

**William J. Crotty**

**Editor**



**Approaches to  
the Study of  
Party Organization**

# Approaches to the Study of Party Organization

edited by  
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## Preface

This volume results from the mutual belief that studies on political parties are on the threshold of capitalizing on theoretical and methodological advances, some already successful in other disciplines or other subfields of political science, that should introduce a new era of intellectual productivity into political parties' research. The eventual result of the efforts should be a more truly scientific enterprise prepared to treat in a more adequate fashion the traditional problems of concern to the field. By scientific, it is meant a systematic, theoretical, and empirically cumulative enterprise which meets the conventional criteria of variability and replicability and, in the present case, which should encourage cross-cultural comparisons.

Another belief of the contributors to this volume is that by conceptualizing and empirically investigating the party organization — how it is structured, what it does, how effective its activities are in achieving its objectives, and how it relates to the total social system of which it is a part — the researcher will have a perspective that will enable him to interrelate the diverse concerns of the field in some meaningful pattern.

Each of the selections to follow deals in some manner with the party organization. Individual works are designed to theoretically relate the political party to broader social concerns, or provide a meaningful focus for interrelationships and activities within the organization, or empirically investigate problem areas in a manner intended to suggest means of handling these topics in comparative analysis. Each of the essays adds something informative to the limited quantity of reliable data or imaginative theorizing available on party organizations.

The difficulties encountered in such analysis should not be underestimated. The party organization has few of the attributes of a conventional bureaucratic organization. Still, by incorporating developments from other subject-matter areas or through experimentation each of the original works contained in this

volume attempts to indicate the manner in which some of the more pressing problems can be resolved as well as the prospective rewards to be gained from such an analytic orientation.

The general approach itself is not new. Moesi Ostrogorski, Robert Michels, and more recently Samuel Eldersveld, among others, have pioneered in developing such a research perspective. Nonetheless, the number of broader research efforts developed in this vein are few. The extent to which other scholars can be encouraged to undertake such analysis within complementary organizational frameworks will provide some measure of the success of the undertakings presented within.

Bernard Hennessy (Pennsylvania State University) introduces the volume with a lively analysis of the evolution of works on party organization. He pinpoints the problem areas deserving attention and he develops the potential contributions of previous studies as well as recent methodological techniques for researchers undertaking explorations of the topics discussed. The bibliography following Chapter I can serve as an introduction to the literature in the field.

In the second essay, Fred W. Riggs (Indiana University) develops an imaginative theoretical superstructure in which to locate the political party. Professor Riggs attempts to control for cultural dissimilarities by categorizing polities and the parties, the latter a dependent variable within the conceptual schema, in relation to structural characteristics and the functional relevance of the institution for the society as a whole. In the process, he contrasts organizational forms and goals and attempts to clarify the distinction between structural and functional characteristics in his typologies. His work is in the broad tradition of Maurice Duverger (*Political Parties*, 1951) and represents an attempt to introduce some of the imaginative theorizing in cross-cultural comparative analysis to a phenomenon of universal concern, political parties, that could profit from an infusion of new ideas. Through such works as that by Riggs and the one that follows by Samuel H. Barnes (University of Michigan) a fresh perspective possibly can be encouraged in parties' research.

Professor Barnes employs a theoretical orientation in his essay developed by Mancur Olson that emphasizes collective action. The utility of the theory is illustrated through an application to Italian political parties, in particular the Italian Socialist Federation.

A comparative emphasis also predominates in the chapters by Austin Ranney (University of Wisconsin) and Kenneth Janda (Northwestern University). Professor Ranney investigates one

of the classic concerns of the American parties' scholar, the relative cohesion of political parties in Britain and the United States; a problem that has invited the attention of social scientists since, as he notes, the time of Woodrow Wilson and A. Lawrence Lowell. Ranney has chosen to explore the process of candidate selection in British parties. This then serves as a base from which to draw comparisons as to party recruitment and organizational coherence in the two countries. Attention is also centered on the pressures inherent in the linkages between the parliamentary party and its members and the local constituency organizations and their needs.

Professor Janda's objectives are quite different. He has undertaken the enormous task of gathering and systematizing the data available in the period 1950-1962 on political parties throughout the world. The background of the study, the information retrieval techniques he has developed, and the categorizations employed in the ordering of the data are to be found in his report.

Environmental factors as reflected in socio-economic variables and as they relate to party competition and more indirectly party organization provide the focus for Douglas S. Gatlin's work. Professor Gatlin (Florida Atlantic University) has abstracted a series of hypotheses from contentions found in the literature on parties and electoral competition. The hypotheses presented are interrelated and operationalized in a manner conducive to empirically testing the relationships between party competition and environmental variables. Gatlin's intention is to theoretically relate variations in socio-economic factors to two-party competition and to suggest the influence of the party organization as an intervening variable in the process.

William J. Crotty (Northwestern University), Thomas M. Watts (University of Pennsylvania), and Dwaine Marvick (University of California, Los Angeles) are more concerned with the various methodological and theoretical problems that can be examined by using data collected on the state and local party organizations and their activists within the United States. Professor Crotty empirically analyzes the extent of party organization and the scope of the party activities engaged in within a one-party system in the process of undergoing change. The differences between the two major parties in organization and how these relate to, in turn, candidate recruitment, campaigning and financing, are all examined.

Professor Watts employs techniques of leadership identification associated with community power structure studies to isolate and analyze the relative influence of the formal and informal

leadership at the local levels of the party organization in selecting candidates for public office. The findings of the study concerning communication and decision-making processes as they affect party recruitment are contrasted with comparative data drawn from other localities.

Professor Marvick begins by examining the role of the party cadre at the intermediate levels of the party structure as linkages or "middlemen" serving to connect the mass electorate with the political elite. Then drawing upon empirical data from several studies in which he has been involved, Marvick sketches a composite picture of these middlemen — their backgrounds and their ambitions.

Finally, Professor Lee Anderson (Northwestern University) appraises the literature on organizational theory and indicates the concepts and approaches that could prove to be of the greatest promise in exploring political organizations.

As editor, I have a number of obligations to acknowledge. Primarily, I am indebted to James W. Prothro and Donald R. Matthews of the University of North Carolina and George Goodwin, Jr., of the University of Massachusetts, Boston Center, for their encouragement of my own interest in the general area of political parties.

The National Center for Education in Politics, now extinct, and its former Director, Bernard Hennessy, appropriately represented among the contributors to this volume, have done yeoman service in promoting a more realistic understanding of political parties. This book was conceived as a result of a conference organized by Professors Hennessy and Charles O. Jones of the University of Arizona and sponsored by the National Center for Education in Politics. The diversity of topics treated in the conference presentations and the disparity of perspectives and approaches to party phenomena helped to stimulate some serious thought over the ensuing years as to the most profitable means of investigating parties in order to maximize the long-run rewards to come from the research. If this book were to be dedicated, it would have to be to the National Center for Education in Politics.

I am indebted to the Political Science Editor of Allyn and Bacon for his continuing and expert assistance. To Mrs. Joanne Hayes and Mrs. Carol Nichols I owe my thanks for their most able help at various stages in compiling and typing the manuscript.

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# ONE

## On the Study of Party Organization

Bernard Hennessy

*Pennsylvania State University*

IT IS ONE of the inconveniences of political science, and telling evidence of the essentially non-scientific nature of our discipline, that there are no neatly edged definitions for our most common terms, such as "political party." Political parties, let us say for a starter, are social organizations that attempt to influence (1) the selection and tenure of the personnel of government by putting forward candidates for elective office, (2) the policies of government according to some general principles or proclivities upon which most of their members agree and, (3) in the case of the totalitarian party, the attempt is to create a comprehensive system of beliefs, a guide to attitude formation and maintenance, and (ideally) a total commitment to a way of life.

Totalitarian political parties are very different from those typified by Anglo-American parties and centralist parties of western Europe, and it may be, as Barnes suggests in this volume, that "the word 'party' covers several essentially different phenomena" and that different theories and analyses may be required for two-party systems, multi-party systems, and the several kinds of one-party systems. In any case, most of the scholarship by political scientists (as distinguished from political sociologists) has been done on non-totalitarian parties—for better or worse—and in this essay the totalitarian parties will be mainly disregarded.

"The chief thing is the selection of candidates." With this

sentence Bryce begins his famous description of American political parties at the turn of the century. (Bryce 1910, I, 54.) He suggests that the parties had earlier been animated by principle, and his denigration of issues-less parties,<sup>1</sup> as well as his unfavorable comparison with British parties on that score, did much to oversimplify all subsequent discussion of parties and principles. The American parties are not so unprincipled, nor the British parties so principled, as he imagined.

But on the whole, he was right. The chief thing is the selection of candidates, and, for the selection *and election* of their candidates, American political parties take both their organizational forms and policy stands. Certainly there must be exceptions to the generalization that the policy positions of the American parties depend on their electoral prospects. But the genuine case of a major party choosing principle over victory is very rare; it is not at all sure that the Goldwater strategists did so in 1964, for their *avowed* expectation was that principle would bring victory (for these claims and the demonstration of their enormous miscalculations, see Converse, Clausen and Miller 1965). This is clearly not so true in developed nations with multi-party systems, or in underdeveloped nations with transitional and rapidly changing political forms. Under such conditions voter education, or preparation for revolution, or control of key voting blocs in the representative assemblies, or any combination of these objectives, may be more important to the party than the mere selection and promotion of winnable candidates.

## The Interest in Party Organization

We are interested in party organization for two reasons.<sup>2</sup> First, description. Political parties are significant social organizations in every modern state, and in all those communities that are in transition from traditional to modern forms. Signifi-

<sup>1</sup> "When life leaves an organic body it becomes useless, fetid, pestiferous: it is fit to be cast out or buried from sight. What life is to an organism, principles are to a party. When they which are its soul have vanished, its body ought to dissolve, . . ." (Bryce 1910, I, 23).

<sup>2</sup> An organization can be defined as "a social system that has an unequivocal collective identity, an exact roster of members, a program of activity, and procedures for replacing members." (Theodore

cant social organizations need to be described, and all the more when, as is the case with parties, their characteristics are so irregular, amorphous, and ill defined. We need thorough, even minute, descriptions of political parties. To understand any polity we have to know something about its party system. To understand how (and sometimes why) a state makes, enforces, and amends its laws we need to know what its parties are and do. Description of the parties may be important for an understanding of constitutional and policy outcomes in any analysis focusing on a single governmental jurisdiction.

Beyond the explanatory value of description in single cases, we need a large accumulation of information (descriptive statements) to suggest relationships and lead us to hypotheses. Description is the raw material of taxonomy and generalization.

And this is precisely the second reason we are interested in party organization: because we want to be able to go beyond description. Not to give up description—we imagine there will always be new data to be recorded—but simultaneously to achieve analysis at a level that transcends the single case. If we believe that political parties, their organization and processes are related to substantive ends such as democracy, the representation of interests, governmental efficiency, or the distribution of indulgences and deprivations, then we want to investigate those relationships to the extent necessary for understanding, prediction, or manipulation. On the basis of what we already know, a powerful argument can be made that the organization of the political parties of a modern or transitional state is, in fact, systematically related to the policies of that state. Whether there are certain invariant and/or causal relationships between party organizations and policy outcomes is a question that is, at the moment, as unclear as it is fascinating.

Despite the importance of parties in the U.S. throughout the 19th century there is no comprehensive treatment of them until 1893. In that year, Bryce published his monumental work *The American Commonwealth*, which included 247 pages on “the party system” plus three case studies of urban party organizations (another 70 pages). He remarks in this first edition, with some surprise, “though the books and articles dealing with

---

Caplow, *Principles of Organization*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964, p. 1. Italics omitted.) Political parties have problems in satisfying even these general qualifications. For present purposes, a party organization is an organization that is distinguished by the definitional requirements for political parties stated above.

the public life of the United States may be counted by hundreds, I know of no author who has set himself to describe impartially the actual daily working of that part of the vast and intricate political machine which lies outside the Constitution. . . ." (Bryce 1893, p. 637.)

In 1902, nine years after Bryce's first edition and eight years before his second, Moisei Ostrogorski published *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*. Here was the painstaking description that Bryce had called for. Ostrogorski spent many years observing and writing about British and U.S. political parties. His descriptions of party structure, processes, critical events, and actors is rich in scholarship and on-the-spot freshness.

In his excellent introduction to the Anchor edition of *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, Seymour Martin Lipset argues that Ostrogorski was more than describer. Lipset is right: Ostrogorski was an insightful participant-observer and social historian. He had a concern for comparison beyond simply recounting events, for generalizations and theory-building checked always against reality. He wanted to study political "forces" and declared that "to really understand the character of social action, its modes of procedure must be studied in the light of the character of those who apply them, and of the social and political conditions in which their wills are formed and manifested. . . . It is a study . . . conceived in this spirit, a study of social and political psychology, based on observation, that I have tried to undertake. . . ." (Author's Preface, Vol. I, xxviii.) Lipset is dismayed to see "how many of Ostrogorski's fruitful hypotheses concerning opinion and electoral behavior have been almost completely ignored by students of the subject." He points out that none of the major American studies, from *The People's Choice* through *Voting*, *The Voter Decides*, *The American Voter*, and the book of commentaries on these studies, *American Voting Behavior*, even refers to his analysis." (Introduction, Vol. I, xliii.)

I suggest the reason for the neglect of Ostrogorski is that he wrote in an older idiom—that of the traveling intellectual and moral reformer. Ostrogorski did not *display* his quantification; he has, therefore, no neat tables of figures, with standard deviations, and tests of significance to commend his work to modern political behaviorists. That his generalizations were based upon judgments on the nature and patterning of events and forces is beyond doubt, but Ostrogorski's knowledge—in-

deed his "science"—was "personal knowledge" in the sense described by Polanyi (1958, 1960) and not yet sufficiently recognized by our most zealous behaviorists. His other liability in the eyes of present scholars is that he was a reformer—worse, a condescending reformer with more or less open disdain for both the venal politicians and their unthinking followers. Like Bryce, Ostrogorski was a cultivated 19th century liberal whose animadversions on the killing (and killers) of the liberal dream had a powerful influence on the progressive movement at the turn of the century, but are much less noted by the sophisticated pluralists who comprise the American social science establishment of the nineteen-sixties.

Important as Bryce and Ostrogorski were, to Michels (1915) goes the honor of considering first the question whether the organizational forms of political parties were related in any significant way to the other characteristics of the party system or the polity in general. We will not tarry for comment on the validity or usefulness of his so-called "iron law of oligarchy"—except to say that he seems to have wanted democracy in the simplest sense of government by *all* the people and his capacity to look candidly at the organizational behavior of his socialist friends convinced him that democracy in that sense was a vain hope.

Michels' methodology is of more interest here. He was the first student of parties to use data from several parties and national party systems to test his hypotheses about the relation of organizational needs (both those of individual members and of the organization in competition with other organizations) and the actual distribution of influence in decision-making. He dared to think of "the study and analysis of political parties . . . [as] a branch of applied sociology." (vii.)<sup>3</sup>

Since Michels there has been increasing (but sporadic rather than steady) interest in political party organization. The work of the 1920s and 1930s fell mainly into two groups: field investigations, often with an exposé flavor, of local machines and bosses (among the best are Gosnell 1924; McKean 1940;

<sup>3</sup> In an unorthodox treatment of Michels' thought—one I find quite persuasive—May (1965) argues that Michels was not a pessimistic democrat, but a "pessimistic Romantic Revolutionist and a pessimistic Scientific Paternalist" (his capitalization). "While maintaining that Organization is incompatible with pure democracy . . . he also suggested . . . that Organization can and frequently does accompany and facilitate a multitude of changes which constitute or facilitate democratization." (p. 429).

Zink 1930), or text-like treatment of party organization within a broader framework of political institutions and processes (Holcombe 1924; Ray 1922; Sait 1927). Since World War II the empirical investigation of parties has been greatly expanded, concomitantly with the widespread use of survey research and quantification techniques. Theory building has also been an interest of some, with organizations theory, systems theory, and functionalism being brought to play in the analysis of party organization and processes.

## The Present State of Knowledge About Party Organization

Description is well along, but much more needs to be undertaken. Comparative analysis has been demonstrated to be possible and fruitful, but only a beginning has been made. The development of theory and "laws" of party organization is hardly beyond the talking stage; a theory of party organization at this level, when or if it comes, may be only a rather trivial case of general organizations theory. However that may be, our present state is one of increasingly detailed and accurate description of party organizations at every level and every part of the world, of increasingly sophisticated comparative analysis, and of some middle-range theory with attendant hypotheses and propositions.

## Parties in English-Speaking Countries

Much work continues on American and British parties, and some on their Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand counterparts. While organization is the exclusive focus of only a very few book-length or monographic studies, all investigations of parties treat it as important and closely related to activities such as nominations and campaigning, personnel questions, and decision-making processes. In the most recent general treatments of American political parties, there seems to be little emphasis on the legal-structural aspects of organization (Greenstein 1963; Sorauf 1964), and even in recent editions of the more comprehensive parties-and-politics texts (e.g., Bone 1965).

By contrast, the older standard works were heavy with descriptions of caucuses, committees, conventions, and campaign structure (e.g., Sait 1939).

More recent writings on party structure are confined principally to description and commentary on new organizational forms (Carney 1958; Sorauf 1954; Wilson 1962), case-making for suggested change (Bailey 1959; APSA Committee 1952), comparative descriptions (Scarrow 1964), or analyses of change (Lowi 1963).

### Parties in the Developing Areas

The study of American parties has proceeded rapidly since World War II. But until quite recently, American scholarship has concentrated largely on American parties—and on British parties to a lesser extent (Epstein 1956; Hennessy 1955; Ranney 1965). There is currently an encouraging growth of American interest in political parties of the developing areas of the world. Early work by Kantor (1953) in Peru, Pye (1962) in Burma, and Weiner (1957) in India, was rapidly followed by field research in Africa. At first, as one would expect, the study of African parties was only part of whole-nation surveys (Apter 1955 and 1963; Ashford 1961; Coleman 1958; Wallerstein 1959). But monographic treatments of African parties or national party systems soon followed (Moore 1962; Zolberg 1964). Several general analyses of African parties are available (Hodgkin 1961; Carter 1962; Schachter 1958 and 1961).

One important consequence of the vastly increased recent interest in the parties of developing countries was the impetus given to generalization and systems building. The student of parties in developing areas is faced with a bewildering variety of protopolitical behavior, always imperfectly distinguished from what western social scientists would regard as religious, or social class, or caste behavior. Moreover, he has no ready made framework for analysis such as western scholars have in the established legal forms or political institutions. He may then either adopt an anthropological perspective such as Muir's (1962) or Gluckman's (1963)—a response more common among British than American scholars—or find a more directly political conceptual system for his analysis. The perspectives



and vocabulary of functionalism have been found useful by many students of politics in developing areas (Schachter 1961; Wallerstein 1960; Holt 1965a and 1965b; Almond and Coleman 1960; Weiner 1964)<sup>4</sup>; others emphasize a psychological, sometimes an avowedly psychoanalytic approach (Pye 1961 and 1962).

Finally, the students of politics in the developing areas have pushed forward the techniques of opinion and attitude surveys, in field work related to what Rokkan (1962) calls “‘micro-politics’—the analysis of the individual citizens’ reactions to the political events and alternatives in their communities.” Here the work of Lerner (1958) and Almond and Verba (1963) are especially valuable for their systematic and transnational approaches, and for pointing the way to “the exploration of general propositions about factors in political behavior” (Rokkan 1962, p. 49).

### Political Parties: Generalizations Beyond Time and Place

So far, despite the growing interest in political parties, there is only one bold attempt to treat parties comprehensively, comparatively, and in relation to other features of the political systems. That is, of course, Maurice Duverger’s *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, a French edition published in 1951, followed in 1954 by a somewhat revised English edition. Duverger’s book crossed the divide between advanced history and kindergarten science. “We find ourselves,” says Duverger, “in a vicious circle”:

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the works cited, the following are useful for an introduction to functionalism and for discussions of its relative value to political inquiry: Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: The Free Press, 1951); Parsons and Edward A. Shils, eds., *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951); Parsons, “‘Voting’ and the Equilibrium of the American Political System,” in Eugene Burdick and Arthur J. Brodbeck, eds., *American Voting Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 80–120; William C. Mitchell, *The American Polity* (New York: The Free Press, 1962); Mitchell, *Sociological Analysis and Politics: The Theories of Talcott Parsons* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967); H. V. Wiseman, *Political Systems* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); and Holt, 1965.