from those taken in 1964. For example, the RCC embraced civil rights legislation, and called on all Republicans to "reject membership in any radical or extremist organization."[105] As Mary Brennan has noted, "eliminating the extremist blemish on the party was central to the new image Republicans tried to create."[106] By having an RNC controlled party organization signal to the broader electorate that the period of extreme conservative domination was over, Bliss and other moderates hoped to rebrand the GOP as a right-of-center party that could be trusted with control of government again. Bliss, speaking during a January 1967 RNC meeting, praised the RCC for helping the public understand "the general direction of movement of our party" and for producing "an image [...] around it. So we received tremendous publicity and more and more the papers are starting to pick up and review our papers and editorialize on them [...]."[107]

[100] "12 Negroes Chosen as G.O.P. Advisers," *New York Times*, February 27, 1966.

[101] "Negro to get Post on Top G.O.P. Unit," *New York Times*, March 12, 1966; "GOP Moves to Change Image," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1966.

[102] "Civil Rights Aide Offered GOP Position," *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 1966; "Waner Gets G.O.P. Race Expert's Aid," *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 1967.

[103] "GOP Designs Blueprint to Snag Negro Vote," *Chicago Defender*, February 4, 1967.

[104] Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*, 84.

[105] Cited in Stephen Hess and David S. Broder, *The Republican Establishment: The Present and Future of the G.O.P.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 52.

[106] Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 109.

[107] See: Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 5, Frame 826. After the 1968 election, Bliss also praised the RCC for producing position papers which formed the basis of the party's platform. See: Ibid., Reel 7, Frame 148.

Much like the DNC in the 1950s, the RNC thus responded to its minority status by engaging in a variety of publicity programs to expand the party's voting coalition. These programs saw major financial investments, and were a priority to the party leadership. However, the groups that were targeted depended on the wing of the party in control of the committee. Under the leadership of conservatives Miller and Burch, the RNC focused on convincing white Southerners to join the GOP. After 1964, under control of moderate chairman Bliss, tactics changed and the RNC instead targeted black voters in major cities. The RNC had the freedom to take positions in intra-party conflict: depending on the wing of the party that held the chairmanship, the specific type of image it promoted shifted from conservative to moderate.

Presidential Control of National Majority and Minority Committees

In the cases in this section I look at committees of parties which controlled the White House either as a national majority or national minority party. The first case focuses on the DNC's activities during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Since Democrats also consistently had majorities in the House and Senate in this period, the party was the clear national majority party. The second case concerns the RNC's activities during the Nixon and Ford administrations. Despite winning presidential elections, the Republicans remained in the minority in House and Senate and thus were still the national minority party. This difference in party status had a major effect on the publicity activities these president-dominated committees engaged in. The RNC continued to invest in new publicity programs, though it promoted a party image focused on supporting the president. In contrast, the DNC ended several prominent publicity programs – eliminating the *Democratic Digest* and the DAC and cutting the DNC's budget.

DNC, 1960-1968: Committee Decline under Kennedy and Johnson

After the Kennedy-Johnson ticket won a tight victory in 1960, Kennedy named John M. Bailey chair of the DNC. Bailey remained chair throughout both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. The DNC's role receded immediately upon the party's shift to national majority status. In the weeks after the election, the DNC began a process of "retrenchment"

in which staff members were fired and programs cut.[108] The DNC terminated the *Digest* as a party magazine in mid-November 1960. Attempts at continuing the magazine independently produced only a celebratory issue surrounding the Kennedy inauguration in January 1961.[109] The DNC also ended the Democratic Advisory Council. Newspapers reported that JFK planned "a quiet death" for the institution which had "served to emphasize the deep liberal-conservative split within the party,"[110] and the DNC announced the official end of the DAC in March 1961. Bailey acknowledged that the DAC had "served a function" while the party was out of the White House, but now that the Democrats restored their national majority, argued that "policy should be made at the White House and by the leadership of Congress."[111]

Of course, winning the presidential election did not end the intra-party conflict that had divided Democrats in the 1950s. With the committee under presidential control, the DNC now used its sparse remaining propaganda tools to promote the administration's policies – specifically through a new program called "Operation Support." Active mostly in 1961 and 1962, Operation Support was built around assisting the Kennedy administration. For example, the DNC sent information on administration supported bills in Congress to local party organizations in districts of members who opposed the plans.[112] Additionally, the DNC organized several conferences across the country at which Kennedy administration officials explained their policy positions to local Democrats. In 1963, the DNC used Operation Support to support Kennedy's proposed tax cuts plan.[113] But the program was short lived: after JFK's death in 1963, Operation Support activities ended as well.

[108] "Democrats Cut National Headquarters Staff," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1960.

[109] "Digest Suspends," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1960; "Party Digest Shifts," *The New York Times*, November 22, 1960.

[110] "Advice Without Consent," *Wall Street Journal*, December 19, 1960.

[111] "Democrats End Advisory Council," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1961.

[112] Specifically, "the practice will be to send a telegram to the Democratic chairman in the member's state or district advising him of the vote and suggesting that he get the 'facts' of the situation as widely publicized as possible." See: "Party Will Press Kennedy Program," *New York Times*, April 5, 1961.

[113] In doing so the DNC mostly targeted Republican districts. However, the DNC was forced to apologize after it was revealed that it had also sent materials to Tennessee to influence Senator Albert Gore ("Democrats Mail Tax Cut Publicity," *New York Times*, October 15, 1963; "Democrat Takes Blame for Tax-Cut Slap at Gore," *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 1963). Operation Support falls in the type of branding activity we would expect to see limited to national minority parties. However, the Kennedy administration found itself frustrated with an unreliable Democratic congressional majority and relied on the DNC in an attempt to tie individual members of Congress to the administration's policies. Crucially, though, Operation Support was not designed to expand the party's coalition, or to promote a specific party image. Rather, it saw the party try to pass individual pieces of legislation and move on to other topics as the legislative agenda moved forward. The White House and DNC thus "aimed to activate the natural Democratic majority to bring pressure to bear on Congress in *this* session, on behalf of certain policies that were being considered *now* [emphasis in original]" rather than promote a party brand as part of a long term electoral strategy" (Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 166).

Beyond the restricted scope of "Operation Support" the DNC's ambitions were limited throughout the Kennedy and Johnson years. Early attempts by Bailey to reorganize the DNC fizzled out. Additionally, while the DNC provided some advice to black and Latino action groups, it did not actively organize voter registration drives. Contrary to Butler in the 1950s, Bailey was "careful not to antagonize southern Democratic politicians and state committees"[114] that remained supportive of Jim Crow.[115] Bailey and the DNC staff instead "tried their best to avoid favoring one faction or candidate over another in intraparty disputes within the states."[116] This was hardly surprising. As the *New York Times*' Arthur Krock wrote immediately after the election, the 1960 results indicated that Kennedy "and the 'liberal' non-Southern party majority that nominated him on a platform repugnant to the South, are deeply in debt to the Southern leaders"[117] for providing enough Southern electoral votes to win the election.

The DNC did continue to provide other non-publicity related services, most notably fundraising. Here, the national committee innovated and created a new set of programs. Under Butler, the DNC had attempted to combine fundraising and grassroots activism. Bailey and DNC treasurer Richard Maguire replaced this project with a more elite system based on membership programs. The approach was wildly successful: the DNC had erased its debt from the 1960 campaign by 1963.[118] Still, the committee did not use its fundraising ability to create new (or revitalize old) publicity programs.

After taking office, LBJ further diminished the DNC's non-fundraising activities. While LBJ was successful in pushing through major pieces of legislation that had stalled under Kennedy – including the 1964 Civil Rights Act – he relied on a broad coalition of Democrats and Republicans to do so. At the same time, LBJ attempted to placate (conservative) Democrats on other policy issues. A publicity centered DNC would not serve either purpose, since "LBJ perceived a strong, national party organization with regular publicity [...] activities emphasizing partisan differences to be a threat to the suprapartisan, centrist consensus that he wanted to develop for his presidency."[119] After the massive Democratic success in the 1964 presidential and congressional elections, the DNC's activities were further limited. With a considerable campaign debt, LBJ ordered Bailey to fire 30% of the

[114] Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party*, 153.
[115] See also: Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 175-177.
[116] Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party,* 154.
[117] "The Parties' Futures," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1960.
[118] Savage *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party*, 155.
[119] Ibid., 160.

DNC's regular staff.[120]

The cuts meant that the already limited services the DNC provided were "savagely reduced."[121] For example, the DNC cut the number of telephone lines members of Congress used to record messages for radio stations in their district. As a result, "members with something timely to say find that their recorded statements, which the Committee is supposed to deliver to home-town radio stations, often can't be recorded until it's too late."[122] Anonymous Democratic party leaders, and the media, described the state of the DNC under Johnson as "absolutely disgusting," "sharply curtailed," and "a skeleton organization."[123]

In the wake of the 1966 midterm elections – in which Democrats lost 47 seats in the House and 3 in the Senate – and under pressure from Democratic governors and members of Congress, Johnson ordered Bailey to begin expanding the DNC's operations again. However, even then the DNC remained mostly invisible.[124] Not until 1968 – when the combination of Vietnam, race riots, and challenges from, first, Eugene McCarthy and later Robert Kennedy in the 1968 presidential primaries began to scuttle the LBJ presidency – did the DNC take on a role publicizing issues again. At a set of regional meetings in early 1968, Johnson administration officials and other Democratic leaders (such as former DNC chair James Farley) deflected criticism on the Vietnam War and other issues. The DNC also produced a set of pamphlets defending the administration and distributed them among party activists.[125] However, after LBJ announced his intention not to run for reelection, the DNC ended all major fundraising efforts and public conferences until the national convention.[126]

The DNC's limited activities during the Kennedy-Johnson presidencies follow the expectations outlined in the brand theory. There was a major decline in national committee activities after the 1960 election, and this decline persisted throughout both the Kennedy

[120] See: "The Democratic Deficit," *Washington Post*, September 23, 1965; "Democrats Reduce Jobs in National Committee," *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1965; "Demo Committee Cuts Staff, " *Chicago Defender*, December 25, 1965; "Republicans Intensifying Efforts in Big Cities as Democrats Cut Back Their Urban Staff," *New York Times*, December 29, 1965.

[121] "Campaign Breakaway," *Washington Post*, March 25, 1966.

[122] Ibid.

[123] See: "Campaign Breakaway," *Washington Post*; "Democrats in Distress," *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 1966; "President Failed to Satisfy Governors on National Committee Shortcomings," *Washington Post*, January 1, 1967; "Democrats Grope for Fresh Ideals, For Fresh Ideas," *New York Times*, January 2, 1967.

[124] A November 1967 mailer in which Democratic critics of the Vietnam War was identified by *Washington Post* columnists Evans and Novak as "the sophomoric tone of 'Campaign '68" and described as "a jumbled, poorly-written eight-page compilation of anecdotes and pronouncements" which revealed "once again the low level of competence at the Democratic National Committee." "Democratic Campaign letter Gibes at Many Anti-LBJ Party Leaders," *Washington Post*, November 24, 1967.

[125] Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party*, 165.

[126] "Major Fund-Raising Halted by Democrats," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1968.

and Johnson presidencies. At the same time, though, the DNC did not go out of business entirely: its fundraising apparatus was remodeled and effective. The Democrats also did not cease their campaign activities in the midterm elections of 1962 and 1966 or the presidential elections of 1964 and 1968. Yet, the type of publicity activities that the DNC had invested in during the Eisenhower administration mostly disappeared. Most notably, the *Digest* and DAC both ended around the time of Kennedy's inauguration, and the DNC largely remained out of intra-party debates about policy, and did not engage in any major branding programs.

RNC, 1968-1976: Ongoing Activities under Minority Presidents

The 1968 election produced a mixed result for the Republican Party: while Richard Nixon won a close presidential election against Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey, Democrats maintained control of both the House and Senate. Four years later, Nixon won reelection in an unprecedented landslide, but Democrats again retained their majorities in Congress. Therefore, while Republicans controlled the White House between 1968 and 1976, they were not the national majority party. The RNC, therefore, continued to invest in (new) publicity programs under Nixon. Immediately after the 1968 election, Nixon's advisor Herbert G. Klein appeared on *Face the Nation* and announced that Nixon intended to "develop the Republican Party into a stronger political entity."[127] Part of this project was an active publicity role for the RNC, and Nixon thus decided to replace Bliss as chairman – preferring "an issue-oriented man" as the "chief Republican spokesman during a period when the party needs promotion rather than consolidation."[128] Rogers Morton, Bliss's replacement, was acutely aware of the GOP's party status – noting that to shed its "role as a minority party" Republicans would have to become "massively involved with millions of young people, with millions of poor people, with American Indians, with national and ethnic groups, farmers, senior citizens, and city folk."[129]

With the committee under control of the White House, the image it promulgated was inherently linked to its president. During his 1968 campaign, Nixon had relied on a "Southern strategy." However, in contrast to Goldwater, Miller, and Burch, Nixon repudiated segregation itself while trying to court Southerners by stressing "law and order, reform of the welfare state, and the promise of a secret plan to end the war in Vietnam."[130] During the

[127] "Klein Says Nixon Will Help Party," *New York Times*, November 18, 1968.
[128] "G.O.P. Governors Cool to Ray Bliss," *New York Times*, December 7, 1968.
[129] "Morton Urges G.O.P. to Shed Stand-By-Role," *Chicago Tribune*, April 15, 1969.
[130] Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy. How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) 88.

first years of the Nixon administration, the White House and RNC attempted to combine Nixon's personal Southern strategy with the RNC's outreach to black voters. For example, Nixon advisor Harry Dent asked the RNC to "intensify [its] efforts to enlist Negro leaders and, in fact, develop Negro leaders to work for our Party" by hiring "part-time workers all through the South."[131] Under Morton, the committee attempted to bring in new voting groups by improving the party's campaign apparatus through the Mission '70s Party Organization Program – intended to coordinate the campaign efforts of county, state, and national party organizations.[132] The RNC also used the president himself to promote the party. In 1970, the RNC produced a major new promotional film, *Setting the Course*, with behind the scenes footage of Nixon's first year in office.[133]

Nixon replaced Morton after the disappointing midterm elections of 1970, believing the RNC needed a chairman who would attack Democrats more aggressively. For this purpose, Nixon selected Senator Bob Dole (R-KS). Newspapers interpreted the selection of Dole as an attempt by the administration to name a new "major spokesman for the party."[134] Dole indeed became a much more visible chairman than Morton, attacking anti-war Democrats and the media for their criticism of Nixon's Vietnam policies.[135] After the 1970 election, the RNC aimed, in the assessment of RNC vice-chairman Thomas Evans, to use its publicity tools to "provide Republican leaders [...] with ammunition with which to speak up for the President"[136] and to "get the story of Republican accomplishments out all over America."[137] The core communication tool the RNC relied on in this regard was *Monday*, a weekly publication distributed to Republican Party members and reporters that produced headlines in part through its attacks on (potential) 1972 Democratic presidential candidates – including Edmund Muskie, George McGovern, Ted Kennedy, and Hubert Humphrey.[138] The publica-

[131] Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 77.

[132] Ibid., 79.

[133] "GOP Shows Nixon Film: First Year in Office Extolled," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1970.

[134] "Dole is Selected to Direct G.O.P.," *New York Times*, January 6, 1971. Other articles reported that Dole was expected to be the "party's public spokesman," or "the Senate's White House spokesman." See: "Dole Eases Into Role as Head of G.O.P. National Committee," *Chicago Tribune*, January 14, 1971; "Dole New GOP Chief," *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1971.

[135] See, for example: "'72 Dem Hopefuls Draw Dole Reply," *Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 1971; "Dole Blasts Coverage of War Protests," *Washington Post*, May 6, 1971; "Dole Assails Critics of Vietnam Policy," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1971; "Dole Urges Panel to Fix War Blame," *New York Times*, January 22, 1972; "Dole Assails Democrats for Vietnam War Role," *Washington Post*, January 22, 1972.

[136] Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 8, Frame 512.

[137] Ibid., Frame 513-514.

[138] See: "GOP Assails Democrats on Peace Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1971; "The GOP Newsletter Prepares for '72, Hits At All Possible Foes," *Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 1971; "Hartke Wrong on POW Trade, GOP Declares," *Washington Post*, May 17, 1971; "Muskie's Temper Rapped by G.O.P.,"

tion was distributed to 285,000 recipients each week by the summer of 1973.[139] Additionally, the RNC produced and distributed over 3,000 video clips for use by television stations.[140]

Nixon's president-centered approach to party building helped win his own major reelection victory in 1972, but produced limited success for the Republican Party as a whole. While Republicans won some House seats, they lost seats in the Senate. In Dole's view, the 1972 election was therefore "sort of a standoff" since "after you take the President's personal landslide, there wasn't any landslide at all."[141] Dole consequently concluded that the RNC did not have the luxury to "go underground" and would have to "continue a full-time operation aimed at winning the support of disaffected Democrats, primarily blue-collar workers and ethnics who voted for President Nixon, and concentrate on the 1974 election."[142] Nixon, now safely reelected, also refocused his attention on helping the Republican Party achieve national majority status, but he believed this required yet another new chairman and replaced Dole with George H.W. Bush, then ambassador to the United Nations.[143]

Under Bush, the RNC began organizing 'New Majority Workshops' – which were intended to train party activists to help ensure that the voters "who came over to us in such great numbers in support of President Nixon"[144] in 1972 would vote in congressional and gubernatorial races as well. During the workshops, the RNC shared 'best practices' on how to work with "ethnic voters, Spanish speaking voters, senior citizens, youths, blacks, and the blue collar laborers"[145] – all traditional Democratic voting blocs that Nixon and the RNC believed needed to be incorporated into the Republican Party for it to become the majority party. The logic behind this program was clear – as Mississippi RNC member Clarke Reed explained: "The Republican Party is the minority party. The President is the majority president. Let's bridge that gap. [...] I say let's sell what's popular. That's the President."[146]

Chicago Tribune, October 10, 1971.

[139] "Republicans' Monday Calls It a Day," *Washington Post*, July 31, 1973. Vice-President Spiro Agnew, in December 1972, also lauded the success of *Monday*: "no party organ in my memory has ever been quite as effective as this one, not simply because it is newsworthy, but because it is constructively partisan. [...] What it does is to try to draw the issues between our political positions and those of the opposition party and it does it in a highly partisan effective sense [...]." See: Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 9, Frame 158.

[140] Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 9, Frame 95.

[141] "Victory Bittersweet for GOP," *Washington Post*, November 9, 1972.

[142] Ibid.

[143] "GOP Chief Dole Getting Set to Leave," *Washington Post*, December 2, 1972; "Bush to Take GOP Post as Dole Quits," *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1972.

[144] Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 96.

[145] Ibid., 96.

[146] "Bush Remolds GOP Committee Into Adjunct of White House," *Washington Post*, March 19, 1973.

However, the Nixon-centered New Majority program almost immediately stalled as Watergate began to consume the Nixon presidency and the party. Kenneth Reitz, a Nixon 1972 campaign aide hired by the RNC to run the New Majority campaign, resigned his position after he was implicated in a "spy corps" set up by the Nixon campaign to gather intelligence on Democrats.[147] Watergate also harmed the RNC by reducing donations: by the middle of 1973 the RNC was $1 million behind in fundraising, resulting in a 25% cut in staff.[148] The cuts also meant *Monday* was now limited to a monthly publication – as the committee was unable to afford the $25,000 weekly production cost.[149] Beyond financial limitations, the RNC found that the media's focus on Watergate made its publicity role for the broader party impossible. As Bush told RNC members in September 1973: "we have cranked out reams of really positive comments, information on programs, but for the last six months a lot of the press has been interested in only you know what."[150] Despite these dire conditions, Bush did not abandon the RNC's image setting role. Most notably, Bush resurrected the Republican Coordinating Committee, which had been dormant since 1968. In announcing the return of the RCC, Bush explained that the organization could "help give us national party leadership on issues [. . .]."[151]

After Nixon's resignation in 1974, but before that year's midterms, Bush resigned the RNC chairmanship to become the U.S. ambassador to China. On Bush's recommendation, incoming President Gerald Ford named RNC member and co-chairwoman Mary Louise Smith as his replacement – making her the first female chair of either national committee. Smith, a self-described 'Republican feminist,' was broadly perceived to be a moderate. However, Smith made it clear that she did not consider herself to be the leader of the party with Ford in the White House: "a President of your own party is certainly considered the leader of the party and plays the dominant role, and should."[152] As such, Smith largely viewed her role as that of an administrator, running the party on behalf of its president.

Smith and the RNC anticipated the major losses the GOP would endure in the 1974 midterms, and began planning a series of activities to rehabilitate the party even before the elections. This included a major program to reintroduce the Republican Party to American

[147] "G.O.P. Aide Resigns," *Chicago Tribune*, April 25, 1973.

[148] "G.O.P. Committee, Facing Deficit, to Cut Staff 25%," *New York Times*, July 18, 1973.

[149] During a September 1973 RNC meeting Bush stressed that the end of the weekly *Monday* publication was purely for financial reasons. See: Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Series B, Reel 11, Frames 270-271.

[150] Ibid., Frame 271.

[151] Ibid., Frames 285-286.

[152] Suzanne O'Dea, *Madam Chairman: Mary Louise Smith and the Republican Revival After Watergate* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2012), 71.

voters. The problem Smith identified before the 1974 elections was that "somewhere the Republican Party is doing something wrong, or else we are not doing enough things right. Either we are being outorganized or we are being outsold and I suspect it is some of both."[153] After the midterm elections decimated the congressional GOP, Smith was even more convinced that the RNC would need to "reshape the image of the Republican Party and what it stands for in the minds of the American people."[154] To help overcome this problem, the RNC proposed a $2 million advertising program aimed at improving the Republican Party's national image.[155] During a March 1975 RNC meeting, Smith explained the program would help give "voters a closer look at who we are and where we stand."[156]

The plan – which also included training programs and voter registration efforts – represented a considerable investment given that the Watergate scandal had turned off many prominent donors and the RNC was now nearly bankrupt. In fact, by the end of 1975, the RNC was so insolvent it closed down its office for the month of December to save money on heating and electricity.[157] While the publicity plan was controversial among a subset of RNC members and party leaders,[158] Smith pushed forward and in the summer of 1975 three 30 minute television shows[159] were broadcast on CBS and NBC showing – among others – "citizen testimonials to individualism, free enterprise, and local government" in an attempt to "combat the widely held misconception that Republicans are rich fat cats unconcerned with the problems of ordinary Americans."[160]

Unlike the DNC under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the RNC remained engaged in providing branding related services during the Nixon and Ford administrations. Crucially, the party invested in several major new branding operations – most notably, under the Smith's chairmanship. The fundamental difference between the DNC and RNC under these presidents, was the lack of a Congressional majority: while Kennedy and Johnson saw

[153] Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Reel 12, Frame 56.

[154] "GOP Seeks to Improve Its Image," *Washington Post*, November 15, 1974.

[155] "Marketing the GOP," *Washington Post*, November 24, 1974.

[156] Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Reel 12, Frames 392-393.

[157] "Hard-Pressed GOP Unit to Close for 2 Weeks," *Los Angeles Times*, October 25, 1975.

[158] For example, Sen. Charles Percy (R-IL) warned that a major advertising push could "lose votes and the money would be better spent for research and for supporting good Republican candidates than for promotional television commercials." See: "G.O.P.'s Ad Plan Hit By Percy," *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1975.

[159] Smith described the shows as being "a kind of Republican magazine of the air" in which the party could promote "an exciting program launched by one of our governors, [...] a legislative report on bills pending in Congress, comments by Republican leaders on current issues [...]." The shows thus represented "a Republican perspective on the news, on goings on in this country among Republicans and what they are doing" (Kesaris et al, *Papers of the Republican Party*, Reel 12, Frame 393).

[160] "G.O.P. Plans TV Advertising to Combat Its 'Fat Cat' Image," *New York Times*, June 5, 1975.

no reason to rely on the DNC given their party's comfortable majority, Nixon and Ford faced a different calculation – understanding that the national committee would need to act to help expand the party.

Conclusion

Political scientists have traditionally dismissed national committees as mere service providers that lack power to influence intra-party politics. I have argued that by focusing on a specific subset of services – publicity programs created by the national committees to educate voters on the party's positions in the hopes of shaping a party brand – we are able to conceive a more complex role national committees play in American politics. Instead of thinking of the national committees as general service providers, party leaders understand national committees to be crucial in communicating a party image to voting groups through their 'educational campaigns.' Since parties use such brands to mobilize voters, political actors value the national committees as important elements in the party system.

The party's desire for such publicity programs depends upon its electoral performance. If a party is the national majority, the need for branding activities diminishes. However, when a party is a national minority, it seeks to incorporate new groups into the party coalition for the next election in part by having its national committees invest in (new) publicity programs. What image those committees promote is dependent upon whether the party controls the White House: if it does not, the committee is free to engage a type of brand it believes is most likely to help win the party future elections. In contrast, when the party controls the White House, the committee will promulgate the party image preferred by its president.

The cases illustrate the logic behind both the relation between party brands and committee activities, and the role of party electoral performance in predicting when committees invest in their publicity programs. In each of the three cases involving national minority party committees (the DNC in the period 1952-1960, and the RNC in 1960-1968 and 1968-1976), party leaders identified the lack of an appealing and coherent party brand as (one of) the problems their party would need to overcome to become the majority party. To solve this problem, these national committees invested in their publicity divisions (even at times when it was facing economic hardship), inaugurated new programs and party institutions (including the DAC, and RCC), and created new communication tools (such as the *Digest*, *Comment*, and *Monday*) to reach out to voting groups in an attempt to (re)incorporate these

groups into their party coalition. In contrast, in the case investigating a national majority party (the DNC in the period 1960-1968), we see a national committee eliminate a series of publicity programs it had previously invested in. While the majority Democratic Party could have continued the type of branding activities made possible through the *Digest* and DAC, party leaders instead let each of these programs go to waste.

Crucially, these cases also show that national committees of presidential out-parties had the freedom to decide what party brand they wanted to promote. The choices these committees made were the product of both ideology and strategic choices. However, in making these choices, the committees took sides in the major intra-party conflicts of this era and, in doing so, sought to promote their preferred side in these conflicts. For example, the DNC's embrace of civil rights and other liberal policies in the 1950s was an attempt at rebranding the Democratic Party as a national liberal party, at the expense of Southern conservative Democrats. Similarly, the RNC's shift from a conservative, Southern strategy under chairmen Miller and Burch, to an attempt at 'moderating' the party brand under Bliss reflected different strategies aimed at furthering the goals of specific elements within the GOP.

As noted earlier, the case selection does raise potential limitations regarding the external validity of these findings. While I believe these cases have illuminated much regarding the publicity role national committees play, and how these specific services relate to the concept of party brands, more can be learned about the DNC and RNC in this regard. Two avenues may be particularly promising. First, as both parties embraced a clear political ideology it is possible that voters' ability to identify the Democratic and Republican parties as – respectively – the liberal and conservative parties also decreased party leaders' valuation of committee publicity activities. Analysis of the ideological consistency of parties in comparison to publicity output by the national committees could clarify whether intra-party divisions prior to the completion of the process of ideological sorting drove these publicity activities, or whether they remain a fundamental role in the eyes of party leaders. Second, the development of mass communication tools in the 1990s and beyond could have affected the role of the committees in publicity provision. While committees – as shown in the cases discussed above – invest in innovative communication tools, the introduction of talk radio, cable news, and internet communication may have lowered the cost for individual candidates and intra-party groups to build their own personal brands. Has this resulted in a decrease in committee publicity activities? Future research may be able to answer these questions and expand our understanding of the ongoing role the DNC and RNC play in American party

politics.

To reiterate, my goal in this paper has been to bridge the gap between the difference in value political actors and political scientists place in the parties' national committees. By contextualizing a specific subset of national party committee activities – that is, the promotion of a national party brand – I have argued that we can understand why leaders believe the DNC and RNC are such important institutions in their parties. Party leaders view their national brand as vital to mobilizing voters. Because they understand their national committees as being among the party institutions that creates these brands, the committees are thus crucial. By going beyond the catch-all of 'service provision' we gain a clearer understanding of the role the DNC and RNC play in American politics, as well as how the different institutions that combined make up political parties create national party images.