

1 Introduction

Voice is “a basic portion and function of any political system” (Hirschman 1970, 30). But it is particularly important in political systems that aim for some sort of responsiveness of the government to its citizens—the type of political system that Dahl (1971) has called polyarchy, and that others have more commonly called democracy.

In his classic work, Dahl (1971) conceptualized voice as developing along two dimensions in democratic systems. The first dimension, contestation, concerns the extent to which opposition to the government is allowed. For example, are there free and fair elections for both the chief executive and the legislature? The second dimension, inclusion, concerns the proportion of the population that is allowed to participate in the contestation. For example, are women allowed to vote in elections? Another way of looking at this is that we should distinguish between *how* voice may be exercised (contestation) and *who* exercises it (inclusion). Voice *in toto* is ultimately shaped by both this “how” and this “who.”

Many scholars of democratization such as Alvarez and colleagues (1996) have focused heavily on the first of these dimensions of voice, which is institutional in nature.¹ Yet even they have acknowledged the importance of the second of these dimensions, which is societal in nature. This societal dimension of voice may alternatively be conceptualized in terms of preferences. Just as the institutional framework for exercising voice varies, so too do the preferences that are its content. For example, the working class was denied the franchise for many years in most countries. When the franchise was extended to these lower-class individuals, new demands, such as demands for safer working conditions, were voiced, holding constant the institutional setting. Accordingly, the kind of issues that a polity’s citizens have cared about and the positions that they have taken on these issues, which may be said to characterize their preferences, have varied over time. In this example, as the electorate has changed, so too have preferences.

Turning from the process of democratization to the working of democracy itself, few political scientists would disagree with the claim that pref-

¹Studies accordingly have embraced topics ranging from the existence of contested elections to the rules governing the translation of votes into legislative seats. See, for example, Doorenspleet (2000).

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erences (the “who” or societal dimension of voice) interact with institutions (the “how” or institutional dimension of voice) to produce the outcomes of the democratic political process. Originally put on the map by Plott (1991), others have called this claim the fundamental equation of politics (Hinich and Munger 1997). In other words, if politics is about who actually gets what, when and how (Lasswell 1936), or in Lenin’s maxim, about who can do what to whom, then *both* preferences and institutions are essential to understanding politics.

1.1 THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

Since the late 1980s, the new institutionalism has focused scholarly attention on one half of the fundamental equation of politics: political institutions.² Political institutions, either as enforcers of agreements that give rise to collective benefits or as “weapons of coercion and redistribution” (Moe 1990, 213), are the “constraint[s] that human beings devise to shape human interaction” (North 1990, 4). As such, they structure the incentives that guide individual actions, which in turn underlie the aggregate outcomes—such as election results and legislation—that political scientists observe.

In comparative politics, the new institutionalism has spurred the growth of a vast literature studying the variance in institutional arrangements across both space and time. Particular attention has been paid to eliciting institutional differences from country to country. To illustrate briefly, scholars have studied the system of government (democracy versus dictatorship); the type of democratic regime (presidential versus parliamentary, as well as federal versus unitary); the cameral structure of the legislature (unicameralism versus bicameralism); the electoral system (proportional representation versus majoritarian); and central banks (independent versus constrained), to name just a few.³ An overview, at an undergraduate level but nevertheless reflecting the breadth of the literature, is found in Lijphart (1999). It is true that most of the attention has been paid to democratic institutions, as Laitin

²The “new institutionalism” is understood here to mean the methodologically individualist meta-research program that explains macro-level phenomena using the strategic behavior of individuals. This encompasses two substantive research programs in the social sciences: that of rational choice (e.g., Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Moe 1990; Knight 1992) and that of bounded rationality (e.g., Bendor 2001). This book places itself within this methodologically individualist tradition. What is not meant is work from a different meta-research program, the institutional school of organizational sociology (e.g., Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972; March and Olsen 1984). Studies in this tradition explicitly reject methodological individualism but are still labeled as belonging to the “new institutionalism” (Moe, Bendor, and Shotts 2001).

³To identify just a few examples of scholarly studies exploring each of these institutions, Alvarez et al. (1996) and Przeworski et al. (2000) discuss the broadest possible classification of regimes: democracy and dictatorship. Shugart and Carey (1992) provide a classic treatment of presidentialism, while Chhibber and Kollman (2004) have more recently addressed the centralization of policy-making authority in the national level of government. Tsebelis and Money (1997) deal with the structure of legislatures, while Tsebelis (1995) offers a more general argument about both partisan and institutional veto players. On electoral systems, Cox (1997) is the modern classic. Central banks are tackled by Hall and Franzese (1998) and Iversen (1998), among many others.

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(2001) notes.⁴ Nevertheless, the ultimate goal is to link the differences in a polity's political institutions, whether the polity is democratic or not, to differences in the outcomes of the political process.

A prominent example is the comparative politics literature seeking to relate differences in a democracy's political institutions to different characteristics of its party system, the dependent variable with which I am concerned in this book. The party system is the way in which political competition is organized by political parties in modern representative democracies. In Sartori's (1976, 44) famous phrase, it is the "system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition." For example, are there few parties or many parties, and are the positions parties take as they compete for votes generally extremist or centrist? Political scientists have sought to gain explanatory leverage over the determinants of the party system because "democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" (Schattschneider 1942, 1). Political parties give voice to a democracy's citizens via the functions they perform in the electorate, as organizations, and in government (Key 1964). As such, they are important from the normative perspective of democratic theory. Moreover, the party system, in turn, has been shown to relate to many other consequential outcomes of the political process, from government stability to macroeconomic policy outcomes to the type of democracy, over which political scientists would like to gain leverage.⁵

The dimension of the party system that has received the most attention to date is the number of political parties, which has also been referred to as the fragmentation of the party system.⁶ An observer of contemporary world politics might naturally ask why some countries tend to have few parties while other countries tend to have many. For example, since World War II, two political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, have dominated elections in the United States. No more than a handful of seats in the lower house of the legislature, the House of Representatives, have been won by other parties.⁷ By way of contrast, elections in Israel have been fought by an average of approximately six parties, with the two largest parties averaging only about 60 percent of the seats in the legislature. Similarly, an observer of a particular country's politics might ask why that country has had more

⁴In a sense, the field of comparative politics that is described here is a compilation of Laitin's (2001) "Political Institutions" and "Comparative Politics" subfields. Like his "Political Institutions" subfield, it is concerned with how institutions work; like his "Comparative Politics" subfield, it is concerned with outcomes that vary across countries and the exogenous factors that account for such variance.

⁵For some of these consequences and others, see King et al. (1990); Wolendorp, Keman, and Budge (1993); Alt and Lowry (1994); Tsebelis (1995); Alesina, Roubini, and Cohen (1997); Lijphart (1999); Thomson (1999); and Powell (2000).

⁶See, for example, the prominence of this dimension in the classic typologies of party systems developed by scholars such as Dahl (1966), Sartori (1976), and Ware (1996).

⁷For example, one seat out of 435 went to other parties from 1940 to 1952; no seats from 1954 through 1988; and nine seats from 1990 through 2006 (all but one of which were won by Bernie Sanders, an Independent from Vermont, during his eight terms of service in the House). See Chapter 7 for more information.

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parties at some times than at others. Israel is again a good example: only approximately five parties contested its 1992 election, but a record high of approximately ten parties contested its 1999 election.⁸ Why did the number of parties *double* over the course of two elections and seven years?

The electoral system is the political institution that political scientists have primarily turned to as the explanatory factor.⁹ All else being equal, countries with majoritarian electoral systems are expected to have fewer political parties in equilibrium than countries with proportional representation systems. For example, building upon Duverger's (1963) well-known arguments, Cox's (1997) influential book argues that restrictive or "majoritarian" electoral systems place a constraining upper bound on the equilibrium number of parties competing in an election. The most prominent example of this type of electoral system combines a first-past-the-post (or plurality) electoral formula with single-member districts. Under these electoral rules, both political elites and ordinary voters have an incentive to strategically engage in electoral coordination, supporting less preferred but stronger contenders in order to make their votes and resources count. Specifically, the incentive is to support one of the two front-runners. At the other end of the spectrum are permissive or "proportional representation" electoral systems. These electoral systems combine multimember electoral districts with an electoral formula that awards seats in each district in proportion to the votes received by the parties. Under these electoral rules, there are no incentives for conventional seat-maximizing strategic behavior. Political elites and ordinary voters instead support the contender they sincerely prefer.

Returning to the stylized examples just discussed, the electoral system seems capable of accounting for the difference in the number of political parties between the United States and Israel. The United States employs a restrictive electoral system—specifically, single-member plurality. Conversely, Israel employs a nonrestrictive electoral system—specifically, a proportional formula (today, the d'Hondt) and one nationwide district of 120 legislators. And as already discussed, the United States on average has far fewer parties than Israel does, in accordance with the theoretical predictions.

But the electoral system does not seem capable of accounting for variation over time within each country. Israel has always employed a proportional representation electoral system, yet its number of parties increased sharply in the mid- to late 1990s.¹⁰ Similarly, earlier in the United States'

⁸See Chapters 5 and 6 for more information.

⁹In comparative politics, prominent cross-national and quantitative studies exploring the relationship between the electoral system and the number of political parties include Duverger (1963), Rae (1967), Sartori (1976), Grofman and Lipjhart (1986), Taagepera and Shugart (1989), Lijphart (1990), Lijphart (1994), Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994), Cox (1997), Sartori (1997), Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich (2003), Clark and Golder (2006), Singer and Stephenson (2009), and Moser and Scheiner (2012), among many, many others. There are also numerous case studies of single countries, such as Reed (1990).

¹⁰Other if less stark changes in the fragmentation of the Israeli party system can also be identified. Note that the minor changes that Israel has made to its electoral system over time have all moved it in a more restrictive direction, such as switching to the d'Hondt from the

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history, more than two parties commonly contested elections (think, for example, of the American Party and the Progressives), yet the United States, too, has effectively always employed the same electoral system at the national (federal) level. Obviously, a constant cannot explain variation. Are there other political institutions that might provide an explanation?

The answer is “yes”: the type of democratic regime. More recently, scholars have begun linking this political institutional variable to the number of political parties. For many years, as part of the literature debating the merits of presidential versus parliamentary systems of government, scholars simply compared the number of political parties under the two types of regimes, finding that “presidential systems, all other factors being equal, will have smaller effective numbers of parties than non-presidential systems of government” (Lijphart 1994, 131). Subsequent studies have refined this presidential–parliamentary dichotomy. The effect of presidentialism, also referred to as the presidential coattails, is now known to be mediated by the fragmentation of the presidential party system itself and by the electoral cycle (e.g., Shugart and Carey 1992; Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Cox 1997; Golder 2006; Hicken and Stoll 2011).¹¹ Specifically, when a presidential election is held in temporal proximity to a legislative election and there are few presidential candidates, the presidential election casts a deflationary shadow over the legislative election, which consolidates the legislative party system. By way of contrast, when a presidential election is held in temporal proximity to a legislative election and there are many presidential candidates, the presidential election casts an inflationary shadow over the legislative election, which fragments it.¹²

However, the existence of a separately elected president is not the only feature of the regime type that shapes the number of political parties. Very recently, political scientists have taken a fresh look at other potentially consequential ways in which democratic regimes vary across space and time. For example, in their pioneering work, Chhibber and Kollman (1998, 2004) argue that the more centralized policy-making authority is at the national level of government vis-à-vis subnational levels of government, the greater the incentive political elites and ordinary voters have to coordinate across electoral districts to form political parties capable of winning many legislative seats. This process of party system aggregation leads to fewer, more nationalized political parties.¹³

LR-Hare formula. Accordingly, these changes cannot account for the *increase* in the number of political parties in Israel in the 1990s.

¹¹More recently still, the size of the presidential prize, that is, the centralization of policy-making authority in the presidency vis-à-vis the legislature, has been identified as an additional conditioning variable (Hicken and Stoll 2013). These other features of the regime type will be discussed in more detail later.

¹²Note, though, that the empirical evidence for the deflationary effect is stronger than that for the inflationary effect (Hicken and Stoll 2011).

¹³Another important recent study that takes a novel look at the democratic regime is Samuels and Shugart (2010). However, this work explores how the regime type shapes a different dependent variable: the internal organization of political parties.

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More generally, Hicken and Stoll (2008, 2009) and Hicken (2009) argue that it is the type of regime, not the electoral system, that provides the incentives for combining the many party systems existing in the electoral districts together into one national party system. While the electoral system primarily provides incentives to coordinate within electoral districts, shaping the district-level party system (e.g., Singer and Stephenson 2009), the type of regime provides incentives to coordinate across electoral districts in order to become the largest party in the national legislature, shaping the national-level party system. The more the democratic regime centralizes policy-making authority in the hands of the largest party in the national legislature, the more valuable it is to be this largest party, and hence the greater these incentives. Better cross-district coordination or aggregation, in turn, usually results in fewer political parties nationally (Hicken and Stoll 2011). Specifically, these scholars have proposed studying how the regime type distributes policy-making authority along two dimensions: vertically among the different levels of government, à la Chhibber and Kollman (1998, 2004), as well as horizontally among different institutional actors within the national level of government. These lines of inquiry have been facilitated by the increased availability of data at the level of the electoral district over the past decade.¹⁴

Again returning to the stylized examples introduced earlier, in the United States, the increase in the vertical centralization of policy-making authority in the national level of government in the mid- to late 1800s helps to explain the decrease in the number of political parties over this same period (Chhibber and Kollman 1998, 2004). And as a later chapter will argue, Israel's 1996 switch from a parliamentary regime to a unique hybrid regime, classified by some as a president–parliamentary regime (Hazan 1996) and by others as an elected prime ministerial regime (Samuels and Shugart 2010), helps to explain the spectacular fragmentation of the Israeli party system in the late 1990s. Moreover, like the electoral system, the United States' presidential regime seems capable of contributing to the explanation of why this country on average has fewer political parties than nonpresidential Israel does.

Hence, the new institutionalism has identified variation in two political institutions, the electoral system and the democratic regime type, and linked this variation to variation in the number of political parties competing in democratic elections.

1.2 A NEW SOCIETALISM?

However, institutions do not—and cannot—tell the whole story: as I initially argued, preferences have work to do as well. Conventional understandings of the world go hand in glove with very old and fundamental philosophical

¹⁴In addition to the previously referenced studies, such as Chhibber and Kollman (2004) and Moser and Scheiner (2012), see also Caramani (2004), Brancati (2008), and Jones (2009). Of particular note, the Constituency Level Electoral Archive (CLEA) at the University of Michigan now serves as a valuable repository for district-level electoral returns.

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debates to tell us this.

To illustrate, one need only compare the writings of the ancient Greek philosophers to those of the early scholars of the Christian tradition to understand how different ideas about political life can be. For Aristotle, politics existed to facilitate human flourishing: it was the crucible where man, a political animal, realized his particular excellence on earth (*areté*).¹⁵ For Paul, on the other hand, politics existed as a terror to evil works, to control the wicked and minister to the good until the imminent day of salvation finally dawned.¹⁶ A thought experiment can easily conjure up two imaginary states, Aristotelia and Paulia, each dominated by the respective perspective on politics. While one might argue that each state would naturally be inclined towards a certain set of political institutions, accepting for the sake of the thought experiment that the same set of democratic institutions exists in each, the mind boggles at the many ways in which political life would differ in the two states. Dissimilarities would likely range from the issues framing political campaigns to the activities ultimately undertaken by the governments. For example, education would likely be a major focus of the Aristotelian state whereas the Paulian state would likely put its energies into law enforcement, particularly of the “Thou Shalt Not Kill” type of commandments. Further, if Aristotelians woke up one morning to find themselves coexisting in a single state with many Paulians, the political sparks would surely fly.

The number of political parties, the dependent variable with which I am primarily concerned in this book, is a good example. It is hard to imagine the Aristotelians and Paulians being able to work together within a single political party: the radically different worldviews of the two groups would almost certainly give rise to radically different interests. If a number of Paulians, for whatever reason, did suddenly find themselves citizens of the Aristotelian state, or vice versa, it is accordingly likely that these new citizens would strike out on their own, forming a new political party to give voice to their own unique interests. The result would be the fragmentation of the original party system.

While the prior paragraphs have deliberately drawn an exaggerated contrast between two sets of beliefs and the likely consequences each would have for political life, the lesson has hardly been lost upon modern political scientists. Some new institutionalists controversially claim that “generally speaking, the institutions of politics provide a larger part of the explanation than do preferences” (Dowding and King 1995, 7),¹⁷ but most of the

¹⁵For an elaboration of these ideas, consult Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Plato, of course, also viewed the ultimate goal of politics as the development of human excellence; however, he viewed politics itself as a necessary evil, not constitutive of human nature. In fact, he consigned it to the realm of experts: his philosopher-kings.

¹⁶These ideas are developed most forcefully in Romans 13; similar themes pervade the writings of other early Christian philosophers such as St. Augustine.

¹⁷Dowding and King (1995) offer in support of their contention work by scholars such as Hall (1986), who, they argue, explains different policy outcomes in France and Britain not

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new institutionalism still leaves a role for preferences to play. In fact, the political situations of the greatest interest to contemporary political scientists are those that are characterized by disagreement.¹⁸ Social choice theory provides a vivid illustration: the rationality or irrationality of group preferences (e.g., the presence or absence of voting cycles) is jointly determined by the structure of and the method of aggregating individual preferences. Similarly, game theory formalizes institutions and their effects on interdependent individual decisions, where one critical structure of a game is individual preferences over outcomes. Hence, comparative politics must not only concern itself with variance in institutions when explaining variance in outcomes. It must also concern itself with variance in preferences.

Consider again the topic that I am concerned with in this book: party systems. A number of scholars have recognized the need to go beyond political institutions when explaining why some countries and elections have more political parties than others. This countervailing perspective has long-standing scholarly antecedents: for example, a close reading of Duverger (1963), typically portrayed as an institutionalist, reveals a view of political parties as reflections of social forces (Clark and Golder 2006). For another example, one need look no further than Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) famous treatise. For Lipset and Rokkan, the party systems of the 1960s were products of countries' salient social cleavages, which in turn were largely products of how the national and industrial revolutions had earlier played out in each country.¹⁹ More recently, in his modern classic work, Cox (1997) argues that the number of political parties in a country is the product of *both* the restrictiveness of its electoral system and its social cleavage structure. Specifically, he argues that many political parties will be the result of a heterogeneous society combined with a permissive electoral system; by way of contrast, few political parties will be the result of either a homogeneous society or a heterogeneous society combined with a restrictive electoral system.²⁰ In the latter case, downward pressure is applied on the country's

by differences in interests, but by differences in institutions. This may be somewhat of an overstatement of Hall's position regarding the role played by interests, ideas, and ideology in economic policy making, but there is some merit to Dowding and King's characterization.

¹⁸For example, Hinich and Munger (1997, 6–7) playfully describe the collective choice that the hypothetical Hun-Gat tribe must make about where to find food: to stay put; to go north; or to go south. The inherent boredom political scientists feel when confronted with unanimity emerges clearly from their writing: "If everyone wants to go north or south, they all go. If all want to stay, they stay." Conversely, their excitement is barely disguised when different Hun-Gats want different things: "Disagreement tests collective choice mechanisms; conflict strains the ties that gather a group of individuals into a society." In fact, the rest of their introductory text—like the spatial theory it is designed to explicate—is devoted to analyzing what the Hun-Gats should do in this situation.

¹⁹The "largely" is critical here in that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) also allow political institutions to play a role, even if this component of their argument is not as well developed or as prominent as the societal component. In their account, the primarily institutional thresholds faced by the social groups that sought representation determined which social cleavages were politicized and hence which party families were present in a country.

²⁰How this social heterogeneity should be defined and operationalized is obviously a critical

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“natural” (given its cleavage structure) number of parties by the strategic responses of voters and elites to the restrictive electoral system. Following Cox, most scholars have both argued for and found empirical support for an interaction between the electoral system and the social heterogeneity of the country.²¹

Applying these arguments to the stylized example of the previous section, Israel is viewed by most commentators as a plural, deeply divided society (e.g., Kop and Litan 2002). Individuals are divided by sociodemographic criteria ranging from ethnicity to religion, as well as by the non-sociodemographic criterion of their stance towards Israel’s foreign policy. This social diversity gives rise to a large “natural” number of political parties. Given Israel’s permissive electoral system, there are few incentives for either political elites or ordinary voters to engage in electoral coordination, which means that its natural number of political parties becomes its actual number of political parties. In other words, it is the combination of its social heterogeneity and its permissive electoral system that explains Israel’s fragmented party system; taking both of these variables into account provides more explanatory leverage than does the electoral system alone. There is less consensus about the social heterogeneity of the United States.²² Regardless of whether the United States should be viewed as socially heterogeneous or homogeneous, however, its restrictive electoral system ensures that only a few political parties will contest American elections.

Accordingly, it would be setting up a straw man to make the case that students of party systems have exclusively sought political institutional explanations. Yet both theorizing about and empirical measurement of preferences have lagged behind that of political institutions. Take again the stylized examples and the party systems literature just described. As I will argue in a later chapter, Israel is a country of immigration. Many different groups of immigrants have made their way to its shores over the past sixty years. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, large numbers of non-European Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, known as Sephardim, immigrated to Israel, and in the 1990s, close to a million Russian Jews did. These two groups of immigrants differed from Israel’s existing citizens in a variety of ways, from their native tongues to their religiosity. Given Israel’s permissive electoral system, the state-of-the-art literature just described would predict that these increases in Israel’s social heterogeneity would lead to an increase in its number of political parties: it is natural to think that these

question, one to which I will turn later.

²¹Examples include Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994), Amorim Neto and Cox (1997), Jones (1999), Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich (2003), Chhibber and Kollman (2004), Jones (2004), Clark and Golder (2006), Golder (2006), and Singer and Stephenson (2009). There are some prominent exceptions, however. For example, Powell (1982) tested only for an additive relationship; Jones (1997) held the electoral system constant by design; and both Stoll (2008) and Moser and Scheiner (2012) have found limited empirical support for the posited interaction.

²²Contrast, for example, the portrait of heterogeneity in Stoll (2004, 2011) with the portrait of homogeneity in Lijphart (1999).

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new groups of immigrants would demand and be supplied with new political parties designed to give voice to their unique interests. Yet while Russian Jews have successfully formed their own parties, the Sephardim for the most part have not. Hence, the number of political parties has only sometimes increased as a result of changes in Israeli society that have increased its social, and specifically its ethnic, heterogeneity. But what can explain the different political trajectories of these two immigrant groups? Why, in other words, have these different waves of immigration had different impacts upon the Israeli party system? The existing literature gives no leverage over these questions.

Similarly, African Americans were emancipated from slavery and enfranchised after the American Civil War of the 1860s. The inclusion of this new ethnic group in the citizenry, an event so revolutionary that it took military force to see it through, is also an example of an increase in social heterogeneity. Because of the United States' restrictive electoral system, however, one conventional reading of the literature predicts that this increase in social heterogeneity should not lead to an increase in the number of political parties. Specifically, the implication of existing theories is that political parties aiming to uniquely represent African Americans should not have emerged. And indeed, as a later chapter will argue, effectively no African American political parties were successful in the 1870s, a period known as Reconstruction. But following African Americans' subsequent disenfranchisement around the turn of the last century and later re-enfranchisement as part of the Civil Rights movement, African American political parties did successfully appear in some states and elections in the twentieth century. What can explain the appearance of these parties, despite the United States' use of a restrictive electoral system throughout this period, and why did they emerge in some states and elections but not in others? Again, the existing literature does not provide sufficient empirical leverage over these questions.

More generally, there have been many changes in both Israeli and American society, some of which have shaped the number of political parties and some of which have not—yet in each country, the electoral system has not changed in any meaningful way over time. Given the two countries' electoral systems, the state-of-the-art literature predicts only that changes in American society should have little impact on the number of American political parties, and that changes in Israeli society should have a substantial impact on the number of Israeli parties. It does not explain the variation over time within each country: why only *some* increases in social heterogeneity have increased the number of parties in these countries. Put differently, the literature does not shed any light on *which* of the many social changes that democracies might experience should be expected to impact the number of parties. Hence, to increase our empirical leverage over how changes in societies (preferences) shape the party system, we need better conceptualizations and measures of this variable, as well as theories that go beyond the conditioning effect of the electoral system. The following paragraphs