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Mobilizing Marginalized Groups among Party Elites

Abstract: The Democratic Party has long used a system of caucuses and councils to reach out to marginalized groups among convention delegates. This article tests two hypotheses about how this system works within the party. First, the *Parties in Service to Candidates Hypothesis* holds that caucuses and councils mobilize elites from marginalized groups to increase support for the party nominee. Second, the *Group Solidarity Hypothesis* holds that caucuses and councils mobilize elites from marginalized groups to enhance group solidarity. Regression analysis of data drawn from an original survey of delegates to the 2008 Democratic National Convention provides no support to the *Service Hypothesis*, while the evidence supports the *Solidarity Hypothesis* in the case of the Women's Caucus, which became a rallying point for women who were disappointed that Hillary Clinton was not the Democratic Party nominee. A similar survey of delegates to the 2008 Republican National Convention did not uncover a parallel system of representing marginalized groups within the Republican Party.

Introduction

The Democratic Party of the United States has long been described as a coalition of interest groups (see, inter alia, Freeman 1986; Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth 1991; Edwards 1998; Rochon and Roy 2001; Cohen et al. 2008). Politically marginalized groups – such as women, LGBT people, African Americans, and Latinos – are key constituencies within the Democratic coalition. Although these groups are hardly the only ones that matter to the Democratic Party, they are long-standing and

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loyal Democratic constituencies, as their members have few realistic alternatives should the Democrats fail to represent them adequately (Frymer 2010). Perceptions that the Democratic Party is a coalition of marginalized groups have been reinforced in recent years as groups like women, gays and lesbians, and people of color have become increasingly important Democratic voting blocs.[1] All of these groups have contributed significantly to the Democrats' winning electoral margins since 1964 – the last time a plurality of whites voted for a Democratic presidential candidate. Voters of color were a particularly important part of the coalition that elected and reelected Barack Obama (Hajnal and Lee 2011; Preston and Santos 2012; Wallace 2012).

One way in which the Democratic Party has attempted to incorporate these and other marginalized constituencies into the party has been by hosting caucus meetings at its nominating conventions. Caucuses began informally at the 1972 Democratic National Convention, with the first meetings of the Women's and Black caucuses (Pear 1986; Freeman 1987). The caucus system grew to include a wider range of groups, the composition of which has varied over time. Today, the Hispanic, Black, Women's, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) American Caucuses receive official recognition from the party (Democratic National Committee 2010). Several less formal "councils" also meet at the convention, such as the Youth Council and the Veterans and Military Families Council, although they are often referred to (inaccurately) as "caucuses" by delegates and party officials.

These meetings are a key means by which the party tries to maintain cohesion and discipline across a diverse range of constituencies, while also providing a forum through which members of those constituencies can communicate needs and grievances to leaders. Caucus leaders bring prominent members of their communities to speak at these meetings, which are also a forum at which party leaders provide briefings about the upcoming election that are tailored to

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1 Note that although a majority of women voted for President Obama in both 2008 and 2012, this was driven in large part by single women and women of color, as majorities of white women voted for the Republican candidate in both of those years. In 2012, for example, 56% of white women voted for Mitt Romney. That same year, only 46% of married women, but 67% of unmarried women, voted for Obama, while 53% of married women and only 31% of unmarried women voted for Romney. So although women are an important Democratic constituency, and while it is true that white women are and have long been more likely than white men to vote for Democratic candidates, majorities of white women have in fact cast their ballots for Republican presidential candidates in every election since at least 1976 other than 1996. See Sanders, Ong, and Hughes (2012).

the interests of the particular constituency. In sum, the caucus system is central to maintaining the Democrats as an organized party rather than a disconnected collection of groups.

Although caucuses and councils are an important way in which the Democratic Party maintains group solidarity and reaches out to elites from marginalized groups within the party, these organizations have received little scholarly attention. The most recent studies of the topic were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s (Sullivan, Pressman, and Arterton 1976; Freeman 1986, 1987). While the descriptions of the conventions produced by these scholars still resonate today, they tell us little about the role played by the caucuses and councils representing members of important constituencies such as women, people of color, and LGBT people within the contemporary party.

This article illuminates this role by evaluating two hypotheses about how caucuses and councils mediate between the Democratic Party organization and marginalized groups within the party. First, we consider the *Parties in Service to Candidates Hypothesis*, which holds that caucuses and councils function to mobilize elites from marginalized groups *to rally support for the party's presidential nominee* among members of these constituencies. Second, we consider the *Group Solidarity Hypothesis*, which contends that caucuses and councils function to mobilize elites from marginalized groups *to increase or consolidate group solidarity*.

To test these hypotheses, we use data from an original survey of pledged delegates attending the 2008 Democratic National Convention. Studying the 2008 convention affords a unique opportunity to understand the relationship between caucuses/councils and the mobilization of marginalized groups. The party had just experienced a fierce nomination battle between Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, individuals identified with two key Democratic constituencies: African Americans and women. As a result, delegate support for and opposition to these candidates may have been mediated by marginalization and group identity in ways that are revealing of party-group dynamics.

In an era in which party nominees are known well in advance of the convention, some might question the relevance of national convention delegates, whose votes are, for all intents and purposes, merely pro forma. Delegates are typically party elites and activists who are influential within the party's organizations at the local, state, and national levels, however, and consequently play important roles in recruiting candidates, raising money, and crafting party positions. As Byron Shafer (2010) has shown, party conventions afford an exceptionally useful laboratory within which to investigate party politics, and we posit that caucuses, councils, and other meetings at the convention matter a great deal in that they

structure the ways in which elites interact with each other and with the party as an institution.[2]

This article proceeds, first, by developing the *Parties in Service to Candidates* and *Group Solidarity* hypotheses in the context of the 2008 Democratic primary battle. We then explain the survey procedures used in the study and report the results of statistical analysis of delegate participation in caucuses and councils at the Democratic National Convention.

We estimate models of overall caucus/council participation, as well as models of participation in the largest caucuses (Women's, Hispanic, Black, and LGBT). Focusing on the case of the Women's Caucus, we also explore whether the relationship between support for Hillary Clinton and participation in the Women's Caucus varies among groups whose marginalized status is constituted by the intersection of gender with other axes of marginalization such as race or sexuality.

Although the Republican Party differs from its Democratic counterpart and does not have a comparable system for representing marginalized groups, we next consider the implications of data that we were able to collect about the organization of marginalized groups at the Republican National Convention. We conclude by considering the implications of our findings for party-group relations more generally.

Serving Candidates, Group Solidarity, and the 2008 Democratic National Convention

Caucus and council meetings occupy a considerable amount of time at Democratic National Conventions. They occur in the morning or afternoon during each day of the convention (Monday through Thursday), with formal activities on the convention floor starting around 4 pm. Each caucus and council generally meets twice; either on Monday and Wednesday or on Tuesday and Thursday. For a convention delegate who wishes to be engaged in the convention during the day, caucuses and councils are the major items on the program.

Caucuses and councils afford party leaders with a particularly good vehicle through which to reach out to elites from marginalized groups with the party.

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2 Other studies that follow in this tradition by analyzing the attitudes and behavior of convention delegates include Dodson (1990), Heaney et al. (2012), Herrera (1993), Layman et al. (2010), Munger and Backhurst (1965), Soule and Clarke (1970), Southwell (2012), Stone (2010), and Wolbrecht (2002).

These meetings include a series of short presentations by party leaders about issues that are of specific interest to constituency in question. For example, the party nominee's campaign staff member for Latino outreach might speak to the Hispanic Caucus about the campaign's strategies for mobilizing Latino voters. In doing so, the campaign seeks to create the impression that it is doing all in its power to include this constituency in the party's effort to win the election, and that the constituency is pivotal in the upcoming election.

These meetings include speakers who are not directly associated with a campaign, but who are well-known members of the group. For example, a speaker at the First American Council might provide talking points for Native American delegates to use in "get out the vote" campaigns in their states and local areas to explain why American Indians should support a Democrat for President. At the same time, caucuses and councils provide an informal setting in which individuals who self-identify as members of the group can meet one another and talk about concerns that they have as members of the group. They might present the opportunity, for example, for members of the Veterans and Military Families Council to meet an Iraq War veteran who has become a prominent activist (or even candidate) within the party.

Another possible role for party caucuses and councils is to mobilize support for the party nominee among marginalized groups within the party. As John Aldrich argues, the modern party organization exists "in service to its candidates" (Aldrich 1995, p. 269). According to Aldrich, once candidates started to build their own campaign organizations in the 1960s, they came to depend less on their parties for election and the parties lost control over candidate behavior, both during the campaign and once they were in office. Party organizations thus evolved to become "the creature of the politicians," serving the candidates' electoral needs (Aldrich 1995, p. 4). Parties may turn to caucuses as a way of serving candidates because caucuses consist of party members who are centrally located in social networks and who can be counted on to mobilize others in their communities (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, p. 166).

The *Parties in Service to Candidates Hypothesis* (hereafter the *Service Hypothesis*) leads to the expectation that caucuses and councils will draw disproportionately from delegates who are pledged to the nominee, who are most satisfied with the nominee, and who are most enthusiastic about the upcoming election. Conversely, the *Service Hypothesis* would predict that delegates pledged to candidates other than the nominee, those who are not satisfied with the nominee, or those who are relatively less enthusiastic about the upcoming election would disengage from the caucuses and councils in favor of other activities.

A second potential role for party caucuses and councils is to build solidarity among individuals identifying with the groups represented by these organizations. As Michael Dawson (1994) argues, a sense of "linked fate" among individuals identified with a marginalized group may, among other things, help the group to have an impact within the political system. Linked fate is "the recognition that individual life chances are inextricably tied to the race [or group] as a whole" (Simien 2005, p. 529; see also Tate 1993). These solidarities have been shown to motivate political participation and attitude formation among African Americans (Dawson 1994), Latinos (Sanchez 2006), Muslims (Jamal 2005), and women (Cole, Zucker, and Ostrove 1998). We argue that political organizations might prime a sense of linked fate by invoking symbols and deploying frames that encourage individuals to think of the organization's political cause in terms of the group (Goss and Heaney 2010). According to Jo Freeman (1986), caucuses serve this function and, in doing so, represent group views to the party, rather than representing party views to the groups.

The *Group Solidarity Hypothesis* (hereafter the *Solidarity Hypothesis*) allows us to assess this theory by testing the expectation that caucuses and councils are more likely to mobilize delegates when their identities as members of marginalized groups are salient, particularly if this salience is heightened in the context of the convention. Those identities may be especially salient if the group in question experiences something they perceive as a political loss (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982; Hansen 1985; Li and Brewer 2004). From this perspective, supporters of Hillary Clinton who experienced her defeat as a setback for women as a group may have been more likely to participate in the Women's Caucus at the 2008 convention as a consequence.

The 2008 Democratic presidential contest was, of course, one of the closest in the recent history of presidential nominations, and one in which every state contest consequently saw substantial competition and attention. Most germane for our purposes, it was a contest in which the two main contenders were a white woman and an African American man. As such, it came to hold symbolic importance to African Americans and women – two constituencies that are central within the Democratic Party. As we might expect, the contest between Clinton and Obama also laid bare the persistent salience of race and gender in American politics in general, and within the Democratic Party in particular.

Some of the Clinton campaign's tactics were viewed as at least tacitly racist. For example, Clinton's comment during a speech that Senator Obama lacked "support among working, hard-working Americans, white Americans" was construed as a racialized appeal to white voters and an allusion to racial stereotypes that blacks are not "hard-working" (Kiely and Lawrence 2008; Mooney 2008). In

addition, former President Bill Clinton's comments about Jesse Jackson winning the South Carolina primary in 1984 and 1988, uttered shortly after Obama's victory there in 2008, were viewed by many as racially tinged and as dismissive of Obama's qualifications and of the significance of his victory (Kornblut and Murray 2008).

For their part, Clinton supporters argued that the media and the Obama campaign had subjected her to gendered stereotyping about, inter alia, women's alleged emotional volatility, eagerness to please, and aversion to violence (Sherwell 2008). In addition, many Clinton delegates and supporters remained up-in-arms about a dispute over how or whether delegates from Michigan and Florida should be counted, convincing many that she was owed something by the party at the convention (Smith 2008). Thus, the tensions surrounding the 2008 nomination were unusually high and both reflected and raised the salience of race and gender within the Democratic Party.

It was in this context that that the 2008 Democratic National Convention took place. Although Barack Obama had essentially sewn up the nomination by June of that year, Hillary Clinton retained a sizable bloc of loyal delegates, many of whom arrived in Denver committed to trying to address what they viewed as the injustice of her defeat. Many hoped, for example, that Clinton might be asked to serve as the vice presidential nominee, that she might be offered a prominent cabinet post, or that a public roll-call vote might be taken to reveal the depth of Clinton support among delegates (Kagan 2008). At the same time, not all women or Clinton supporters held these views. Indeed, many women had supported Obama in the primaries, were elated that he was the nominee, and wholeheartedly supported his presidential candidacy. However, for many female Democratic delegates who hoped to elect the first female president of the United States, a win for Obama meant a loss for Hillary Clinton and a step back for women's gains within the Democratic Party.

In light of these circumstances, levels of satisfaction with Obama among female delegates may serve as an indicator of whether they had a sense of loss associated with Clinton's defeat. We assume that women who were more satisfied with Obama did not view his candidacy as a zero-sum loss for women. However, we posit that women who reported lower levels of satisfaction with his candidacy did so at least in part because they experienced his victory over Clinton as a defeat for women. To test the *Solidarity Hypothesis*, we examine whether female delegates who experienced Clinton's defeat in this way were more likely to attend the Women's Caucus than those who did not view Obama's candidacy as a loss for Democratic women as a group. According to this expectation, the Women's Caucus served as a rallying point for women and as a vehicle for building women's solidarity within the Democratic Party.

The Delegate Survey

We surveyed delegates during the 2008 Democratic National Convention in order to gather their viewpoints at a vital time of transition for the party. The grueling primary and caucus season had only recently concluded. The fall campaign had not yet begun. The Republicans had not yet held their convention, and few people outside Alaska had ever heard of Sarah Palin. Surveying delegates earlier would have been impossible, as they had only recently been selected. Data collected from delegates after the convention would have been tainted by the fall campaign.

We assembled a team of 20 surveyors to administer pencil-and-paper questionnaires to pledged delegates at the Democratic convention. While a purely random and representative sample of delegates at such an event is impractical, we took aggressive steps to approximate randomness and representativeness, consistent with similar studies undertaken in recent years (cf. Goss 2006; Heaney and Rojas 2007; Walgrave and Verhulst 2011). We distributed the team proportionately across places at which delegates were expected to gather, including the lobbies of official convention hotels, the Colorado Convention Center (where caucus meetings were held), the Pepsi Center (the main convention hall), and Invesco Field (the convention hall on the final night).

The survey was six pages in length and included 47 questions that covered respondents' political backgrounds, attitudes, and demographic information. The surveyors were instructed to approach people wearing convention credentials and to invite them to participate in a 15-minute survey of the participants at the convention. Our team received a response rate of 72%, which yielded 546 surveys. We determined that 462 of these individuals (84.62%) were, indeed, pledged delegates meeting the criteria of our study (as opposed to alternates, superdelegates, or other party activists). Of these, 50.13% were pledged to Clinton and 49.78% were pledged to Obama, very nearly the breakdown in the population of delegates.

We took additional measures to ensure that our data were as representative of the delegate population as possible. We obtained a list of pledged delegates from the Democratic National Committee (which included the candidate pledged and sex/gender of each delegate) in order to compare our sample to the population on these characteristics. The proportions of four key subgroups of delegates in our sample – male delegates pledged to Obama, female delegates pledged to Obama, male delegates pledged to Clinton, and female delegates pledged to Clinton – was very similar to the full population. Nonetheless, to account for small differences between our sample and the population proportions, we calculated survey weights based on each subgroup's representativeness to adjust our calculations.

What Explains Participation in Caucuses and Councils?

To gauge the engagement of delegates with the caucus system, we asked respondents: "Are you participating in any of the caucuses being held by the party at this convention?" They could answer either yes or no to this question, and if they chose "yes," they were asked to specify which ones. Responses to this question revealed that participation in caucuses and councils is a part of the convention experience for the overwhelming majority of delegates. Almost three quarters (73.66%) of delegates reported that they participated in at least one caucus or council. We graph the overall distribution of participation in Figure 1. More than one third (36.32%) of Democratic delegates participated in only one caucus or council, 29.60% attended two, 7.13% of delegates went to three, and <1% (0.62%) attended meetings for four caucuses or councils. The caucus system clearly holds some value for most delegates, and many delegates make a point to be present at several of these gatherings.

Taken together, these data also provide information about which caucuses and councils draw the greatest interest from delegates. We rank caucuses based on delegate participation rates in Table 1. The results provide evidence that caucuses are particularly important to members of marginalized groups, showing that the Women's Caucus drew the most delegates at the 2008 convention, with slightly more than one quarter (26%) of respondents indicating that they attended these meetings. Moreover, the other leading caucuses include the Hispanic Caucus (14.26%), the Black Caucus (13.92%), and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender American (LGBT) Caucus (13.12%). After these major caucuses,
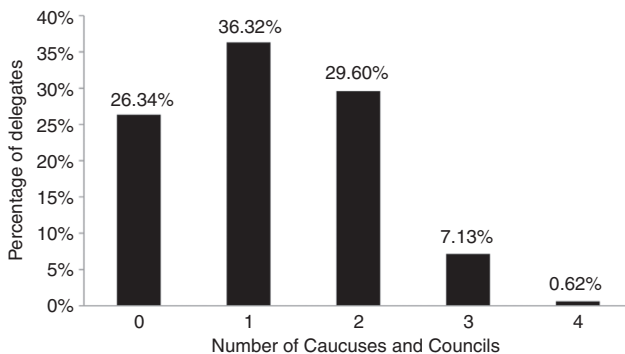
Figure 1 The Distribution of Participation in Caucuses and Councils.
Note: N=452. Percentages are adjusted using survey weights.

Table 1 Ranking of Caucuses by Delegate Participation Rates.

Rank	Caucus or Council	Percent of all Delegates who Attended
1	Women's Caucus	25.998%
2	Hispanic Caucus	14.261%
3	Black Caucus	13.919%
4	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender American (LGBT) Caucus	13.124%
5	Youth Council	12.544%
6	Labor Council (Unofficial)	10.389%
7	First American Council	5.904%
8	Rural Council	5.012%
9	Senior Council	4.257%
10	Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Caucus	3.168%
11	Veterans and Military Families Council	3.003%
12	Faith Council	2.765%
13	Health Care Council (Unofficial)	1.390%
14	Disability Council	0.875%
15	Ethnic Coordinated Council	0.748%

N=452. Percentages are adjusted using survey weights.

several councils drew large proportions of delegates, including the Youth Council, the Labor Council (which was not officially included in the convention program, but met in tandem with the convention), the First American Council, and others. These results provide evidence that a wide range of marginalized constituencies consider the system of caucuses and councils at the Democratic National Convention to be a vehicle for their issues within the party.

The Service Hypothesis

The principal goal of our analysis is to understand what delegate participation in these caucuses and councils reveals about the way that the party as an institution interacts with marginalized groups among its constituencies. We begin by assessing the *Service Hypothesis*. If the caucuses and councils serve primarily to help elect candidates, then we should observe that delegates are more likely to participate in caucuses when they are more supportive of the party's nominee for president. We measure support with three variables. First, we code whether delegates are *Pledged to Obama*, a variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent is pledged to Obama and 0 if the respondent is pledged to Clinton. (We did not observe delegates that were pledged to other candidates.)

Second, we rate respondent *Satisfaction with Obama*, which is based on the following survey question: "How satisfied are you with Barack Obama as the presidential nominee of the Democratic Party?" Respondents were asked to circle one of the following: "Very Satisfied," "Somewhat Satisfied," "Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied," "Somewhat Dissatisfied," or "Very Dissatisfied," which we coded on a 1–5 scale, with "Very Dissatisfied" taking the value of 1 and "Very Satisfied" taking the value of 5. Third, we determine the respondent's *Enthusiasm for Election* with the question: "Generally speaking, how enthusiastic are you about the upcoming Presidential election?" Respondents were asked to circle one of the following: "Extremely enthusiastic," "Very enthusiastic," "Somewhat enthusiastic," "Not too enthusiastic," and "Not enthusiastic at all," which we coded on a 1–5 scale, with "Not enthusiastic at all" taking the value of 1 and "Extremely enthusiastic" taking the value of 5.

In addition to variables that allow us to test the *Service Hypothesis*, it is essential to control for other potential explanations for caucus/council participation. First, we ask whether respondents *Attended Past Conventions*. By increasing familiarity with the convention, we anticipate that this factor could have either a positive or a negative effect on participation. Attending past conventions could help delegates to realize how important caucuses are, or they could lead them to realize that they might prefer to find another way to spend their time at the convention.

Second, we include a variable for the *Number of Organizational Memberships* (other than the Democratic Party itself). A substantial body of research on interest group politics (see, for example, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, pp. 375–383) shows that there is considerable variation in the degree to which individuals participate in political organizations. We anticipate that variations in this propensity relate to activity within the Democratic Party itself: individuals with a habit of joining organizations are more likely to participate in the caucuses than are individuals without such a habit.

Finally, we control for variations in *Level of Education* (1=less than high school diploma, 2=high school diploma, 3=some college or associate's/technical degree, 4=college degree, 5=some graduate education, 6=graduate degree) and *Level of Annual Income* (in $100,000s). In line with the extant literature, we anticipate that higher levels of education and income correspond to greater participation (see, for example, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012, pp. 375–383).

We model the dependent variable, *Number of Caucuses/Councils Participated*, using negative binomial regression, which is appropriate when the dependent variable takes the form of a count. We estimate four models to determine the independent and joint effects of the variables associated with the *Service Hypothesis*. Estimating separate models ensures that correlations among these variables do

not unduly influence our results. Model 1 includes *Pledged to Obama* (plus controls). Model 2 includes *Satisfaction with Obama* (plus controls). Model 3 includes *Enthusiasm for Election* (plus controls). Model 4 includes all three focus variables (plus controls). We estimate missing values using complete-case imputation, constrained to the possible intervals of the data, which is an appropriate method when <20% of values are missing (Little 1988; King et al. 2001). We use survey weights to adjust for differences between our data and the population of delegates. The results of our analysis are reported in Table 2.

The regression analysis reported in Table 2 provides no support for the *Service Hypothesis*. None of the variables of interest related to that hypothesis are significant in any specification of that model. We do find, as expected, that delegates participate in more caucuses as their *Number of Organizational Memberships* increases, suggesting that people who are joiners outside of the party are also joiners inside of the party. Contrary to our expectation, individuals with lower incomes are significantly more likely to participate in caucuses and councils than are individuals with higher incomes. This outcome likely emerges because members of the groups most likely to attend caucuses – women and people of color – have lower average incomes than do men and whites, although it may also be because high-income individuals are drawn away from the caucuses by fundraisers. Finally, the results suggest no effect from *Attended Past Conventions* or *Level of Education*.

Together, these results suggest quite strongly that caucuses and councils are not used merely as a tool of the party's nominee. Caucuses and councils are as likely to be attended by delegates who are pledged to the nominee as by those who are not, by those who are satisfied with the nominee and by those who are not, and by those who are enthusiastic about the election and by those who are not. Attending caucuses and councils, in general, must be motivated by something other than the nominee's campaign. It is important to emphasize that while our findings fail to support the *Service Hypothesis* with respect to caucus participation, they should not obscure the fact that many other aspects of the party organization are dedicated to serving the needs of candidates. We conclude only that the hypothesis is not supported in this particular domain.

The Solidarity Hypothesis

If caucuses do not simply mobilize support for candidates, do they build solidarity among members of marginalized groups? To assess the *Solidarity Hypothesis*, we focus on determining whether the participation of women in the Women's Caucus is related to their degree of dissatisfaction with the candidacy of Barack Obama

Table 2 Negative Binomial Models of Number of Caucuses/Councils Participated.

Independent Variable	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)	Model (4)	Mean	Percent Imputed
Pledged to Obama	0.106			0.133	0.498	0.000
	(0.074)			(0.083)	(0.501)	
Satisfaction with Obama		0.041		−0.080	4.521	4.470
		(0.006)		(0.062)	(0.043)	
Enthusiasm for Election			0.043	0.085	4.627	1.970
			(0.050)	(0.078)	(0.035)	
Attended Past Conventions	0.042	0.022	0.019	0.046	0.277	3.580
	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.021)	
Number of Organizational Memberships	0.079***	0.076**	0.077***	0.081***	1.219	7.870
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.061)	
Level of Education	0.049	0.052	0.051	0.049	4.635	10.380
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.060)	
Level of Annual Income	−0.111*	−0.115*	−0.112*	−0.108*	1.002	14.490
	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.041)	
Constant	−0.116	−0.087	−0.259	−0.167		
	(0.139)	(0.225)	(0.268)	(0.274)		
ln(α)	−21.481	−21.481	−21.481	−21.481		
N	452	452	452	452	452	
F	4.790***	4.400***	4.590***	3.700***		
Degrees of Freedom	5, 447	5, 447	5, 447	7, 445		

***$p \le 0.001$, **$p \le 0.010$, *$p \le 0.050$. Results are adjusted using survey weights.

(Model 5). To provide a baseline for comparison, we examine the participation of members of other marginalized groups in the caucuses associated with several other identities. In particular, we look at the four largest caucuses, examining the participation of Latinos in the Hispanic Caucus (Model 6), African Americans in the Black Caucus (Model 7), and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender in the LGBT Caucus (Model 8). We estimate a probit model predicting whether delegates who identify with each group participated in the relevant caucuses. To do so, we use the same variable specification (and use the same methods for replacing missing values and weighting observations) as we used in the models reported in Table 2. We report the results of our analysis in Table 3.

The results for the Women's Caucus provide support for the *Solidarity Hypothesis*. Specifically, Model 5 shows that women who were less satisfied with Obama as a candidate were more likely to participate in the Women's Caucus than were women who were more satisfied with Obama. This finding holds even after controlling for whether the delegate was pledged to Obama and for her level of enthusiasm about the election, as well as the other control variables. That is, other

Table 3 Probit Models of Caucus Participation in Own Group's Caucus.

Independent Variable	Model (5) Women's Caucus	Model (6) Hispanic Caucus	Model (7) Black Caucus	Model (8) LGBT Caucus
Pledged to Obama	0.033	0.063	0.306	−0.213
	(0.216)	(0.511)	(0.432)	(0.407)
Satisfaction with Obama	−0.339*	−0.523	−0.223	−0.180
	(0.142)	(0.274)	(0.368)	(0.258)
Enthusiasm for Election	0.248	0.270	0.053	0.399
	(0.182)	(0.361)	(0.345)	(0.357)
Attended Past Conventions	0.095	−0.388	0.332	−0.408
	(0.209)	(0.443)	(0.442)	(0.381)
Number of Organizational Memberships	0.155*	−0.035	0.375*	0.391*
	(0.066)	(0.183)	(0.182)	(0.154)
Level of Education	0.117	−0.108	0.328*	0.076
	(0.071)	(0.143)	(0.155)	(0.146)
Level of Annual Income	0.070	0.715*	0.434	0.077
	(0.105)	(0.361)	(0.358)	(0.177)
Constant	−0.643	1.800	−0.919	−1.350
	(0.684)	(2.061)	(1.374)	(1.580)
N	211	58	68	51
F	2.420*	1.010	1.640	0.930
Degrees of Freedom	7, 204	7, 51	7, 61	7, 44

***$p \leq 0.001$, **$p \leq 0.010$, *$p \leq 0.050$. Results are adjusted using survey weights.

things being equal, the Women's Caucus at the 2008 Convention was a gathering place for many women who experienced Clinton's defeat as a loss for their group.

Our evidence suggests that the reverse dynamic does not play out in the other major caucuses, as high levels of satisfaction with Obama did not boost participation in the Hispanic, Black, or LGBT caucuses among delegates that self-identified with these groups. Rather, participation in these caucuses was a function of delegates' propensity to join organizations and/or of their levels of education and annual income. While women who were concerned about the implications of Clinton's defeat for women within the party may have been motivated to engage with the Women's Caucus, excitement about the implications of Obama's candidacy for people of color did not seem to motivate other constituencies within the party to participate in caucuses.

The Democratic Party mandates that half of all delegates to its national convention must be women, so it is not surprising that, as we observe above, the Women's Caucus was the largest of any caucus or council at the convention. Because women constitute not only a large group within the Democratic Party but also a diverse one, it is important to examine whether our findings pertaining to the Women's Caucus might vary among subgroups of women, particularly among those whose marginalized status is constituted by the intersection of gender with other axes of marginalization such as race or sexuality (Crenshaw 1989; Cohen 1999; Hancock 2007; Strolovitch 2007, 2012; Weldon 2011). To explore this possibility, we estimate a series of variations on the model examining participation in the Women's Caucus. To this specification, we add variables for *Race/Ethnicity is Latino* (Model 9), *Race/Ethnicity is African American* (Model 10), *Sexual Orientation is LGBT* (Model 11), and *Age in Years* (Model 12). We estimate a final Model (13) that includes all of these variables. The results of this estimation are reported in Table 4.

The results of these additional analyses reveal that there are, indeed, significant interactions between sex/gender and membership in some other marginalized groups. More specifically, Model 9 shows that Latinas were significantly less likely to participate in the Women's Caucus than were non-Latinas, while Model 12 shows that younger women were *more* likely than older women to participate in it. However, we observe no significant racial differences (Model 10) nor do we find significant differences between LGBT-identified women and women who did not self-identify as LGBT on the survey (Model 11). Model 13, which includes the full set of group identification variables examined in this article, confirms the pattern of results in Models 9 through 12. However, including these interactions does not undermine the significant negative relationship between participation in the Women's Caucus and satisfaction with Obama as the Democratic nominee.

These findings provide strong support for the *Solidarity Hypothesis* when it comes to the Women's Caucus. That is, women who felt that women's gains

Table 4 Probit Models of Women's Participation in the Women's Caucus.

Independent Variable	Model (9)	Model (10)	Model (11)	Model (12)	Model (13)	Mean	Imputed
Pledged to Obama	−0.037	0.022	0.008	0.072	−0.031	0.440	0.000%
	(0.218)	(0.217)	(0.218)	(0.215)	(0.220)	(0.498)	
Satisfaction with Obama	−0.370*	−0.345*	−0.324*	−0.332*	−0.348*	4.541	4.310%
	(0.147)	(0.143)	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.145)	(0.042)	
Enthusiasm for Election	0.300	0.254	0.232	0.220	0.256	4.639	3.900%
	(0.187)	(0.184)	(0.180)	(0.188)	(0.192)	(0.034)	
Attended Past Conventions	0.066	0.096	0.090	0.269	0.264	0.281	4.310%
	(0.212)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.229)	(0.232)	(0.021)	
Number of Organizational Memberships	0.140*	0.162*	0.163*	0.178***	0.183***	1.219	4.710%
	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.069)	(0.062)	
Level of Education	0.123	0.109	0.118	0.135	0.141	4.640	2.750%
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.076)	(0.061)	
Level of Annual Income	0.053	0.068	0.068	0.091	0.079	0.998	7.840%
	(0.106)	(0.104)	(0.106)	(0.105)	(0.107)	(0.041)	
Race/Ethnicity is Latino	−0.589*				−0.593*	0.135	0.390%
	(0.279)				(0.286)	(0.015)	
Race/Ethnicity is African American		0.146			0.054	0.172	0.390%
		(0.230)			(0.239)	(0.017)	
Sexual Orientation is LGBT			−0.359		−0.447	0.165	2.390%
			(0.273)		(0.282)	(0.017)	
Age in Years				−0.014*	−0.017*	46.891	3.530%
				(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.703)	
Constant	−0.704	−0.655	−0.613	−0.023	0.051		
	(0.693)	(0.685)	(0.682)	(0.757)	(0.767)		
N	211	211	211	211	211	211	
F	2.460*	2.103*	2.290*	2.600***	2.450***		
Degrees of Freedom	8, 203	8, 203	8, 203	8, 203	11, 200		

***p ≤ 0.001, **p ≤ 0.010, *p ≤ 0.050. Results are adjusted using survey weights.

within the Democratic Party were compromised by Clinton's loss were more likely than were women who did not feel this way to attend the Women's Caucus, presumably in search of solidarity with other women who felt similarly. Thus, the Women's Caucus had the potential to play a valuable role for the party by providing a space for discontented members of the party to gather and communicate their grievances.

There is, however, an alternative – and more troubling – interpretation of our findings. Rather than it being the case that women who were less satisfied with Obama were drawn to the Women's Caucus (as we argue), it is conceivable that participation in the Women's Caucus itself led female attendees to become less satisfied with Obama. If this type of endogeneity were present, the substantive and normative implications of our findings would be reversed. Rather than the caucus providing a space for those who are already discontented, it would have been a *source* of discontent and conflict within the party.

The survey design allows us to adjudicate which of these explanations is more plausible. Our data are, of course, cross-sectional, but because we conducted the surveys over several days at the convention, there is also a temporal component to the data that may be exploited to shed light on the question of endogeneity. If the claim of endogeneity were valid – that is, if attending the Women's Caucus served to sour delegates on Obama's candidacy – then we would observe a significant time trend in the data based on the date that we collected the surveys. The testable implication of endogeneity in this case is that Women's Caucus-goers surveyed later during the convention week would indicate lower levels of *Satisfaction with Obama* than would women surveyed earlier at the convention.

To examine this implication, we graph the time trend in Obama satisfaction among Women's Caucus participants in Figure 2. If participation in the caucus turned attendees against Obama, we should see a decline in his approval over time among attendees. In fact, the figure reveals no discernible trend. The weighted bivariate correlation between *Satisfaction with Obama* and *Date of Survey* is −0.044, which has a statistical probability level of p=0.661, falling well short of conventional levels of statistical significance. Thus, it appears to be more reasonable to conclude that women's participation in the Women's Caucus was influenced by their preexisting attitudes toward Obama than to conclude that participation in the Women's Caucus systematically turned caucus participants against Obama's candidacy.

In summary, our findings provide robust support for the *Solidarity Hypothesis*. Women who held more negative views of Obama's candidacy were more likely to participate in the Women's Caucus than were women with positive views of his candidacy. This finding does not disappear when we account for the effects of intersectional marginalization, nor does endogeneity bias appear to be
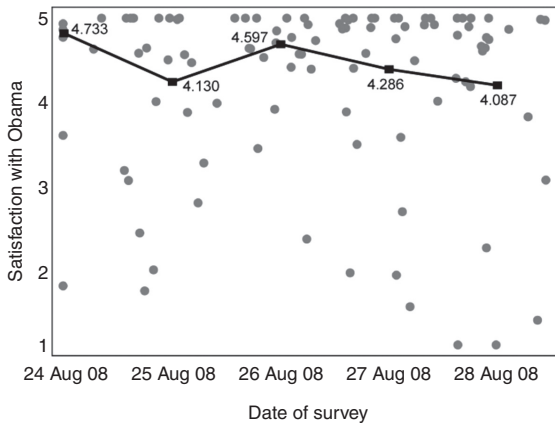
Figure 2 Satisfaction with Obama over Time by Women's Caucus Participants.
Note: N=101. Bivariate correlation=−0.044, p=0.661. The solid black line represents the mean value for each day we fielded surveys. Each survey response (denoted by a gray point) has been given a small random deviation from its exact location in order to make it visible in the graph.

a plausible alternative explanation. Similar results do not obtain among other marginalized groups within the Democratic Party – Latinas, African Americans, and those who identify as LGBT – none of whom had a specific reason to believe that a Clinton candidacy would lead to particular benefits for their group within the party.

If individuals identifying with these groups believed that Obama's candidacy would advance their group's standing within the party, they did not respond by disproportionately flocking to their own group's caucuses. Rather, our findings are consistent with the view that the presence of threat is more generative of political mobilization than is the opportunity to make gains (see, for example, Miller and Krosnick 2004). This study supports the conclusion that caucuses are spaces for building solidarity within marginalized groups, especially when they feel threatened within the party, than they are to advance a nominee's candidacy.

The Case of the Republican Party

Readers might wonder how the party-group relations that we have documented in the Democratic Party compare to those in the Republican Party. Since there is no exact analog to the caucus system within the Republican Party, it is difficult to draw a direct comparison. Although the Republican convention does

afford opportunities for delegates to meet with ideological and issue groups that address topics such as gun rights, the right to life, and the defense of the state of Israel, these opportunities are neither as extensive nor as integrated into the program as they are at the Democratic convention. Jo Freeman's observation that, within the Republican Party, these auxiliary organizations "are not mechanisms for exercising power and they are not primary reference groups" still rings true (1986, pp. 331–332).

The companion survey that we fielded at the 2008 Republican National Convention does allow us to draw some comparison, however. The RNC survey was almost identical to the Democratic one and was administered using identical survey procedures. Our team of 20 surveyors secured a response rate of 70%, which yielded 407 surveys. We determined that 276 of these respondents (67.81%) were pledged delegates and therefore met the criteria for our study. Without formal caucuses, we could not, of course, inquire about caucus participation at the Republican convention. However, the survey included a question that asked "Are you participating (or were you planning to participate) in any of the business meetings being held by the party at the convention (not including floor activities)?" (We refer to this question hereafter as *Attended Meetings*.)

Less than one quarter (23.90%) of pledged Republican delegates reported that they *Attended Meetings* at the convention. Recall that almost three quarters of Democrats attended caucus or council meetings. This question is not directly comparable to the caucus question that we asked at the Democratic convention, but the large gap between the responses to these similar (but not identical) questions suggests that delegates at the Republican convention are not engaged in formal meetings in a way comparable to their Democratic counterparts.

Of the Republican delegates who attended meetings, only eight delegates (2.90% of all pledged delegates) reported plans to attend ones related to some marginalized group. These groups included the National Federation of Republican Women (two respondents), the Log Cabin Republicans (one respondent), and the National Black Republican Association (one respondent). In addition, four respondents indicated that they planned to attend meetings of various veterans' organizations such as Vets for Freedom. The remaining respondents who reported participation in meetings indicated that they attended state delegations, formal party committees (such as the Platform Committee), candidate committees (such as Lawyers for McCain), company receptions (such as Google), issue-oriented gatherings (such as Life of the Party, a pro-life event organized by Phyllis Schlafly), and several did not specify which meetings they planned to attend.

Even when we consider the possibility that our method may be systematically undercounting participation in meetings at the convention, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Republicans do not engage members of marginalized

groups at their convention to the same extent as do Democrats. Our findings with regard to the Republican Party are consistent with expectations from the prior research on this topic. While the Democratic Party is known as the party that represents marginalized groups, the Republican Party is better understood as divided by ideological cleavages. While the Republicans do reach out to groups such as women through organizations such as the National Federation of Republican Women, our survey reveals that participation in the meeting of such organizations is far less common among Republican convention delegates than it is among their Democratic counterparts.

Conclusion

Since the 1970s, the Democratic Party has relied on a system of caucuses and, more recently, councils to reach out to marginalized groups at its conventions. Our research shows that these caucuses are not primarily vehicles through which candidates rally their supporters. Rather, caucuses and councils provide an opportunity for party elites who are members of marginalized groups to build group solidarity and for members of such constituencies to gather in the wake (or in the midst) of conflicts over nominations, battles over platforms, and the like.

For example, our analysis shows that the more satisfied women were with Barack Obama's nomination as president in 2008, the less likely they were to participate in the meetings of the Women's Caucus. The Women's Caucus became, in part, a place for women who had hoped for a female presidential candidate to seek solidarity with other women who felt similarly. As such, our study suggests that solidarity-building opportunities may be greatest when members of marginalized groups believe that they have experienced a political loss.

It may be possible, however, for the Democrats to make more proactive use of caucuses and councils as they navigate future presidential nomination battles. Outreach to the caucuses and councils of constituencies like women, Latinos, LGBT voters, and Asian Americans might be more effective if it were ongoing rather than limited to convention week, and if it were attentive to the need to negotiate among elites representing key groups (Hajnal and Lee 2011; Bawn et al. 2012). Democrats might consider making use of the Women's Caucus as a channel through which to communicate with women over the course of the 2015–2016 primaries, for example, regardless of whether Hillary Clinton or another woman runs for or wins the party's nomination.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republican Party cannot simply mimic the Democratic model of caucuses and councils. As the "party of interest groups,"

the Democrats have a group element to their party culture for which there is no Republican analog. However, if the GOP wishes to appeal to growing segments of the electorate, it may try to develop mechanisms for interacting directly with elites identified with marginalized groups. Party elites might, for example, try to build representation based on group identification into already thriving organizations such as the National Federation of Republican Women. They might also build organizations around social or economic conservatism that may fit more naturally into the ideological makeup of the party. Regardless, targeted outreach to marginalized groups will likely become increasingly important for anyone seeking the presidency in the coming years.

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