New Critical Writings in Political Sociology

Volume Two: Conventional and Contentious Politics

Edited by
Kate Nash, **Alan Scott** and
Anna Marie Smith

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Series Editors: Kate Nash, Alan Scott and Anna Marie Smith

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Volume One:
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Volume Three:
Globalization and Contemporary Challenges
to the Nation-State
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Conventional and Contentious Politics

Edited by

Kate Nash

Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK

Alan Scott

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Anna Marie Smith

Cornell University, USA

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Series Preface

This series of three volumes of 'critical writings' in political sociology seeks to provide a balanced and comprehensive range of influential essays and, in exceptional cases chapters, within this subfield published since the 1970s. There is a bias towards the more recent period partly because many earlier pieces are available in similar collections, but, more importantly, because the shifts of direction that political sociology has taken over the last 20 years make some earlier debates look – at least for the moment – somewhat arcane. One example is the heavy emphasis on class in the earlier period (see the Introduction to Volume Two for a fuller discussion). The influence of feminism and post-structuralist thought, as well as empirical evidence of the shrinking of the working class, and thus the decline of its political significance (discussed in Volume One by Colin Crouch), have shifted attention away from social class as a (at one time *the*) central concern. Some analysts (for example, Pakulski and Waters, 1996) have gone so far as to argue that class is now largely an irrelevance in understanding political phenomena, while others (for example, Savage, 2000) have sought to redirect and reshape our understanding of the class–politics nexus.

A further example of shifting interests is the fading into distant memory of the dispute between instrumentalist and structuralist Marxists (represented by Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas respectively) that was so central to debates in political sociology in the 1970s. There is a brief discussion of the issues involved in the essay by Steven Lukes (Volume One), and Louis Althusser's Marxist–structuralist analysis of the state (the *locus classicus* in this literature) can be found in Volume Two, but Miliband and Poulantzas themselves are not reprinted here. What is still influential in Poulantzas's work is rather represented in this series by the generation(s) of political sociologists who have followed him and who continue to extend this Gramsci–Althusser–Poulantzas line of thought, notably Bob Jessop and Neil Brenner (both in Volume One).

There is a thematic division of labour both between and within the volumes. Volume One covers power, the state and inequality; Volume Two covers conventional and contentious politics; and Volume Three brings the story up-to-date by covering globalization and other 'contemporary challenges' to the nation-state. This is, of course, a loose classification. For example, while Volume One contains many of the 'traditional' concerns of political sociology – such as, state formation, power and legitimation in its coverage of the more recent literature it inevitably touches on themes, such as the emergence of 'new state spaces' (Brenner) below and above the level of the nation-state, that are taken up again in Volume Three.

We should also say something here about the criteria we have applied in making this selection. While the volumes contain many seminal and famous contributions of the kind that would appear in any such collection – for example, Steven Lukes and Michel Foucault on power (Volume One), Claus Offe on social movements and Judith Butler on (the end of) sexual difference (Volume Two), or Ernest Gellner on nationalism (Volume Three) – we have not simply used citation indexes to identify the 'greatest hits', since to have done so would have produced a thematically very unbalanced collection. As one of the central aims was to

retain a balance in order to provide potential users with the full range of work that can be gathered under the – admittedly wide – umbrella of political sociology, we have used a more thematic approach – one that seeks to cover the full range of empirical and theoretical issues that have been of concern to political sociologists. As a result, some extremely influential pieces have not been reproduced here. For example, you will not find Michael Mann's 'The Autonomous Power of the State' (1984), one of the most frequently reproduced and cited papers in political sociology to have appeared in the period covered here. This is because we wanted to include one of Mann's more recent pieces (on globalization, in Volume Three) and because the topic of state formation and the sources of state power are well represented by other important authorities, notably Charles Tilly and Gianfranco Poggi (Volume One). The essay by Tilly is an example of another feature: we have not always chosen to represent well-known political sociologists by reproducing their best-known work. Instead, we have tended to go for pieces that are either representative or which display their more recent thinking. The Tilly piece, for example, is an introduction to an edited collection, but it contains some useful indications as to how his thinking about state formation slightly altered after the publication of *Coercion, Capital, and European States* in 1992.

Despite our efforts to provide a balanced and comprehensive collection, it would, of course, be foolish to claim that the interests and preferences of the three editors played no role. There is also some bias towards theoretical, synthetic and broad-brush approaches rather than the reporting of empirical data that may be of interest primarily to specialists.

Finally, political sociology is a subfield that crosses disciplinary boundaries: sociology, anthropology, human geography and political science. To have included only essays that are representative of a strictly political sociology enterprise (whatever that might be) would have restricted the scope of the series too severely, and we have not attempted it. There are thus essays quite directly addressed to, for example, geographers (for example, David Harvey, Volume One), which nevertheless are of direct relevance to key issues in political sociology. In this respect, the series is eclectic as well as broad, but this strikes us as a fair reflection of work in the field. A similar point can be made with respect to its theoretical pluralism: for better or worse, there is nothing like a dominant paradigm in political sociology.

KATE NASH, ALAN SCOTT AND ANNA MARIE SMITH
Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK
University of Innsbruck, Austria and
Cornell University, USA

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Introduction

In very general terms, like the discipline of which it is part, political sociology is crafted out of studies and theories of social structures and institutions. The state and the market are of particular importance, and sociology addresses how their ongoing reproduction, which nevertheless involves continual alteration and even, on occasion, more or less complete transformation, is related to social differences which are invariably tied to inequality and subordination, such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality and to organizations in civil society, the family, the workplace, the political sphere and so on. Sociology is also concerned with social meanings, the frameworks through which social relationships are understood, and the ideas and values that maintain or challenge social structures of inequality. In very general terms, sociology as a discipline is organized around considerations of how these two dimensions of social reality are related: what difference does how we understand social relationships make to how society is structured?

Sociology is also organized around debates over structure and agency. How do structures constrain or facilitate agency, the ability to act meaningfully and effectively in the world? And how does agency contribute to maintaining, modifying or transforming social structures (Giddens 1984)? These are very complex questions, but here we should note that whilst sociologists at the turn of the twenty-first century have been much exercised by the desire to avoid explanations that are over-deterministic, it is clearly equally important that we should avoid theories which suggest that individuals simply act as they will, without social constraints of any kind. The structure/agency problem is related to that of the relationship between structures and meanings, but they do not simply map onto each other. Although it is common to think of structures as 'material' – in terms, for example, of logics of capitalist production that 'work themselves out behind our backs', or of the historical expansion of states which no individual or group planned and which then become impossible to control – it is important to be aware that cultural understandings may be equally constraining: how people identify or dis-identify with others, how they position themselves, and how they are identified and positioned socially by others, can be as restrictive as the demands of political and economic systems with which such understandings are inextricably entwined.

As a subfield of the discipline, political sociology is similarly organized around what we might call the meta-problems of sociology: what are the relationships between structures, meanings and agency? In particular, political sociology involves study of the relationship between social structures and political agency. Under what social conditions is politics more or less likely? And what difference does politics make to creating or improving societies, or to maintaining the status quo? As we see in Volume One, political sociologists are especially interested in how inequalities of power, wealth, status and life-chances impact on politics, and what difference politics makes to social justice – to lessening or ameliorating those inequalities.

The particular focus of political sociology on inequalities and social justice makes engagement with normative questions unavoidable. The question 'What is democracy?', for

example, is intrinsically, conceptually, bound up with the question 'What should democracy be?'. This is not to say that sociologists must therefore do normative political philosophy, but rather that, in order to successfully investigate the empirical social world, we have to grasp how the empirical itself is shaped by normative values. In addition, we have also to be reflexive about our own normative values. Many of those who are interested in political sociology have come to it because of strong feelings about social justice and how it should be addressed. Even when attempting to be 'neutral', we necessarily build into our research assumptions about how the world is and should be. In order to produce good accounts of what society is in relation to what it could become, we must also, therefore, reflect on how our understandings of politics differ from, or are similar to, those of other members of society, and how they might affect our study of the social world.

This volume is concerned above all with the question of why and how some people at specific times organize to change society. It is also, therefore, concerned with the shadow of that question, which is equally, if not even more, compelling for political sociologists: why do most people most of the time conform to social norms rather than trying to change them? How are the fundamentals of inegalitarian and unjust societies reproduced? How is society set up to encourage or discourage feelings of collective belonging to a group that might empower itself to have a voice in how things are done? Under what conditions is politics engaged, ignored or discredited?

Class Elections and Parties

The three volumes, of which this is the second, are of critical writings in political sociology since the 1970s. At the beginning of this period, with the exception of those studying social movements, political sociologists focused almost exclusively on class as the basis of political mobilization. In the case of research on voting patterns, with which Part I of this volume is concerned, a great deal of work has been done – especially in the USA and UK – on defining class and on measuring the extent to which there is a statistical correlation between class membership and voting for parties of the Left or Right. This work is represented here by the thorough overview of arguments and data on these themes undertaken by Jeff Manza, Micheal Hout and Clem Brooks in Chapter 1. The definition of class used is Weberian, based on occupational stratification in terms of conditions of employment and payment, degree of occupational security and promotion prospects (Goldthorpe and Marshall, 1992; Hout, Brooks and Manza, 1993). However, there is an implicit commitment to socialism in this research: if those in working-class occupations are more likely to vote for parties on the Left than those in middle-class occupations, this suggests that they have a reasonably accurate grasp of their common interests in a progressive programme of social reform. On the other hand, if, as work in this area initially seemed to suggest, class and voting are becoming dealigned, then the reformist working-class movement is effectively at an end. In the USA, of course, this debate has taken place in a context in which there has long been a complementary interest in why the working-class movement has always been so weak (Lipset and Marks, 2000).

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the complexity of the issues and the technicalities of measuring and assessing long-term trends, those who continue to work in this area disagree over whether there is now a correlation between class, as measured by the head of household's occupation, and voting for parties that have historically been centre-left. Statistical correlation

between class membership and voting has always varied from country to country: there has been no correlation in some countries, like Canada; it has been much more complicated in countries (neglected until quite recently in the debate) where religion plays an important role in creating political cleavages, such as the former West Germany; and it is an open question whether it still holds in countries, like the UK, where class alignment is understood to have been historically quite strong (Nieuwbeerta, 1996; Evans, 1999). Furthermore, in the case of the USA there are those who argue that we are now seeing class *realignment*, a shift of working-class voters to the Republican Party and of middle-class voters to the Democrats (Hout, Brooks and Manza, 1995).

Following the prejudices of the time, these studies of class and voting began by focusing exclusively on men, and, within that group, on charting working-class voting patterns. These prejudices have proved a permanent difficulty for this area of research. As women have moved in increasing numbers into full-time paid work, simply decreeing that wives should be attributed the same class status as their husbands, or trying to fit women – who still tend to do different jobs from men – into a class schema designed for male occupations and then disaggregating households into individuals, have both proved increasingly unconvincing ways of classifying women's class position, a problem created by the traditionally masculine perspective of 1970s sociology (Sorenson, 1994; Stanworth, 1984). In addition, with the decline of manufacturing in advanced capitalist societies, the working class itself has shrunk in absolute terms, while the middle class has grown with the growth of service industry jobs. Add to this an increased volatility in politics itself, the growing importance of other dimensions of politics (see, for example, Huckfeldt and Kohfeld, 1989) and the gradual movement of traditional left-wing parties towards the centre-right following the neoliberal restructuring of society to emphasize the market provision of previously public services, and this area of research has come to look increasingly out of touch with contemporary concerns (Clark and Lipset, 1991; Savage, 2000).

It is very far from being the case that sociologists now know better how to use statistical data to assess how different social dimensions of inequality and domination are combined and how they are causally linked to forms of political action. It is, rather, that we are much more aware of the difficulties of doing so, and of the distortions that are produced when only one social dimension is taken into account. Moreover, and paradoxically, the most important lesson from these studies may be that the focus required to refine methodology and methods in order to measure specific social trends may in fact be something of a limitation for understanding widespread social change. Sometimes imaginative thinking through counterintuitive possibilities may be more fruitful. Anne Phillips's argument in Chapter 2, concerning how democracy is itself gendered, is an example of this type of research. It is not only that the political sociology of voting has run into trouble because classifications of class are difficult to combine with recognition of the importance of gender; it is also that assumptions about gender have been built into democracy itself. It is not only political sociologists who have ignored women; they did so in the 1970s because political movements themselves were also based on masculinist assumptions. In contrast, using a 'gender lens', Phillips raises fundamental questions concerning what democracy is for, and for whom. Representative democracy is based on rather a peculiar amalgam of principles: whilst voters elect representatives according to geographical area, traditionally those representatives have been organized, to a greater or lesser extent at different times in different places, as members of parties which represent

particular ideas and values concerning how society should be organized. What, then, becomes of the interests and needs of particular groups who have been marginalized, of which women is by far the most numerically significant? Phillips invites us to think about what it would mean to organize democracy differently, precisely in order to give voice to those whose perspectives have been neglected, making a normative argument that very nicely demonstrates what is taken for granted about the actual social arrangements in place and how they exclude some issues from consideration altogether (see also Phillips, 1995; Young, 1990).

Civil Society and Political Participation

In a similar vein, Part II includes an essay by Paul Hirst (Chapter 3), which invites us to look again at what we know about how democracy is, and should be, organized. Hirst argues that an emphasis on voting for centralized political parties not only obscures what is most important about society today, but also fails to address the general political disaffection from formal politics that is indicated by decreasing voter turnout. In other words, like Phillips, Hirst again reminds those of us who live in advanced capitalist societies that we should not assume that we also live in genuine democracies; we should not simply take for granted that official definitions of democracy indicate actual participation in organizing society. Hirst proposes a much more thorough-going vision of democratic participation, based on a commitment to reducing the complexity of the state by devolving as many social activities as possible to self-governing voluntary associations, including core activities of work and welfare. His proposals are controversial: whilst they identify ways in which lack of participation in creating the conditions of our lives might actually be tackled in practice, at the same time they raise difficult questions concerning equality of provision and the subordination of minorities, including women, within communities and groups. This is especially significant given that state regulation has increasingly been required to redress inequalities and to promote personal freedom following demands from social movements that formal, and even to some extent substantive, discrimination be ended against minorities of all kinds. Although, as Hirst argues, demands on the state are at odds with the rhetoric of globalization, which politicians use to deflate citizens' expectations concerning what states can and will do, the question of whether 'voice' in local affairs is more important to most people than equality and personal freedom is not one that can be settled by calls for the creation of greater participation in voluntary associations.

Moreover, as Hirst himself notes, it may seem counterintuitive to suggest ways in which participation in democracy might be improved through increased involvement in voluntary associations, given that it is now widely accepted – especially following Robert Putnam's extremely influential work, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (1991) – that fewer people are interested in joining associations at all. However, in his influential review of the literature on social capital (Chapter 4), Alejandro Portes argues that we should be wary of such a sweeping conclusion. Portes's essay is again exemplary not only for the interest of his well-reasoned argument and his good use of empirical evidence, but also because of his critical reflections on the importance of carefully defining theoretical concepts and of not being misled by inappropriate methodology. Criticizing Putnam's famous study as fundamentally flawed, Portes presents evidence to suggest that networks continue to be an important source of social capital for individuals. This is obscured, he argues, because

the term 'social capital' is variously used in ways that conflate: those who make demands on networks; those who find themselves in a position where they are obliged (for more or less altruistic or instrumental reasons) to accede to those demands; and the goods or services which are demanded and/or granted. Social capital inheres in the structure of social relationships, and, although membership of certain organizations has undoubtedly declined, as Putnam has shown, this may not mean an absolute decline in existing social capital across whole societies. Finally, as Portes points out, it is important to understand that social capital also has its 'dark side'; dense social networks are empowering for some, but they also operate to reinforce power, inequality and exclusion (see also Arneil, 2006; Adkins, 2008). Proposals for the enhancement of social capital, and lamentations about its disappearance, generally ignore this 'dark side'.

Social Movements

The 'actually existing' political participation that has most interested political sociologists since 1970 is the formation of social movements, which appear to offer the principal means by which ordinary members of society can exercise far greater influence over the conditions of social life – whether through the formal political process or outside it – than they would be able to as individuals. Social movements were called 'new' in order to distinguish them from the 'old' labour movement when a cycle of protest, which began with the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam War protests, erupted in the 1960s, catching sociologists' imaginations and often their political sympathies too. Since then there has been a great deal of theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich research on social movements. We have tried to give a flavour of this research in the essays selected for Part III of this volume.

In research on social movements the debate over the structure–agency problem has been particularly prominent. The most complicated aspect of study in this area has been the question of how to combine explanation of the rise of social movements in terms of how they are facilitated, modified or repressed by political structures and the opportunities to deploy economic and social resources available to movement leaders with understanding of how individuals are motivated to give up their time and energy to a cause from which they may not personally benefit in any great measure. The very demanding requirement to deal with both structure and agency that researchers in the field of social movement studies have set themselves has structured debates in the area. What sociologists do agree on is that, when social movements are successful they bring about change through a variety of means: through direct influence on how social relationships are conceived and lived, as well as through formal political processes (see Rochon, 1998; Giugni, McAdam and Tilly, 1999). Although the vast majority of studies in this field have tended to focus on reformist movements, it is important, then, to be aware that the 'contentious' politics in which social movements engage are on a continuum with revolution (Tilly, 1993) and also with the violent protest of terrorism (della Porta, 1995).

However, although showing how structure and agency are intertwined in social movements is ideally the aim in this field, in practice an emphasis on *either* the enabling or disabling features of structures *or* on the formation of collective identity through the communication and manipulation of symbols is evident in virtually all existing research. Herbert Kitschelt's essay (Chapter 5) is an excellent example of the former. Kitschelt uses the idea of 'political

opportunity structures' in the most flexible way possible, emphasizing the range of factors that influence how actors may or may not engage with the state to successfully create social reform. However, ultimately his account is determinist: at best his argument may explain *why* social movements are able to become prominent and effective, given structural conditions that facilitate or inhibit social movement formation and effects; and it may be especially convincing because of his use of comparative data, which is a prominent feature of the best work in this field (Tarrow, 1998; della Porta and Diani, 1998).

What Kitschelt's essay cannot do, however, is help us understand *how* social movements form and change as a result of the understandings they generate internally about their own possibilities through ongoing reflection on their aims and purposes. In contrast, the arguments and analyses we have selected from the work of Robert Benford and David Snow (Chapter 6) on their celebrated use of Goffman's theory of 'framing' and Alberto Melucci's equally celebrated work on the use of 'symbolic codes' (Chapter 7) are designed to bring an understanding of *how* social movements are formed through the mobilization of 'hearts and minds' – how they capture and extend what people understand of their own individual and collective situations and what they can do to alter them.

In recent times Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly have returned to the task of addressing the mechanisms and processes that link political structures and agents in an ambitious attempt to show both 'why' and 'how' political activity occurs across the spectrum from popular revolution through industrial action to terrorist cells, as well as in the reformist politics typically associated with social movements. Describing himself as a 'recovering structuralist', Tarrow has commented of the model of 'contentious politics' represented by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly in Chapter 8, that it emphasizes how mobilization is realized through social interaction and puts social construction at the centre of the analysis (Tarrow, 2006). The focus on 'mechanisms and processes' is intended to capture how structure and agency are dynamically entwined when mobilization challenges existing social structures and relationships of power. It is up to the reader to decide whether McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly have succeeded in creating a theoretical framework which will enable the analysis of dynamic mobilization in reality (see also McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001).

Changing Citizenship

As well as a status which is attributed to members of democratic societies, 'citizenship' is also a theoretical concept that political sociologists have used to understand the role and effects of political participation in pursuit of social justice. Like the liberal practice of citizenship, citizenship theory has developed in such a way as to stress entitlements – classically, in T.H. Marshall's model, which is still the common reference-point for sociologists working in this area – to civil rights of individual freedom, political rights of participation and social rights to basic levels of provision for education, housing and welfare, 'to share in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society' (Marshall, 1992, p. 8). However, as Bryan Turner's widely cited 'Outline for a Theory of Citizenship' (Chapter 9) shows, Marshall's evolutionary and ethnocentric model, developed with England in mind and with an exclusive focus on class, is in fact very limited for an understanding of the range of types of citizenship that is evident from comparison of different

national state formations and how they have been achieved. It is also limited in respect of the variety of types of citizens within any particular state.

The other essays in Part IV each take up different aspects of differentiated citizenship and also the even more fundamental issue of exclusion on which all citizenship, as membership of a particular group, is based. In each case, questions are raised concerning how citizenship can be conceived of and practised in such a way as to better approximate what the status of 'citizen' seems to promise: genuine equality of participation and solidarity within societies across, and despite, legitimate differences of embodiment, personal biography and cultural affiliation.

Ruth Lister's essay (Chapter11) follows the tradition of feminist work on citizenship in that it deals with the exclusion of women from the ostensibly gender-neutral practices of citizenship (see also Pateman, 1989; Walby, 1994). Historically, women were not permitted to be citizens and this gendered exclusion continues to structure citizenship today. 'Citizenship' was granted or achieved for men as heads of households in paid employment and/or as soldiers, so that when women are now accorded the same citizenship rights as men, the persisting differences in women's lives, both public and private, produces gendered inequalities in the enjoyment of those rights. Although feminists are well aware of the problems, finding a solution that does not exacerbate either the neglect of gender as a dimension of citizenship, nor the liberal depoliticization of citizenship by reducing it to formal rights, is, however, extraordinarily difficult to create, both theoretically and politically. Lister systematically explores both the possibilities and the dangers of her proposed synthesis of equality and difference as the basis of genuinely universal citizenship (see also Bock and James, 1992).

Rogers Brubaker's provocative essay 'The Return of Assimilation?' (Chapter 10) is similarly concerned with issues of equality, difference and solidarity, and builds on his influential comparative work on the rights of migrants in France, Germany and the USA (Brubaker, 1992). Brubaker defines 'assimilation' in a very particular way, to distinguish it from 'assimilationism', the 'harshly homogenizing state projects' (p. 219) to which migrants to Europe in the 1960s were subjected, along with the overt racism of the time against which there were no formal sanctions. Brubaker argues that the new emphasis on migrants as 'similar' rather than 'different', in the USA as well as in Europe, is much more benign than assimilationism: it need not lead to demands that citizens all adopt the same cultural norms and it should provide a lever against the 'separate but equal' policies to which migrants and denizens are subjected, especially in France and Germany, which he likens to apartheid. He asks, for example, why we should not expect that, over time, migrants will become more similar to those of the national majority on all social indices. This is indeed an interesting and worthwhile question that goes to heart of research into citizenship. However, other theorists working on this area are far less optimistic about the 'return to assimilation' as a tendency, seeing it precisely as exacerbating racism which not only constructs cultural differences in terms of hierarchy, but also puts pressure on racialized minorities to conform to majority norms which, by definition, they will always be judged as failing to adopt fully or properly (Back *et al.*, 2002; Fortier, 2007).

In Chapter 12 Etienne Balibar is similarly concerned, though in a different way, with what has been called 'postnational citizenship' (Soysal, 1994; Habermas, 2001). Yasmin Soysal's careful empirical work on denizens and migrants has demonstrated that, to some extent at least, the link between national identity and citizenship is coming apart, as long-term residents in

national states increasingly mobilize to secure virtually all the rights (with the very significant exception of voting rights in general elections) to which citizens are entitled (Soysal, 1994). Nevertheless, as Balibar argues, the question of whether European citizenship is possible must go to the heart of how modern citizenship has been founded on the absolute exclusion of non-nationals. There remains, in European law itself as it was established by the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, an absolute distinction between citizens who are members of the national state and non-citizens: European citizenship is only granted to those who are the citizens of member states. This distinction is nowhere more visible than in the cases of those who seek political asylum to remain in a European state for fear of persecution in the country of which they are a national and who endure lack of respect and even violation of their fundamental human rights as a result (Castles and Miller, 2003; Nash forthcoming). Denying European citizenship to anyone who is not a citizen of an EU member state is not, as Balibar points out, a principled exclusion; it simply reiterates the practical exclusion that was historically instituted by the nation-state, inaugurated in Europe and then exported to the rest of the world through colonialization and decolonialization. There is, therefore, no truly supranational European citizenship: it remains to be invented (see also Balibar, 2004).

Ideology and Hegemony

We now turn explicitly to research on the ideas and values that structure people's understanding of politics and their own relationships to radical or reformist social change. This work is covered in Parts V and VI.

Part V, 'Ideology and Hegemony', concerns what I have called the 'shadow' question of political sociology: why do those who seem to benefit least from existing social arrangements largely accept them? In contrast to the minority of people who actively mobilize for better social conditions, for voice and for the full realization of their rights, whether by violent revolution or through reformist social movements or political parties, the majority do not organize or act collectively outside the minimal commitments of voting or belonging to trade unions – and the numbers of those who go even that far have been declining for some time. Is it that most people are largely contented with their lot? And if this is the case, why are they contented? Is it that they don't see very much wrong with society and, if so, why not?

The tradition of sociology which has most elaborated the question of why people largely accept the social conditions of their lives is Marxism. Marxists begin from the premise that, since most people in society are subjected to domination and exploitation, the question of why such conditions are so rarely challenged is highly significant. In the 1970s this question was explored in neo-Marxist thought through the concepts of ideology and hegemony initially developed by the key figures of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. Although these theories of ideology now look dated, presupposing, as they do, a very idealistic commitment to a highly technically advanced communist society that is to be born out of the contradictions of capitalism, the question they raise and address concerning why most people accept the conditions of their lives continues to be amongst the most important of political sociology.

Louis Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (Chapter 13) was incredibly influential in political sociology in the 1970s. In this work, as in other political sociology of the time, class is understood to be the principal category of social organization, but this time it is the Marxist definition of class that is central: class is both the relationship to the means

of production and the intrinsic antagonism that structures capitalist societies and their future possibilities. Although Althusser's rather functionalist analysis of ideology from both Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives met with wide criticism (Abercrombie and Turner, 1978; Barrett, 1980), his theory was also seen as a major advance in Marxist understandings of the reproduction of advanced capitalism because it showed how class relations were obscured in contemporary societies and yet how ideology has 'relative autonomy' from economic forces. Today there are two aspects of Althusser's theory of ideology that have proved of lasting influence. First is the understanding that ideas are material; they are embedded in practices rather than existing as the contents of individual consciousness. Second is Althusser's innovative view – which he developed drawing on psychoanalysis – that ideology is a structured and, in a sense, almost a motivated, misrecognition of reality (Barrett, 1988). The work of Slavoj Žižeck on popular culture, of which we provide a short, and typically engaging and accessible sample in Chapter 15, is heir to Althusser's legacy in both respects (see also Žižek, 1990).

Stuart Hall's work (perhaps most celebrated as foundational for the new discipline of Cultural Studies in the 1980s) was just as influenced by the work of Gramsci as it was by Althusser, and also by such diverse trends of thought as that of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and the cultural theory of Raymond Williams (Gilroy, Grossberg and McRobbie, 2000; Morley and Chen, 1996). In addition to its clear synthesis of abstract and philosophically difficult ideas concerning culture and ideology, Hall's work was especially important because of his systematic attempt to apply those ideas to the analysis of concrete issues of contemporary social life. His essay, 'Culture, the Media and the "Ideological Effect"'(Chapter 14), is not simply an illustration of neo-Marxist theory; it also uses this theory to understand how the media work to represent, construct and, at the same time, obscure knowledge concerning the fundamental social relations of class society, in part through a sophisticated negotiation with political perspectives which might otherwise lead viewers and readers to challenge the conditions of their own lives.

Political Culture and Cultural Politics

Part VI, the second section on ideas and values, is more concerned with continuities and traditions than with the possibilities of radical political change. As a term, 'culture' is more neutral than 'ideology' and 'hegemony'. Although, notoriously, 'culture' is the term in the social sciences with the greatest variety of definitions, none of them implies that culture masks or conceals the reality of social conditions (Williams, 1976). It is largely for this reason that 'culture' has replaced 'ideology' in political sociology; it avoids the difficult issue of how social theorists are able to escape the trap of misrecognition, given that it is historically determined, while other members of society apparently do not (Barrett, 1988). However, the term 'culture' is not without problems of its own. One of the main criticisms of uses of 'culture' in recent times is that it often suggests a consensus which is somehow expressive of a social totality. The assumption that values and beliefs are shared across a society, and that they explain people's motivations and actions, can be just as determinist, just as limiting for an understanding of political agency, as any theory of objective social structures.

Clifford Geertz's engaging account of the Balinese cockfight in Chapter 16 – although it is from the fieldwork of an anthropologist – has been celebrated in political sociology for the way in which it shows how the most ordinary, albeit ritualized, social events can be

interpreted by social researchers as structuring the whole society (Chabal and Daloz, 2006). Geertz develops Weber's insight that 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he [sic] himself has spun' (quoted in Geertz, 1973, p. 5) to stunning effect here to demonstrate how hierarchical, competitive and yet solidaristic, social relations are maintained in embodied practices which make a 'deep' sense to participants. Far from being the dupes of dominant ideology, Geertz argues that participants are themselves aware of how the cockfight sorts and ranks individuals in their society. Indeed, the very way in which the cockfight works as a kind of meta-narrative depends on the interpretations which the participants bring to it. Geertz's account, therefore, is of the reproduction of power relations which depends on the knowing collusion – indeed, the participation – of those who are themselves hierarchically arranged in social relations of power.

Robert Bellah's account of 'civil religion' in the USA (Chapter 17) is similar to Geertz's view of culture: civil religion is a collection of 'beliefs, symbols and rituals' which are continually reaffirmed at key occasions (Thanksgiving Day, the Fourth of July and so on) when people come together to celebrate their common experience of US society. According to Bellah, civil religion in the USA has been formed historically in the making of the nation as a kind of 'legitimating myth', or meta-narrative, which ennobles political life and provides it with the quasi-transcendent purpose of what is sometimes called 'Manifest Destiny': US politicians, and indeed, indirectly, US citizens too, have a God-given duty to spread liberal democracy across the world (Lieven, 2004). It is important to note that this civil religion is, in principle, distinct from Christianity: the USA is a secular state, and politicians are not subject to the interpretations of religious leaders; and, as it is God who is watching over the USA, not Christ, it is open to any religious interpretations, including Christian, Jewish or Muslim. In practice, however, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that historically Christianity has dominated the US state: Native Americans, for example, were schooled by teachers who punished them for speaking in their own languages, Mormon polygamy has been outlawed and so on (Porterfield, 1994).

The view of culture put forward by Geertz and Bellah, however powerfully it appears to represent the connections between what people believe and how society is organized, is now seen as problematic. In Geertz's usage, 'culture' suggests that society is 'all of a piece' in terms of agreement over how it is and should be organized. Despite Geertz's note at the beginning of his essay that there have been repeated attempts by colonial and national elites to ban cockfighting, this is rather an ahistorical and decontextualized view of culture (cf. Hannerz, 1996; Ortner, 2006). Are there such homogeneous societies? Have there ever been? Bellah's idea of civil religion is more historically informed, but it is no less essentialist in its assumption that there is a single dominant understanding which sums up America to Americans, which makes sense of society 'for the whole fabric of American life' (p. 417). We have chosen these essays for this volume because they are examples of the kind of account of how culture works that has been influential in political sociology, and because they have themselves been influential. Such accounts, which are ostensibly based on an interpretative methodology but which actually deploy culture as an *explanation* of how forms of society are constructed and reproduced, have had a very powerful impact on the sociological imagination.

Uma Narayan's essay on contestations of *sati* in India (Chapter 18) has been selected as an example of a more historical and political understanding of culture itself. It builds on previous work in feminist post-colonial theory to show that culture is not necessarily 'deep' in Geertz's

sense; while it is made up of symbols, beliefs and values, it does not necessarily – indeed it, may never – express the social values of a totality to which all wholeheartedly subscribe, and assumptions that it does inevitably work to privilege still further the status of the powerful (see, for example, Spivak, 1988, 1996). Certainly in contemporary post-colonial societies, whether they were colonized or colonizing, culture is much more likely to be pluralist, fluid and relatively fast-changing. This does not mean that participants are oriented towards culture as intrinsically playful: on the contrary, we see from Narayan's account how culture can engage deep emotions; and what culture means, how it is interpreted and contested is most certainly tied up with the reproduction of power relations. Narayan's account is explicitly concerned with cultural politics, with how culture is differently interpreted by different groups in society; it is what is at stake in interpretative struggles over what is valuable and how society should be organized around common values.

Making Things Public and the Public Sphere

What is politics? This is obviously a huge question, with a long history of diverse answers. As we have seen from this brief Introduction, and as can be explored more fully in this volume, politics is not simply the activities through which parties and officials engage the state; attempts to remake civil society and culture are also political. One thing that all definitions of politics would seem to share, however, is that, at the very least, politics always involves *visibility*. Politics involves conflicts over how common life is structured, and these conflicts therefore take place in public.

The concept of the 'public sphere' was first introduced into political sociology by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, published in 1962 and translated into English in 1989. Part VII opens with a brief synopsis of the argument of that book, written by Habermas himself for an encyclopedia. Habermas's work in this area has been hugely influential: it is impossible to consider the public sphere without reference to his pioneering study. His concept has, however, also been very widely criticized, especially for the way in which he privileges rationalist debate as necessary for democratic political change and for what are seen as his unduly pessimistic conclusions, which he reaches because of his exclusive focus on the bourgeois public sphere, neglecting the historical importance of more radical, subaltern publics (Calhoun, 1992). Indeed, in his more recent work Habermas himself now takes a somewhat more optimistic view of the possibilities of the mediated public sphere, arguing that under certain circumstances, which include ethical media, actors in civil society can legitimately influence the public sphere, which can then influence change in the political system (Habermas, 1996).

Habermas's later work is largely a response to those critics who have not only demonstrated the historical and theoretical weaknesses of his original argument, but have also adapted and developed the concept of the public sphere. Nancy Fraser's essay (Chapter 20) is both a detailed critique of Habermas's theory of the public sphere and an adaptation of his work to illuminate and enable the ongoing radical politics of social movements. Fraser shows how taking a more realistic, sociological approach to how subaltern publics have actually worked historically can contribute to our understanding of how they may continue to be effective for those who become marginalized from mainstream political processes in the future. Fraser anticipates that multiple public spheres which are, or which attempt to become, 'strong' – that

is, to become part of state structures as well as be active in civil society – will continue to be important for radical social change. However, what Fraser's account gains in realism, it may lose in terms of what, from the perspective of Habermas's problem of legitimacy, is a key question: is Fraser's theory simply an account of *force*, of how particular groups actually achieve change, rather than an investigation of the norms of democratic legitimacy, of how publics *should* (and, under some circumstances, may) work to change society?

In complete contrast to the Habermasian tradition of theorizing the public sphere, we have also selected a chapter from what Bruno Latour describes as a 'catalogue', his edited book with Peter Weibel, *Making Things Public*. Latour's understanding, which emerges from the tradition of science studies, is interesting because of the way in which he focuses on democracy as concerned with division rather than with consensus. For Latour, democracy does not concern the means of reaching agreement over how things are, or should be, arranged. Rather, it concerns the sites at which people come together to reflect upon how well the relationships between humans and things are represented. What participants in democratic assemblies (which are and must be plural, according to Latour) have in common is the possibility of going beyond simple coexistence, of living 'side-by-side' to build 'intertwined form(s) of cohabitation' (p. 536). What is unclear about Latour's understanding of the public, however, is how it is related to other social structures, especially those of the state and the economy. According to the socialist tradition – now, historically, post-socialist according to Fraser – democracy should enable people to gain greater control over the conditions of their own lives, which means greater control over the structures within which we live in complex, advanced capitalist societies. One of Latour's contributions to social theory is his understanding of this complexity and how it is represented where issues of science and technology are in question (Latour, 2005). However, his theory of 'making things public' appears to neglect the important question of the difference that democratic engagement may and should make to structures of the state and market.

The final essay in the volume, an extract from Zygmunt Bauman's book *In Search of Politics* demonstrates the pessimism of those who argue that there is no longer a public sphere. It also shows the importance of the concept, since Bauman provocatively concludes that, without a public, there is also no longer any possibility of politics at all. Bauman's social theory emphasizes agency, not for reasons of theoretical preference but because he sees a privileging of individual agency as one of the markers of the neo-liberal restructuring of modern societies. Individuals are forced to make choices over every aspect of their lives because structures which previously constrained individual choice have been remade in order to increase it. This does not, however, mean that individuals are freer than ever before. We are not freer because, to an unprecedented extent, we lack collective control over the social conditions of our lives – over the ways in which individual choice is structured and patterned by forces that cannot be addressed by individuals acting alone. According to Bauman, we lack such control because the private sphere has been allowed to invade the public and this has consequences that are just as serious as those that arose when the totalitarian state invaded the private sphere in the twentieth century.

The extract from Bauman's *In Search of Politics* is an appropriate conclusion to this volume. As I have noted throughout this Introduction, political sociology has moved from an emphasis on class as the determining structure of our lives to a much more pluralist, fluid and nuanced understanding of how social structure and political agency are entwined. Not all political

sociologists would agree with Bauman's pessimistic conclusions. As we see in this volume, there are many examples and accounts of how political agency as collective empowerment continues to be important in contemporary societies. However, most political sociologists would agree with Bauman that we are currently living through times of extraordinary social change, accompanied by understandings of social life as characterized by rapid, fundamental and continual reinvention. As a result, the principal task of political sociologists – to explore the relationship between social structures and the possibilities and effects of politics – has become more challenging than ever before.

Conclusion

The influential essays that have been selected for this volume model the relationship between social structures and politics in different ways. In fact, the models they propose are rather disparate: they emphasize and take account of different aspects of social reality rather than engaging in a single research programme. None is entirely adequate to understanding the new world we now face. However, together they do offer something of a map for future research. Partial, distorted, clearly misleading in parts, it is a map which has been constructed on the basis of clear, rigorous thought and careful research, that of the authors represented here and also those with whom they have engaged in collaboration or in critique. It is the map that political sociologists must use now to generate questions about the future possibilities of politics and to research answers to those questions.

KATE NASH

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Part I
Class Elections and Parties

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CLASS VOTING IN CAPITALIST DEMOCRACIES SINCE WORLD WAR II: Dealignment, Realignment, or Trendless Fluctuation?

Jeff Manza
Department of Sociology, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802

Michael Hout
Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720

Clem Brooks
Department of Sociology, State University of New York, Stony Brook, New York

KEY WORDS: political sociology, class analysis, political behavior, political change

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ABSTRACT

Over the last two decades, many social scientists have argued that the stable class politics of industrial capitalism is giving way to newer types of social and attitudinal cleavages. Some scholars have gone further to associate what they see as significant declines in the anchorings provided by class with the rise of new political movements, parties, and even politicians standing for office completely outside traditional party systems. Advances in class theory and statistical methods coupled with the availability of high quality data have led others to reexamine the issue. They have suggested that these arguments reflect a misreading of the empirical evidence and/or exaggerate the significance of these developments. We conclude that despite the absence of a clear consensus in the field, theories asserting a universal process of class dealignment are not supported.

INTRODUCTION

The sociological study of politics centers on two broad concerns: the relationship among social structures, social action, and political institutions (or more generally the interaction between "states" and "societies"), and the social bases of individuals' political behavior. The seminal postwar work in political sociology, Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man* (1960), for example, explicitly developed analyses in both of these areas. In recent years, however, the state tradition has become the predominant focus of political sociology (Alford & Friedland 1985, Barrow 1993, Haynes & Jacobs 1994: 71). This review considers the more neglected side of the classical tradition: the relationship between social divisions and political behavior, specifically the relationship between class and voting in the capitalist democracies of Western Europe, North America, and Australia.

The status of the "democratic class struggle" (Anderson & Davidson 1943, Lipset 1981 [1960], Korpi 1983, Esping-Anderson 1994) has been the subject of vigorous recent scholarly debates. A number of analysts have suggested that the stable class politics of industrial capitalism is giving way to newer cleavages based on gender, identity, and values. Some scholars have gone further to argue that class dealignment, along with declining political salience of other social cleavages, is leading to increased political instability in the form of new political movements, new parties, and even politicians standing for office completely outside traditional party systems. Others have countered that conclusions of class "dealignment" are a misreading of the empirical evidence and/or an exaggeration of the significance of these developments. Instead of class dealignment, defenders of class analysis argue that the class/vote association is merely subject to patterns of "trendless fluctuation" or, in exceptional cases, class "realignment." Our task is to review and evaluate these debates and the evidence.

We begin our review with an overview of the early scholarship on class voting. In part two, we consider the evidence for the declining significance of class for electoral politics. Part three examines research that challenges these findings, insisting on the continuing significance of class. In both of these sections, we discuss and evaluate both theoretical and empirical studies based on single-nation or cross-national comparisons, although to keep the discussion manageable we limit ourselves to the English language literature. In part four we address the methodological issues—including how to define class—that partly frame the debate. Last, we review analyses of the class basis of nonvoting, an important topic for class politics but one often isolated from the analysis of vote choice.

We note at the outset that our discussion of the literatures on class and voting addresses two related topics that have each been the subject of heated debates.

First, there are controversies over the proper way of measuring the level of class voting and in particular of assessing the presence or absence of trends in the association between class and voting. A variety of statistical approaches have been developed to assess trends in class voting, and these often produce different estimates of the magnitude and changes over time in class-vote association (Goldthorpe 1994, Weakliem 1995). Second, there are controversies over the proper interpretation of the observed trends (or nontrends). Researchers have offered different kinds of institutional, historical, and cultural analyses to account for empirical findings.

SCHOLARLY ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

The nineteenth century socialist movements and parties spawned an enduring interest in the association between class and voting (Przeworski 1980, Przeworski & Sprague 1986). Marx argued that the industrial working class would form the backbone of the revolutionary transformation of capitalism. Many socialists and social democratic leaders later assumed, and their conservative opponents feared, that if workers won the franchise, they could lay the foundation for an electoral road to socialism. By 1895, Engels' infamous "Introduction" to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850* could hail the steady progress made by social democratic parties in Western Europe and suggest that the socialist revolution could be brought about through the ballot box by workers voting for socialist parties (Engels 1978 [1895]).

The social scientific study of class voting is usually motivated by an interest in testing the assumption of a direct link between class and electoral behavior as posited by theorists and opponents of social democracy. Early attempts to study the class-vote link used ecological techniques to infer the voting preferences of different income groups (Siegfried 1913, Ogburn & Hill 1935, Ogburn & Coombs 1940). Anderson & Davidson (1943) used Northern California precinct registration data to analyze how occupation affected political preference and changes in party identification during the New Deal period. The advent of election surveys, however, made possible more direct testing of the class-vote link. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia made landmark contributions in the 1940s (Lazarsfeld et al 1948, Berelson et al 1954). They compiled evidence of a social basis for political behavior in election surveys in Erie County, Ohio (1940) and Elmira, New York (1948). More influential still were the empirical findings and theories developed by the "Michigan School" (especially Campbell et al 1960). The American National Election Study (ANES) has been carried out biannually in the United States since 1948, and similar national surveys based on the Michigan model have been periodically carried out in virtually every western democracy since the 1960s.

The seminal postwar voting research studies offered three distinct hypotheses about the association between an individual's class location and partisan preference, hypotheses that have continued to inform contemporary research. The simplest model emphasized material interests as the foundation for class voting. For example, Lipset and his colleagues argued in 1954 that class voting is a matter of "...simple self-interest. The leftist parties represent themselves as instruments of social change in the direction of equality; the lower-income groups will support them in order to become economically better off, whereas the higher-income groups will oppose them in order to maintain their economic advantages" (Lipset et al 1954:1136; also Downs 1957: Ch. 3). The assumption that material class interests provide the foundation for class voting has remained the standard explanation shared by virtually all analysts to some degree or another (Evans 1993:263). But the empirical fact that many members of a particular class do not vote according to narrow class interests (for example, Heath et al 1991:68–69 note that members of a class rarely provide more than 60% of their votes to their natural class party), however, suggests that further theorization of the mechanisms linking class membership and voting are needed (Lipset et al 1954:1136, Scarbrough 1987, Weakliem & Heath 1994a).

The "Columbia School" (Lazarsfeld et al 1948, Berelson et al 1954) provided an explanation for voters' decision-making that went beyond the simple invocation of interests. The core of their findings was the discovery of very high levels of stable partisanship on the part of voters, and that voters susceptible to changing their votes in the context of the campaign were those least interested in politics (Lazarsfeld et al 1948:69). They explained this seeming anomaly by emphasizing the importance of the cumulative effects of the historical experiences of social groups and the reinforcing effects of relatively homogenous social networks (Lazarsfeld et al 1948:137–149, Berelson et al 1954:88–109). Class voting in this model reflects the strength of common experiences of key historical moments and the reinforcing effects of intra-class friendship networks and social organizations (see also Frankel 1991 and Weakliem & Heath 1994a for recent applications).

The most influential of the postwar approaches to understanding political behavior was that of the Michigan School, in particular the analysis developed in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al 1960). The Michigan School viewed the mechanisms of voting as occupying positions along a funnel that represented both a causal and a temporal ordering (Campbell et al 1960:24–25). Social structural variables, including class origins and occupation, were seen as operating at the mouth of the funnel, leading to the social-psychological attributes (primarily political attitudes and partisan identification) at the narrow end of the funnel that ultimately predicted vote choice. Emphasizing a lack of ideological awareness and political sophistication on the part of most Americans (Converse 1964), the Michigan School viewed class voting as requiring

a level of political sophistication unavailable to a significant portion of the electorate. Voters who were aware of their class location and who could make active use of class voting heuristics were much more likely to cast a vote consistent with their class (Campbell et al 1960: Ch. 13).

The accumulation of national election surveys since the 1960s has permitted detailed examination of theses about the association of class voting over extended time periods. Through the early 1970s, most findings suggested that class had a strong—though variable—influence on voting behavior (Lipset 1981 [1960], Alford 1963, Lipset & Rokkan 1967a, Rose 1974a). Lipset & Rokkan's influential theoretical synthesis (1967b) argued that two revolutions, the national revolution and the industrial revolution, initiated everywhere processes of social differentiation and conflict. The two revolutions produced four basic sets of cleavages: 1) church(es) vs the state; 2) dominant vs subject cultures; 3) primary vs secondary economy; and 4) employers vs workers (1967b: 14). The precise political articulation of these cleavages varied from country to country, depending on geopolitical structures and the timing of political and economic development, but all countries were subject to the same basic pattern. Further industrialization led to the decline of most types of social cleavage other than class, magnifying the importance of the democratic class struggle and "freezing" the cleavage structure (Lipset & Rokkan 1967b; see also Rose & Urwin 1970, Bartolini & Mair 1990).

THE DECLINING SIGNIFICANCE OF CLASS?

A series of setbacks experienced by social democratic or working-class parties, the emergence of religious, nativist, and regionalist political movements (cleavages long thought to have been depoliticized), and the sudden appearance of "new" issues such as ecological and antinuclear concerns have given rise to a wide range of challenges to class-based models of politics. A variety of labels have been offered to characterize this new environment: Scholars have variously claimed to find evidence of the "declining political significance of class" (Clark et al 1993), a "loosening of social structure" (Burler & Kavanaugh 1984:8), an "opening up" of the electorate (Rose & McAllister 1986), the emergence (especially among younger cohorts) of a "new politics" or "postmaterialist" orientations (Ingelhart 1977, 1990, Baker et al 1981, Dalton 1988), a general process of "dealignment" (Sarlvik & Crewe 1983, Nie et al 1981), or "the decline of cleavage politics" (Franklin et al 1992a). In this section we review the empirical foundations of the hypothesized declining significance of class and the attempts to explain it.

Empirical Evidence of Declining Class Voting

Figure 1 replicates a graph that has been presented—with only minor variations—in numerous publications as evidence of the decline of class voting

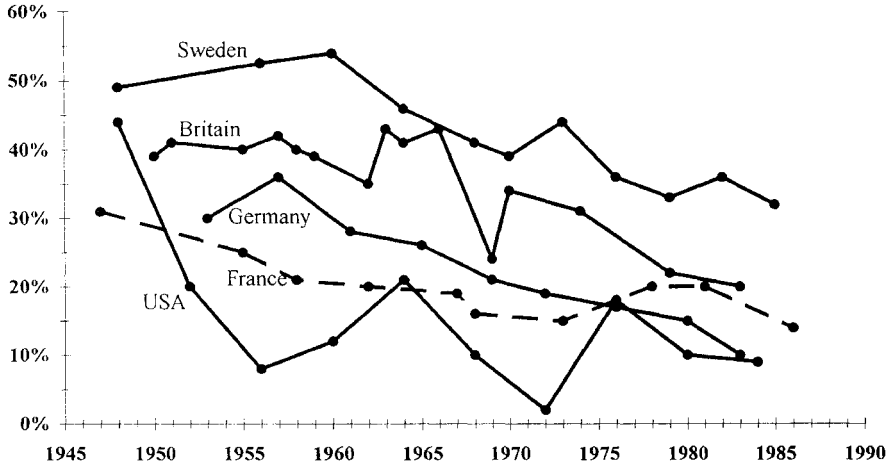

Figure 1 Alford Index of class voting shows decline over time. (Source: Clark et al 1993, Figure 3)

(e.g. Lipset 1981:505, Inglehart 1984:30, Dalton 1988:157, Huckfeldt & Kohfeld 1989:3, Minkenberg & Inglehart 1989:85, Clark & Lipset 1991:403, Piven 1992a:7, Clark et al 1993:312). The graph is based on an extension of Alford's (1963, 1967) deceptively simple index of class voting, first introduced in the 1960s. The "Alford index," as it has come to be known, measures class voting as the percentage of "persons in manual occupations voting for Left parties" minus "the percentage of persons in nonmanual occupations voting for Left parties" (Alford 1963:79–80). The figure suggests that in many different countries support for left parties by manual workers has declined while employers and nonmanual employees' support for those same parties has increased. (We analyze the statistical properties of the Alford index, and the other measures considered in this and the next section of the paper in the methodological section below).

A second, related type of empirical evidence offered to support the declining significance of class thesis considers levels of "absolute" class voting, defined by Crewe (1986:620) as (referring to Britain) "middle-class Conservative plus working class Labour [votes] as a proportion of the total votes" cast (also Dunleavy 1987, Rose & McAllister 1986). The intuition behind the absolute class voting measure is that each voter has a natural class party (left parties for manual workers and right parties for nonmanual workers in the two class model); if the proportion of voters choosing their natural class party falls, the levels of class voting can be said to have declined (Weakliem 1995). A number of analysts have used absolute measures of class voting to demonstrate declin-

ing class voting (Sarlvik & Crewe 1983, Crewe 1986, Rose & McAllister 1986).

Both the Alford and absolute class voting approaches generally consider only the gross effects of class on vote choice (except Rose & McAllister 1986). A number of scholars have used multivariate models to test for change in the relative net predictive power of class in comparison with other significant social structural variables (Franklin 1985, Franklin et al [1992b] contains multivariate regression analyses from 15 countries). These results tend to vary widely from country to country, and to a lesser extent from election to election within a given country. Nevertheless, in many countries scholars have claimed to find that regression results show that class explains a reduced proportion of the variance in recent elections and hence has declined in importance for political behavior (especially the studies in Franklin et al 1992b).

Explanations of the Decline of Class Voting

Empirical evidence of the declining significance of class voting has given rise to a wide range of theoretical explanations. Many general sociological arguments assert the decline of class per se. Social scientists from virtually all points along the political spectrum (to cite but a few, Hobsbawm 1981, Gorz 1982, Baumann 1982, Laclau & Mouffe 1985, Sorensen 1991, Clark & Lipset 1991) have heralded (in one way or another) the withering away of class. Here we consider only those arguments that have been explicitly linked to electoral politics. At least five distinct theories have been offered: 1) working class "embourgeoisement" and social mobility explanations; 2) the emergence of new forms of social division replacing "class" as a source of political cleavage; 3) "cognitive mobilization" approaches; 4) value change approaches emphasizing the emergence of a "second" left; and 5) macrolevel approaches, which focus on party strategies and changing structures of global capitalism.

EMBOURGEOISEMENT/SOCIAL MOBILITY APPROACHES Various explanations for the decline of electoral differentiation on the basis of class emphasize either the growing affluence or "embourgeoisement" of the working class and lower-level white collar workers (Halle & Romo 1991). Although not in wide use today, they nevertheless still provide a key standpoint in the debates over class politics. [Sainsbury (1985) provides a critical review of working class affluence theories of changing vote patterns in the Scandanavian countries.] Related arguments emphasize the importance of occupational and social mobility for declining class voting, seeking to assess the impact of individual mobility experiences on political behavior. Most of these studies have found that the mobile are likely to adopt a middle standpoint between their class of origin and class of destination (Turner 1992, Weakliem 1992; De Graaf et al 1995 argue for an "acculturation" model in which the mobile gradually adopt the

political norms of the class of destination). The significantly greater levels of class mobility in the postwar period (Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992), resulting largely from the steady and nearly universal growth of professional and managerial employment (Esping-Anderson 1994, Brint 1994), suggest that mobility may be constraining class voting.

NEW SOCIAL DIVISIONS A second set of explanations for the decline of class voting emphasizes the increased importance of cross-cutting, nonclass forms of social cleavage in the politics of postindustrial capitalist democracies. A wide range of theories of working class fragmentation exist in the literature (e.g. the studies in Piven 1992b). Other new or reemerging cleavages are based on ascribed characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or linguistic differences, as the "identity" struggles of social groups such as movements of gays and lesbians, regional movements, and others (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Many of these divisions have long historical roots that can be traced back to earlier political divisions which have often been dormant throughout the twentieth century. The profusion of new axes of conflict suggests to some that a focus on class per se is mistaken (Balbus 1982, Cohen 1982). Much of this literature has not attempted to test these propositions systematically with election data. An important exception to this generalization can be found in a series of arguments that a "consumption cleavage" increasingly divides British voters, cutting across the standard class divisions by dividing those relying on the public sector for housing and income from those dependent on the market (Dunleavy 1980, Duke & Edgell 1984, Taylor-Gooby 1986).

POLITICAL LEARNING APPROACHES A third set of arguments explains the decline of class in terms of the increased capacity of a better-educated citizenry to make political decisions independent of the constraints of class loyalty or other social attributes (Dalton et al 1984, Rose & McAllister 1986, Dalton 1988, Inglehart 1990: Ch. 10, Franklin et al 1992a,b). Voters are viewed as increasingly capable of rational assessment of party and candidate platforms (Nie et al 1981) and therefore less likely to rely on simple class-based heuristics (Rose & McAllister 1986). Inglehart (1977, 1990) described this process as one of "cognitive mobilization," while other scholars have characterized it as the emergence of "open" electoral competition (Rose & McAllister 1986).

As Weakliem (1995) has noted, the political learning thesis distinguishes between voters shaped primarily by class (whom Weakliem characterizes as "class loyalists") versus voters who make electoral choices independent of class influences. The most sophisticated attempts to defend this thesis typically assert that increased voter rationality can be traced either to rising "issue voting" (e.g. Sarlvik & Crewe 1983, Franklin 1985, Shanks & Miller 1990) or to retrospective or prospective assessments of party performance (Tufte

1978, Kinder & Kiewiet 1981, Hibbs 1987, Achen 1992, Haynes & Johnson 1994). Political learning approaches often link the increased capacities of voters to make independent electoral choices to class dealignment (e.g. Franklin 1985, Rose & McAllister 1986), although the directionality of the relationship between issue voting and class dealignment often appears circular (Scarbrough 1987:222).

POSTMATERIALISM AND THE TWO LEFTS? Perhaps the most influential of the microlevel explanations for the decline of class voting emphasizes the importance of value change and the rise of new attitudinal cleavages. In particular, a large literature has developed around the claim that the historical links between workers and parties of the left have weakened at the same time that a "second" left rooted in segments of the middle class has grown up (Parkin 1968, Lipset 1981:503–23, Offe 1985). This is said to have produced a global trend toward declining class voting for two principal reasons. First, the increased proportions of left party support drawn from middle class sectors have weakened the class coherence of party platforms as "new" issues such as concerns about environmental protection, peace, civil rights for previously ignored groups such as women and gays and lesbians, and more generally quality-of-life issues have arisen (Offe 1985, Inglehart & Rabier 1986). Second, as left parties have altered their appeals to become more inclusive, their appeal to workers concerned with "material" issues has weakened (Przeworski & Sprague 1986).

The oldest source of the "two lefts" argument is a theoretical tradition that seeks to understand the anomaly of support for socialism among middle class intellectuals. Starting from the observation that virtually every socialist and revolutionary party (even in the third world) was founded and led not by workers but middle class intellectuals, these "new class" theories argue that intellectuals are often drawn to nonmarket forms of rationality critical of capitalist society (Gouldner 1979, Eyerman et al 1987), which may ultimately take the form of support for left parties (Alt & Turner 1982, Inglehart 1990, Nieuwbeerta et al 1992). The new class position (and related arguments) does not, however, emphasize the decline of class per se, as the material interests of middle class segments provide the key explanatory mechanism (Brym et al 1989). These arguments may suggest the possibility of class realignment, not dealignment (Hout et al 1994).

The most systematic effort to account for middle class leftism, which clearly does break with class-centered accounts, has grown out of Inglehart's (1977, 1990) "postmaterialist" thesis. In a series of articles and books based on cross-national surveys fielded in ten or more countries in every year since 1973, Inglehart and his colleagues (especially Abramson & Inglehart 1992, Dalton 1988, Inglehart 1977, 1990, Inglehart & Abramson 1994) have set forth an ambitious attempt to explain contemporary patterns of political change.

Inglehart argues that a systematic shift has taken place in values on the part of younger cohorts born into relative affluence during the post-World War II period. These younger cohorts are said to be increasingly concerned with "postmaterialist" priorities while rejecting the "materialist" concerns of earlier cohorts born in a less affluent period. A process of generational replacement is thus occurring in which postmaterialists are gradually becoming the dominant segment of the population in postindustrial societies (Abramson & Inglehart 1992, Inglehart & Abramson 1994), leading to (among other things) a decline in class voting (Inglehart 1984, Inglehart & Rabier 1986; see also Flanagan & Dalton 1984).

MACROLEVEL FORCES The literature considered thus far offers theories of *voters,* not *voting.* The decline in class voting has been explained primarily in terms of changes in voters' attitudes and aptitudes. Macro-structural analyses of party strategies and macroeconomic environment provide a very different impression of the sources of change in the class-vote alignment. Two distinct approaches can be identified: analyses of the "dilemma of electoral socialism," and analyses of the consequences of global economic changes on party strategies and voter coalitions.

The analysis of the history of social democratic parties developed by Przeworski (1980) and Przeworski & Sprague (1986) asserts that parties cannot successfully appeal to all groups, and that they therefore face an electoral trade-off in appealing to different groups of voters. Left parties whose core constituencies are manual workers face an electoral dilemma: Since the working class (defined narrowly by Przeworski & Sprague) are always an electoral minority, left parties must appeal to middle class voters as well if they are to win elections. Yet such strategically necessary maneuvers have important class demobilizing consequences: "whenever leftist parties are successful in mobilizing large electoral support from anyone else they suffer a loss of opportunities among narrowly defined workers" (Przeworski & Sprague 1986:60). This trade-off occurs, according to Przeworski (1980:43), because left parties "must promise to struggle not for objectives specific to workers as a collectivity—those that constitute the public goods for workers as a class—but only those which workers share as individuals with members of other classes." The electoral dilemma thus undermines class voting in two ways. First, it forces parties originally based in the working class to appeal to members of other classes. To the extent they succeed, class-based electoral cleavages decline. Second, it discourages class-based appeals in politics in general in favor of supra-class themes such as appeals to more general themes of consumers, families, economic prosperity or the nation (also Sainsbury 1990:31).

A second set of macrostructural arguments emphasizes the importance of recent changes in the organization of global capitalism in undermining the

prospects for class solidarity and stable class-based electoral alignments (Lash & Urry 1987, Piven 1992b). The rapidity of economic shifts, both between and within sectors, is creating new sets of cross-cutting cleavages that weaken the salience of traditional class divisions. The threat of foreign competition—common to labor and capital—may in some circumstances forge a unity of interests among classes in declining industries and communities (Logan & Molotch 1987). Others have noted that the structural foundations of social democratic hegemony in the working class are being undermined by the penetration of competitive market forces, leading to new sources of fragmentation (Offe 1992).

THE CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE OF CLASS?

While many scholars have raised serious questions about whether class is "dying" (Clark & Lipset 1991), at least with respect to voting and political behavior, others have challenged these conclusions. In this section we begin by considering the empirical evidence that has been offered to demonstrate the continuing significance of the class thesis; then we turn to explanations of recent political change.

Empirical Evidence of the Continuing Significance of Class

Clark & Lipset (1991:403) assert that class voting as measured by the Alford Index "has declined in every country for which data are available." "Continuing" class analysts argue against claims of universal decline, noting wide variation from country to country (Esping-Anderson 1994) and challenge exaggerated claims of electoral instability (Bartolini & Mair 1990). The 15 case studies contained in Franklin et al (1992b)—a volume aiming specifically to demonstrate the decline of social cleavages—vary widely in their estimates of the level and trend in class effects on voting. The loglinear models developed by Nieuwbeerta & De Graaf (1994) to test for the existence of trends in class voting in 16 capitalist democracies established declines for only 6 countries, although the trend parameters were negative in 12 countries (see also Nieuwbeerta 1994). Weakliem & Heath's (1994b) comparative analysis of class voting in Britain, France, and the United States since the 1930s revealed sharply different patterns in the three countries, with France showing no trend over the course of the time series, Britain an increase followed by a decline, and the United States a slow but steady decline. The absence of a universal pattern of decline found in cross-national research suggests the need for more attention to the particular institutional configurations and polities of individual countries, a point central to Lipset's earlier work on class politics (e.g. Lipset 1981 [1960], 1985).

"Continuing" class analysts focusing on individual countries have also challenged the empirical evidence used to demonstrate declining class voting. The Alford index has been challenged on grounds that its two-class scheme and

dichotomization of the dependent voting variable lead to misleading results (Korpi 1972, Myles 1979, Heath et al 1985, Hout et al 1994, but see Kelley & McAllister 1985). Expansion of the class scheme to include a more fine-grained set of distinctions than the manual/nonmanual permits alone appears to explain most of the alleged decline of class voting in the United States (Hout et al 1994). More careful specification of the alignments between class, region, and party in Canada corrects the extremely low level of class voting suggested by Alford index approaches (e.g. Alford 1963, Meisel 1975) and suggests that Canadian class voting levels are closer to those of other capitalist democracies (Ogmundson 1975, Myles 1979, Zipp & Smith 1982, Brym et al 1989).

Class analysts have also empirically challenged the argument that the proportion of the electorate voting along class lines has declined. In their important analyses of class voting in Britain, Heath et al (1985: Ch. 3, 1987, 1991: Ch. 5; Evans et al 1991) use a five-class model based on the Goldthorpe class schema (1987; Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992) and loglinear statistical models to test for changes in the association between class and voting (further discussion of their methodological innovations is provided in the next section). Analyzing the log-odds ratios of the different classes supporting the major parties since 1964, they show that a pattern of "trendless fluctuation," not decline, best captures the association between class and voting during this period. Their findings have been confirmed by other analysts using similar class schemes and statistical techniques (Marshall et al 1988: Ch. 9; Weakliem 1989, 1995; Goldthorpe 1994).

Explanations for the Continuing Significance of Class

Much of the argument that class retains its importance for electoral politics rests on the empirical evidence. However, continuing class analysts have also responded to the various interpretative arguments put forward to explain trends in the class/vote link, offering interpretations significantly different than those typically found in the declining significance of class theories. To maintain the flow of the argument, we examine in order the responses of class analysts to each of the five arguments outlined above.

EMBOURGEOISEMENT/MOBILITY ARGUMENTS Claims about the political importance of rising affluence have been tested in many contexts and found wanting (e.g. Goldthorpe et al 1968, Hamilton 1967, 1972). Similarly, the effects of social mobility have always been much weaker than hypothesized in the classical mobility literature (Turner 1992). Class analysts do recognize the importance of collective mobility, in particular the decline of the manual working class and other changes in class structures of postindustrial societies. For example, Heath et al (1985, 1991) explain a significant portion of the poor electoral results of the Labour Party in Britain as reflecting a substantial decline

in the size of the manual working class in recent decades. Nevertheless, class analysts argue that claims of class dealignment per se can only be evaluated by examining the relative voting patterns within each class, not the size of the classes themselves (Goldthorpe & Marshall 1992:391).

NEW SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND CLASS POLITICS While acknowledging the force of nonclass cleavages on political attitudes (and to a lesser extent, political partisanship), analysts who continue to emphasize the importance of class argue that nonclass cleavages have always existed in capitalist societies and that there is little evidence yet that new cleavages are emerging that are actually bringing about class dealignment, especially with respect to partisanship. The two most systematic attempts to demonstrate the electoral dealigning effects of an emergent social division are the "consumption cleavage" (as discussed above) and, in the American case, the class/race trade-off (Huckfeldt & Kohfeld 1989, Edsall & Edsall 1991). Reanalysis of voting data from Britain has shown that the consumption cleavage has virtually no effect on vote choice once the model is properly specified (Franklin & Page 1984, Heath et al 1985, 1991, Rose & McAllister 1986; but see Taylor-Gooby 1986). Hout et al (1994) reexamine trends in class voting in the United States, showing that the hypothesized class/race trade-off is not reducing the overall effect of class, as decreases in Northern white working class support for the Democrats appears to be offset by a falling regional effect as the American South behaves more like the rest of the country.

POLITICAL LEARNING Claims about the rising importance of issue and ideological voting have been widely debated in political science in recent years, and no consensus has emerged that cognitive mobilization lies behind recent political change (e.g. Scarbrough 1987, Smith 1989). The relevant claim for our purposes, namely, that increasing issue and ideological voting is linked to declining class voting, has recently been examined in Weakliem's (1995) important study. He systematically tests, for the first time, loglinear models of voting, asserting that declining class voting is associated with a rise in the number of "independent" voters, but finding that the fit of "association" models that place all voters on the same continuum is significantly better than the absolute class voting models. Before any firm conclusions can be drawn, however, further work along these lines is needed, both in other national contexts, in cross-national comparisons, and with more refined class schemes.

VALUE AND CHANGE AND THE "TWO LEFTS" The postmaterialist/two lefts thesis has been one of the most widely debated theoretical approaches to political change in recent years (e.g. Hamilton & Wright 1986, Weakliem 1991, Brooks & Manza 1994). Criticisms of the thesis have raised questions

about both the foundations of the theory and its ability to explain voting patterns. Brooks & Manza (1994) develop a foundational critique. They challenge the four-item battery used by Inglehart and test his notion that postmaterialist values constitute a unique dimension of values capable of informing political action. They find that using more sophisticated techniques of measuring values and log-linear statistical techniques showed no evidence that postmaterialist values are distinct from materialist values. Weakliem (1991) considers the ability of the postmaterialist/two lefts thesis to explain party choice in France, the Netherlands, and Italy. While finding some support for Inglehart's claim that postmaterialist values are informing political attitudes, he found that, while all segments of the population are moving in a postmaterialist direction, class differences across cohorts are equally large.

MACROLEVEL ANALYSES The argument that left parties are unable to appeal successfully both to important segments of the working class and to middle class voters has also been challenged. Votes received by left-wing parties in the 1980s in Western Europe, for example, were not appreciably different than their levels of support in earlier periods (e.g. Pulzer 1987, Pierson 1991: Ch. 5). Sainsbury (1990) shows that there is little if any evidence that Scandinavian socialist parties lose working-class votes when they adopt strategies to gain middle class support. She also notes that Przeworski & Sprague's (1986) reliance on official data sources to extrapolate the "carrying capacity" of various socialist parties leads to a severe overestimation of their electoral dilemma.

Similarly, arguments that global economic change are undermining the possibilities of class-based political cleavages have been challenged on several grounds. Hibbs (1982) finds significant class differences in political responses to economic problems. The lack of evidence of clear declines in the level of class voting in more than a handful of countries to date further suggests that theorists of postindustrial politics may have jumped to unwarranted conclusions about the changes that have taken place thus far. The continuing or even growing economic inequalities that have accompanied many of the most important economic shifts in postindustrial capitalism (e.g. Smeeding 1991), declining rates of relative social mobility (e.g. Hout 1988), and increasing poverty (e.g. Markland 1990) suggest that future polarization along class lines may be more, rather than less, likely (Evans 1993, Hout et al 1993).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

In this section we turn to an examination of methodological issues in the study of class voting. First, we examine some of the important definitional questions all class analysts of politics face. We then examine the types of statistical models used in class voting research.

Defining Classes and Political Outcomes

Researchers' decisions about how to define the two key concepts—class and electoral outcome—and how to measure the association between them influence the outcome of their studies.

DEFINING CLASSES Class definitions almost always start with some notion of middle class and working class. Many stop right there. Using occupation or income, they divide the electorate into two groups that might be contrasted. The developments in class theory—both neo-Marxist (Wright 1978, 1985) and neo-Weberian (Erikson et al [EGP] 1979, Marshall et al 1988, Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992)—spawned more differentiated class maps for use in stratification research by the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both share an emphasis on the causal primacy of the source of income rather than the amount of income (Hout et al 1993). The neo-Weberian schema soon made its way into voting studies (Heath et al 1985); studies with differentiated Marxist class schema have been slower in coming. The variant of EGP used by Heath et al (1985) specifies five classes based on distinctions between the self-employed and employees, between nonmanual and manual employees, and between upper and lower categories within the nonmanual and manual classes. Hout et al (1994) further distinguish between professionals and managers among the upper nonmanual employees.

DEFINING POLITICAL OUTCOMES Definitions of electoral outcomes usually start with a left-right dichotomy that parallels the working class–middle class dichotomy. Multiparty systems are frequently forced into this framework (e.g. Nieuwbeerta & De Graaf 1994), although there are exceptions (e.g. Goldthorpe 1994, Ringdal & Hines 1994). A few studies include nonvoting as an additional electoral outcome (e.g. Weakliem & Heath 1994b, Hout 1994) although most studies of nonvoting focus on voter turn-out exclusively (see next section).

LINKING CLASSES AND PARTIES Most class voting studies start with the assumption that workers' interests lead them to vote for parties of the left, and the interests of the middle classes lead them to vote for parties of the right. Any deviations from this assumed link between class and party constitutes evidence of lower overall levels of class voting. This traditional perspective plays down the mediating role of political parties in shaping the conditions under which voters make choices (Kelley et al 1985). However, parties often organize the political articulation of class interests (Przeworski & Sprague 1986). For example, when the US Republican Party makes explicit appeals to workers—as it often has since 1972—or when the Democratic Party seeks to represent the "middle class"—as it has in recent elections (e.g. Edsall 1984,

Shanks & Miller 1993)—the a priori assumptions of researchers as to what constitutes class voting may be overthrown even if the intrinsic importance of class divisions for electoral politics remains unchanged. A full understanding of the significance of class divisions for political outcomes requires considerations of class differences in voting, irrespective of which party a particular class lines up with. Hout et al (1994) term this unconstrained association between class and voting outcome "total class voting" and propose that analysts distinguish between "total" and "traditional" class voting.

Goldthorpe (1994) also addresses the issue of traditional class voting. His "topological" model constrains the statistical analysis to admit only traditional class alliances into the calculation of the effect of class on voting outcome. His model also introduces a distinction between positive and negative class voting. In Britain, workers exercise positive class voting by voting for Labour and negative class voting by voting against the Conservative Party. In his analysis of British elections from 1964 to 1992, Goldthorpe finds that negative class voting fluctuates more than positive class voting. In particular, Conservative successes are frequently tied to their "national party" appeals that lower the propensity of workers (including routine white collar and elite blue collar workers) to vote against them.

Statistical Indices and Models

Statistical practices mirror the definitions of classes and parties. Dichotomous approaches generally employ simple indices of absolute or relative class voting. Researchers using more differentiated schemes of class and electoral outcome use multivariate statistical procedures to accommodate the added complexity of their measures.

THE ALFORD INDEX This index—in spite of the criticisms discussed above—remains the empirical starting point for most studies of class voting. Simplicity is at once the biggest asset and a serious limitation of the Alford index. Like any calculation that is not based on the odds-ratio, it confounds differences in the marginal distributions of the variables with differences in the association it hopes to measure (Goodman 1965, Heath et al 1987). As a measure of political change over time, it may be contaminated by shifts in class structures or the overall popularity of political parties (Heath et al 1985) or by the emergence of new parties (Esping-Anderson 1994). The Alford index as a measure of class voting also precludes considering the influence of nonvoting on the overall association between class and voting outcomes.

The pointed statistical criticisms of the Alford index probably overstate its limitations as a measure of relative class voting. If the goal is to measure the effect of class on voting, then the requirement that both be dichotomized is a far more important limitation of the Alford index than its undesirable statistical

properties as a measure of association between dichotomies (Hout et al 1994). Odds-ratios (and statistics based on them) and the Alford index give virtually identical results as long as the smaller class and smaller party each comprises between 30% and 49% of the population (Knoke & Hout 1976). In every study we have seen, the observed range of class distributions and electoral outcomes falls within this comfort zone.

ABSOLUTE CLASS VOTING MEASURES Another approach to measuring the class/vote association is to consider the so-called "absolute" level of class voting, as described above. The absolute measure of class voting is susceptible to some of the same problems that afflict the Alford index. Specifically, this approach—like the Alford index—does not control for variability in the marginal distributions of the class and vote outcome variables (Marshall et al 1988:231–32). A more serious problem is that the absolute index combines shifts in party popularity that reflect opinion in all classes with shifts in party popularity within classes. Therefore, it cannot distinguish declines in overall support for left parties from declining working-class support for the left. It may incorrectly infer a drop in the effect of class on voting from generally falling fortunes of the left or right (Heath et al 1987). Proponents' protests notwithstanding (Crewe 1986), this is a serious shortcoming. Scholars using absolute measures assert their interest in endogenous change in the fortunes of left parties precipitated by falling class voting, but their simple index is not the appropriate operationalization of their ideas (Weakliem 1995). Furthermore, the absolute measure is (by definition) susceptible to computational shifts, e.g. for any fixed value of the log-odds ratio, the absolute measure varies over a 20 percentage point range.

MULTIVARIATE MODELS BASED ON THE ODDS-RATIO Since the late 1980s, nearly all research on class voting employs some version of statistical modeling for qualitative dependent variables based on the odds-ratio—loglinear models, logistic regression—or related methods (e.g. probit models). The principal advantages of these approaches are (a) they do not confound changes in marginal distributions (changes in the overall popularity of parties and the distribution of voters among different classes); (b) they can accommodate more than two voting outcomes and more than two classes; and (c) as multivariate methods, they can be used to estimate the effects of class on political outcomes net of the influences of other variables (Heath et al 1985, Hout et al 1994).

The most important features of the various modeling approaches can be seen as properties of a multinomial logistic regression (MLR) model. In its most general form, the MLR model is written for more than two election outcomes, more than two classes and more than two elections. Under this framework, researchers can pool data across all elections by entering election year into the

analysis as another independent variable. By selectively using interaction terms, most importantly the three-way interaction of time and class with vote, researchers are able with this approach to compare the effects of class over time without the undue complexity of generating separate equations for each election.

The general form of the MLR model is:

$$\hat{y}_{ij} = \alpha_{0t} + \sum_{t=1}^{T-1} \beta_{tj} D_{it} + \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \gamma_{kj} X_{ik} + \sum_{t=1}^{T-1} \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \delta_{ktj} X_{ik} D_{it} + \sum_{p=1}^{P} \lambda_{pj}^{Z} Z_{ip} + \sum_{t=1}^{T-1} \sum_{p=1}^{P} \lambda_{ptj}^{TZ} D_{it} Z_{ip} \qquad 1.$$

where y_{ij} is the logit transform of the expected probability that person i (= 1,...N) will be in category j (= 1,...J) of voting behavior, the X_{ik} (k = 1,...K) are dummy variables for the class categories, the D_{it} (t = 1,...T) are dummy variables for the time periods, and the Z_{ip} (p = 1,...P) are the control variables. If all of the Z_{ip} are dummy variables, then Equation 1 is equivalent to the loglinear model. The δ_{jkt} terms express the changes in class voting as a three-way MLR interaction term among vote, class, and election. If no constraints are placed on the order of the δ_{jkt} terms, then the MLR model is an operationalization consistent with the "total class voting" approach (Hout et al 1994) because the model allows the δ_{jkt} terms to change the differences among classes over time. From the "traditional class voting" perspective, realignments are tantamount to declines. The "uniform change" model, patterned after the "unidiff" model of Erikson & Goldthorpe (1992), is the multivariate expression of the "traditional" approach (Nieuwbeerta & De Graaf 1994, Weakliem & Heath 1994b). The uniform change model replaces the δ_{jkt} terms with multipliers that do not vary among classes (δ_{jt}—dropping the k subscript). Under "uniform change" the relative distances between classes do not change over time; the persistent differences among classes are simply expanded or contracted by the election-specific multiplier δ_{jt} (see Hout et al 1994 for details). It is that property of the uniform change model that captures the key proposition of the traditional perspective: Classes can be ranked according to an unchanging order that corresponds to the left-to-right ranking of parties even if the strength of association between class and voting might change from election to election.

LINKING MODELS AND HYPOTHESES Within the traditional approach, the uniform change model can be used to test the hypothesis of "declining political significance of class" (Nieuwbeerta & De Graaf 1994). The multiplier δ_{jt} replaces the Alford index as the measure of class voting. If δ_{jt} declines over

time, then the results support the hypothesis of declining significance. If δ_{jt} changes significantly over time, but significant increases follow significant decreases, then the alternative of "trendless fluctuation" would be the appropriate conclusion. If δ_{jt} does not change significantly over time, then the results support a "persistent class politics" interpretation.

If the uniform change model fails to fit the data as well as the unconstrained version of MLR (Eq. 1), then the number of δ terms goes up from one for each combination of election and outcome (t,j) to K, i.e. the number of classes. This loss of parsimony is a serious consideration. Hout et al (1994) propose the standard deviation of the δ_{jkt} terms among classes (but within elections and voting outcomes), an index of class voting comparable to δ_{jt} and the Alford index. When the effect of class is zero for some combination of voting outcomes (j) and election (t), then $\delta_{jkt} = 0$ for all k within that combination $\{t,j\}$, so $\text{appa}_{jt} = 0$. Likewise, increases in class effects (δ_{jkt}) will result in a proportional increase in appa_{jt} (see Hout et al 1994 for details).

These two indices based on multivariate models—δ_{jt} and appa_{jt}—have a number of desirable statistical properties that make them more defensible and sensitive measures of class voting than the Alford index is. First, they do away with the potential contamination of the Alford index due to shifts in the distributions of classes and/or parties. Moreover, because they do not require that class and vote choice be reduced to dichotomies, they are flexible tools for comparative and historical analysis. The choice between δ_{jt} and appa_{jt} depends on whether the traditional (δ_{jt}) or total (appa_{jt}) class effects model provides a better fit to the data.

CLASS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

To this point we have considered research on the relationship between class and voting. We now take up the question of class and political participation. Most of the discussion in this section focuses explicitly on the United States, which is alone (with Switzerland) among the western democracies for its unusually low levels of voting in national elections (e.g. Powell 1986, Jackman 1987, Piven & Cloward 1988). Not surprisingly, the decline in national turn-out rates in Presidential elections (from a range of 69–83% in the 1840–1896 period to a range of 49–61% in the 1920–1994) period has prompted a vast literature on the causes of nonvoting in the United States, literature dating as far back as 1924 (Merriam & Gosnell 1924). While most researchers have long recognized class biases in participation rates (e.g. Milbrath 1971:116: "No matter how class is measured, studies consistently show that higher-class persons are more likely to participate in politics than lower-class persons"; see also Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, Burham 1982, Piven & Cloward 1988, Cunningham 1991), there have been vigorous debates about the sources and

magnitude of class differences. Three controversies in the nonvoting literature that bear on larger questions relating to class politics can be distinguished. First, there are debates over the microlevel factors that encourage or discourage participation on the part of individual voters. A second, related debate concentrates on the sources of the turnout decline since the early 1960s. Finally, there are debates over the sources of the macrolevel institutional structures that constrain voting, and the relationship of institutional arrangements to microlevel factors. Each of these scholarly debates is considered briefly in this section of the paper.

The microparticipation debate was initially framed by the search for the appropriate set of variables that could "explain" nonvoting (Agger et al 1964, Cassel & Hill 1981). Wolfinger & Rosenstone's (1980) influential analysis of turnout in the 1972 US presidential election found that in a multivariate probit analysis, education explained away most of the effects of income and class on turnout. Other studies have similarly emphasized the importance of cognitive skills and a sense of political efficacy in the voter who surmounts the administrative hurdles to voter registration found in most states in the United States (e.g. Abramson & Aldrich 1982, Aldrich & Simon 1986). Leighley & Nagler (1992b) have recently extended the Wolfinger/Rosenstone analysis, analyzing the relationship between the same social structural variables and turnout in conjunction with a state-by-state analysis of registration rules, party competition, and unionization rates. They found that including the systemic variables in the analysis produced only a slightly better fit, and that these variables had virtually no effect on the impact of social-structural variables on voter turnout.

The importance of class for nonvoting has been most systematically addressed in analyses of falling rates of turnout since the early 1960s, what Brody (1978) has termed the "puzzle" of increased nonvoting in a period when rising educational levels and the loosening of racial and other barriers to voter registration should have led to increased turnout. Burnham's (1982, 1987) work on this question has forcefully argued that the "class skew" in turnout has increased steadily throughout the twentieth century, continuing in recent decades. In an analysis of participation data in the Boston metropolitan area, Burnham (1987) finds that turnout for people classified as "working class" by the census categories has declined substantially since 1960. Using income and education as proxies for "class," Reiter (1979) found significant class bias in turnout decline among whites (but not blacks) (also Bennett 1991). More recently, Weakliem & Heath (1994b) found (using an EGP class scheme) a significant increase in class turnout bias since the 1960s in the United States, a pattern not found in either Britain or France.

Other scholars, using income as a proxy for "class," have found no significant increase in class turnout bias in the United States (Leighley & Nagler 1992a). Teixeira's (1987) comprehensive analysis of turnout decline between

1960 and 1984, using a manual/nonmanual class dichotomy, also concludes that class and other social structural forces did not contribute to the turnout decline during this period. He argues that while some kinds of changes (rising education levels) encourage rising turnout, other factors (increased geographic mobility) serve to neatly cancel out such changes. Instead, he argues that "sociopolitical" factors such as declines in partisanship, political efficacy, and campaign newspaper reading explain away the post-1964 decline (1987: Ch. 4).

Analyses focusing on microlevel explanations of nonvoting tend, as Piven & Cloward (1988:113) have suggested, to attribute to individual voters the causes for their failure to participate. But the same individual level factors that serve to reduce turnout in the United States have few significant effects in most other countries (Crewe et al 1977, Burnham 1982, Powell 1986, Smeenk 1994; but see Swaddle & Heath [1989], who find evidence of class bias in recent British elections). Focusing on the institutional sources of nonvoting, macrolevel approaches offer very different understandings of the exceptionalism of US turnout. Two broad sets of theories can be distinguished (cf Piven & Cloward 1988: Ch. 4): those that emphasize changes in the party system after 1896, in particular declining party competition (Kleppner 1982, Burnham 1982), and those emphasizing the imposition of restrictive registration rules (Campbell et al 1960: Ch. 11, Kelley et al 1967, Converse 1974, Rusk 1974, Cunningham 1991). Piven & Cloward (1988) offer a class-centered interpretation of the origins of restrictive registration laws, arguing that these laws can be traced to the efforts of political elites to reduce the electoral threats from mass politics, and that franchise restrictions have crucial consequences for class politics in the United States, increasing the difficulties faced in organizing a labor party and reducing the incentives for the major parties to appeal to working class interests. Highton (1994) has recently challenged Piven & Cloward's claims about the class consequences of registration laws, showing levels of socioeconomic turnout bias in states with no or very lax registration requirements similar to those of states with restrictive registration laws.

CONCLUSION

Some recent scholarly analyses have suggested that the relationship between class and voting in the capitalist democracies of Western Europe & North America since 1945 can be characterized as undergoing a process of "dealignment." Advances in class theory, statistical methods, and the availability of high-quality data have encouraged others to reassess claims that the intrinsic importance of class for electoral politics is declining. Many recent studies conclude that the trends are better characterized as either "trendless fluctuation" or in exceptional cases "realignment." Efforts are underway to coordinate

the next wave of reassessments in a way that will facilitate cross-national comparisons. At this juncture only one conclusion is firm: In no democratic capitalist country has vote been entirely independent of class in a national election.

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Representing difference: why should it matter if women get elected?

Anne Phillips

By the beginning of the 20th century, women's right to vote had become one of the major political issues, dividing party from party and women from women as well as women from men. By the beginning of the 21st century, women's right to vote on equal terms with men has been extended into a wider claim about representation. We do not just demand the equal right to vote and stand for election (a right that might still deliver legislatures composed exclusively of men). Many of us have come to believe that fair representation means equal representation, and that elected bodies should be drawn roughly equally from both women and men.

The shift, in fact, took less than a century, for while the equal right to vote was only recognised by one country (New Zealand) in 1900, and hasn't been recognised by Saudi Arabia to this day, the idea that fair representation means a rough parity of elected positions between women and men has been gaining ground for a good thirty years. Political parties in the Nordic countries took the lead in this, setting in place a variety of mechanisms to ensure more women stood for election; and citizens living in Sweden or Norway or Denmark have now become accustomed to cabinets where women hold half the positions and parliaments where they make up 35-40 per cent. The UK leapt up the league table in 1997 with an intake of 120 women MPs, an achievement that doubled the previous proportion of women in parliament to an unprecedented 18.4 per cent. But the UK is still put into the shade by Sweden (42.7 per cent), Germany (30.9 per cent), South Africa (30 per cent), Australia (22.4 per cent); and only ranks 25 in the world table compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2000). The point to note about such figures is that none of the more dramatic ones can be put down to accident. Most countries have managed a gradual increase in the number of women in parliament, reflecting a declining prejudice against women or an increase in the number of women in professional jobs. All the speedier transformations, however, have come about through political action and as a result of feminist campaigns.

The extent and the extraordinary success, compared with some other feminist causes, of these campaigns suggests we are living through a period when women's empowerment and women's equality are very much to the forefront of the political agenda. The puzzle is that the initiatives coincide (in Britain but also elsewhere) with a marked complacency about women's position. This comes out in comments about a 'post-feminist' age where gender politics has allegedly become redundant; or in agitated anxiety about the crisis of masculinity and declining position of men. Some of this reflects the strange perception that women achieve equality with men when they become somewhat less subordinate: a peculiar misreading of the notion of

equality that should alert us to the continuing power of assumptions about it being 'normal' for women to be lesser than men. We might add to this that strategies devoted to changing those at the top (more women in parliament, more women in management, more women with professional careers) are always potentially misleading because they focus attention on what is most visible, leaving less glamorous inequalities in the shade. The point I want to develop here is that the coexistence of ambitious initiatives on women's political representation with complacency about women's position also testifies to deep ambiguity about why we need more women in parliament (Phillips, 1995). If this ambiguity is not recognised and addressed, the moves towards fairer representation will be less far-reaching than many of us have hoped.

The right to equal opportunity

Why does the under-representation of women matter? Why should it matter whether our representatives are women or men? One answer to this fits within a broad framework of equal opportunities: the idea that women should have the same chances as men to serve as political representatives and to pursue their political careers. By what possible superiority of either talent or experience could men claim the 'right' to monopolise decision-making assemblies? There is, so far as we know, no genetic reason why women should be less suited to the tasks of political representation, less capable of arguing a case, representing the views of their constituents, and contributing to the decision-making process. That being so, we should expect a roughly random distribution between the sexes when candidates are being chosen to contest elections or elected to carry out the representative's role. That the actual distribution is far from random confirms what all of us already know: that it is far harder for women than men to off-load their caring responsibilities, harder for women than men to present themselves as figures of authority, harder for women than men to take their own political aspirations seriously. The background inequalities are obvious enough, but instead of treating these as excuses or explanations, we should regard them as making a mockery of women's supposedly equal right. Failing additional measures (like the all-women short-lists employed by the Labour Party before the last general election, or the numerical quotas employed by a large number of political parties across the contemporary world), women do not have the same opportunities as men.

This is a commendable and radical argument (and more radical than current Labour Party policy, which has abandoned all-women short lists without offering anything in their place). It makes us more acutely aware that the current distribution of influence and power is indefensible; it gives no credence to self-serving claims about this distribution being normal and natural; and it encourages us to do something

about it. There are plenty of people who will shake their heads in sorrow at the unhappy state of affairs that leaves us with so few women in parliament, but nonetheless back away from any decisive action. They regard the statistics as unfortunate but understandable, something they just hope will eventually change. In contrast to this, most of the arguments for women's representation have developed a strong version of equal opportunities that takes issue with more standard oppositions between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. If the outcome is assemblies dominated by men, then the opportunities were clearly not equal; legal equality alone does not establish equality of choice.

The argument for 'real' equality of opportunity is sometimes combined with more general points about the symbolic impact of legislatures that are dominated by men, the way these depict men as the active participants while infantilising women as the objects of their care. Both arguments figure large in popular views about the unfairness of male dominance in politics – but neither of them says much about what women representatives are expected to do. Indeed in many ways, they merely extend to political office the argument we might also apply to women in management or the professions: the notion that women should have the same chance as men to pursue interesting and rewarding careers. Those campaigning for more women in politics have often made their case in a particularly radical way (insisting on affirmative action, for example, to guarantee the equality, rather than leaving the equality up to chance), but so long as the argument is phrased in terms of equal opportunities, it does not engage with what is special about representation. If we think, as most of us probably do, that being a political representative is not just a job like any other, and that politicians should not be in public life just to further their own careers, then equating the right to be an MP with the right to be a boxer or barrister rings rather hollow. Of course women should have the same chances as men – but isn't there more to the argument than that?

Representing different experiences

The extra is where the difficulties begin, for the more profound reason for promoting the better representation of women – as also for promoting the better representation of citizens from ethnic and racial minorities – is that different groups have different experiences, perspectives, needs and interests, and that those who remain outside the political process are unlikely to get their needs or interests addressed. It used to be thought (but only because we didn't think long about it) that anyone could represent anyone else. In the context of sustained inequalities between male and female, white and black, this is an absurdly optimistic idea. When people recoil from images of an all-white parliament determining the laws and policies for a population made up of both white and black, this is not just because such a scenario could only develop in a

grotesquely unfair society. (It is not, that is, just because such an outcome proves to us that the opportunities were far from equal.) The unease also testifies to a well-founded suspicion about the decisions this sort of parliament will take. The intuition underpinning virtually all initiatives to change the composition of legislative bodies is that people are fallible, limited, and partial, that our political priorities and judgements are framed by our life-histories and location, and that with the best will in the world, we tend to see things from our own point of view. Many democracies protect their citizens against the self-seeking bias of elected politicians by drawing up a Bill of Rights, to be interpreted by the wisest of judges; but judges can also be partial, and their experience of life is often rather weird. The best safeguard against partiality and bias is the inclusion of all relevant groups in the decision-making assembly, and the opportunity this gives for all those likely to be affected to contribute their ideas and concerns. It is for this reason, more than any other, that that we so urgently need women representatives as well as men, representatives from the ethnic minority as well as ethnic majority. We need them because we cannot trust the judgements of an assembly from which they are absent. We need them to bring their different experiences to bear.

Some experiences are, of course, more detachable than others, and there are cases where it seems plausible enough to talk of representation by individuals who were not directly exposed. I find it relatively easy to think of a well-informed agricultural expert as representing the interests of farmers (though I can see I might think differently if I were a farmer), but I find it less plausible to think of a well-informed male expert on gender as representing the perspectives of women. This is partly because perspectives attach, by their very definition, to those looking from a particular location, and partly because of the power relations involved. Where there has been a long history of subordination, exclusion or denial, it seems particularly inappropriate to look to individuals without such experience as spokespeople for the group: not because individuals outside the group can never be knowledgeable or never be trusted, but because without the direct involvement of those with the relevant experiences, the policy process will be inherently paternalistic and the outcomes almost certainly skewed. Embodiment matters. By their presence in a decision-making assembly, members of a previously marginalised group can better guarantee that their interests and perspectives will be articulated. By their presence, they also make it more likely that members of previously dominant groups will recognise and speak to their concerns.

It will be apparent to anyone that these arguments are at odds with current understandings of representation– and certainly at odds with the way the Labour Party perceives its role. In the conventions of party politics, candidates may be, and often are, selected partly on the basis of personal attributes. Thus, one candidate may be favoured over another because of a particularly close connection with the locality;

because he shares certain key characteristics with the local population; or because she comes from an under-represented group – like women – whose profile the party is keen to raise. In some cases, possession of these attributes will be used to advantage in the election campaign, and voters will be encouraged to regard the candidate more favourably because of them. At the moment of election, however, it is assumed that we vote not for individuals but for parties (a correct enough assumption in the British case), and those elected are then charged not with representing their group but with promoting their party's policies and concerns. Having played with the idea that difference matters, most parties (and many politicians) then recoil from the idea that individuals might be elected so as to represent that difference, and at this point we hear all the usual disclaimers about representing everyone, or promoting the so-called 'common good'.

A puzzling double imperative

This generates a puzzling double imperative – one may be selected so as to reflect the different experiences and perspectives of a previously under-represented group, but one is elected to represent a political party – and it is in the context of this puzzle that we can best understand the difficulties experienced by some of the newly elected women MPs in the 1997 Parliament. A significant number of the new Labour MPs were selected by constituencies that were keen to address women's under-representation in politics. They were selected, then, at least partly on the basis of their gender. All of them, however, were elected as candidates of the Labour Party, with no obvious mandate to speak for anything else. How, then, could they legitimately challenge the Government's decision to end special benefits for single parents – the first major issue on which all those extra women in parliament might have been expected to make some difference? By what right could they set up their own views against those of the Party? Were they there to represent women or represent Labour?

Commenting on the much longer history of women's representation in Norway, and the very similar tensions that have emerged there between representing what they may perceive as in the interests of women and supporting their party's line, Hege Skjeie warns against what she calls the rhetoric of difference: 'The belief in women's difference could still turn into a mere litany on the importance of difference. Repeated often enough, the statement that "gender matters" may in turn convince the participants that change can in fact be achieved by no other contribution than the mere presence of women' (Skjeie, 1991). Yet if simply being there is all that it is about, we have nothing more than a rather glorified argument about equal opportunities: the belief that it is fairer to have some women alongside the men.

There is a tension, in other words, between the representation of difference – the

representation of those multiple differences of experience associated with positions in a gender, racial or class hierarchy – and the representation by political party. If political parties fail to address this tension, they will end up with the mere window-dressing of brighter clothes and softer voices. When you ask people why they want more women in parliament, they will usually say they think women representatives will behave differently from men, that women will bring a different range of experiences to bear on decisions, will prioritise different policy areas, perhaps even be less dogmatic and aggressive, more prepared to listen to other points of view. They expect, in other words, that women will do more or other than men. If the constraints of party representation block this – if each representative is expected to vote and act exactly like any other representative from the same party – then the difference supposedly attached to gender fades into insignificance. More women becomes simply more women. This may be a good development in terms of equal opportunities. It does not, in any grander sense, further women's political inclusion.

Evidence suggests that there are indeed significant differences between women and men when it comes to policy priorities, and that there are particularly significant differences when it comes to issues of equality between women and men (Norris, 1996). Having more women in Parliament then opens up space for a different range of concerns to enter into the process of policy formation, and having more women in the Cabinet raises hopes that these concerns will be more seriously addressed. But measures to promote women's political representation can only deliver on this wider promise if parties accept that it is legitimate for women representatives to act in this way. This means welcoming rather than silencing what may be seen as voices of internal dissent, and backing off from tight party discipline. I do not mean by this that women politicians should be freed up to pursue only their own personal agendas, or that if they do so they will automatically represent something called 'the interests of women'. Taken to extremes, the first would undermine the principles of accountability that are crucial to any democracy, making a mockery of the election process and turning party programmes into a grim joke. The second is patently at odds with everything we know about the diversity of women, a diversity not just of experiences but also of political views. But if there is a problem about the under-representation of women, and the problem is bigger than not enough women getting a fair crack at a political career, it cannot be solved through numbers alone. It has to be possible for women MPs to articulate what may be conflicts of interest. It has to be possible for them to do something different from what would otherwise have been done.

Transforming democracy

In my own rather cynical reading, New Labour has embraced some of the arguments about women's representation because it sees a feminised party as more attractive to