

Members of polarized networks may feel pressure to choose loyalties: Another example of partisan divide

November 2 2012

(Phys.org)—Democrats and Republicans may find it increasingly challenging to bridge the partisan divide when their memberships in political organizations remain polarized.

A new University of Michigan study involving Democrat and Republican convention delegates indicate they live in different organizational worlds. Few organizations share members of each party, making it more difficult to find bipartisan causes, says lead author Michael Heaney.

Thus, a member of the [Republican Party](#) who is also involved in an interest group, such as the Teamsters, may be forced to choose between loyalties to these organizations when these organizations take conflicting positions on the right to organize labor unions.

Research teams conducted surveys at the 2008 Democratic and Republican national conventions. Respondents—504 Democrats and 369 Republicans—were asked about memberships they held in any political organizations, social movement organizations or [interest groups](#).

Among delegates belonging to the same organization, only 1.78 percent of them crossed party lines, and only 2.74 percent of the ties between organizations sharing common delegates were bipartisan.

"Party activists rarely find themselves in political settings where they are

on common ground with activists from the other major party," said Heaney, U-M assistant professor of organizational studies and political science.

The study showed that Democrats join more organizations than Republicans, but are less likely to unite around the same organizations than are Republicans. Party members sharing a common interest isn't entirely bad, Heaney says.

"In many ways, it is important for the parties to form some exclusive organizations that allow them to build solidarity and coordinate their plans for elections and government," he said.

Nevertheless, the divide between groups may involve several factors, such as activists preferring organizations that favor their political [party](#) or the lack of organizations that represent issues of both parties.

The study's other authors are political scientists Seth Masket of the University of Denver, and Joanne Miller and Dara Strolovitch of the University of Minnesota. The findings appear in the current issue of *American Behavioral Scientist*.

More information: [abs.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... 463354.full.pdf+html](https://abs.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/11/01/08912444)

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Members of polarized networks may feel pressure to choose loyalties: Another example of partisan divide (2012, November 2) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-11-members-polarized-networks-pressure-loyalties.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.