PARTIES, PARTICIPATION, AND REPRESENTATION IN AMERICA:

OLD THEORIES FACE NEW REALITIES

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Introduction

Theory and reality interact continuously. Reality shapes theories, but theories in turn shape understandings of reality. Theory generally trails reality in their ongoing interaction. Theorists construct new models and modify old ones upon recognition that the political world has changed; consequently, revised understandings arise after new realities have arrived--and sometimes departed. This paper argues that important components of traditional democratic theory now lag the realities of contemporary American democracy. Thus, what we teach our students about parties and representation is outdated, a reflection of conditions that prevailed from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, not the realities they see around them.

My argument takes off from several developments that many observers view as indicators of serious problems in American democracy. These include (1), the near half-century decline in the public's regard for government and politics; (2) the similarly long-term decline in voting turnout and other forms of political participation; and (3) the more general long-term decline in civic engagement and social capital that is currently the subject of much academic and popular discussion. While scholars have invested considerable time and energy describing and dissecting these developments, my interest here is different. According to two major lines of argument about how to improve American democracy, the condition of American democracy today should be judged superior to its condition at mid-century, but the aforementioned developments seem to contradict that judgment. This paper considers possible explanations for this gap between scholarly theory and popular perceptions, and argues that ordinary Americans are correct: empirical developments have left us teaching theories whose fit with reality has diminished.

The Condition of American Democracy I: Declining Trust and Rising Cynicism

By various time series compiled by various survey research organizations, cynicism about government is up, confidence and trust in leaders and institutions are down. Figure 1 provides some familiar illustrations. I will not belabor these well-known trends, but briefly note that a number of caveats apply to them. First, while there is a common tendency to decry trends like these, plausible arguments to the contrary exist. For purposes of this paper, however, a normative stance is not required. The simple empirical proposition that evaluations of government are lower now than four decades ago is the issue. Second, while there also is a natural tendency to assume that the more positive evaluations of government measured shortly after mid-century are the norm and the less positive contemporary levels are the aberration, that too is a questionable assumption. American history has had its ups and downs, and one suspects that trust in government might have been low at various other times—during the late 19th century period of industrial warfare, for example. Whether Americans in 1960 were historically typical or abnormally trusting can not be determined from this data, but again, the simple empirical decline from mid-century is the issue here.

{Figure 1 about here}

Third, confidence in leaders and institutions outside the political sphere has fallen as well (Lipset and Schneider, 1983). As social scientists we need to keep this development in mind. Generalization is our stock in trade, and purely political explanations do not speak to the broader decline. Still, confidence in all leaders and all institutions has not fallen at the same rate or to the same levels, and confidence in some has recovered.[1] Thus, variation is present, so that arguments that apply principally to politics but somewhat to other spheres as well have some explanatory potential. The argument presented below has that characteristic.

A broad phenomenon like deteriorating evaluations of government obviously has many causes (Nye, Zelikow and King, 1997: Part II; Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn, 2001). To some extent leaders no doubt have earned the distrust of the citizenry: Vietnam and civil disorder in the late 1960s, Watergate, stagflation, and the Iranian hostage crisis in the 1970s, out-of-control deficits and Iran-Contra in the 1980s, Bill Clinton in the 1990s. Perhaps the negative evaluations held by Americans are no more than a natural reaction to a long litany of abuses of office and seeming incompetence. Other observers emphasize the economy—the end of the postwar expansion and the arrival of the inflationary era in the early 1970s shook confidence the government's ability to maintain prosperity, and their confidence did recover a bit during the Reagan boom and again during the current Clinton prosperity. Some scholars look beyond such objective events and trends to perceptions, in particular to perceptions shaped by the media, especially TV. With their characteristic negativity and pursuit of scandal, the media make Americans believe that government is less competent and leaders less trustworthy even though the reality may not have changed.[2] It is highly probable that all these and other developments contribute to the trends detailed in Figures 1. The arguments offered below are intended as additions, not alternatives.

The Condition of American Democracy II: The Decline of Political Participation

For several decades academic and popular commentators have bemoaned the decline of voting turnout in the United States. From a modern high in 1960, presidential turnout fell every election until 1992, when the Perot challenge generated a five percent surge (Figure 2). That rise was temporary, however, as turnout fell below the symbolically significant 50 percent mark in 1996, and rose only to a little below the 1992 level in 2000, despite what one overenthusiastic reporter (Von Drehle, 2000) characterized as "the largest voter mobilization effort in history." Congressional turnout also has declined over the past generation, although a bit more erratically. Numerous observers are at least partly sympathetic with Benjamin Barber's (1984: xiii) verdict

on these trends: "In a country where voting is the primary expression of citizenship, the refusal to vote signals the bankruptcy of democracy."

{Figure 2 about here}

Not everyone is so enamored of the value of voting, but other forms of participation have declined as well (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993: ch. 3). Political participation takes time and energy, of course, and contemporary Americans are overworked according to some scholars (Schorr, 1991). But the fall in participation appears to be less a consequence of competing demands and more a reflection of a fall in psychological engagement. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996: ch. 3) report that despite a vastly more educated public and an explosion of information broadcast over the airwaves, contemporary Americans know at most as much as those of a generation ago. Why? In part because they don't care: popular interest in government and public affairs has declined by about 20 percent since the 1970s (Putnam, 2000: 36).

Again, there are numerous disagreements about the description, explanation, and implications of these trends. McDonald and Popkin (2000) for example, criticize the way the Census Bureau calculates turnout, arguing that if measured properly, turnout does not show a steady decline so much as a sharp drop in 1972. Some accept the fact of decline, but are more sanguine about the effects of declining turnout than those who share Barber's views. Numerous scholars have puzzled over the respective sizes of institutional, demographic and psychological contributions to declining participation (eg. Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Teixeira, 1992). Clearly, however, only a few curmudgeons regard low political participation as a healthy feature of democracy.[3]

Some observers have argued that political participation is not so much in decline as in a process of transformation. Specifically, people vote less, go to fewer political meetings, and forego buttons and bumper stickers because they feel that their time and energy can be better spent in activities other than classic forms of electoral participation. Instead, they join and

contribute to groups that influence communities and government, they volunteer their time, and they support nonprofit groups and organizations that increasingly take on public functions (Ladd, 1999). That optimistic argument is challenged by the third development.

The Condition of American Democracy III: The Decline in Civic Engagement

The associated concepts of civil society, civic engagement and social capital have received an enormous amount of attention during the past decade. *Civic engagement* refers to the voluntary activities of people in their communities, workplaces, churches, and other social contexts. Such activities can be highly political, entirely nonpolitical, and anything in between. Civic engagement occurs in *civil society*: "those forms of communal and associational life which are organized neither by the self-interest of the market nor by the coercive potential of the state" (Wolfe, 1997: 9). In classical political theory a strong civil society is a bulwark of democracy (Tocqueville, 1966).

Within democracies civic engagement is thought to contribute to a healthier, more peaceful, more prosperous society by generating what James Coleman (1988) called *social capital*, an intangible resource analogous to physical or financial capital. Social capital consists in the first place of information networks that pass useful knowledge from one member of society to another. In the second place social capital consists of expectations and obligations that minimize conflicts and lubricate social relations. In the third place, social capital consists of norms that specify obligations and punish transgressions thereof.

In the eyes of its proponents, civic engagement generates social capital. Norms will be effective only if individuals recognize their existence. But individuals will not recognize their obligations if they do not know them. And such critical information will not be passed on if individuals do not communicate in the first place. Civic engagement brings people together; interacting enables them to communicate their preferences and expectations, and working

together builds bonds of trust and mutual obligation. Thus, societies with high levels of civic engagement will be societies that can draw on extensive reserves of social capital.

Contrary to what Ladd and others have argued, Putnam (2000) shows that civic engagement in America has declined. Political, civic, and religious participation, philanthropy, social contacts--all are down from earlier decades. While numerous critics have quarreled with various parts of this arguments, analyses, and data, his arguments strike a responsive chord in many lay people as well as scholars. In particular, they look back fondly on an era when presidential turnout exceeded 60 percent, when partisans enthusiastically pinned on campaign buttons, when every (ie. all three) TV channel provided gavel-to-gavel coverage of the presidential nominating conventions, when people trusted their government and each other, and when government and society seemed in some general sense "better."

The argument that civic engagement and social capital have declined partly incorporates the previous two arguments. Relative to Americans of mid-century, citizens today are not as closely connected with each other and because they interact less now, they trust each other and government less now, and this will lead to still lower participation in the future. Would a negative dynamic like this have been predicted by mid-century political scientists? On the contrary, there is good reason to believe that such a development would have surprised them.

Improving American Democracy

By my reading there are two major strains of argument about how American democracy can be improved. The first underlies the long-standing populist tradition and the more recent participatory movement of the 1960s. In a nutshell, if democracy is government by the people, then American democracy can be improved by empowering citizens and opening up established structures and processes. The second argument has enjoyed more support within the academy than in the popular arena. First exposited around the turn of the century by Woodrow Wilson and

others, it holds that American institutions diminish the effectiveness of democratic government. The way to overcome these institutional impediments and make American democracy more effective is to strengthen parties (Ranney, 1954). Let us consider these in turn.

Improving American Democracy, I: Open it Up

The participatory argument received a very sympathetic hearing in the late 20th century, a hearing that translated into practice. For a long generation reformers (joined by others seeking political advantage) have diligently stripped away the insulation around political institutions and processes, leaving them more open to popular participation and pressure. Table 1 lists some of the changes that have taken place since the 1950s, indeed, most of them since the mid-1960s, when confidence in government began to decline.

{Table 1 about here}

Some of the changes are widely recognized, but others are less so. Among the former, changes in the presidential nomination process are the best known example. Until the mid-1960s stereotypical nomination politics consisted of party "bosses" choosing nominees in "smoke-filled rooms." Party leaders ignored Estes Kefauver's 1952 primary victories, and they were impressed by John Kennedy's critical 1960 primary victories only as demonstrations that he could carry Protestant states. As late as 1968 Hubert Humphrey won the Democratic nomination without entering a single primary. But Goldwater's "amateurs" upset the Republican establishment in 1964 and when McGovern's new politics activists did the same on the Democratic side in 1972, the new era was firmly in place (Ceaser, 1979; Polsby, 1983).

Meanwhile, the decline of local party organizations, weakening of citizen party identifications, the advent of television campaigning, and other factors contributed to a broader change—the development of candidate-centered politics. The most notable (and most studied) example was in the congressional arena where the personal advantage of incumbency surged in

the late 1960s (Mayhew, 1974; Gelman and King, 1990). But more generally, the old order in which a single party organization or an encompassing interest group delivered the vote for a larger set of candidates associated with it was replaced by a new order in which each individual candidate built a personal organization and communicated directly with supporters. Two-step flows, opinion leaders and related concepts from the voting literature of the 1940s and 1950s (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954) largely disappeared from the voting literature of the 1970s and 1980s, as the influence of intermediaries in the electoral process declined.

Changes in arenas other than the electoral are less widely-recognized but also significant. The movement toward "government in the sunshine" resulted in changes in the internal processes of governing institutions. In Congress, for example, the early 1970s saw the opening of many committee meetings to the public, and a movement away from anonymous voting procedures in favor of putting everything on the record. Many scholars have pondered the consequences of congressional decentralization in the 1970s (eg. Dodd and Schott, 1979); fewer have reflected on the consequences of making the activities of its members so much more visible. Movement in this direction occurred all through American democracy as open meetings and agendas published in advance increasingly became the norm.

At roughly the same time it became easier to get one's day in court. The Supreme Court expanded doctrines of standing, enlarging the class of interests entitled to a hearing in the courts (Stewart, 1975). Similarly, new Congressional statutes expanded standing. Congress and the courts worked in tandem to open up the bureaucracy. Congress mandated new procedures that enabled interested constituencies to learn about agency proposals and participate in agency decision processes, and the courts reinforced these requirements and became increasingly aggressive about judicial review. Congress even subsidized non-governmental intervenors in some cases. The end result of these changes is an administrative process that is far more visible and open to public participation than was the case in 1950.

At the local level, the watchwords of the Great Society were "maximum feasible participation" (Greenstone and Peterson, 1973). Old structures were bypassed in favor of new ones that empowered new groups. Local bodies of all sorts proliferated (Burns, 1994). And most of these were subject to the kind of open government requirements mentioned above. The days when many smaller cities and towns were run by mayors and councilors fronting for a few big business interests are long gone (Ehrenhalt, 1991).

Changes such as these are on the supply side of politics—the people and processes that supply public policy outputs are more exposed to popular influence today than a generation ago. But there have been important changes on the demand side as well. Most obvious is the "advocacy explosion" – the proliferation of interest groups documented by Scholzman and Tierney (1986), Walker (1991) and others. In the 1950s a small number of large sectoral interest groups worked with party and institutional leaders. Today a plethora of small particularistic interest groups lobby everyone-- often working indirectly through the grass roots, and help to finance the campaigns that grow ever more expensive.

Another demand side change is the increasing information available to politicians. Not only do constituents have more information about what politicians do, politicians have much more information about what constituents think. Younger scholars today may not appreciate how recently the widespread use of polling came to American politics. But John Brehm's (1993). striking tabulation (Figure 3) shows the polling explosion—beginning, of course, in the 1960s.

{Figure 3 about here}

Polling is just the most prominent example of a set of new technologies that provide more direct links between politicians and voters. Letters and postcards were supplanted by long distance telephone, WATS by FAX, FAX by e-mail and the Internet. A citizen who so desires may easily contact his or her representative in seconds, a far cry from the 1950s, when the time

and effort to write a letter were required. Most attention to these developments has focused on

the enhanced ability of members to reach constituents, but the new technologies are two-way:

elected officials find it easier to reach constituents, but the reverse holds as well.

Finally, to an increasing extent, citizens and groups now dispense with leaders and

representative institutions altogether. The past generation has seen growth in the use of the

procedures of direct democracy—the initiative, referendum and recall.[4] Many decry this trend

(eg. Broder, 2000), but the point here is simply that for better or for worse, it is another example

of how popular pressure can increasingly make itself felt in the governmental arena.

The preceding list is partial, to be sure, but I think it sufficient to make the general point.

During the past generation American political institutions and processes have become

increasingly permeable to popular participation and increasingly subject to popular pressure.

How ironic, then, that Americans so dislike what reformers have wrought. Americans liked their

government better, trusted their leaders more, voted in higher numbers and in general participated

more in public life when party bosses chose nominees in smoke-filled rooms, when several dozen

old men (mostly Southerners) ran Congress, when it was difficult to get a hearing in court, when

legislatures, agencies and city councils made decisions behind closed doors, when big business,

big labor and big agriculture dominated the interest group universe, and when politicians didn't

have the tools to figure out what constituents wanted—if they cared.

Perhaps there really is no puzzle here. Long ago Bismarck advised against watching laws

and sausages being made. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995) advance a modern version of that

argument to explain why Americans hold Congress in lower esteem than the Presidency and the

Supreme Court: congressional operations are more visible, hence congressional "politics" more

exposed and popular disapproval more severe. One can generalize their cross-sectional argument

across time and suggest that since institutions and processes are now more visible across the

board, approval and confidence in all drops—albeit from different levels--as voters increasingly

see the lobbying, infighting, and bargaining and compromise that politics entails. This argument

probably explains some of the irony noted above, but I doubt that it is the whole story. Before

adding to it however, let us consider the second strain of argument about the improvement of

American democracy.

Improving American Democracy II: Strengthen the Parties

Another line of argument about democratic reform locates the deficiencies in American

democracy in a different place. Especially within the academy, critics have seen the problem not

as one of limited participation in government, but as one of control of government. Federalism,

the separation of powers, checks and balances—the fundamental institutions of American

democracy operate to hinder coherent action and obscure responsibility for government action.

Making the popular will (if it can be said to exist) known through participation is not enough; the

popular will must be focused. What is needed is a means of imposing coherence on government

action, of centralizing the authority that institutions decentralize. According to various scholars

over the decades, that means strong or responsible political parties.

As noted above, the case for strong parties was advanced at the turn of the century. It has

regularly been elaborated since, most prominently in the 1950 report of the American Political

Science Association's Committee on Political Parties, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party

System." In the 1970s numerous articles and books decried the "party decomposition" then

apparent (eg. Burnham, 1970, ch. 5; Broder, 1971), and a Committee for Party Renewal even was

established in the mid-1970s (Mileur, 1991). In 1995 there was a palpable sense of excitement

among American politics scholars when the congressional Republicans behaved much like the

responsible party that we had read about in our textbooks.

Everett Ladd (1992) undoubtedly was correct in noting that support for strong parties to

some degree reflects a preference for activist government. Wilson was arguing for a party that

would enable a strong president to impose his leadership. The APSA Committee did its work

during the heyday of the New Deal public philosophy. And most recently, concerns over the state

of the parties resurged during the energy crisis and stagflation of the 1970s, both of which seemed

to require some major, coordinated government response.

Still, not only statists see the value of responsible parties. For many scholars the electoral

accountability provided by cohesive parties was a more important consideration than the

programmatic efficiency they would provide. Without the collective responsibility provided by

parties, members of Congress could escape responsibility for the policies advocated by their

activists and presidential candidates, and they had every reason to hang their presidents out to dry

when the going got tough (Fiorina 1980). Ending this electoral irresponsibility—which reached

its apogee with a more-or-less continuous state of divided government--was clearly a concern of

modern supporters of strong parties.

Like advocates of participatory democracy, supporters of strong parties have gotten much

of what they wanted over the course of the past three or four decades. The APSA report is far

more often cited than read, but those who read it typically report a response of the following sort:

"gee, a lot of what those guys wanted actually has happened." Professors Baer and Bositis (1993)

have done the profession a great service by carefully reading the report and judging the extent to

which its numerous recommendations have been adopted. I hope they will forgive me for

summarizing their 40 page assessment in the crude tabulation reported in Table 2.

{Table 2 about here}

Some of the APSA committee's recommendations applied to the internal processes of the

parties, and others to the larger system. The recommendations range from minor (reducing the

number of convention delegates) to major (making congressional committee chairs responsible to

the parties). Some of the proposals never had a chance--abolition of the Electoral College, for

example, while some of the proposals were fairly easy to implement (party conferences). But

even granting these problems in adding up successes and failures, on the whole the crude

tabulation in Table 2 strongly suggests that the committee was quite successful. The Democrats,

fittingly, have adopted 28 of 33 proposals, the more conservative Republicans have gone along with 20 of the 33, and 15 of the 20 recommendations for the larger system have been implemented at least to some degree. Nelson Polsby (2000) has quipped that the committee "sought both to rewrite the U.S. Constitution and to reform human nature." Against odds like that they seem to have done rather well.

And therein lies a second irony! Some of the best political science minds of the 1930s and 1940s proposed a plan to improve American democracy. Whether as a direct result of the power of their case or not, much of that plan has been implemented. But the result is not what the committee might have anticipated. Current generations of Americans who are blessed with more responsible parties like and trust their government much less and participate less in politics than their predecessors who were afflicted with the unreformed, less responsible parties of mid-century. Here again, a venerable set of arguments about how to improve American democracy seems inconsistent with the judgments of the people who actually live under it.

Explaining the Gaps Between Theory and Reality

These broad inconsistencies between theories and data raise three logical possibilities. The first is that both general theories are correct separately, but when implemented simultaneously they offset or produce some kind of negative interaction. An example might be the charge of some critics that the APSA report was schizophrenic: on the one hand it called for centralization, but on the other hand it doffed its hat in the direction of the participatory tradition by calling for more grass roots involvement. Perhaps the two simply are impossible to reconcile. Getting more popular involvement prevented party reforms from achieving the desired end of enhancing coherence and discipline. Thus, neither theory is invalid, but democratic theorists failed to work out how they would operate if implemented simultaneously.

Another possibility is that both theories are correct, even operating simultaneously, and would have contributed to a healthier democracy, had not some overlooked or unanticipated third factor overriden the positive effects of both theories. Again, the media provide the obvious example of such an explanatory villain. Had television never been invented, perhaps Americans today would participate more and like and trust their government more than Americans of 1960, as suggested by both democratic reform traditions. I don't believe this, but it is a possibility.

A third possibility is that one theory is right, and the other one wrong, and the harmful consequences of the wrong theory more than offset the beneficial consequences of the correct one. The arguments about "overload" of democratic systems (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki, 1975) that were offered in the 1970s provide an example. According to such arguments the participatory movements of the 1960s delegitimated political authority and overwhelmed "gatekeeper" institutions. As a result, democracies were "in crisis," overloaded with popular demands that exceeded their aggregative capacities. Thus, party theorists could be right, but the gains produced by party reforms were overwhelmed because the participatory theorists were so wrong.[5]

And there is a final possibility; namely, that both theories are faulty. That is the position I will argue in the rest of this paper. My contention is not that party and participatory theorists had it wrong from the beginning, but rather that important implicit assumptions underlying both theories have been undermined by the evolution of American democracy. The consequence is that both theories are inaccurate now, whatever their merits fifty years ago.

The Problem with Party Theory

Party theory assumes fealty to a set of basic party principles. As Polsby (2000) notes: "Parties should make promises and stand by their promises and risk the loss of elections if they fail to deliver on their promises." Despite that assumption I believe that most supporters of strong parties implicitly add the qualification "but not if the risk is too large or too long-term." In

other words, party theorists accept the idea of popular sovereignty and in consequence the notion that real world parties are and will remain Downsian: they will appeal to the broad mass of the electorate in an attempt to win elections (Downs, 1957). To be sure, parties have different constituencies and generally support somewhat different policies, but when important interests are at stake—namely, control of government, they will rise above their principles in order to win. This reasoning underlies the standard model of party competition in which parties converge to the position of the median voter in the electorate. To political scientists of the 1950s—the era of "me too" "not a dime's worth of difference" politics--the Downsian assumption must have looked all too true.

A second subsidiary assumption also was widely held: the issues that would dominate American politics in the modern world were issues of foreign policy, the national economy, and the welfare state.[6] Given the United States' position as the undisputed leader of the free world, international engagement was a given. Only the means to consensually held foreign policy and national defense ends were in dispute. Similarly, except for a few "reactionaries" everyone recognized the necessity for some government role in maintaining economic stability and social welfare; the question was how much, and what instruments to use—issues that lent themselves to compromise. "Half a loaf is better than none" was the outlook of the members of Congress described by 1950s scholars. In particular, the Committee on political parties worked during the one generation in American history when the kind of divisive social issues that reemerged in the 1960s were dormant. Such issues were an important part of American politics in earlier eras as political historians have shown, but the parties of earlier eras generally attempted to suppress such issues and were capable of doing so (Kleppner, 1979).

In sum, the general viewpoint of 1950s party scholars was that parties would differ, but they still would position themselves well within the mainstream of public opinion. Moreover, their differences would not be so severe as to produce deadlock. Competition between two responsible parties would produce reasonably representative government.

Things seem different today. The new reality that is not yet sufficiently incorporated in our accounts is that between 1960 and 1990 the trade-offs parties made between policies and votes shifted in the direction of policies.[7] In 1964 worldly-wise political scientists chuckled at the Goldwaterite slogan "I'd rather be right than President" but in the ensuing decades such sentiments became quite widespread—especially among Democrats in the 1970s and 1980s, then again among Republicans in the 1990s. Close observers (eg. Sundquist, 1981: 371) maintain that in Congress, at least, members coming into the institution in the 1970s were more policy-oriented than those they replaced. The traditional party organizations selected candidates on the basis of party loyalty and service--and electability if the district was marginal, but as the traditional parties declined, a newer generation of candidates increasingly was recruited by or at least supported by social movements and interest groups. Even if they are not personally more policy committed, newer members are more dependent on activist constituencies who compose their personal organizations and fund their campaigns.

Party activists, of course, are a large part of the story. They always have had a point of view, and even in the 1950s their points of view on many issues were quite distinct from the mass public, as documented by McCloskey, Hoffman, and O'Hara, 1960). But activists are far more distinct today. As Figure 4 shows, the ideological distance between Democratic and Republican activists has grown steadily in the past three decades. More anecdotally, when asked about his priorities the incoming chair of the California Republican Party replied that "killing our babies is the issue of the century…cutting taxes or any other issue pales in comparison."[8] Whatever happened to "maximizing the number of Republicans elected," the response that state chairs like Ray Bliss no doubt would have offered in the mid-1960s?[9]

If I am correct in arguing that today's parties and candidates are more ideological and committed to specific policies, then the answer to why party reforms have not produced greater citizen happiness with government is apparent: citizens don't like principled parties—especially when party positions are far from the center of public opinion. A generation of research has

shown that the mass public is generally moderate in its views and takes a non-ideological, pragmatic approach to issues (Kinder and Sears, 1985). Moreover, for most people politics is a peripheral concern. Why should they be positively disposed toward a public arena overrun by activists and candidates whose outlook is just the opposite?

The Problem with Participatory Theory

The problem with participatory arguments is related to that just proposed. Those who put their faith in expanded participation assume that the desire to participate is widely distributed; thus, opening government doors will lead to a more representative democracy. Unfortunately, the reverse appears to be true. Contrary to the presumptions of political theorists, participation is not a natural act; it is an unnatural act. Left to their own devices ordinary people generally will devote little by way of time and resources to politics. Participation today is the province of those who feel strongly about an issue or candidate, either because they have particularly extreme views, or because they are directly affected in a way that others are not, which tends to make them hold particularly extreme views.

It is striking how little political scientists really know about political participation. Take as the state of the art Verba, Brady and Scholzman's (1995) *Voice and Equality*. This magesterial study greatly adds to the stock of knowledge about political participation, but it impresses as much for what it indicates about what we don't know, a remark in no way intended as critical. VSB flip the standard question and ask "why *don't* people participate? Their answer is threefold: because people can't—they don't have the resources, because people don't want to—they don't have the motivation, and because no one asked—they weren't mobilized. VSB propose a resource-mobilization account of participation that enables them to bring virtually every known correlate of participation into a coherent empirical analysis.[10] As summary Tables 3 and 4 illustrate, however, the results are sobering.

{Tables 3-4 about here]

If we were to analyze the vote choices of these same respondents, our models would produce R^2 and pseudo-R^2 in the .8 range—with a far smaller number of right hand side variables. But elaborate models of participation yield R^2s that are much smaller (Table 3). And when we turn to participation in specific issue domains, and add still more right hand side variables (mainly personal interest or impact), the models yield R^2s less than .1 (Table 4). The simple facts are that many people who have the resources don't expend them, many people who have the motivation don't act on it, and many people who are asked refuse--and we are not very good at picking out the small minority who are different.

I think the missing explanatory variable is motivation. VSB include motivation in two ways, one general one specific. General motivations are tapped by the standard concepts of efficacy and duty, but VSB's results suggest that most people who are efficacious and dutiful nevertheless are not going to sit through a three-hour city council meeting or spend their Saturday afternoon at a caucus. Specific motivations are tapped by measures of self-interest or personal impact, but VSB's results indicate that people who appear to have a direct interest nevertheless are not motivated to pursue it. Having observed participators in recent years I have concluded that the principle factor motivating them is that they care deeply about the subject of their participation, although why they do often escapes me. They are intense, and their intensity leads to their participation.

Social psychologists and political scientists long have understood that extremity is the handmaiden of intensity (Allport and Hartman, 1925; Cantril, 1946). Common discourse recognizes that close relationship by the absence of pairings like "raging moderate" or "wishy-washy extremist." Intensely held views generally are extreme views—relative to the issue and the population--and these are the views that are most common among political participators.

Consider the abortion issue. As Figure 5 suggests, Americans have relatively settled and generally qualified views on legal abortion. They favor it overwhelmingly in what are considered traumatic circumstances and express significant reservations when the reasons seem less dire. In particular, anyone who has delved into public opinion on this subject knows that only tiny minorities would support forfeiting the life of a mother on the one hand, or destroying a healthy eight-month fetus on the other. Yet the political debate is defined by those minorities. In the Democratic primaries Al Gore was attacked from the left because as a Tennessee congressman he indicated that a fetus might be more than a clump of tissue, and in the Republican primaries John McCain was attacked from the right because he favored legal abortion in cases of rape, incest or birth defects. In fact, these two candidates bracketed the positions held by 80 percent of the American people. The abortion issue could have been compromised in a way acceptable to the great mass of the American people thirty years ago, but it has not because of the implacable views of those active in the politics of the issue.[11] Tellingly, in some European democracies, where participatory theories have never been so popular, the abortion issue was generally settled long ago with much less conflict than surrounds the issue in the United States.

Abortion is all too typical of the issues and the debate that the advocacy explosion has brought to American politics. Fifty years ago pluralist scholars argued that interest groups exercised a moderating influence on politics. Group members had overlapping memberships that subjected them to cross-pressures and moderated their outlooks (Truman, 1951). That may have been true in 1950, but consider the myriad interest groups that have sprung up over the course of the past generation. Moderation certainly is not the first word that comes to mind.   Many of them are single-issue groups devoted to advancing an all-or-nothing point of view on their particular concern. What contemporary scholar of interest groups argues that they are a moderating influence? In this case scholars have already reformulated a branch of democratic theory, but they have not as yet worked out the implications for larger arguments.

In sum, participatory arguments about improving American democracy have gone astray because they overlook an important feature of participation. Not only is the desire to participate not widely distributed, but more importantly, neither is it randomly distributed. The great expansion of participatory opportunities in the last generation has advantaged extremists of all stripes (Fiorina, 1999). The nonideological, pragmatic Americans mentioned above sit at home while extremists participate—whatever the issue: presidential politics, sex education, land use, leash laws, and so on. Another reason contemporary Americans do not like government or want to participate in political processes is because the people who populate the public arena are not like them.

Why Have Underlying Assumptions Become Less Accurate?

Why would today's party activists and elected officials weigh policy concerns more heavily vis-à-vis electoral considerations than their counterparts of earlier generations? I suggest a very simple hypothesis: the *personal* material rewards linked directly to political participation have greatly diminished. The material rewards allocated by government, of course, have *not* diminished. Insurance companies, the teachers' unions, agribusiness and myriad other interests stand to gain or lose huge amounts from government actions, as suggested by the large sums of money they contribute to campaigns and expend on lobbying. What I am arguing is that the personal material rewards to political activism are less today than for much of our history before the mid-20th century. Table 5 lists some of the reasons for the declining importance of material incentives.

{Table 5 about here}

Civil Service, of course, is the oldest and most widely-recognized means of removing material incentives from politics. Accounts of 19th century politics attribute staggering patronage

resources to the parties—tens of thousands of jobs in large states like Pennsylvania and New York.[12] And not only were the patronage recipients themselves subject to political mobilization, the party organizations appropriated portions of their paychecks and pressed them into service to mobilize others. But for more than a century both reformers and elected officials have extended protection from arbitrary control of public employment, for different reasons to be sure, and with predictable consequences. If the toll-collectors on the eastern state turnpikes today knew they would lose their jobs if the governor lost the next election, their levels of political participation no doubt would be much higher. But extension of civil service had been going on for three-quarters of a century when the shift toward a hypothesized more ideological basis for political participation began, so it may not play a major role in the current public discontent.

Public sector unionization has much the same impact as civil service protection, although it is much more recent. True, public employees vote at higher rates than others, but the more relevant question is whether they participate at rates as high as they would if their jobs were subject to the decisions of political leaders.[13] Recently I had occasion to review tapes made 25 years ago when I conducted interviews in two congressional districts for an earlier project. In one interview a county chair in a state then undergoing unionization opined that this would kill off the patronage system in his state. He said that the parties had managed to work with civil service, but unionization would be the death knell for the patronage system. In retrospect, we can see that unionization would diminish the ability of parties and public officials to mobilize public sector workers and their families. If the members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the National Education Association, and other public sector unions depended not on their unions for economic gains, but on the decisions of public officials in the country's 86,000 jurisdictions, their levels of political engagement no doubt would be higher than at present. This is a subject that deserves more systematic study.

Not only was politics a primary source of jobs at one time, but it was a primary means to personal advancement through what was charmingly referred to as "honest graft" (Riordan, 1963:

4). Whom you knew in politics might be the key to a contract, a tip, or some other means of turning a profit. Thus, it paid--literally--to participate in politics and government, with predictable results, positive and negative. But modern politics is much "cleaner." Rather than a commonly held goal, in many cases conflict of interest is now a crime. And if you can't profit from participation, fewer people will participate.

Just as jobs are no longer bestowed at the pleasure of party and elected officials, neither are policy outputs. If your neighborhood's garbage collection or snow removal depends on its turnout rate, turnout will be higher *ceteris paribus*, than if such services are automatic, a matter of right. Scholars long have recognized the negative impact of government-provided social welfare on the urban machines. This is only a special case of a broader phenomenon. When people feel that public benefits depend directly on their personal actions or those of their close associates, they will be more engaged than when those benefits accrue as a matter of law or right. The modern movement toward universalism and entitlements is a movement that encourages free-riding on the political engagement of others—with predictable consequences.

The decline of old-fashioned parties organized around material rewards and particularistic outputs is associated with a change in campaign style. Labor-intensive campaigns staffed by public sector workers have given way to the modern hi-tech campaign staffed by professionals. The transformation has gone along with a sharp rise in the costs of campaigns, in large part driven by the costs of television. Corporations and other interest groups contribute for instrumental reasons now as they always have, but it is likely that the basis for individual campaign contributions has shifted. In the older party era, patronage workers often were dunned a portion of their salaries, recipients of contracts were assessed a portion of their contracts, favor recipients were asked to reciprocate, and so forth. Such "contributions" were the price of a job or other material government benefit. Today, many fewer people are subject to such material pressures. Instead, individuals voluntarily contribute to political campaigns based on the causes

they believe in. And, what evidence we have suggests that contributors, like those who participate in other ways, are more extreme in their views (Brown, Powell and Wilcox, 1995).

Each of the aforementioned changes probably reflects gradual changes in the political culture, an admittedly amorphous but undoubtedly significant factor in diminishing the personal materials rewards of political participation. As Mayhew (1986: 20) notes, in what he calls "traditional party organization" (TPO) states the parties rely on material rather than purposive incentives, to use Wilson's (1973) typology.[14] In TPO states the public sector is viewed as a large employment bureau.[15] The cost of government is regarded as a benefit in part, since government spending provides jobs (Weingast, Shepsle and Johnsen, 1981). And part of the exchange is the expectation that those benefited will participate in politics when the party calls on them. A younger, better-educated population that thinks of the public sector as something that should provide efficient services at minimum cost is in conflict with the older party culture, and this newer subculture is historically ascendant, of course.

Finally, changes in media values and practices help to drive out personal material rewards as a reason for political activity. Scandal is a staple of the "junkyard dog" media. The media ferret out and publicize instances of conflict of interest, honest graft, and favoritism. Even where old time temptations still exist, the potential costs of succumbing to temptation may deter the potential sinner. Moreover, the media analyze motives and speculate on the presence of ulterior ones ("never assume a good motive if a bad one is available"). The only participants who can demonstrate credibility are those who can show that their political stands harm their personal material interests.

If we remove material reasons for participation, why would people participate? Well, there is the altruistic desire to serve one's fellow human beings. I don't think it's overly cynical to suggest that this is not a major factor in explaining political participation, although for some people, it is indeed the explanation. At any rate I can see no obvious reason why this motivation should have become more or less common in recent decades.

A second incentive would be the desire for visibility and adulation, a "love of fame" as Hamilton puts it in *Federalist No. 72*. No doubt this is why some people go into politics, but again, there is no obvious reason why this motivation should be more or less important for political participation today. Indeed, with the growth of the entertainment industry, there probably are more avenues outside politics for publicity seekers and exhibitionists now than in earlier periods of history.

A third reason people participate is in response to what Wilson (1973: ch. 3) calls "solidary" incentives. People want to belong to a group, to interact with others whom they like, to affirm symbols and allegiances, and so forth. Historians argue that such incentives have been extremely important stimuli for political participation in the American past (McGerr, 1986). Clearly they are much less important today, but again, it seems unlikely that their erosion plays a major role in explaining popular disaffection now because they had greatly diminished in importance at least a generation before the present discontent began.[16]

As the material incentives for political participation declined, it seems likely that ideological incentives took up most of the slack. More than in most of our history participation today reflects a desire to impose one's view of a better world on the rest of society. Most people today participate because they really do want to save the whales, outlaw abortion, stop global warming, get government off our backs, or achieve some one of a plethora of other ends.[17] And while many people share such goals, the people who participate will be those who feel most intensely about them and whose points of few are most one-sided. Again, the reemergence of social issues in the 1960s and afterwards--racial, ethnic, religious, cultural—reinforces these trends. Because such issues deeply implicate values, the resulting preferences are intensely held.

In sum, the replacement of material incentives by purposive ones, combined with the growing importance of social issues has transformed political participation in America. People who went to meetings or worked in campaigns because their jobs depended on it were different from people who now do so out of ideological zeal. In particular, people who participated

because it paid to do so probably were a reasonable cross-section of the electorate, certainly a more representative sample than self-selected participants activated by a cause. Moreover, with real economic benefits at stake, materially-motivated participants naturally would be concerned to keep the benefits flowing, which gave them a strong incentive to represent the opinions of the electorate whose decisions controlled the flow. Theories of parties and representation implicitly based on such premises will generate different conclusions—positive and normative than will theories based on today's realities: parties and participants more extreme in their viewpoints, more reluctant to compromise their positions, and more willing to sacrifice electoral victory for principles.

Consequences of Displacing Material by Ideological Incentives

If the preceding broad arguments are correct, then a number of conclusions about contemporary politics follow naturally. The most obvious is that politics has become more conflictual. If participants hold more extreme positions, feel more intensely about their positions, and have little to lose materially by deepening and prolonging controversy, then conflict will be more common.[18] Indeed, in politics today prolonging and deepening controversy may advance one's cause by generating publicity and contributions. Of course, nostalgia always is a danger when thinking about long-term change. Certainly, politics in the 1960s was conflictual, to note the obvious objection. But that was a decade of abnormal politics, as suggested by the tag sometimes applied to it, "the time of troubles." Politics then was about war and race, about young Americans dying and black Americans being denied the most basic rights and privileges. Today, participants go to the mat over leaf-blowers, leash laws and salamanders.

Normal politics today is more conflictual also because of a second characteristic: it is more symbolic. The importance of positions vis-à-vis outcomes has increased. Participants struggle mightily over statements, labels, and gestures that are unlikely to have any real impact.

This is a natural consequence of the increased importance of ideological incentives.[19] If I participate because of the rightness of my cause, then opposition is illegitimate. Society must be forced to recognize my cause whether anything tangible follows from that or not. The resurgence of social issues and the rise of what often is called identity politics have reinforced this tendency. Did it really matter whether George W. Bush chose a pro-choice or pro-life running mate? Whether students said a prayer before a high school football game? Whether gays are permitted to marry or whether their relationships receive some alternative but equivalent legal status? Whether Jews can string twine between telephone polls to create symbolic ERUVs? To the participants involved in debates like these the answer is a resounding "yes!" But to millions of uninvolved Americans observing the crossfire the answer more likely is "not really."

A third consequence of the displacement of material incentives by ideological ones is that politics becomes less relevant to the needs and concerns of the mass of Americans. One can understand the frustrations of old-line social democrats who complain that Democratic candidates today devote much energy to identity politics, gun control, abortion, and other issues of critical importance to their constituency groups, while failing to invest comparable energy in advocating a flattening of the income distribution, improving education, and making medical care available to all.[20]

The preceding characteristics of contemporary politics reinforce the long-standing advantage of the status quo in American politics. A federal system with a separation of powers and a wide array of checks and balances makes it difficult to act, as the proponents of strong parties recognized. The changes in participation discussed above enhance that long-standing generalization. If participants take more extreme positions on issues, and focus primarily on issues that do not engage the mass of the American people, they are unlikely to mobilize stable popular majorities that can overcome the usual inertia of the system.

That lack of success in turn suggests two tendencies that are concerns from a democratic theory standpoint. The first is that participants will attempt to escape from electoral politics. If

you can not mobilize majorities behind your point of view, then find a non-majoritarian arena in which to fight. The courts are the obvious alternative. Develop a legal strategy that results in unelected judges imposing an outcome that elected officials would not (Melnick, 1994). If you can criminalize or otherwise delegitimate the actions of your opponents (Ginsburg and Shefter, 1990), so much the better. But the courts are not the only alternative. Persuade the president to act unilaterally (Moe and Howell, 1999) or have legislators insert a "stealth rider" in a must-pass appropriations or omnibus bill. Such strategies are not at all new, of course, but modern developments make them relatively more attractive than mobilizing majorities and winning elections.

Finally, we come full circle. Not only do the characteristics of contemporary politics tempt elites to leave the electoral arena, they push ordinary people to do so too, indeed, to leave politics altogether. If politics has fallen into the hands of people who take it altogether more seriously than you do, who froth about issues that seem to you peripheral, who advocate policies that strike you as extreme, who demonize their opponents, who reject reasonable compromises, and if, as a consequence, nothing seems to happen very quickly other than judges tossing an occasional bombshell, then why in the world would you devote your valuable and limited time and energy to politics?

In recent decades turnout in American elections has declined, and commentators were disappointed in 2000 when despite intense voter mobilization efforts, turnout barely exceeded 50 percent. One of the features of the turnout decline that has not been adequately recognized is that it largely reflects the nonparticipation of moderates. As traced in Figure 6, strong partisans report turnout rates as high as ever. Increased nonvoting among weak identifiers, independent leaners, and independents is the source of the turnout decline. On the one hand that observation is not new; we have long known that declining partisanship was a contributor to the turnout decline (eg. Abramson and Aldrich, 1982). But we have not thought about the implications, namely, as indicated in Figure 7, a hollowing out of the electorate as moderates participate at lower rates

than the extremes. Over the long term this development may encourage candidates to adopt

narrow mobilization strategies—appeals to one's base, in preference to centrist strategies

designed to win over the median voter (Fiorina, 1999). The fact that centrist pressures seem

strongest at the presidential level, where turnout runs around 50 percent than in say, off-year

House elections, where turnout runs around 35 percent suggests that a strategic switch may be

rational (to the candidates) somewhere in that range.

{Figures 6-7 about here}

The reason that the Hibbing and Theiss-Morse explanation for the present discontent

strikes me as incomplete is that it misplaces the blame for that discontent. Reminiscent of Jimmy

Carter's "malaise" speech (Nelson, 1999: 211-218), Hibbing and Theiss-Morse lay the blame for

disaffection with government squarely on citizens themselves. We are distrusting and cynical

because at base we don't like fundamental features of democratic politics. We regard interest

groups as wicked, we don't like conflict, and we don't like the bargaining and compromise

necessary to settle conflicts. To Hibbing and Theiss-Morse such attitudes betray naivete about

democratic politics. Maybe so. But there is a difference between giving interest groups a fair

hearing and allowing selfish and self-righteous groups to dominate the political debate. There is a

difference between reasoned disagreement and adolescent temper tantrums and name-calling.

And there is a difference between compromises among public officials who disagree in good faith

and last-minute logrolls by gridlocked partisans at summits. I am not nearly as sure as Hibbing

and Theiss-Morse that the American people should bear the entire blame for their discontent.[21]

Academic and Practical Implications

If the preceding account is persuasive, the question remains, what can be done about it?

I am not optimistic that much can be done about the developments described above. Americans are not about to legalize conflict of interest, outlaw public sector unions, and bring back the spoils system--and they probably would not like the resulting politics any better. That purposive incentives have become more important motivators of political activity is a reality that is likely to stay with us for the forseeable future. The first order of business is to update our theories of representation and electoral competition to take account of these new conditions so that we do not inadvertently lead people astray.

For example, the Supreme Court recently overturned the California blanket primary as an unconstitutional infringement on the party's freedom of association.[22] My impression is that most political scientists applauded the court's decision, but this approval partly reflects an outdated, positive view of the role of parties in a democracy. In reaching its decision, the court ruled that the state interests claimed by blanket primary supporters were not sufficiently compelling to outweigh the first amendment rights of the parties. Reading the opinion one can not help but wonder whether the court's judgement about the balance was influenced by a generally positive view of parties' role in a democracy, a view promulgated by generations of political scientists.[23]

Imagine, for example, that the California plaintiffs had been the kind of corrupt old style machines that provoked the Progressive movement. Would the court have been equally solicitous of their associational rights? Perhaps not. The court's judgment about whether an organization's rights of free expression outweigh the state's claim that it is furthering a compelling interest undoubtedly reflects in some part the justices' views of the value the organization contributes to society. If today's parties contribute less value to American democracy than the textbook portrait of mid-century depicts, we need to make that clear.[24]

As for practical rather than intellectual suggestions, the only one I can offer is analogous to the old hair-of-the-dog remedy for hangovers. Given that we can not go backward, we need to go farther down the road the populist tradition marks out. If the expansion of participatory opportunities has generated unrepresentative participators, the obvious solution is to increase

participation so as to make it more representative by diluting the extreme voices that dominate contemporary politics. The problem is not that the doors to the public arena have been opened, but that they have not been opened so wide that people simply can not avoid walking through them. Thus, while some contemporary theorists have the general idea right—more participation--their specific recommendations point in precisely the wrong direction. The answer is not, for example, "strong democracy," where meetings and deliberation are expanded (Barber, 1984). That sort of trend has helped to put us in the present situation. Barring a sudden transformation in human nature, or failing that, the sudden disappearance of TV, the internet, and other forms of entertainment, the requirements of strong democracy will only decrease participation and make politics less representative.

On the contrary, much more "thin democracy" is what we need. Given a world in which time is scarce and recreational opportunities are plentiful, the best hope is to proliferate very low cost participatory opportunities, so that majorities can easily weigh in against unrepresentative minorities.[25] For example, we should be open to the burgeoning discussion, however nonsensical it seems at times, about electronic town halls and digital democracy; there may be some promise amidst all the hype. Participatory theorists may decry proposals like these as still further departures from ideal democracy, but we do not life in an ideal world.

I conclude with two extended caveats. First, this essay obviously reflects a majoritarian point-of-view.[26] In *Federalist No. 10* Madison discounted the likelihood of minority tyranny because by definition minorities would be outweighed by majorities. The argument is persuasive when one considers minorities that are attempting to change the status quo. As an empirical matter out-of-the-mainstream proposals advocated by various minorities typically are killed somewhere in the process. Thus, minorities often are frustrated. But Madison's argument is less persuasive when one considers minorities that are resisting changes in the status quo. The intricate system Madison and his colleagues devised advantages minorities who resist change; they need only control one veto point in the process. Thus, developments in the past half century

or so have reinforced the system's bias against change, increasing the costs of government and delaying the decisions of government, and consequently frustrating majorities. In sum, contemporary politics typically frustrates *both* minorities and majorities.

Second, it is possible that nothing much can be done about the present condition because we already live in the best of all possible worlds, practically speaking. That is, while my argument suggests that today's parties are more a part of the problem than the solution, it may still be the case that they are the best alternative available to a modern democracy, an argument that has been made many times. Various political scientists have made the case that political vacuums are no more long-lived than natural ones. If parties do not organize politics, politics will be organized by narrower personal factions and special interest groups.[27] A politics dominated by today's narrow interest groups unconstrained by the larger encompassing forces that parties provide may be even less attractive than a politics dominated by polarized, policy-oriented parties. If Americans in large numbers can not be induced to participate in politics at least at the level of voting, then the parties as presently constituted still may be the best available alternative, even if they are less a force for representative government than they have been in the past.

I hope that such a lesser-of-other-evils conclusion is simply the product of my limited imagination. The problem, of course, is that living with the least of various evils might not be stable. The ultimate result may be that feared by those who are troubled by the trends discussed in the first section of this paper--a turn away from a public sector that has lost the confidence and support of the citizenry and a turn away from public life that has taken on unattractive features. While we may be entering a new era in which citizens of democracies the world over claim to want less centralized, less intrusive government, there is no good evidence that they actually want government to do less rather than more (Clark, 2000). But in the present context it is hard to see how public officials can consider the myriad demands of citizens without increasing the level of popular frustration as well.

FOOTNOTES

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* I wish to thank Bonnie Honig, David Mayhew, Helen Milner and Margaret Weir for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[1] Confidence in the Executive branch fluctuates but does not show much, if any, trend. Similarly, confidence in the courts has not fallen. Confidence in the military has increased.

[2] This is the "videomalaise" thesis, generally attributed to Robinson (1976). See also Sabato (1991).

[3] George Will (1986) comes closest.

[4] After bottoming out in the 1960s use of the initiative surged, although five states account for more than half of all initiatives. See "A Century of Citizen Lawmaking." (http://www.iandrinstitue.org).

[5] I have not been able to think of a symmetrical argument, where the participatory theorists are correct but the party theorists so wrong that the validity of the participatory argument is not apparent.

[6] As Baer and Bositis (1993: 205) note, the APSA report was relatively silent on the issue of race.

[7] I am referring here to general theories about parties and representation. The developers of specialized formal theories of electoral competition have been quite active in constructing models in which parties and candidates differentiate themselves. For a survey see Fiorina (1999).

[8] John McCarthy quoted in Marinucci (2000).

[9] Longtime State Chair of Ohio, Bliss was named Republican National Chairman after the Goldwater debacle. He was generally considered to be organizationally gifted.

[10] This comment is not meant as criticism, only as a statement of fact. VSB's resource-mobilization framework provides a broad theoretical umbrella that subsumes all the standard correlates of participation, as well as numerous non-standard ones.

[11] Some colleagues disagree, suggesting that the courts polarized the issue to begin with and have helped keep it polarized. I concede this point in part, but note that in *Webster* and *Casey* the courts have moved toward compromises that Congress seems unable to achieve.

[12] Keller (1977: 239) cites estimates that in New York state one in every eight voters was a federal, state or local office-holder.

[13] On turnout of public employees see Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980: 94-101).

[14] Of course, material incentives also are important in states not categorized as TPO. Massachusetts is a good example.

[15] I can not back up this claim with survey data, but I grew up in Pennsylvania and have lived in New York and Massachusetts, and this is certainly my impression of attitudes prevailing in the older subcultures of those states.

[16] As indicated in the subtitle of McGerr's (1986) work: *The American North, 1865-1928*. McGerr argues that the advertising approach began to replace the mobilization approach about the turn of the century.

[17] True, many activists make their living running or working for such organizations. The fact remains, however, that they do not run or work for just any organization. Their ideological preferences point them toward certain issue areas.

[18] As suggested by the classic quip attributed to Wallace Sayres, "the reason academic fights are so vicious is that there is so little at stake."

[19] Jane Mansbridge (1986: especially ch. 10) makes this point in the specific case of the Women's movement.

[20] Ralph Nader's charge that the Democrats have become lackeys of corporate America seems to contradict the argument made in this paper. That is, Nader complains that the Democrats and Republicans differ insignificantly on economic issues, a charge that, if true, apears to be at odds with my argument that the parties have become more polarized. An alternative interpretation is that many of today's Democratic activists and office-holders are not very concerned with traditional economic issues. By muting their positions on those issues they can raise the corporate cash to win elections and attempt to implement social policies that they care intensely about. For example, late in the 2000 campaign feminist and gay-lesbian groups attacked Nader for his supposed indifference to their issues (Marinucci and Simon, 2000). For his part Nader claimed that Gore and Bush differed only in how fast their knees hit the ground when the corporations called. Evidently, the two sides differed in the issues they viewed as important.

[21] There is something a bit ironic about two professors from Nebraska blaming common people for America's problems.

[22] *California Democratic Party v. Jones*. 530 U.S. 1 (2000).

[23] The majority opinion even paraphrases Schattschneider's comment that democracy is "unimaginable" without parties. *Ibid*.: 6.

[24] This is not a brief for the specific form of the California blanket primary. As Justice Scalia suggests, a nonpartisan blanket primary could deliver the same benefits, in theory, and it would pass constitutional muster.

[25] Lijphart's (1997) recent call for compulsory voting is relevant here, although politically infeasible. Compulsory voting is a way of making *nonparticipation* costly.

[26] It should go without saying that I am in no way advocating muzzling minority points of view. The question is not whether minorities should have every opportunity to present their cases and persuade majorities. The question is whether procedural and institutional changes should give them influence disproportionate to their numbers.

[27] On factional politics see, of course Key (1949: especially chapter. 14.) On parties versus interest groups see Schattachneider (1942: especially chapter 8.)

TABLE 1. CHANGES IN AMERICAN POLITICS SINCE 1960

Presidential Nominating Process

"Candidate-centered" Politics

Open Meetings

Recorded Votes

Expanded Rules of Standing

Enhanced Judicial Review

Open Bureaucracy

Intervenors

"Maximum Feasible Participation"

Proliferation of Local Bodies

Advocacy Explosion

Propositions

Proliferation of Polls

New Technologies

TABLE 2. APSA REPORT AFTER 40 YEARS

Fate of Proposal	*Democrats*	*Republicans*	*System*
Full Implementation	13	6	5
Partial Implementation	7	5	5
De facto Movement	8	9	5
No Change	3	10	3
Negative Movement	2	3	2

Source: Grossly adapted from Denise Baer and David Bositis, *Politics and Linkage in a Democratic Society* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993): Appendix.

TABLE 3: VSB EXPLANATION OF KINDS OF PARTICIPATION

Independent variables: education, vocabulary, family income, job level, non-political organization, religious attendance, civic skills, political interest, political information, political efficacy, partisan strength, citizenship

	R-squared
Time-Based Acts	.23
Voting	.38
Contributions	.13
Political Discussion	.42

Source: Adapted from VSB, Table 12.7

TABLE 4: VSB EXPLANATION OF FOCUS OF PARTICIPATION

Independent variables: education, income, job variables, organization variables, church variables, political interest, self-interest (eg. receipt of means-tested benefits/school age children), abortion attitudes:

	R-Squared
Activity on Basic Human Needs	.03
Activity on Education	.09
Activity on Abortion	.08

Source: Adapted from VSB, Tables 14.2, 14.4

TABLE 5. REMOVAL OF MATERIAL INCENTIVES FOR

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Civil Service

Public Sector Unionization

Conflict of Interest Laws

Universalistic Policies / Entitlements

Changes in Political Culture

Media (Junkyard Dogs)

**Figure 1.   Trust and Faith in the National Government Are Down**

Trust Government Most or All of the Time

Believe Government Is Run for the Benefit of All
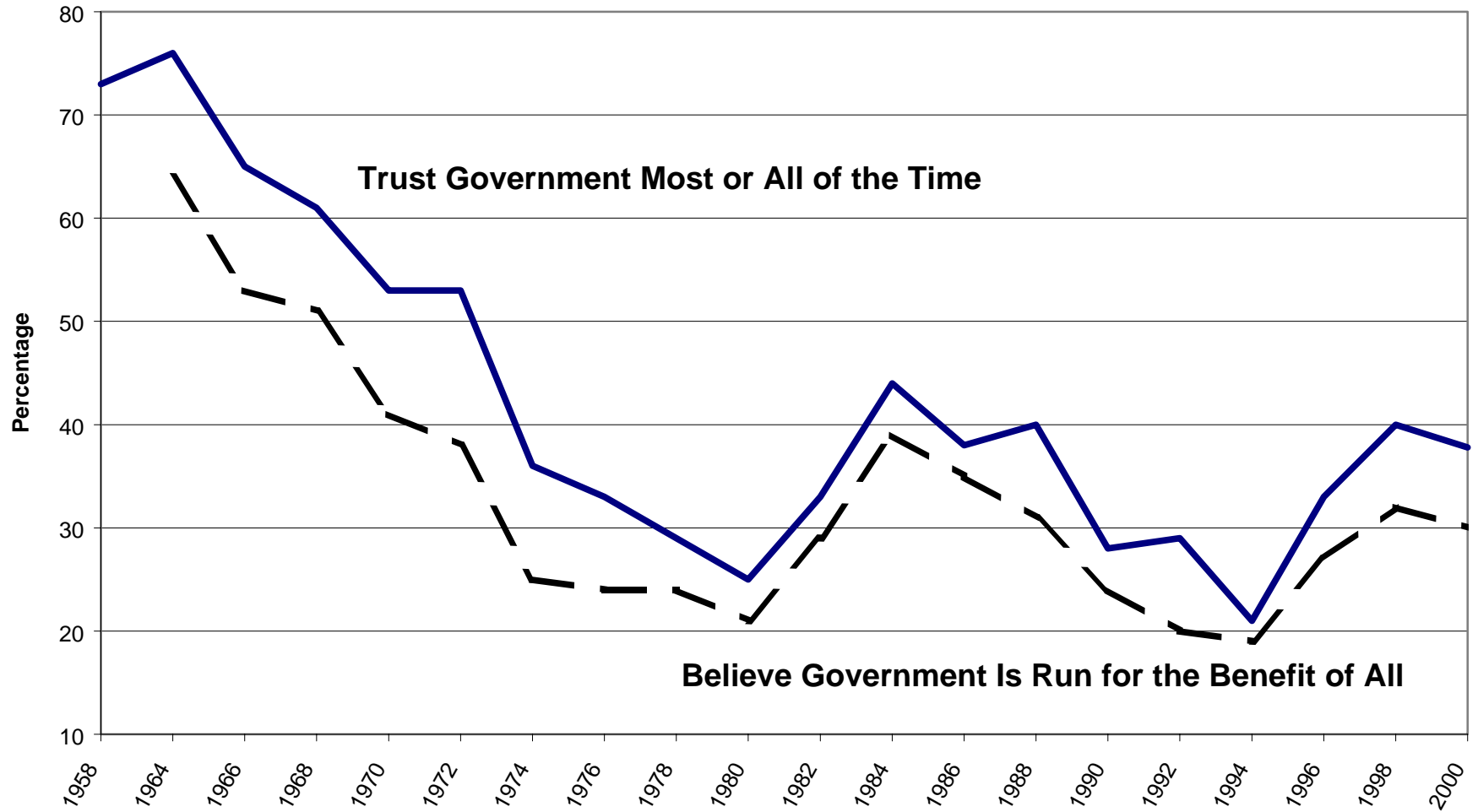
Source: The American National Election Studies.
Data on the 1958 and1986 responses to the second question do not exist.

Figure 2. Turnout in America Has Declined Since 1960

Presidential Election Year Turnout

Off-Year Congressional Turnout

% of Eligible Voters
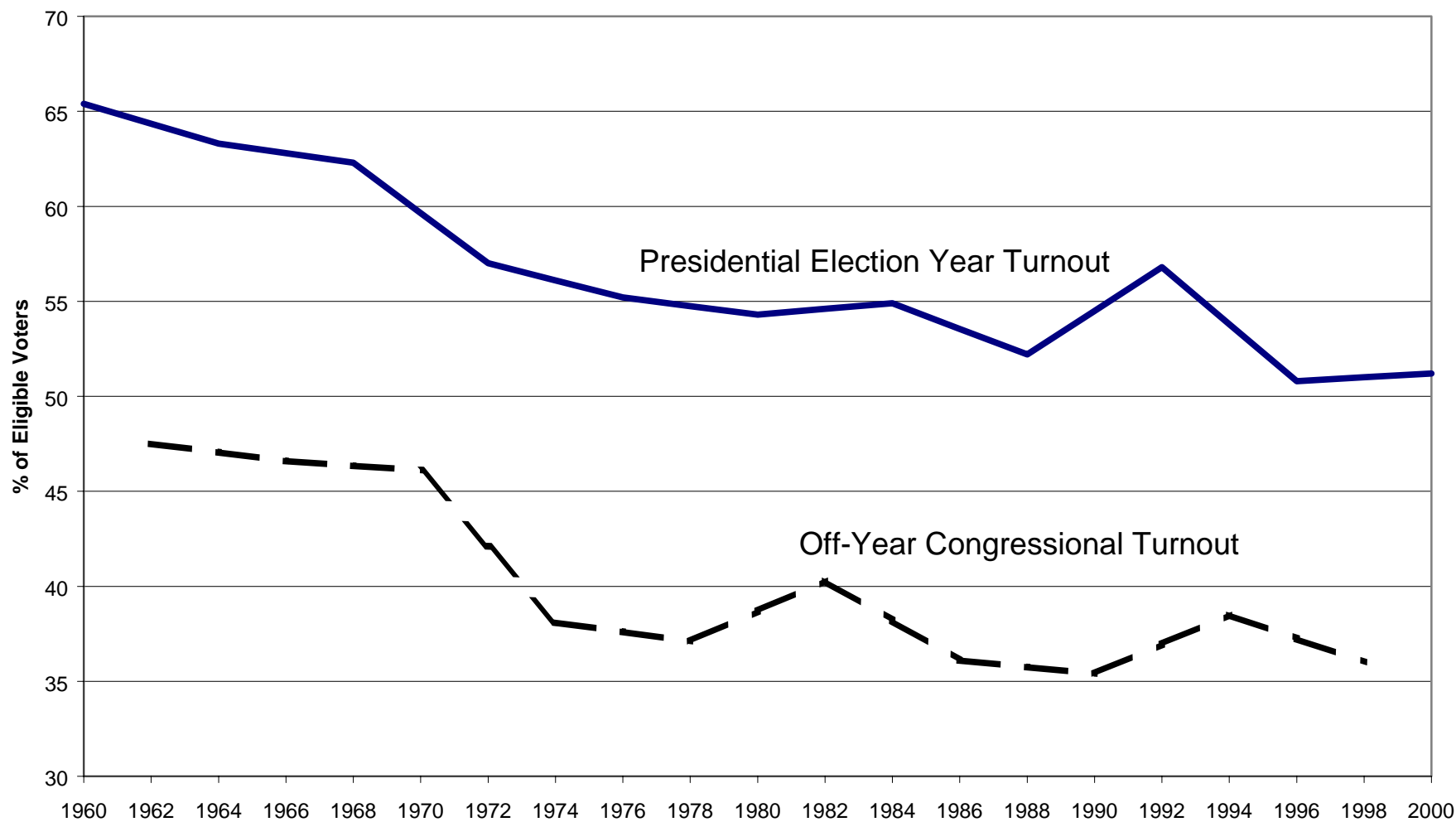
Source: The Federal Election Commission

Figure 3. From Rare to Every Day: Media Coverage of Poll Results
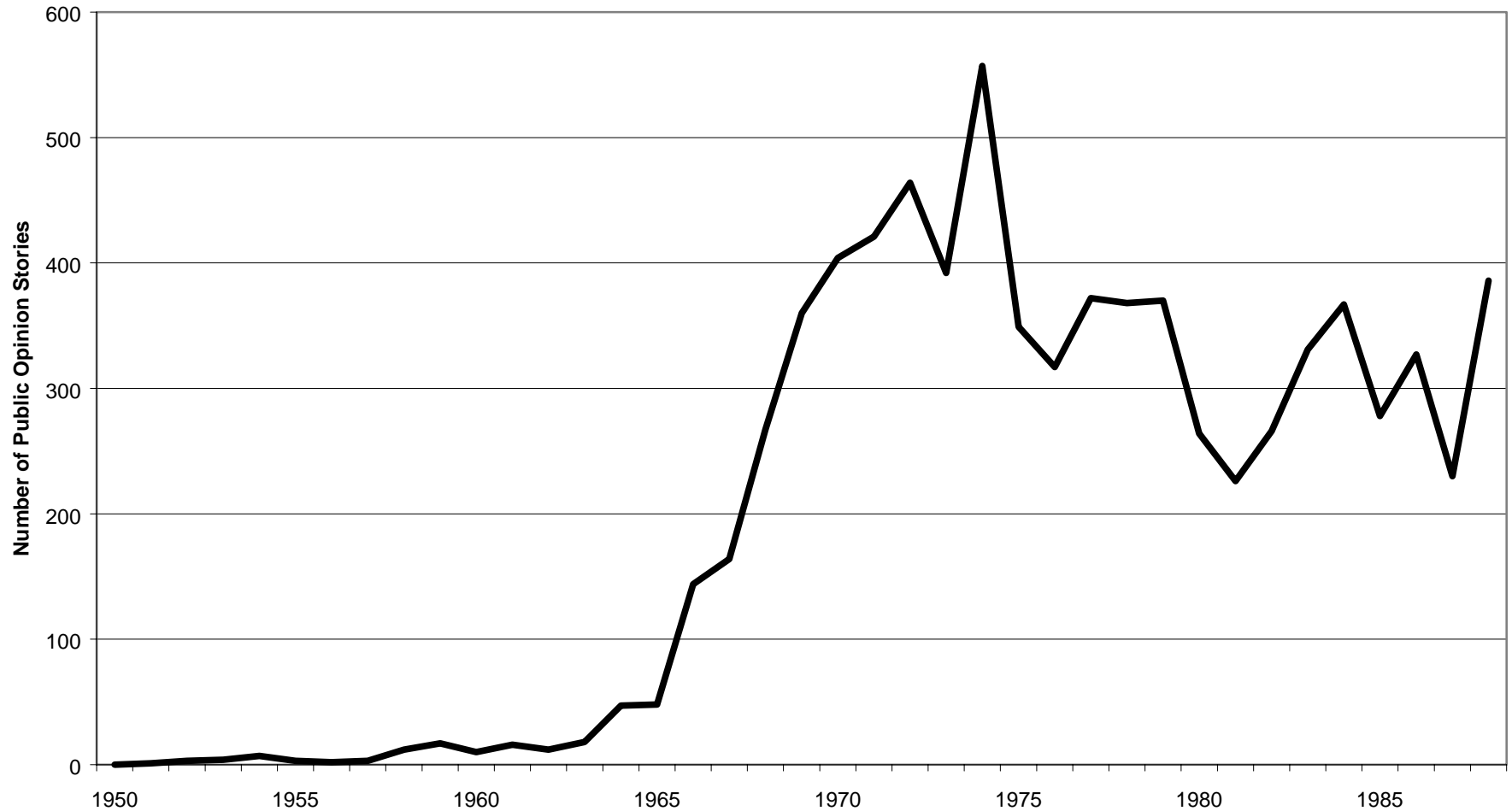
Note: Figure shows the number of stories cited under "public opinion" in the New York Times. According to John Brehm the cited public opinion stories "by and large report poll results, and only rarely reflections on public opinion in the broader sense."
Source: John Brehm, *The Phantom Respondents* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993): 4.

Figure 4 Ideology Thermometer Scores of Party Identifiers and Activists
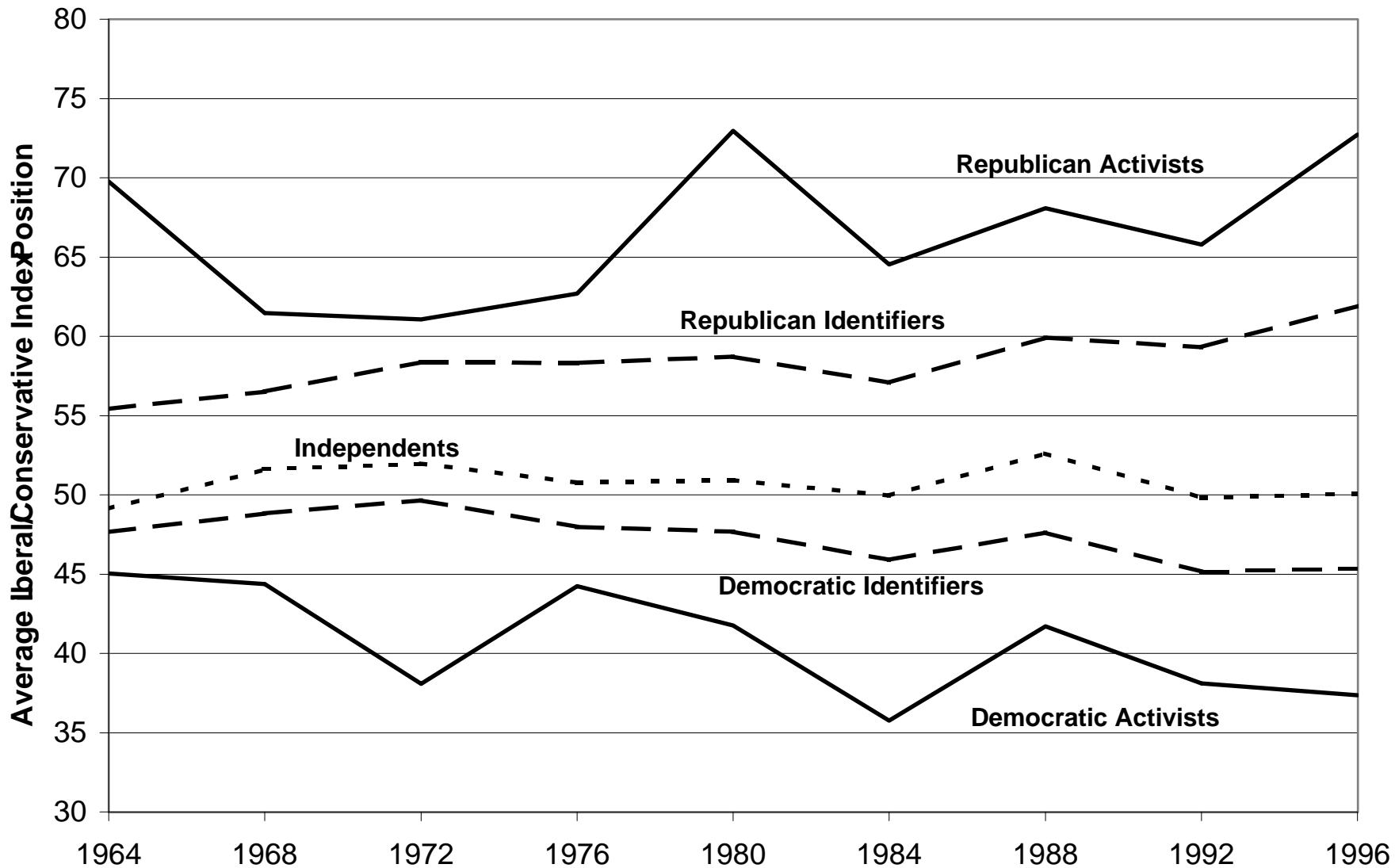
Source: ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File.

Notes: Activists are defined as respondents who engaged in 3 or more campaign activities as coded in vcf0723. Leaners are coded as partisans. The Liberal/Conservative Index (vcf0801) measures a respondent's relative thermometer ratings of "Liberals" and "Conservatives." It is calculated by subtracting the Liberal Thermometer score from 97 and averaging the result with the Conservative Thermometer score. Cases are weighted by vcf0009.
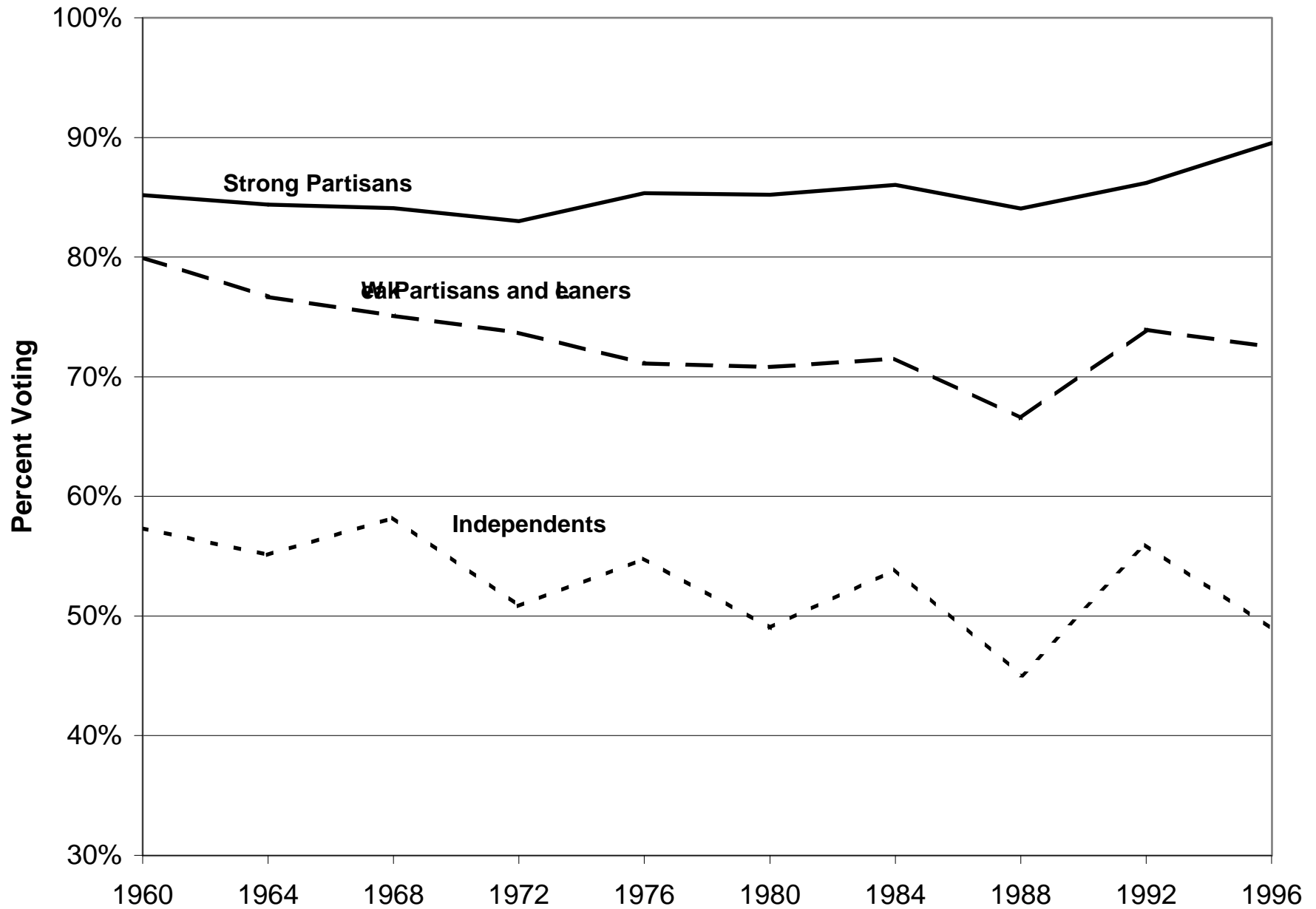
Figure 5 Popular Attitudes Toward Abortion Since Roe v. Wade (1973)
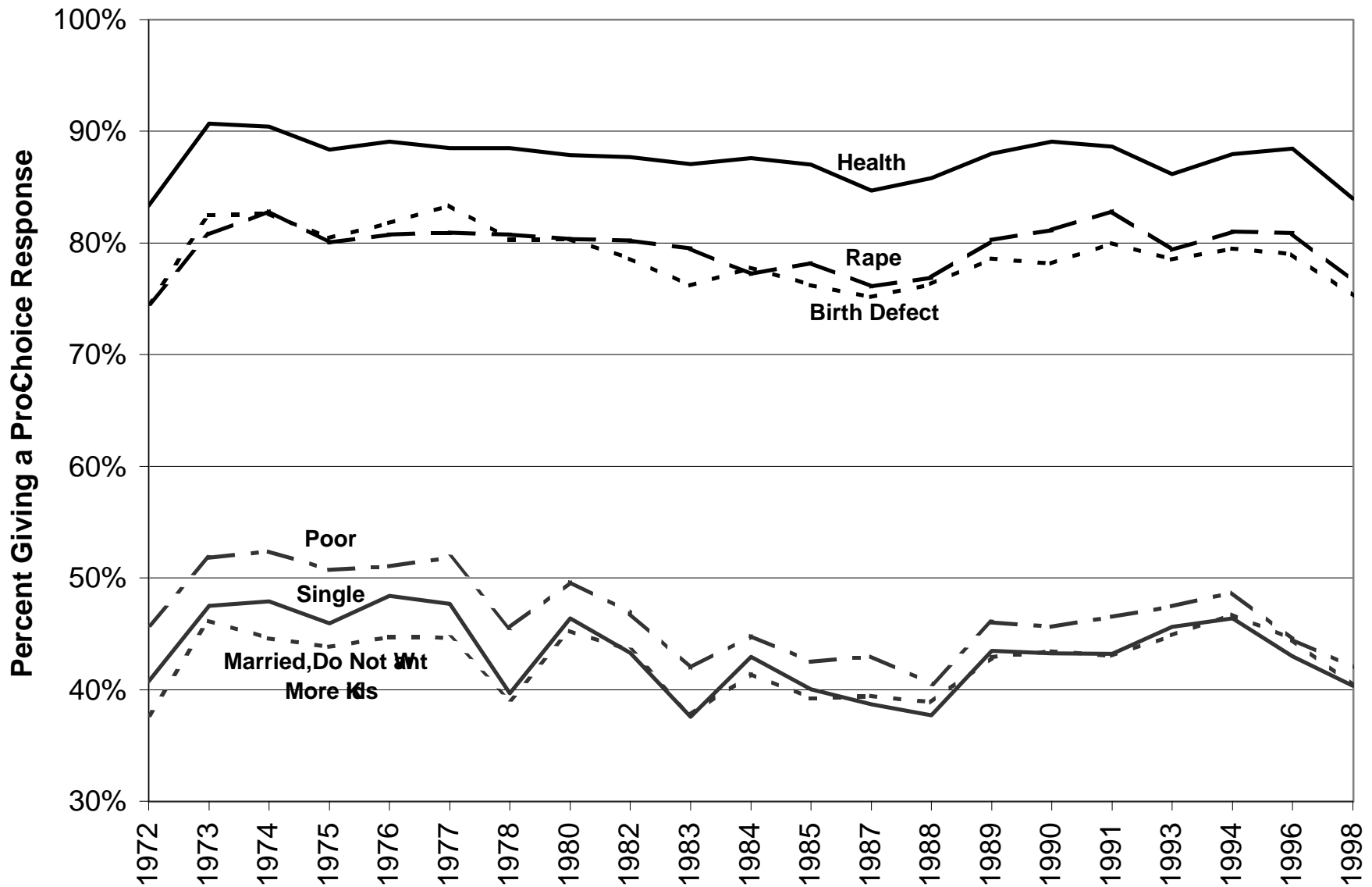
Source: Calculated by the authors from the General Social Survey 1972-1998 Cumulative Data File.
Note: Respondents who answered "dont know" are included in the calculation.
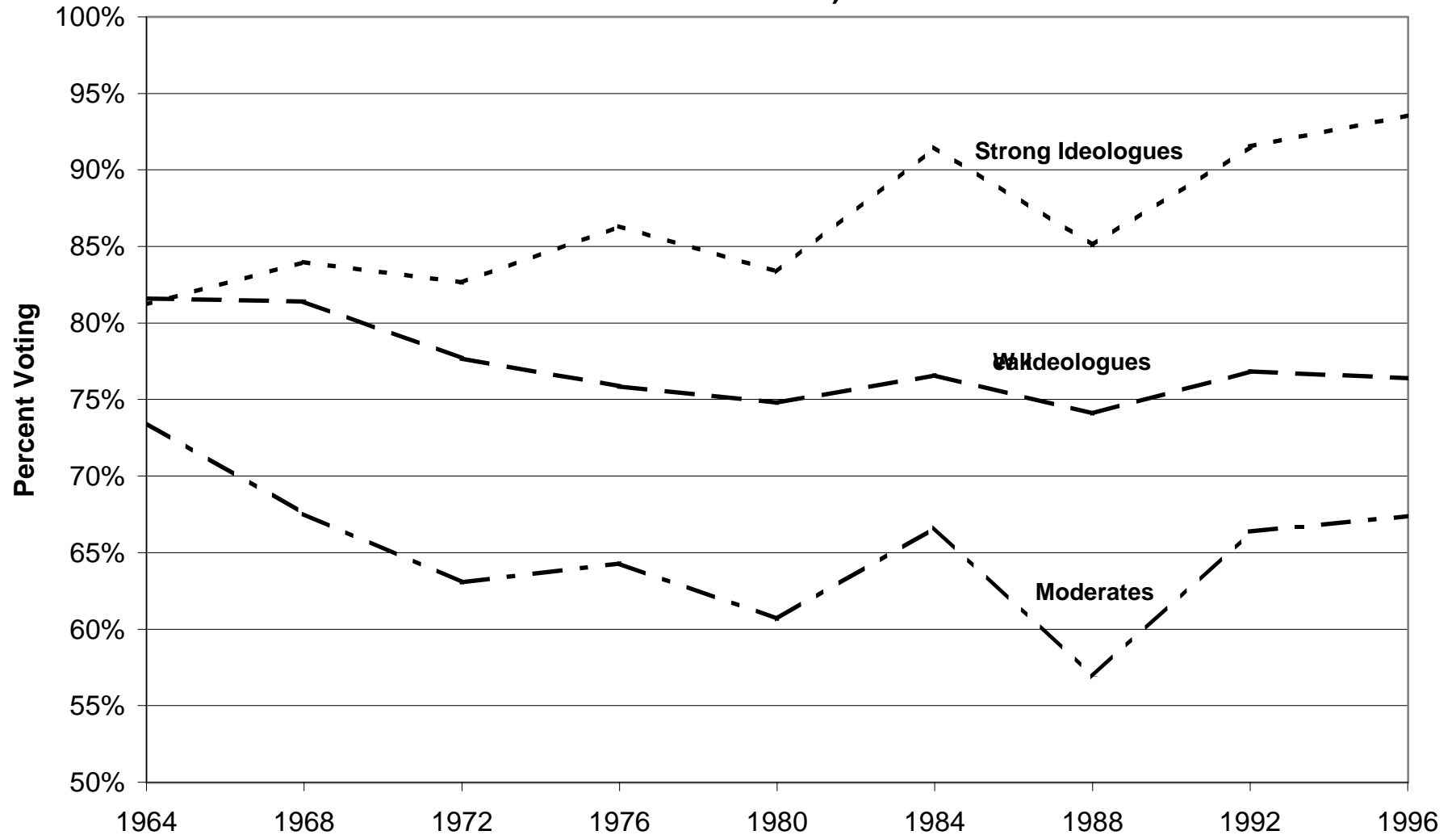
Figure 6. Turnout by Strength of Party Identification (Presidential Elections)

Source: Calculated using the ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File.
Notes: Apoliticals are coded as Independents. Cases are weighted by vcf0009.

Figure 7 Turnout by Position on the Liberal Conservative Scale (Presidential Elections)

Strong Ideologues

Weak Ideologues

Moderates

Percent Voting

100%
95%
90%
85%
80%
75%
70%
65%
60%
55%
50%

1964   1968   1972   1976   1980   1984   1988   1992   1996

Source: Calculated using the ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File.

Notes: Extremism of ideology is recoded from a respondent's scores on the Liberal and Conservative Feeling Thermometers (vcf0211 and vcf0212). To maintain consistency with the NES coding prior to 1970, respondents who answered "dont know" to either feeling thermometer are coded as 50 on that feeling thermometer. Using these recoded thermometers a modified version of the Liberal Conservative Index is constructed following the procedure used to construct vcf0801. Finally, the modified Liberal Conservative Index is recoded into categories of ideological extremism. Codes 0-24 and 75-97 are recoded as Strong Ideologues, 25-48 and 50-74 as Weak Ideologues and 49 as Moderates. Cases are weighted by vcf0009.