

CHAPTER TWO

DIVERSITY IN THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE: THE SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM

Party systems rely on differences in opinion or interests among voters. One might assume that a legislature in a representative government would mirror the opinions and interests in the electorate. In America, however, the two-party system may conceal political and social diversity. This paper proceeds with an investigation of the social and ideological basis for a multiparty system without assuming that Congress already mirrors the diverse opinions and interests of the electorate.

The public certainly seems to question the nature of its representation; only 17 percent of respondents to a 1990 poll agreed that Congress was "about as good a representative body as it is possible for a large nation to have."¹ Even among partisan legislators, the two-party coalitions are forced compromises. When given permission to vote without partisan concern in Congress, two-thirds of legislators will try to build new coalitions across party lines.²

There is a debate in the academic literature on party systems, however, between those who believe that the number of parties in a nation is a function of social diversity and those who believe that institutional factors are responsible. Seymour Martin Lipset

¹ Gordon S. Black and Benjamin D. Black, *The Politics of American Discontent: How a New Party Can Make Democracy Work Again* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 16.

² Jesse Unruh, "Toward a Governing Coalition--I. Democrats," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 418.

outlined the need for a diverse electorate to produce a multiparty system: "Electoral systems alone do not determine the varying nature of the party systems of different countries. The basic social cleavages in various societies... have also had a determinative influence on their party systems."³ As Walter Lippman once said, "all that politics can do is clarify and put a sort of concluding stamp on revolutions that have worked themselves out in the lives of people."⁴

This chapter will show that at least in the U.S. example, sociological explanations of the two-party system are untenable. As political scientist James Reichley has put it, "Without the shaping influence of electoral institutions, the political system of a nation so large and so economically and culturally diverse as the United States would long since have produced a substantial number of competing parties."⁵ America's electoral system results in what Lipset calls "a concealed multiparty system" where interest groups must make pre-election coalitions.⁶ The real system of U.S. interests and ideologies would be more accurately reflected in a multiparty system.

The chapter first reviews the literature on American ideological cleavages, assessing the positions represented by the major parties with work by Marshall Ganz (1994), Theodore Lowi (1998), and Gordon Black and Benjamin Black (1994) and noting the rise of cross-cutting ideological divisions in the electorate. Second, this chapter

³ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Coalition Politics--Causes and Consequences," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 441.

⁴ Walter Lippman quoted in David Reynolds, *Democracy Unbound: Progressive Challenges to the Two Party System* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 45.

⁵ A. James Reichley, "The Future of the American Two-Party System after 1996," in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 3d ed., ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 13.

⁶ Lipset, 439.

reviews voting behavior literature on social cleavages, using a study by Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks (1999) and research on ethnic and religious division. Third, it uses a comparative approach, determining whether the institutional bases for the rise of parties in other nations have parallels in the U.S. For this analysis, the paper relies primarily on a comparative study by Alan Ware (1996), a review of current third parties by David Gillespie (1993), and literature on interest groups and social movements. All three methods of researching diversity in the American electorate show multiple groupings that do not fit neatly into the two-party system. The United States has the ideological, social, and institutional basis for a multiparty democracy.

Ideological Divisions among American Voters

Parties typically represent different views or ideologies. According to Klaus von Beyme in a study of European parties, "over the longer term only parties based on an ideology have succeeded in establishing themselves."⁷ It is not clear, however, that the two American parties represent the left and the right, or even their respective memberships. The major parties are both pragmatic; they pursue what Gillespie calls "the politics of convenience" at the expense of any ideology.⁸ Ninety-four percent of candidates now hire media consultants and almost half of consultants report that their

⁷ Klaus von Beyme quoted in Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17.

⁸ J. David Gillespie, *Politics at the Periphery: Third Parties in Two-Party America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 4.

candidates are "uninvolved in setting the issue priorities in their own campaigns."⁹ Only the 37 percent of registered voters who are likely to vote are targeted, with a special focus on only 2 percent who are said to be "swing voters."¹⁰

As a result of the lack of major party ideological competition, more voters than ever before are changing their party identity in each election cycle.¹¹ In 1992, 40 percent of Americans could not name an important difference between the issue positions of the two major parties and half believed there was no difference in problem-solving ability.¹² In the 1994 election that changed congressional leadership, only 12 percent of the people who voted Republican said they were voting for the party; most said they were voting against the Democrats.¹³ According to Jimmie Rex McClellan, "Polls have shown that the disinclination of the Democratic and Republican Parties to enunciate their differences... has led a majority of the public to perceive that no differences exist."¹⁴

Education is the top concern of American voters and yet the two parties offer remarkably similar education plans including standardized testing, nationalization, and parental choice. According to Theodore Lowi, "It has been rare for the two major parties

⁹ Marshall Ganz, "Voters in the Crosshairs: How Technology and the Market are Destroying Politics," *The American Prospect* 5 no. 16 (1994). Available: <<http://www.prospect.org/archives/16/16ganz.html>>. Accessed 29 September 2000.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Walter Dean Burnham, *The Current Crisis in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 28, 112-113.

¹² Howard Gold, "Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace," *Political Research Quarterly* 48 no. 3 (1995): 759.

¹³ Paul E. Tsongas, *Journey of Purpose: Reflections on the Presidency, Multiculturalism, and Third Parties*, The Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics, and Economics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 78.

¹⁴ Jimmie Rex McClellan, "Two Party Monopoly: Institutional Barriers to Third Party Participation in American Politics" (Ph.D. diss., Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, 1984), 11.

to take opposite stands on new controversies; it is much more common for new cleavages to develop within existing parties, providing incentives to avoid addressing these controversies."¹⁵ In the twentieth century, parties used "wedge" issues like crime, taxes, anticommunism, and welfare to divide the populace into two major coalitions.

The parties are less stable coalitions than in past iterations, however, even if their national conventions no longer feature open fights for control of the party.¹⁶ According to Lipset, the hurdles against third-party creation have led American radicals to "operate as factions within one of the old parties."¹⁷ These dissident groups have begun to recognize that major party candidates will not run on the agenda of their party's true constituents, particularly since Bob Dole said in 1996 that the Republican platform meant nothing to him.¹⁸ Republican delegates disproportionately represent the conservative Christian right and Democratic delegates disproportionately represent liberal public employee organizations.¹⁹ Even with both memberships increasing in their extremity, the parties have moderated their messages to appeal to swing voters.²⁰

¹⁵ Theodore J. Lowi, "Toward a Responsible Three-Party System: Prospects and Obstacles," in *A Republic of Parties? Debating the Two-Party System*, ed. Theodore J. Lowi and Joseph Romance (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 175.

¹⁶ David S. Broder, "Introduction," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 7.

¹⁷ Lipset, 441.

¹⁸ Patricia Ireland, "Lifeblood of American Politics of Lock-Up of American Government? The Meaning of the Two Party System." Panel discussion at a conference entitled "The Two-Party System and Its Discontents." American University, Washington, DC, 13 May 1999.

¹⁹ Black and Black, 16.

²⁰ Paul Allen Beck, "The Changing American Party Coalitions," in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 3d ed., ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 40.

The Radical Center

The unclear nature of ideological division between the major parties parallels the large number of moderates in the electorate. The American public, according to Neal Beck, is generally divided into "ideologically polarized" partisan voters and many non-partisan, "even anti-partisan," voters, resulting in inconsistent electoral outcomes.²¹ One-third of voters call themselves "independent," compared to 15 percent in 1942. Seventy-one percent of voters say they split their tickets, up from 42 percent in 1942.²² Recent Republican gains in the south have actually come from a dealignment of southern conservatives, not an increase in Republicans. Economic modernization, geographic mobility, and black-led Democratic parties in southern states have led former Democrats to become independents.²³

After several decades of dealignment and a few popularized independent campaigns, voters are now less socialized in the two-party system than ever before.²⁴ According to Marshall Ganz, "Many elections have become for most citizens exercises in choosing between two power blocs representing similar if not identical resource-rich interests."²⁵ Since half of all Americans do not vote, even in presidential elections, a party or ideology that was able to attract and involve non-voters could easily come to power.²⁶

²¹ Ibid., 28.

²² Reichley, 12.

²³ Beck, 32.

²⁴ Black and Black, 21.

²⁵ Ganz.

²⁶ David Reynolds, *Democracy Unbound: Progressive Challenges to the Two Party System* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 107.

Thirty percent of Americans believe that it does not even matter who is elected President.²⁷ According to polling by Gordon S. Black after the 1992 election, a core of voters equal in size to Republican and Democratic loyalists was willing to support a centrist party.²⁸ Independent gubernatorial candidates such as Lowell Weicker in Connecticut, Walter Hickel in Alaska, Angus King in Maine, and Jesse Ventura in Minnesota have been successful.

Ross Perot "radicalized... the political middle" on a platform of fiscal responsibility and political reform.²⁹ In 1992, 65 percent of the public registered a willingness to vote for potential "reform party" candidates.³⁰ Perot voters in 1992 were disproportionately male and white but by 1996 had come to parity with the overall electorate.³¹ Centrist third parties show that parties do not need particular group profiles to gain a significant share of the vote.

There is a smaller centrist group in Congress. Congressional moderates in both parties are typically given incentives to stay within a party but join a factional group such as the Tuesday Group or the Blue Dog Coalition.³² The Tuesday Group is made up of Republicans who disagree with the party on environmental issues, abortion, and civil

²⁷ Pew Research Center For The People & The Press, *Participation Report* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 13 July 2000). Available: <<http://www.people-press.org/june00que.htm>>. Accessed 18 April 2001.

²⁸ Black and Black, 187.

²⁹ Ibid., 128.

³⁰ Ibid., 180.

³¹ Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks, *Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignments and U.S. Party Coalitions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 226.

³² Robin Kolodny, "Moderate Party Factions in the U.S. House of Representatives," in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 3d ed., ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 272.

rights issues.³³ The Blue Dog Coalition is made up of conservative Democrats who have been able to play brokering roles on issues such as welfare reform.³⁴ Some moderates such as Warren Rudman, Pete DuPont, and Lowell Weicker considered joining the third-party efforts of Ross Perot.³⁵

The social consensus theory put forth by Louis Hartz explains this phenomenon by arguing that America is characterized by basic agreement, having accepted the constitutional framework.³⁶ The two parties have evolved within this consensus, according to Hartz, to offer different policies that can appeal to the majority. This seems to be a plausible understanding of the moderate nature of American opinion but does not help explain why two parties should be dominant. After all, if there were general agreement, one would expect one major party. There is no inherent reason why a country of homogenous opinions would have two parties instead of many.

Only a single major cleavage dividing opinion would help explain the two-party system in this context. V.O. Key has explained the American two-party tradition as a consequence of the dualist nature of America, set up by the original decision over approval of the constitution.³⁷ Divisive issues are normally construed as dualities of opinion, Key says, citing the Civil War and the changes to the party system in its aftermath. This is a reasonable explanation for early two-party dominance and for the

³³ Ibid., 277.

³⁴ Ibid., 277.

³⁵ Ibid., 73.

³⁶ Joan Bryce, "The Preservation of a Two-Party System in the United States" (M.A. diss., University of Western Ontario, 1996), 40.

³⁷ Ibid., 39.

post-Civil War party division but it does not explain the maintenance of the modern two-party system, given a lack of similar conflict.

The typical explanation for the duality of opinion is the theory that politics is organized by a dominant cleavage based on redistributive politics. Anthony Downes theorized the left-right political spectrum as the first attempt at organizing "spatial competition between parties" and Ian Budge found that party systems in most countries fit this pattern.³⁸ This spatial competition fails to account for the different messages used to attract different sets of supporters based on style or reaction, according to Alan Ware: "[The spatial paradigm] fails to capture subtle, but important, differences between parties."³⁹

Social Issues

The left-right paradigm is also threatened by the rise of any ideological cleavage, dualist or not, that cuts across the traditional spectrum of views on redistributive policies. The evidence for an ideological center does not challenge this dominant method of ideological categorization but may be a sign of crosscutting cleavages. The most common critique of the left-right paradigm argues that social issues should be seen as a separate dimension of ideology. American voter beliefs are better mapped in those two dimensions than with a single liberal-conservative paradigm, though the social and

³⁸ Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

economic dimensions correlate.⁴⁰ Social conservatives have at some times split along a racial cleavage as well, leaving five major groupings.⁴¹

Ronald Inglehart has identified a similar ideological cleavage based around "postmaterialism" or "quality of life issues," with younger, more educated voters supporting more efforts toward citizen autonomy rather than material security.⁴² This division is connected to support for "new social movements" such as environmentalism, the peace and anti-nuclear movements, and feminism.⁴³

There is a large section of the electorate with socially liberal and economically conservative views and another group, including many non-voters, with economically liberal and socially conservative views. Mainstream opposition to religious fundamentalism is met with opposition to leftist secularism, leaving many socially conservative, but hardly fundamentalist, voters in the middle.⁴⁴ On the socially conservative side, the pro-life movement often questions its association with the Republicans and has created several independent parties, most prominently in New York.

The opposite side of the social cleavage is evident in America's most well-organized third party, the Libertarian Party. The party attempts to turn socially liberal and economically conservative public sentiment into a political movement that is

⁴⁰ Lipset, 445.

⁴¹ Lipset, 445.

⁴² Herbert Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formation: Structure and Strategy of Belgian and West German Ecology Parties* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 94.

⁴³ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁴ Reichley, 25.

fundamentally anti-statist.⁴⁵ Founded by a split group from Young Americans for Freedom that favored marijuana legalization and opposed the draft, the Libertarian Party began in 1972 when Nixon decided to support wage and price controls.⁴⁶ In 2000, the Libertarians had 1420 candidates.⁴⁷ According to Gillespie, the party may be nearing an "unambiguous entry into the political mainstream."⁴⁸

The Libertarians are a uniquely American phenomenon, as most anti-government, anti-tax parties worldwide have been right wing on social policy.⁴⁹ Libertarians, though they represent a political ideology that is not represented in the left-right paradigm, are typically thought of as a potential replacement party for the Republicans or a "discussion group" that works to have its ideology endorsed by the major parties.⁵⁰ Several types of libertarians are well represented in the technology industry. According to *Wired* writer Paulina Borsook, "technolibertarians" are generally divided between gilders, traditional libertarians "in love with the spirit of enterprise and the spirit of the microchip" and ravers, "neohippies whose anti-government stance is more hedonic than moral, more lifestyle choice than policy position."⁵¹

⁴⁵ Edward H. Crane, "Libertarianism," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 354.

⁴⁶ John C. Berg, "Beyond a Third Party: The Other Minor Parties in the 1996 Elections," in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 3d ed., ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 218.

⁴⁷ Steve Dasbach, "Strategy Problems for Third Parties." Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

⁴⁸ Gillespie, 178.

⁴⁹ Ware, 42.

⁵⁰ Hazlett, 118.

⁵¹ Paulina Borsook, *Cyberselfish: A Critical Romp through the Terribly Libertarian Culture of High Tech* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 16.

Modernization

Technological influence on political ideology is not a new phenomenon. In American history, the cleavage dividing the two parties has generally been modernization. The Whigs supported infrastructure, technology, and public schools, and faced the agriculturally-based Democrats.⁵² Beginning in 1896, the McKinley republicans, a pro-modernization party of ethnic pluralism and pro-business economic views, opposed a populist Democratic Party intent on maintaining traditional values.⁵³ Progressive scientific reforms were eventually incorporated into the Democratic Party with Wilson and set the stage for the Democrats' attempt to modernize the state with the New Deal.⁵⁴

The current party system seems to rely on other cleavages and fails to reflect the ongoing modernization debate between what Robert Nisbet calls the "realistic" and "archaic" conservative values and the "progressive" and "utopian" values of traditional liberalism.⁵⁵ Both Alvin Toffler in *The Third Wave* and Virginia Postrel in *The Future and Its Enemies* theorize that the major electoral cleavage of the information age will be between those who favor technological advancement and those who oppose it. Though arguments from the right may at first seem more pro-technology, conservatives are generally attempting to fight the new cultural phenomena with old religious ideology.

⁵² Richard Jensen, "Party Coalitions in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁵ Robert A. Nisbet, "The Delimma of Conservatives in a Populist Society," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 404.

Prominent Republicans speak out against problems associated with television and the Internet and worry about the effects of new technology on the work ethic, traditional employment, and the family.

The conflict over modernization is also evident in economic debates. In 1994, fear of future economic problems motivated a set of voters to support Republican candidates for Congress; more than half of the population believed that the current economy was healthy but less than half believed it would be better in the future.⁵⁶ The fear of job loss, based on foreign competition and replacement of human tasks by machine, is a major issue for political mobilization.⁵⁷ Technological advancement is also producing a rise in the number of people favoring new kinds of safety nets such as educational tax credits, transferable health insurance, and universal Internet access.⁵⁸

Technological change is related to globalization, the post-cold-war geopolitical context former President George Bush termed "the new world order." Thomas Friedman has designed a political matrix for politics in the era of globalization that nicely predicts the rise of Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader in the 2000 elections. People can fall anywhere along both a redistribution dimension and an integrationist-nationalist dimension, he says, dividing the electorate into four parts with both the left and the right split by issues such as foreign intervention and trade.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Morley Winograd and Dudley Buffa, *Taking Control: Politics in the Information Age* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 28.

⁵⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 333.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 447.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 348.

Industrial-age internationalization produced new sets of resistant ideologies such as communism, socialism, and fascism; those opposed to globalization could mobilize a large population but have yet to develop an ideological alternative.⁶⁰ Polls show that over half of the American public had sympathy with the concerns voiced by the protesters at the World Trade Organization demonstrations in Seattle; anxiety about globalization is likely to grow over time. Within the left, there is an ideological divide on the trade issue between supporters of international standards and those who support cultural relativism.

There are additional examples of crosscutting ideological cleavages in the academic literature; adding other dimensions to an opinion matrix would likely improve descriptions of the American electorate. The comparative studies show that parties are typically divided by support for centralization of decision-making.⁶¹ A debate over federalism is sometimes present in American politics, but the rise of the Greens may expand the debate to include leftist arguments for decentralization. "Washington outsider" anti-incumbent campaigns would likely be part of new third-party movements.

The liberal-conservative paradigm also fails to accurately reflect populist and nationalist sentiments. According to Ware, the major American parties may more accurately be called "liberal-populist" and "liberal-conservative" rather than liberal and conservative.⁶² There is little debate, he says, on the desirability of the maintenance of the regime. In this void, even anarchists are divided into three groups: anarcho-syndicalists travel on the left and want to attack corporations without using government,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 334.

⁶¹ Ware, 48.

⁶² Ibid.

eco-anarchists want to learn new organizational forms from nature, and anarcho-capitalists believe government should get out of the way to make room for business.⁶³

Social Cleavages in the American Electorate

Ideological cleavages may not be able to translate into voting behavior without accompanying social divisions in the electorate. According to Ware, new parties typically gain supporters in three ways: voters support something the party offers, they have economic connections to others that support the party, or they feel group consciousness with the party members.⁶⁴ Thus far, this chapter has only discussed the potential for Ware's first method of gaining supporters; this section explores economic and social groupings as potential bases for new parties. Even as many theorists have claimed that political behavior is no longer associated with social cleavages, the social group explanations of partisan behavior remain predictive.

The rise of independent voters, split-ticket voting, and ideological debates that cut across social groups have reduced group attachment to parties, but a sociological approach can still classify the electorate reasonably.⁶⁵ According to Manza and Brooks, "Social-structural cleavages [describe] enduring conflicts within the electorate."⁶⁶ In *Political Man*, Lipset said that the industrial and national revolutions created long-standing patterns of group conflict but some voters are torn between several group

⁶³ Ulrike Heider, *Anarchism: Left, Right, and Green*, trans. Danny Lewis and Ulrike Bode (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1994), 5.

⁶⁴ Ware, 201.

⁶⁵ Manza and Brooks, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

identifications.⁶⁷ If political parties fail to take true opposing positions on the issues that matter to particular social groups, however, a social cleavage may not come to fruition despite structural differences and normative ideological conflict between groups.⁶⁸

The American electorate is more like European countries with cleavages based on class, ethnicity, religion, and region than its party system would indicate.⁶⁹ The most important social cleavages in U.S. politics are race, religion, gender, and class, in that order.⁷⁰ Traditional realignment theory is incomplete because it fails to account for the gradual types of partisan change that have occurred in issues such as race; a view of what Edward Carmines and James Stimson call "issue evolutions" can account for all kinds of causal relations instead of realigning moments.⁷¹ Group-specific realignments may occur without overall changes in electoral behavior; in several instances, equally strong groups shifted from the Republicans to the Democrats and vice versa.⁷²

The Race Cleavage

Racial voting was decisive in each major partisan realignment. It remains the most important social cleavage; it has led to a recent vote gap of between 20 percent and 35 percent for blacks and whites.⁷³ The large racial gap was instituted by the Goldwater

⁶⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset quoted in Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks, *Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignments and U.S. Party Coalitions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

⁶⁸ Manza and Brooks, 34.

⁶⁹ Lipset, 444.

⁷⁰ Manza and Brooks, 5.

⁷¹ Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 157.

⁷² Manza and Brooks, 42.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 156.

campaign of 1964 and has prevented a rise in the class cleavage.⁷⁴ Before the 1960s, racial cleavages were distinct from the dominant ideological dimension around redistribution; after the 1960s, race became part of the dominant spectrum, increasing the voting constraint played by one's position on the left-right paradigm.⁷⁵ Among more educated audiences, racial issue positions are in parity with positions on social welfare; among the less educated, positions on racial issues are still separately determinative.⁷⁶ The race cleavage has risen considerably in importance but has not lessened the impact of other cleavages.⁷⁷

Real differences in black public opinion are beginning to be illuminated. Almost 20 percent of blacks have no confidence in any government and, unlike whites, more have confidence in the national government than in the state government.⁷⁸ Many blacks are also unsatisfied with their electoral choices; there is an average difference of about 10 percent in voter turnout between blacks and whites over the last thirty years.⁷⁹

There is also a unique black agenda. According to a poll of blacks, America's most important problems are violence and drugs; when asked the same question, whites identify education and the "moral crisis" as most important.⁸⁰ The problem of crime

⁷⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁷⁵ Carmines and Stimson, 116.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 129.

⁷⁷ Manza and Brooks, 5.

⁷⁸ Hanes Walton, *Black Politics and Black Political Behavior: A Linkage Analysis* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 57.

⁷⁹ Federal Election Commission, *Voter Registration and Turnout in Federal Elections by Race/Ethnicity 1972-1996* (Washington: Federal Election Commission, 1996). Available: <<http://www.fec.gov/pages/Raceto.htm>>. Accessed 17 April 2001.

⁸⁰ Walton, 275.

seems especially ripe for a new approach. More black people died to crime in one two-year period than in all of the Vietnam War. It is safer, Louis Farrakhan tells his followers, to be in a war zone than to grow up in an inner city black neighborhood.⁸¹ Liberal leaders, however, continue to build more prisons and send more young people to jail even though almost half of young black males have been put on probation or incarcerated. Black urban poor people have also been the major target of the war on drugs, which has helped push America's level of incarceration to two million people, well beyond any other major nation.⁸² The major two parties have failed to address these problems and other issues that are important to blacks such as housing and the collapse of inner city schools.

Within a context of what Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward call "paternalistic oppression," black politics always includes an internal struggle over the best strategy for liberation, an "inside" strategy involving collaboration and complicity with white factions or an "outside" strategy built through independent black-led institutions.⁸³ Blacks are aware that they have had to work outside normal political channels, resorting to the politics of mass protest, to gain basic due process of law. They have also been led to believe, however, that they have a better chance of gaining power if they obey the rules of the game and choose the lesser of two evils in our party system.

This presents a dilemma, according to Piven and Cloward: "[An election is] the principle structuring institution [of dissent]... it serves to measure and register the extent

⁸¹ Louis Farrakhan, "Louis Farrakhan," *Independent Black Leadership In America*, ed. William Pleasant (New York: Castillo International, 1990), 32.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸³ Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 184.

of the emerging disaffection."⁸⁴ Both voting, which legitimates the system, and not voting, which is tantamount to being ignored, are forms of accepting the power structure. Beginning in 1936, blacks joined the Democratic coalition in an attempt to rectify their subordinate position. This decision shifted the setting of their conundrum from the Republican Party, where they had been facing the same challenges for 50 years, but it has left a legacy of subordination.⁸⁵

Among the decreasing black population that actually votes today, there is near universal support for the Democratic Party. Blacks were the decisive voting block for Democratic presidential victories in the elections of 1960, 1964, and 1976.⁸⁶ Black leaders, however, have split along a black nationalist-integrationist cleavage that translates to support of independent movements.⁸⁷ As early as 1916, NAACP founder W.E.B. Dubois said, "Between these two great parties, there is little to choose... The only effective method in the future is to organize in every congressional district as a Negro Party to endorse those candidates... whose promises or past performances give greatest hope for remedying the wrongs done [to blacks.]"⁸⁸ Black voting studies have failed to recognize moves away from traditional participation to more independent movements

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 195.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 254.

⁸⁷ Gillespie, 155.

⁸⁸ Warren N. Holmes, *The National Black Independent Political Party: Political Insurgency or Ideological Convergence?* Studies in African American History and Culture, ed. Graham Russell Hodges (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 15.

such as protest because they have assumed a spectrum of behavior stretching from non-participation to full-participation, but not including independent action.⁸⁹

Other minority groups could become voting blocks if group consciousness increases. Hispanics, for instance, have grown rapidly and aligned with the Democrats, giving almost two-thirds of their votes to Democratic presidential candidates since 1984, but vote only half as frequently as whites.⁹⁰ Hispanics are generally socially conservative and somewhat free-market oriented. They have voted for many Republicans in state office but they typically move towards the Democrats because of Republican-led immigrant bashing.⁹¹ Thus, their interests may lie outside a minority coalition with blacks. As one activist told Hispanic leaders, "We blacks were dying for civil rights when you could not make up your minds whether you were colored or which side you were on."⁹² There have been some moves toward independence. For instance, Chicano activists started "La Raza Unida," an independent Mexican-American party in the early 1970s.⁹³

The racial cleavage also contributes to white voting behavior. According to Gwendolyn Mink, "[The two-party system] is a sanctuary for middle-class white privilege [because] it doesn't represent whole categories of people."⁹⁴ For those who

⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁰ Manza and Brooks, 236.

⁹¹ Reichley, 26.

⁹² Joseph L. Rauh, "The Lack of Liberal Leadership," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 384.

⁹³ Gillespie, 156.

⁹⁴ Gwendolyn Mink, "What's Wrong with the Two Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

require it, the Democratic Party fulfills the psychological need for identification with the poor and the oppressed; for those who do not need that identification, a Republican vote serves as a block on minority advancement.⁹⁵ According to Manza and Brooks, "[Since] viable third-party organizations [are] virtually impossible, minority voters have few political alternatives to the Democratic Party... As long as the Democrats remain slightly more supportive of [minority] programs, they can be expected to hold the allegiance."⁹⁶ The two-party system, therefore, protects those who claim to speak for the oppressed races but does not contribute to self-actualization by dominated groups.

The Religion Cleavage

Religion is second only to race as a social determinant for voting behavior. According to Manza and Brooks, the religious cleavage is split between "liberal Protestants," "moderate Protestants," "conservative Protestants," "Catholics," "Jews," others, and those with no religion, who currently make up 10 percent of the population.⁹⁷ Liberal Protestants have moved from the most Republican-supporting group to one of the least Republican-supporting groups since 1960 due to social issue positions. Overall, there has been a decline in the religious cleavage with the exceptions of Jews, who remain staunchly Democratic, and conservative Protestants, who remain Republicans.⁹⁸ The religious cleavage has declined because of rising denominational inter-switching and

⁹⁵ Michael Novak, "A New Coalition?" in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 368.

⁹⁶ Manza and Brooks, 237.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

intermarriage; religious groups also have less prejudice against one another than they have had in the past.⁹⁹

Dominant protestant denominations have been losing membership in a long period of diversification of American religions.¹⁰⁰ Liberal political strategists have been willing to lose Catholic voters and yet the Catholics have remained Democratic despite their social conservatism. This is partially due to liberal views on race, environmental protection, and assistance to the poor.¹⁰¹ Jewish liberals generally vote against their interests but the phenomenon cannot be based on traditional Jewish values because orthodox Jews are more likely to be conservative.¹⁰² It is more likely explained by an aversion to the right, according to the American Jewish Committee's Milton Himmelfarb, because movements of the right were "the enemy everywhere."¹⁰³ Jewish interest, however, is often divergent from blacks on issues such as affirmative action and protection for Israel.¹⁰⁴

Some scholars have indicated that the major religious cleavage is between secularists, religious fundamentalists, and liberal religious modernizers. Robert Wunthrow argues that conservatives in all denominations are now facing off against

⁹⁹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 87.

¹⁰¹ Andrew M. Greeley, "Catholics and Coalition: Where Should They Go?" in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 284.

¹⁰² Milton Himmelfarb, "The Case of Jewish Liberalism" in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 298.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 300.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 304.

liberals.¹⁰⁵ There is now a spiritual left that agrees with social conservatism in its focus on social issues and its diagnosis of modern problems as internal moral problems but disagrees radically on the suggested solution. It teaches love and consensus building as methods of solving political problems, arguing that we must collectively raise consciousness.¹⁰⁶ The spiritual left fails to fit into the left-right paradigm that generally pits traditional religious beliefs against secularism.¹⁰⁷ With the diversification of religious beliefs in America, it is important to note that Christian parties in Europe and Buddhist parties in Asia hold quite different kinds of positions.¹⁰⁸

In the U.S., several parties have arisen on the outskirts of the new age religions. Fred Newman, the New Alliance Party founder, also founded social therapy, an outgrowth of psychotherapy that challenges people to get involved in political movements as a therapeutic exercise.¹⁰⁹ The Natural Law Party was founded in 1992 out of the transcendental meditation movement on a platform of preventative health care, peace, and stress-reduction; in 1996, several of its candidates received enough votes to be the deciding factor in congressional elections and the party received 1.4 million votes.¹¹⁰ The Natural Law Party is the clearest example of a party with a complete platform that does not fit into the liberal-conservative paradigm. It favors a flat tax, crime prevention, campaign finance reform, and promotion of organic agriculture and alternative energy,

¹⁰⁵ Manza and Brooks, 90.

¹⁰⁶ Marianne Williamson, *Healing the Soul of America: Reclaiming Our Voice as Spiritual Citizens* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 2000), 42.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 133.

¹⁰⁸ Ware, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Gillespie, 165.

¹¹⁰ Berg, 222.

and opposes genetic engineering and international intervention.¹¹¹ It also actively favors multiparty government, not just its own rise.¹¹²

The Gender Cleavage

Ethnic and religious cleavages are followed by gender in predictive strength for voting behavior. The gender gap, after being non-existent in the 1950s, has grown in importance.¹¹³ Many theorists have explained the gender cleavage by looking at value differences caused by socialization or motherhood. Women are said to be more "sociotropic" and "maternal," according to Manza and Brooks, favoring protections for children and the poor and opposing military force.¹¹⁴ Difference feminists like Carol Gilligan believe that women are more apt to concentrate on interrelationships and compassion whereas men are focused on self-interest.¹¹⁵ In surveys, women generally have more liberal attitudes on war and social welfare.¹¹⁶

The gender gap rose between 1952 and 1980 but stabilized between 1980 and 1992 because it is a phenomenon generally caused by increasing female labor force participation.¹¹⁷ By 1996, however, the gender gap had grown considerably, almost entirely among working women. Working women are a unique voter group with feminist

¹¹¹ Roth, 64.

¹¹² Ibid., 66.

¹¹³ Beck, 36.

¹¹⁴ Manza and Brooks, 135.

¹¹⁵ Borsook, 61.

¹¹⁶ Gillespie, 142.

¹¹⁷ Manza and Brooks, 143.

consciousness and positive views of social welfare policy.¹¹⁸ According to Patricia Ireland, women's issues are now ignored by the Republicans and taken for granted by the Democrats.¹¹⁹

In 1992, the National Organization for Women attempted to create an independent party, following the tradition started by what Gillespie calls the "militant wing of the suffrage movement."¹²⁰ The gender cleavage is also complicated by the rise of the gay-straight cleavage and transgender identities. America may have the social basis for an independent queer rights party; the gay community has already produced interest groups and protest movements.

The Class Cleavage

The gender, race, and religion cleavages are less evident in other countries but class differences are often the main producer of party conflict. Some have theorized that lack of class consciousness is responsible for the lack of multiple parties in the U.S. but this does not seem plausible because the assumed conflict would be between the "haves" and the "have nots." According to Manza and Brooks, America is still divided into several occupational voting classes despite claims of class decline. They find it more helpful to divide class into several categories: "professionals" such as lawyers and teachers, "managers and administrators," "owners" and the self-employed, "routine white-

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 151.

¹¹⁹ Ireland.

¹²⁰ Gillespie, 142.

collar workers" such as clerics and retail salesmen, industrial "skilled workers," service industry "nonskilled workers," and the jobless.¹²¹

Class as a predictor of voting behavior has remained a constant factor since 1964, but five out of the seven classes have shifted their alignments. The self-employed shifted toward the Republicans in 1980; professionals gradually shifted toward the Democrats; nonskilled workers dealigned from the Democrats; skilled workers also dealigned from the Democrats but began to realign after 1972; managers shifted toward the Republicans and then slightly back since 1972; and routine white-collar workers gradually shifted toward the Democrats.¹²² The main class-based change was the rise of professionals in the Democratic coalition because of changes in their social issue positions.¹²³ The proportion of Republicans who are managers has more than tripled since 1960 and the proportion of Democrats who are professionals has more than doubled.¹²⁴ The class profiles of the Republicans and Democrats are now more similar than they have ever been, with 20 percent of votes from both parties coming from the working class.¹²⁵ American voting may not accurately predict voter group alignment because of limited parties, but the system provides one prominent exit option that has been endorsed by most of the country, nonvoting. In fact, the U.S. has high rates of class-based nonvoting,

¹²¹ Manza and Brooks, 57.

¹²² Ibid., 65.

¹²³ Ibid., 77.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 193.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 197.

with turnout differences between classes the major way in which class affects vote outcomes.¹²⁶

The poorest Americans, Manza and Brooks say, are currently "indifferent to what they perceive as the limited range of political options" because their lives have not improved despite changeover between Republican and Democratic administrations.¹²⁷ The working class contribution to the Democrats has decreased 5 percent since 1960.¹²⁸ According to Manza and Brooks, "[An] important consequence of the increasing representation of professionals and managers in the Democratic coalition is a corresponding willingness by party leaders to either take for granted or effectively ignore the concerns of working-class voters."¹²⁹ As Marshall Ganz puts it, "The set of concerns that least enters the campaign are those of citizens of lower socioeconomic status... their concerns go unrepresented, and silent, as their capacity to articulate those concerns remains underdeveloped."¹³⁰ The major parties are following the concerns of many middle class voters, who believe that economic conditions favor those at the top along with those at the bottom that receive "handouts" at their expense.¹³¹ The poor are turned off by both the bankrupt electoral process and the lack of positive outcomes for their group.¹³²

¹²⁶ Ibid., 27.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 237.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 193.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 233.

¹³⁰ Ganz.

¹³¹ Winograd and Buffa, 29.

¹³² Barbara Ehrenreich, "Can Third Parties Transform the Two-Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

In addition, the old union-based left that favored "jobs, growth, discipline, [and] production" has been abandoned in favor of support for the new countercultural movements.¹³³ This group resists Republicans because the party defends inherited power but could be motivated by a socially conservative movement.¹³⁴ Even though there has been increasing change in union composition and issue focus in recent years, there has been no change in electoral politics.¹³⁵ Manza and Brooks point out that any instance of a group-based inequality could easily lead to the development of new social cleavages if group interests became ideological and represented in institutions.¹³⁶

At the birth of the industrial age, new technology created new hierarchical assembly-line organizations in business; this led to a political realignment of labor with the left and management with the right.¹³⁷ According to Morley Winograd and Dudley Buffa, the information age economy is leading to more self-employed people and more flat, web-like business organizations. These changes create a politics where geography is less relevant and in which big business is distrusted along with big government in favor of communitarian solutions.¹³⁸ The high-tech industry, which is increasingly setting the national agenda, carries a strong disposition towards libertarianism.¹³⁹ Economic changes have produced what Winograd and Buffa call a "knowledge worker"

¹³³ Novak, 370.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 372.

¹³⁵ Kent Wong, "What's Wrong with the Two Party System?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

¹³⁶ Manza and Brooks, 242.

¹³⁷ Winograd and Buffa, 30.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹³⁹ Borsook, 3.

constituency that favors "government that helps people help themselves" and an opposing group that Robert Reich calls the "anxious class," blue-collar workers worried about economic changes.¹⁴⁰

Age may also become a dominant cleavage, particularly in third-party voting and independence. The choices necessary to maintain the solvency of Medicare and Social Security in an aging population may produce generational warfare. In addition to potential economic differences, Generation X generally attempts to work for social change through volunteer organizations rather than political movements.¹⁴¹ According to Douglas Rushkoff, apolitical youth cultures actually represent new methods of responding to the modern world that "promote a social agenda" and could be precursors to future electoral movements.¹⁴² Young people are, however, currently caught between two ideologies that react to their culture as a problem.¹⁴³

Other social cleavages divide the electorate as well. Scholars commonly mention region, urban/suburban and metropolitan/nonmetropolitan residence as major American cleavages.¹⁴⁴ Some regions seem to be entirely excluded from the national debate. New Mexico, for instance, is "treated like a colony" according to Green Party Congressional

¹⁴⁰ Winograd and Buffa, 46.

¹⁴¹ Douglas Rushkoff, *Children of Chaos: Surviving the End of the World as We Know It* (London: Flamingo, HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 198.

¹⁴² Ibid., 2.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 215.

¹⁴⁴ Manza and Brooks, 39.

candidate Carol Miller; this partially explains the rise of the Libertarians and the Greens in that state, she says.¹⁴⁵

According to former Republican Senator S.I. Hayakawa, there is little substantive difference between the two major parties. However, Republicans are generally "insiders" in the business system, those who "would like to be mistaken" for insiders, immigrant children who want to lose "outsider" status, or those that believe they are being threatened by "outsiders." Democrats, he says, are generally religious, ethnic, or immigrant "outsiders" or those who are guilty "insiders."¹⁴⁶ This insider-outsider cleavage could become more pronounced if it divorces itself from the two-party system, perhaps through George W. Bush's attempt to change the image of the Republican Party.

The education cleavage has also become strong, with more of the electorate graduating from college or entering post-graduate studies. The priorities of intellectuals are sometimes distinct; they generally support civil liberties and the new social movements and are opposed to social conservatism.¹⁴⁷

Institutional Bases for Missing American Parties

Even with social and ideological diversity, America may still need a historical-institutional basis for the development of new parties. The institutional approach to party

¹⁴⁵ Carol Miller, "Strategy Problems for Third Parties," Panel discussion at a conference entitled "Independent Politics in a Global World." City University of New York Graduate Center, New York, 7 October 2000.

¹⁴⁶ S. I. Hayakawa, "Toward a Governing Coalition--II. Republicans," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 427.

¹⁴⁷ Stanley Rothman, "Intellectuals and the American Political System," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 340.

systems categorizes parties by their origins. The four lines of cleavage typically identified, according to Ware, are "centre-periphery, state-church, land-industry, and owner-worker."¹⁴⁸ Some of the world's great parties were created by the industrial revolution, which separated agricultural interests (land-industry); others were created by the Russian Revolution, which raised class consciousness (owner-worker); still others were based on initial divisions over religion (state-church) or regional culture and language (centre-periphery.) In America, these cleavages have either been less pronounced or integrated into the current party structure.

Von Beyme splits European parties into nine groups based on these historical divides: liberal parties, conservative parties, socialist parties, Christian democratic parties, communist parties, agrarian parties, ethnic parties, right-wing parties, and ecology parties.¹⁴⁹ The most successful parties have been the Liberals, Conservatives, Socialists, Christian Democrats, and Communists. America, therefore, currently lacks several types of major parties that exist in other democracies.¹⁵⁰

According to the institutional approach to party systems, both the Democratic and Republican parties are liberal parties in that they favor "business-oriented politics" like those of European liberal parties.¹⁵¹ Though "liberal" in the U.S. was used by Roosevelt to describe the New Deal and "conservative" was used by Goldwater to describe opposition to government intervention, "liberal" traditionally identified belief in free-

¹⁴⁸ Ware, 186.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 25.

market rights and "conservative" signified opposition to change and support of dominant religion.¹⁵²

Of nine major party families, therefore, both U.S. parties belong to the same family; the U.S. is the only country in which a party family has more than 50 percent of the vote.¹⁵³ Though the Republican Party now favors some social conservatism, its origins are in radical liberalism.¹⁵⁴ Traditional conservatism never begins with individual rights but pursues strengthening social contexts such as religion and family. Though the Constitution is fundamentally conservative, as it attempted to enshrine early American tradition indefinitely, America has always been a liberal country because there is no tradition of feudalism.¹⁵⁵

In most countries, liberal parties lost out to a socialist or union-led alternative, but the Democratic Party was able to co-opt this agenda in America.¹⁵⁶ Socialist parties worldwide all receive at least one-eighth of the popular vote; the U.S. is the only major exception.¹⁵⁷ Because socialist parties failed to gain prominence, no major party is in favor of primarily government-run industries. "Communist" parties were suppressed or unpopular. U.S. agrarian parties did make inroads at the beginning of the twentieth century but, unlike more rightist parties in other countries, generally formed coalitions

¹⁵² Ibid., 26.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 46.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁵ Nisbet, 398.

¹⁵⁶ Ware, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 46.

with the left.¹⁵⁸ Agrarian parties are now absent from a society with little agriculture remaining.

Parties representing women or social conservatives other than Christians were also present in Europe but not in America.¹⁵⁹ "Christian Democratic" parties, which represent Catholics and are primarily concerned with social conservatism, failed to materialize due to protestant majorities. Under a different party system, many different party types would be represented in the American electorate.¹⁶⁰ If the U.S. had adopted different electoral systems, according to Lipset, it would likely have had several major parties including a labor party, a northern conservative party, a southern conservative party, a southern populist party of poor whites, and a farmer's party.¹⁶¹

Current Third Parties

To see if America maintains the institutional basis for a multiparty system, current minor parties can serve as a starting point. Several scholars have created typologies for third parties in the U.S. but none have connected them to international party families. V.O. Key divided minor parties into "doctrinal parties" and "short-lived parties."¹⁶² James Guth and John Green divided minor parties into "principled parties," "protest parties" devoted to a single issue, and "personalistic parties" devoted to a candidate.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹⁶¹ Lipset, 444.

¹⁶² V.O. Key quoted in John C. Berg, "Beyond a Third Party: The Other Minor Parties in the 1996 Elections," in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 3d ed., ed. John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 216.

¹⁶³ Berg, 217.

Steven Rosenstone, Roy Behr, and Edward Lazarus divided third parties into those that rise from social movement deviations, prestigious candidates, or new group allegiance.¹⁶⁴

These typologies fail to describe the diversification of the American electorate as evidenced by third parties. Minor party candidates fared similarly even in 1996, when Perot gained 9 percent of the vote, leading Christopher Gilbert to say that Perot and other minor candidates appeal to "distinct markets" of voters.¹⁶⁵ Libertarian Harry Browne and Natural Law Party candidate John Hagelin managed to get on most state ballots in 1996, winning what John Berg calls "noticeable percentages of the vote."¹⁶⁶ In 1996, the number of third-party candidates with more than 5 percent of the vote declined, but only because of the diversity of minor candidates; the total votes for third-party candidates increased.¹⁶⁷ In 2000, five third-party candidates received a total of almost four million votes despite the close election.

Current third parties do parallel the institutional basis of political parties in other democracies. First, Howard Phillips' Constitution Party is perhaps the only U.S. "Conservative" party opposed to change and reliant on traditional symbols and national honor. Second, Pat Buchanan's Reform Party is probably the only "right-wing" party opposed to immigration and the social disruption of both large corporations and government. The U.S. Green Party, which holds similar positions to other "ecology"

¹⁶⁴ Christopher P. Gilbert, *Religious Institutions and Minor Parties in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 12.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 144.

¹⁶⁶ Berg, 213.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

parties, is in favor of state intervention but is based on social movements rather than class movements;¹⁶⁸ it has just begun to gain prominence.

Robert Harmel has developed a useful categorization of third parties; he divides party challenges into four main groups: "left-right challengers," which try to take the place of another party, "new issue mobilizers," which try to take advantage of a new ideological or social cleavage, "left-right mobilizers," which try to rise to the left or the right of one of the major parties, and "other issue parties," which try to promote a specific issue or a regional interest.¹⁶⁹ New issue mobilizers are the least likely to be co-opted; the others can face major party program adjustments. Left-right mobilizers are the next most likely to gain prominence. The main recent successful parties have been either ecology parties or "right-wing antiestablishment parties," according to Harmel.¹⁷⁰ Harmel's categorization can be applied to the U.S. to determine if there is an institutional basis for spatial challenges to the two-party system.

The Left

Older leftist philosophies were represented by American third parties that failed to gain prominence. The Socialist Party was active early in the century and influenced "new left" circles in the 1960s. Despite falling prey to the worldwide decline of socialism, it remains a force on the fringes of American politics.¹⁷¹ The Communist Party USA fell out of favor after the decline of Soviet communism; it remains only as a potential

¹⁶⁸ Ware, 43.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Harmel, "The Impact of New Parties on Party Systems: Lessons for America from European Multiparty Systems," in *Multiparty Politics in America*, ed. Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 46.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 49.

"forbidden fruit" for American leftists.¹⁷² According to David Reynolds, leftists must now "find ways to redistribute power so that workers and communities have greater control over the decisions that impact their lives" in the face of the fall of socialism.¹⁷³

There is the potential for a new leftist movement to replace socialism that opposes corporate power and large government programs in favor of what Tom Hayden calls "extending democratic participation in decisions which affect all our lives."¹⁷⁴ Because of the global advance of capitalism, liberalism needs to produce an alternative method of development to compete, emphasizing values other than production and including social movements and self-help groups.¹⁷⁵

According to Charles Derber, government expansion is not an appropriate response to modern free-market economics: "What needs to be restored is public sovereignty over the corporation and the government itself."¹⁷⁶ The new left electorate, including Ralph Nader supporters, might advocate additional worker and consumer rights but fail to reject capitalism. Many people are generally unhappy with the centrality of work in their lives and may be attracted to this alternative. Women's entrance in the

¹⁷¹ Gillespie, 190.

¹⁷² Ibid., 199.

¹⁷³ Reynolds, 301.

¹⁷⁴ Tom Hayden, "The Left-Progressive Coalition," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 360.

¹⁷⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994), 159.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Derber, *Corporation Nation: How Corporations are Taking Over Our Lives and What We Can Do About It* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 34.

workplace has arguably led to increased wage-slavery rather than liberation; this may be a basis for a reevaluation of objectives by new left social movements.¹⁷⁷

As America's leading consumer advocate, Nader has set about building a new left movement using the Green Party. Green parties throughout the world have avoided becoming single-issue environmentalist parties, instead actively supporting feminism, minority protection, disarmament, and international assistance.¹⁷⁸ Green parties have been able to gain prominence in times of security and affluence like that of the current era in the U.S.¹⁷⁹ The parties are generally based in the left but support "small group autonomy" and community organizations over state power.¹⁸⁰ They often call for the involvement of "self-organized groups in the government of important life spheres and a participatory political process."¹⁸¹

This is certainly consistent with Nader's belief in citizen activists and politics led by public interest groups. Environmental groups, in fact, represent the primary challengers to both energy producers and agricultural industries.¹⁸² Because "conservatives" currently support the increasing pace of change brought by corporate power and technological advancement, there is an opening for a party that supports the values of old, natural law. Anthony Giddens says that green politics, not conservatism,

¹⁷⁷ Giddens, 176.

¹⁷⁸ Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formations*, 94

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 97

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 97

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 107

¹⁸² Robert H. Salisbury, John P. Heinz, Edward O. Laumann, and Robert L. Nelson, "Who Works with Whom? Interest Group Alliances and Opposition," *American Political Science Review* 81 n. 4 (1987): 1226.

may represent the only hope for a true conservation-based ideology in modern political systems.¹⁸³

The Right

On the opposite side of the spectrum, American parties on the far right have been split between states' rights supporters, neo-nazis, and nationalists.¹⁸⁴ New nationalist and populist parties attempt to entice supporters of older populist movements to join a new movement of the right designed to appeal to white racial feelings.¹⁸⁵ Doctrinal parties of both the far right and far-left, however, are kept alive by activist commitment to extreme views; they are probably nearly represented by their strength in the current party structure.¹⁸⁶

Nonetheless, the American Republican Party is the only party worldwide that has been able to link strong laissez-faire economic views with strong conservative social issues. It is probably made possible by high religious feeling in America historically tied to capitalism and the work ethic.¹⁸⁷ According to the Free Congress Foundation, cultural conservatives are not even represented among the major parties despite a "change in the basis of politics from economics to culture." "The entire new class accepts political

¹⁸³ Giddens, 200.

¹⁸⁴ Gillespie, 207.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 219.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 220.

¹⁸⁷ Ware, 62.

correctness and the destruction of western civilization," they say, pointing out that Bob Dole invited social conservatives to leave the party in his 1996 convention speech.¹⁸⁸

As political scientist Nelson Polsby put it, "the Republican Party has always had two main wings, one representing 'Main Street,' the other 'Wall Street.'¹⁸⁹ From Main Street come the moralists who distrust Washington and from Wall Street come the internationalist entrepreneurs who favor economic development.¹⁹⁰ Social conservatives do not necessarily fit well with the internationalist banker class. Whereas the Democrats were historically "the party of social and cultural conservatism," they have become the party of civil rights and the new social movements, directly opposed to social conservatism.¹⁹¹

Organized Interests

On the left and the right, as well as in alternative ideological communities, the institutional basis for a multiparty system can also be seen in the proliferation of interest groups. Major party attachment has declined as the number of citizens' groups has increased; in fact, interest groups are now mobilizing as parties are growing weaker.¹⁹² Despite their registrations as independent entities, interest groups often become involved

¹⁸⁸ Bill Lynd, "Are There Viable Alternatives to the Status Quo?" Panel discussion at a conference entitled "The Two-Party System and Its Discontents." American University, Washington, DC, 13 May 1999.

¹⁸⁹ Nelson Polsby, "Coalition and Fraction in American Politics: An Institutional View," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 110.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁹¹ William Schneider, "Democrats and Republicans, Liberals and Conservatives," in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), 205.

¹⁹² Marjorie Randon Hershey, "Citizens' Groups and Political Parties in the United States," *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528 (July 1993): 142.

in internal fights in the Democratic and Republican parties; they do not pursue independent options because of the relative weakness of U.S. third parties. The major parties now depend on interest groups and the media for their legitimacy and their vote. Matching the diversification of the electorate, according to Robert Salisbury, John Heinz, Edward Laumann, and Robert Nelson, there has been a "general tendency toward interest proliferation and fragmentation as the interests of various types of specialized producers... grow increasingly differentiated."¹⁹³

Most issue groups, including commodity groups, trade associations, and citizens' groups are able to identify significant numbers of allies and adversaries.¹⁹⁴ There may be "a system of structured conflict" between interests groups including labor, business, and citizens' groups; that system certainly exists at the level of each individual issue; the "domain subsystems" are stable despite fragmentation.¹⁹⁵ The nature of the two-party system has forced giant coalitions of interests but there may be coalitional alternatives that do not split the electorate into infinite numbers of groups. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, for instance, attempts to represent all progressive disadvantaged interests including Hispanics and gays.¹⁹⁶

Even more effectively than interest groups, churches can provide social contexts for political behavior. They are social institutions that can produce political mobilization because of commitment to a belief system and the availability of a community to act at

¹⁹³ Salisbury et al., 1219.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 1224.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 1228.

¹⁹⁶ Gillespie, 153.

the social level to influence behavior.¹⁹⁷ Churches can produce name recognition within specific groups, convey information easily, and produce campaign resources.¹⁹⁸ Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson, for instance, were able to mobilize what Gilbert calls "their core faith constituencies" in their primary runs for president.¹⁹⁹ Because religious organizations generally support the political system, however, they are inclined to support one of the major two parties.²⁰⁰ According to a study of religious movements and minor parties, "minor candidates in U.S. elections are impeded in their quest for votes by the presence within communities of social networks and contexts to which they do not or cannot gain access."²⁰¹ In fact, third-party candidates "draw votes disproportionately from non-church members."²⁰²

Even if the social groups that would form the basis for new parties express themselves in a multiparty system, a new cleavage between movement and electoral change supporters could easily come to prominence. Some parties might seek to win immediate elections and others might hope to build movements towards new kinds of societies.²⁰³ New social movements, according to Kitschelt, have divided even though they all "oppose the bureaucratization of society in economics and politics;" some have

¹⁹⁷ Gilbert, 17.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 24.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 29.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 139.

²⁰² Ibid., 144.

²⁰³ Reynolds, 120.

pursued the "politics of space" such as environmentalism and others have advanced the "politics of social identity" such as feminism.²⁰⁴

Early this century, the Socialist and Communist Parties played major roles in depression-era protest movements in addition to their electoral advocacy; these protests were largely responsible for the New Deal programs of that era.²⁰⁵ Leftist parties are generally linked to social movements; they work year-round in political struggles rather than focus on candidate elections.²⁰⁶ The ability to effect change through protest movements has also weakened calls on the left for new political parties.²⁰⁷ In their historical examination, Piven and Cloward discovered that an uprising cannot receive elite concessions that help the movement sustain itself and yet it will always receive concessions that help to break the movement down.²⁰⁸

Movements can also strengthen party development, however, and sometimes do not disrupt movement activities. President Kennedy attempted to emulate Roosevelt's successful inclusion of the labor movement into the Democratic Party by focusing on the incorporation of the civil rights revolution.²⁰⁹ Kennedy's efforts to convince black leaders to focus on voter registration, however, did not end the confrontations; instead,

²⁰⁴ Herbert Kitschelt, "Social Movements, Political Parties, and Democratic Theory," *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528 (July 1993): 14.

²⁰⁵ Reynolds, 27.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., x.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 72.

²⁰⁸ Piven and Cloward, xxi

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 232.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. endorsed both strategies and focused on registering blacks in areas where there was the potential for a black majority.²¹⁰

Interest groups, current third parties, and social movements therefore provide the institutional basis for the rise of new political coalitions, including several groupings present in other nations but absent from the American scene. The American electorate contains the ideological and social diversity necessary for a multiparty system and features crosscutting cleavages that threaten the stability of the two-party coalitions. Research on ideological and social diversity, combined here with comparative literature and parallel American examples, demonstrates that sociological constraints to multiparty democracy are absent in the U.S. American heterogeneity in both social and ideological groups suggests that a multiparty system is probable if institutional constraints can be mitigated.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 234.