

The Social Bases of U.S. Political Parties: 1952 to 2012 Social Support and Political Interests

Kenneth Janda
Northwestern University

Paper prepared for delivery at the 2013 Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association,
Chicago, Illinois, April 10-14, 2013

Using data on party identifiers from national election surveys, I scored Democratic and Republican parties from 1952 to 2012 for their attraction and concentration of support from seven established sources of political cleavage: occupation, education, region, urbanization, religion, ethnicity, and ideology. Over the last sixty years, the Democratic Party tended to be more attractive than the Republican Party of support from multiple groups on most—but not on all—of the cleavage dimensions, while the composition of the Republican Party tended to be more concentrated among particular groups. Concerning the parties' articulation of political interests, the extent to which social support is concentrated in a political party appears to be more important than the extent to which parties attract social support. Based on interest group ratings of party members in the House of Representatives, the higher the proportion of a party's supporters coming from a single social group, the more the party supported policies favored by the group, according to interest group ratings of congressional voting.

This paper reports findings from a larger study, *The Social Bases of Political Parties*, published electronically as an iBook in early 2013.¹ Drawing on 16 national surveys from 1952 to 2012, *The Social Bases of Political Parties* sought to

1. describe—in colored charts—how the United States society changed from 1952 to 2012 in terms of occupation, education, regional growth, urbanization, religion, ethnicity, and ideology;
2. summarize how the patterns of social support for the Democratic and Republican parties shifted with these changes;
3. indicate how the parties articulated the political interests of their social bases in congressional voting in Congress; and
4. invite readers to speculate about the future of our two-party system in 2032 by offering their views in a national survey.

In contrast, this paper focuses on four aspects of that study, as reflected by the unfamiliar concepts of *attraction* and *concentration* for analyzing social support, and by the familiar

¹ Kenneth Janda, *The Social Bases of Party Support: Democrats and Republicans, 1952-2012 and 2032* (Roseville, MN: Kenneth Janda, 2013). This is a 110 page self-published iBook for Apple iPads. For a description, go to <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/social-bases-political-parties/id602462683?mt=13>

concepts of articulation and aggregation for analyzing political interests. It draws heavily, often verbatim, from my iBook.

The concepts of attraction and concentration refer to two different methods for evaluating the structure of political party support. They were introduced decades ago in the comparative study of political parties but are probably unfamiliar to party scholars today, especially those who only study American party politics.² Party scholars generally will be more familiar with the concepts of articulation and aggregation.³ However, scholars tend to pay only lip service to interest articulation, devoting far more attention to parties' role in interest aggregation.

Analyzing the Structure of Party Support

The social bases of party support are typically analyzed using data from sample surveys. Assume the presence of survey data on party preference by social groups (e.g., by occupations) cross-tabulated as shown in Table 0.

Table 0: Generalized Distribution of Support for n Parties across k Social Groups

	Group ₁	Group ₂	...	Group _k	Total %
Party ₁	<i>data</i>	<i>data</i>	...	<i>data</i>	100
Party ₂	<i>data</i>	<i>data</i>	...	<i>data</i>	100
...	...	...	...	...	100
...	...	...	...	...	100
Party _k	<i>data</i>	<i>data</i>	...	<i>data</i>	100
Total %	100	100	100	100	

How should a given party's social support be assessed from these data? Two alternatives present themselves: (1) Assess support in terms of the proportions of the *groups'* preferences it receives, or (2) assess support in terms of the proportions of its *total* preferences that come from each group. Calculating percentages by columns conforms to method 1; calculating percentages by rows conforms to method 2.

Voting studies have tended to analyze data such as those in Table 0 by columns, reporting the percentages of a given group—for example, unskilled laborers—that support each party. This mode of analysis conforms to the major interest of voting studies in predicting voting choice of individuals. The percentage that prefers a given party is regarded as an estimate of the probability that a member of that group would support that party.

Scholars studying voting behavior have been less apt to calculate percentages by *parties*

² Kenneth Janda, *Political Parties: A Cross-National Survey* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), Chapter 5, pp. 41-52. Long out of print, this book is now available online. For Chapter 5, go to http://janda.org/ICPP/ICPP1980/Book/PART1/Ch.05_SocialSupport/Ch.05p41.htm.

³ Kenneth Janda, "Interest Aggregation and Articulation," in *The Encyclopedia of Political Science, Volume 3*, (Washington, DC: CQPress, 2010), 798-799.

(by rows in the preceding example), because the resulting percentages indicate nothing about the probability of voting choice of group members—as the party rather than the social group becomes the unit of analysis. Thus, voting studies are more likely to produce information on the percentage of blue-collar workers voting "leftist" in Western democracies than on the proportion of the "leftist" vote that comes from blue-collar workers. While both methods for calculating party support are relevant to scholars studying political parties, a case can be made that calculating party support by rows—which makes parties the unit of analysis—is more central to their interests. This method shifts attention away from the party preference of the social group to the social composition of the party.

Consider the data from a January, 2012 Pew survey cross-tabulating party preferences by age groups.⁴ Table 1 computes and reports the percentages of citizens in five age groups who identified themselves as Republicans, independents, and Democrats. The table computes the fifteen cell percentages by columns, which is the standard format for reporting such poll data.

Table 1: Percentages by Age Groups Identifying with Parties, 2012

	18-29	30-41	42-53	54-64	65+	<i>Total of Sample</i>
Republicans	19%	20%	25%	23%	28%	23%
Independents	51%	48%	45%	38%	38%	45%
Democrats	30%	32%	30%	39%	34%	32%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>1,140</i>	<i>1,126</i>	<i>1,250</i>	<i>1,009</i>	<i>886</i>	<i>5,410</i>

The cell entries in Table 1 show the party identification of citizens by age group. Only 19 percent of respondents from 18 to 29 said they were Republicans compared with 30 percent who described themselves as Democrats. Older citizens, however, were systematically less likely to be independent and more likely to be partisan—28 percent being Republicans and 34 percent Democrats. The percentages varied somewhat across the age groups, but generally speaking, party preferences differed little across them.

If the raw data for the 5,410 cases are calculated by rows, however, a different picture emerges. See Table 2, which computes party composition as the proportion of all identifiers in different age groups. To help distinguish between the two different ways of computing group support of political parties, this paper reports party composition in *proportions* (rows) and group preferences in *percentages* (columns)

Table 2: Proportion of Party Identifiers by Age Groups, 2012

	18-29	30-41	42-53	54-64	65+	Total	<i>Number of Cases</i>
Republicans	0.18	0.18	0.25	0.19	0.20	1.00	<i>1,240</i>
Independents	0.24	0.23	0.24	0.16	0.14	1.00	<i>2,411</i>
Democrats	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.17	1.00	<i>1,759</i>
<i>Total of sample</i>	0.21	0.21	0.23	0.19	0.16	1.00	<i>5,410</i>

⁴ The January 11-16, 2012 Pew Research Center Political Survey had a sample size of 1,502. The data were kindly supplied by Dr. Leah Melani Christian, Senior Researcher, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

Table 2 shows that young people from 18 to 29 constituted 0.18 of Republicans but only 0.19 of Democrats, while 0.20 of all Republicans and 0.17 of all Democrats were 65 or older. Paradoxically, a higher percentage of the 65+ group was attracted to the Democrats (Table 1), but a larger proportion of older citizens was concentrated among Republican identifiers (Table 2).

This surprising result occurred because Republicans had a smaller share of the electorate. These two tables demonstrate that there is a difference between how strongly a party attracts support from a group and how strongly that group is concentrated within a party. Therefore, a thorough analysis of party support needs to consider two different questions:

1. How *evenly* does the party attract support from various groups along the dimension of social cleavage?
2. How *heavily* is the party's support concentrated within any particular group in a dimension of social cleavage?

As expected, the two major political parties in the United States do not differ very much in patterns of support by age groups. Age was chosen for this example precisely because it does not serve as a major factor in differentiating the social bases of party support. The more important the factor, the more differences between the two methods of assessing party support.

Tables 1 and 2 each contain 15 entries. We could discuss notable differences among all 15 cell percentages or proportions. Making such comparisons among all the percentages and proportions can be tedious. Instead of ferreting out differences in the extent to which parties attracted support from individual groups—such as age—and the extent to which individual groups were concentrated within the parties, I created two separate measures to summarize data such as those in Tables 2 and 3. One measures “social attraction” and the other “social concentration.”

Social Attraction

"Social attraction" is defined as *the extent to which the party attracts its supporters evenly from each significant group within any dimension of social cleavage*. Only the *evenness* of support for a party from social groups is important; the average level of support is unimportant. This concern with *evenness* of support and not *level* of support separates measures of social attraction from measures of party strength.

The formula for measuring social attraction, given in Box 1, considers the absolute deviations from the mean level across all age groups (percentages calculated by column in Table 1). A score of 1.0 is achieved only if there is *no* variation in the percentages of support received by the party from the different social groups in the analysis. A score of 0.0 results only if a party receives *all* the support of one group while winning no support from any other.

Box 1: Social Attraction Formula

Start with the percentages, X_i , by which each group supports a party (percentages by column in Table 1). Compute the average amount of deviation across the percentages by row (sum of absolute deviations, $|X_i - \bar{X}|$). Divide by the number of groups, k , for each party to yield the average deviation. Norm the average deviation by dividing by the mean, \bar{X} . (An average deviation of 1.0 percentage points is relatively small for a mean support level of 50 percent, but relatively large for a mean support level of only 10 percent.)

Divide the result by the maximum deviation that could be obtained for a specified number of groups. This maximum is achieved when a single group gives a party 100 percent of its support and the party gets no support from any other group. These several concerns are included in our formula for measuring social attraction:

$$\text{Social Attraction} = \left(1 - \frac{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^k |X_i - \bar{X}|}{k} / \bar{X}}{\frac{2(k-1)}{k}} \right)^2 \quad [1]$$

where k is the number of groups within the cleavage dimension in the analysis; X_i is the percentage of the i th group's support given to the party; and \bar{X} is the mean percentage of support for the party, calculated over all social groupings, k . The quantity is subtracted from 1 so that high scores signify high attraction.

The social attraction values produced by the formula within parentheses range from 0.0 to 1.0. The values are then squared to normalize their distribution, which otherwise would be negatively skewed—i.e., a few scores tending toward 0.0 while many clustering toward 1.0.

Choosing the k specific groups in the formula is important. Two criteria enter the choice. The most important is their social significance. Consider the age of the respondents. Dividing the population into the youngest group, the oldest group, and three intermediate age groups seems to capture significant differences in life cycle. Usually, survey organizations specify groups according to their social significance. Concerning ethnicity, for example, contemporary polls typically classify respondents as white, black, Hispanic, or other. Decades ago, polls did not include Hispanic.

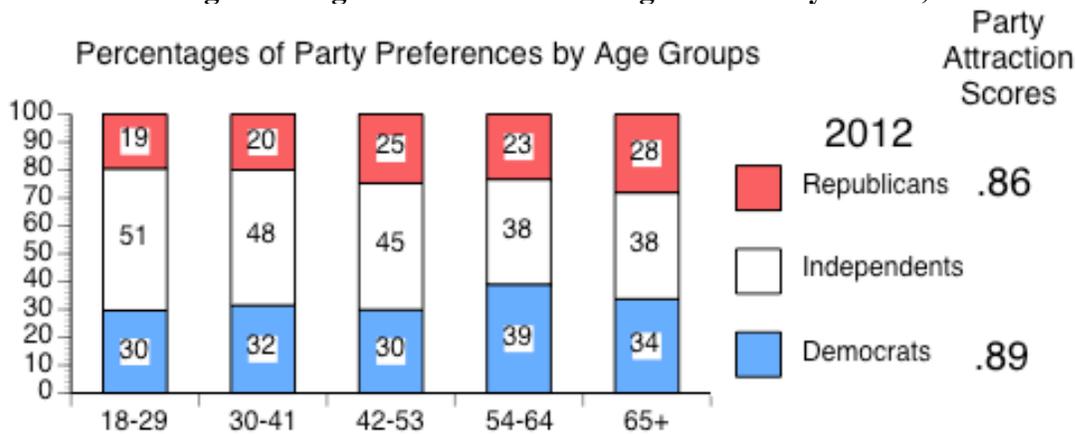
The ethnicity example brings up the second criterion: the number of groups (k) to include in the cross-tabulation. Increasing the number of groups means that percentages will be based on fewer respondents spread over more categories. Because the reliability of the percentages is tied to the number of cases on which the percentages are calculated, adding extra categories tends to reduce the reliability of the attraction scores. It also has the *potential* (but not necessarily the effect) of raising or lowering the attraction score itself. Problems about choosing the k groups

apply as well to the social concentration score. Insofar as possible, we follow the practices of the polling organizations in choosing the categories of our social groups.

The social attraction percentages of different age groups appear in Figure 1, which graphs the same percentages as in Table 1. The Republican age attraction score for 2012 was computed to be .86, while the Democratic age attraction score was .89. These are very high scores by comparison with other data. So the Democrats attracted identifiers slightly more evenly across age groups. Republicans drew fewer supporters from the younger age groups and scored lower.

Of course, all summary measures of tabular presentations lose interesting detail contained in the original tables. In calculating attraction and concentration scores, we lose knowledge about *which* groups differed in their party support. When discussing such figures in subsequent chapters, we will identify groups that deviate from others.

Figure 1: Age Attraction Percentages and Party Scores, 2012



Social Concentration

"Social concentration" is defined as *the extent to which party supporters are concentrated in specific groups within any dimension of social cleavage*. The focus is on the pattern of party composition, with the pattern based on the proportions of the party's identifiers that come from each group (i.e., proportions calculated by rows in Table 2). If each group contributes equal proportions, the concentration score is 0.0, as no group outweighs another. In the limiting case of perfect concentration—when all the party's support comes from only one of several existing groups—the concentration score is 1.0.

The formula for measuring social concentration is presented in Box 2. In economics, a similar formula measures the concentration of firms in the marketplace. Assuming that the marketplace has a great many firms, economists simply sum the squared proportions of firms' market shares. A simple summing of squared proportions of party support from social groups, however, does not allow for comparison across parties or countries when the number of existing groups varies. For example, given only two significant groups within a social category (e.g., religion divided into Catholic and Protestant) and both groups contribute equally to the party's composition; the sum of the squared proportions ($.50^2 + .50^2$) is 0.50. But, given *three* religious

groups also equally divided ($.33^2 + .33^2 + .33^2$), the value is 0.33. Thus, a correction is introduced to allow for the number of groups and to render the concentration scores comparable in the two cases. This correction factor is included in our formula for measuring social concentration.

Box 2: Social Concentration Formula

Square and sum the proportions, Y_i , of each group's contribution to the total set of party supporters. In Table 2 those are the entries along the row for a given party.

$$\text{Social Concentration} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^k Y_i^2 - 1/k}{1 - 1/k}} \quad [2]$$

where k is the number of groups within the cleavage dimension included in the analysis and Y_i is the proportion of the party's support coming from the i th group of k groups. The social concentration values produced by the formula under the radical (square root sign) range from 0.0 to 1.0. Taking the square root normalizes the distribution of scores, which otherwise would be positively skewed—i.e., a few scores tending toward 1.0 while many clustering toward 0.0.

The concentration formula in Box 2 ranges from 0.0—when the party's support comes equally from each group—to 1.0, when one of the groups contributes all its supporters. The scores are comparable across parties and countries, regardless of the number of groups included in the analysis. Figure 2 reports the parties' concentration scores for age groups in 2012.

Figure 2: Age Concentration Proportions and Party Scores, 2012

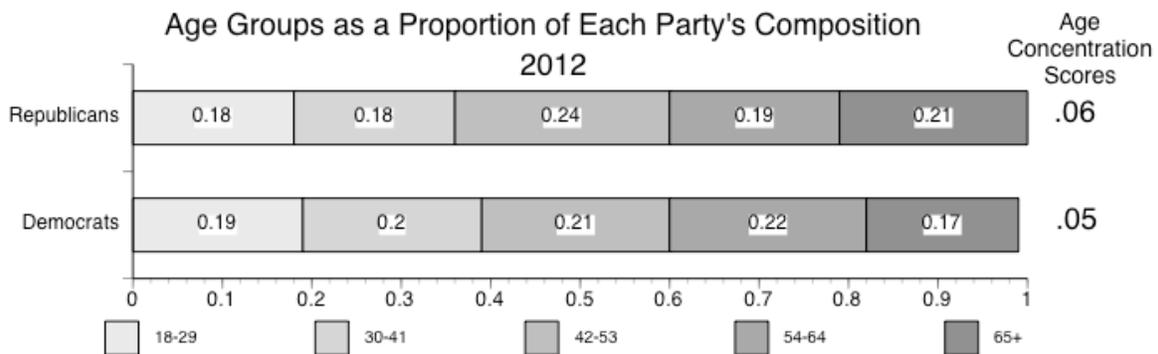


Figure 2 graphs the proportions of age groups among the identifiers of each party as reported in Table 2 from the 2012 Pew survey. (Because parties are of interest, the Independent category is omitted from the concentration graph.) The Republican age concentration score for 2012 was 0.06 and the Democrats scored even lower at 0.05. Concerning party supporters by age for 2012, these scores fit the expectation that no age group is significantly concentrated in either party. Age is not an important factor in differentiating between the parties for their social bases of support.

In general, the more important the social factor for differentiating between the Democratic and Republican parties, the more their attraction scores will drop below 1.0, and the more their concentration scores will rise above 0.0. Figures 3 through 9 plot the social attraction scores for Democrats and Republicans for occupation, education, region, urbanization, religion, ethnicity, ideology from surveys taken in presidential years.⁵

Figure 3: Party Attraction and Concentration Scores for Occupation, 1952-2012

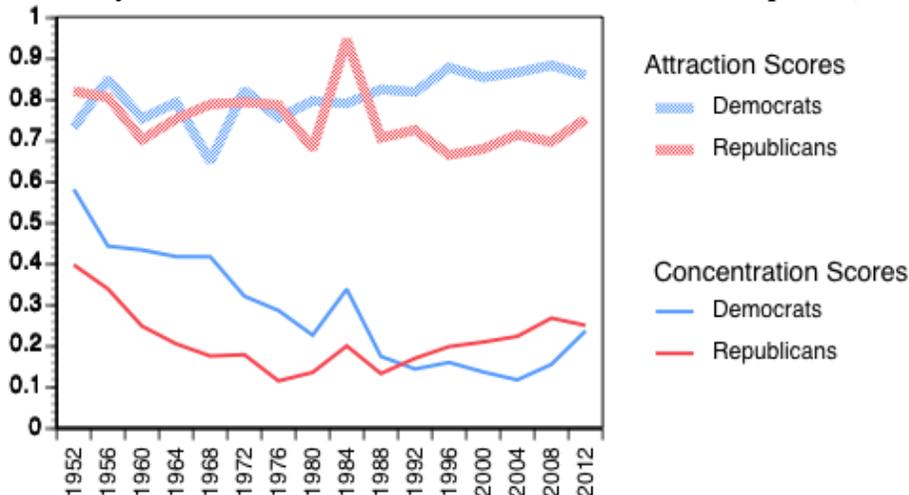


Figure 4: Scores for Education

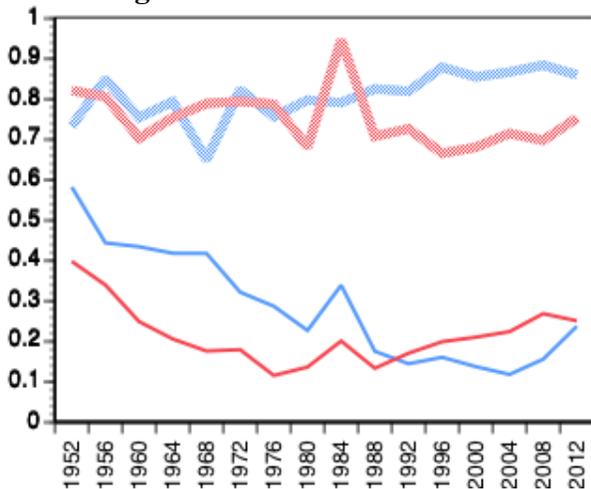
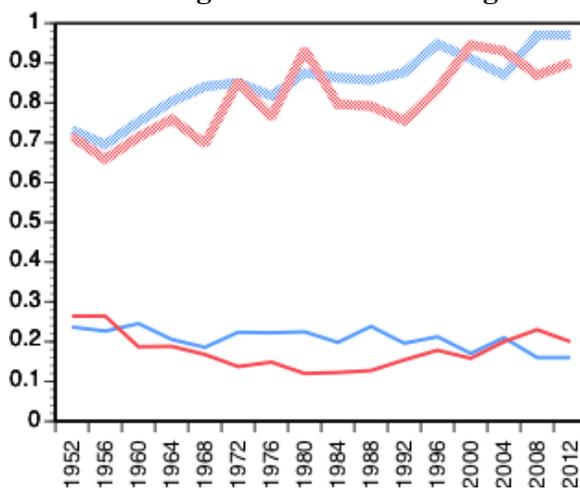


Figure 5: Scores for Region



Despite their ups and downs, the attraction and concentration graphs for occupation, education, region, and urbanization in Figures 3 to 5 are similar. They all show these features:

1. Over the last sixty years, both parties had relatively high attraction scores (usually above .70).
2. During the same period, the Democrats usually scored higher in attraction.

⁵ Data came from the American National Election Studies' Time Series Cumulative Data File, 1948-2008, and the Pew Research Center survey in January, 2012.

3. Over the last sixty years, both parties had relatively low concentration scores (usually below .30).
4. Except for urbanization, concentration scores for both parties tended to decline.

Figure 6: Scores for Urbanization

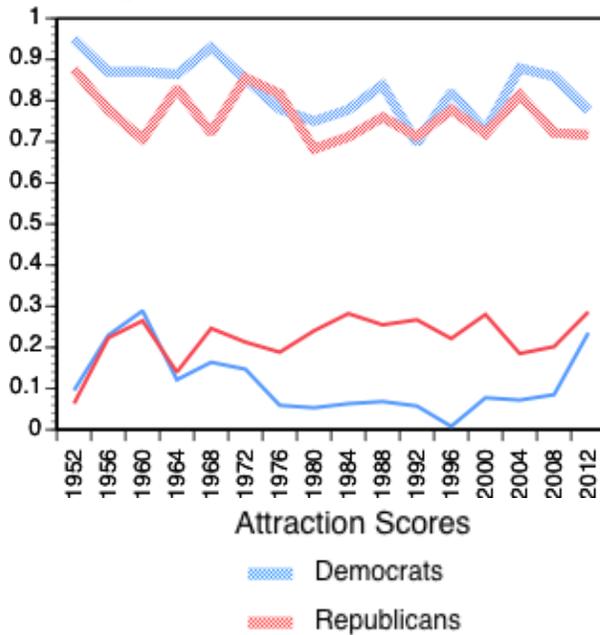
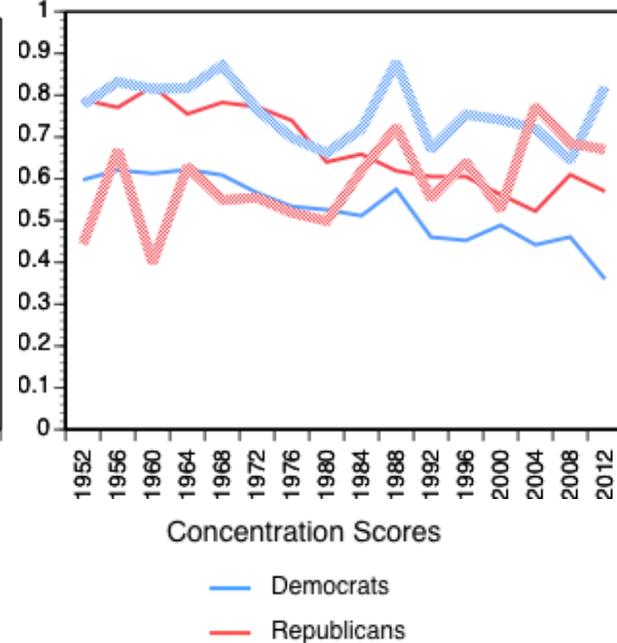


Figure 7: Scores for Religion



The attraction and concentration graphs for religion, ethnicity, and ideology in Figures 7 to 9, however, are quite different. Each Figure requires separate discussion.

Figure 7 displays the parties' attraction and concentration of religious groups over time. Amidst their ups and downs, the party lines demonstrate four features:

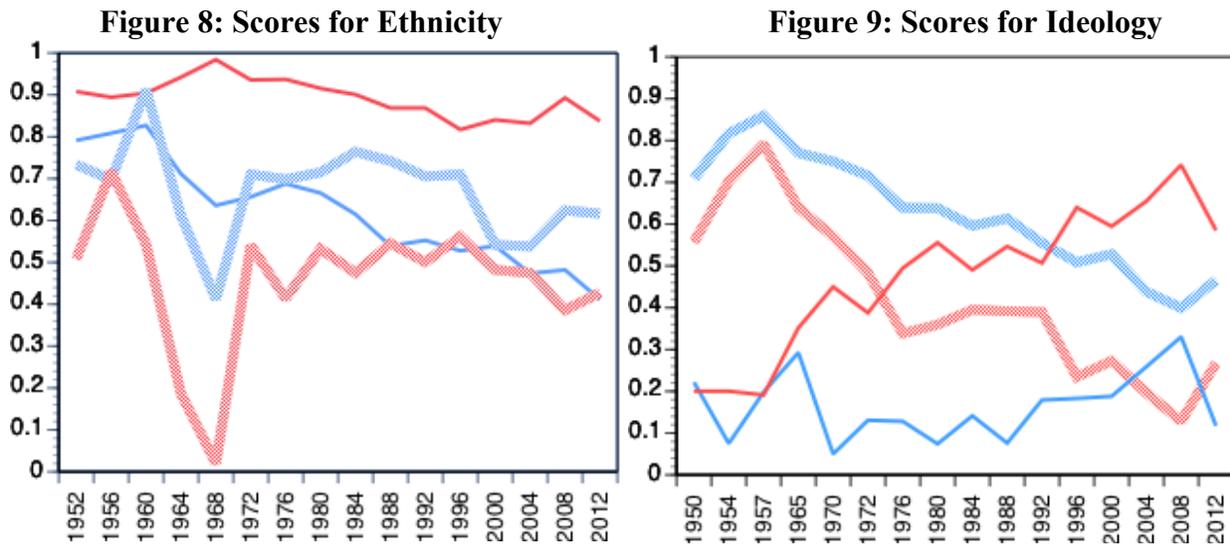
1. Democrats almost always scored higher in attraction scores than Republicans.
2. Republicans tended to increase in attraction scores.
3. Republicans always scored higher in concentration scores.
4. Both parties declined in concentration scores.

The first two features have political interpretations: the Democratic Party continued to draw support more evenly from all religious groups than the Republican Party. However, the Republican Party over time drew more support from Catholics and Jews, which generated increasingly higher attraction scores. The last two features have methodological interpretations: as the share of Protestants declined over the over sixty years, their capacity to dominate the composition of both parties has declined, resulting in lower concentration scores for Democrats as well as Republicans.

Figure 8 has four plot lines telling four different stories:

1. The narrow solid red line for the ethnic concentration scores of the Republican Party at

- the top reflects its status as an overwhelmingly white party throughout the period, although trending slightly toward more diversity.
2. The narrow solid blue line for the ethnic concentration scores of the Democratic Party shows that it began as a mostly white party in 1952 but became progressively more diverse over the time period.
 3. The wide shaded blue line for ethnic attraction scores of the Democratic Party indicate that it almost always attracted support more evenly from different ethnic groups than the Republican Party.
 4. The wide shaded red line for ethnic attraction scores of the Republican Party is noteworthy for its downward plunge beginning in 1964 to almost zero in 1968 and its climb back to normal levels in 1972.



The fourth and last story for Figure 8 requires some background about the changing pattern of ethnic support for the Republican Party from 1956 to 1968. ANES data estimated the percentages of blacks who self-identified themselves as Republican in those presidential years declined from 23 percent in 1956 to 2 percent in 1968. What caused blacks to flee from the Republican Party—the party of Lincoln—over such a short span of time? The short explanation centers on the Democratic Party’s support of the blacks’ struggle for civil rights versus the Republican Party’s neglect of—or opposition to—that struggle. Note that 1968, the year of Richard Nixon’s “southern strategy” for winning the presidency, marked the nadir of ethnic attraction for the Republican Party, when only 2 percent of blacks called themselves Republicans.

Figure 9 traces the parties’ scores over time throughout the sixty years period. Four points emerge clearly from its graphs of attraction and aggregation scores:

1. Both parties’ ideological attraction scores (wide shaded lines) tended to decline over time, indicating that both parties increasingly attracted support unequally from liberal and conservative voters.
2. The Republicans’ ideological attraction scores declined more sharply than the Democrats’.
3. The Republicans’ ideological concentration scores (narrow red line) increased fairly

- consistently, as Republican support became concentrated among conservatives.
- Democratic identifiers tended to be spread among liberals, moderates, and conservatives fairly evenly over the period.

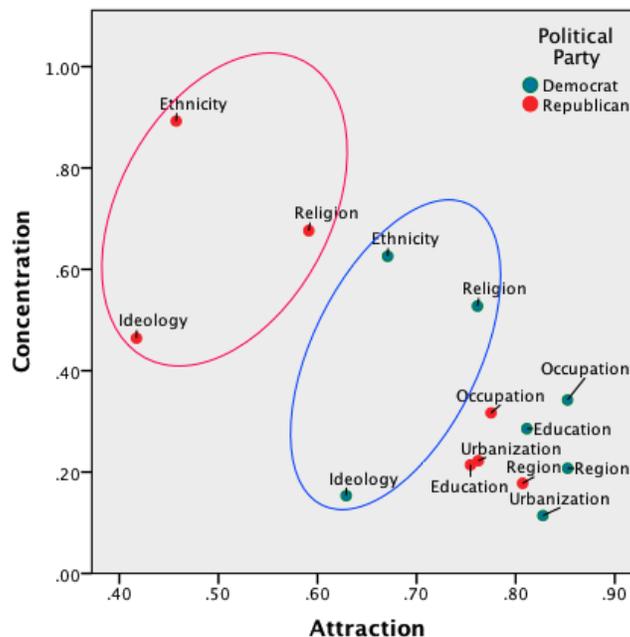
Attraction v. Concentration

To recap, attraction and concentration measures were computed using data from two different methods of calculating group support in a cross-tabulation of parties by groups. One method computed percentages by columns as in Table 1. The other computed proportions by rows as in Table 2. If all groups and parties in the cross-tabulation were equal in size—which rarely occurs with real data—all percentages would be equal in value to all corresponding proportions. Otherwise—which virtually always occurs with real data—the values differed.

Therefore, the attraction and concentration scores were not simply mirror images of each other, although they were strongly negatively related empirically. High attraction scores were associated with low concentration scores, and vice versa, but the correlation between any pair of attraction and concentration scores was not perfect. Moreover the correlations between paired scores varied by social differentiator—occupation, education, region, and so on.

To demonstrate how these scores are related, Figure 10 plots the parties’ mean attraction and concentration scores over 1952-2012 in two dimensions. The parties’ mean attraction and concentration scores for occupation, education, region, and urbanization are clustered fairly closely together toward the lower-right hand side of the figure, indicating that these were minor sources of differentiation.

Figure 10: Plots of Mean Attraction and Concentration Scores, 1952-2012



The red and blue ovals mark two different distributions of attraction and concentration scores.

They demonstrate (1) that the parties differed more on ethnicity, religion, and ideology than on the other dimensions, and (2) that the Republican Party consistently scored lower on social attraction and higher on social concentration for these dimensions than the Democrats.

Which concept, social attraction or social concentration is more important for theory and research about political parties and party politics? Early in this paper, I suggested that survey data reported by national polls was better suited to the study of voting behavior than the study of party politics. Party scholars would benefit more from knowing what proportion of party identifiers came from which social groups than from knowing what percentage of social groups identified with each party. In other words, knowing the extent to which social groups are concentrated within a party is more important than knowing the extent to which the party attracts support evenly from social groups. I will argue this point after discussing the concepts of interest articulation and interest aggregation.

Interest Articulation and Aggregation

To assess the social structure of party support is one thing; to demonstrate that parties act to represent their supporters in politics is something else. In analyzing the structure of party support, my iBook theorizes about the process by which parties represent the political interests of specific groups. The theory relies on the related concepts of interest *articulation* and interest *aggregation*. To “articulate” an interest means to express it clearly. To “aggregate” interests means to collect and balance different, often competing, interests. An interest aggregator acts as a broker between groups that articulate competing interests.

According to Almond and Coleman, who stressed these concepts in comparative politics, interests are usually articulated by political organizations, called interest groups, which present specific desires before relevant political actors, such as legislatures. In contrast, political interests are usually aggregated by another type of organization, political parties.⁶ As Almond and Coleman admit, however, “The distinction between interest articulation and aggregation is a fluid one.”⁷ Moreover, the functional allocation of interest articulation to interest groups and interest aggregation to political parties often breaks down. Some interest groups—often called “peak associations”—are broader than others. They speak for whole classes of society, such as labor or business, and must aggregate their members' conflicting interests. Conversely, some political parties, such as environmental or religious parties, are more articulative than other parties. The extent to which political parties (and interest groups) vary in being articulative or aggregative becomes a matter for theory and research.

Unfortunately, most existing theory and research neglects the articulative function of political parties. Research often cites aggregation and articulation as functions of political parties but then discusses only how parties aggregate interests, neglecting to describe how they can also articulate interests. Indeed, parties that aggregate interests are usually praised for governmental contributions, while parties that articulate interests, especially ethnic parties, are deemed politically dysfunctional. However, the consociational model of democracy sees

⁶ Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, eds. *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

democratic potential in ethnic parties too.⁸

My research into the social bases of political parties addresses both their articulative and aggregative functions. I argue that the structure of their social support relates to how they articulate and aggregate political interests. I make two theoretical assumptions:

Assumption 1: *Parties whose supporters are concentrated within a particular group within a social division tend to articulate the interests of that group.*

Assumption 2: *Parties that attract support equally from all groups within a social division tend to aggregate the interests of all groups.*

In science (as elsewhere), assumptions are statements that are *assumed* to be true or refer to conditions that are assumed to hold. Assumptions 1 and 2 that parties serve the interests of their supporters according to the extent of their support certainly seem reasonably valid, but they demand independent verification. Verifying them was outside the scope of my iBook, which kept the *structure* of social attraction and concentration separate from the *process* of interest articulation and aggregation. Nevertheless, the iBook presented some evidence concerning two empirical propositions that flow from these assumptions.

Proposition 1: *The larger the proportion of a party supporters concentrated in a group, the more the party will articulate that specific group's interests.*

Proposition 2: *The more evenly that groups support a party, the more the party will aggregate interests of all those groups.*

According to a popular term in contemporary journalism, the *base* of a party consists of the groups that make up the majority of its identifiers. Social concentration is a better indicator of the party base than social attraction, for concentration measures the proportions of groups that are party identifiers. Consequently, we should expect that parties that rank high in concentration of a specific social group should articulate its interests, while parties that rank high in attraction of all social groups should aggregate their interests.

These outcomes are easier to expect theoretically than to document empirically. Interest aggregation, in particular, is notoriously difficult to document in the real world. The process of interest aggregation involves bargaining and brokering between competing interests to reach acceptable compromises in public policy. These bargaining and brokering activities typically occur behind the scenes. Hence, interest aggregation is typically more difficult to study than interest articulation.

Although studying interest articulation by political parties is still problematic, it is more promising. To investigate parties' articulative tendencies, my iBook used data from interest groups that systematically rate members of Congress for their support of legislation backed by the groups. Specifically, it compiled all available interest group ratings of House voting from the 1950s to 2011 for the Chamber of Commerce, AFL-CIO, National Education Association, Christian Coalition, NAACP, the NHLA (National Hispanic Leadership Agenda), the ADA

⁸ See Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). This passage and the one above were adapted from Janda, "Interest Aggregation and Articulation."

(Americans for Democratic Action), and the ACU (American Constitutional Union). The parties were scored for the extent to which they supported the groups on the “key votes” that pertained to their interests.

For reasons to be made clear, this analysis was not conclusive. Its findings concerning the House Democrats’ and Republicans’ support of these interest groups’ “key votes” can be broadly and briefly summarized as follows:

1. Republicans strongly voted in support of the Chamber of Commerce and strongly opposed the AFL-CIO.
2. Democrats strongly supported the AFL-CIO but were only moderately opposed to the Chamber of Commerce.
3. Democrats strongly supported the NEA, while Republicans were only moderately opposed to the NEA.
4. Republicans strongly supported the Christian Coalition, while Democrats opposed it equally strongly.
5. Democrats moderately supported the NAACP and the NHLA, while Republicans moderately opposed both groups.
6. Republicans strongly supported the American Conservative Union and strongly opposed the Americans for Democratic Action.
7. Democrats strongly supported the Americans for Democratic Action and strongly opposed the American Conservative Union.

One limitation of this research lies in the limited time span of the interest group congressional vote ratings. The AFL-CIO and ADA ratings became available by parties only in 1956, and most other group ratings began much later. The Christian Coalition’s ratings were first published in 1992, and the NHLA data in this analysis spanned only 1996 to 2004.

A more serious limitation is that the concentration measure of social support does not match well to proposition 1 about interest articulation: *The larger the proportion of a party supporters concentrated in a group, the more the party will articulate that specific group’s interests.* Testing that proposition requires measuring the proportion of a specific group’s support, but the concentration measure conflates all groups in the social category. According to the 2012 Pew survey, 0.66 of Republican identifiers were Protestant, which contributed to the party’s relatively high religious concentration score of 0.57. But the party could have gotten the same concentration score if 0.66 of Republican identifiers were Jewish. That distribution would call into question the party’s strong support of the Christian Coalition.

So one needs to know the identity of the groups concentrated in the party before attempting to test proposition 1. That requirement does not invalidate the utility of the social concentration measure, it simply limits its value. The measure of social concentration and social attraction are useful for other research purposes, especially in comparative research on party systems.

Most scholars hold that—compared with parties elsewhere—both American parties attract support fairly evenly across all cleavage dimensions. Neither party has its supporters concentrated among any specific groups. In terms of party theory, the American party system is

said to be more *aggregative* of various group interests than *articulative* of specific group interests. Essentially, that theory assumes that both parties have, over time, attracted support relatively evenly from different social groups and that their supporters were not concentrated among any specific groups. Cross-national research is being planned that will test that theory. It will compare attraction and concentration scores of the Democrats and Republicans on occupation, education, region, urbanization, religion, and ethnicity with the scores for parties on similar social factors in other advanced democracies.