

CHAPTER 1

GOING INSIDE STATES

The Geography of Local Political Behavior

Understanding how distinct political contexts have emerged from the institution of state government requires that we learn something about the internal character of states. State boundaries are not the only lines that matter. Subdivisions within states, defining counties, towns, and districts, to say nothing of the cognitive maps that define neighborhoods and other place locations, structure information and influence political activity, creating local variation. County and city boundaries differentiate states internally by steering people toward the places they live and work (Peterson 1981; Tiebout 1956). Within every state, then, we can find locations of Republican and Democratic concentration, some liberals and some conservatives. It is the uneven geographic distribution of these salient political traits that we mean by the term *geographic sectionalism*, or *sectionalism*. Sectionalism signals that political disagreements have a geographic dimension.

We could imagine states where political characteristics were evenly dispersed across substate jurisdictions (counties, cities, precincts). At every location we would find, say, equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives. Mapping that even distribution across geographic subunits would reveal no clustering or regional basis of support for candidates or political parties. For a state to be sectional, there must be diversity across substate units in the propensity to support (or oppose) particular candidates or parties. Sectionalism, as we define it here, requires that Republicans (or Democrats) have a strong presence in some places, but not in others. Just as important, sectionalism is a matter of degree, with some states being more uneven in the geographic distribution of partisanship than others. Sectionalism can also vary over time within the

same state, with some elections creating gaping geographic cleavages while other elections submerge these differences through widespread consensus.

Sectionalism in American politics has usually been understood in straightforward partisan terms, and usually construed regionally, contrasting the states that support Democrats with states that are more evenly matched, or else support Republicans. Political scientists and historians used to conceive of sectionalism in broad North-South terms, a legacy of the Civil War and Jim Crow laws adopted throughout the South to keep racial segregation in place and sustain white political dominance (Key 1949; Bensel 1984; Sundquist 1983). Historians still speak of the nation's great "sectional conflict" as the issue of slavery that precipitated the Civil War.

Between the Civil War and the early 1970s, discussions of North-South differences as the epitome of American sectionalism made a good deal of sense. The South stood out for its monolithic support of ideologically conservative Democratic candidates, whereas the North was more politically competitive and ideologically diverse. But by the 1980s and 1990s, the Republican party had made a serious comeback throughout the South with the consequence that the Southern states are more like Northern states than ever before, particularly in their degree of political competitiveness (Lamis 1999, 1984a; Schantz 1992). The growing political homogeneity across states that has brought the North and South closer together has raised serious questions about whether North-South sectionalism remains as relevant to the study of American politics as it once was (Ayers et al. 1996; DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996, 732; Hesselstine 1960). Certainly the evidence showing the rise of a two-party South suggests that the classical form of sectionalism is not a constant. While some form of North-South sectionalism has been present throughout most of U.S. history, it is clearly not the same now as it was in 1950, much less 1860 (Hesselstine 1960). As early as 1960, Southern historians were noting that with the urbanization and industrialization of their region, centers of strain and conflict were being relocated from the older cross-state sectionalism to newer regional conflicts within states (Vance 1960, 50–51). As we generalize the notion of sectionalism beyond the traditional confines of the North-South distinction, it is the variable nature of sectionalism across and within states that makes it a "complex" fact (Bensel 1984), and one worth studying.

Sectionalism within States and the Meaning of *Region*

Viewing the evidence for sectionalism on maps early in the new century shows that the most evident regional political conflict today is within states, rather than across them. Just as the classic North-South differences have faded, partisan geographic divisions within states have often persisted and intensified (Agnew 1987; Johnston, Shelley, and Taylor 1990; Luebke 1990; Murauskas, Archer, and Shelley 1988; Ormrod and Cole 1996; O'Reilly and Webster 1998; Shelley and Archer 1989; Wolfinger and Greenstein 1967). These substate tensions are perhaps most evident in the rival party leanings of particular locales—nearly all of which can be identified as Republican, Democratic, or competitive between the two parties.

To be sure, substate jurisdictions are not always politically monolithic. Much depends upon scale. A county that is politically competitive may have several towns and many neighborhoods that are politically similar. Where a jurisdiction is politically one-sided—and many remain so for decades—it is worth pondering how these distinct sections stand the test of time. One explanation for this durability is rooted in social psychology. Partisanship and political attitudes are widely shared and long lasting because the people living within these communities exercise social pressure on each other to enforce conformity to local tradition.

Minority views wind up being squelched because minorities have few politically compatible neighbors and so resist discussions of politics (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Huckfeldt 1986). Minorities generally keep quiet, so the theory goes, because people have a sensitive “social skin” that makes them fear isolation and adopt conforming attitudes to avoid it (Noelle-Neumann 1993). One’s political views and attitudes can be either weakened or strengthened depending on the extent of social support one finds for expression of one’s views (Dogan and Rokkan 1969; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). Finding little compatible social support, minorities will be less likely to express their viewpoints, and their influence within the community will be limited. The supply of political information within a particular jurisdiction, then, is determined by the political orientation of majority groups (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 155; Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993; Huckfeldt

and Sprague 1990; Huckfeldt 1986; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). By supplying only certain types of information and reinforcement, local populations wind up being politically homogeneous for long periods of time, and therefore they can be easily recognized on a map when we plot partisanship or candidate choice across counties, cities, or precincts. Even though counties may appear to be especially large and potentially heterogeneous aggregations, Huckfeldt et al. (1995) found that for voters with more extended social networks, even county-level political attributes have an impact on political attitudes and perceptions.

Although there may be many ways of measuring political regionalism, we evaluate political diversity (or similarity) within states in terms of support for a particular party. We prefer to found our identification of political sections in these concrete terms, rather than fall back on a multifaceted, but poorly understood concept such as “political culture” (Elazar 1984, 1994) to describe regional differences. Partisanship is a good way to recognize political sections because partisanship has a direct, demonstrable impact on election outcomes, people identify with parties indicating some public awareness of what they stand for, and candidates run under party labels. We also know, however, that political viewpoints and party affiliations are affected by group traits and memberships. If we are to understand the basis for the unevenness in support for the Democratic party within a state, we must ask what has caused the state to exhibit distinctive regional clusters in its political support.

Among the causes we could catalog, people’s race, income, occupation, mobility patterns, and religion are relevant to the study of sectionalism because these characteristics have been found to be relevant to patterns of social interaction and, in turn, with the formation of people’s political values (Petrocik 1996, 827). Often, then, sectionalism, as revealed by the geographic distribution of party support, signals an underlying social, economic, or religious identity that has caused it (Bensel 1984; Key 1964). A variety of identities could generate sectionalism in contemporary American politics.

1. *Racially based sectionalism*: where the uneven distribution of partisanship is traceable to race-based settlement patterns, with black areas supporting Democrats while predominantly white areas are more politically divided or support Republicans.

2. *Ethnically based sectionalism*: where geographic differences in support for a party are founded upon ethnic diversity in the underlying population and the geographic concentration of ethnic groups with distinct political identities. Areas of ethnic diversity and recent immigration are more likely to support Democrats than areas that are predominantly white and native born.
3. *Economically based sectionalism*: where the uneven distribution of partisanship is rooted in economic disparities among substate jurisdictions, with lower-income areas supporting Democrats, and wealthier areas supporting Republicans. Economically based sectionalism may have its roots in the uneven distribution of occupational groups, such as farmers, professionals, or manufacturing workers.
4. *Ideologically based sectionalism*: where the uneven distribution of partisanship is based in ideological differences on issues, so that support for candidates and parties rests on the geographic concentration of, for example, conservative or liberal voters, or traditionalists vs. progressives.
5. *Religiously based sectionalism*: where the geographic differences in party support are traceable to differences in the religious traditions and moral beliefs of the underlying population.

Some may choose to call this collection of traits and characteristics “political culture” (Axelrod 1997; Elazar 1994, 9), and we have no quarrels with that language. But if we want to be precise about what underlies the unevenness of partisan electoral strength across a state, attributing that variation to political culture may obscure more than illuminate. We would rather attempt to pinpoint a few specific economic, religious, or social characteristics that account for that variation than lump all of the explanations together into a catchall descriptor called *culture*.

Of the five explanations for political regionalism listed, economic variation, or differences in “material interests,” has probably been the single most popular (Archer and Taylor 1981; Key 1964; Turner 1932). But the social and economic underpinnings of political regionalism can vary widely from state to state, and over time within the same state, for the very same reason that survey research has shown that individuals’ partisan preferences can have variable foundations (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996). Studies of voters have

revealed that people have different understandings of what they are doing when they identify with a political party. Partisanship varies according to short-term forces much as candidate choice does (Allsop and Weisberg 1988; Fiorina 1981; Stanley, Bianco, and Niemi 1986; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). If partisanship is subject to period effects, or “epochal forces” (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991, 192), it is equally reasonable to suggest that partisanship may be subject to contextual forces— influences brought to bear on voters as a result of residing in a particular place within a decentralized system (Clarke and Stewart 1998; Niemi, Wright, and Powell 1987). The policy expectations of Republicans in Phoenix are quite dissimilar to the policy expectations of Republicans in Boston, even though both groups are likely to vote for the same presidential candidate. Political scientists have rarely investigated whether Arizona Republicans evaluate the leadership qualities of their party’s officeholders in the same way that Massachusetts Republicans do. The notions that voters have of parties and candidates, and the issues that motivate them to vote for one party or the other, are important for understanding the variable meaning of the choice made in the voting booth.

Just as voters may offer different reasons for supporting particular candidates and parties, the foundations of sectionalism may vary from state to state depending on the disagreements that are salient and the way populations with distinct interests are geographically concentrated (Wolfinger and Greenstein 1967). The geographic distribution of particular population groups is not the same in every state. For example, sometimes the black population will be highly concentrated in one, two, or a few counties. In other states (or at other times) it will be more dispersed. Such differences in settlement patterns will have an obvious bearing on race-based sectionalism when issues such as civil rights and affirmative action polarize the electorate.

Often the presence of sectionalism rooted in demographic differences boils down simply to the size of particular population groups within states— again, the compositional explanation for electoral geography (Gimpel 1996; Key 1956). Racial conflict has not informed sectionalism in Oregon because the black population has been so small there. Religious conflict was not as relevant to the nineteenth-century politics of Alabama as it was in Connecticut because the Old South lacked the religious diversity one could find in the Northeast. By understanding the foundations for substate sectionalism, we can

evaluate how the federal structure of American government has created contexts in which political party constituencies vary from place to place.

Critics might argue that the historic North-South sectionalism is not at all the same thing as the type of regionalism within states we have been discussing. White Southerners were often a distinct political group even after controlling for their social and economic characteristics. In the introduction, we discussed two approaches to understanding regionalism: the compositional view and the contextual one. We have just admitted here that political regionalism within states may be explained primarily by reference to the presence and geographic concentration of particular groups—the compositional explanation. An important group of scholars in geography and political science have insisted that regional differences amount to more than just population characteristics—but point to communicative interactions within those populations that add something not captured by models containing the usual compositional variables (Huckfeldt 1986; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Johnston, Shelley, and Taylor 1990; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Mondak, Mutz, and Huckfeldt 1996; Prysby 1989).

In favoring compositional explanations for regionalism in this book, we are not agnostic on the subject of the independent influence of context effects on attitudes and behavior. There are excellent theoretical reasons for believing that local communication patterns add something to people's behavior and attitudes not captured by their demographics. Nevertheless, not every "region"-related variable points to a true context effect (Hauser 1974; Kelley and McAllister 1985). Hence, we believe that it is pedagogically useful to begin by taking a skeptical stance—doubting whether *political* regions are anything more than a collection of people with shared traits and opinions.

To examine whether regional designations have an impact on behavior separate from the compositional traits of the underlying population, we might evaluate whether regional distinctions in political behavior amount to anything more than differences in population characteristics such as race, class, or occupation. Take the well-rooted urban-rural distinction in behavioral research on electoral politics (Key 1949, 1956; Lipset 1981; Lockard 1959; Webster 1987). The mere condition of residing in a densely populated area, compared with a less densely populated one, appears insufficient to generate a unique brand

of political thinking productive of political cleavage. There are certainly plausible theories for why population size might matter to political *participation* (Dahl and Tufte 1973; Dahl 1967; Oliver 2000). But arguments have not been developed to explain why living in areas of differing size or density would make voters oppose one another. Those who have moved beyond compositional explanations to explain urban-rural cleavages in British political behavior have suggested that the gap rests upon the institutional arrangements that organize social life, including churches, workplaces, trade unions, and political parties. Working-class voters in rural Britain, for instance, are less likely to be trade union members, which helps us to account for their greater support for Conservative party candidates (Johnston 1987). Our point is that by controlling for the underlying variables that make urban and rural regions politically distinct (e.g., occupation, race, union membership, or the presence of certain institutional arrangements), references to unhelpful explanations to account for these differences (e.g., political culture) could be pushed out of the analytical lexicon, leaving us with a more concrete sense of what is responsible for generating the differences observed between locations (Gimpel and Schuknecht 2000; Kelley and McAllister 1985; Wirt et al. 1972).

A Proper Role for Context

While the *most obvious* forms of political regionalism are traceable simply to the characteristics of the people who live within the region, does this mean that place location, or context, adds absolutely nothing to our understanding of political sections? No; while perhaps not appearing on the surface, locational effects may figure prominently at the microlevel in several ways. First, who comes to reside in a particular location, and how they wind up expressing their political preferences, may be explained by the characteristics of the place itself. Location characteristics shape distinct regional identities initially by imposing various limitations and opportunities that attract some populations and repel others (Gastil 1973, 1975; Kollmorgen 1936; Turner 1932). Among these limitations, we could count environmental resource constraints that circumscribe the range of economic activities in an area—there can be no mining where there are no minerals of value, no farming in an area with little precipitation or groundwater. Environmental limitations may also raise the salience of certain conflicts, because of

the unique challenges posed by resource constraints—water availability in the Western states is a good example (Lowitt 1995). Physical and geographic barriers to social interaction (rivers, mountain ranges) may prevent some populations from mingling, which produces political differences that are absent in areas that are similarly populated but lack those barriers to interaction.

Place locations are influential on attitudes and behavior because they bind their populations to the established local laws and customs under which the people live and labor. Not only does law set certain preconditions for social life by governing, it also creates social meaning, creating opinion in its favor because legality plays a legitimating role (Noelle-Neumann 1993, chap. 15; Hunt 1993). In a federal system, institutional practices and understandings will not be uniform, and local variation in law and policy will steer even similar populations toward dissimilar political identities. In this sense, “sections are fields for experiment in the growth of different types of society, political institutions and ideals” (Turner 1932).

Finally, the manner in which a place is settled, in interaction with the people who wind up settling there, conspire to create social environments that shape the tone and texture of politics. From a social standpoint, people are selective about where they live because they want to be around others who are like them (Huckfeldt 1984, 402). Accordingly, local environments become important social units because proximity and distance structure the social interactions citizens will experience, their exposure to information, and consequently the pressures toward conformity that will come to bear on them (Huckfeldt 1986, 117–18; Huckfeldt et al. 1995). Huckfeldt (1986, chap. 10) found that the actors’ own characteristics do not fully determine their behavior, but that contextual influences extend to friendship selection, party loyalty, political participation, ethnic loyalty, residential satisfaction, and migration. Prysby’s (1989) study of party activists in North Carolina primaries suggested that geographic context does not directly influence the vote once attitudes are taken into account, but that attitudes are shaped by context, giving context an indirect but no less important role to play in predicting behavior. In a study showing the importance of macroenvironmental factors on perceptions of political support for candidates, Huckfeldt et al. (1995) show that a county’s political climate has substantively important effects on those whose discussion partners extend beyond their family, even

after controlling for the respondent's race and party identification—two of the most important compositional explanations for vote choice. Finally, there is a case to be made that many so-called individual-level (compositional) variables could also be measures of context. While taking such a position muddies the waters, it is undoubtedly true that certain objective elements of a respondent's personal history indicate context. Level of education, for example, probably signals context by pointing to who a person associates with, what she reads, the kind of clothes she wears, the music she listens to, and so forth. In these cases, individual characteristics and contextual influences are inseparable joint phenomena (Sprague 2001).

Sectionalism Changes over Time

The causes of political sectionalism may be highly variable across geographic units for both compositional and contextual reasons, but political geography can also change over time. Among voters, survey research has shown that the salience of some types of political conflict has waxed and waned across decades and generations (Abramson 1975; Carmines and Stimson 1981; Wolfinger 1965). Other studies have shown that there are geographic variations in the extent to which changes in the issue agenda influence attitudes (Marchant-Shapiro and Patterson 1995; Clarke and Stewart 1998; Galderisi et al. 1987). When studies ignore location-specific variations in attitudes and behavior, they mislead us into thinking that political change occurs at the same time and at the same pace across the nation. But it is unreasonable to assume that changes in one location mirror changes in another in a diverse nation with a system of semisovereign local units.

Various notions of political party realignment have been commonly advanced as explanations for electoral change, and they can help explain rising and falling sectionalism over time (Key 1955, 1959; Sundquist 1983; Burnham 1970; Shafer 1991). Party realignment was once understood to occur principally as the result of a critical election—an election in which the electoral outcome and subsequent electoral outcomes depart in significant and lasting ways from previous patterns of partisan politics (Key 1955). How radical this lasting departure must be to be indicative of a “critical” election is a matter of some contention. Conservative estimates suggest that the nation

has undergone three or four realignments where partisan patterns have been dramatically altered by critical elections. The 1932 and 1936 presidential elections are often said to be the best examples of critical elections because they resulted in significant and lasting changes in the social groups underlying the political parties (Petrocik 1981; Shafer 1991; Axelrod 1972). Aggregate levels of party support may not change much in a realignment. Democrats and Republicans may be about as competitive (or noncompetitive) as before the critical election. But the 1932 and 1936 elections resulted in a major shift in partisan support—with groups of low socioeconomic status serving as the new foundation for the Democrats and groups of higher socioeconomic status crystallizing around Republicans (Axelrod 1972, 1986). New partisan cleavages also emerged between black and white voters, between immigrants and natives, and between farmers and industrial workers. To the extent that these groups were geographically clustered, their political realignment altered sectionalism. Maps of substate sections may be one of the best ways, in fact, of illustrating party realignment in the New Deal era.

If we are attentive to changing patterns of substate sectionalism, we can observe electoral changes that do not appear to be driven by major economic earthquakes or critical events such as the Great Depression. Such observations have taught us that partisan change is not strictly dependent upon the rare critical election. Even the most major realignments have now been discovered to be partial, occurring among some populations and in some locations, but not universally (Petrocik 1981; Carmines and Stimson 1981; Galderisi et al. 1987; Mayhew 2002; Nardulli 1995; Gimpel 1996). In related work, a number of studies have focused on how local economic conditions and issues influence voting in state elections, providing strong evidence that political behavior is conditioned by local forces, not just national ones (Atkeson and Partin 1995; Beck 1977, 1982; Campbell 1977a; Dyer, Vedlitz, and Hill 1988; Galderisi et al. 1987; Hadley and Howell 1980; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1983; Nardulli 1995; Stanley 1988; Wolfinger and Arseneau 1978). The implication of these studies is that realignment theory should be either scrapped altogether or recast to assist us in explaining local political shifts.

But to say that realignment can help us to explain changing political geography within states is not very useful unless we also examine the forces that drive realignment. Three primary mechanisms are

thought to be the sources of partisan realignment, whatever its magnitude: (1) the *conversion* of existing voters from one party to another, (2) the *mobilization* of new voters into the electorate, and (3) *generational replacement*, or the aging and mortality of one group of voters and its subsequent replacement by a younger one (Abramson 1975, 1976; Carmines and Stimson 1981; Erikson and Tedin 1981; Campbell 1985; Erikson 1986; Anderson 1976, 1979; Carmines and Stimson 1981; Brown 1988; Gimpel 1996).

There is little reason to expect that any of these processes behind party change work uniformly across the nation. Given the social and political diversity of the United States, it is a long stretch of the imagination to think that conversion from one party to another occurs the same way everywhere. Voter interests are sufficiently diverse that converts to the other party will be more easily won in some locales than in others. Arguably, in some locales, there will be no converts because those areas are already strongly supportive of the party to which most voters are shifting their allegiance.

Large-scale partisan change has usually been precipitated by some expansion of the number of people who vote (Petrocik 1981; Andersen 1979). In addition to conversion, then, mobilization is a key source of electoral dynamics. Since mobilization rates vary across the nation at the beginning of any period of electoral change, the mobilization of new voters will only make a significant difference in electoral outcomes in those places where turnout is especially low and where the voters not initially mobilized are different from those who are. Mobilization's impact will not be any more uniform across states and localities than that of conversion.

Finally, with respect to generational change, the age distribution of the electorate also varies by location, with some places having a larger elderly population than others. The size of the elderly population is critical because it reflects the potential for change in the electorate due to mortality. In 1990, for example, the median age of residents across California counties ranged from a low of 28 to a high of nearly 41. And in Florida, home to many elderly retirees, the range in median age ran from a low of 28 to a high of 53! The potential for partisan change due to generational replacement is far higher in Florida's counties than California's. This is because the proportion of residents of retirement age is a good indicator of how many people will soon be exiting the electorate through death. Naturally, whether mortality contributes to realignment depends on whether there are

pronounced generational differences in partisan affiliation and attitudes (Carmines and Stimson 1981). For instance, one could easily determine through survey research whether the population over age 65 was politically distinct from the population under age 65. Where these differences are minimal, generational replacement of the elderly population will not result in dramatic political change. High birth rates are not as likely to contribute to partisan change as high mortality rates. This is because most new voters are politically socialized by their families and children adopt the same political attitudes as their parents. They may carry some differing viewpoints into the electorate as they enter it, but those views are not likely to redefine the politics of a place. The size of the retirement-age population, then, is a predictor of potential political change in a way that the size of the preadult population is not.

Population Mobility as a Neglected but Important Force for Change

In most states the electorate has become more dispersed as residents have fled central cities for suburbs. This outward movement has balkanized states into Republican and Democratic strongholds in a manner not seen early in the twentieth century. Parties once fought side by side for voters in urban areas, but have gradually moved apart, finding that they have less intersecting turf (Gimpel and Schuknecht 2002). This is not to say that fierce competition does not exist anywhere at the local level. But it does mean that there are fewer jurisdictions where the two parties are competing to mobilize the same voters.

Simultaneous with population movement away from large central cities, many rural areas have been abandoned and farms have been consolidated, creating a countervailing centralizing force within many states. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, a solid plurality of the electorate could be found in just a handful of counties, usually in one, two, or a few metropolitan areas, with vast territories within states contributing little to the statewide vote for either party. This reshuffling of the population has had profound implications for the nature of substate sectionalism, to say nothing of how it has altered political campaigns. These considerations lead us to believe that population mobility has been the most important force shaping the political identity of regions within states.

Why has the impact of population mobility been neglected in much

of the literature on electoral politics? We suppose it's mostly because questions about population mobility are absent from many surveys and partly due to the false assumption that mobility redistributes voters evenly or randomly across the nation. At most, population mobility can be said to restrict voter turnout due to burdensome regulations on voter registration that vary from place to place (Squire, Wolfinger, and Glass 1987; Timpone 1998). Mobility is commonly thought to be a net wash in terms of its impact on partisan and ideological change. And if movers are a random subset of the population, we would have little reason to suppose that their migration would contribute to political change or a redistribution of party strength. If Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, are equally likely to move and settle in a new locale, then there probably are no political consequences stemming from this reshuffling of the demographic deck.

But the assumption that migrants are a random and representative subset of the total population is almost always incorrect. Moving imposes heavy financial and psychological costs on migrants, and particularly on those who move long distances, such as across state lines. Because of the costs associated with migration, there is likely to be an economic bias in who moves and who does not, with wealthier people exhibiting much more mobility than poorer people. Demographers and economists have established that this bias exists. Internal migrants (as opposed to immigrants) are most likely to be better educated, young, white, and upwardly mobile (Gimpel 1999; Gabriel and Schmitz 1995; Borjas, Bronars, and Trejo 1992). The poor and unskilled are the least likely to move (Clark and Whiteman 1983). The social characteristics of movers were highly associated with Republican party identification in the final decades of the twentieth century. Hence, those locations with more residents born in the United States, but outside their current state of residence, exhibited strong Republican leanings (Gimpel 1999). By contrast, areas of low population mobility were often composed of poor and minority residents with entrenched Democratic loyalties.

To the three main explanations for partisan change (conversion, mobilization, and generational replacement) we add a fourth, population mobility. These four explanations will serve as a platform to help us to understand how the sectionalism rooted in a particular type of political conflict is either reinforced or replaced by something new. Given the nature of our data, we will not be able to draw defin-

itive conclusions about the sources of political change in all circumstances, but we can indicate where some explanations of political change are more probable than others. It takes little sophistication to hypothesize that fast-growing states (Florida, California) are more likely to be subject to partisan changes brought about by population mobility than slower-growing states (North Dakota, Iowa). The slow-growth states are likely to see partisan change only through the gradual process of generational replacement.

Anticipating where political mobilization is likely to produce electoral change is a bit more difficult, but we can advance some hunches. Mobilization's potential to effect change will be greatest in areas where there are large disenfranchised populations whose activism could potentially alter political outcomes. In states with large African-American populations, such as Georgia, Michigan, or Illinois, we would expect greater political changes to follow on the heels of the civil rights movement than in states such as Oregon, Connecticut, or Colorado, with their much smaller black populations.

Conversion's impact is hard to anticipate as most studies suggest that mass conversions are rare. To the extent that conversion is thought to be contingent upon the emergence of new issues and cleavages, one could say that a converting electorate must meet some minimum standard of attentiveness or education. But although converts must display some modicum of attention, these voters do not adhere to the prevailing or majoritarian views within their party, because partisans who are happiest with the substance of national party platforms are least likely to convert. From these considerations, we hypothesize that the potential for partisan change attributable to conversion is likely to be greater in states with high levels of migration coupled with voters who wind up alienated from their party's most significant platform positions. Electoral change stemming from conversion, then, is more likely to be found in regions and states that are peripheral to party support than those that are considered the core of support. White Democratic voters in Southern states have held views on racial issues that became peripheral to the national party following because they came to constitute a minority within their party on civil rights matters by the mid-1960s. As such, these white voters were good candidates for conversion, and many have changed parties in the years since. Western states are the next best candidates to look for conversion during the twentieth century as

they are home to the most migratory populations and have been home to minority interests that are uneasy with mainstream party stands on matters such as land use regulation and environmental protection. The support for Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential bid among voters in the Pacific Northwest was one sign that this restless bloc is of considerable size. Finally, with the twenty-first century beginning, the Northeastern states have grown increasingly peripheral to Republican party support as that party's base has shifted toward the West and South—pulling these once peripheral regions toward the core of party support. As the Northeast has lost its influence within GOP ranks, we might expect the conversion of many Republicans in this area who no longer find their views embodied in presidential and congressional agendas.

Plan for the Book

No event more clearly demonstrated the importance of states as distinct fields of play than the 2000 presidential election. George W. Bush plainly admitted in a postelection interview on CBS News' *60 Minutes II* that his campaign strategy had been dictated by a focus on winning electoral college votes rather than by the popular vote, which he lost by 340,000 votes. In the end, Bush won thirty states, to Gore's twenty-one (counting the District of Columbia), dividing the electoral college 271 to 267. Evidence from studies of previous campaign efforts show how sensitive campaigns are to the political geography of state politics (Shaw 1999). Because so many campaign activities, from voter mobilization programs to advertising, center on states as particular fields of play, we take up individual states in chapters 3 through 14. This state-by-state approach can exploit variations in political behavior across both time and space, within states. We present a comprehensive analysis of substate sectionalism, pausing to analyze maps of candidate choice within states from 1928 through 2000. Using electoral geography, we explore the states' different patterns and nuances rather than gloss over them in an aggregate or pooled analysis. The last chapter, however, reaches across the myriad electoral settings to draw some general conclusions about political development and partisan change.

For each state we will describe how the economic and social trends of the last century have influenced political geography. Maps of the

state's political sections illustrate the important changes across the period since the New Deal realignment. For some states, the geographic foundation for political conflict changed dramatically. Places that were Democratic strongholds moved into the Republican column, and vice versa. For other states, broad sectional patterns remain much the same as in the 1930s, sometimes in spite of significant social and economic changes. Displaying these patterns on thematic maps, then explaining them in terms of the main theories of partisan and political change from the literature on party realignment will be a major goal of each chapter.

Some political conflicts are highly salient in some states, irrelevant in others. To highlight these differences, each chapter will include an analysis of ecological (county level) data from the 1928 to the 2000 presidential elections. The dependent variable will be Democratic vote choice in presidential elections. The independent variables will be demographic indicators of the race, occupation, education, and migration patterns of residents. We lean on the county-level data to make inferences about individual-level behavior because state-level polls are scarce prior to the 1980s. In the past, the use of aggregate data, at the county or precinct level, for this purpose resulted in misleading or nonsensical conclusions (e.g., 130 percent of blacks vote Democratic or -30 percent of voters over age 65 vote Republican). This is because the previous techniques for inferring individual behavior from aggregate data do not allow for the fact that many quantities of interest are proportions (percentages) and therefore cannot exceed 100 or drop below 0. Recent methodological resources, in particular Gary King's 1997 *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem*, have allowed us to make more accurate inferences about individual attributes based on aggregate data (see appendix A). King's method is a significant advance because it overcomes many of the problems of older techniques, including those estimates that are above 100 percent or below 0 for quantities that we have just described. The method does not guarantee perfection. Not every estimate will be faithful to reality and the method has some prominent detractors (Tam Cho 1998; Anselin and Tam Cho 2002). But compared to alternative methods, King's approach has been advanced as a major improvement.

Each state chapter presents tables of results generated via ecological inference estimation to describe the political leanings of a variety of demographic groups in the state electorate and to reason about

political change. To reduce the sheer quantity of information to be presented and to improve the quality of the estimates, presidential elections are combined in groups of two or three from 1928 to 2000. Precise estimates for every state and every politically relevant group are not always attainable: data limitations, including the number and size of geographic units and their heterogeneity, affect the precision of the estimates. For purposes of drawing inferences about political change within a state, however, we believe our results approximate reality. For more recent elections, we are able to examine the plausibility of the ecological inference estimation with polling data. For those elections where polling data are not available, it is probably best to compare the ecological inference estimates over time, examining the figures for given elections in light of estimates from later and earlier elections within individual states. Otherwise, cross-state comparisons of these figures can shed light on the extent of political differences between rival groups as one moves from state to state.

The final chapter will highlight comparisons and contrasts across states while reminding readers of why the similarities and differences exist. On the one hand, the dominance of two national party labels ensures some measure of uniformity in the way people think about candidates and issues. On the other hand, federalism ensures that within the basic framework set by the U.S. Constitution and the historical development of our two major parties, there is amazing leeway to develop autonomous and distinctive political orientations. The seemingly interminable saga of the 2000 election campaign in Florida demonstrated that there is demand by journalists, academic researchers, political consultants, and politicians to understand the local nuances and subtleties that make states unique political environments. This book will have succeeded if it meets even some of that demand.