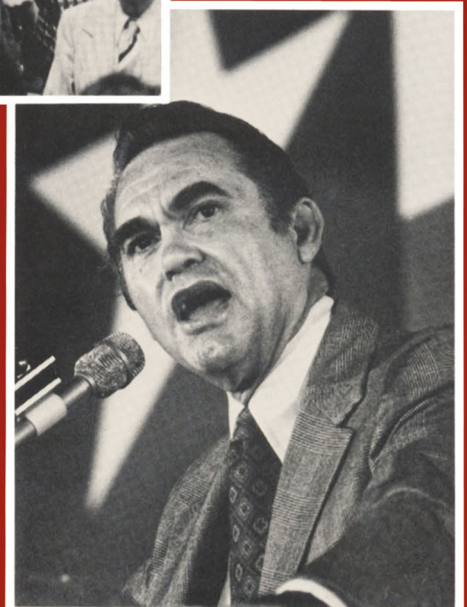
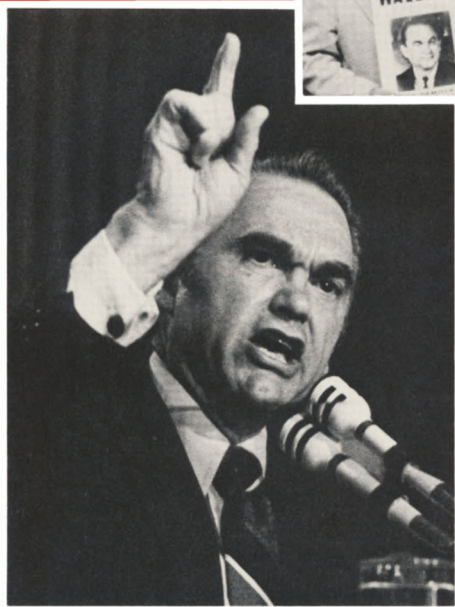


George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness

The Wallace Campaigns
for the Presidency, 1964-1976

Jody Carlson



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For Kim and Margot



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Preface

The aim of this book is to explore systematically and substantively the political appeal of George C. Wallace, who as candidate for president of the United States four times, got almost enough votes to throw both the 1968 and the 1972 elections into the House of Representatives. Not only that, his presence had such a profound influence on American politics that it pushed not only Nixon but every other presidential hopeful to the right and was subsequently responsible for the election of Jimmy Carter as well as the direction of American politics for a great many years.

Until now there has been no systematic attempt to examine Wallace and his appeal from the point of view of his politics. This study is unique because it employs both qualitative and quantitative methodology. I have employed a multimethodological approach using history as reported by journalists, social scientists, and the participants, including Wallace himself; official documents, speeches, and other materials from the Wallace campaigns; and demographic and attitudinal data on Wallace supporters to explore one essential question: What were the Wallace politics?

This question, however, is inextricably tied up with another—that of Wallace's cultural context and the tenor of the times—and the answer, no matter what methodology is used, keeps coming up powerlessness.

It is a long and complex story, and my interest in it is personal as well as intellectual. I grew up in the segregated South, a product of upper-middle-class white parents and the folklore of southern womanhood. Life was riddled with contradictions: black/white, South/North, federal government/states' rights, male/female.

Much of the violence of southern politics and the brutality of black white relations was kept a secret from southern women in general—we were to be protected at all costs from the realities of southern life and the

power interests of men. In many ways, growing up in that kind of South was like growing up before the Civil War, or as southerners put it, the War between the States. When the twentieth century finally burst into my consciousness and I had acquired scholarly and intellectual skills, I wanted to go back to the past and unmask every myth, to finally and fully understand the intricacies of the culture from which I had emerged. I was particularly interested because it is a culture and polity which has had such a great—even disproportionate—impact on American society. In many ways the South, like presidential candidate Wallace, has been the tail wagging the dog, and as such, needs to be better understood.

This book began in a graduate class in political sociology taught by Irving Louis Horowitz at Rutgers University. Horowitz had been talking about the 1968 general election and mentioned that the Arkansas elections were particularly curious—American Independent Party presidential candidate George Wallace, Senator William Fulbright and Governor Winthrop Rockefeller had all captured a plurality of the same voting populace. I was immediately intrigued. They were such different politicians; how could this be? I decided to find out.

A close scrutiny of voting data led nowhere. The Fulbright vote was most definitely not related to Fulbright's position on Vietnam; most Arkansans were hawks. Voting theory was no help. The Wallace vote was not related to the number of blacks in a county, as V.O. Key had suggested, and the Rockefeller vote had nothing to do with economic indicators. Rockefeller, as chair of the Arkansas Industrial Development Board, had brought in many new jobs and was responsible for improved economic conditions in general.

Only one thing could explain these contradictions: all three candidates projected the same image—that of a David fighting Goliath: Wallace and Fulbright railing against the federal government, and Rockefeller fighting crime and corruption.

Wallace's stance was the most dramatic. His speeches were fiery personifications of the South's resistance to the federal government's policy of integration. I got a picture of the South being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the twentieth century. Wallace represented his constituency as proud, powerless, and fiercely resistant. At once he captured the South of my girlhood—the pride, the agony, the boisterousness, the insecurity, the violence. I wanted to know more, and this book is what I found out.

This is a book for those interested in sociology, political sociology, political science and government, history, social research, and communications. As such, it is organized by campaigns—1964, 1968, 1972, 1976. Within each campaign there is a chapter on the historical events of the

campaign, a chapter that compares Wallace supporters with supporters of other candidates, and a chapter that analyzes the content of the candidate's most revealing public utterances.

If your interest is history, you may want to read the narratives straight through (Prologue, Chs. 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 13, and Epilogue). And students of research will be interested in the data analyses of Wallace supporters (Chs. 5, 8, 11, 14, and 16) and the content analysis of the speeches (Chs. 6, 9, 12, and 15).

You will find that this study is not only about Wallace, it is also about the South and southerners and Wallace supporters everywhere. Most of all, however, it is about social change and the reaction of one faction of the voting populace to the most revolutionary social structural changes that have yet taken place in this century.

Acknowledgments

The process of doing and completing any work of this sort involves the stimulation of brief conversations as well as continued dialogue with friends and colleagues. Many people have contributed toward my understanding of the subject as well as involved themselves in the process of production through listening, questioning, and encouraging. My thanks go to all of them.

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The data used in the writing of this book were made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Roper Public Opinion Research Center, and the CBS News/*New York Times* Poll. The data for the Center for Political Studies American National Election Studies were originally collected by the Center for Political Studies of the Institute for Social Research, the University of Michigan, under a grant from the National Science Foundation. Philip Meyer of Knight Newspapers directed the study of the 1972 Florida Primary, and Warren Mitofsky directed the 1976 CBS News/*New York Times* Polls. Neither the original collectors of the data, nor the Consortium, nor Roper, nor CBS News bears any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.



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Prologue: Wallace's South

In imagination and in fact, the South has been set apart from the North since the 1860s. The feeling that it is somehow different from the rest of the United States, resulting at first from its participation and defeat in the Civil War, has been fueled by both the memories and myths of Reconstruction and reinforced by the behavior of the rest of the United States toward the South. I.F. Stone (Middleton 1973, p. 106) portrays the white South as feeling that it is "a victim of injustice, misunderstanding, and brute force." Such feelings allow little recourse. The resulting resentment and rage at being made to feel so powerless are apparent as both psychological and cultural themes throughout all of Wallace's speeches.

Feelings of resentment and separateness continue, as shown by the presence in southern souvenir shops of "Forget, Hell!" captioned-pictures of an old Civil War soldier carrying a Confederate flag, as well as the strong feelings expressed by southerners that "Yankees" are somehow different from them. It is a view not limited to southerners; most Americans in the rest of the United States also think that southerners are different from other people.

Wallace's South was primarily agricultural and comparatively more poverty-stricken than the rest of the United States (Havard 1972, ch. 1). But the white South had one thing that made it feel powerful: superiority over the black South, a set of power relations which had been salvaged and reinforced in the years since the Reconstruction period (Woodward 1966). That one thing above all else was to be preserved.

Also of great cultural importance was the bravado with which the white southern male lived his life. Bravado can be understood as a way of dealing with life that allows one to hide feelings of pain and inadequacy. Having less of the education and income valued by the larger society, the southerner was obliged to outdistance the northerner through devious

means: by manipulating thought and logic and by projecting the threat of violence. Politically, this kind of style had great power. The gentlemen of the North could not easily deal with the southerner's style—seemingly genteel while deliberately misleading the other and promoting a mood of unpredictability.

As a result of such “games,” southerners came to be perceived by others as primitive and dangerous, a reputation which they welcomed and cultivated and which served them well in their games of power. Wallace's vast talents of this style of political manipulation can be seen in Frady's (1968, pp. 150-170) account of Robert Kennedy's futile attempt to avert the stand in the schoolhouse door at a meeting with Wallace in Montgomery in April 1963.

In discussing Southern politics, V.O. Key makes many valuable observations along these lines. He suggests that the Civil War left a much higher degree of southern unity against the rest of the nation than had existed before. The experience of that war and the reconstruction following it purged any integral differences which had been present in the South (Key 1949, p. 7), and the resulting unity came about primarily to “oppose external intervention in matters of race relations” (Key 1949, p. 352). A strong and united front was presented in Congress as well as in the voting in national elections (Key 1949, p. 8), but the consequences were a growing isolation coupled with a very strong resistance to any kind of federal intervention. Having to produce such a strong united front in the face of feared national intervention led to the diminution of democratic politics and the rise of a one-party system.

In such a situation, it is not surprising that no real understanding of civil rights would develop. The absence of dissident groups and the political dynamics which would have resulted from such groups tend to make the norm one of conformity rather than democratic discussion. While Democratic primaries functioned somewhat as forums for the settlement of interest group differences, the main *raison d'être* of southern politics—to keep the Negro in his place—remained secure, whatever the political infighting might have been.

In protecting that power interest, the southern politician spent most of his time dealing with issues which distracted others from his true purpose of keeping black/white power relations intact; he worked tirelessly to entrench himself into positions of control in national politics. As an underdog relative to the general American political system (his region did not share equally in the distribution of goods and services, perhaps a trade-off for leaving the southern social system untouched), he spent most of his time operating solely by the use of threat and bravado.

During the decade of the 1960s, the South was the location of social-

structural changes that reached back to the beginnings of Southern history and involved the deepest social cleavage in the United States. These changes were substantial ones and it is quite remarkable that something so revolutionary took place with a minimum of bloodshed. Part of the reason that it was relatively peaceful is that the South found itself in a position (due to the rise of federalism [Elazar 1972] as well as the preponderance of the industrial and agricultural market networks) of little choice. To fight federal orders would have been sheer economic suicide. Frederick M. Wirt, in *The Politics of Southern Equality* (1970) shows how federal money was used as threat and was the deciding factor in accomplishing desegregation of the school system and other public agencies in Panola County, Mississippi. Such institutions had been dependent for years on federal funds, and a pragmatic assessment on the part of local citizens of what they would lose financially if they chose to defy orders made the crucial difference. Wirt emphasizes that “without Title VI [of the 1964 Civil Rights Act] and its guidelines, no school integration whatever would have taken place” (Wirt 1970, p. 221). Local businessmen, eager to get federal funds and to attract industry from the North, also served to smooth the move towards integration (Wirt 1970, p. 304; Cramer 1963, p. 384). Although most Panolians greatly opposed the changes, Wirt remarks that those questioned said that they would support the law “because it was the law.” Not once did anyone say that he agreed with what the law was trying to do (Wirt 1970, p. 136). There was also the threat of federal force if they did not comply. The option of noncompliance was simply not possible, but delay tactics and the exercise of temporary defiance were. And this is where Wallace came in.



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Chapter One

The Politics of Powerlessness

George Wallace ran for president of the United States four times—in 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1976. In 1968, as the candidate of the newly formed American Independent Party, he came close to throwing the election into the House of Representatives, getting over nine million popular votes and forty-six electoral votes. In 1972, he ran as a Democrat. “In the fourteen primaries that he entered before he was shot, he got 1.5 million more votes than any other Democrat . . . won five of the contests and was second in five others” (Ayres 1974b).

Because he had such widespread support, his candidacies caused a great deal of consternation among politicians, journalists, and scholars. While almost everyone had an opinion about George Wallace, few people stopped to examine his politics and those of his supporters closely. Those who did usually termed Wallace a racist and tended to classify both him and his supporters as right wing.

That Wallace was a racist is not in doubt, although he did make a pragmatic reappraisal of his segregationist position after the 1970 gubernatorial election and began to focus on busing, dropping all references to race relations from his rhetoric altogether. The views of his supporters also shifted, but there is no conclusive evidence that either he or they were right wing. In fact, Wallace supporters were virtually indistinguishable from supporters of other candidates on measures traditionally considered right wing. Moreover, in terms of demographics, they looked like Republicans.

A reading of the Wallace speeches provides some insight. In his attacks on the federal government in regard to its continuing interference in

people's lives, Wallace gives precise expression to something that his supporters seem to respond to overwhelmingly: that they have lost power relative to the growing power of "Washington." Supporters of Wallace have certain identifiable attitudes toward power which serve to distinguish them from supporters for other candidates.

The data show that Wallace supporters are politically alienated and feel powerless in relation to the American political system. In demanding power, they are also demanding that the system operate in a legitimate fashion, rewarding effort and faithfulness, distributing goods and services equitably. In the general scheme of things their bid for power is conceived of as "getting one's share." The model is one of scarcity—there is only so much to go around, and governmental response to civil rights demands means that one's "share" has to be jealously guarded, as blacks are perceived as getting more than what rightfully belongs to them. Further, blacks and other minorities ("and welfare loafers" in the mid-1970s) are getting their demands met in ways that, to the Wallace supporter, are illegal and un-American. This means that "good Americans" are getting left out of the distribution process and this calls for action, but the only action available to them is defiance masquerading as power.

Wallace is a master at knowing how to feel out and exploit discontent:

They've looked down their noses at the average man on the street too long. They've looked at the bus driver, the truck driver, the beautician, the fireman, the policeman, and the steelworker, the plumber, and the communication worker, and the oil worker and the little businessman and they say, "We've gotta write a guideline. We've gotta tell you when to get up in the morning. We've gotta tell you when to go to bed at night. And we gonna tell both national parties the average man on the street in Tennessee and Alabama and California don't need anybody to write him a guideline to tell him when to get up. (Armstrong 1970, pp. 184-85)

Wallace puts on a show of power. It attracts certain kinds of people, people who feel essentially powerless and whose understanding of power is very limited. As Lurleen Wallace once said of her husband: "When he's on 'Meet the Press' they can listen to George and think, 'That's what I would say if I were up there.'" The reporter adds that to these people, "In a sense, hearing it said matters more than the fact that saying it accomplishes little" (Wicker 1972). Frady echoes this in his remark that "it has not mattered to most Alabamians that in his series of confrontations with the federal government Wallace had met with consistent failure. What matters is that he fought, and continues to fight" (Frady 1968, p. 149).

Wallace's supporters, like Wallace, believe that defiance is all that is necessary. Their sense of powerlessness is so ingrained that they do not

understand that a show of outrage is nothing more than an exercise which brings them nothing.

Central to Wallace's posturing is the presence of an enemy to rail against. Joe Azbell, the Wallace campaign's public relations man in 1972 and 1976, tells the following anecdote to explain Wallace's politics. Azbell postulates that if two men fall in love with the same woman, they will both be jealous. There is no possibility of a friendship between them; the only possibility is being enemies, as they would both want the same thing. He maintains that the two men could be friends only if they both hated the woman. Azbell summarized bluntly that hatred is the prime motivator in politics. A successful politician is one who has figured out what people's "devils" are, and focuses on them in order to gain support and excite the imagination. And that, Azbell contends, is the secret of Wallace's politics (Azbell 1974c).

The assumptions of Azbell's parable are that there is a limited piece of the pie which must be fought for and it is necessary to have an enemy. These assumptions breed a strange politics. While the clamor is for power, there is a lack of understanding of the nature of politics. Power is perceived only as power over or power against, never power with. The concept of participation, kept to a minimum by the candidate in his organization and in his enumeration of the possibilities (limited mainly to protest through the ballot box or by the drama of defiance), is likewise limited.

Consider the political activities of those who belong to the John Birch Society and other right-wing organizations. Their activities consist essentially of isolated, individual actions: letter writing, petition signing, conferences about the evils of communism. In almost no case is there any real participation—a making something happen, a reaching goals through working with others. Instead, one is concerned with exercising his individual power against an unseen but certainly conspiratorial enemy. There is no joint feeling, no exercise of creative politics dedicated to meeting the needs of fellow human beings, only an exercise which perpetuates isolation.

The same is true of Wallace supporters. Wallace strikes chords of discontent in those who support him, but they participate only by attending rallies, contributing funds, or watching his gyrations on television.

In the end the Wallace supporters' discontents and agonies remain private, individual ones exploited by the candidate. If these disgruntlements were shared, they would become "public troubles," as Mills calls them (1959). Pateman (1970) also expresses the thought that if people participated in the decisions which affect them, then they would begin to feel responsible not only for themselves, but also for others. In an exercise of true politics, the nihilistic quality exhibited here would vanish.

Wallace supporters have chosen to remain in the same kind of lonely,

individual struggles that Wallace dramatizes rather than participate in the kinds of actions that would solve real human problems as well as dispel feeling of powerlessness. They cannot picture life without enemies to fight, and they, like Wallace, remain shadow boxers—the ultimate product of a twentieth century that has put its emphasis on individualism, on competition and winning, and on the necessity of fighting to get what one needs.

Chapter Two

Voting Theories and the Wallace Voter

In the early campaigns, Wallace supporters were referred to as “kooks,” racial bigots, and right-wingers. However, their numbers grew; from 1968 on, a full twenty to twenty-five percent of voters were considered hardcore Wallace supporters. They could no longer be dismissed as crazies. This was a faction that, combined with others, could make a politician a winner, and politicians in the mainstream knew it. They began to acknowledge Wallace’s presence and note his appeal, and one by one the politicians of the mainstream moved to the right: Nixon touting law and order in 1968 and 1972, Jackson stressing antibusing in 1972 and 1976. Campaign issues gradually grew more conservative, away from the so-called excesses of the Johnson years. By 1976, Wallace was complaining that the others had stolen his issues.

Social scientists have been as concerned with Wallace supporters as politicians have been. In general, they see them as dangerous—representative of the darker side of human nature, as being “that element” in society from which mass politics and fascism spring. They scrutinize them carefully, using theories which have been developed before to explain politics outside of the mainstream: the authoritarian personality (Adorno 1950), marginal voting (Campbell 1960; Converse 1967), and status politics (Bell 1963; Rohter 1969).

Never mind that these theories raise more questions than they answer about support for Senator Joseph McCarthy, the John Birch Society and other right-wing groups; the old pigeonholes would do.

The Authoritarian Personality

Among the first explanations offered was that Wallace supporters might perhaps be explained in terms of personality traits—specifically those

associated with the authoritarian personality (Adorno 1950). People with authoritarian personalities are described as rigidly adhering to conventional middle-class values and condemning, rejecting and/or punishing people who violate those values. They are recognized further by their belief that one's fate is determined by mystical forces and by their generalized hostility (Adorno 1950, p. 228). In their political behavior, they tend to adopt a submissive, uncritical attitude toward moral authorities idealized by those close to them, and to focus on considerations of power and toughness. In being so focused, they are preoccupied with questions of strength and weakness, domination and subservience, superiority and inferiority (Janowitz and Marvick 1953, p. 186).

The theory had been used before, with mixed results. (Polsby 1963; Lipset 1963; Rohter 1969; see McEvoy 1971, p. 35 for criticism.) Only Lipset (1963) had found an unequivocal relationship between authoritarianism and right-wing ideas: in this case, support for McCarthy. Moreover, one social scientist (McClosky 1958) had found evidence that conservatives also had characteristics associated with authoritarianism.

The research was inconsistent in yet another way. Definitions of authoritarianism differed; rarely would items from Adorno's original F (authoritarianism) Scale be used. In many cases, tests for the authoritarian personality employed instead the intermediate variable of political intolerance, often defined as hostility toward civil rights (Trow 1957; Wolfinger 1964).

One can see immediately that this line of reasoning does not work in explaining Wallace supporters. For Wallace supporters, being racist, are undeniably hostile toward civil rights. Thus, here the argument is circular: any racist would automatically be classified as authoritarian. Adorno himself had been careful to separate authoritarianism from what he called ethnocentrism. They are not the same thing, and they should be kept conceptually apart.

McEvoy tried another tack in studying Wallace supporters. He used three items from Adorno's F Scale and three from McClosky and Scharr's anomie scale to measure psychological, or anomic authoritarianism. It does not distinguish Wallace's 1968 supporters from the supporters of other candidates (McEvoy 1971, p. 140). McEvoy did, however, find that Wallace supporters have higher scores on political vengeance, a measure of "verbal support for violent actions against political elites and extreme distrust of government" (McEvoy 1971, p. 136). While the items which constitute this index are not directly related to those on the F Scale, it is evident that McEvoy was making an important observation about Wallace supporters. They are extremely angry at the federal government, and their

attitudes toward government set them apart from supporters for other candidates.

While McEvoy's findings give little evidence of an authoritarian personality among Wallace supporters, this study will demonstrate that there is evidence of such a personality among Wallace supporters, as described both by items on the F Scale and their attitudes toward concerns of strength and weakness.

Marginal Voter Theory

Marginal voters (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1967; McEvoy 1971) are defined as voters for third parties in general, and can also be characterized by a history of almost no participation in the democratic process. They have voted with little regularity, belong to few if any voluntary associations, and are more likely to call themselves Independents rather than profess interest in one particular political party. Their marginality is defined relative to the political behavior of the majority of voters in the United States; they are outside that mainstream.

In exploring the Wallace support, it seems immediately clear that in this case third-party considerations are inadequate in measuring true marginality, for by definition, all voters for third-party candidate Wallace in 1968 would be classified as marginal. The model has further problems. Ever since the 1966 election, growing numbers of voters have classified themselves as Independents. By 1976, the percent of persons who identified themselves as Independents outnumbered those who said they were Republicans—party identification figures in 1976 were: Democrats 39%, Independents 36%, and Republicans 23% (Flanigan and Zingal 1979, p. 54). Under such conditions, one wonders if the continued designation of the Democratic and Republican parties as mainstream is correct.

McEvoy found conflicting evidence of political marginality among Wallace supporters in 1968. They have average rates of political interest and political activity but are less likely than others to have voted in previous elections (McEvoy 1971, p. 124). They also are much more likely than supporters of other candidates to doubt the legitimacy of government and to reject political institutions. McEvoy considered this "evidence of disproportionate political marginality" (McEvoy 1971, p. 119). Pettigrew and Riley (Pettigrew 1971) noted the same finding as well as the same conclusion.

McEvoy clinched his argument for political marginality among Wallace supporters with questionable assumptions. He noted a demographic fact about southern Wallace supporters: they are more likely than others to

have been born on farms. That is apparently enough of a finding for McEvoy to insist that since

previous research (reported in *The American Voter*) shows that low levels of involvement and participation persist in persons of farm origin, even though they may move later to an urban environment . . . we might, on the basis of previous evidence, infer that this [Wallace supporters' average rates of political activity and involvement] is possibly an abnormal condition and that political quiescence among these persons is the usual state of affairs. (McEvoy 1971, p. 117)

Wallace supporters can in no way be classified as marginal voters, as subsequent analysis will demonstrate. Feeling that the system isn't working the way it should does not mean that one is politically marginal. While an assessment that one does not have any power to influence government may be an indication of political marginality, the fact that the Wallace supporters' political activity is above average (Pettigrew 1971) questions that interpretation. I shall argue (in agreement with those who originally devised the measures) that the indices which these studies described as indicative of marginality are more specifically measures of political anomie and political powerlessness.

The Theory of Status Politics

Most research efforts have used status politics to explain support for the radical right (Bell 1963; Rohter 1969). Often social scientists use the concept of status discrepancy (Lanski 1954), a condition which exists when one or more of the three concomitants of status (income, occupation, and education) is mismatched, or discrepant with another. If even one status component is mismatched, then it can be expected that a person with such discrepancy might well manifest certain predictable political attitudes (Geschwender 1967, 1971; Lipset 1963). If, for instance, one has a high income and a low education, then he most likely has right-wing attitudes. Although touted as a productive theory, few empirical studies show clear connection between status discrepancy and a right-wing political consciousness (Olsen and Tully 1972).

McEvoy looked for status discrepancy among Wallace supporters by correlating income and education. He found very little difference among them and supporters of Humphrey and Nixon in 1968 (McEvoy 1971, p. 127).

Another aspect of status politics involves status frustration. It can be explained in these terms: an individual must, first of all, "place himself in society." That is, he must see himself and others like him as part of a group

which can be identified according to certain characteristics that the individual members of the group have in common. For instance, an individual may perceive "that he and others belong to specific racial groups and that the different groups occupy a complex hierarchy of positions vis-a-vis his own group." In such an instance, Herbert Blumer contends, racial prejudice may "be viewed 'fundamentally [as] a matter of relationship between racial groups.'" (Blumer in Lyman 1972, p. 138). Blumer goes on to say that this consciousness of group position is forged and reinforced by institutions such as legislatures, public meetings, and the mass media (Lyman 1972, p. 140).

An awareness of where one's own group stands in relation to other groups in society may give rise to status anxiety of a particular sort—here status frustration. Some groups are more subject to status frustrations than are others, particularly those

groups which feel themselves to be "dispossessed," to be declining in status as a result of the rise of other types of communities, occupations, or ethnic groups, and groups which have recently risen, but find themselves barred from being able to claim the concomitant of success. (Lipset and Raab 1970, p. 306)

Pettigrew, Riley, and Vanneman (1972) noted that the motivating factor for "participants in the black ghetto riots of the late 1960s" as well as for 1968 supporters of Wallace in the cities of Boston, Cleveland, and Gary, seemed to be "a psychological mechanism called relative deprivation." Because relative status deprivation is status anxiety resulting from a feeling of deprivation, which comes when one compares himself to those in another reference group of which he is not a part (Sherif 1953), this would seem to be confirmation of Lipset and Raab's (1970) view of status politics.

As indicated above, status anxiety or status frustration arises when one compares his own group with another group. The reference group may be above his in a position that he and the others in his group would like to attain, or below his and perceived to be gaining on his group's position, thereby threatening a loss of status. In the first case, he has a deficiency of status in comparison with the other group which is almost impossible to rectify; in the second case, he is threatened with a loss of status, the magnitude of which cannot be calculated. In either case, there is wholesale status anxiety.

Of most interest here are the groups which feel that others are gaining on them and/or they are in imminent danger of losing status. Such people, the theoretical argument goes, are deeply concerned over their decline in influence (either real or imagined) in American society. If they respond politically, it is considered a move toward preservation. The expectation is

that old “in” groups, when threatened by displacement because of social change, will seek to protect their values and status. This thrust toward preservationism, when accompanied by gestures of repression or exclusion, is at the heart of most definitions of extremist politics.

McEvoy viewed the Wallace movement as a preservationist response to social change. He argued that Wallace supporters are experiencing a “withdrawal of social support” (McEvoy 1971, p. 148). What is going on is that they have lost status relative to that which they enjoyed in the past. Lipset and Raab (1970) also make this argument.

Further, McEvoy felt that Wallace supporters are motivated by threats they perceived to originate from blacks (McEvoy 1971, p. 145). Lipset and Raab described this phenomenon as “backlash,” and define it as a “displacement of hostility toward the designated source of change” (Lipset and Raab 1970, p. 488).

McEvoy, in fact, saw the racism of Wallace supporters as a key component of their status politics.

In the Wallace movement, ... racism [is] ... a desire to maintain an increasingly threatened traditional status-deference pattern upon which southerners and the white urban working classes have depended as one important component of their prestige. (McEvoy 1971, p. 149)

To see racism as a matter of status, or to understand the concept of relative deprivation as solely representative of status politics, is completely missing the mark.

In actuality neither McEvoy (1971), or Pettigrew (1971) or Lipset and Raab (1970), or Pettigrew, Riley or Vanneman (1972) ever came up with any clear evidence of status discrepancy or status anxiety among Wallace supporters. What they portrayed as comparisons of one group relative to another, and what they term relative status deprivation, are not really a matter of status politics at all. It is power politics.

The Power Theory

Wallace supporters have status. As Gary Wills once described the audience at a Wallace rally: “They are not hungry or underprivileged or deprived in material ways. Each has, in some minor way, ‘made it,’ and it all means nothing. Washington does not care” (Wills 1970, p. 58).

Wallace supporters do feel anger and frustration toward blacks, but status anxiety is not a part of it. In 1968

over half of the Wallace supporters were *not* willing to say that Negro progress was “too fast.” Presumably, many who are disturbed by integration

may still feel that as a group Negroes are underprivileged and favor their moving ahead. (Lipset and Raab 1970, p. 402)

Thus it is not the upward mobility of blacks as such that bothers Wallace supporters, and threats to status are felt by these Wallace supporters to be either nonexistent or of little consequence.

The real appeal is to their proportionate sense of power. Power to influence the government is seen in zero-sum terms (Parsons 1967): the more some other group gains, the more their own group loses (Coles in Barnicle 1974). Wallace supporters feel that they have a very low place on the list of interests with which the government is concerned and their appraisal of the situation is accurate.

In the first place, the locus of responsibility has shifted in the last twenty years from the state and local level to the federal level. Federal government priorities do tend to ignore the white working class, and this is the group that in 1968 was proportionately more responsive to Wallace than to any other candidate. Jerome Rosow, assistant secretary of labor in the Nixon Administration, wrote a memorandum in 1970 calling attention to the federal government's lack of aid to the lower middle class. The abuses vary—some are in the tax structure (federal, state, and local); in the lack of services available to the blue-collar worker (for instance, his payment of taxes is used in financing welfare programs which do not provide these same services for him); in the lack of low-cost housing; in the worker's inability to pay for proper medical care and to attain proper legal services because of the expenses involved. "Washington," Rosow admitted, "has been definitely unresponsive to the blue-collar worker" (Rosow 1970).

Moreover, Washington, Wallace supporters think, is giving preferential treatment to blacks.

... in the minds of the blue-collar worker the black citizen had "gotten to" the effective centers of cultural change ... "they" were giving the Negro the decision-making power and personal recognition [the blue-collar worker] so desperately craved. (Fackre 1969, p. 646)

The resentment extends toward other groups as well. Ransford (1972) found that white working-class people who felt politically powerless are the people who expect public officials to be unresponsive to their needs and are antagonistic toward student activists as well as black militants. The Wallace supporters appear to feel particular resentment toward any group that attempts to gain political advantages through the threat of force. This is seen as a most "un-American" way of accomplishing a social goal.

Wallace supporters are furious at the federal government for what they perceive as capitulation to the demands of such groups. They view

themselves as upstanding citizens and cannot understand the disinterest or the refusal of government to relate to their needs. Where there once was no federal government, they now see federal policy as influencing every aspect of their lives—the economy, their access to jobs, the kinds of houses they can afford to live in, and the kinds of schools their children can go to. In short, governmental decisions affect them greatly, and they have no input. Few politicians represent their interests. The American dream is getting them nowhere.

Consider this letter from a Wallace supporter, written in 1972 on the back of a Wallace solicitation poll and returned to campaign headquarters:

Dear Governor Wallace, I will send you a donation later on if this country isn't bankrupt by then. It's just getting harder and harder to make an honest living. What I really don't understand is why we pour billions of dollars to Israel when they are responsible for all of our oil cutoff from the Arab countries? As much aid as we give them, they should pay U.S. income tax. Why do we keep on exporting more crude oil than ever when there is a shortage in this country? Shouldn't we be taking care of the U.S. first? The federal government is cutting and cutting service with the U.S. mail, but there is plenty of money for foreign aid. Every citizen benefits from the postal service, it never was intended to break even. Why not use some of the money they waste to improve the postal service? The U.S. Senators and Congressmen are already overpaid and they want another raise. The President's salary should be cut. There is supposed to be a gasoline shortage, yet the federal government refuses to put an end to forced busing. Why is there enough gas for such foolishness? I'm getting sick of hearing people holler minority and get all the breaks in jobs and everything. What about all these auto workers that already have been laid off due to the manufactured energy crisis? The time has come for new leadership in Washington and you are the only man that can do it.

Scholars have rarely dealt with the question of a loss of power as a motivating factor in politics. One exception is Horowitz (1968, p. 10), who remarked that "the so-called radical right is in fact reacting to a genuine diminution of local power by federal authorities."

Seeman's definition of powerlessness is most relevant here. He defined loss of power as "... the expression or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements he seeks" (Seeman 1959, p. 784).

This study will demonstrate unequivocally that the Wallace supporter feels precisely this kind of powerlessness relative to his ability to influence the federal government. Such feelings are intrinsically related to perceptions of change over the last twenty years and are related directly to the perceived actions and the consequent inactions of the federal government.

Racism and the Power Theory

The powerlessness, frustration, and anger that the Wallace supporter feels toward the federal government is also directed toward blacks, but it differs in very important ways from the ways in which racism is traditionally defined.

In this instance, racism can be viewed not as a "feeling or set of feelings lodged within an individual . . . (but as) a matter of relationship between racial groups" (Lyman 1972, p. 138). It arises from the competition inherent in power relations (Blumer in Lyman 1972; Brown 1971; Carlson 1976a) not from competition for status position (Dye 1971; Pettigrew 1971; Lipset and Raab 1970; Pettigrew, Riley and Vanneman 1972). Recalling for a moment the discussion on reference groups, consciousness of group position serves to place one's group relative to others in a hierarchy of positions. Racism thus functions as a means of clarifying that hierarchy, thereby defining power relationships and justifying in ideological terms the specific power relationships of the groups vis-a-vis one another.

Cox maintained that racial groups are power groups and that the relationships between them are relationships of power rather than of social status (1948, pp. 318, 332, 335). Robert Coles gave data to support this theoretical approach through his observations on busing in Boston.

"The ultimate reality," Coles states, "is the reality of class. And it's around this issue of having and not having—and social and economic vulnerability versus social and economic power—that's where the real issue is."

"That's the real struggle that's going on," Coles says. "And to talk about it only in terms of racism is to miss the point. It's working-class people who happen to be white and working-class people who happen to be black . . . poor people . . . both of whom are very hard pressed; neither of whom have got much leverage on anything. They are both competing for a very limited piece of pie, the limits of which are being set by the larger limits of class which allow them damn little if anything." (Barnicle, 1974)

To summarize, the response to Wallace represents a bid for power that is felt to be the inherent right of every citizen, a power which the Wallace supporter feels was once there and is now felt to be either slipping away or lost altogether. Specifically, the support for Wallace represents a protest against the erosion of that power by the federal government, the proof of which is seen by the Wallace supporters through the government's increasing involvement in areas of decision making and influence that originally were thought to lie within the domain of individual or local power.

Changes in the workplace and in the schools, bolstered by the revelations

of television newscasts—desegregation, Vietnam, black protest, student power, Watergate—over the same time period have served to stir the political awareness of most Americans. The Wallace voter has responded to these things in a particular way. Unwilling to give up the belief in the “American Dream,” still hoping that hard work and being a good citizen will pay off, he is very angry at student protestors who are disparaging of that dream and those who are getting what they want without going through the “proper channels”—black protestors, “welfare loafers,” etc. He is aware, however, that some groups are getting some of what they need, and he wants to be able to do that, too. Disagreeing with the means that these people are using, he continues to try to work within the system by casting a vote for Wallace, whose politics may be seen as a kind of symbolic protest. But he has very little hope, given those particular government priorities which he feels do not include him in their considerations. He feels virtually powerless.