

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

IN NOVEMBER 1992, Democratic party leaders did not merely celebrate the first victory by their presidential nominee in sixteen years. They celebrated the revitalization of their party in national electoral politics. Unlike in previous campaigns, which had been marked by division and disorganization, the party's leadership could claim this time that they were an important factor in Bill Clinton's successful run for the executive office. In fewer than four years as party chairman, Ron Brown transformed the Democratic National Committee into an effective campaign organization. The DNC provided financial, media, and consulting resources to the party's national candidates, enabling them to compete more effectively against their Republican opponents.¹ Brown also maintained a degree of solidarity between the party's various ideological factions not seen in nearly three decades. He successfully exhorted Jesse Jackson, Mario Cuomo, and Paul Tsongas to unite behind Clinton once it became apparent that the Arkansas governor was both the front-runner and the most threatening opponent to Republican incumbent George Bush.

Perhaps most important, Brown took an active role in formulating the party's new ideological and policy agenda.² Responding to critics who deemed the pre-1992 Democratic party out of touch with significant portions of the national electorate, Brown worked closely with Clinton and the Democratic Leadership Council, an organization composed of moderate and conservative party officials. Together they pushed an agenda that would bring ideologically moderate voters back into the party.³ Brown and Clinton emphasized throughout the cam-

¹ See Anthony Corrado, "The Politics of Cohesion: The Role of the National Party Committees in the 1992 Election," and Paul S. Herrnson, "Party Strategy and Campaign Activities in the 1992 Congressional Elections," in Daniel M. Shea and John C. Green, eds., *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994); and Philip A. Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 189-91.

² Corrado, "Politics of Cohesion," 64-69; Klinkner, *Losing Parties*, chapters 8-9.

³ For just a few examples of this criticism, see Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991); Peter Brown, *Minority Party* (Washington, D.C.: Reg-

paign that this was a “new” Democratic party with a revised message, better equipped to handle the politics and problems of the 1990s. Voters and political elites alike were impressed by the changes. One of the many prominent critics of the pre-1992 Democratic party, *Washington Post* writer Thomas Edsall, commented shortly after the election that “the rhetoric and strategy of the Clinton campaign restored the Democratic party’s biracial coalition and made the party competitive again in the nation’s suburbs.”⁴ Another critic, political pollster Stan Greenberg, claimed that the party’s moderate ideological mandate “allowed for a Democratic party that could once again represent people in the broadest sense.”⁵ Even the prominent third-party candidate, Ross Perot, attributed his initial resignation from the presidential campaign to Clinton and the Democrats’ recommitment to the moderate voter.

Yet while Democratic leaders were celebrating their party’s revival, many African American Democrats were less enthusiastic. They expressed ambivalence about the party’s general neglect of their interests during the campaign.⁶ Intrinsic to the revamped message formulated by Brown and articulated by Clinton was a distancing from the Democrats’ previous efforts to implement the civil rights goals of the 1960s. Party leaders believed that the Democrats’ identification with policies explicitly designed to integrate blacks more completely into the nation’s social, economic, and political institutions damaged their party’s appeal among key groups of white voters. According to this line of argument, the active promotion of African American concerns made it difficult for the party to maintain the support it once had received from the successful New Deal coalition of southern, working-, and middle-class whites.

In order to increase the Democrats’ standing among white voters and to revive the decaying New Deal coalition, Clinton called for extensive welfare reform, as well as cutbacks on “excessive” unemployment benefits and other areas of government spending widely perceived as benefit-

nery Gateway, 1991); Stanley Greenberg, “Reconstructing the Democratic Vision,” *American Prospect* (Spring 1990): 82–89; and Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

⁴ Thomas Byrne Edsall, “Now What? Cracks in the Clinton Coalition: How Urban Conflicts Undermine the Democrats,” *Washington Post* (November 8, 1992), C1.

⁵ Stanley B. Greenberg, *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 277.

⁶ See Gwen Ifill, “Clinton Waves at Blacks as He Rushes By,” *New York Times* (September 20, 1992), D1; Michael C. Dawson, “Demonization and Silence: Preliminary Thoughts on the 1992 Presidential Election, The New Consensus on Race, and African American Public Opinion” (paper presented at the Symposium on Race and American Political Culture, 1993); Adolph Reed, Jr., “Old-Time New Democrats,” *Progressive* (April 1993); 16–17; and Kimberle Crenshaw, “Running from Race,” *Tikkun* 7 (September–October 1992).

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ing “undeserving” African American citizens. The Democratic party platform reflected this new message. For the first time in almost three decades, it contained no mention of redressing racial injustice. Clinton’s own policy platform, spelled out in a book (entitled *Putting People First*) cowritten with vice-presidential candidate Al Gore, had only one reference to race, and this was to oppose the use of racial quotas as a remedy for employment and education inequality.⁷ A chapter entitled “Cities” did not mention the problems of inner cities or the continuing existence of de facto racial segregation, while the chapter on civil rights devoted more space to people with physical disabilities than to African Americans.⁸

On the campaign trail, Clinton also distanced himself from representatives of the party’s African American constituency. In perhaps the defining moment of his campaign, Clinton seized upon the Los Angeles riots as an opportunity to articulate his differences with Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition and to attack an obscure rap music artist, **Sister Souljah**, for allegedly advocating black-on-white violence. According to public opinion polls, whites not only were aware of Clinton’s

about Clinton’s economic plan—but they approved of it by a three-to-one margin. Blacks, meanwhile, disapproved of Clinton’s comments by nearly the same margin.⁹ Earlier in the campaign, in an effort to dispel the beliefs of many voters that the party had grown too permissive toward criminals, Clinton traveled to his home state of Arkansas to watch a mentally impaired black man convicted of murder die in the electric chair. Shortly after the Democratic convention, meanwhile, he and Al Gore toured “America” by bus, which ultimately translated into their wearing plaid shirts, chewing on straw, visiting predominantly rural communities, and speaking to primarily white faces.¹⁰

The actions of Clinton and the national party leadership—troubling to many African Americans but deemed necessary by many party elites—reveal a great deal about the relationship between national electoral incentives, competitive parties, and black representation.¹¹ The actions

⁷ Bill Clinton and Al Gore, *Putting People First* (New York: Times Books, 1992).

⁸ See Andrew Hacker, “The Blacks and Clinton,” *New York Review of Books* (January 28, 1993), 12–15.

⁹ Thomas B. Edsall, “Black Leaders View Clinton Strategy with Mix of Pragmatism, Optimism,” *Washington Post* (October 28, 1992), A16.

¹⁰ See Gwen Ifill, “The 1992 Campaign: The Democrats; Tour Touches Small-Town America,” *New York Times* (July 21, 1992), A15.

¹¹ What, if anything, constitutes itself as an African American political interest is a quite complex and difficult question (at least in the post-civil rights era). It is one I deal with in

taken by Democratic leaders in 1992 mark merely another chapter in a long-running saga—the efforts of national party leaders to downplay the interests of their black constituents in order to broaden the party's electoral base and increase its chances in presidential campaigns. At most moments in American history, the desire of political parties to elect candidates to national office has meant marginalization for African Americans. Why this is so often the case and what impact it has had and continues to have on race relations in the United States are the subjects of this book.

In the process of examining these questions, I hope to reformulate some of the ways we think about our national parties as political institutions. Most broadly, I challenge the common belief that a competitive two-party system produces a more democratic and inclusive society. Scholars argue that competition between two parties forces at least one party to reach out to those groups not represented by the other party. As a result of this competition, parties will mobilize these groups to participate in electoral politics; educate these groups about important policy issues; educate and persuade other party members to support the interests of these marginalized groups; and, finally, place the interests of these groups on the political agenda and represent them in the legislative arena. I will argue that while parties often do perform these positive democratic functions, there is nothing that *necessitates* their doing so. In fact, there are politically compelling reasons for parties *not* to behave in this manner, especially with regard to African Americans. In their efforts to win elections, party leaders often resist mobilizing and incorporating blacks into the political system, and at times will go so far as to deny completely black Americans their democratic rights.

Insofar as our party system provides incentives for leaders to marginalize black political interests, the United States is unusual. Unlike those in other democratic societies, our party system exacerbates rather than diminishes the marginalized position of a historically disadvantaged minority group. The United States is not the only democratic nation with sharp racial divisions, nor are we the only democratic nation with cleavages between a large majority and small minority. We are, however, one of the few democratic nations where party leaders have an incentive to appeal almost exclusively to the majority group. This type

greater detail in chapter 6. For additional discussion, see Carol M. Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), chapter 1; Lani Guinier, "The Representation of Minority Interests," in Paul E. Peterson, ed., *Classifying by Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 24–25, and in particular n. 12; and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 42–48.

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of majority rule is undemocratic, as the minority group is frequently denied effective access to power and is excluded from involvement in a great deal of substantive decision making.¹²

Equally troubling, the founders of our modern party system understood and, in some ways, even *intended* for party competition to have this negative impact on African American political interests. More than 150 years ago, party leaders conceived of a party system that would avoid, or at least minimize, racial and sectional conflict. As we will see in chapter 2, the Democratic party was founded to a significant degree with this in mind. In the mid-1820s, northern and southern elites agreed to put existing differences on the slave issue aside for the sake of combining forces to elect candidates to national office. They formed the Democratic party, a powerful electoral agency that influenced any potential opposition to follow a similar strategy in order to compete effectively for national office. Both the Democratic and Whig parties in the period prior to the Civil War derived a great deal of legitimacy and strength from their ability to keep slavery off the political agenda. The leaders of the two-party system not only structured electoral competition around the average voter. Over the long run, they structured competition around the white voter.

Although two-party competition broke down in the 1850s and 1860s, it reemerged little more than a decade later when the Republicans and Democrats resumed “normal” electoral competition. The competitive two-party system still provides incentives for party leaders to deemphasize black interests in order to create broad-based electoral coalitions. The party system helps us avoid potentially devastating conflicts—not by appeasing both sides of the racial divide, but by appealing to racially moderate to conservative whites and suppressing the open expression of black political interests.

ELECTORAL CAPTURE

This apparent contradiction, that the success of broad-based parties rests on the marginalization of black interests, demands an explanation.

¹² This is an argument made by Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Majority* (New York: Free Press, 1994); and Ronald Walters, *Black Presidential Politics in America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). It is also made by a number of comparative scholars: see Arend Lijphart, *Power-Sharing in South Africa* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of International Studies, 1985); Pierre L. van den Berghe, “Introduction,” in *The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); and Donald L. Horowitz, “Ethnic Conflict Management for Policymakers,” in Joseph V. Montville, ed., *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1990).

I begin by examining the impact of electoral incentives on party leaders, which reveals two important features of our party system, features generally overlooked by scholars. First, it highlights the tendency of our political parties to “capture” specific minority interests, and in particular African American interests. Hypothetically, “electoral capture” refers to any politically relevant group that votes overwhelmingly for one of the major political parties and subsequently finds the primary opposition party making little or no effort to appeal to its interests or attract its votes. Simply voting for one party, however, is not sufficient for a group’s interests to become captured. A group, for instance, may be loyal to a particular party because it finds its interests well represented by that party or because of historical or organizational reasons. In turn, the opposing party’s leaders may wish to appeal to the group’s vote, but over time stop doing so because they find a significant portion of this vote unattainable. In this instance, the group has *chosen* to align itself with one party.

By electoral capture, I mean those circumstances when the group has no choice but to remain in the party. The opposing party does not want the group’s vote, so the group cannot threaten its own party’s leaders with defection. The party leadership, then, can take the group for granted because it recognizes that, short of abstention or an independent (and usually electorally suicidal) third party, the group has nowhere else to go. Placed in this position by the party system, a captured group will often find its interests neglected by their own party leaders. These leaders, in turn, offer attention and benefits to groups of “swing” voters who are allegedly capable of determining election results.

Why would the opposing party not want a group’s vote, allowing the other major party to take the group’s vote for granted? There are a number of potential reasons. Leaders of both parties will consider the size of the group in relation to the overall electorate; how much power the group’s leaders wield in the party organization as well as in local and state politics; whether the group can offer financial support to party candidates; and whether the group’s votes are concentrated within strategic electoral locations. Moreover, if party leaders see the group’s primary political interests as ideologically opposed to those of a large segment of the public, they are likely to ignore the group as they compete for those voters ideologically closer to the majority of the nation’s voters.

While all of these factors are important, none of them is as powerful as the party leaders’ belief that appeals to the group will *disrupt* the party’s electoral coalition. To form an electoral majority, a party must avoid appealing to groups that alienate its base or diminish its ability to reach out to median “swing” voters. Party leaders have an incentive not to appeal to a group if they believe that such appeals will lead larger numbers of voters to defect to the opposition. Support from the group

might alter entirely the makeup of both parties' coalitions. In such situations, party leaders will find it in their interests to ignore the group and make it more or less invisible in electoral battles. If one party perceives a group as a danger to the party's electoral majority, the group cannot threaten to leave the party. Faced with this situation, the captured group is likely to find its support taken for granted and its interests neglected by the other party's leaders as well. Even if the group remains loyal to one party, and even if its numbers can provide the difference in either local or national elections, its own party's leaders will find it in their strategic interest to keep the group more or less invisible in national political discourse.

African American political leaders have experienced great frustration and difficulty in attempting to move their group from this captured position. In part, this is a function of black voters fitting the profile of electoral capture mentioned above: they have remained loyal to one political party and have chosen not to reward the efforts made by the opposition for their vote; they are ideologically to the left of center on a number of important economic and social issues, and on some of these issues they are quite far to the left; and as a group, they are financially disadvantaged and unable to make large contributions to national campaigns. Aside from these factors, the historical legacy of slavery, legal discrimination, and racism has left large numbers of African Americans in need of policies and programs not easily provided by a government that favors an incrementalist approach to politics.

I argue in this book that all of these factors lend themselves to the capture of black interests, but that none of these factors alone is in itself sufficient or primary. For instance, while ideologically liberal on a number of issues, black voters are also ideologically moderate to conservative on a number of other issues—issues that ought to allow for opposition party appeals. There are a number of issues in the post-civil rights era that make black voters ripe for appeals from the Republican party, particularly regarding “family values,” religion, and abortion rights.¹³ Groups with similar ideological agendas have been courted by parties at precisely those moments that blacks were ignored.¹⁴ Moreover, while financially underrepresented in political action committee (PAC) spend-

¹³ Pat Robertson in the 1988 Republican primaries is one example of a national party candidate to make appeals to black voters on religious grounds. For examples of the ideological heterogeneity among African American voters, see Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), chap. 2; and Michael C. Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ See Paul Frymer and John David Skrentny, “Coalition-Building and the Politics of Electoral Capture during the Nixon Administration: African Americans, Labor, Latinos,” *Studies in American Political Development* (Spring 1998).

ing, black votes have often been crucial in national elections.¹⁵ In all three Democratic party presidential victories since the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the party would have lost the election without the numerical support of black voters. Despite the efforts of black political leaders to point this out, Democratic party leaders have refused to credit the pivotal role of black voters. Finally, even when black leaders and voters have expressed interest in defecting to the opposition party or to a third party, the opposition's party leaders have generally been reluctant to make even the most general of political appeals to blacks.

I argue that the primary reason for African American electoral capture is the worry of national party leaders that public appeals to black voters will produce national electoral defeats. The perception among party leaders that important blocs of white voters oppose the political goals of African Americans influences party leaders in ways simply not comparable to the perceptions about other potentially captured groups. Disagreements over race do more than limit the ability of white and black Americans—who might otherwise have similar economic or social interests—to join in a coalition. Precisely because racism is so divisive and repelling, African Americans are in the unique position of not being able to join in the give-and-take of normal coalition politics. Party leaders recognize this divisive quality and are reluctant to reach out to black voters, since doing so often results in a larger loss of white voters from their existing electoral coalition. They fear making appeals to black voters because they fear that the salience of blacks will overwhelm an electoral coalition of white voters united by largely economic concerns. Thus, party leaders have incentives to ignore black voters, and as such are willing to lose the black vote. Given this situation, black leaders cannot represent their voters as a “swing vote,” even in close national elections and even if their numbers can influence state or local elections. Party leaders not only believe that appealing to black votes may actually decrease the party's total vote, but that it also will alter entirely the makeup of both parties' coalitions.

PARTIES AS INSTITUTIONS

I have been focusing on how electoral incentives often lead political leaders to distance their parties from African American citizens. I believe that these incentives have been operative throughout most of American history, that party leaders have been cognizant of these incentives, and that the incentives have had detrimental effects for blacks.

¹⁵ See Walters, *Black Presidential Politics*.

That being said, how can we understand why our national parties have at times taken it upon themselves to join, if not lead, the fight for civil rights? It is a question that I will explore throughout the book, particularly in chapters 2–4 and 6. I will provide a number of explanations. Sometimes (although quite rarely as we will see) party leaders do not perceive public appeals to black voters as electorally disruptive. Sometimes party leaders are motivated by ideological principle instead of electoral incentives. It is important to remember that many people have influence within parties. Some of them are electorally minded but others are more ideological. Even party leaders who are more concerned about elections may very well have different understandings of what course of action is optimal.

It is important to remember as well that parties are not composed of only leaders and constituents, but of rules and procedures. These rules allow some voices in the party more power than others. Party rules sometimes limit the ability of leaders to make decisions. These rules may reflect the interests of its core constituents more than the interests of its electorally minded leadership. If the party's rules favor its African American members, then the perceptions among party leaders about the relationship between black voters and the party's electoral opportunities are less relevant than whether the leaders have the organizational power to do anything about those perceptions. Particularly since the early 1970s when voters in national party primaries began to influence greatly the nomination of each party's presidential candidate, party leaders have often been unable to marginalize certain constituencies. If Jesse Jackson, for instance, wants to run for president as a Democrat, Democratic party leaders are only so powerful in stopping him. If he can win party primaries, party leaders are even less powerful. If the procedures that govern primaries are beneficial to Jackson's success, then party leaders are even further marginalized.

In the following chapters, I will explore how party organizations and rules matter. More importantly, however, I will explore how long-term electoral incentives continue to dominate strategic considerations and party organizational rules. For a party to be successful, its leaders must be able to make the decisions they perceive are necessary to win elections. Party rules sometimes do not allow leaders this flexibility. If the party consistently loses national elections, its leaders will take measures to restore their upper hand in party affairs. The consistent electoral defeats of the party usually provide the justification and opportunity for these leaders to regain control of the party apparatus and change the rules to give them more power. Thus, the necessity to follow structural incentives has immense implications for the groups involved. Electoral incentives will promote some interests over others regardless of party

rules and, as such, will shape the interests and agendas of those people the parties represent and those people they choose to exclude.

Parties matter in a second way: they have a tremendous impact on existing social hierarchies. Parties need to be understood as more than umbrella organizations that unite various factions into a single force. They are organizations that shape how people think and act politically.¹⁶ When parties choose to mobilize or exclude groups, they influence the actions of those groups in politics and society. Examining this important but often neglected role of the party helps us better understand the impact of the two-party system on both white and black political representation. How does the two-party system shape the ability of blacks to secure government access? Does electoral competition encourage party leaders to ignore or minimize black concerns? Does this in turn shape the efforts of party leaders to mobilize other political groups? Finally, does this lead to an alternative understanding of how parties could fulfill the role ascribed to them by scholars—namely, as a vital agency for incorporating all groups into the political system?

POLITICAL SCHOLARS AND THE CHAMPIONING OF PARTIES

Most American political scientists place parties at the center of democratic political life, arguing that they are the most effective institutions for promoting equality for the powerless and the disadvantaged. A long line of thinkers have maintained that parties are essential to both the creation and the furthering of democratic values.¹⁷ More than five de-

¹⁶ This view of political parties is influenced by a number of sources, most directly from the “new institutionalism.” See James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life,” *American Political Science Review* 78 (1984): 734–49; Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chap. 1; Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). I have also been influenced by the work of comparative party scholars and a number of the tenets of the “power” debates of the 1960s. Among comparativists, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). On the power debates, see E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960); and Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “The Two Faces of Power,” *American Political Science Review* 56 (1962): 947–55.

¹⁷ In fact, one needs to go back to the turn of the century to find major challenges to the norms of the scholarly debate. See Moshe Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Party System*

cedes ago, E. E. Schattschneider claimed that parties “created democracy” and that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties.”¹⁸ Today, few scholars state their support as bluntly as Schattschneider did, but their assumptions reinforce his views, as is evidenced by most introductory American government textbooks.¹⁹

Political parties are said to offer the best hope for the powerless and disadvantaged because, unlike interest groups and individuals who use their wealth and inside information to advance their cause, parties “enable the many to pool their resources to offset the advantages of the few.”²⁰ Unlike uncompetitive single-party systems, which deny voters a choice and allow the “haves” to obstruct electoral accountability, two-party competition provides the necessary organization and the ability to mobilize the public around programs more beneficial to the “have-nots.”²¹ “Party organization is generally an essential ingredient for effective electoral competition by groups lacking substantial economic or institutional resources. Party building has typically been the strategy pursued by groups that must organize the collective energies of large numbers of individuals to counter their opponents’ superior material means or institutional standing.”²²

To gain electoral office, scholars argue, parties must appeal to and include all potential voters and groups into the political system. The logic of party competition assures that “no group has reason to feel that the rest of society is a kind of giant conspiracy to keep it out of its legitimate ‘place in the sun.’ No group feels that it may at any moment have to drop everything else and defend itself against onslaught by some other group.”²³ According to Judson James, “It is in [the party’s] interest to involve previously uncommitted groups in politics. To gain and retain this support, political parties have strong motivation to be re-

in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1910); and Herbert Croly, *Progressive Democracy* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

¹⁸ E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1942), 1.

¹⁹ See John Kenneth White, “E. E. Schattschneider and the Responsible Party Model,” *PS* 25 (June 1992): 167–71. Among textbooks, see Theodore J. Lowi and Benjamin Ginsberg, *American Government* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Edward S. Greenberg and Benjamin I. Page, *The Struggle for Democracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 268.

²⁰ Robert A. Dahl, *Pluralist Democracy in the United States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), 245.

²¹ V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1950), chap. 14. See also Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970), 132–33.

²² Lowi and Ginsberg, *American Government*, 479.

²³ Austin Ranney and Willmoore Kendall, *Democracy and the American Party System* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956), 508.

sponsive to the concerns of these recruited supporters.”²⁴ William Keefe maintains that parties “are remarkably hospitable to all points of view and to all manners of interests and people,” while Frank Sorauf agrees that “neither party ignores or writes off the political interests and aspirations of any major group.”²⁵ For Edward Greenberg and Benjamin Page, parties “are important for achieving popular sovereignty because in an effort to win majorities, and thus win elections, they attempt to include as many groups as possible. Parties are by nature inclusive.”²⁶ For Martin Shefter, as long as parties are in competition with each other, “the losers in [the] conflict, in an effort to reverse the outcome, undertake to mobilize popular support for their cause, thereby threatening to swamp their opponents at the polls or to make it difficult for them to govern in the face of popular turbulence. To meet this threat politicians on the other side seek to establish a mass base for themselves.”²⁷

These theoretical claims regarding the democratizing capabilities of U.S. parties are for the most part rooted in historical examples. The Democratic party of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren in the 1820s and 1830s broke the power of politically dominant notables and elites, expanded the suffrage to all white males, and increased voter participation.²⁸ Parties continued to encourage participation throughout the mid-nineteenth century, both at the national level and in cities where budding party machines integrated millions of immigrants.²⁹ The Republican party during Reconstruction won the passage of critical amendments legalizing voting rights and citizenship for African Americans.³⁰ The Democratic party in the twentieth century furthered this tradition, providing the legislative vehicle to bring about the Civil Rights

²⁴ Judson L. James, *American Political Parties in Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 4.

²⁵ William J. Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 10; Frank J. Sorauf, *Political Parties in the American System* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964).

²⁶ Greenberg and Page, *Struggle for Democracy*, 268.

²⁷ See Shefter, *Political Parties and the State*, 7.

²⁸ See *ibid.*, chap. 3; and Richard P. McCormick, “Political Development and the Second Party System,” in William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham, eds., *The American Party Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 90–116.

²⁹ On the ways in which nineteenth-century mass-based parties enhanced democratic behavior, see Joel H. Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838–1893* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991). On benefits provided by the urban machine, see Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 32–62; and Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow’s End* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), chaps. 1–3.

³⁰ See Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); and Morton Keller, *Affairs of State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in what many have called the “second Reconstruction.”

African American political interests have clearly benefited from this party activity. Republicans during the first Reconstruction and the Democrats during the second helped mobilize black voters and integrate black concerns into party platforms and into national legislation.³¹ It is important to recognize, however, that these two examples are quite exceptional, and they occurred during periods notable for the *absence* of a strong, competitive two-party system. The Republicans of the first Reconstruction, already a politically powerful organization in their own right, faced a Democratic party severely weakened by its association with the Confederacy and the disenfranchisement of many southern whites. The Democrats of the second Reconstruction passed important civil rights legislation after the Republican party had ceased to be competitive in national and congressional elections. As two-party competition was revived, the dominant party deemphasized issues important to their black constituents. Party leaders perceived that racial advocacy was diminishing their electoral base, weakening their internal organizational structure, and hurting their electoral chances.

ELECTORAL STRATEGY AND THE INCENTIVES OF PARTY LEADERS TO DOWNPLAY AFRICAN-AMERICAN POLITICAL ISSUES

Scholars by no means deny that the party system has at times failed to integrate black political interests. They argue, however, that it is the absence of two-party competition that should be held responsible. According to this line of argument, when one of the parties fails to be competitive, the incentive for the dominant party to reach out and incorporate groups outside the political process disappears, and these groups are neglected and demobilized. As an example, scholars argue that blacks and many poor whites were disenfranchised in the South at the turn of the century largely because the Republican party failed to compete in the region.³² In the early-twentieth century, according to this argument, newly arriving blacks and immigrants in the north failed to

³¹ See Richard M. Valelly, “Party, Coercion, and Inclusion: The Two Reconstructions of the South’s Electoral Politics,” *Politics and Society* 21 (1993): 37–67.

³² See Key, *Southern Politics*; Shefter, *Political Parties and the State*; Richard M. Valelly, “National Parties and Racial Disenfranchisement,” in Paul E. Peterson, ed., *Classifying by Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Walter Dean Burnham, “The System of 1896: An Analysis,” in Paul Kleppner, ed., *The Evolution of American Electoral Systems* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

be incorporated into urban politics because of entrenched one-party machines.³³ Many party scholars, meanwhile, point to the cessation of party competition between social classes as the main culprit for the decline in working-class participation in national elections.³⁴

Since party competition is seen as inherently positive, efforts to improve the functioning of the two-party system have focused exclusively on reforming the internal institutions (i.e., party organizations) and not the electoral structures (i.e., winner-take-all, single-member districts). During the 1950s and 1960s, when an internally divided Democratic party was resisting a civil rights agenda, scholars argued that the party was incapable of promoting civil rights for two reasons. First, they maintained that the South was characterized more by factional conflict than by a competitive two-party system and, as a result, the Democratic party there was dominated by white segregationist interests. Second, they claimed that the national Democratic party leadership was not internally strong enough to discipline its southern white-supremacist wing, either in presidential politics or in Congress.³⁵ As a result, many of these scholars promoted reforms to create more internally “responsible” party organizations. Greater internal discipline and party leadership would supposedly translate into responsible parties offering a progressive civil rights platform and increased levels of legislative cohesion.³⁶

Given that these reforms were proposed during a period of public support for the broad goals of the civil rights movement, it made sense that more responsible, majority-based parties would empower those favoring racial equality over the minority of racist southern Democrats. Responsible party scholars cannot be faulted for failing to recognize at the time how short-lived this majority would prove. By the late 1960s, the public mood toward civil rights changed dramatically, and as a result, the incentive for responsible parties to be inclusive instead of exclusive lessened considerably. In general, no matter how internally disciplined, party leaders have little incentive to promote the goals of a group whose interests are divisive as well as unpopular with the majority. Nonetheless, party scholars have continued to focus primarily on the need for institutional reform rather than on the negative consequences of electoral competition.

This focus on institutional reform is perhaps most notable in the

³³ Erie, *Rainbow's End*.

³⁴ Burnham, “System of 1896.”

³⁵ Key, *Southern Politics*; Schattschneider, *Party Government*, 122; and James MacGregor Burns, *The Deadlock of Democracy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

³⁶ See the American Political Science Association Committee on Political Parties, “Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System,” *American Political Science Review* 44 (1950), supplement.

scholarly reaction to the Democratic party's reforms, established in the early 1970s to include more African Americans and other historically underrepresented groups into the party's nomination procedure. Scholars have argued that opening up the nomination process to more groups has taken away the party leadership's ability to select viable candidates and bring together broad groups of people into a common coalition.³⁷ By opening the party's nomination process to groups advancing goals that conflicted with those of mainstream voters, party leaders could no longer serve "as neutral agents which mobilize majorities for whatever candidates and programs seem best suited to capturing public fancy."³⁸ More recently, scholars have attacked court-ordered racial redistricting on many of the same grounds. Drawing congressional district lines in order to maximize the number of districts with majorities of African American voters may lead to an increased number of black representatives in the House of Representatives, but scholars argue that this has decreased the overall numbers of Democrats in the House.³⁹

Party scholars correctly show how both of these reforms have hurt the Democrats' ability to elect candidates to national office (and I will deal more extensively with both of these reforms later in the book). Yet what the failure of these reforms illustrates is not the need for counteracting reforms to strengthen party leadership and two-party competition, but the limits of using the majority-based party as a vehicle for more effective black representation. Scholars have ignored a number of factors that hamper the ability of majority-based parties, responsible or otherwise, effectively to represent African American political interests.

As these scholars have argued, the primary motivation of competitive party leaders is the election of their candidates to political office.⁴⁰ A number of consequences follow from this, some of which have been discussed by scholars, but others of which have been generally overlooked. Political scientists have understood that in a two-party system, ideologies are developed by each party to attract the greatest number of votes. Parties do not seek election to promote policies; they promote policies to win elections. Assuming that the American population is dis-

³⁷ See Nelson W. Polsby, *The Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Byron E. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post Reform Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983). For a dissenting view, see Denise L. Baer and David A. Bositis, *Elite Cadres and Party Coalitions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).

³⁸ James Q. Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 18.

³⁹ See Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests*.

⁴⁰ See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957); and Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Political Parties and the Winning of Office* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

tributed ideologically on a linear continuum (i.e., in the shape of a bell curve), the appeals by parties to gain the support of the median voter will necessarily concentrate on those ideologically in the middle.

This model of party competition posits that groups lined up at the margins of the distribution (i.e., at the tails of the bell curve) will find their interests neglected by parties spending most of their time and effort appealing to ideologically moderate voters. Extreme liberals and conservatives at opposing ends of the bell curve, then, are constantly frustrated by the two-party process. They believe there is little difference between one moderate party and another. According to political scientists, however, parties are ultimately responsive to these groups' interests because electoral competition provides the opposition party with an incentive to make appeals to all potentially susceptible voters. Put simply, at least one political party will reach out and incorporate those who can be added against an opposition's coalition.⁴¹ Anthony Downs, for instance, believes that the current out-of-power party can follow a "coalition of minorities" strategy in order to defeat the majority party.⁴² Even though "the effect of the two-party system" is to produce "moderate parties," Schattschneider still argues that "the hospitality of the parties to all interests is one of their most pronounced characteristics."⁴³ Moreover, even if these marginalized groups are unable to elect representatives of their own, their presence at least ought to push the median voter closer to their interests, moving the position of national party appeals closer to their interests as well.⁴⁴

Parties, however, clearly do not target all groups who can potentially add to their coalition. Groups that do not participate in electoral campaigns often find their positions no longer considered in party appeals. Faced with limited resources, party leaders have incentives to target those who are most likely to respond without much prodding: that is, those already participating in the political system.⁴⁵ Swing voters, moreover, almost always will be at the center of two electorally competitive parties vying for the deciding votes of a close contest.⁴⁶ When faced with

⁴¹ Key, *Southern Politics*.

⁴² Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*, 55–60. Also see Key, *Southern Politics*.

⁴³ Schattschneider, *Party Government*, 88 and 85.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Benoit and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Electoral Systems and Minority Representation," in Paul E. Peterson, *Classifying by Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁴⁵ See Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

⁴⁶ See Earl Black and Merle Black, *Politics and Society in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Scott James, "A Theory of Presidential Commitment and Opportunism: Swing States, Pivotal Groups, and Civil Rights under Truman and Clinton" (paper presented at the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Ill., 1995).

issues of race, however, parties so alter their behavior that they cannot carry out the roles ascribed to them by scholars. While on some issue dimensions the United States population is normally distributed on a left-right continuum, this is not the case on racially specific issues: blacks tend to be skewed strongly to one side, while the majority of whites are skewed, often equally strongly, to the other.⁴⁷ Scholars who confront this problem in other racially and ethnically divided nations have shown that the two-party majoritarian-based systems are rarely an adequate solution. They fail to represent the groups that find it difficult to enter majority-based coalitions.⁴⁸ Downs, in fact, recognized that the two-party system does not offer much to any minority group in permanent opposition to the dominant majority: “Fear of this is precisely what caused many European aristocrats to fight the introduction of universal suffrage.”⁴⁹

Fear of majority tyranny also led James Madison and the other architects of the U.S. Constitution to devise a governing system embedded with checks and balances intended to slow down and, if necessary, block altogether the power of the majority public to threaten minority rights and interests. The potential for majority tyranny, Madison believed, necessitated safeguards to protect “one part of the society against the injustice of the other part.”⁵⁰ Not coincidentally, few people in the 1990s support Madison’s minority-empowered system as strongly as do some African American politicians and analysts. For instance, in 1993 Lani Guinier’s nomination to head the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division was derailed after a great deal of public controversy over her proposals to ensure that majority rule did not become majority tyranny.⁵¹ Likewise, members of the Congressional Black Caucus have defended racially drawn congressional district lines, arguing that they secure blacks greater representation within the Democratic party’s House delegation. Again, not surprisingly, the larger part of the Democratic party (and for that matter, most party scholars) has argued that such districts are damaging to broader—that is, majoritarian—party interests.⁵² When the Democrats lost the House in the 1994 mid-

⁴⁷ For recent public opinion data on these differences, see Tate, *From Protest to Politics*. For long-term trends see Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ See Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Benoit and Shepsle, “Electoral Systems and Minority Representation”; and Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, eds., *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences* (New York: Agathon Press, 1986).

⁴⁹ Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*, 121.

⁵⁰ James Madison, *Federalist 10*.

⁵¹ Guinier, *Tyranny of the Majority*.

⁵² Most notably, see Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests*.

term elections to the Republicans, redistricting was invoked prominently as a factor.

In many ways, the failure of party scholars to confront the consequences of two-party competition for African Americans is a direct result of their neglecting to recognize the existence of a long-term, white-based majority interest in the United States.⁵³ Party theorists champion the concept of a majority interest only because they believe an individual who is in the minority on one issue will be in the majority on another issue. Yet, when it comes to race issues, black Americans continue to be in the minority and white Americans are in the majority. Unable to form coalitions with other groups facing similar socioeconomic concerns, or even to become junior partners of the majority interest, blacks often lack the substantive power to persuade party leaders to take their interests seriously. Moreover, racial cleavage makes party elites hesitant about attracting African Americans to an existing party coalition. They fear that mobilizing black votes will lead to a decrease in the overall votes of the coalition. If voter hostility to black political interests is great, then the threat of defections among the party's current supporters will likely diminish the party's efforts to appeal to black voters.⁵⁴ As long as political party leaders believe that racial appeals to whites are a successful method for gaining votes and attaining office, it will remain in their interests to continue such efforts, and it will remain in the interests of the other party to try to take race issues off the agenda entirely.

PARTY INSTITUTIONS AND REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL STRUCTURE

Existing party theory, then, promises more than it can deliver. This failure poses a problem not just for theory but for politics. As multiple chapters of this book will show, the impact of the two-party system on African American political representation and empowerment can be profoundly negative. To achieve majorities, party leaders are induced by the electoral system to ignore and demobilize those who hurt their campaign opportunities. Parties, then, are not just umbrella organizations that take voters and, more broadly, society's hierarchies as they see them. They also shape people's ideas about politics, their level of involvement, and the kind of policies that are pursued in government. Even when parties simply gather up groups of already existing political interests, they nonetheless communicate a message and shape the politi-

⁵³ For further discussion on this, see Walters, *Black Presidential Politics*, chap. 1.

⁵⁴ See Stephen Elkin, "Political Structure, Political Organization, and Race," *Politics and Society* 8 (1978).

cal identity and behavior of these voters. If parties attempt to moderate their platform in order to be more electorally competitive, they communicate to voters a moderate position. They will mobilize moderate voters, educate moderate voters, and pursue policy agendas with moderate voters in mind. This does not offer a great deal of hope to those outside the middle, let alone those groups historically disadvantaged and in dire need of substantive representation. These voters are neglected during campaigns, left uninformed on issues, and often excluded from policy debates.⁵⁵

I do not wish to argue, however, that parties cannot establish themselves as democratizing agents. If we change the electoral incentive structure, parties will be in a position to establish themselves as democratizing agents. Scholars of party organizations outside the United States have long recognized the importance of parties as more than pluralist vote-gathering institutions. Parties “forge collective identities, instill commitments, define the interests on behalf of which collective actions become possible, offer choices to individuals, and deny them.”⁵⁶ They “create opinion as much as they represent it; they form it by propaganda; they impose a prefabricated mould upon it.”⁵⁷ And while American parties may not “penetrate” their society and influence individual preferences in precisely the same ways many international parties do, they already exert some influence in these arenas and have the potential to apply even more.⁵⁸ Research has shown that party elites influence public opinion on foreign policy matters, health policy, and civil rights issues. The actions of party leaders during the 1950s and 1960s helped change citizens’ attitudes toward civil rights.⁵⁹ If we understand that political institutions do not merely aggregate opinion, but influence

⁵⁵ It is not the case that only voters on the extremes drop out or are removed by party electoral competition. Moderates can also be demobilized via negative advertising, the absence of face-to-face contact, and the like. In fact, parties may recognize that it is in their interests to induce swing voters not to vote. This is logical since the goal of party actors is not vote maximizing, but simply winning. For one account of the demobilization of moderate voters by national party campaigns, see Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going Negative: How Attack Ads Shrink and Polarize the Electorate* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁵⁶ Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 101.

⁵⁷ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (London: Methuen, 1951), 422.

⁵⁸ See Alan Ware, *Citizens, Parties, and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), chap. 7.

⁵⁹ See Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Elisabeth R. Gerber and John E. Jackson, “Endogenous Preferences and the Study of Institutions,” *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993): 639–56; and John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

the development of political preferences and roles, we better can explore how elite actors shape the political agenda, the scope of alternatives, and the degree of information available in public discourse.⁶⁰

Currently, our national parties do not understand themselves as having this role. Party leaders and scholars accept the Downsian notion that voters have fixed preferences. Campaigns, meanwhile, are dominated by polling organizations and consultant groups that treat the process as they would a commercial advertising effort. Consultants are paid by individual politicians and national parties alike to find what the market will bear. They then figure out the best way to appeal to public preferences, no matter how ambiguous; by tailoring the candidate's policies to fit these allegedly static positions. As Gary Mauser has written, "Because individuals are to be left fundamentally intact, marketing necessarily limits its purview to making only relative changes. It cannot, nor does it attempt to, change any individual's basic goals, values, needs, or interests."⁶¹ Among the consequences associated with this form of campaigning is increasing public alienation and confusion, and decreasing levels of voter turnout.⁶²

For African Americans, this reliance on market indicators is further complicated since even the most charitable public opinion polls show that while white Americans support the broad ideals of racial equality, they are less supportive of specific government measures to redress racial inequality, and strongly opposed to measures requiring any form of economic, social, or political redistribution.⁶³ In the effort to follow market indicators, both of the national parties' campaign and policy activities have tended to reflect this public ambivalence. The parties more often reinforce racism rather than confront and educate citizens about it.⁶⁴ Yet if parties are to promote the interests of blacks or any other group disadvantaged by socioeconomic hierarchies, both the "pushing" and educating functions are essential—one or the other is insufficient.

What is needed, then, are institutions that mobilize those not currently incorporated into the decision-making process and that, as a re-

⁶⁰ See, for example, March and Olsen, "The New Institutionalism."

⁶¹ Gary A. Mauser, "Marketing and Political Campaigning: Strategies and Limits," in Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser, eds., *Manipulating Public Opinion* (Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1989), 23.

⁶² Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going Negative*.

⁶³ See for instance, Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America*; and Donald R. Kinder and Tali Mendelberg, "Cracks in American Apartheid: The Political Impact of Prejudice among Desegregated Whites," *Journal of Politics* 57 (1995): 402–24.

⁶⁴ For some examples of this see Alan Ware, *The Logic of Party Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 140–52.

sult, exert pressure on their behalf. Efforts to create more effective pressure organizations within the existing party system have failed, however, because of the nation's electoral structures and its incentives. Given that the modern-day party system was designed to keep potentially divisive black interests off the table, electoral reforms are imperative. With reforms, parties — no longer forced to pursue the median voter — will have more freedom to ignore majority-based strategies. They will have incentives to mobilize and educate their specific constituencies, and in the process will have far less of an incentive to appeal solely to white voters to win elections. Without these reforms, there are two likely alternatives: either a social movement will have to generate external pressure or large numbers of African Americans will withdraw from the political system entirely. Given the political difficulties of the first⁶⁵ and the moral implications of the second, reforming the electoral structure is all the more vital if we wish to bring about a more inclusive democratic polity.

WHAT FOLLOWS

Before I discuss what follows this chapter, let me point out what is *not* covered in this book. First, the focus of my discussion is national party politics and party leaders seeking to win national political offices. With the exception of chapter 6, the emphasis is exclusively on presidential politics. Clearly, this is not the whole story of African American involvement with the two major political parties or with other minor parties.⁶⁶ African Americans have achieved a number of dramatic victories in local political campaigns and are effectively represented by many local politicians. Many scholars have analyzed the relationship between black voters and local politicians.⁶⁷ I do not address this area in detail

⁶⁵ See for instance, Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); and Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁶⁶ On black third parties, for instance, see Hanes Walton, *Black Political Parties: An Historical and Political Analysis* (New York: Free Press, 1972).

⁶⁷ On local congressmembers, see Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests*. Most of the discussion has centered around urban politics. See Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David Tabb, *Protest Is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in City Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Paul Kleppner, *Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985); Dianne M. Pinderhughes, *Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralist Theory* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Manning Marable, *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* (New York: Verso, 1985), chap. 4; and Charles H. Levine, *Racial Conflict and the American Mayor* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1974).

because it would entail a discussion of different electoral structures, different constituencies, and, hence, party leaders responding to a different set of electoral incentives. Clearly, if the majority of a constituency is African American, the median voter will not be opposed to African American interests. I do not diminish the importance of local politics. The fact that black political leaders see opportunities at the local level that they do not see at the national level leads them to focus much of their time and energy increasing their representation at the local level. This, in turn, potentially leads to a deemphasis on joining and participating in national party coalitions.

Second, I will not discuss, except in passing, the issue of descriptive representation—the representation of black interests by elected officials who are black.⁶⁸ This is perhaps surprising because the issue has been at the center of not only recent scholarly debate, but of congressional and courtroom debate as well.⁶⁹ Again, I do not believe this issue is unimportant. However, the primary focus of the book is on substantive representation. To the degree that descriptive and substantive representation overlap, I will deal with the distinction. I simply am not making the argument that descriptive representation is the only measure of black political representation.

Third, and perhaps most surprisingly, I will not deal extensively with the question of whether racism exists in the United States. This seems quite odd given that the book assumes the median, or “swing,” voter in most national elections is generally racist or at least opposed to many specific policy goals of black voters. At certain moments in history—the late 1850s or early 1960s, for example—the median voter might have supported civil rights and federal programs promoting racial equality. One might argue that since the 1960s, racism has largely diminished as an important political force and has been replaced instead by economic, ideological, or social interests. Doesn’t this matter for whether black voters are represented in politics? Doesn’t it directly matter for whether the two-party system is able to represent their interests? Certainly, it does in a number of ways, and I will attempt to deal with this reality

⁶⁸ For initial discussion of the distinction between substantive and descriptive representation, see Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); and Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

⁶⁹ See Guinier, *Tyranny of the Majority*; Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests*; Luis R. Fraga, “Latino Political Incorporation and the Voting Rights Act,” in Bernard Grofman and Chandler Davidson, eds., *Controversies in Minority Voting* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992); and Kenny J. Whitby and Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr., “Representation in Congress: Line Drawing and Minorities,” in Herbert Weisberg and Samuel C. Patterson, eds., *Great Theater: American Congress in the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

when it is historically appropriate. But for the purposes of understanding party politics, the opinions of voters are less important than the perception among party leaders that race does matter and that the median voter does not support black interests. This perception, whether it is based in reality or not, has been fairly continuous throughout American history, and it continues to have huge consequences not only for black representation but for white voter opinion as well. It is this perception of party leaders that I analyze throughout the book. Whether it is correct is the subject of another book.⁷⁰

In the chapters that follow, I examine the issues addressed in this introduction. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical foundation for the study. In this chapter, I lay out in detail how party leaders following electoral incentives will often capture African American interests, and I analyze the implications of this for black political representation. A series of spatial models, backed up by historical example, will help illustrate how party theorists from Schattschneider to Downs have ignored what happens when party elites are confronted by a majority of whites voting along racially specific lines. I will argue that as black voters are captured they become more or less “invisible” to party leaders. As a result, and contrary to the beliefs of those who argue that the mere presence of liberal African Americans is sufficient for pushing parties closer to their interests (and thereby for representing their interests), rational party actors will try to move their organization farther to the right on the political spectrum. In fact, depending on specific circumstances, parties may be influenced to move farther to the right on the ideological spectrum than they otherwise would were they absent entirely from the electoral process.

In chapters 3 and 4, I explore two different historical periods, the Republican-dominated party system of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and the post-civil rights era of the 1960s–90s, in order to illuminate how electoral laws led to the capturing of African American interests. While at the end of both of these periods blacks found their interests captured, their status throughout was not static. How black interests have made momentary gains necessitates a discus-

⁷⁰ It is also the subject of an enormous literature. For the argument that party leaders are correct to see race as a divisive force, Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided by Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); David O. Sears, “Symbolic Racism,” in Phylis Katz and Dalmas A. Taylor, eds., *Eliminating Racism: Profiles in Controversy* (New York: Plenum, 1988); Lawrence Bobo, “Group Conflict, Prejudice, and the Paradox of Contemporary Racial Attitudes,” in Katz and Taylor, *Eliminating Racism*; and Keith Reeves, *Voting Hopes or Fears? White Voters, Black Candidates, and Racial Politics in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). The most prominent counter-argument comes from Paul M. Sniderman and Thomas Piazza, *The Scar of Race*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

sion of both party and nonparty factors. What enabled party elites to promote (albeit briefly) civil rights while following electoral incentives? What factors led to the recapturing of blacks shortly thereafter? What role did organizational reforms play in these momentary successes? In the long run, did these organizational reforms maintain a significant degree of black political representation in national politics?

Once I lay out the theoretical and historical dimensions of the captured minority group in the competitive two-party system, I turn to its consequences for party behavior. Chapters 5 and 6 examine some of the implications of captured status in the post-civil rights era. With the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the subsequent enfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of black voters, the post-1960s is a period when the African American electorate is at its largest and most formidable. This has been a historic time period for the representation of black interests in the party system. Blacks have elected a substantial number of representatives to both national and local offices, achieved a number of notable legislative victories, and have witnessed the first significant presidential campaign by an African American politician. Nonetheless, a number of features of electoral capture continue to exist and have political consequence, serving to marginalize African American interests in varying ways.

These two chapters are organized around the functions widely associated with political parties, and in particular with vigorous party competition. Chapter 5 focuses on the mobilization of voters as well as on the efforts of parties to educate voters in order to win elections. Chapter 6 looks at the Democratic party's legislation on behalf of African Americans. On the one hand, both chapters show the enormous potential that parties have to incorporate blacks more completely into the democratic process. On the other hand, both show how electoral structures inhibit this potential and lead to negative consequences.

Finally, in chapter 7, I attempt to apply the concept of the captured group to other political interests in society. Are African Americans exceptional in their captured status, or are their experiences relevant to those of other marginalized political groups? I compare the position of blacks in recent presidential campaigns with two other potentially captured groups: gay and lesbian voters in the Democratic party and evangelical Christians in the Republican party. Since these two groups have differed in their ability to influence their own party's political agenda, what explains the success of some groups to avoid the marginalization of their potentially captured status? What lessons can other group leaders learn from their strategies? Finally, what possibilities exist for changing the real culprit for captured interests—the majority-based electoral system? What alternatives are most viable?