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Issue Group Activists at the Conventions

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The rise of the new single issue groups has presented the Republican and Democratic parties with a novel challenge to their historic roles as broad-based coalition parties. Both parties now confront groups within their ranks that demand of party nominees a strict commitment to the position held by the group on a specified issue. We will examine the extent to which party delegates who are active in the new issue groups are distinguished from other delegates in their party commitment, issue positions, and ideological orientation. In short, have state party conventions been penetrated by new issue group activists, lacking any broader interest in or commitment to the party? We draw two conclusions from our analysis below: First, delegates in new issue groups are also active in other interest groups within their respective parties. This suggests that while delegates may belong to single issue groups, they may not have single issue political orientations. Second, delegates active in newer social issue groups can be distinguished from other delegates within their respective parties on certain measures of commitment, but nonetheless such delegates are clearly differentiated in their party orientation from delegates in the other party who are active in similar interest groups.

The two main American political parties, of course, are legally obligated to maintain open memberships and to maximize participation in the nominating process (Ranney 1975, 1978). Over the years both parties have come to enjoy the status of semistate agencies—that is, both the judicial and legislative branches have recognized that parties perform a critical role in the selection of the nation's leadership (Francis and Warr 1980). In return for this recognition, the parties have been obliged to remain relatively open to a large array of individuals and groups who opt to participate in the nominating process of either or both parties.

Over most of this century, economic issues have generated the princi-

pal cleavages between Republicans and Democrats (Sundquist 1972; Burnham and Chambers 1975). Well-established business and labor groups have long played important roles (albeit at sharply different levels) in both parties. In the past two decades, however, new issues have become salient—issues that are social and/or moral in nature. Along with the older established groups, issue groups such as the anti-abortionists, women's rights advocates, and environmentalists have sought to play important roles in American party politics.

There is some concern that the new social issue groups are inimical to the traditional conception of American parties (Commager 1980; Samuelson 1979). The new groups, it is argued, for the most part are committed to a very limited set of issues, have little interest in the broader range of concerns that make up national political parties, and are only willing to judge candidates or parties on the issue stance of concern to the group.[1] (Vinovskis 1979; Keller 1980; Crotty and Jacobson 1980; Weintraub 1980). In contrast, the older established economic groups such as labor or business are experienced in dealing with a range of diverse issues and have developed the art of compromise in working within the broad coalitions that are the two main political parties.

It might be presumed that the rise of a new issue group would have an equal chance of acceptance or rejection by each party in a two-party competitive system. But few issues are received with equal interest by the respective parties, nor is a new issue completely rejected by one party and fully accepted by the other. A party's commitment to a new issue area is, in part, dependent on the constellation of forces within the existing two parties. It may well be that a new social issue group in its relationship to the parties is quite similar to older, established groups when they started out; that is, an initial neutrality toward the system is followed by a gradually greater identification with one party rather than the other. An illustration is the environmentalist movement. When the environmentalists emerged as a major force in the late 1960s, they adopted a stance of strict party neutrality. Environmentalist issues were widely perceived as consumer issues requiring strong federal regulatory solutions. This perception of the problem made environmentalist concern understandable and appealing to many groups within the Democratic party who themselves favored strengthened federal regulatory intervention. It is increasingly apparent in the early 1980s that many environmentalist groups have decided to actively involve themselves in the Democratic party. Thus

members in a new issue group are likely to be in the process of sorting out their group's relationship to the two main parties.

Of course, it is likely that political activists may belong to more than one interest group. Indeed, one way a new interest group may stand apart from, or be a part of, the broader coalitions that make up the two parties is the extent to which its members are also active in other groups. If, for example, activists in one group are also active in other organizations, then there is a greater chance they will share understanding of the various groups' concerns (Verba and Nie 1971). On the other hand, if the delegates who are active in one group are not noticeably active in any other groups, then the prospects for isolation from the party coalition are greater. We discuss below patterns of plural interest group membership and the implication for coalition-building within each party.

We examine three sets of questions concerning the relationships between interest groups and their political parties. First, what differences exist in terms of levels of support for the party among those who belong to an old or a new issue group? For example, are the activists in the new single issue groups less supportive of their political party than delegates who are not members of such groups? Second, what variations are evident in the issue positions of members of old or new groups? Would there be substantive differences between the issue positions of activists in a new single issue group and activists in the established economic groups? Finally, what is the extent of shared ideological orientation among members of the old or new groups? From answers to these questions we draw some tentative conclusions about the extent to which delegates with memberships in several groups enhance the integrative abilities of the political parties.

We test the following hypotheses in the exploration of activists' attitudes to their respective political parties:

Party support: Delegates who are active in new interest groups will be less likely to be supportive of the party than are delegates in the established economic interest groups.

Ideological Orientation: Delegates who are members of a new issue group will be ideologically distinct from other delegates at the convention.

Issue Orientation: Delegates who are active in new issue organizations will be distinct from other delegates at the convention on particular issue positions.

It is precisely because American political parties are so closely identified with the electoral system that a single issue group—indeed, any group wishing to influence the course of American politics—finds it less costly to devote some of its efforts to working within either or both parties. However, as the first hypothesis predicts, large numbers of delegates at a party convention who belong to a single issue group would increase the probability of greater fragmentation within the party. Less consensus on issues or candidates and less commitment to the party as an organization deserving of support in its own right would be expected. It is fairly apparent, for example, that a number of single issue groups have been increasingly active in the Democratic party in the past two decades. In one of the few empirical studies dealing with this subject Jeane Kirkpatrick surveyed delegates to the 1972 Democratic National Convention. The "interest group specialists," that is delegates who focused activity almost exclusively on the new social interest groups, were notable for their political style combining "high policy concern with little or no interest in party preservation or solidarity" (Kirkpatrick 1976; Polsby 1981). The first hypothesis, based upon the Kirkpatrick findings, predicts that the Democrats would be a party of policy divisions, that is, a party composed of a number of autonomous groups.

Moreover, the longer a group has enjoyed an association with a political party, the greater may be that group's strength of identification with that party. The economic groups have had, for the most part, long records of association with the two parties. What we are proposing is that there is a parallel between individual level socialization and party membership and group level socialization and party orientation. Some observers have stipulated that the longer an activist remains in the political party the greater the likelihood that there will be a shift in incentives (Wilson 1973, chapter 6). Initially some activists are activated by ideological considerations, but over time solidary and tangible rewards come to play larger parts in inducing activists to remain with a party (Roback 1980; Moe 1981, 1980). We suggest that interest groups' members also change in their orientation to the party over time. Group members come to establish social and political relationships with other activists in the party.

A network of relationships develops that socializes the new group members into a sympathetic appreciation of the problems of an electoral organization and its need to come up with viable candidates and issues capable of creating winning electoral coalitions (Kirkpatrick 1976). In turn, the party over time becomes more attuned to the demands of the group.

As grounding for the second hypothesis, we note that the new issue groups are likely to attract individuals of diverse backgrounds who are united only on the issue position held by the group (Kirkpatrick 1976, 224). These activists may come to the party from a range of ideological backgrounds. In contrast, party activists who are members of the older established economic groups or who are not active in groups at all are more likely to share broadly similar ideological orientations. Our data suggest that in terms of self-placement the Democrats are more likely to be found to the center-left while Republicans are to the center-right.

Finally, the third hypothesis is built on the assumption that the issues that confront social interest groups may be less susceptible to compromise than economic interests since they are more frequently presented in moral terms. For example, environmentalists may see the preservation of the public lands as a goal of incalculable value, of an order different from the bargaining and negotiation that takes place between business and labor groups. Similarly, if the anti-abortionists wish to secure the nomination and election of candidates who share the group's position on abortion, then group members would become politically active in the Democratic and Republican parties. If abortion is the only issue of concern to group members, then it is probable that no real pattern of issue compatibility will exist between delegate members of the anti-abortionist group and other delegates at the convention.

As described in the introductory chapter, the activists surveyed come largely from states located in the South and West. In most of these states political conventions are meaningful political activities. In these ideologically conservative regions the Republican party has enjoyed growing electoral success. Many of these states have seen major controversies during the last decade over such new issues as the environment, the Equal Rights Amendment, and abortion.

For the purposes of our analysis we examined the responses of delegates by party but not by state. Our justification for treating the eleven states as a whole is that it permitted us to explore the attitudes of delegates

in a range of groups. If we had engaged in a state-by-state analysis, certain groups simply lacked sufficient representation in the Republican party to allow us to perform our analysis. By massing the delegates by party we were able to explore all groups in both political parties. We created two delegate subgroupings. The first is composed of delegates who are politically active in the new issue groups. We identified four such groups: opponents of abortion, advocates of women's rights, environmentalists, and civil rights activists. The last group, civil rights activists, presents some problems in classification. The civil rights groups may be illustrative of groups in transition. That is, they have a long record of association with the main political parties, principally the Democratic party, and have come to embrace a range of issues, many of which are economic in focus.

Our second category is composed of delegates who report that they are active in the traditional economic interest groups. We identified three such groups: labor unions, business organizations, and farm associations. We discuss educational groups as well as traditional economic groups, although we recognize that the category embraces both professional and civic-minded organizations. These economic groups, particularly labor in the Democratic party and business in the Republican party, have been important components of the national parties for the past fifty years.

Our analysis relies on what delegates themselves tell us about their political activities. Indicators of strength of partisan identification, degree of party support, campaign activity and ideological placement are all self-reported. We recognize that there may be a good deal of variance to the delegates' reports of their activity in various interest groups. Such activity could be interpreted as attendance at meetings or it could suggest that the delegate holds an active leadership role in the group. We also recognize that delegates were asked to respond to group categories rather than to particular groups such as, say, the Sierra Club. Categories such as conservation, ecology groups, woman's rights groups, or civil rights groups can embrace a variety of organizational possibilities.

With one exception, the data do not support our hypotheses. It does appear that social issue group delegates, particularly in the Democratic party, are less supportive of their party than are delegates who are not politically active in social issue groups. But single issue group delegates are not lacking in ideological relevance to their respective parties, although they may fall to one side of the party's ideological spectrum. Nor

Table 6.1. Delegates reporting interest group activity (percent)

	Democrats	Republicans
Economic Groups		
Labor unions	18.4 (1841)	2.8 (291)
Business organizations	15.4 (1557)	27.5 (2765)
Professional organizations	23.1 (2321)	23.5 (2381)
Farm organizations	12.6 (1291)	13.3 (1329)
Educational organizations	27.9 (2827)	14.4 (1474)
Social Groups		
Civil rights groups	19.6 (1990)	2.1 (227)
Environmentalists	15.8 (1566)	7.7 (779)
Women's rights groups	18.6 (1861)	4.2 (423)
Anti-abortionist groups	5.9 (596)	10.7 (1115)

are they divorced from the issue positions of their fellow delegates. We thus must reject the hypotheses predicting issue divergence and lack of ideological congruence between activists in the newer interest groups and their parties.

PATTERNS OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP

On the question of group membership, in Table 6.1 over 60 percent of all delegates surveyed claim to be active in groups outside their respective parties.

No one will be surprised to learn that interest groups do not enjoy equal representation in both parties. Democrats are involved in a wider, more diversified range of groups than the nearly 28 percent of the delegates professing activity in educational organizations; by contrast, Republican educationists come in at just under 15 percent. Some 18 percent of Democratic delegates identify themselves as labor activists—six times the representation of labor activists among Republicans. Just over half of all Republican delegates are active in either business (28.5 percent) or professional (23.5 percent) organizations—by far the largest groupings of Republican activists—but some 23 percent of Democrats identify themselves as involved in professional organizations, and 15 percent claim activity in business organizations. Farm organizations claim relatively

Table 6.2. Democratic activists in selected groups

	Labor union		Business organization		Farm organization		Educational organization		Women's rights group		Ecology group		Anti-Abortion group	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Labor union	———		15.6	297	11.8	224	26.6	506	21.6	412	18.2	346	9.0	172
Business organization	18.5	297	———		20.6	331	26.6	427	17.9	288	16.8	269	8.6	137
Farm organization	16.4	224	24.2	331	———		32.7	447	15.7	214	22.4	307	11.8	161
Educational organization	17.2	506	14.5	427	15.2	447	———		25.7	757	19.1	564	6.7	199
Women's rights group	21.3	412	14.8	288	11.0	214	39.1	757	———		33.4	648	7.2	140
Ecology group	21.4	346	16.6	269	18.9	307	34.8	564	40.0	648	———		10.5	170
Anti-abortion group	27.3	172	21.8	137	25.6	161	31.6	199	22.3	140	26.9	170	———	

Note: Entries are percentages of groups reporting membership in other groups. For example, 15.6% of union members were in business organizations.

similar levels of involvement from delegates in both parties, 12.5 percent among Democrats and 13.3 percent among Republicans.

In the area of social issues, the events of the past twenty years have had more impact on group activities of Democratic delegates than on activities of Republican delegates, with one major exception, the abortion issue. Just under one-fifth of the Democrats report political activity in civil rights groups. Over 18 percent are active in women's rights groups. Somewhat below 16 percent are in the environmentalist movement. Such issue groups clearly constitute major forces in Democratic state conventions.

By contrast, the Republicans contain many fewer activists from these social issue groups. Just over 2 percent of Republican delegates are active in civil rights groups. Women's rights supporters constitute somewhat over 4 percent of the delegates. Next to the anti-abortionists, the environmentalists are the largest social group at nearly 8 percent. Significantly, the only issue category represented in double digits for the Republicans is the anti-abortion movement, which includes just over 10 percent of Republican delegates. In contrast, just under 6 percent of the Democrats report political activity in anti-abortion groups. This finding is surprising, for studies of the anti-abortion movement have described it as being successful in recruiting blue-collar Catholics, a group historically within the Democratic tradition. In another sense, however, the anti-abortionists are clearly conservative in their reaction against a change in social practice that was triggered by the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in Roe vs. Wade.

In analyzing the relationships between interest group activists and their parties, it must also be borne in mind that delegates who are active in one interest group tend to be active in others as well. In Tables 6.2 and 6.3 the pattern of plural or overlapping group membership is apparent in both the Republican and Democratic conventions. Read horizontally, the tables show the percent of activists of one type—for example, labor union activists—active in groups of other types such as business or farm organizations. In order to obviate the danger of overreporting, the categories selected in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 are ones that are less likely to have been confused with each other by the delegates. For example, the category of "civil rights groups" is not included in the analysis of overlapping group membership because members of women's rights groups might quite naturally have reported themselves as members of civil rights groups as well.

Table 6.3. Republican activists in selected groups

	Labor union		Business organization		Farm organization		Educational organization		Women's rights group		Ecology group		Anti-Abortion group	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Labor union	———		28.7	87	14.9	45	24.5	74	8.4	26	13.3	41	18.6	57
Business organization	3.0	87	———		16.6	479	12.3	354	4.2	122	10.1	292	11.0	317
Farm organization	3.2	45	34.2	479	———		20.0	2.80	4.6	65	16.5	232	12.3	172
Educational organization	4.9	74	23.3	354	18.4	280	———		9.4	142	12.5	190	14.0	213
Women's rights group	5.7	26	27.3	122	14.5	65	31.7	142	———		19.1	86	24.7	110
Ecology group	4.9	41	35.6	292	28.2	232	23.1	190	10.4	86	———		13.3	109
Anti-abortion group	5.0	57	27.9	317	15.2	172	18.7	213	9.7	110	9.6	109	———	

In both parties, interest groups that attract the membership of large numbers of delegates appear to have a commanding position in serving as the center of a network of common issue concerns. A useful illustration is delegate membership in educational organizations in the Democratic party. In Table 6.2 between 26.6 percent and 39.1 percent of delegates in the other selected group categories also claim to be activists in educational organizations. This network of membership means that certain issues and interests in the area of education are likely to attract considerable attention among delegates at the several Democratic state conventions. In contrast, the network of the anti-abortionist groups among Democratic delegates is much more restricted. Only 6 percent of Democratic delegates claim to be active in anti-abortionist organizations. Those delegates are, themselves, active in many other interest groups. But their voice in the other organizations is not numerically strong, certainly in comparison to the educationists. The percentage of activists in the other types of organizations who are also active members of anti-abortionist organizations range from only 6.7 to 11.8 percent.

In the case of the Republican delegates, a different pattern of overlapping membership emerges. Active membership in business organizations appears to be the focal point for Republican delegates. In Table 6.3 between one-quarter and one-third of Republican delegates claiming to be active in the other selected groupings claim to be active in business organizations as well. The greater strength of the anti-abortionists in the Republican party is apparent as well in the pattern of overlapping membership. Between 11 and 24.7 percent of delegates claiming to be active in the other six groupings also claim activity in anti-abortion groups.

Of course, group membership is not necessarily equated with a specific issue central to the group leading the delegates to participate in the 1980 election campaign. Nonetheless, single issues apparently are an important source of motivation. Just under half of all Democratic delegates (48.2 percent) and nearly 60 percent of all Republican delegates (58.8 percent) claim that a single issue caused them to become involved in the 1980 campaign. An analysis of the issues by area, however, reveals that social issues are not the central motivators of delegates' participation in the 1980 elections. In Table 6.4, although the category of morality and conduct includes such issues as abortion and women's rights, overall the category attracted only 10 percent of delegates in both parties. The economy and government were the principal motivators of active participation in the 1980 elections.

Table 6.4. Issues motivating delegates to join the 1980 campaign (percent)

	Democrats	Republicans
Economic issues	21.3	33.0
Social welfare	9.1	2.8
Energy	6.9	2.5
Morality and conduct	11.2	10.4
Race	0.9	0
Defense	3.2	6.2
Government	26.1	28.2
Foreign relations	3.6	4.5
No issue	17.7	12.4
	100.0	100.0

If we turn to specific groups of delegates active in social issue groups, it is quite apparent that such groups are not composed of delegates motivated solely by the issue that is presumably central to the group's concern. Among Democrats active in women's rights groups, 62.8 percent claim to be participating in the 1980 election because of a specific issue, but only 18.9 percent of those delegates state that it is the women's rights issue. A similar pattern is found for Democrats active in anti-abortion groups: while 60.4 percent of such delegates claim to have become active in the election because of a specific issue, only 20 percent identify it as the abortion issue per se. A similar pattern holds for the Republican delegates. Republican activists in women's rights groups and anti-abortion groups claim by 62.3 percent and 66.4 percent respectively to have become active in 1980 in response to a specific issue. However, only 18.3 percent and 15.6 percent of the two groups of issue-motivated delegates attribute their activity to the women's rights or abortion issues respectively.

PARTY SUPPORT AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The heart of our concern is the extent to which delegates who are politically active in the new single issue groups are less party oriented than delegates in the more traditional economic or occupational organizations. Table 6.5 does reveal that delegates to both sets of state conventions are

Table 6.5. Delegates expressing strong partisan identification

	Democrats %	Republicans %
Economic groups		
Labor unions	81.5 (1406)	73.0 (197)
Business organizations	72.1 (1060)	79.1 (2342)
Professional organizations	74.5 (1615)	86.0 (1954)
Educational organizations	72.8 (1906)	79.1 (1097)
Farm organizations	75.9 (895)	88.2 (1281)
Social groups		
Civil rights groups	77.0 (1417)	66.4 (204)
Environmentalists	68.7 (1015)	82.5 (612)
Women's rights groups	75.1 (1313)	70.6 (287)
Anti-abortionist groups	69.0 (382)	81.2 (837)
All delegates	72.1 (6763)	84.5 (8136)

strong party identifiers. Republicans more so than Democrats express a strong sense of party affiliation; the figures are 80 percent and 70 percent respectively.

An examination of the groups in which Democratic delegates are active indicates that labor union activists, women's rights supporters, and civil rights group activists are among the strongest Democratic party identifiers. Labor union delegates lead all other groups in the strength of their identification, 81.5 percent. In contrast, the average for the party is 72.1 percent. The only two groups that fall below the party average are the environmentalists (68.7 percent) and the anti-abortionists (69.0 percent). All of the economic groups are either at the party average or just above.

In the Democratic party we found that delegates who are active in labor, civil rights, and women's rights groups are supportive of their party to an extent that is not apparent among Republican delegates active in those same groups. Republican activists supporting labor, civil rights, and women's groups are some ten percentage points below their fellow Republicans in expressing strong partisan affiliation. In contrast, Republican environmentalist and anti-abortionist activists are at 82.5 percent and 81.2 percent, just about the party average, in expressing a strong sense of identification. Business, professional, and farm groups are the three most strongly partisan of all the Republican groups.

Table 6.6. Support for party as motive for attending convention

	Democrats %	Republicans %
Economic groups		
Labor unions	70.6 (1300)	56.4 (170)
Business organizations	68.6 (1067)	67.8 (1893)
Professional organizations	62.9 (1460)	64.5 (1538)
Educational organizations	58.9 (1664)	61.3 (906)
Farm organizations	68.5 (885)	70.6 (950)
Social groups		
Civil rights groups	59.5 (1185)	54.5 (123)
Environmentalists	51.5 (799)	63.5 (505)
Women's rights groups	60.4 (1123)	59.9 (254)
Anti-abortionist groups	60.9 (363)	56.6 (617)
All delegates	61.9 (6281)	66.6 (6765)

Table 6.5 indicates that delegate groupings that are both large and influential within the party are more likely to contain strong party identifiers than groups with less successful records and smaller numbers of adherents in the party. Women's rights activists and labor unionists, for example, have not enjoyed much success in Republican state parties. In contrast, such groups have been important components of the Democratic party.

Reported strength of party affiliation is one measure of party commitment.[2] Another indicator that is more to the point in an analysis of the impact of interest group membership upon importance of party support is the motivation to attend caucuses. In Table 6.6, we see that Republicans are more inclined to believe that supporting the party was an important motivation than are Democrats. In the Democratic party, traditional economic groupings are more likely than newer social issue groups to emphasize support for the party. Both labor and business groups are over 9 and 8 percent higher, respectively, in assessing the importance of party support than the party delegates in general. In contrast, civil rights, women's rights and anti-abortionist groups are close to the party average. Environmentalists were much less motivated to participate by support for the party, falling 10 points below. In some sense the environmentalists are the least party-oriented of the Democratic groups; their group behavior

most conforms to the prediction that single issue groups are not highly supportive of the party.

For the Republicans in Table 6.6, the pattern that was observed in regard to party affiliation by group activists is also apparent on the question of support for the party. Traditional economic groups are more likely to emphasize support for the party than are social issue groups. The single exception to this division between social and economic issues is Republican labor activists. Along with civil rights activists, they remain noticeably less motivated by support for their party. Republican anti-abortionists are next weakest in party motivation, remaining 10 percent below the average for Republican delegates.

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 provide some confirmation of our first hypothesis that social issue groups are less motivated by support for their respective political parties than are delegates in economic groups. Presumably, commitment to social issue groups can and does draw support away from the party. But any account of conflicting loyalties between group and party must be seen in the larger context of the success enjoyed by the group in the two parties. The more influential the interest group, the more its delegates were motivated by party loyalty.

IDEOLOGY AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP

In testing our second hypothesis—that is, the extent to which single issue group delegates are actually ideologically sympathetic to the party in which they are located—we examined the ideological self-placement of delegates in each party. The range for Republicans was from somewhat liberal, middle of the road, and somewhat conservative to very conservative. Democrats ranged from somewhat conservative to very liberal.

A survey of Table 6.7 shows three distinct ideological locations for the interest groups we have examined in the Democratic party. Economic organizations are skewed to the left of center. Among these groups, labor union activist delegates are the most liberal, while farm and business groups are the least liberal. The social issue groups, with the important exception of the anti-abortionists, are to the left of the economic groups and are therefore a strong liberal presence in the party conventions. There is a remarkable degree of ideological similarity among the women's rights groups, the civil rights activists, and the environmentalists. Members of each of these groups who claim to be middle of the road or somewhat

Table 6.7. Ideology of Democratic delegates in interest groups

Interest groups	Ideological self-placement (%)			
	Very liberal	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative
Economic				
Labor union	25.6 (465)	39.3 (713)	20.4 (369)	14.6 (265)
Business	15.0 (233)	32.1 (499)	23.5 (366)	29.3 (456)
Professional	21.9 (500)	39.6 (905)	21.1 (482)	17.5 (400)
Educational	19.5 (558)	43.2 (1233)	20.5 (584)	16.8 (479)
Farm	14.1 (193)	35.1 (464)	23.3 (307)	27.0 (356)
Social				
Civil rights	38.6 (766)	41.9 (832)	11.2 (223)	8.2 (163)
Environmentalist	37.1 (574)	39.3 (610)	12.0 (187)	11.6 (179)
Women's rights	35.0 (652)	44.2 (823)	12.4 (231)	8.3 (155)
Anti-abortionist	17.9 (107)	26.7 (159)	23.3 (139)	32.2 (192)
All Democrats	19.1 (1935)	39.4 (3987)	22.1 (2240)	19.4 (1970)

Note: Percentages are row percentages.

conservative do not exceed 25 percent. In contrast, among the Democratic economic groups, "right wings" range between 35 and 55 percent of their members.

The Democratic social issue groups appear in large part to be the left wing of the party. Their delegate members are on average more liberal than delegates in general attending the convention. Delegates active in the economic interest groups, by contrast, are at the party average. The anti-abortionist group is the most conservative in the party and stands out in comparison with other social groups. Nonetheless, the anti-abortionists are conservative Democrats, not all that ideologically distinct, for example, from Democrats who are active in farm groups. Thus, anti-abortionists are still ideologically more in tune with the Democrats than with the Republicans.

A survey of the distribution of Republican ideological positions by groups (Table 6.8) indicates, first, that there is more homogeneity within the Republican party than the Democratic party. The Republican delegates taken as a whole are overwhelmingly conservative, falling between somewhat and very conservative in ideological self-placement. Only just over

Table 6.8. Ideology of Republican delegates in interest groups

Interest groups	Ideological self-placement (%)			
	Somewhat liberal	Moderate	Somewhat conservative	Very conservative
Economic				
Labor union	7.9 (24)	11.4 (34)	46.1 (137)	34.5 (103)
Business	2.9 (81)	8.3 (235)	48.7 (1372)	40.1 (1128)
Professional	4.4 (103)	9.9 (236)	49.0 (1172)	36.7 (872)
Educational	6.2 (93)	12.6 (188)	52.8 (787)	28.4 (424)
Farm	3.4 (46)	9.2 (125)	50.3 (686)	37.1 (505)
Social				
Civil rights	16.0 (36)	16.0 (36)	47.4 (106)	20.5 (46)
Environmentalist	7.2 (58)	12.7 (102)	48.1 (384)	32.0 (255)
Women's rights	16.4 (70)	20.6 (88)	35.8 (154)	27.1 (116)
Anti-abortionist	1.6 (18)	3.5 (39)	35.0 (385)	59.9 (659)
All Republicans	3.8 (388)	9.0 (929)	46.6 (4802)	40.7 (4197)

Note: Percentages are row percentages.

13 percent of the delegates opt for either a somewhat liberal or moderate position. It should be recalled that membership in civil rights groups, women's groups, and labor unions is found only among a quite small subset of Republican delegates. Such groups are a good deal more moderate in their ideological placement than are the other much larger economic groups within the Republican party. As among Democrats, the most conservative group found in the Republican ranks is the anti-abortion group of delegates; only about 5 percent see themselves as somewhat liberal or moderate, whereas just short of 60 percent view themselves as very conservative.

The social issues groups we have selected have failed to take form as major organizational forces in the Republican party in the same way as they have for the Democrats. Civil rights, women's advocates, and environmental activists, are not potent forces in the Republican party. The great exception is the anti-abortion group, the largest social issue grouping among the Republican delegates. Ideologically it is the most conservative, and the least vigorously supportive of the party.

The configuration of ideological orientations on the one hand clearly

Table 6.9. Ideological Positions of Democratic group members

	Women's rights	Ecologist	Anti-abortionist	Labor	Business	All delegates
Economic issues						
Non-defense budget cuts	−23.6	−21.7	+0.3	−9.5	−2.4	−6.1
Wage and price controls	−7.6	−1.3	−8.3	−5.8	−2.9	−2.1
Reduce inflation even if it increases unemployment	−6.8	−9.9	−4.3	−15.1	+5.8	−2.6
Deregulate oil	−8.4	−14.2	−5.8	−17.5	−8.0	−5.1
More rapid development of nuclear power	−28.1	−46.0	−10.4	−7.4	+4.7	−11.8
Social issues						
Equal Rights Amendment	−87.5	−65.3	+3.7	−28.4	−29.9	−40.0
Anti-Abortion Amendment	−57.0	−47.0	+55.6	−16.3	−16.1	−21.0
Affirmative action	−39.6	−27.4	+6.5	−22.9	−12.8	−16.9
Foreign and defense issues						
Reinstituting the draft	−17.4	−24.3	+24.2	+7.4	+22.1	+5.0
Ratification of Salt II	−23.0	−19.0	+1.9	−5.4	−2.3	−8.5
Increased U.S. military presence in the Middle East	−9.7	−14.5	+7.8	+9.3	+17.1	+3.5

Note: Each entry is the percent strongly agreeing minus the percent strongly disagreeing with the issue.

distinguishes the several social and economic issue groups within the respective parties. On the other hand, clear cut ideological divisions exist between the two parties and their respective sets of social and economic groups.

Our second hypothesis, which predicts that members of new issue groups would not show ideological congruence with their party, is thus unsupported. We can further explore the relative congruence between members of new interest groups and their parties by testing a third hypothesis, that members of the newer groups are less likely to share issue positions with others in their party.

ISSUE POSITIONS AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

There are sharp differences between the two parties on a whole range of issues, particularly questions of social policy. The most outstanding difference is that Republicans are strongly unified on nearly every issue. Republicans have clear-cut, definite positions on most of the questions asked. In contrast, the Democrats exhibit very little unity on economic, defense, or foreign policy issues. The only area that reveals some issue consensus on the part of Democrats is that of social policy.

It is a seeming paradox that the Democratic party, transformed into a majority party nearly forty years ago by the economic crisis of the 1930s, now seems to lack any sense of agreement on economic policy. In contrast, the Republicans (at least in the summer of 1980) exuded a great deal of confidence in their prescriptions for economic policy.

Our study of issue positions is reported in tables 6.9 and 6.10. We employed a measure on policy position agreement that is used in Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick 1976, chapter 9). We have examined eleven issues: five in the area of economic policy, three social issues and three foreign and defense questions. Each score reported in the tables is the result of subtracting delegates who were strongly in favor of an issue position from those who were strongly opposed. A positive score should be interpreted as indicative of a conservative ideological position. A negative score should be understood as favoring a liberal position. An example is the proposed constitutional amendment to prohibit abortions except when the mother's life is endangered. A conservative position is interpreted to mean the delegate favors the amendment. If a + 100 score is calculated for Republican delegates on this issue, then all Republicans

Table 6.10. Ideological Positions of Republican group members

	Women's rights	Ecologist	Anti-abortionist	Labor	Business	All delegates
Economic issues						
Non-defense budget cuts	+28.8	+34.5	+47.9	+26.0	+43.7	+38.1
Wage and price controls	+28.0	+37.2	+44.7	+32.7	+49.3	+40.3
Reduce inflation even if it increases unemployment	+13.8	+18.2	+19.5	+12.1	+23.3	+21.0
Deregulate oil	+25.6	+35.3	+40.2	+24.2	+45.1	+37.5
More rapid development of nuclear power	+16.5	+23.8	+37.3	+29.8	+40.2	+32.9
Social issues						
Equal Rights Amendment	−24.6	+19.3	+79.8	+32.2	+36.6	+38.5
Anti-Abortion Amendment	−20.5	+9.6	+77.2	+6.8	−3.6	+18.2
Affirmative action	+2.3	+23.2	+29.7	+28.5	+26.9	+24.5
Foreign and defense issues						
Reinstituting the draft	+16.0	+24.3	+22.7	+30.9	+32.0	+28.5
Ratification of Salt II	+38.5	+46.5	+68.2	+60.6	+45.6	+54.9
Increased U.S. military presence in the Middle East	+14.8	+17.3	+20.1	+24.5	+25.7	+22.1

Note: Each entry is the percent strongly agreeing minus the percent strongly disagreeing with the issue.

strongly favor such a constitutional amendment. A weakness in this scoring device is that a very low score could reflect either a deeply divided party or a party with only a limited interest in the issue at hand.

Before examining the scores on issues by delegates active in interest groups, we will examine the respective issue stances of Republicans and Democrats in general in order to establish a comparative context for the analysis of the social and economic groups. First, for Democrats, it is apparent in Table 6.10 that none of the economic issues elicits consensus.

No clear-cut Democratic position emerges on such issues as the desirability of nondefense budget cuts, deregulation of oil, or wage and price controls. The lack of Democratic party unity on these issues may reflect the set of states available in the survey. But such disharmony is clearly not to be found among the Republicans drawn from the same states.

On economic issues, the Republicans hold very strong views. In Table 6.10 there are remarkably high levels of support to deregulate oil, cut the budget, oppose wage and price controls, and fight inflation even at the expense of increased unemployment. Many of these proposals have, of course, been realized by the Reagan administration. On social issues, Republicans exhibit somewhat less unity, particularly if opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment is set aside. Some divisions do exist among the Republican delegates on abortion and affirmative action, but these divisions are not large.

It is only on social issues that the Democrats reveal much party unity. The new social issues that made their way into the Democratic party in the 1960s and the 1970s have clearly won for themselves a base of support extending beyond the delegates who are politically active in the new single issue groups. There is widespread support for the Equal Rights Amendment among Democrats. Indeed, it is the issue beyond all others that generates a party consensus. On two other highly divisive issues, we find the Democrats exhibiting more agreement in support of affirmative action and in opposition to a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion than on all economic and foreign policy issues.

Foreign policy and defense issues fail to generate much unity or commitment among Democrats. There is little support among Democrats for ratification of SALT II even though the Carter administration had invested considerable time and political capital in the treaty. The issues of reinstituting the draft and increasing U.S. military presence in the Middle

East do not elicit much commitment from Democratic delegates. In contrast, it is in opposition to the SALT II ratification that the highest issue agreement is reached among Republican delegates.

The Republican party consistently reveals consensus on the topical issues of the day. Such consensus may easily flow not only from the greater ideological unity of the Republican delegates, but from the underlying demographic homogeneity found in the Republican party. The Democrats are a far more diverse party, but as we have seen, it does not appear to be the social issues that are promoting divisions within the Democratic ranks.

To test our third hypothesis further, we have examined in more detail the policy attitudes of three single issue groups operating within each party—the anti-abortionists, advocates of women's rights, and environmentalists.[3] Our concern is to examine, first, how much the respective groups have in common that transcends party lines and, second, the extent to which delegates who are members of such groups indeed possess but a single interest. That is, do these delegates hold a general set of issue positions that places them within a well-defined segment of their respective political party or are these delegates in the party to realize their group's goals alone?

In the case of the anti-abortionists and women's rights groups, our survey included specific questions that capture the presumed central concerns of the group. These questions concerned the possible passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and an anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution. The question of more rapid development of nuclear power is not perhaps as central to environmentalists as the two issues described above. Nonetheless, it is an issue of deep concern to many environmentalist organizations in the nation and clearly distinguishes the Democratic activists with ecological concerns from other Democrats at the conventions.

What observations can be made concerning single issue group politics and political party delegates on the basis of Tables 6.9 and 6.10? For certain issues central to the groups concerned, feminists and anti-abortionists are clearly linked regardless of party. But this linkage in the case of women's rights group activists is one of direction rather than one of intensity. The score for Democratic feminists on support for the Equal Rights Amendment is -87.0; for Republican feminists it is -24.6. The scores for their respective parties are: Democrats, -40; Republicans,

+38. Republican feminists are certainly outside their party on this issue and are closer to Democratic delegates, but they are still quite distant from Democratic women's rights group activists. On the broader range of issues, it is apparent that Republican feminists are on the left of their party, particularly on social policy issues, but their liberalism does not place them in the same ideological camp as women's rights group activists in the Democratic party. What the two groups of activists share is that they are on the left of their respective parties, but the distance between the two groups is far greater than the distance between each group and their fellow party delegates.

Similarly, there is little congruity between Republican and Democratic environmentalists. This incongruity is quite apparent in attitudes toward the development of nuclear power. The support score for more rapid development of nuclear power is +23.8 for the Republican activists in environmentalist organizations. In contrast, the opposition among Democratic environmentalists is high for a score of −46.0. Thus Democratic environmentalists are firmly on the left and are remarkably similar in their issue positions to the supporters of women's rights. Both feminists and environmentalists reveal a great deal of unity on social issues, particularly on the issue of nuclear power. Both groups are far more likely to oppose domestic budget cuts than are Democrats in general. The two groups are much more supportive of SALT II and far more in opposition to the draft than Democrats in general. The congruence in attitudes among members of these groups is not surprising in light of their overlapping memberships, as 49 percent of Democrats claiming to be active in ecology groups are also active in women's rights groups (see Table 6.3).

Republican environmentalists are for the most part very similar in the positions they hold to Republican delegates in general. It is only on the issues of equal rights and abortion that the environmentalists are less supportive of conservative positions. But on economic issues, there is virtually no difference between environmentalist Republican delegates and the rest of the party. Indeed, no particular sets of issue concerns appear to differentiate Republican environmentalists from the mainstream of Republican delegates.

It is with the anti-abortionists, the best known single interest group, that we find sharp differences in issue orientation from others in the party. Anti-abortionists are conservative, particularly on social issues, but also on foreign policy concerns as well. They cluster on the right in both

parties. But as for the other sets of social issues groups, there remain substantial partisan differences between the two groups of anti-abortionists. A good illustration is SALT II ratification, where Republican anti-abortionists vigorously oppose Senate consent. Democratic anti-abortionists lack such unity. On economic questions, the Democratic anti-abortionists are very similar to Democrats in general in that no strong pattern of issue positions is observable. Perhaps the most telling difference is on the Equal Rights Amendment: here the Republican anti-abortionists are even more opposed to the ERA than they are in favor of an anti-abortion amendment, albeit only slightly. The same pattern is not duplicated for Democratic anti-abortionists who are too divided to have a unified vigorous stance one way or the other on the issue.

In short, the Democratic anti-abortionists are conservative Democrats. They are very distant from the ideological orientation held by Democratic environmentalists and women's rights advocates, but they are removed from the Republican party as well. If pressed they might find the Republicans more sympathetic on social issues and some defense issues, but still great gaps would remain that would ideologically separate them on many issues from their fellow anti-abortionists in the Republican party.

We have also examined the issue positions of two economic groups, business and labor, in the two parties. (See Tables 6.9 and 6.10.) There are some clear parallels with the pattern we found for the social issue groups. Both Republican and Democratic delegates who were active in business groups were consistently more conservative on economic issues than all the other groups described in this analysis as well as in comparison to the over-all averages of delegates in their respective parties. But it is also clear that Republican business delegates are consistently more conservative on economic issues than are Democratic delegates. The differences between the two sets of business group delegates are far greater than the differences between labor and business delegates within each of the two parties.

What is apparent in comparing labor and business group delegates within the Republican conventions is the remarkable unity on social issues. The only social question that generates any difference between the two Republican groups is the anti-abortion amendment where Republican business group activists express slight opposition. There are clear-cut differences between labor and business delegates on economic issues, with Republican business activists more conservative, but the differences are ones of magnitude.

Differences between labor and business activists in the Democratic Party are confined to economic issue areas. An illustration is that there is more support among Democratic business activists than labor activists for an anti-inflation policy that could cost jobs. On social issues a remarkable similarity between labor and business activists exists on the ERA and opposition to the anti-abortion amendment. There is some difference on support for affirmative action programs with labor activists being much more supportive. On foreign policy questions, Democratic labor activists and especially business activists are somewhat more conservative than Democratic delegates in general.

On the basis of our investigation, it is reasonable to conclude that in spite of the activities of interest groups, the political parties are still decidedly identifiable bodies possessing a high degree of loyalty and varying degrees of ideological unity.

The Democrats are the more deeply divided party. There are divisions between liberals and moderates and little unity is manifested on a range of topical issues. Party support is lower than that found in the Republican party. Democrats, confronted with a large number of diverse and active interest groups, may simply be much less of a definable political entity than Republicans. Where there is some semblance of commitment and consensus in the Democratic party, however, it is in the area of social issues. Here, deeply controversial issue positions have achieved a level of delegate support not reflected in either economic or foreign policy issues. In reference to the Democratic party the first hypothesis is partially confirmed, as support for the party is stronger among the older established economic groups. These economic groups are also more in the mainstream of the party ideologically—more so than most of the single issue groups who occupy a liberal position in the party.

In the Republican party the need to modify the hypothesis is more evident. The position a group enjoys in the party clearly influences the group's level of party support. Many of the newer social groups, as well as labor, have not enjoyed much support among Republicans. In turn, such groups are the least supportive of the party. In addition to sheer numbers, it is likely that multiple group memberships enhance the group's opportunity to have its issue position disseminated throughout the party. The greater the number of delegates who are members of business groups, the greater the ease of generating probusiness sympathies. The greater the extent of plural membership, the greater the likelihood of mutual appreci-

ation of issue concerns and of coalitions built on such common concerns.

It is the anti-abortionist movement that presents the most obvious test for hypotheses concerning the extent of party loyalty found in a single issue group. Like nearly all other groups, the group has had a differential impact on the two parties. It has much less representation among Democratic delegates than the other social issue groups. It is a movement that is ideologically on the right of the Democratic party, but still anti-abortionist delegates have more in common with other Democrats than they do with Republican anti-abortionists. The Republican anti-abortionist movement among Republican delegates is relatively large and ideologically consistently to the right of any other group in the party. Like the other social issue groups in the Republican party, it is less willing to support the party than are delegates in general. The anti-abortionist movement is very much still in the process of establishing itself and, if the examples of social issues in the Democratic party give us guidance, we would predict that the anti-abortionists would gain in influence in the Republican party and diminish in strength among the Democrats. Social issues seem to follow a zero-sum course of partisan distribution not unlike the issue itself. If one party supports the issue, then the other party ultimately will not. In contrast, economic groups with the exception of labor have a good deal more flexibility in surviving in and accommodating to both parties. The challenge to parties is not the rise of single issue groups, but sorting out the process by which issue groups find their respective ideological homes.

NOTES

1. Discussion of single issue groups is not new to American politics. The abolitionists and the suffragettes are examples of powerful nineteenth-century movements. In the current debate more attention has focused on the effective communication strategies of the New Right social issues groups.

2. A subjective measure of party support (question 5 in the appendix) has been selected rather than objective measures such as attendance at party functions or activities undertaken in behalf of party candidates. The subjective approach is justified on the basis that the delegates surveyed form an elite within the party and are capable of making such judgments.

3. These groups were chosen because they have arisen in the past ten to fifteen years.

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