

Public Abstract

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Previous scholarship on the political cultures of the political parties provides anecdotal evidence regarding the distinct differences between the two major U.S. political parties. This conventional wisdom is based on one important essay authored by Jo Freeman nearly 30 years ago. To date, our understanding regarding the nature and effects of the political cultures of the Democratic and Republican parties suffers from lack of rigorous empirical examination. This study explores the political cultures of the political parties by examining the behaviors of congressional members seeking their party's nomination for another office. In this dissertation, I measure the extent which the Democratic and Republican parties' political cultures effect progressively ambitious members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, I provide firsthand accounts of how these cultures impact state legislative careers. The empirical tests I present in this project largely support Freeman's earlier accounts as to the nature of the two major parties' political cultures at the national level. Based on firsthand accounts, however, I also provide evidence to suggest the political cultures of the parties are subject to short-term, localized forces at the state-level.