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Introduction to "Religious Institutions and Minor Parties in the United States"

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The roots of this book trace back to an August 1994 morning in St. Peter, Minnesota. Three of this book’s authors (Chris Gilbert, Tim Johnson, and Dave Peterson) were laboring to complete a paper on three-candidate presidential elections for an upcoming conference. Each author had analyzed a different election, and as often happens when three political scientists get together, three different perspectives on the findings had emerged and none of us could put everything together. The deadline for submitting the paper had arrived. As a way to break the impasse, one of us had the idea to check out the influence of a variable that had been included in all data sets, despite the lead author’s belief that the variable was probably meaningless and not even worth including.

When the first model incorporating this variable appeared on the computer screen, the mood in the room changed. It is probably rare for political scientists to have such an epiphany, when a new relationship between two concepts appears, unexpectedly and all at once. The feeling is unforgettable, and in many respects it has sustained our inquiry for almost four years, culminating in this book that centers around that very same variable—religious adherence in U.S. counties—and its influence on the electoral fortunes of minor candidates in U.S. elections.

This book therefore exists because of Dave Peterson’s intuition about the potential relevance of religious adherence. On the long road to its completion we have produced numerous conference papers and manuscripts, added a fourth author (Paul Djupe), and waited patiently through one more presidential election year, just to have another good case study to include.

Many people and institutions deserve thanks for their assistance in material and intangible ways. The National Election Studies data sets used throughout the book were made available through the Inter-University Consortium for Po-
Political and Social Research (ICPSR), which bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here. Data on U.S. election results and U.S. religious census data for 1890 through 1971 were also made available through the ICPSR. The Voter News Service exit poll data for 1994 were purchased by the political science department of Washington University in St. Louis, for use on this and other projects.

All other data sources have either been compiled by the authors or are publicly available, and we thank the library staffs at three institutions—Gustavus Adolphus College, the University of Minnesota, and Washington University in St. Louis—for their assistance in tracking down some hard-to-find figures.

The academic environment at Gustavus lies at the heart of this project in many ways. All of us have a close connection to this institution—Gilbert as a professor; Johnson and Djupe (both class of 1993), and Peterson (class of 1995) as alumni. All of us have been shaped in our professional and personal lives by the values and traditions that Gustavus represents. Few undergraduate institutions have a stronger commitment than Gustavus to research by students in conjunction with faculty members. The collaborations formed through these projects reflect a commitment to an "open exchange of ideas and the independent pursuit of learning" (Gustavus mission statement). We trust that this commitment by the College will not waver, so that future generations of Gustavus teachers and students can form the same mutually beneficial bonds as we have.

Chris Gilbert's participation in this project has been supported in numerous ways by Gustavus Adolphus College. Research on the first conference paper was supported by a 1994 summer grant from the Faculty Development Committee's Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Fund. This grant also provided research support for Dave Peterson, then an undergraduate at Gustavus. Gilbert also received a sabbatical leave for the 1997–1998 academic year to prepare the final manuscript. Colleagues inside and outside the political science department, as well as countless Gustavus students, have assisted this project through their constant curiosity, support, and friendship.

The work of David Peterson on this project is supported under a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

Timothy R. Johnson and Paul A. Djupe have received support through fellowships and other grants from Washington University in St. Louis, where both have split their time between this project and their own dissertation research. For the 1997–1998 academic year, Djupe has served as visiting assistant professor at Gustavus Adolphus College.

In the course of writing the papers that form the outline of this book, we have benefitted from the helpful comments of many peers in the field of religion and politics and beyond. These include (in alphabetical order) Christopher Achen, John Green, Jim Guth, Allen Hertzke, Kristina Hisey, Ted Jelen, Gary King, Bud Kellstedt, David Leege, Paul Mueller, Wendy Rahn, Robert Salisbury, Cor-
Preface

We have no responsibility for the analysis of U.S. election results and U.S. voting data for 1994 were purchased by the University in St. Louis, for use by the authors or are publicly available. The institutions—Gustavus Adolphus College, Washington University in St. Louis, for use of hard-to-find figures.

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Finally, no book would be possible without the support of family and friends. Please indulge us our paragraphs of thanks.

Christopher P. Gilbert. Chris would like to thank these three students and friends, who have sustained his energy to work for five years (and counting). Special thanks go to the noontime basketball players at Gustavus Adolphus College and to golfing partners too numerous to mention. Most important, Chris thanks Julie Moberg for her love and friendship, and her considerable patience in putting up with his nonstop work schedule at the end of this project.

David A. M. Peterson. Dave would like to take this opportunity to thank the family and friends who have supported him during this project specifically and all aspects of his life in general. His parents, Stan and Donna, and older brother, Scott, have always supported and encouraged him in his education and learning. Aside from the coauthors of this work (who are in many ways older siblings themselves) he would also like to thank his colleagues in the political science department at the University of Minnesota, who have put up with numerous presentations of this material in seminars. Finally, and most importantly, he thanks Lori Biederman, who has helped Dave maintain perspective and understand what is really important in life through her patience, support, and friendship.

Timothy R. Johnson. Tim personally thanks Julie Maynard-Johnson for enduring long hours and many days without Tim as he worked on numerous parts of this project along with his dissertation. To endure a spouse writing one dissertation is extraordinary; to endure him working on a book project at the same time is beyond the call of duty. Fortunately, both are coming to fruition at the same time. Tim also thanks Alexi Matthew, whose joyous 3-year-old outlook on life has kept Tim sane (most of the time) throughout his graduate school career. Finally, Tim wants to thank Dave and Chris and Paul for believing he was a good part of this team, even when writing about parties, elections, and religion and politics is only a "second job" for him.

Paul A. Djupe. Paul would like first to thank his coauthors for believing that he had something unique and worthwhile to contribute, though joining the project midway through (he hopes he delivered). Thanks to David Djupe for supplying much-needed diversions from this project and the routine of life with well-timed phone calls, and for being a constant reservoir of support. Paul reserves his deepest thanks and appreciation for Megan Webster, without her friendship, love, and support, he would not be who or where he is today.
Chapter 1

Introduction

A TALE OF TWO CANDIDATES

In the elections of November 1996 and November 1997, the residents of St. Peter, Minnesota, had the opportunity to consider two political newcomers. These candidates—Ruth Johnson and Dan Stratton—had much in common beyond the fact that neither had run previously for elected office. Both candidates had a strong and long-standing interest in politics and public affairs. Both sought prestige positions—Johnson wanted the vacant state legislative seat, while Stratton challenged for mayor of St. Peter. Both were relatively unknown to the general public. Finally, both candidates had connections to the local liberal arts college; Johnson was an alumnus serving in administration, and Stratton was a third-year student involved in numerous campus activities.

The differences between Johnson and Stratton are also significant and explain the divergent outcomes of their respective campaigns. Ruth Johnson was a long-time St. Peter resident, while 21-year-old Dan Stratton came from another small Minnesota town three years prior to attend college. By virtue of living in St. Peter for so long, Johnson had developed many ties to the community; one such bond centered around First Lutheran Church, a large congregation (about 1,000 members in a town of 9,000) in which she had been an active member for over two decades. Stratton, on the other hand, did not attend any local church and had no other connection to any local institution except the college.

This simple distinction, church membership, is one key to understanding why Ruth Johnson won her state legislative race, while Dan Stratton finished last in a four-person race for mayor. Johnson had connections to local institutions, most notably the church and the local Democrat-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party organization; many local DFL leaders also attend First Lutheran. Thus Johnson made
the decision to run for office under the DFL banner. In doing so she allied herself with an organization able to offer her numerous advantages, which we will detail later in this book. Stratton chose to run as an independent and had no such advantages. Perhaps the most important advantage conferred was credibility; as the candidate of one of the two major political parties, Johnson was bound to be taken seriously by voters. Indeed, for some voters the choice in any partisan race is almost automatic, thus Johnson could probably count on gaining 30 percent of the vote even without trying. Johnson could also count on the social networks that intersected with her home church. Members of First Lutheran live and work all over St. Peter; they have friends inside and outside the congregation; and they can spread the word about Ruth Johnson to their friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

It is not surprising, then, to learn that Johnson prevailed in her initial run for elective office. Stratton was not able to utilize any social network to his advantage. With the modest exception of the college student population, Stratton had no connections in town. He could not obtain an invitation to candidate forums, and he received little media coverage. With almost no resources and low visibility, Stratton's vote total of 132 (9.2 percent) was both respectable and predictable (Lee 1997). In the end, he suffered the same fate as most U.S. candidates who run without a party label and without the benefits that come with such a label.

THE THEME OF THE BOOK

Our book begins with the differences between these two candidates in one small town, because we believe one difference is compelling and suggestive of a much greater point. Candidates who choose not to run for office as Democrats or Republicans face obstacles that have historically proven insurmountable in all but a handful of places and races. Previous research outlines in great detail the problems of ballot access, accumulation of resources, lack of name recognition and party loyalty, and simple voter reluctance to choose independent and minor party candidates for fear of "wasting" or throwing away votes (Key 1948; Duverger 1964; Mazmanian 1974; Smallwood 1983; Chressanthis and Shaffer 1993; Gillespie 1993; Gould 1993; Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996).

One additional edge that major party candidates gain arises from the social networks located in every corner of America. Every town and village, whether tiny or huge, has such networks centered around the institutions that comprise the local community. By far the most ubiquitous of these institutions is the church. In our small example, Ruth Johnson belonged and Dan Stratton did not. Johnson's church membership, combined with the awareness of her candidacy among her fellow First Lutheran members, opened pathways to every corner of St. Peter through the flow of information from resident to resident.

Our example highlights a well-known fact about American electoral politics—
FL banner. In doing so she allied her numerous advantages, which we see to run as an independent and had been an advantage conferred was cred major political parties, Johnson was deed, for some voters the choice in is Johnson could probably count on put trying. Johnson could also count her home church. Members of First they have friends inside and outside a word about Ruth Johnson to their Johnson prevailed in her initial run for lize any social network to his advan age student population. Stratton had in an invitation to candidate forums, th almost no resources and low visit cent) was both respectable and pre fered the same fate as most U.S. and without the benefits that come between these two candidates in one ence is compelling and suggestive of se not to run for office as Democrats historically proven insurmountable in various research outlines in great detail on of resources, lack of name recogn reluctance to choose independent and ing” or throwing away votes (Key Smallwood 1983; Chressanthis and 93; Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus candidates gain arises from the social area. Every town and village, whether around the institutions that comprise a quitous of these institutions is the n belonged and Dan Stratton did not, with the awareness of her candidacy opened pathways to every corner of om resident to resident, about American electoral politics— the significance of religion and religious institutions—and reveals a gap in our understanding of minor parties and independent candidates. Given the large body of knowledge surrounding the multiple roles of organized religion in structuring support for the major U.S. political parties, the absence of discussion about the interconnections between religious institutions and minor parties is striking. "We therefore propose in this book to examine systematically the impact of churches and church membership patterns on support for third parties and independent candidates. Our study takes place on two levels and spans the twentieth century. Most of our research will focus on presidential elections with a significant independent candidate (1912, 1924, 1948, 1968, 1980, 1992, 1996), but we will also investigate relationships in recent state-level elections with significant independent candidates. We measure “churches and church membership” in different ways at different levels of analysis. At an aggregate level, we investigate the impact of country-level measures of religious adherence on the aggregate voting patterns of Americans, as well as on the individual vote decisions of citizens. Religious adherence at an aggregate level means nothing more than professed membership in a church or other form of organized religious institution; we often refer to this in shorthand as church membership. At the individual level, church membership denotes many things: a specific building or place where members gather; a denomination to which the specific church belongs; a set of beliefs that members practice, or that they hold in common with other members; a set of traditions passed down over time; and a set of social networks, organized around groups that operate within the church, connecting individual members to one another and to the community beyond the church. We will test the effects of these aspects of church membership on the propensity of individuals to vote for a minor candidate.

SOME DEFINITIONS

The terms independent candidate, minor candidate, minor party, third candidate, and third party are all used by scholars who study these phenomena. These terms have one common meaning; they refer to candidates not running as Republicans or Democrats. Since the election of 1860 the Republicans and Democrats have constituted the universe of major parties in the United States, and all other electoral efforts supported by some form of political party have been termed minor, even though some of these candidates and parties have contested numerous offices in numerous elections. Thus the term minor candidate is the most general one. A minor candidate is a candidate who runs as neither a Democrat or Republican, and who may or may not have a party affiliation. A minor party is a party that contests elections with a name other than Democrat or Republican. The terms third candidate and third party have essen-
Initially the same meaning and simply reflect the fact that most minor candidates finish third, behind the major party candidates.

Those interested in drawing even finer distinctions would point out that typically there are more than three candidates appearing on ballots for high offices, especially for the office of president; it would not be atypical for a voter to find a list of as many as ten candidates for president. It would strike some people as odd that in one election there could then be eight “third” candidates, some of whom are affiliated with minor parties and some who are truly independent—running entirely on their own without any formal party organization. In practice, most scholars have asserted with considerable justification that there is little use distinguishing among candidates running under some minor party label and candidates running unattached to any party (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996: 10). We support and emulate this convention. Therefore, we have chosen to use the most general terminology, referring to minor candidates or third candidates throughout the book. Where relevant, we will use the more common term third party when describing the roles of party organizations in specific elections.

What is most important to remember about minor candidates in American politics is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, they are most certainly not aberrations. In a system dominated by two major political parties, scholars agree that minor candidates are a logical consequence of the system. Minor candidates appear with regularity, because two major parties cannot hope to capture all the issues and loyalties in the diverse American electorate (Key 1948). Moreover, as we will detail later, minor candidates will almost certainly lose every election they contest, but they have a measurable impact on public policy and the positions espoused by the major parties. Hence minor candidates and parties play a critical role in developing the foundations of the U.S. two-party system. It is therefore imperative that scholars develop a full understanding of how minor candidates and parties fulfill their roles, and how voters perceive minor candidates and parties.

One essential factor that influences these processes is organized religion. The relationship between religious factors and political outcomes is complex, but a complete grasp of political and social processes in the United States is not possible without a clear sense of the myriad ways in which religion matters. We turn now to an overview of its multifaceted role.

**CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS**

Ever since Tocqueville, few students of U.S. society have failed to consider the role of religion and its significance for Americans. Churches constitute the largest voluntary association extant in the United States, and levels of attendance and membership surpass those in most other industrialized nations (Bellah et al. 1985: 219; Kosmin and Lachman 1993). Freedom of religion continues to be a significant if underappreciated feature of our democratic system of governance, and it also explains the noteworthy pluralist character of American religion. The
large number of denominations and the processes that have led to their proliferation offer some insight into how social structure transformations affect societal institutions, including political institutions. Unlike minor political parties, old and new religious denominations in the United States have always found space to arise, evolve, and establish themselves within communities and regions (Niebuhr 1929; Mead 1976; Finke and Stark 1992).

The impact of religion on politics in the United States is manifest at three interrelated levels: systemic, group, and individual. At the level of social systems, the processes by which churches gain and lose members have an impact on the relative strengths of the major political parties, because churches help to define the social structure in which parties and candidates compete for votes (Kleppner 1970, 1981; Djupe et al. 1997). At the group level, many scholars have detailed the connections between denominations and parties that develop over time (Lopatto 1985; Kellstedt and Noll 1990; Green et al. 1996; Wald 1997). Other scholars have advanced explanations of religious influence working through social institutions, such as congregations, a line of inquiry known generally as contextual analysis (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988, 1990; Gilbert 1993; Lege and Kellstedt 1993; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Djupe 1997). Finally, survey research has demonstrated numerous ties between personal religious beliefs and practices and individual political beliefs and behaviors (Lenski 1961; Green et al. 1996; Wald 1997).

These levels of analysis are interrelated because religious activity is at heart both an individual and a social activity. Americans spend significant time praying and reading sacred texts, yet they also typically practice their myriad faiths in settings such as worship services, Bible studies, and other groups within the U.S. two-party system. It is an understanding of how minor and new voters perceive minor candidates and parties.

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL OUTCOMES

How do the disparate ideas introduced so far come together to structure an argument about the impact of churches and church membership patterns on minor candidates and parties? Since the publication of Robert Putnam’s influential 1995 essay “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” scholars have given renewed attention to what Putnam terms “the norms and networks of civic engagement” (66). Despite evidence of a modest decline in weekly churchgoing and church-related group membership since the 1960s, religious affiliation remains the most common associational membership of Amer-
icans, helping to foster civic engagement and the utilization of social capital through citizen participation in public life (Putnam 1995: 69-70). Social connectedness—the means by which citizens manipulate the links between democracy and civil society—clearly depends on strong institutions such as churches, especially when most commentators perceive other societal institutions to be declining in strength and importance.

If most Americans profess belief in God and at least membership in some church, they have drawn themselves in (often unwittingly) to a long-lasting, cultivated network of attachments between the secular and sacred aspects of U.S. society. Putnam and others assert that these bonds are not as strong as they once were, and the empirical research on the decline of strong partisanship since the 1960s provides an individual-level correlate (Wattenberg 1990). Moreover, the increasing mobility of Americans' church attachments might correspond to their mobility in terms of electoral choices and partisan leanings (Roof and McKinney 1987; Wuthnow 1988). Churches are much more than mere extensions of the civic culture. They have beliefs and opinions, and as intentional groups they care about how their members view the world beyond the church, including the political world, albeit with different levels of interest. Thus religious or church-based influences on patterns of political behavior are often indirect, part of a complex process that brings personal beliefs and group-generated cues to bear on vote decisions and issue attitudes.

Writing on the growth of religiously conservative church bodies, Dean Kelley argues that furthering a sense of distinctiveness from society at large is a primary aspect of strong religion-fueling growth (1972; see also Moore 1986). Distinctiveness and strictness are critical salient factors in explaining the success of upstart sects, according to the religious markets paradigm (Finke and Stark 1992). When it comes to politics, however, churches and churchgoers clearly find it advantageous to abandon distinctive, upstart political figures and strict movements or ideologies at the polling booth. Instead, organized religion—represented by established (and declining) mainline denominations, ancient and enduring faith traditions, or growing offshoots in transition from sect to church—can best be viewed as a key sustaining source of Putnam’s social capital, adopting new forms and furnishing institutional histories that help to foster the social connectedness necessary to maintain a vibrant civil society. The reinforcement of a central tenet of America’s political faith—support for and competition between two and only two political parties—is but one byproduct of this process.

Third candidates who would break through this structural and historical nexus face a daunting challenge indeed. Perhaps the central challenge for third candidates is how to penetrate the institutions within communities, and the flow of information among citizens connected with these institutions. In many respects, institutions knit communities together. Information flows through networks structured through and around these institutions. Political parties work through the avenues of communication to reach the public—they work through the social
the utilization of social capital (Putnam 1995: 69–70). Social capital cultivate the links between democ­ ratic institutions such as churches, other societal institutions to be (Wattenberg 1990). Moreover, attachments might correspond to and partisan leanings (Roof and are much more than mere exten­ sion of personal beliefs and issue attitudes. Religious church bodies, Dean Kelley from society at large is a primary (see also Moore 1986). Distinc­ tors in explaining the success of sects paradigm (Finke and Stark 1992). Churches and churchgoers clearly political figures and strictures on adherents (Finke and Stark 1992: 237–238). But in American politics the major parties always win out over upstart competitors, and the recent devolution of the electoral system, both in terms of participation and the strength of the major parties, necessitates a deeper understanding of organized religion’s continuing contribution to the structural supports that sustain the major parties.

**TIME FRAME AND CHOICE OF CASES FOR ANALYSIS**

We have chosen the twentieth century as the time frame for our analysis. Within this century, we will focus the most attention on the handful of minor candidates who have run viable campaigns for the presidency; we also study in some detail the determinants of minor candidate voting in recent state-level elections. The convention in the literature on minor parties is that a viable candidate is one who receives at least 5 percent of the popular vote for president (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996). Our definition is broader, including minor candidates who had some significant issue, regional base, or discernible impact on the course of the presidential race and future public policies.

These choices are partly dependent on the availability of data sources that describe salient aspects of religious membership, social structure, and voting patterns in the United States. We will describe these sources in Chapter 3. But we also choose the twentieth century and viable minor candidacies based on the
fact that political scientists have established the election year of 1896 as a break point between party systems, and therefore as a logical place to start describing the modern period of minor candidate activity (Key 1948; Burnham 1970; Sundquist 1983). Minor party activity thrived in the period between the Civil War and the realigning election of 1896, but changes in ballot laws and procedures helped to end this phase (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996: 6, 19-20). In this century, by contrast, minor candidates, not connected to long-lasting political party organizations, have comprised the viable third candidacies with few exceptions. Hence limiting the discussion to minor candidates in the twentieth century creates a set of candidates with some clear similarities in terms of the types of campaigns they waged and the significant barriers they confronted. We will describe these barriers in Chapter 2.

We add six 1994 state-level elections to the mix in order to extend existing theories of minor candidate vote choice to another level. State elections do not receive the attention that national elections do, primarily because political scientists have come to rely on national voter surveys that normally do not sample enough citizens from individual states to draw firm conclusions about state races. Examining minor candidates who ran for governor or the U.S. Senate in the 1994 elections allows for consideration of our theory about religious institutions and minor candidates in a more diverse set of electoral contexts than simply national races.

The unifying thread between the two levels is the local community. Whether an election is for the highest office in the land or the least visible position in a small village, major or minor candidates face the same situation: how to organize their efforts to draw more votes than all competitors. We will demonstrate how religious institutions, beliefs, and practices affect the process by which voters perceive and decide whether to vote for minor candidates.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Chapter 2 introduces a theory of religious institutions and minor parties that will guide the empirical analysis throughout the book. We detail the barriers and constraints facing minor candidates, with particular attention to the roles played by churches and other social institutions and contexts. Then we present an overview of electoral politics from the perspective of a third candidate, moving from the choice to run for office through election day and the long-term challenge of developing a viable party organization. For each stage of the campaign, we describe the necessary activities and summarize the literature on how third candidates attempt to gain electoral support. This overview also evaluates the salience of churches and religious beliefs in determining voter behavior. The discussion serves to generate hypotheses about the role of religion in shaping support for minor candidates, both in terms of aggregate vote patterns and individual voter decisions.

Chapter 3 describes the rich data sources that will be utilized in our empirical
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reliable conclusions about personal religious beliefs and practices that is available through the National Election Studies (NES), the primary survey tool for political scientists since the late 1940s. Based on the census data, Chapter 3 presents basic information about religious adherence in the United States, as well as calculations of the constraints faced by minor candidates. In effect, we use our data to calculate the audience of voters from whom minor candidates must draw their support, and we will show a linkage between the minor candidate market and levels of religious adherence in U.S. counties.

The analysis of the market for third candidates leads in Chapter 4 to a historical focus on three-candidate presidential elections with aggregate religious adherence data. This chapter examines in detail the significant three- or four-candidate presidential races in the twentieth century—1912, 1924, 1948, 1968, 1980, and 1992 (the 1996 election is covered separately). We include historical overviews of the elections and candidates involved, so that readers can see how the religious factor matters in each race. Chapter 4 also utilizes a new technique for drawing individual-level inferences from aggregate data (Gary King’s solution to the ecological inference problem; 1997), yet another tool with which to examine the effects of religious institutions, beliefs, and practices on minor candidate voting.

Chapter 5 analyzes survey data on three-way presidential races in 1968, 1980, and 1992. This chapter develops individual-level models that predict voting for third candidates, and compares the findings across elections. We will break down religious factors from each election and link the earlier aggregate findings to the individual voter decision-making processes described by the empirical models.

Chapter 6 turns the focus to state-level elections involving minor candidates. We use aggregate data, exit poll survey data, and the 1994 NES survey to study six elections for governor or the U.S. Senate. The intent here is to examine whether the connections between religious factors and minor candidate voting in presidential elections also apply to statewide elections.

The final empirical chapter, Chapter 7, focuses exclusively on the presidential election of 1996. Reform Party candidate H. Ross Perot is the only minor candidate in U.S. electoral history to receive over five percent of the national popular vote in consecutive elections. Using all the dependent variables and levels of analysis from earlier chapters, we explore whether the Perot phenomenon changes in character or strategy in its second campaign, focusing in particular on evidence of party-building activities and the utilization of social networks such as churches. The chapter also examines the religious and secular sources of support for other minor presidential candidates in 1996. This inquiry provides a strong transition to a summary of all the findings and further development of their theoretical implications.

The concluding chapter summarizes our results and explores their implications.
for electoral politics in the United States. We also address broader questions about how and why organized religion helps to structure American politics and society, and how our findings pertain to the work of other scholars.

**FINAL INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS**

The binding thread in this book is the exploration of how measures of religion—whether defined as institutional strength, denominational membership, or personal beliefs and practices—affect the strength of political institutions, as expressed through minor candidate voting patterns. In investigating this question fully, we cannot hope to cover all of the intriguing stories surrounding the colorful cast of minor parties and candidates who have contested presidential elections. Nor can we present all of the available research on the multifaceted nature of the relationship between religion and politics in the United States. However, because this book represents the first effort to merge these two fields of inquiry, we have tried throughout to give readers unfamiliar with one field or the other enough information so that our own analysis and conclusions can be fairly evaluated. The larger concerns raised by the questions explored here go to the core of research in political behavior: How do citizens form attitudes about politics, candidates, and issues? What social forces operate to affect the information voters receive as well as their perceptions of this information? How can we reconcile competing theories about the associations between religious beliefs and membership patterns on the one hand, and political actions and voting patterns on the other? We hope that in highlighting the factors affecting minor candidate fortunes, some light will be shed on the nature of voter support for the major parties as well.

**NOTES**

1. While the St. Peter city elections are officially nonpartisan (no party labels appear on the ballot), many candidates are identifiable as members of one of the two major parties.

2. In the state of Minnesota, voters can register on Election Day, and unregistered college students may choose to register in the town where they attend college. Gustavus students thus represent about 10 percent of the St. Peter electorate, and local candidates have come to rely on large turnouts from this population.