Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy
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Inequalities of Political Voice

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Inequalities of Political Voice

The exercise of political voice goes to the heart of democracy. In fact, it is difficult to imagine democracy on a national scale without the right of citizens to take part freely in politics. Through their political participation citizens seek to control who will hold public office and to influence what policymakers do when they govern. When they take part politically, citizens communicate information about their preferences and needs and generate pressure on public officials to respond. Although politicians in America have many ways to learn what is on the minds of citizens by parsing the polls, reading the newspaper, listening to talk radio, or watching the evening news, the messages conveyed through citizen participation are essential to democratic governance. Beyond its instrumental function in permitting activists to communicate their politically relevant concerns, participation is a value in and of itself: conferring upon the individual the dignity that comes with being a full member of the political community.

Citizens in American democracy who wish to have an impact on politics have a variety of options for exercising political voice. They can communicate their concerns and opinions to policy makers in order to affect public policy directly, or they can seek to affect policy indirectly by influencing electoral outcomes. They can act on their own or work with others in informal efforts, formal organizations, political parties, or in more loosely formed aggregates in social movements. They can donate their time or their money. They can use conventional techniques or protest tactics. They can work locally or nationally. They can even have political input as the unintended by-product when, for entirely extra-political reasons, they affiliate with an organization or institution that is active in politics.

Students of civic involvement in America are unanimous in characterizing political input

through the medium of political participation as being extremely unequal. The exercise of political voice is stratified most fundamentally by social class. Those who enjoy high levels of income, occupational status and, especially, education are much more likely to take part politically than are those who are less well endowed with socio-economic resources. Attendant to the class differences in political participation are disparities in political voice on the basis of both gender and race or ethnicity.

What is much less clear is whether these inequalities have been exacerbated in recent decades. The last quarter century has been a period of substantial increase in economic inequalities. Since the stagflation of the late 1970s gave way once more to relatively sustained periods of expansion, the fruits of economic growth have accrued disproportionately to those at the top of the economic hierarchy. There is, however, difference of opinion as to whether political inequalities have, correspondingly, become more pronounced. That is, the consensus about the extent of class-based inequalities in political voice is not paralleled by agreement as to whether those political inequalities have grown in tandem with growing economic inequalities.

In this memo we explore these matters with respect to the level of inequality of political voice and recent changes, if any, in the stratification of political voice. We begin by placing our concerns in the framework of public opinion by reviewing briefly what surveys can tell us about American attitudes towards inequality. We then proceed to examine both the extent of political inequality and the way that the extent of political inequality has changed recently with respect to the expression of political voice through individual participation, organized interests, political parties, and social movements. In each case we will pay attention to the representativeness of expressions of political voice both in terms of who takes part and in terms of what they say.

Public Opinion: What Americans Think About Inequality

A central part of the background for our consideration of how the U.S. political system has responded, or failed to respond, to rising economic inequality and to long-entrenched racial, ethnic and gender inequalities is an understanding of what ordinary Americans think about these matters. Knowledge of the public's attitudes may help inform our normative thinking about what sorts of inequalities should be considered acceptable or unacceptable. To the extent that government policy responds to citizens' wishes, knowledge about public opinion on issues involving inequality may also affect our understanding of why the political system has reacted as it has.

Evidence about the public's views of inequality is complicated by the fact that the subject itself is so complex. A full and nuanced portrait of the views of the American public would require making several important distinctions.[1] For example, with respect to the acceptable limits of inequality, members of the public might differ depending whether what is at stake is *economic* inequalities in income, wealth, or other benefits for which one would need to pay or *political* inequalities in power and influence. Moreover, it would be necessary to differentiate inequalities of *opportunity* from inequalities of *result*. That is, we would need to inquire whether inequalities of condition reflecting individual differences in talent, industriousness, and perseverance are judged differently if, regardless of background, we are all equal at the starting line. It would also be necessary to investigate attitudes towards the ways that these inequalities -- whether political or economic inequalities, whether inequalities of opportunity or condition -- are enhanced or reduced by the operations of politics and markets. Actions taken by individuals, by private, non-profit, and religious institutions, and by public authorities have consequences for

levels of inequality; in its responses, the public is likely to differentiate among the sources of inequality and among the policies that affect inequality. Finally, it would be essential to distinguish between inequalities among *individuals* and inequalities among *groups* defined along a variety of dimensions -- most notably for our purposes, class, race or ethnicity, and gender. That is, levels of inequality among individuals might be deemed less tolerable if those individual inequalities cumulate in such a way as to produce aggregate differences between women and men or among Asian Americans, Latinos, African Americans, and non-Hispanic Whites.

We sketch the broad outlines of Americans views of inequality based on data from opinion surveys. Over time, large majorities of Americans have come to reject most kinds of legally-enforced inequality or discrimination against particular social groups, even though support is uneven when it comes to government remedies for past discrimination. Particularly relevant to our concern with equal political voice, most Americans favor a high degree of political equality and seek a populistic sort of democracy in which people's voices weigh heavily and count equally. In the economic realm, support for equality of opportunity is qualified by reluctance to embrace equality of result. Nevertheless, in spite of certain anti-egalitarian biases in survey results, large majorities favor certain concrete policies (such as closing tax loopholes, generous funding of Social Security, and government help with education and medical care) that can have substantial egalitarian effects. Thus, evidence from surveys raises questions about whether inequalities of political voice may lead to government policies not fully reflective of ordinary citizens' wishes.

Inequalities among Social Groups

One of the great stories of the past century in the United States has been the gradual rejection of inequalities based on such social characteristics as race, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. More and more, Americans have come to oppose any government-enforced discrimination on such grounds. Most now say they oppose private prejudice and discrimination as well. The chief remaining areas of controversy concern whether and how laws and regulations should prohibit, or counteract the effects of, private discrimination.

The change in public attitudes about African Americans has been particularly dramatic. Between 1942 and 1985, the proportion of Americans saying that black and white children should go to the same schools (rather than "separate schools") rose in a steady, linear fashion, from a meager 31 percent to an overwhelming 93 percent. Similarly, the proportion of whites who opposed "separate sections for Negroes" on streetcars and buses grew from 46 percent in 1942 to 88 percent in 1970. The 45 percent minority who said in 1944 that "Negroes should have as good a chance as white people to get any kind of job" grew to a near-unanimous, 97 percent majority in 1972. Opinion also turned against the segregation of public accommodations and housing. Between 1963 and 1990, opposition to "laws against marriages between blacks and whites" rose from 38 percent to 79 percent.[2]

Still, even now, public support for federal government policies that enforce pro-integration principles is mixed. Only a minority of Americans -- a minority that declined in the 1970s and 1980s -- has said that the government in Washington should "see to it" that schools are integrated. Large majorities oppose school busing or job quotas. Reactions to affirmative action depend on the details. Support for open housing laws has increased, reaching a small majority (57 percent) in favor by 1990. But only with respect to public accommodations, where

racial interactions are transient and casual, have substantial and growing majorities of Whites favored government action.[3]

Does this opposition to concrete measures for achieving integration and remedying past discrimination result from continuing racism? Or does it reflect broader, "race-neutral" principles, like individualism and color-blind application of the law? This question continues to provoke scholarly controversy. Some scholars tend to blame "symbolic racism" or "racial resentment;"[4] in contrast, others point toward ideological principles.[5]

With respect to gender discrimination, public opinion has also moved strongly in favor of legal equality for women. In 1937, only 18 percent of Americans said they approved of a woman "earning money in business or industry" if she had a "husband capable of supporting her." This figure rose markedly over the years to 82 percent in 1990. Large majorities oppose job discrimination and favor equal pay for equal work. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution regularly won 60 percent support (77 percent when the text was read to respondents).[6]

By 1982, affirmative action programs in *industry* ("provided there are no rigid quotas") won 72 percent support or higher with respect to women, "Spanish-Americans," Blacks, and especially the physically handicapped. Support for "affirmative action programs in *higher education"* was a bit stronger. After hitting a plateau in the 1980s, support for such programs remains high. Even in the case of homosexuality, which many Americans still call "wrong," majorities do not think it should be illegal and oppose job discrimination -- with some distinctions among occupations.[7]

Economic Inequality

Americans' views of inequalities in the economic domain are multi-dimensional. Most Americans say that all people are "created equal" and strongly favor equality of opportunity. However, there is considerably more tolerance of inequality of economic results -- especially when people perceive extensive opportunities to get ahead, or when economic inequality can be plausibly justified as providing incentives to work and invest in ways that may benefit everyone. Americans are substantially less egalitarian than people in nearly all other advanced economies.[8] At the same time, most Americans oppose what they see as unfair economic disparities that do not reflect merit or effort, and most favor a number of government programs with egalitarian effects.

Large majorities of Americans approve of private property and free enterprise. They believe that hard work and ambition are rewarded, that their children will be better off than they are, and that it benefits the country to have a class of rich people. But most Americans also think that the rich have too much political power and do not pay enough taxes. They consider lawyers, CEOs, doctors, investment bankers, and various celebrities to be "overpaid," while restaurant workers, school teachers, secretaries, policemen, nurses and factory workers are "underpaid." Most feel that "money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed…"[9] These attitudes appear to vary somewhat with the business cycle and with international events. Economic downturns tend to produce more egalitarian sentiments, and extra sacrifices are sought from the affluent during major wars.

Government Action against Economic Inequality

A part of Americans' broad skepticism about the efficacy and efficiency of government is opposition to government policies mandating any extensive redistribution of wealth -- when this issue is put in the abstract. For example, very few favor "a law limiting the amount of money any individual is allowed to earn in a year," and most agree that "[p]eople should be allowed to accumulate as much wealth as they can, even if some make millions while others live in poverty." On a 7-point scale, responses tilt only slightly more toward the sentiment that "Washington ought to reduce income differences between rich and poor," than toward the feeling that the "government should not concern itself" with such matters.[10]

At the same time, there has long been a difference between Americans' "ideological conservatism" and their "operational liberalism."[11] Considerable majorities favor a number of concrete policies that would have, or actually do have, substantial redistributive effects. Large numbers of Americans support having moderately -- though not highly -- progressive taxes. Most favor closing tax "loopholes" used by the wealthy. While most people call their own taxes "too high," anti-tax fervor among ordinary Americans is considerably weaker than politicians sometimes imply. Substantial majorities of the public are willing to pay the taxes needed to fund popular spending programs. In 2001 and 2003, for example, when large, regressive cuts in income and estate taxes were enacted, polls showed that substantial majorities of Americans would have preferred to keep the money and bolster the Social Security system or reduce the budget deficit.[12]

The major federal government programs that help lower-income citizens do win broad public support. For example, Social Security -- the largest single program in the federal budget -- is extremely popular. The main effect of Social Security is to smooth out middle-class

people's incomes over their lifetimes, but it also redistributes incomes among individuals by providing substantial benefits even for those who had low incomes during their working lives. For that reason, poverty experts have called Social Security "crucial" in reducing poverty among the elderly.[13] Year after year, overwhelming majorities of Americans say that they want to keep Social Security at its present level or spend more on it; only tiny percentages want to cut back. There is considerable resistance to any "reforms" that would reduce guaranteed Social Security benefits in any way, even through reduced cost-of-living increases or stretched-out retirement ages. Apparently high public support for partial privatization of the program (e.g., allowing individuals to invest part of their payroll taxes in personal retirement accounts) drops sharply when it is made clear that this program would imply cuts in guaranteed benefits.[14]

The American public also generally favors universalistic government help with education (including day care and pre-schooling), which can be a major equalizing force in society. Most Americans want government help with jobs and employment, including a surprising (though seldom surveyed) level of support for job creation through public works programs. Large majorities want to help the uninsured get health care, and favor a variety of possible methods including the expansion of Medicare to younger people, providing catastrophic health insurance coverage to everyone, expanding community health clinics, and subsidizing private health insurance. The term "welfare" is despised, but a wide range of programs for the "deserving" poor win public approval, so long as the able-bodied are willing to work. Public support has been high, for example, for Supplemental Security Income, Unemployment Insurance, and even the former Aid for Families with Dependent Children.[15]

Political Inequality

In contrast to the economic realm, substantial majorities of Americans endorse a high degree of equality in the realm of politics -- in terms of both abstract principles and concrete legal arrangements. For example, in an early study with a local sample, as many as 95 percent of Americans endorsed the idea that "[e]very citizen should have an equal chance to influence government policy;" and 91 percent said that everyone should have an equal right to hold public office. True, roughly half of Americans say that government should pay most attention to "people of intelligence and character" or to "the people who really know something about the subject." But large majorities say that elected officials would "badly misuse their power" if they were not watched by voters, and that elections are one of the best ways to keep officials on their toes. A large majority of Americans says that all adult citizens should be allowed to vote, "regardless of how ignorant they may be."[16]

When it comes to specific institutional arrangements, most Americans favor a variety of reforms aimed at increasing popular control of government and reducing political inequalities. Even before the controversies surrounding the 2000 presidential election, solid majorities of Americans (73 percent or 86 percent in different polls) have favored abolishing the Electoral College and electing the president by popular vote. Equally large majorities of 70 percent or 80 percent have also favored choosing presidential candidates in a nationwide primary rather than through party conventions. Before the 1971 ratification of the Twenty-sixth Amendment, 60 percent to 70 percent of Americans favored granting the vote to eighteen-year-olds.[17]

Most people say that the general public should have "more influence" over policy making. Concerned about the power of money in politics, substantial majorities of Americans

favor limits on private campaign contributions and on campaign spending (not, however, public financing of elections.) Pro-democratic sentiments also underlie the popular movement for legislative term limits and the strong rejection of a six-year term for presidents. (Longer terms in office are thought to insulate politicians from popular control.) By the same token, the public has favored majority-vote cloture of Senate filibusters.[18]

Unequal Voices in Surveys

The opinions summarized above are mostly opinions expressed in national public opinion surveys, which -- by interviewing random samples of adult Americans -- try to ascertain what all Americans think. In such surveys, everyone is supposed to have an equal voice. Yet there is substantial evidence that surveys do not in fact report the opinions of all citizens equally, and that the results are biased in the direction of making Americans' opinions seem less egalitarian than they actually are.

The problem is that it forming political opinions, and expressing them to survey interviewers, is easier for those who have abundant resources in skills, income, and, especially, education. Less advantaged people -- who also have real political wants, needs, and desires -- are more likely to be uncertain or confused and to say "don't know" when interviewers ask their opinions. Natural supporters of egalitarian social welfare policies are also the least likely to register their opinions. By contrast, the very people who have abundant resources and make their voices most heard in surveys are the same people who are least concerned about gaps between the rich and the poor.

As a result, survey data appear to be subject to a consistent "exclusion bias" that tends to

make Americans look, on average, somewhat more conservative and anti-egalitarian (less likely, for example, to say that government should "reduce income differences between the rich and the poor") than they actually are. This bias has been estimated to be rather small -- smaller, for example, than the resource-related biases, discussed later in this report, in voting and nearly every other form of individual or collective political input. Still, the exclusion bias appears to reinforce other political barriers faced by disadvantaged.[19] The survey results presented here reveal substantial pro-egalitarian sentiments *despite* this bias. Data corrected for the bias would probably move further in the same direction, especially on issues of economic inequality and redistribution.

Public Opinion as Effect rather than Cause

In democratic political systems it is natural to think of public opinion as a cause, or at least a possible cause, of what governments do. We tend to judge how well democracy works partly in terms of how well government policies correspond with what citizens say they want. But this way of thinking neglects the possibility that public opinion may be an *effect* as well as a cause of political processes. Charles E. Lindblom referred to this as the problem of "circularity."[20] If political leaders, organized interest groups, large corporations or others can manipulate the opinions of ordinary citizens, democracy will be compromised even though the government responds perfectly to those opinions. If public opinion can be manipulated, and if the tools of opinion manipulation are most available to the wealthy and powerful -- who tend to occupy "bully pulpits" and to have the rhetorical skills or money needed to persuade others -- the result may be a subtle, indirect, but pervasive kind of inequality in political influence.

It is fairly well established that the political contents of the mass media -- especially the reported views of ostensibly non-partisan commentators and "experts" -- tend to affect the priorities and policy preferences of the public.[21] It is also well known that what appears in the media is heavily influenced by public officials, who are major sources of political news, and that business corporations spend a great deal of money funding the think-tanks, universities, and foundations that produce and publicize "expert" opinions. Corporations and others have also spent large amounts of money on issue advocacy advertisements, often trying to turn the public against egalitarian policies.[22] Still, it is very difficult to know what net impact, if any, all of this activity has had upon public opinion. Even when there are measurable effects, however, the interpretation is often disputed. If ordinary citizens change their opinions in response to persuasion by public officials or other policy elites, how are we to discern whether the process is one of "education" or "manipulation"?

At minimum, it seems important to bear in mind the possibility that the wealthier and more powerful members of American society have been able to influence the opinions of the less affluent, reducing public support for policies that would combat economic inequality and adding to inequalities of political voice.

Similar problems arise in attempting to assess the possibility that recent increases in economic inequality have themselves affected public opinion, perhaps by making people angry, cynical, and distrustful of government, which they may see as not doing much about -- or, even, exacerbating -- their troubles. Studies have indicated that much of the sharp decline in Americans' trust and confidence in government and other institutions occurred very early (in the late 1960s and early 1970s), before economic inequality began increase.[23] The causes of these

declines, then, may have had more to do with political disenchantment over Vietnam and Watergate than with economic trends. But the long subsequent history of negative political attitudes, punctuated by protest candidates and rejections of incumbent officials, suggests that economic stagnation and increased gaps between rich and poor may indeed have soured the political views of many Americans or, at a minimum, reinforced the distrust that was precipitated by Vietnam and Watergate. We cannot be sure.

Public Opinion and Egalitarian Policies

This broad framework of opinion should be taken into account as we think about the reasons for egalitarian and anti-egalitarian public policies. To recapitulate, although most Americans support a high level of equality among social groups and favor equality of opportunity, they appear to be less concerned about inequality in economic outcomes. For example, there is little public support for a massive redistribution of income or wealth. At the same time, however, there can be little doubt that large majorities of Americans favor a populistic version of democracy, with a high level of political equality among citizens. Moreover, most Americans support a number of concrete government policies that have, or would have, substantially egalitarian economic effects.

To anticipate issues that will be raised later in this report, if we wish to judge the extent to which political equality among citizens does or does not prevail in policy making, it can be useful to compare policies that are actually enacted and implemented with policies that majorities of Americans say they favor. Most Americans, the evidence indicates, would prefer a number of policies that would tax the wealthy and upper-income people at higher levels, and

spend more money to help middle- and lower-income people, than is currently the case. In other words, there are indications of something other than perfect political equality in U.S. policy making. It is not the case that every citizen has one effective vote, one equal amount of influence upon political outcomes.[24] If this leads to a tilt against egalitarian public policies, political inequality in the United States may tend to reinforce economic inequalities.

Why Do We Care About Equal Political Voice?

Discussions about democratic participation are ordinarily conducted as if the reasons why we care about it are self-evident. Rather than make such presumptions, it seems appropriate to make explicit why political voice matters. Political participation is often placed in the context of civic engagement construed more generally. Voluntary activity benefits both the community by cultivating democratic virtues and cooperation in the name of the common good as well as the individual by developing capacities and skills and by instilling a sense of dignity as a full member of the community.

When we separate political involvement from other forms of civic engagement a different rationale emerges, one that focuses on equal protection of interests. This perspective acknowledges the conflicting interests of individuals and groups and draws nourishment from Madison's fundamental insight in Federalist Paper No.10 that differences of opinion are sown in the nature of humankind, especially in the unequal acquisition of property. Through the medium of political participation, citizens communicate information about their preferences and needs for government action and generate pressure on public officials to heed what they hear. Of course, we know that public officials act for many reasons only one of which is their assessment of what

the public wants and needs. And policymakers have ways other than the medium of citizen participation of learning what citizens want and need from the government. Nonetheless, what public officials hear clearly influences what they do. Therefore, so long as citizens differ in their opinions and interests, the level playing field of democracy requires that we take seriously the fact that citizens differ in their capacity, and desire, to exercise political voice. The democratic principle of one-person, one-vote is the most obvious manifestation of the link between voluntary participation and equal protection of interests. However, for forms of voluntary political participation beyond the vote -- for example, writing letters to public officials, attending protests, making political contributions, joining organizations, working for a political party -- there is no such mandated equality of participatory input. When placed in the context of equal protection of interests in a democracy, concerns about the aggregate quantity of civic engagement become less significant and questions of representation come to the fore. What matters is not only the amount of civic activity but its distribution, not just how many people take part but who they are and what they say.

Although the evidence about public opinion that we have just seen suggests that Americans are, on average, less comfortable with political inequalities than with economic inequalities, theorists of democracy raise normative and practical concerns about political equality as a democratic value. One perspective, which has been present in various guises throughout American history, implicitly endorses inequalities of political voice. Underlying property requirements for the franchise in the colonies and the early days of the republic and intermittent demands for educational requirements or literacy tests thereafter is a fear of the mob and an understanding that political voice is appropriately exercised by those who can be trusted

to do so with wisdom and respect for democratic process.[25] A different approach is more utilitarian. While inequalities of political voice may be regrettable from the perspective of democratic theory, the costs of addressing those inequalities -- whether measured in economic terms or construed in terms of tradeoffs among competing democratic values such as liberty -- do not justify the effort.

Others raise the difficulty of reconciling concern about political equality with some deference to views that are intensely held. The question of how to weight the strength of collective preferences is a highly vexing one for democratic theory. To ignore the fact that some people care deeply about a particular issue while the large majority are more or less indifferent would seem to be perverse and unreasonable. In fact, as Madison makes clear, once again, in Federalist Paper No. 10 the structure of the American government was established to ensure that majority factions do not always prevail. Yet, unless some mechanism is designed to equalize political voice across multiple issues, to allow an intense minority to prevail over and over risks violating the principle of political equality. In the abstract, the principle of political equality can be harmonized with respect for intensity of preferences by insisting that everyone have the same amount of total political influence while allowing the individual to specify the issues -- one, a few, or many -- over which that equal allocation of influence will be spent.

Specifying this ideal version of political equality -- equal inputs from all citizens distributed among issues as each individual sees fit -- immediately raises another question. What about people who are genuinely content with the policy status quo or who really do not care about political outcomes? Do the dictates of equality of political voice require equal input from the satisfied and the indifferent? From the perspective of democratic theory, are inequalities of

political voice that are related to differences in how much people care about politics or in how they appraise what is good for them politically less worrisome that inequalities arising from other sources -- in particular, group-based differences in resources? That is, if hairdressers, convenience store clerks, secretaries, and gas station attendants do not take part in politics and do not have organized representation because they are satisfied with current public policies or would rather spend their time and energy going hiking or fishing than attending school board meetings, then should their lack of political voice be deemed less consequential. Or does the principle of equal protection of interests require equal voice for all regardless of the level of political interest or awareness?

One perspective that is more congenial to political inequalities of result draws an implicit analogy between economic and political life. According to this construction, the requirements of democracy are essentially procedural and what are needed are equal rights for all citizens. So long as all enjoy equal opportunity in the political realm -- a condition that has often been violated in American history -- inequalities of political voice may be considered acceptable. A variant of this argument concedes that equal rights may not confer equal capacity to exercise political voice. However, if inequalities in political voice reflect differences in taste, rather than differences in the resources of time, money and skills that make effective participation possible, they are easier to justify.

The normative issue of how we assess political silence that arises from satisfaction with or indifference to policy outcomes raises an empirical one: Does a lack of activity or organization inevitably imply a lack of political concern? The absence of advocacy or organized representation for what would seem to be a politically relevant interest is sometimes construed as

prima facie evidence for an absence of political concern on the part of those who might be presumed to have political interests. However, as we shall see, there are multiple barriers to political mobilization, most of which have nothing to do with lack of concern.

Scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the problem of collective action and have pointed to the hurdles to group mobilization, especially when the group in question is relatively large and not well endowed with political resources. In particular, large, diffuse groups that lack the capacity to coerce cooperation or to provide selective benefits often face severe collective action problems that prevent them from organizing on behalf of their joint political concerns.[26] According to Olson, the rational individual has an incentive not to spend scarce resources of money and time in support of favored causes but rather to free ride on the efforts of others. Only when an organization has the capacity to force a potential free rider to support group efforts or when it supplies benefits available only to those who assist in the collective effort will an organization emerge and prosper.

Others have pointed out that Olson's argument neglects the significance of the costs of organizations, costs that not all potential constituencies are in a position to bear. These costs are not simply financial although money is surely a necessity. The affluent and well-educated are not only able to afford the financial costs of organizational support but they are in a better position to command the skills, acquire the information, and utilize the connections that are helpful in getting an organization off the ground or keeping it going. In short, a group of jointly interested citizens that is well endowed with a variety of kinds of resources is more likely to overcome the hurdle posed by the logic of collective action than is a group of similar size and similar intensity of concern that is resource-poor. For all these reasons, it is erroneous to assume

that the amount of organization activity is a surrogate for intensity of group political preferences or that the under-representation in organized political groups of the resource-disadvantaged indicates indifference to political outcomes.

Political Participation and Equality of Political Voice

Citizens in American democracy have many options for expressing their political voice including the sending of messages directly to policy makers or seeking indirect influence through the electoral process. It is widely known, however, that participation in American politics is anything but universal and that those who do take part are, in important ways, not representative of the public at large.[27] These days, only about half of Americans vote in a presidential election. Much smaller proportions take part in more demanding and costly activities such as working in an electoral campaign, getting in touch with a public official, making a campaign contribution, getting involved in an organization that takes political stands, or taking part in a protest or demonstration. Not only are many citizens politically inactive, but the processes by which people come to take part imply that, taken together, activists are not representative of the American public and, thus, that public officials are disproportionately likely to hear from people with certain politically relevant characteristics.

Various political acts differ with respect to the extent to which the participatory public is representative. At one end of the continuum is the vote.[28] Although once construed as a privilege rather than a right of citizens, the vote is now widely considered to be fundamental to democracy. Through their votes, citizens in a democracy choose their leaders and hold them accountable for their conduct in office. Democratizing regimes inevitably establish procedures

Table 1: Voter Registration and Turnout

	Percent reporting they registered		Percent reporting they voted	
	1998	2000	1998	2000
Education:				
8 years or less	40.2	36.1	24.6	26.8
High school:				
1 to 3 years	43.4	45.9	25.0	33.6
4 years	58.6	60.1	37.1	49.4
College:				
1 to 3 years	68.3	70.0	46.2	60.3
4 years or more	75.1	77.3	57.2	72.o
Race:				
White	63.9	65.6	43.3	56.4
Black	60.2	63.6	39.6	53.5
Hispanic	33.7	34.9	20.0	27.5
Sex:				
Male	60.6	62.2	41.4	53.1
Female	63.5	65.6	42.4	56.2
Age:				
18 to 20 years old	32.1	40.5	13.5	28.4
21 to 24 years old	43.1	49.3		24.2
25 to 34 years old	52.4	54.7	28.0	43.7
35 to 44 years old	62.4	63.8	40.7	55.0
45 to 64 years old	71.1	71.2	53.6	64.1
65 years old and over	75.4	76.1	59.5	67.6

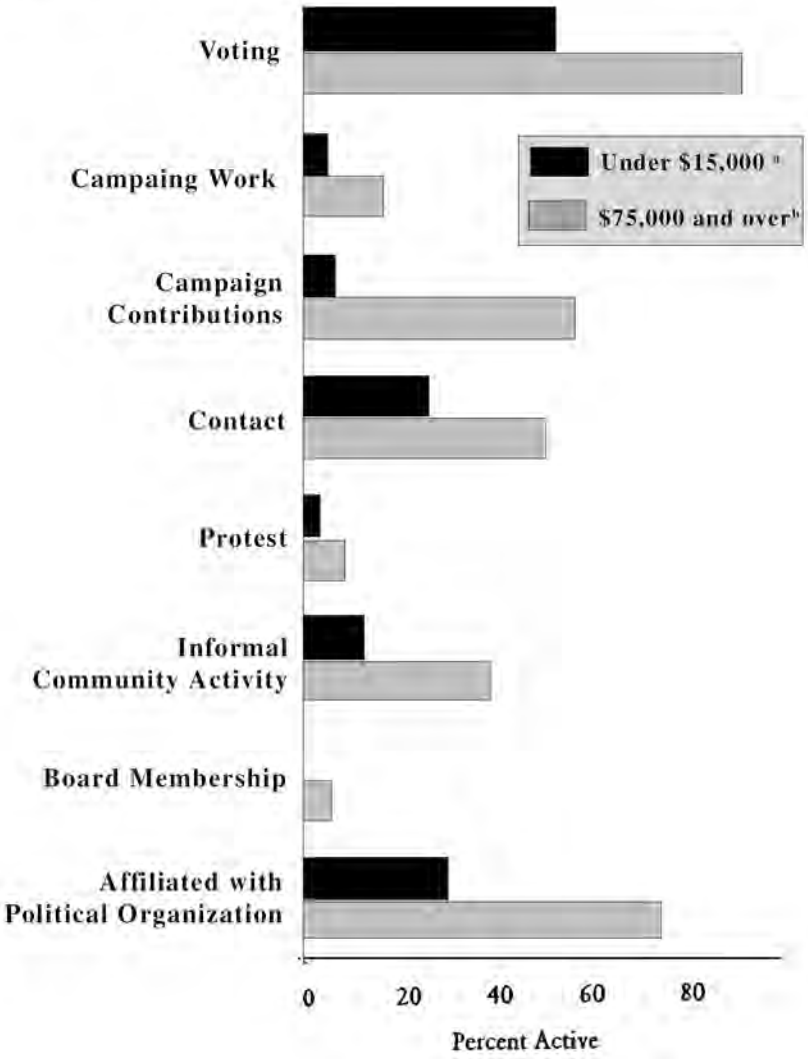
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract

for national elections even if they neglect other guarantees (for example, the right to dissent) that are usually deemed essential to a functioning democracy. Voters are not only the most numerous but also the most representative group of political activists. As shown in Table 1, there are significant group differences in turnout. Nevertheless, the extent of participatory bias is much less pronounced when it comes to voting than it is for political activities that demand more in the way of resources or skills -- for example, contacting a public official, getting involved in a campaign, or sitting on the local zoning board.

At the other end of the continuum, campaign contributors, especially those who make large donations, are the least representative group of activists. Not only are campaign donors an unrepresentative group of individuals but, unlike voters, they can easily raise the volume of their political voice. In spite of campaign finance laws placing upward boundaries on campaign contributions, the volume of individual political input through the medium of campaign contributions can be multiplied to an extent that is unique among political acts. When it comes to voting, the principle of democratic equality is legally mandated: we each get only one per election. Even the most prolific of letter writers or the most industrious of meeting goers cannot multiply participatory input to the extent that a generous donor can. In 2000, when 26 percent of Americans age twenty-five and over had completed at least a bachelor's degree, fully 85 percent of those who made donations of over $1,000 to a presidential candidate had at least a BA. In fact, 58 percent of that group of significant donors, compared with only 9 percent of Americans twenty-five and over, had attained a graduate degree. While only 12 percent of American households had incomes over $100,000 in 2000, a whopping 95 percent of the substantial donors did.[29]

Figure 1: Percentage Active in Various Activities: High and Low Income Groups

a. N=483 weighted cases
b. N=224 weighted cases



Source: Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 190.

Group Differences in Participation

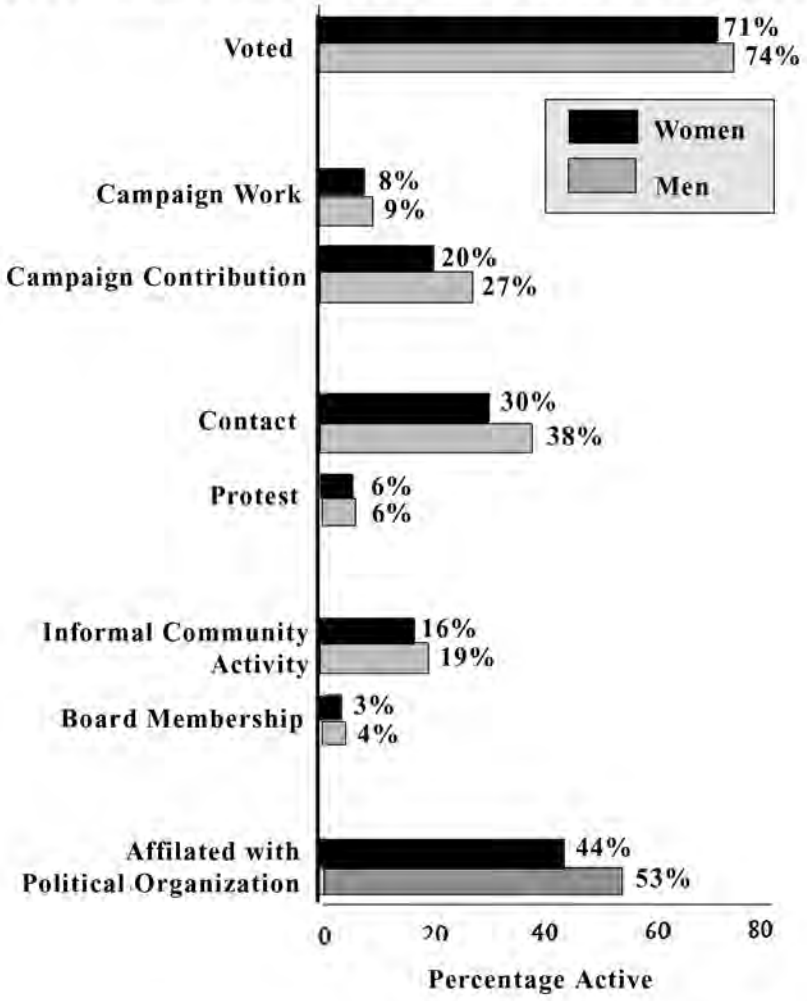
As suggested by the evidence just presented, foremost among the characteristics associated with political participation is socio-economic status. Study after study has demonstrated that individuals with high socio-economic status -- that is, those who have high levels of education, income, and occupational status -- are much more likely to be politically active. This relationship, which obtains for all democracies, is especially pronounced in the United States. Figure 1 uses data from a 1990 survey of the American public to contrast the political activity two income groups, each of which constituted roughly one fifth of the sample -- those having family incomes below $15,000 and those at the top of the income ladder with family incomes over $75,000.[30] For instance, nearly nine out of 10 individuals in families with incomes over $75,000 reported voting in presidential elections while only half of those in families with incomes under $15,000 reported voting. (The pattern of class stratification of voter turnout has been documented in a variety of analyses including those based on census data and validated votes.)[31] The gap in voting between the well-off and the poor is evident (or even greater) for the other seven political activities listed in Figure 1: voting; working in a campaign; making a campaign contribution; getting in touch with a public official; taking part in a protest, march or demonstration; getting involved in an informal effort to solve a community problem; serving as an unpaid volunteer on a local governing board such as a school board or city council; and being affiliated with an organization that takes stands in politics. While there are different ways to measure the magnitude of the differences, it is clear that the disparity in activity between the two income groups is especially wide when it comes to making campaign contributions.

Table 2: Political Activities by Race (percent active)

Activity	Anglo-Whites	African-Americans	Latinos	Latino-Citizens
Vote	73	65	41	52
Campaign Work	8	12	7	8
Campaign Contributions	25	22	11	12
Contact	37	24	14	17
Protest	5	9	4	4
Informal Community Activity	17	19	12	14
Board Member	4	2	4	5
Affiliated with a political Organization	52	38	24	27

Source: Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 233.

Figure 2: Political Activities by Gender (percentage active)



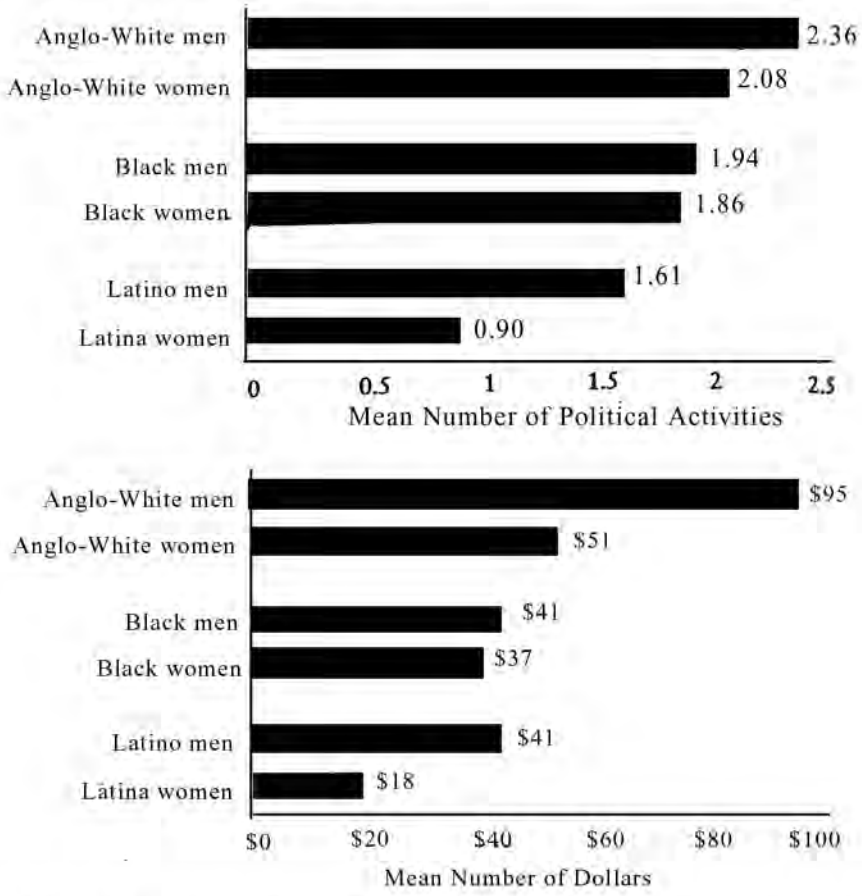
Source: Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. 1995. Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism In American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University, p. 255

Interestingly, even protesting -- which demands little in the way of skills or money and which is often thought of as "the weapon of the weak" -- is characterized by the pattern of socio-economic bias. The successes of the labor and civil rights movements illustrate the possibilities for the disadvantaged when they mobilize collectively. Nevertheless, the United States also has a long tradition of middle-class protest movements ranging from abolition and temperance to environmentalism and disarmament. The bottom line is that, even when it comes to protest, the well-educated and well-heeled are more likely to take part. In fact, when the protesters in this survey were asked about the issue or problem at stake in their activity, those who had demonstrated about a national issue were far more likely to mention abortion than any other issue.

Participatory input is stratified not only by socio-economic status but also by race or ethnicity, gender, and age. In terms of overall participation, Anglo-Whites are more politically active than are African-Americans and, especially, Latinos. However, as shown in Table 2, this rank order does not always obtain when we consider particular forms of political activity, and the differences between African Americans and Anglo Whites are, for most activities, small in magnitude and inconsistent in direction. Compared to Anglo Whites, African Americans are more likely to have reported taking part in a protest, engaging in informal community activity and, perhaps reflecting the timing of the survey in the aftermath of Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential bid, working in a political campaign. In contrast, for most of the activities, Latinos, even Latino citizens, were less likely to report having taken part.

When it comes to gender, as shown in Figure 2, the differences are small in magnitude and consistent in direction: except for protesting, men were slightly more likely than women to

Figure 3: Overall Political Activity by Race or Ethnicity. (citizen participation study)



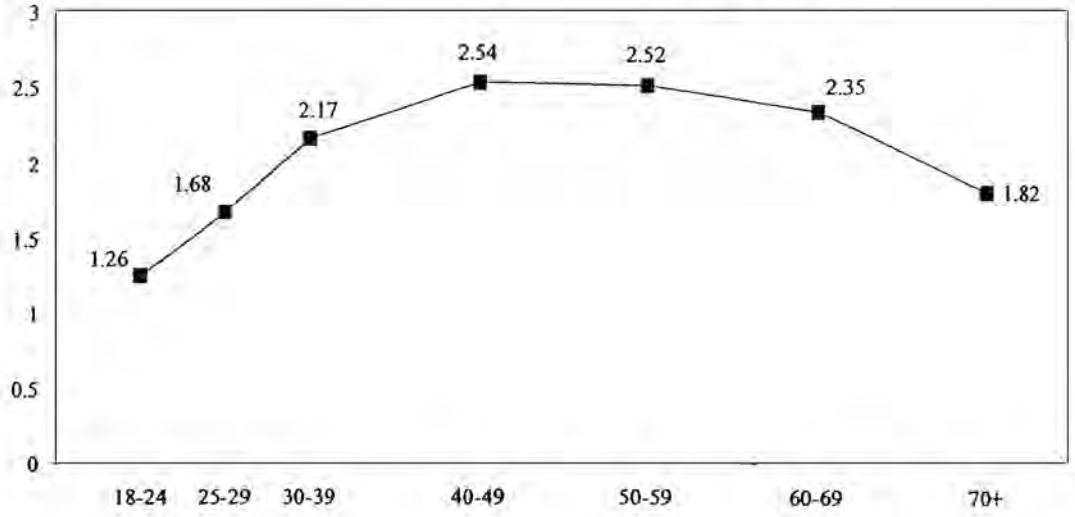
Source: Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 278

have taken part in each of the political activities on the list.[32] The pattern of gender differences in Figure 2 is, however, somewhat unexpected. It has sometimes been argued that the masculine advantage with respect to political participation derives from an emphasis on electoral forms of activity. However, when the definition of political activity is expanded to encompass informal community activity and organizational affiliation -- forms of involvement in which women have been presumed to specialize -- the gender gap in participation does not disappear.

Figure 3 considers the overall activity, as measured by the average score on an additive scale of these eight activities and the average number of dollars donated to political campaigns and causes, of the groups at the intersection of these two axes of cleavage. Both race or ethnicity and gender play a role. In a pattern that is repeated over and over, when the scale is disaggregated into its individual components, Anglo-White men are the most active, Latina women the least. Overall, Anglo-Whites are more active than African-Americans, who are, in turn, more active than Latinos. Within each group defined by race or ethnicity, women are less active than men. However, the size of the gender gap varies across the groups defined by their race or ethnicity and is widest, by far, among Latinos and narrowest among African-Americans. With respect to political giving, Anglo-White men donate the largest amounts, and the gender disparity is widest in absolute dollars among Anglo-Whites, whose levels of contributions are highest, and in relative terms among Latinos.

Figure 4 confirms the widely observed pattern of life-cycle variation in political activity: participation rates are low among younger citizens, rise steadily before peaking in middle age, and drop off somewhat among the elderly.[33] The age disparities are substantial: the gap in activity between those under twenty-five and the forty-somethings is wider than that between

Figure 4: Mean Number of Political Acts by Ages



Source: Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Jennifer Erkulwater. 2001. "Growing Up, Settling Down, and Becoming Active: Political Participation over the Life Cycle." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.

Anglo-White men and Latina women. This curvilinear pattern is remarkably consistent when particular political acts are considered separately. However, as usual, there are variations. While those under thirty generally post very low rates of political activity, they are about average in their rate of campaign participation and are the age group most likely to take part in a protest. At the other end of the life cycle, as we saw in Table 1, the elderly continue to go to the polls. In contrast, the decline in senior participation is especially steep when it comes to informal community activity and contacts with public officials.

Explaining Group Differences

Cataloguing the groups that are under- or overrepresented among activists does not, however, explain group differences in activity. It is essential to understand what it is about being, say, well-educated, Anglo-White, male, or middle-aged that leads to higher levels of participation. With respect to the substantial, and widely noted, socio-economic bias in political participation, political scientists have begun to elaborate the causal links between political activity and high levels of income, occupation, and education.[34] In particular, they have demonstrated why education is so central to the relationship between socio-economic status and participation. Not only does education have a direct impact on political activity, but more importantly, education has indirect effects through its consequences for the acquisition of nearly every other participatory factor. The well-educated earn higher incomes on the job; are more likely to develop civic skills at work, in organizations and, to a lesser extent, in church; are more likely to receive requests for political activity; and are more politically interested and knowledgeable.

The explanation for the relationship between socio-economic status and political donations is, not unexpectedly, quite straightforward. In contrast to forms of political involvement for which command of civic skills or location in the kinds of networks through which requests for political activity are mediated or political interest and information help to predict who will take part, what really matters when it comes to making political contributions is the size of the bank balance. Family income plays an overwhelming role in explaining not who will make political contributions but how large those contributions will be.

With respect to participatory disparities among groups defined by race or ethnicity, once group differences in participatory resources -- in particular, education, income, and job-related civic skills -- are taken into account, the disparities in participation among Anglo-Whites, African-Americans, and Latinos disappear. Although systematic national data are not readily available, it seems that this analysis does not hold for Asian-Americans, who are less politically active than would be expected on the basis of their class-based participatory factors.[35]

Disparities in class-based participatory resources are also front-and-center when it comes to gender differences in activity. However, in contrast to the circumstance for Anglo Whites, African Americans and Latinos, they do not fully explain the gap between women and men in political activity. Several factors contribute to the disparity in participation between men and women. First, men have, on average, higher levels of education than women do. In addition, because they are more likely than women to be in the work force and, if employed, more likely to hold jobs that permit the acquisition of civic skills and exposure to requests for political participation, men have an advantage when it comes to work-based participatory factors. Moreover, men are more likely than women to be psychologically engaged with politics -- that

is, to be politically interested, informed, and efficacious. Once these factors are taken into account, the gender gap in political activity closes.

The deficit in activity of the young is both more complicated and more difficult to explain. It is commonly asserted that the younger citizens are less likely to take part because they have not yet settled down. According to this story, once they acquire the roles and responsibilities of adulthood -- full-time jobs, families, and mortgages -- they will become more active. In fact, the acquisition of adult statuses works in very complex ways to influence political participation. With other factors taken into account, these adult roles and responsibilities do not have an independent impact on participation. That is, going to work, getting a job, and having children do not themselves raise participation. Indeed, those who leave school early and get married, have children, and work full-time in their teens or early twenties are likely to be less, not more, active than their peers. Furthermore, the nexus among marriage, children, and work force status is different for men and women: a spouse and children operate to push men into the work force; for women, the effect is the opposite. Still, some of these adult statuses are associated with the resources, recruitment, and political orientations that predict political activity. In particular, having work that is well paid and highly skill-endowing is central to the cultivation of the factors that foster participation. Nonetheless, in contrast to the circumstance for gender or race, differences in participatory endowments among age groups do not fully explain the gap in participation between the young and their elders. Indeed, even after all the factors we have been discussing have been taken into account, the unexplained difference in activity between those in their twenties and those in their forties is actually larger than the initial disparity between Blacks and Whites or between women and men.

What Do Policymakers Hear?

From the perspective of equal political voice, understanding the origins of group differences in participation does not put the matter to rest. Although memberships in demographic groups may not be the key to the causal understanding of political activity, they are absolutely fundamental to politics. It is not sufficient simply to understand, for example, that disparities in participation among Latinos, African-Americans, and Anglo-Whites stem not from race or ethnicity per se but from group differences in participatory factors, most of which are rooted in class differences. For one thing, focusing on the way that class differences among racial and ethnic groups account for participatory differences does not obviate the fundamental question of *why* there are such enduring and pronounced socio-economic differences among groups defined by their race or ethnicity. Class differences along racial or ethnic lines reflect the legacy of historical and social processes that have everything to do with racial or ethnic status.

Furthermore, the fact that socio-economic differences are behind differences in participation among racial and ethnic groups does not obviate the fact that policymakers are hearing less from African-Americans or, especially, Latinos. These are groups with distinctive political preferences and participatory agendas: they differ in their opinions on public matters and, when they are active, they are concerned with a different mix of issues. Hence, it makes a difference with respect to equal protection of interests if participatory messages to policymakers underrepresent input from African-Americans and Latinos. That the sources of these group differences in activity lie in characteristics other than race or ethnicity does not vitiate the political significance of disparities in participation. The same logic obtains for participatory

differences rooted in groups defined by gender, age, or such politically relevant characteristics as citizenship status or dependence upon government benefits. When the messages to public officials are skewed, then the democratic norm of equal responsiveness to all is potentially compromised.

Do Demographic Differences in Political Voice Matter?

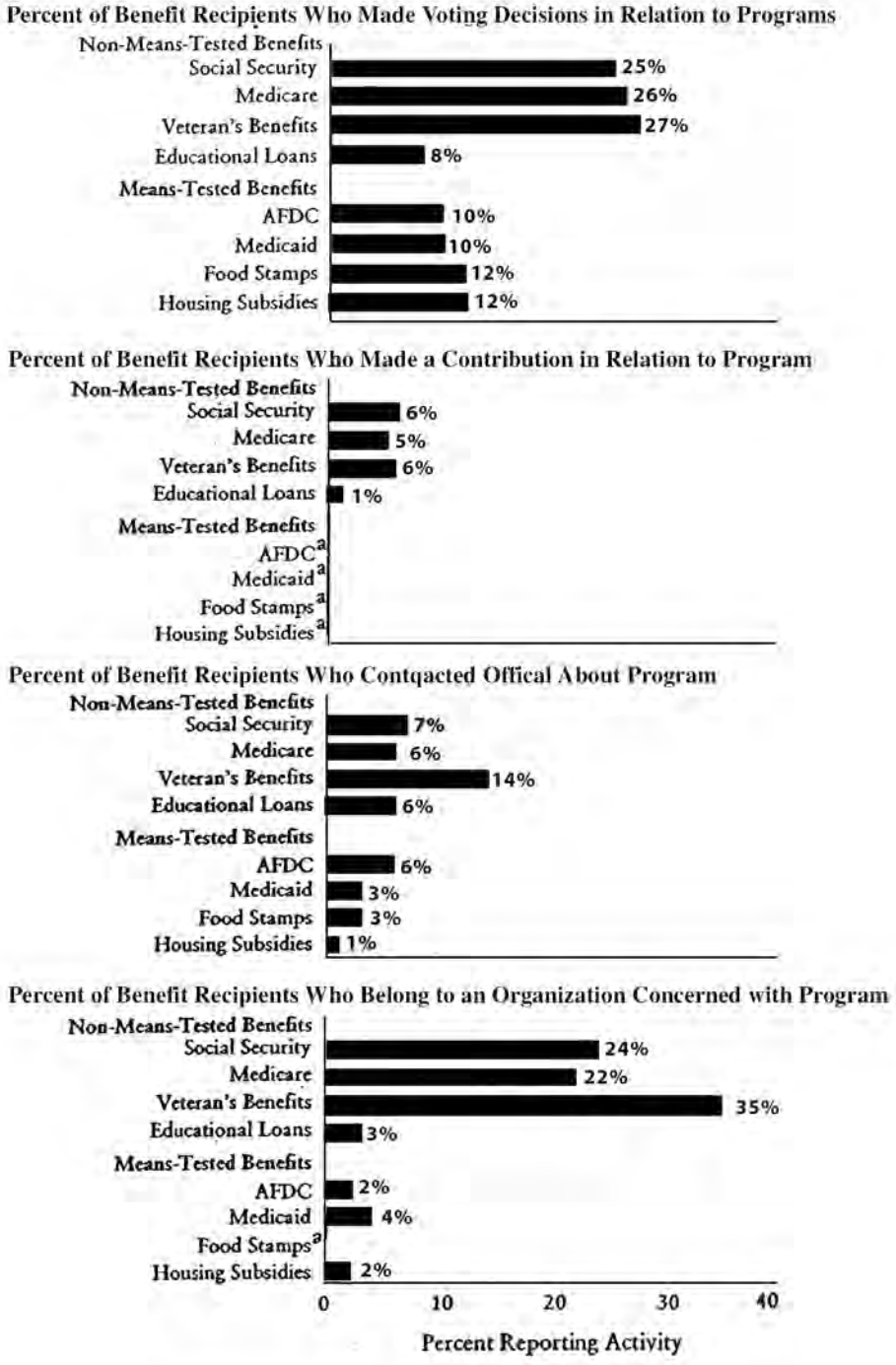
One important line of reasoning suggests that participatory differences among demographic groups do not really matter. A significant analysis of the representativeness of the electorate demonstrates that, although the electorate is not demographically representative of the public at large, voters do not differ from non-voters in their partisan leanings or their opinions on policy matters as expressed in surveys.[36] That is, although those who go to the polls differ from those who stay home in many ways -- for example, in age, race or ethnicity, or level of income and education -- their answers to questions in public opinion polls are quite similar. This finding, which also obtains for activists who undertake other forms of political activity, might suggest that demographic distortion in participation does not compromise equal voice.

However, taking a broader view of the attributes of citizens that matter for politics -- encompassing not just demographics and policy positions as expressed in response to survey questions but also policy-relevant circumstances and the actual content of participatory input -- sheds a different light on this finding.[37] Political participants, including voters, can be distinguished from inactives in ways that are of great political significance: although similar in their attitudes, activists are distinctive in their personal circumstances and dependence upon government benefits, in their priorities for government action, and in what they say when they get involved. These disparities are exacerbated when we move from to the most common

political act, voting, to acts that are more difficult, convey more information, and can be multiplied in their volume.

Consider, for example, economic needs and circumstances. Compared with those who are politically quiescent, those who take part in politics are much less likely to have experienced a need to trim their sails economically -- to have been forced to work extra hours to get by, to have delayed medical treatment for economic reasons or to have cut back on spending on food. Predictably, almost no one among substantial campaign donors reported having cut back financially in order to make ends meet. Not only are there differences in economic circumstances, there are differences in their need for various kinds of government assistance. Those who receive such means-tested government benefits as food stamps and housing subsidies are underrepresented among political activists, even among those who undertake participatory acts that might be expected to be especially relevant to their circumstances -- getting in touch with public officials, taking part in protests, and getting involved in informal community efforts. The data in Figure 5 make clear that this inactivity has consequences for the messages sent to public officials about government programs. For several kinds of political activity, recipients of means-tested government benefits are much less likely to take part *in relation to that program* than are recipients of non-means-tested benefits such as Social Security, Medicare, or veterans' benefits. The data on contacting are especially interesting. We might expect that inclusion in the non-means-tested programs would be more or less automatic and, thus, would require fewer contacts. Nevertheless, Medicare recipients are *more* likely than Medicaid recipients to contact about their medical benefits; Social Security recipients are *more* likely than recipients of AFDC (the pre-welfare reform predecessor to TANF) to contact about their benefits. Clearly, the

Figure 5: Activities Directly Related to Benefit Programs.



Source: Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, 1995. Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 218

government hears more from those on some programs than on others, and the ones it hears from are systematically among the more advantaged citizens.

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that inactive citizens do not differ substantially from activists in their responses when survey researchers choose the issues, when it comes to what political activists actually say when they take part, members of various underrepresented groups have distinctive participatory agendas. When asked about the issues and problems that animated their political activity those who engage in the kinds of participatory acts that permit the communication of explicit messages to policymakers -- for example, contacting, protesting, or serving as a volunteer on a local board -- mention a wide variety of issues ranging from the environment to schools to taxes to the need to get the garbage collected. However, members of different groups have distinctive policy agendas attached to their participation. For example, compared with Anglo Whites, African Americans and Latinos are, not unexpectedly, much more likely to refer to issues involving civil rights or the rights and concerns of minority groups. However, they are also more likely to mention issues involving crime or drugs, educational concerns, and the needs of children and youth. Similarly, compared with those who enjoy SES advantages, those who have limited income and education are considerably more likely -- and those who receive means-tested government benefits are substantially more likely -- to discuss issues of basic human need (that is, matters involving poverty, jobs, health, housing, and the like) in association with their participation. However, because they are so inactive, public officials actually hear less about these matters from the disadvantaged than from more advantaged activists. Moreover, it is not simply that members of various groups talk about different issues when they take part, they also say different things. When the SES-disadvantaged send messages

about policy issues concerning matters of basic human needs, they are much more likely to be discussing policy issues that are germane to their own lives, rather than abstract matters. Furthermore, they inevitably urge greater government attention to these concerns. The more numerous messages on these subjects sent by more advantaged activists are much more mixed with respect to whether they advocate greater government efforts on behalf of basic human needs. In short, when we consider what policymakers actually hear, the demographic stratification of activist publics is of potential political consequence.

Changing Participatory Representation: Conflicting Expectations

The widespread agreement about the extent to which political voice is unequal is not matched by consensus as to whether the extent of that inequality has *changed* over the last generation. Part of the reason for the absence of agreement is that, as is so often the case, scholarly inquiries do not always reach the same conclusion when investigating the same subject. A more important explanation, however, derives from the fact that political voice is multi-faceted, and developments with respect to various modes of expressing political voice -- for example, campaign giving, protest, or activity in political organizations -- need not operate in tandem. Thus, the inability to reach a single conclusion about changing inequality of political voice reflects the multiple dimensions of the subject as well as scholarly disputation.[38]

Recent decades have witnessed several trends with potential -- and potentially contradictory -- implications for participatory inequalities. Some of them might possibly be expected to have had an ameliorative impact on the level of participatory stratification. Consider, for example, the recent decline in political activity. The widely noted erosion in

voting turnout that began after the recent high in 1960 was the first, and most immediately visible, manifestation of a more general trend.[39] It turns out that the decay in turnout, a complex matter that we shall discuss in greater detail later, is part of a more general decline in political participation as well as in civic involvement construed more broadly.[40] The consequences of participatory decline for participatory stratification are not obvious. One possibility is, however, that because those on the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder have traditionally been so politically inactive, the recent decline in overall rates of political activity cannot come solely from erosion at the bottom. Inequality in political voice may have also been reduced by the rise in education during recent decades. Since education is such a powerful predictor of political engagement, rising absolute levels of education might be expected to facilitate the political activation of those at the bottom of the SES hierarchy and produce class convergence in participation. In fact, however, it has been demonstrated that increasing education does not produce commensurate increases in activity.[41]

In contrast, other developments might lead to the aggravation of inequalities in political voice. Most importantly, in recent decades economic inequalities have become more pronounced. Since 1980, several factors -- among them the attenuation of the labor movement and economic processes such that most of the fruits of economic expansion have accrued to those at the top -- have conspired to exacerbate class stratification, though not class conflict. These trends would suggest an increase in the class stratification in political activity. Moreover, the institutions that link citizens to policymakers have been transformed in ways that have the capacity to enhance the voice of the well-off and well-educated. Reflecting a trend that characterizes many institutions of American society, the domain of citizen politics has become

increasingly professionalized in the past generation. Roles in political parties and interest groups that would once have been taken on by volunteers are now assumed by professional staff with expertise in such matters as campaign management, polling, direct mail, and public relations. To keep such political operations going requires that citizen supporters provide voluntary contributions of cash rather than of expertise or sweat equity. Under the circumstances, those who have the wherewithal to write large checks would be expected to enjoy enhanced political voice.

Changing Participatory Representation: The Evidence

Has been a change in whose voices are heard? Studies of various forms of participation, including voting, are unanimous in finding that the strong association between political activity and socio-economic status has not been ameliorated in recent decades. Beyond that, however, there are no easy conclusions when it comes to changing inequality of political voice.

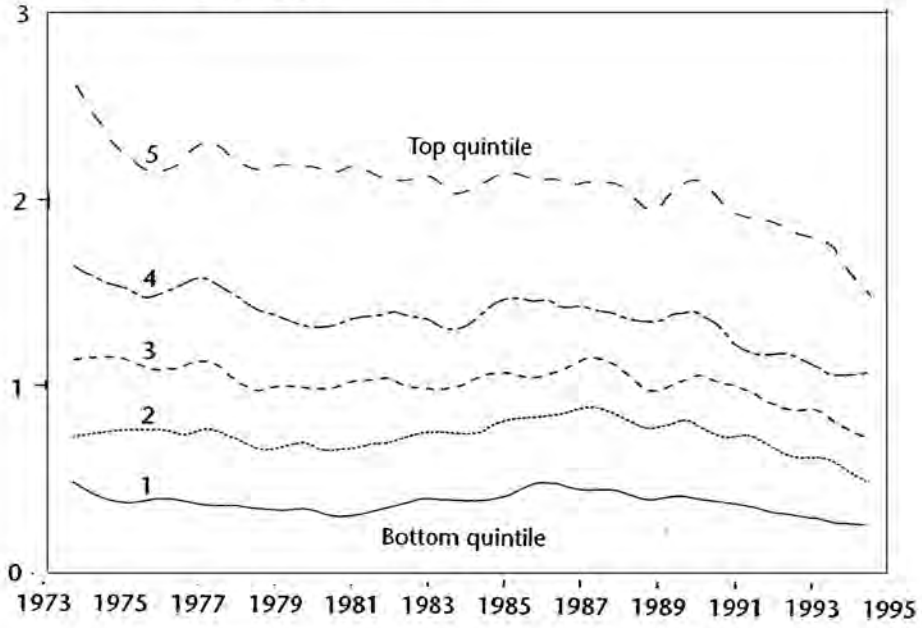
Consider, first, one of the most basic rights and responsibilities of the citizen, the vote. The enfranchisement of Blacks in the South as the result of the civil rights movement and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 coupled with increasing levels of education within the public might be expected to have rendered the electorate more representative not only in racial but also in socio-economic terms. Erosion in voting among those in the lowest SES ranks is possible (not much decline is possible in other forms of participation because those in the lowest SES ranks already register very low rates of involvement).

Scholars differ on whether voting has changed and the numerous studies have conflicting findings. At this writing the best evidence suggests that the decline in turnout has come

Figure 6: Has the Class Stratification of Political Activity Changed?

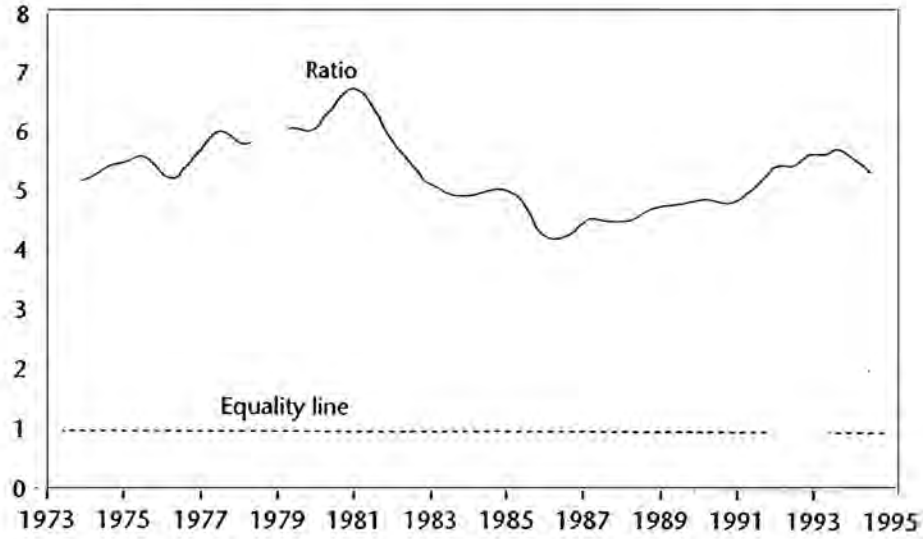
A. Political Activities, by SES Quintile

Mean number of activities



B. Political Activities Ratio, Top Fifth to Bottom Fifth

Ratio: top fifth/bottom fifth



Source: Roper Social and Political Trends Data, 1973-1994 as reported in Henry E. Brady, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Laurel Elms. 2002. "Who Bowls?: The (Un)Changing Stratification of Participation." In Understanding Public Opinion, ed. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, pp. 227, 299

disproportionately from those at the bottom of the SES hierarchy and, thus, has exacerbated the demographic bias of the electorate.[42] Moreover, no one suggests that the electorate is *less* stratified than was when turnout peaked most recently in 1960.

Studies that consider over time a broad range of activities beyond voting are extremely rare. The only study to encompass a variety of modes of political activity finds that the socio-economic bias in political participation fluctuated somewhat in the two decades separating the early 1970s and early 1990s, but was more or less the same at the end of the period as at the beginning.[43] Figure 6A shows the average amount of participation as measured by an additive scale of twelve political acts for five quintiles based on education and income. For every quintile, there is an overall decline in participation between 1973 and 1994. Figure 6A also makes clear the striking degree to which political activity is structured by SES. The five quintiles array themselves neatly in order with discernible differences between adjacent quintiles. The lines move more or less in tandem and never cross. Those at the highest level of SES are roughly five times more active than those at the bottom -- undertaking, on average, about 2.1 acts compared to 0.4 acts for the lowest quintile.

Figure 6B measures representational inequality by presenting a "representation ratio" – namely, the ratio of average participation by the top SES quintile to the average participation by the bottom SES quintile. A ratio of one indicates representational equality between the two quintiles (or any two groups). It is hardly surprising that the representation ratios presented in Figure 6B, which range between 4 and 7, show an ongoing pattern of participatory dominance by the highest-SES quintile. What is surprising, however, is the absence of any clear secular trend. Participatory inequality rises somewhat in the late 1970's, falls during the early 1980's and ends

the two-decade period almost exactly where it started. It might be argued that the recent increase in political activity by the elderly -- who do not command high levels of income or, especially education -- might obscure increased SES stratification among younger cohorts. However, when the elderly are eliminated from the analysis, the findings are unchanged.

These data suggest that we tread carefully before assuming that greater economic inequality implies commensurate increases in class-based inequalities in political participation. However, they leave many questions unanswered. Because the additive scale in Figure 6 combines numerous activities, it obscures developments with respect to particular forms of participation. Consider, for example, the domain of organizational involvement. Activity in voluntary associations is significant for political voice in two ways. First, regardless of whether the organizations in question take stands in politics, people who are active in membership associations are more likely to take part in politics because, through their organizational involvement, they develop politically useful civic skills and they are exposed to political cues and to requests for political participation.

Second, voluntary associations themselves are an important vehicle for the expression of political voice. Theda Skocpol's work demonstrates that recent decades have witnessed not only erosion but also transformation in this sphere.[44] The decline in membership in voluntary associations has not been uniform across different kinds of groups. Instead, organizations that traditionally enrolled working-class as well as middle-class members have fared especially badly: in the period between World War II and the late 1990's, the median decrease in membership for a group of twenty-one cross-class, chapter federations was 60 percent; the analogous figure for a group of seven elite professional societies was only 28 percent.

Furthermore, with the erosion of the share of workers enrolled in unions, the gap between the proportion of college-educated Americans who are members of a professional society and the proportion of non-college-educated Americans who are union members has grown substantially.[45] In addition, increasing numbers of professionally managed national organizations that require little of their members other than financial support draw their members very disproportionately from among the well-educated.[46] These developments have consequences for the experience of democratic governance and cultivation of democratic habits. However, we must add a cautionary note. As we shall soon see, we cannot extrapolate directly from changes in membership in voluntary associations to changes in political voice through organized interests. Many voluntary associations, even large ones, are not involved in politics. Moreover, the arena of organized interest politics includes not only voluntary associations of individuals but also organizations -- for example, trade associations -- that have organizations rather than individuals as members and institutions -- ranging from corporations to public interest law firms to hospitals -- that have no members in the ordinary sense. In short, not all membership groups are active in pressure politics and pressure politics involves many kinds of organizations and institutions that are not membership groups.

Another problem with drawing inferences about changing political voice from the data considered earlier is that evidence based on the enumeration of activities does not take into account how much people do when they take part. This concern is especially relevant when it comes to giving to campaigns and to other political causes. As we have discussed, political contributors, especially those who make large donations, are the least representative of the participant publics. Studies conclude that the social stratification of campaign contributors has

Table 3: Characteristics of Significant Presidential Donors

	1972	1988	2000
Education:			
High school or less	9%	6%	2%
Some college	16	15	14
College degree	24	22	28
Some graduate	16	11	11
Graduate/Professional	36	45	46
	101%	99%	101%
Income:			
Under $30,000–($123,213)	22%		
$30,000 to $49,999–($205,355)	22		
$50,000 to $99,999–($410,711)	31		
$100,000 and up–(over $410,711)	26		
	101%		
Under $50,000–($73,056)		18%	
$51,000 to $99,999–($146,112)		22	
$100,000 to $250,000–($365,282)		30	
Over $250,000–(over $365,282)		31	
		101%	
Under $100,000			14%
$100,000 to $249,999			42
$250,000 to $500,000			21
Over $500,000			23
			100%
Race:			
White	99%	95%	96%
African-American	1	2	2
Hispanic		na	2
Asian		1	1
Other		1	1
	100%	99%	102%
Sex:			
Male	83%	73%	70%
Female	17	27	30
	100%	100%	100%
Age:			
18-30	7%	5%	1%
31-45	24	30	17
46-60	48	35	43
61+	21	30	40
	100%	100%	101%

Source: Clyde Wilcox, "Individual Donors in the Presidential Nomination Process."

not changed in recent decades.[47] Although increasing levels of education and income and inflationary erosion of the value of the dollar imply that such comparisons are difficult to make, Table 3 shows a great deal of continuity in a variety of characteristics -- education, income, race, gender, and age -- of those who contributed more than $200 to a presidential candidate in three election years: 1972, 1988, and 2000.[48] What these figures cannot reveal, however, is that political contributions have become a more important component of the participatory mix over the period. It is well known that, even when measured in constant dollars, campaign giving has risen rapidly over the last generation at a time when other forms of political activity are declining. In particular, soft money donations, which until recently have not been subject to limits, have increased especially dramatically. Although there are no longitudinal data to assess the consequences of this configuration of circumstances, there is reason to suspect that the changing mix of modes of activity -- in particular, a participatory system in which large-scale campaign giving figures increasingly importantly -- exacerbates inequalities in participatory input.

At the same time there has been a change in the ideological composition of activist publics. Survey data confirm the impression gleaned from journalistic accounts, that citizen politics in America has become more polarized. One study finds that the decline in civic engagement has been especially pronounced within the large, and growing, sector of the public that describes its political views as moderate, thus producing a circumstance such that political activists are drawn disproportionately from the ranks of those at both ends of the political spectrum.[49]

Political Voice Through Organized Interests

Citizens in American democracy seek political voice not only individually but jointly -- through organized interests, political parties, and social movements. Collective political efforts raise the same kinds of questions about inequalities of political voice that we have been considering with respect to individual activity: Who is talking? How loudly? About what subjects? What are they saying?

Although the evidence for this proposition is not simply incomplete but impossible to gather, it is probably fair to say that, of the various forms of collective political voice, expressions of preference through organized interest activity are least likely to represent all citizens equally and that the economically advantaged speak especially loudly and clearly in organized interest politics.[50] Once again, while it is unambiguous that not all individuals -- and, consequently, not all points of view -- are equally well represented through organized interest politics, it is less clear whether those inequalities of political voice have been exacerbated during a period of marked increases in economic inequality among Americans.

Representation by Organized Interests

The set of organizations that represent Americans' political interests and preferences -- which, as we have discussed, is not coterminous with the vast set of voluntary associations that individuals can join -- is remarkable in its breadth and diversity. The 2001 Washington Representatives directory lists more than six hundred organizations just with names beginning with the word "American," among them:

American Automobile Association

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Airlines

American Civil Liberties Union

American Corn Growers Association

American Council of Korean Travel Agents

American Enterprise Institute

American Express

American Federation of Teachers

American Friends of the Czech Republic

American Frozen Food Institute

American Greyhound Track Operators Association

American Hiking Society

American Kennel Club

American Legion

American Muslim Council

American University

As indicated by this brief list, these organizations include membership groups with many, many members, groups with few members, and institutions -- most notably, corporations but also universities and think tanks -- that have no members in the ordinary sense; organizations based on how people earn a living, how they spend their leisure, and how they define themselves in religious or ethnic terms; organizations, especially corporations, that have billions in assets and others that live from hand to mouth; organizations with liberal views and organizations with

conservative views. In view of the stunning array of organizations that take part in American politics, it makes sense to ask: Is everyone represented? Is everyone represented equally?

To the extent that organizations have an impact on public policy (an issue dealt with later in this report), unequal representation by organizations may imply unequal influence upon policy. One well-designed study of controversies in four policy domains found it difficult (after taking many political factors into account) to predict which of the players will prevail in influencing policy, but reported that it is essential to be on the field of play.[51] Absence of representation is, obviously, especially detrimental at the critical phase before policy controversies emerge -- when the political agenda is being set.[52] In short, although we should not equate the organizational representation of an interest with political influence, representation is fundamental.

What Would Equal Representation by Organizations Look Like?

At the individual level it is possible to specify in the abstract what a representative sample of Americans would look like. It would contain proportionate numbers of individuals with particular characteristics: occupation, income, race, religion, gender, veteran status, health, immigrant status, attitudes on school prayer, taxes, and national health care, and so on. Questions of representativeness become much more complicated when we move from consideration of individuals to consideration of groups arrayed along a variety of dimensions of political cleavage and having radically different numbers of members -- and, sometimes, no members at all in the ordinary sense.[53]

With respect to the problem of how to measure equal voice in the domain of

organizational politics, how do we compare the relative political weight of AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons), which has 35 million members, and the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, which has 4,000? Or the American Furniture Manufacturers Association, which has companies as members, rather than individuals? Or American Airlines and American University, which are not membership groups at all? For that matter, when representation is by institutions like corporations or universities, whose concerns and preferences are being represented: the stockholders, managers, employees, or customers of a corporation? The administration, professors, staff, graduates, or students of a university?

Furthermore, beyond the obvious differences in numbers of members are differences in resources, especially money. Such disparities in resources are not proportional to the number of members, the number of politically relevant issues, or the intensity of political concerns. Budgetary resources are especially important because they can be converted into a wide variety of inputs into the policy making process: among them, such traditional lobbying activities as undertaking policy-related research, seeking to inform and persuade policymakers, drafting bills, testifying at hearings, issuing policy statements and reports, and the like; making campaign contributions; grassroots lobbying; and influencing public opinion through issue advertising, funding friendly authors and think tanks, and placing news and opinion pieces in the mass media. Moreover, organizations with deep pockets can spend more generously in hiring the talent to undertake these activities.

An additional complexity is that the set of organizations that take stands in politics is structured around multiple axes of cleavage. It is complicated enough to characterize political equality considering only the dimension around which the largest portion of organized interest

representation takes place, economic interests associated with making a living. It becomes even more so when the framework includes the many other dimensions around which interests are organized. In achieving equality of political voice, how much of the space should be occupied be organizations based on race? On sexual orientation? On attitudes towards capital punishment or policy in the Middle East? On hobbies?

What Does the Set of Organized Interests Actually Look Like?

For all the conceptual difficulties in specifying what political equality would look like when political input arises from organizations rather than from individuals, there is widespread agreement that whatever an unbiased set of organized interests would look like, it would not very closely resemble what we have ever had in the United States. In 1960, E.E. Schattschneider observed famously that "the flaw in the [organized interest] heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent."[54] Schattschneider argued that what he called the "pressure system" is biased in favor of groups representing the well off, especially business, and against groups representing broad public interests (or public goods) and the disadvantaged.

The essential outlines of Schattschneider's analysis of the pressure system still pertain today. The set of organized political interests continues to be organized principally around economic matters -- in particular, around the joint political concerns attendant to making a living -- and to be dominated by business and the professions. As we shall see, significant changes in the representation of broad public interests have taken place over the past generation or two. Still, the proportion of people who take part in an organization seeking public goods like safer streets or safer consumer products, cleaner water or cleaner government, enhanced domestic

security or reduced domestic violence is far smaller than the proportion that would benefit from those conditions. This brief list of public goods sought by interest organizations should make clear that these broad public interests are not inevitably liberal. In many cases, opposing conceptions of the public interest compete with each other. A liberal vision of the public interest -- involving, say, wilderness preservation or consumer product safety -- may vie with a conservative one (say, economic growth or low prices). These competing visions do not necessarily always balance out. In particular, advocates of conservative public interests are more likely to find themselves on the same side of a policy controversy as an intense private interest (for example, a corporation or trade association representing real estate developers or the manufacturers of infant car seats) than are liberal ones.

Moreover, the economically disadvantaged continue to be underrepresented in pressure politics. Organizations of the poor themselves are extremely rare, if not nonexistent, and organizations that advocate on behalf of the poor are relatively scarce.[55] Furthermore, as Jeffrey Berry points out, the health and human service nonprofits that have as clients "constituencies that are too poor, unskilled, ignorant, incapacitated, or overwhelmed with their problems to organize on their own" are constrained by the 501c3 provisions in the tax code from undertaking significant lobbying.[56] However, in an era when economic gains have flowed very disproportionately to those at the top, it is not simply the poor whose economic interests receive little direct representation. If they are not members of a labor union, those who work in occupations having modest pay, benefits, and status are very unlikely to have direct organizational representation in politics. Furthermore, the economic interests of many other groups that are not economically privileged -- for example, students, holders of company

pensions, working people without health care benefits, women at home -- receive little direct organizational representation.

We should, however, note an important qualification to the generalization that the organized interest community is biased in favor of the well-off, especially business, at the expense of the economically disadvantaged and broad publics. When it comes to the sets of groups that coalesce around non-economic axes of cleavage -- for example, race, ethnicity, age, or gender -- it is not the dominant groups in society that receive the lion's share of explicit organizational representation. Numerous groups represent the interests of, for example, women, the elderly, Muslims, Asian Americans, or African Americans and few, if any, are explicitly organized around in the interests of men, the middle aged, or WASPs. Still, for all their numbers, such groups constitute only a small fraction of the universe of organized interests. Furthermore, the interests of middle-aged, White men are surely well represented in the mainstream economic organizations -- corporations, business associations, professional associations, and unions -- that form the bulk of the organized interest community. When it comes to economic issues, the bias of organized interests toward the well-off seems quite clear.

Changing Organized Interest Representation

At the same time that there has been continuity, the organized interest community has also changed in important ways in the decades since Schattschneider warned about "bias." First, even though, on average, individual membership in voluntary associations has diminished, the pressure community has grown substantially. Many new political organizations have come into being -- not all of them, by any means, membership associations -- and many existing

organizations that were hitherto outside of politics have come to take part in politics. With this growth in the number of politically active organizations has come the representation of groups and interests -- for example, gays and the disabled -- not previously included in organized interest politics and enhanced representation for many others such as African Americans and women.[57] This circumstance may reflect the fact that social movements in the U.S. often leave organizations in their wake. In contrast to protest politics in other democracies, American social movements are likely to generate an organizational legacy.

Moreover, the bias against groups representing broad public interests has almost certainly been ameliorated. Organizations that advocate on behalf of such public goods as environmental preservation, national security, safe streets, durable consumer products, clean government, or low taxes have increased in numbers and in resources. The presence of all these new organizations in national politics -- the result, in part, of infusions of initial resources from foundations and other patrons -- might be seen as reducing the political inequalities in the set of organized interests active in politics.[58]

At the same time, several developments would have the opposite effect, shoring up the dominance of organizations traditionally well-represented in organized interest politics. At least in part in reaction to the explosion in the number of consumer and environmental groups that became active in national politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, previously apolitical corporations and professional associations began a massive mobilization into politics. Beginning in the late 1970s large numbers of existing corporations and professional associations augmented their political efforts, often by establishing an independent office in Washington rather than relying on trade associations and lobbyists-for-hire to manage their political affairs.

Furthermore, after a union-backed measure in the 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act preserved political action committees (PACs) as part of the campaign finance system, the Federal Election Commission issued an advisory opinion in the 1975 Sun Oil case that permitted corporations to use corporate funds to set up and administer PACs and to solicit voluntary contributions from managers and stockholders. Since then, there has been sharp growth in the number of PACs associated with corporations and professional associations and in the number of dollars flowing through them. Since the elections of 1994 that ended Democratic control of Congress and, therefore, the right to chair committees and subcommittees, business-related PACs have increasingly focused their giving on Republicans. (There was no longer a strong incentive to channel some funds to Democrats in strategic positions of congressional power.)

While business interests have gained new antagonists -- as well, of course, as new allies -- in the public interest community, their traditional adversary (organized labor) has become progressively weaker, both politically and economically, over the past half century, a development with significant consequences for the political representation of the interests of less affluent Americans.[59] In contrast to the substantial growth in the numbers of politically active organizations of various kinds -- ranging from corporations to environmental groups to civil rights groups -- the number of labor unions has remained relatively stable. The attrition in the power of labor unions, which were traditionally part of the coalition backing egalitarian social programs, has been particularly pronounced in the years since the late 1970s. The proportion of the work force that is now unionized, 13.5 percent, is roughly half what it was in 1970. The erosion in union membership has come entirely from the ranks of private-sector workers.

Currently, only 9 percent of workers in the private sector are union members.[60]

The implications of the weakening of labor unions are thrown into relief when we note that, while the membership associations, public interest law firms, and think tanks that represent diffuse public interests in politics broaden the perspectives brought to political contestation, they do not broaden the socio-economic base of citizen politics. Even when they provide political opposition to the business interests that have traditionally been so powerful in pressure politics -- and they frequently do not -- these public interest organizations tend to be staffed and supported by the well-educated and privileged and, thus, do not diminish class-based inequalities in political voice.

Some scholars have made an interesting, but controversial, argument about another change in pressure politics that has potential implications for policies affecting social and economic equality. According to this line of reasoning, certain segments of the business community played an active part in shaping key social welfare policies under the New Deal and provided support crucial to overcoming the bias intrinsic to a business-dominated interest group system.[61] Perhaps in response to heightened international economic competition, by the end of the 1970s, the bulk of formerly liberal businesses and investors had turned sharply against the tax and regulatory policies needed for social programs. Since then, according to this argument, American businesses have constituted a much more consistently conservative voice in American politics.[62] Such a transformation in the political aims of some businesses might help to explain the failure of the United States, in contrast to other advanced industrial democracies, to enact public policies to ameliorate the recent rise in economic inequality.

Thus, recent decades have witnessed a series of opposing processes -- some of which

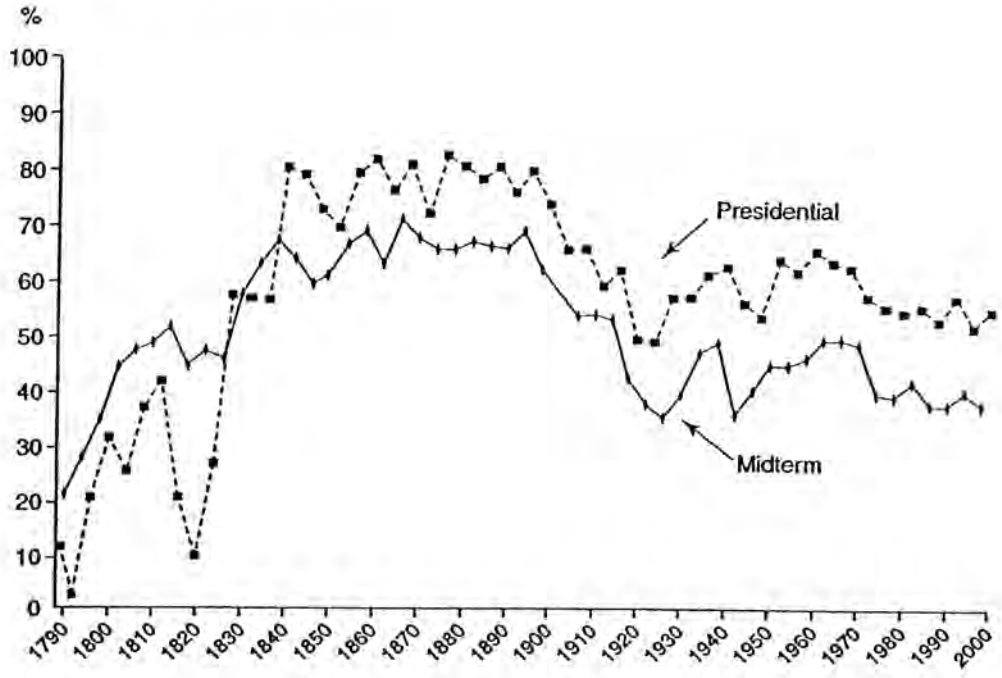
have reinforced the political voice of interests traditionally well-represented in organized interests politics and some of which have strengthened less traditional interests. On the one hand, many relatively marginal groups -- including racial and ethnic minorities, women, gays, and the disabled -- have become organized, and business has new antagonists (and allies) among public interest groups. On the other, labor unions have grown substantially weaker, and the economically disadvantaged have been left behind in the explosion of organized interest representation. The bottom line would be extremely difficult to calculate. Whether these contradictory trends have had an impact in either direction on the inequalities that have long characterized organized interest politics may be impossible to measure. What is clear is that, in this realm of citizen politics, substantial inequalities of political voice remain.

Political Parties and Political Voice

No account of political voice in a democracy can neglect the role of political parties. Political parties serve to shape political voice in two ways. First, in seeking support for the candidates for political office running under their banner, parties mobilize citizens to vote or otherwise to get involved in politics, especially by giving time or money to electoral campaigns. In addition, they present party programs that appeal to contrasting coalitions of citizens. Thus, in democracies around the world political parties play a crucial role in influencing not only whose voices are heard but also what is said. Related to our concern with equality of political voice, parties are widely agreed to be a vehicle for the political organization of the disadvantaged. Where there are strong working class, peasant, or social-democratic parties, the class-based needs of the economically disadvantaged are more likely to be well represented.[63]

Figure 7: Turnout in American Elections: 1790-2000

Note: These are percentages voting for president and for the office with the highest vote in midterm elections.



Source: Marjorie Randon Hershey and Paul Allen Beck, Party Politics in America (10th edition, New York: Longman, 2003), p. 143.

Generating Political Equality by Mobilizing Disadvantaged Citizens

One of the most important functions of a party is to bring citizens into politics -- as voters and as party supporters. In this way, political parties influence political voice in a democracy through their influence on who makes noise.

Mobilized Citizens: A Golden Age?

The American political parties were once more potent in mobilizing voters. As shown in Figure 7, during the 19th century, voting turnout was high -- well above current levels and quite similar to turnout rates in other democracies today.[64] Much of the reason for the high turnout was the role played by political parties. Electoral politics represented a form of mass entertainment with party rallies and political spectacles that appealed to citizens across the social spectrum.[65] After the Civil War, citizens identified closely with the Democratic or Republican parties. Presidential elections were hotly contested partisan conflicts. Each party had an identifiable support base and each turned out its supporters on Election Day. The party system, thus, produced a high level of activity. In addition, although we do not have the kind of information we would now use, much higher levels of turnout, of necessity, produce a less unequal electorate. The party support bases included poorer workers and farmers. Political machines in many urban areas were particularly active and effective in mobilizing new immigrants and the urban working class.

In most textbooks, this era is described as a Golden Age of citizen engagement. As a Golden Age of *equal* citizen engagement, however, the story is much more complicated.

Although those who celebrate the political achievements of this era admit the problem of serious political corruption,[66] they are less likely to dwell on -- or even to mention -- the ways that the eligible electorate from whom the parties mobilized support so fully was a very limited electorate that contained White, adult males only and encompassed perhaps 40 percent of those who would be eligible today. The political parties were never in the vanguard of efforts to enfranchise the single largest group of citizens who lacked the right to vote (women), and urban party organizations actually opposed suffrage for women.[67] Furthermore, this was a period of constriction of the eligible electorate, most importantly through the Jim Crow disenfranchisement of Blacks in the South. Even with respect to the political incorporation of immigrants, it is by no means clear that the political parties -- in this case, the Democratic Party, which played the dominant role in mobilizing the urban immigrants -- represented all immigrant groups equally well. The urban machines were often dominated by Irish politicians who mobilized and provided benefits for their fellow Irish in the electorate rather than all such groups.[68]

One additional qualification must be added to the depiction of the era as the Golden Age of citizen engagement with politics. Participation is the means of communicating the needs and preferences of citizens and inducing the government to respond. Political involvement that is inspired solely by selective benefits -- whether material benefits like jobs or a Christmas turkey or intangible ones like the fun of being part of the spectacle -- may not lead to government programs and policies that benefit the poor. Persistent agrarian and labor discontent in the late 19th century would suggest that the mass political parties were more effective at bringing the disadvantaged into electoral politics than in creating policies to meet their needs.

Demobilized Citizens: The Progressive Era

After 1896, voter turnout fell off significantly. The source of this sharp decline in turnout can be found, at least in part, in the reduced role of parties as political mobilizers. There are two competing, but not incompatible, explanations for this development. First, progressive reformers, concerned about party machines and corruption, introduced a variety of measures such as registration laws and the Australian ballot that limited the ability of parties to dominate elections.[69] Civil service reform removed one of the major selective incentives (jobs) that party machines used to mobilize voters and activists. Second, the party alignment that emerged from the election of 1896 left large geographical areas of one-party supremacy.[70] When one party dominates, local electoral outcomes are foreordained, and the parties have little incentive ensure that voters get to the polls and the voters have little incentive to go. The result of these changes in the American party system was a reduction in voting in general and a special demobilization of the poorer parts of the citizenry.

The Recent Demobilization of Citizens

After rebounding somewhat during the New Deal, voting turnout has eroded fairly steadily since the 1960s, a development that has generated a great deal of attention among observers of American politics and society. In fact, the widely noted decrease in turnout is a complex phenomenon. Although turnout did decline during the 1960s, since 1972 the apparent decline results -- partially, if not fully -- from the increase in the proportion of the voting age population (VAP) that is disqualified from voting by virtue of incarceration or lack of

citizenship.[71] That turnout in presidential elections has fallen rather than risen since the 1960s is somewhat surprising. For a variety of reasons, we might have expected turnout to increase. First, African-Americans in the South -- included in the age-eligible population, but not permitted to vote -- have been brought into the electorate. In addition, the population has become more educated. Furthermore, legal changes including the easing of residency requirements and provisions making it easier to register and to acquire an absentee ballot were designed to raise turnout. One factor that has operated in a contrary direction and may have contributed to downward pressure on turnout is the erosion in union power and in the share of American workers who are union members.[72]

Our political parties are in many ways enjoying a period of revitalization: party voting in Congress has risen over the past two decades, and the parties are more ideologically coherent at both the elite and the mass level. Still, an important part of the explanation for the erosion in electoral turnout one is the weakened role of the political parties as vote mobilizers. Efforts by party workers to contact potential voters to urge them to vote have declined.[73] Campaigns are increasingly run by professionals rather than party activists.[74] Using poll data, campaign consultants have the technological wherewithal to target carefully selected small groups of citizens with targeted messages that seek to raise money or to activate voters to turn out.[75]

The weakness of parties as mass institutions results in greater stratification of the activists who get involved in elections as campaign workers and contributors. Those who ask others to take part in political campaigns act as "rational prospectors" recruiting from among those who have the resources to make a substantial contribution of time, effort, or money and who are likely to say yes if asked. In particular, they will ask people who have demonstrated those attributes by

Table 4: Party Mobilization for Political Activity: Who is Asked?

Average Family Income of:

All Respondents $40,300

	Republican	Democratic
Party identifiers	$45,400	$36,900
Regular voters	$48,000	$38,500
Those asked to work in a campaign by a fellow partisan	$51,700	$49,800
Those asked to contribute to a campaign by a fellow partisan	$56,700	$54,700

Source: Citizen Partipation Study

having taken part in the past.[76]

As shown in Table 4, the result of these processes of targeted recruitment is to exacerbate the bias of the electoral process toward the more advantaged citizens rather than to correct it. The two parties differ in their support bases: in terms of average family income, Democratic identifiers and voters are substantially less affluent than their Republican counterparts. However, when party activists, whether Republican or Democratic, seek campaign workers and campaign contributors, they search among the more affluent members of their support bases. The Democratic identifiers and voters may be different from their Republican counterparts, but the economic profiles of those asked by a fellow partisan to get involved in a campaign -- or, especially, to make a campaign donation -- are much more similar.

The search for political money by both political parties has turned upside down the role of electoral politics as entertainment. In the 19th century, the rallies and parades stimulated political interest and activity among Americans of all classes -- perhaps disproportionately among the poorer members of society for whom political spectacle was one of the few forms of entertainment available and for whom the selective benefits that parties provided were particularly valuable. Today, the entertainment is likely to be a cocktail party fund raiser where attendees drawn from the more affluent end of the economic spectrum are treated to white wine and brie and the appearance of a political celebrity. At the same time, in a media-saturated society, mass political communications no longer stimulate political engagement among ordinary citizens. In fact, when they take the form of negative advertising and negative television coverage, they may depress political involvement.[77]

Parties, Voter Coalitions, and Political Programs: Whom Do Parties Represent?

Parties shape political voice not only by mobilizing citizens to take part in politics but also by presenting alternatives as they compete for voters in order to win elections. This competition leads them to support policies that will garner the needed votes. From the perspective of equal political voice we are led to ask: From what coalition of supporters will each party seek support? And what policies does each party -- or its candidates -- espouse as a way of attracting a winning coalition? In other words: whom does each party represent?

A leading theory of party competition argues that both parties will try to satisfy the median voter -- that is, the voter in the dead center of the political issue space whose vote might go either way. By this logic, the tweedledum and tweedledee parties would offer little or no choice to the public, a circumstance that would not necessarily favor the advantaged over the disadvantaged. Rather it would be equally unfavorable to the truly advantaged and to the truly disadvantaged -- both of whom are far from the median voter.[78]

Consistent with the logic of the median voter, both parties do court the moderate middle. However, there is more to the story. In order for candidates to succeed in primaries and to field increasingly expensive campaigns, they need to attract the support of partisan primary electorates and the party activists who work in and fund campaigns. In each of the parties, the median campaign worker -- and, especially, the median contributor -- is more affluent than the median voter, a circumstance that works against the representation of the disadvantaged by either of the parties. Seeking to satisfy the median contributor or activist also pushes the parties apart ideologically: although similar in their affluence, Democratic and Republican party activists differ substantially in their preferences on a variety of policy matters, including economic

policies with special consequences for disadvantaged groups.[79] In this way, the needs of groups that exercise less voice on their own might gain attention.

Beyond the New Deal Alignment

The New Deal alignment of the 1930's organized class interests into politics in a way not seen before or since, and the 1936 election was the high water mark of class polarization in voting. Except in the Solid Democratic South, where virtually all Whites supported the Democrats and Blacks were without representation by either party, poorer, working-class citizens lined up with the Democrats and more affluent citizens with the Republicans. Foreshadowed by the Dixiecrat rebellion of 1948, a series of changes beginning in the 1960s have altered the coalitions underlying the parties and the issue basis on which they compete:[80]

- New groups have entered the electorate. Southern Blacks, once effectively barred from the polling booth became part of the active electorate after the civil rights reforms of the 1960's. Immigrants (especially Latinos), who are disproportionately concentrated in large, competitive states have grown in number and in political significance.

- Members of the electorate are less likely to identify with one of the parties.[81]

- In certain respects the parties have become more demographically distinguishable. Blacks have become almost uniformly Democratic, a change that took place in the 1960's when the Democrats became the party of civil rights.[82] In addition, a much smaller, but quite durable, gender gap has emerged with men more favorable to the Republicans and

women more favorable to the Democrats. And, lastly, although the parties are less distinctive than they once were in terms of religious denomination, partisans -- especially White partisans -- have become increasingly divided by church attendance since the late 1970s, with those who are more religiously active supporting the Republicans.

- In spite of these developments, the overall trend is that the parties have become less distinct in demographic terms. Southern Whites -- especially Southern White men -- have increasingly left the Democratic Party. And two traditionally Democratic groups, Catholics and blue-collar Whites, more closely resemble the entire electorate in their partisan preferences and vote choices.

- In contrast to the tendency for the parties to be less distinguishable demographically, Democratic and Republican supporters have diverged ideologically.

- A crucial development is the introduction of new issues -- for example, environmental preservation, affirmative action, abortion, and identity politics of various kinds -- as fodder for partisan competition. While the parties continue -- as they have since the New Deal -- to differ on economic issues, partisan differences on these social issues have emerged only much more recently.[83]

The Social Class Basis of Party Conflict

While students of American politics would be likely to agree with the preceding

description of how the parties have changed since the 1930s, there would be less consensus about the extent to which the parties continue either to organize voters on the basis of social class or to offer contrasting policy proposals on class-relevant economic issues. As party coalitions and partisan competition has evolved, how has the relationship of class to party changed?

Class differences in party coalitions remain. Surveys of voters, including the data already presented in Table 4, invariably show a relationship between income and party choice with the affluent preferring the Republicans and the less well heeled the Democrats. Moreover, Republican and Democratic partisans differ more substantially in their opinions on economic and welfare issues than in their opinions on cultural and foreign policy issues.[84] In the nation as a whole, there also seems to be some tendency for increasing class division between the parties. In particular, the parties in the South have become more class-based than at the time of the New Deal when all White southerners were Democrats.[85]

Moreover, the parties do continue to offer contrasting programs on economic issues that meet the differing needs of their partially class-based constituencies. They differ regularly on such matters as taxation, social welfare programs, and economic regulation. However, even as far back as the 1950s, the Democrats backed away from the populist economic rhetoric -- with its denunciations of the "interests" and the "rich" -- they had used during the Roosevelt and Truman years.[86] More recently, in their attempt to attract a majority of voters, Republicans have broadened their economic appeal by stressing tax cutting and economic performance -- policies presented as serving all Americans -- and some Democrats have sought to pursue more moderate economic policies that appeal to a broader middle class. Although the extent of the movement can be overstated, the economic agenda does seem to have shifted to the right.[87] With respect to

a concern about how the parties influence inequalities of political voice, what is the implication of recent economic stands of Democrats on such issues as budget balancing, low interest rates, and welfare reform, as well as the adoption of new issues like the environment? Do the Democratic Party's positions reflect strategic retreats to avoid permanent minority status in the face of economic and societal changes? Or, has the Party's drifting from their traditional economic base made them strategically vulnerable?

In an era when the role of the parties as mass organizations has become attenuated, one development is clear, however. Elite issue activists in both parties have gained ascendance at the expense of traditional party activists.[88] Long-term changes in American politics -- from the development of the civil service to public sector unionization to welfare state entitlements -- have deprived traditional party organizations of the selective material benefits that generated support among ordinary citizens.[89] These long-term developments are reinforced by more recent institutional changes -- including, for example, a primary-dominated presidential nominating process, sunshine laws that open up meetings, expanded rules of standing in the courts, increased use of ballot propositions -- that have had the effect of opening up the political process to constituencies with intense issue preferences that operate increasingly within the parties as well as within interest groups and local politics. These activists have brought new attributes to the stratum of the middle management of party leadership. Among the Democrats at least, they are more affluent and better educated.[90] Furthermore, in both parties, they have made politics more issue-based and less moderate. And their issue concerns are new ones that do not fit easily into the contours of a New Deal party alignment anchored in competition over economic issues. Still, these party activists continue to differ over, among other things, the economic issues that have

divided the parties since the 1930s.[91] What is, once again, less clear is the extent to which a party politics based on the multiple issue concerns of upper-status issue activists has compromised the capacity of the parties to bring about greater equality of political voice.[92]

The Equalizing Influence of Social Movements[93]

Social movements provide an important vehicle -- sometimes the only vehicle -- for the mobilization of citizens previously outside politics and the collective expression of non-mainstream opinions.[94] From the outset, protest has enjoyed a central position in the American mythology. The Boston Tea Party figures importantly in our narratives of the Revolution, Shays' Rebellion in our narratives of the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation. More recently, during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, politically disenfranchised southern Blacks engaged in direct action campaigns in order to secure basic rights, including the right to vote. Movement participants took to the streets because conventional channels of political participation were closed to them. Indeed, a chief purpose of the movement was to pry these channels open.[95]

Social movements bring into politics previously ignored points of view. They may also bring into politics relatively resource-poor groups that use movement activities to attract third party support[96] or to influence the policy-making process through disruptive collective action.[97] For groups whose social and economic disempowerment tends to restrict their conventional political access, then, a social movement can serve as an alternative means for gaining and expressing political voice, thereby potentially mitigating the impact of inequality upon democratic participation. Just as we could not specify what political equality would look like

with respect to representation through organized interests, it is impossible to define some universe of potential social movements to which the set of actual movements could be compared in order to determine whether it is representative. Earlier we saw that data about individual participation show that taking part in protests, marches or demonstrations is stratified by SES -- a finding that might have been different had the survey been conducted in the mid-1960s rather than in 1990. Even without being able to specify some measure of political skew, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that the domain of social movement activity is characterized by a lesser degree of inequality of political voice than the other realms of citizen activity we have discussed.

The boundaries between social movement activity and rioting, on the one hand, and between social movement activity and conventional politics, on the other, are notably blurry. Was the Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 a politically motivated rebellion or a riotous spree of criminal behavior? What about the rioting by Whites in opposition to James Meredith's attempt to matriculate at the University of Mississippi in 1962? With respect to more conventional modes of activity, just about all movements combine conventional and extra-conventional resources and tactics in pursuit of their goals.[98] For example, the story of the civil rights movement in the American South includes lunchroom sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the Montgomery bus boycott, the march on Selma, *and* the legal test cases filed by the NAACP. A hallmark of successful social movements in the United States is that they almost inevitably produce advocacy organizations -- for example, the National Organization for Women or the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund -- that behave like other organized interests and gain semi-insider status in Washington. Social movements may also find

themselves welcomed, or co-opted, by one of the major political parties. In fact, many of the changes in the party coalitions discussed earlier represent the incorporation of a social movement into a political party -- for example, the pro-choice movement into the Democrats and the Christian Right into the Republicans. In addition, collective political efforts that entail substantial grassroots organizing and activity (such as anti-smoking campaigns) may rely solely on conventional forms of participation such as petition drives without necessarily involving protest activity. Each of these examples illustrates the permeability of the borders between social movement and other forms of activity.

Equalizing Political Voice through Social Movements: Possibilities and Limits

Of the various forms of citizen involvement we have reviewed in this memo, social movements are the most likely to mobilize those who have been outside of politics by dint of resource deprivation. Many of the most prominent social movements in U.S. history have been undertaken by groups suffering some sort of social, economic, or political disadvantage relative to the majority. Among them are the labor movement, the welfare rights movement, the women's movement and American Indian Movement. However, we must qualify in important ways the observation that social movements can serve as a means through which the socially and economically disadvantaged achieve political voice. To begin with, there is in the United States a long tradition of middle-class protest movements. The nineteenth century abolition and temperance movements, the peace movement of the 1960s, and the contemporary environmental and animal rights movements are examples of movements that involved oppositional activism on behalf of initially overlooked or unpopular ideas by foot soldiers drawn from the middle class.

While the individual supporters of each of these movements were not socially or economically disadvantaged, they were, collectively, politically disadvantaged compared with their extremely well-organized and resource-rich adversaries both inside and outside the government.

Furthermore, even when a movement mobilizes a disadvantaged group, it usually consists of groups who are not worst off in absolute terms but rather have some stake in the political and economic system who undertake movement activities. Resource mobilization theorists have argued convincingly that certain basic resources -- for example, organizational networks, leadership capacity, and access to some financial backing -- are required in order to launch and sustain a movement.[99] The leadership of the contemporary African-American reparations movement, for instance, consists of individuals who have substantial resources: among the players are lawyers, elected officials, business executives, and academics. Lacking a stake in the system, a sense that they can make a difference, and the skills and resources that facilitate political participation, the worst-off in disadvantaged groups usually do not join social movements. They may, however, engage in other forms of spontaneous collective actions such as the urban civil disturbances during the 1960s. Thus, even though social movements serve as vehicles for those who lack conventional political resources, participation in them is characterized by the same kinds of stratification that we have seen in other forms of political activity.

A corollary to this observation is that the internal dynamics of social movements often mirror power relations in the larger society. For example, in the student movements of the left during the 1960s, women resented the dominance of men who occupied the leadership positions. Within the civil rights movement, Black members of SNCC chafed under the leadership of

White counterparts while Black women fought against sexual stereotyping from both Black and White men. During the Asian-American movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Filipino Americans complained that the movement was being run by the numerically dominant Chinese and Japanese Americans, who presumed, inappropriately, to speak for all Asian Americans. Although social movements often challenge the status quo from the vantage point of disadvantaged groups, they inevitably favor some voices within these groups over others.[100]

Although there is a long-standing tradition of social movement activism on the left in the United States and elsewhere, we should note that the causes on behalf of which social movements advocate span the ideological spectrum. In fact, a number of important recent social movements -- including the pro-life movement, the Christian right, and the militia movement -- are on the right, not the left. Like many of their progressive counterparts, they mobilize alienated non-elites to activity in contentious politics and face entrenched adversaries.

Social Movements in Action: Changing Policy -- Changing Hearts and Minds

Social movements seek to realize their objectives by a variety of means not only by influencing public policy but also by changing private behaviors, by challenging accepted cultural understandings, and by transforming the lives of their adherents.[101] Indeed, social movements are one of the few arenas in which citizens articulate alternative collective visions of what society should look like and aim the discussion not just at policymakers but at the general public as well. Because significant aspects of the relations between the sexes lie deep in private life beyond the reach of the state, and because gender roles have deep cultural resonance in societies throughout history and around the world, such non-policy-related approaches figured

importantly in the early days of the revival of the women's movement. In addition to strategic efforts to have an impact on specific policies, the women's movement -- especially its radical wing -- focused on consciousness-raising and sought to win over the hearts and minds of the members of the public, transform their values, and alter their lifestyles.[102] Black nationalists within the Black Power movement of the 1960s and early 1970s movement nurtured an oppositional racial consciousness within the Black community and advocated either gaining some form of autonomy -- whether economic, political, or territorial -- from American society or transforming it altogether through revolution.[103]

Even when a movement seeks policy influence, symbolic goals may be as important as material demands. For example, in seeking concrete policy changes, reparations movements focus on achieving symbolic redress for historical wrongs. The Native American and Native Hawaiian sovereignty movements, the Japanese American redress movement, and the African American reparations movement all include demands for the redistribution of assets like land or money but go beyond this agenda to call upon the state to acknowledge the illegitimacy of its past actions and to right historical wrongs.[104]

Social movements also influence the people who participate in them. Activists come to see themselves as effective political actors: they interpret their experiences in political terms and politicize their actions both in movement contexts and in everyday life. Civil rights veterans of the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro have noted what it meant to them personally to have taken responsibility for changing the segregated South. It transformed their sense of identity and, thus, changed their lives forever.[105] People who participate in movements step into history as active agents, not simply as passive spectators, and this transformation is not easily reversible.

In the process of collective action, movement participants forge new identities that carry on beyond the scope of a particular campaign or movement.

The multiple seemingly extra-political ways that social movements operate do, however, have a variety of consequences for politics, conventionally understood. When hearts and minds are changed in the course of cultural transformation, previously non-political issues may be politicized and policymakers may construe social conflicts in new ways. The process of forming new identities may create new constituencies for explicitly political advocacy. Movement activity, even on behalf of non-political objectives, can create skills and cultivate self-confidence that may easily be transported to political settings. In short, even when they do not focus on having an impact on public outcomes, social movements have secondary effects with potential for ameliorating inequalities of political voice.

Social Movements in an Era of Increasing Economic Inequality

In our examination of various realms of citizen activity, we have asked repeatedly whether there has been an increase in political inequality corresponding to the recent increase in economic inequality. When it comes to social movements, we have not been inclined to ask about the extent of political inequality in this realm of citizen politics. Instead, we have inquired about the extent to which social movement activity compensates for other political inequalities.

Social movement activity in the U.S. has been cyclical, peaking most recently in the decades between the 1950s and the 1970s. Although our mass politics are currently less contentious than they were a generation or two ago, a variety social movements are making themselves heard. Some of them -- for example, the animal rights movement -- do not have an

obvious place on a traditional left-right continuum. Others such as the anti-globalization protests against the WTO and the scattered demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq have affinities with the left. Arguably, the energy in social movement politics seems concentrated disproportionately on the opposite end of the political spectrum in such conservative movements as the pro-life and Christian conservative movements -- movements that draw from groups that are not privileged.

However the net ideological pitch of political expressions emanating from social movements is evaluated, one conclusion seems inescapable. An era when the fruits of prosperity accrue so disproportionately to those at the top of the economic hierarchy has not spawned a social movement on behalf of the economically disadvantaged. The kind of class-based oppositional politics once associated with the labor movement has not materialized in response to increasing economic inequality.

Crossing the Digital Divide: The Internet and Political Equality

What are the implications for political equality of the revolutionary changes in communications and information acquisition produced by the Internet? In spite of early predictions about the capacity of the Internet to broaden the base of citizen politics, it has become apparent that Internet use is highly stratified -- a phenomenon sufficiently pervasive as to acquire a descriptive moniker, the "digital divide."[106] Although computer use and Web access are increasingly widespread, they are not universal in America and are structured in by-now-familiar patterns. Inequalities in Internet access are not simply a function of the uneven distribution of computer skills or the inability to afford an Internet connection. Rather they are

rooted in the patterns of social stratification that structure so much of what we have already discussed. Internet use does not stand apart from other forms of information acquisition; instead, it correlates strongly with exposure to traditional media, including newspapers. Moreover, the demographic attributes associated with Internet use are familiar as correlates of political participation. The well-educated, the affluent, and non-Hispanic Whites are much more likely to be linked to the Web.[107] Although patterns of computer use and Web access replicate the racial, ethnic, and socio-economic stratification we have seen for political activity, they are, in one important respect, very different: the young are much more likely to be Web-connected than are their elders. Presumably, the aging of this wired generation, and its successors, will speed the diffusion of these technological innovations. What is less clear is the extent to which the racial and SES stratification in Internet use that characterizes the population as a whole obtains for the younger generation.

The implications of Internet-based political mobilizations for equality of political voice are analogous to those of the middle-class social movements discussed earlier: they involve new issues and new ideas but not new kinds of people. Thus, the experience so far is that the Internet is not overcoming the social stratification of political participation. Indeed, the Internet may simply "activate the active"[108] and, thus, widen the disparity between participants and the politically disengaged by making it easier for the already interested to gain political information and to make political connections. Furthermore, the utility of the Internet in raising political money -- the form of participation that is most highly stratified -- raises an additional concern about whether cyber-politics will promote political equality.

In addition, it is not clear whether the internet will channel Americans into or away from

politics. As more Americans come to the Internet, will they use its capacities to keep current with political developments, to acquire political information, to engage in political discussion, and to become politically connected, or will their online activity be confined to e-mailing friends, planning vacations, and going shopping? Internet use need not be political in content.

In short, conclusions about the meaning of the Internet for inequalities of political voice are premature, but there is reason for caution.

Conclusion

In the course of our discussion of inequalities of political voice, certain themes have emerged repeatedly. Most importantly, the level of political inequality in America is quite high. The expression of political voice is distinctly stratified by social class. Those with high levels of income, occupational status and, especially, education are much more likely to be politically articulate -- with unambiguous implications for what policymakers hear. The socio-economic bias in citizen politics implies as well that the concerns of members of disadvantaged groups -- for example, racial and ethnic minorities, women, immigrants, and lower-income groups -- are systematically less likely to make themselves heard. Once again, there are clear consequences for the sorts of messages conveyed to policymakers. The various domains of citizen politics differ in the extent to which the group of activists -- and the messages they send -- are unrepresentative. Social movement politics has the clearest capacity to bring into politics previously quiescent publics and hitherto ignored points of view. In the realm of conventional politics, party politics functions more effectively in this way than does organized interest politics. Still, all forms of citizen participation -- including the alleged weapon of the weak

(social movements and protests) -- are characterized by some degree of socio-economic bias.

What is more ambiguous is whether these political inequalities have become more pronounced in an era of increasing economic inequality. In fact, rising levels of popular education might have been expected to yield reduced levels of political inequality, a circumstance that has surely not materialized. In no aspect of the multi-faceted phenomenon of political voice have inequalities been ameliorated in recent decades.

Whether political voice has become even more unrepresentative is a question to which the answer seems to depend upon the realm of citizen politics under scrutiny. With respect to voting, the evidence is unclear and scholars differ in their assessments, but there may well be some aggravation of political inequality. When it comes to organized interest activity, it is difficult to specify what a level playing field would look like, and adequate data about the changes over the past few decades do not exist. Among the contradictory trends are, on the one hand, the overall increase in the number of organized interests and enhanced advocacy on behalf of a number of underrepresented interests -- for example, racial and ethnic minorities, women, gays, the disabled, and such public goods as environmental preservation and lower taxes. On the other hand, advocacy on behalf of the economically disadvantaged has not been correspondingly expanded. When coupled with the weakening of the labor unions, the organized representation of the economic needs of the less well-off has suffered in relative terms.

In terms of various kinds of individual activity, a study using an additive scale of numerous kinds of political participation found fluctuations in the stratification of political activity over a twenty-year period but no net change from the beginning of the period to the end.

However, the increasing dominance of political giving -- a form of activity that permits

the affluent to achieve disproportionate political voice -- among the modes of citizen involvement would seem to have the consequence of aggravating inequalities of political voice. In short, while there is no evidence that inequalities of political voice have been reduced in recent decades, there is variation across domains of political involvement with respect to whether those inequalities have been exacerbated.

In contrast to the uncertainty with respect to any overall change in the level of socio-economic stratification of political inputs, there is a consistent trend towards the overrepresentation of extreme viewpoints at the expense of moderate opinions. This trend was noted in various domains of citizen politics including political party leadership and overall political participation. Thus, even if we cannot conclude that expressions of political voice have in the last generation become even more stacked against the disadvantaged, we can say that they have become more ideologically polarized.

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Endnotes

[1] A discussion of these distinctions can be found in Verba and Orren (1985, chap.1).
[2] See Page and Shapiro (1992, pp.63, 68-71); and Schuman, Steeh and Bobo (1985, pp. 74-76.)
[3] See Page and Shapiro (1992, pp. 71-75); Schuman, Steeh and Bobo (1985, esp. pp. 88-90.)
[4] See, for example, Sears (1988); Kinder and Sanders (1996); and Gilens (1999).
[5] See, for example, Sniderman and Piazza (1993). Sears, Sidanius and Bobo (2000) bring together a variety of positions.
[6] Page and Shapiro (1992, pp. 64, 100-102, 105-110). See also Mansbridge (1986).
[7] Page and Shapiro (1992, pp. 97-100).
[8] See Weakliem, Andersen, and Heath (2003, pp. 47-48).
[9] See Ladd and Bowman (1998, esp. pp. 17, 18, 97-8, 20-21, 110); McClosky and Zaller (1984, pp. 108, 116, 133, 140); as well as Hochschild (1981).
[10] Ladd and Bowman (1998, pp. 108-9, 111); McClosky and Zaller (1984, pp. 120, 141, 143). See also Lipset and Schneider (1983).
[11] On this distinction, see Free and Cantril (1968).
[12] Page and Shapiro (1992, pp. 160-166). See also Hansen (1983). The income tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 were roughly proportional in the sense that individuals' income tax payments were reduced by approximately the same percentages at different income levels. However, they had a highly regressive effect on the tax system as a whole, because only the most progressive taxes (on income and on estates) were cut, while regressive taxes on payrolls (and, at the state level, sales) grew markedly as sources of government revenue.
[13] Blank (1997, p. 228). See also Page and Simmons (2000, chap. 4).
[14] Cook and Jacobs (2001); Page (2000).
[15] Cook and Barrett (1992, especially, p.62); Cook (1979); McClosky and Zaller (1984, pp. 272-76); Page and Shapiro (1992, ch. 4); and Page (2001).
[16] McClosky and Zaller (1984, pp.74, 75, 79).
[17] Page and Shapiro (1992, p.166).
[18] Page and Shapiro (1992, pp. 166-67.)
[19] Berinsky (2002, p.285) estimates that in 1996 the exclusion bias led to a .11 point overestimation of the average respondent's opinion on the 7.00-point "reduce income differences between the rich and the poor" scale. See also Brehm (1993); Bartels (1996); and Althaus (1998).
[20]. See Lindblom (1977, chap. 15) for a discussion of the "circularity" problem.
[21]. Iyengar and Kinder (1987), Page, Shapiro and Dempsey (1987).
[22]. See Saloma (1984), Stefancic and Delgado (1996), West (1998).
[23] Lipset and Schneider (1983).
[24] An entry point to the extensive literature on the extent to which public opinion has an influence upon public policy is Manza, Cook, and Page (2002, especially, chap. 18).
[25] On the history of the right to vote and, more specifically, on the arguments used to justify political exclusion, see Keyssar (2000).
[26] See Olson (1965). For discussion of the problem of organizational maintenance and the difficulties confronting someone who wishes to found a membership group or keep one going, see Wilson (1973), esp. chaps. 2-3.
[27] The academic literature on citizen participation in America is extensive. A number of helpful sources contain general discussions of political participation and extensive bibliographical references. Among them are Milbrath and Goel (1977); Bennett and Bennett (1986); Leighley (1995); Brady (1999); Conway (2000); and Schlozman (2002).
[28] The classic work on voting and the representativeness of those who go to the polls is Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980).
[29] Figures for those who made donations over $1,000 to a presidential candidate are taken from Campaign Finance Institute (2003). Figures for the American public are calculated from the Web site of the U.S. Census.

[30] The data in Figure 1 -- as well as those in Table 2 and Figures 2, 3 and 5 -- are taken from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). See Appendix A and B for information on the nature of the sample and the wording of questions.
[31] Freeman, 2004; Leighley and Nagler, 1992a and 1992b; and Traugott and Katosh., 1979. It has long been observed that a higher proportion of survey respondents claim to have gone to the polls than would have been possible on the basis of election returns. However, evidence that the American electorate is stratified by class holds regardless of whether the self-reported or the validated electorate is considered.

Some analyses seem to suggest that the well educated and affluent are not overrepresented among voters. Presser and Traugott (1992) report that education is *not* a significant predictor of validated turnout in multivariate models of validated voting (but see Katosh and Traugott, 1981), a finding that is probably an artifact of model specification. (Attitudinal variables such as political efficacy and political interest, which are included in these analyses and retain their predictive power and their statistical significance, are strongly associated with educational attainment, and they probably mediate the impacts of education.) In addition, Silver, Anderson, and Abramson (1986, p. 615) demonstrate that among those who did not go to the polls, "education is positively related to overreporting."

These findings related to overreporting are not as relevant to our concern with equality of political voice as might be supposed. Among non-voters, the proportion of well-educated and affluent citizens who falsely claim to have voted is relatively high. However, the critical finding for our analysis is that privileged Americans turn out to vote at such high rates that the misreporting is only a relatively minor proportion of their overall level of participation. Conversely, the turnout of less privileged Americans is sufficiently modest that misreporting by this group is a relatively large share of its turnout. Indeed, Traugott and Katosh (1979) find that misreporting turnout is related not to sex or education but to age, race, and income -- with "the younger, nonwhite, and low income groups more likely to misreport their registration and voting" (p. 366).

The bottom line is that vote turnout is skewed toward upper income groups, which would come as no surprise to politicians who know that affluent precincts are much more likely than poor ones to deliver high turnout as measured by voting returns.

[32] With respect to gender differences in voter turnout, the data in Figure 2, which are based on the Citizen Participation Study, contradict those in Table 1, which are based on larger -- and presumably more trustworthy -- samples in the Current Population Survey. For at least two decades, the Current Population Survey has showed women to be slightly more likely than men to go the polls.

[33] The data in Figure 4 are taken from Schlozman, Brady, Verba, and Erkulwater (2001).

[34] Unless otherwise noted, the discussion of how group differences in participation are explained is drawn from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995); Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001); and Schlozman, Brady, Verba, and Erkulwater (2001). For additional perspectives, discussion, and bibliographical references, see Verba and Nie (1972); Strate, Parrish, Elder, and Ford (1989); de la Garza, Di Sipio, Garcia, Garcia, and Falcon (1992); Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996); Harris (1999); Leighley and Vedlitz (1999); Hritzuk and Park (2000); and Leighley (2001).

[35] See Citrin and Highton (2002, chap. 2). Lien, Conway, and Wong (2004) use the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey to study in detail the participatory profiles of various Asian-American nationality groups. Unfortunately, because they do not have data about other ethnic groups, they are unable to shed light on the issue of whether Asian Americans in the aggregate, or particular groups of Asian Americans, are less active than would be expected on the basis of their socio-economic characteristics.

[36] See Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, chap. 6).

[37] The discussion in these paragraphs draws from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, chaps. 7-8).

[38] In considering a related subject, Robert Wuthnow (2002) demonstrates that to understand whether social capital has declined, it is necessary to unpack the soncept and examine each of its multiple dimensions separately.

[39] On the erosion in voter turnout, see Brody (1978) and Teixeira (1992).

[40] See Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Putnam (2000).

[41] See Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996).

[42] Among recent works, contrast Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, pp. 241-245) and Freeman (2003), who (on the basis of data that end in 1988) find an increase in SES stratification of voters, with Leighley and Nagler (1992) and Shields and Goidel (1997), who do not. Those who report increased stratification of the electorate tie that change to erosion in turnout rather than to increased economic inequality. In fact, Freeman (p. 28) shows the greatest increase

in the stratification of the electorate to have occurred between 1968 and 1972. In addition, Rosenstone and Hansen (p. 243) show the 1960s to be the distinctive era with income and educational inequality of the electorate at lower levels that either before or after. See Shields and Goidel (1997) and Freeman (2003) for summaries of the relevant studies and bibliographical references.

[43] The discussion and data in this paragraph and the following one are drawn from Brady, Schlozman, Verba, and Elms (2002).

[44] On these developments, see Skocpol (2003; 2004a; and 2004b).

[45] See Skocpol (2003, pp. 212-219).

[46] See Skocpol (2004b, Figure 3).

[47] See Shields and Goidel (2000) and Wilcox (2003).

[48] While it might be argued that $200 is not a very large donation -- mere peanuts compared to the aggregate sums donated by high-rolling contributors -- only a small fraction of contributors to a presidential campaign give as much as $200.

[49] See Putnam (2000, p. 342) as well as Fiorina (1999).

[50] The study of organized interest politics has a venerable history in political science. Important works include Schattschneider (1960); Bauer, Pool and Dexter (1963); McConnell (1966); Lowi (1969); Truman (1971); Wilson (1973); Lindblom (1977); and Walker (1991). Baumgartner and Leech (1998) present useful discussions of the political science literature and many references. Further discussion of the specific issue of the representation of interests through organized interest politics and additional bibliography can be found in Schlozman and Tierney (1986, chap. 4) and McFarland (1992).

[51] Heinz, Laumann, Nelson, and Salisbury (1993, pp. 344-360).

[52] On the role of organized interests in agenda setting, see Baumgartner and Jones (1993, especially chap. 9), who show the impact on the political agenda of the emergence of new environmental groups.

[53] On the complexities in understanding equal voice when political representation is by organized interests, see Schlozman and Tierney (1986), esp. chap. 4.

[54] Schattschneider (1960, p. 35).

[55] See Imig (1996).

[56] See Berry (2003, p. 65). In his analysis of the impact of the tax code on lobbying by nonprofits, Berry points out that a little-known tax provision, the possibility of H election, permits nonprofits autonomy in undertaking political action of which they are not aware.

[57] See Minkoff (1995).

[58] On the implications for politics of the growth of new citizens' groups, see Berry (1999). On the role of foundations and other patrons in stimulating these developments, see Walker (1991), esp. chap. 5. Discussions of the role of patronage in stimulating the growth of public interest organizations have tended to focus on the cultivation of liberal groups. However, conservative advocates for broad public interests, especially conservative think tanks and legal foundations, have also benefitted from this kind of sponsorship. See Ferguson and Rogers (1986), pp. 86-87.

[59] On the decline of organized labor, see Goldfield (1987).

[60] Figures taken from the Statistical Abstract on the Web site of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

[61] Although they disagree about the motivations of business people, both Ferguson (1995), especially chap. 2, and Swenson (2002) emphasize their importance to the New Deal.

[62] An especially articulate, though controversial, version of this argument is contained in Ferguson and Rogers (1986).

[63] Examples from the comparative literature include Verba, Nie, and Kim (1979); and Powell (1986).

[64] On this era, see, for example, Burnham (1965); McGerr (1986); and Schier (2000, pp. 54-64) .

[65] See McGerr (1986).

[66] See Schier, (2000, pp. 62-64).

[67] See Scott and Scott (1975, p. 26).

[68] This argument is made in Erie (1988).

[69] See Burnham (1965). These changes that had a disproportionate effect on poorer citizens are usually dated from this period of progressive reform. Keyssar (2000, chap. 5) presents evidence that similar efforts were made even

earlier with the same effect.

[70] Although the vast literature on the changing shape of the American political universe around the turn of the 20th century contains many controversies, there is agreement on the overall contours of the change. See Burnham (1965); Rusk (1970); McGerr (1986); and Silbey (1991).

[71] McDonald and Popkin (2001) discredit the common wisdom about falling turnout rates. They consider turnout as a proportion of the voting eligible population (VEP) and conclude that turnout has fluctuated, but not declined, since 1972. While Freeman (2003) agrees that higher rates of ineligibility within the VAP are responsible for some of the apparent decline in rates of turnout, he argues that McDonald and Popkin overestimate the impact of these factors and finds that turnout has continued to decline since 1972.

[72] See Radcliff and Davis (2000) for a discussion of why unions enhance turnout even among non-members. Both cross-national and state-level American data demonstrate the significance of levels of union membership for rates of turnout.

[73] Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, chap. 7) emphasize the consequences for political activity of the decline in voter mobilization by parties (as well as social movements). In their discussion of the origins of the decline in turnout, Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (1999, p. 85) point out that the decline in contacts from political parties has not tracked turnout very well. In fact, even though turnout was falling, party contacts rose during the first part of the 1960s and rose again in the 1990s, a period of fluctuating turnout.

[74] Although parties play a smaller role in mobilizing voters, selecting candidates, and managing campaigns, they are not uniformly weaker as institutions. By many measures the parties have become stronger over the past two generations, especially at the national level. However, while party organizations provide services and funding for candidates, they are less active as contact points for individual voters. For an expanded version of this argument, and extensive references, see Aldrich (1995, chap. 8).

[75] Bradshaw (1995) gives a consultant's eye view of the need to focus campaign efforts on the small group of voters who are neither clearly ours or clearly theirs.

[76] See Brady, Schlozman, and Verba (1999). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) make a similar point about the strategic elites that seek to get others involved in politics.

[77] See Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995, chap. 5).

[78] The fact that the income distribution in most societies is skewed has led to the prediction that the median voter will vote to exproporiate the wealth of the affluent. However, see Meltzer and Richard (1981, p. 914) for an economic analysis of the factors that might offset that prediction.

[79] On the logic of how the requirements for getting nominated and running a campaign push candidates and parties away from the dead center of the political spectrum, see Schlozman and Verba (1987) and Aldrich (1995).

[80] For a helpful summary that places changes in the coalitions underlying the parties in the context of party dealignment, see Beck (2003).

[81] For a strong statement about partisan dealignment, see Wattenberg (1991).

[82] See Carmines and Stimson (1989).

[83] On the emergence of abortion as a partisan issue, see Adams (1997). On the exchange of positions between the parties on the ERA, in particular, and issues of women's rights more generally, see Freeman (1987).

[84] See Shafer and Claggett (1995, chap. 3).

[85] See McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (1997, pp. 20-23) and Stonecash (2000) present extensive data to show increasing class differences between the parties. However, Flanigan and Zingale (2002, pp. 110-112) give evidence that suggest the opposite. See Stonecash (2000) for bibliography about this debate.

[86] See Gerring (1998, chap. 7).

[87] Although the extent and the sources of any rightward movement in the political agenda are debated among analysts of American politics, Radcliff and Davis (2000) demonstrate that the attenuation of union strength has ideological consequences.

[88] This development was first observed about the Democrats by Wilson (1960).

[89] This argument is taken from Fiorina (2001).

[90] Kirkpatrick (1976, chap. 3) demonstrates that while political reforms have made Democratic convention delegates more representative of the rank and file in terms of race and gender, they are less representative in terms of income and occupation.

[91] In fact, in their survey-based study Jackson, Bigelow, and Green (2003, p. 68) show that, while Democratic

convention delegates are quite uniformly liberal across a variety of issues, "welfare liberalism" is the dimension that most strongly structures opinion among them.

[92] The common assertion is that party elites in both parties are less moderate than their respective rank and file. However, Shafer and Claggett (1995, chap. 7) argue that Democratic party elites are more liberal than Democratic supporters on what they call the "cultural/national" dimension and Republican party elites are more conservative than Republican supporters on the "economic" dimension.

[93] We are grateful to David Meyer for his generous assistance with this section.

[94] The literature on social movements is extensive. For varying perspectives and bibliographical references, see Lipsky (1968); Lowi (1971); McCarthy and Zald (1977); Tilly (1978); McAdam ((1982); Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett (2002); Morris and Mueller (1992); Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986); and Tarrow (1998a).

[95] See Morris (1984).

[96] See Lipsky (1968).

[97] See Piven and Cloward (1971).

[98] Sidney Tarrow (1998b) points out that social movements in America have always used political institutions as part of their strategy. In response to the puzzling failure of the social movement literature to differentiate between an SMO (social movement organization) and an interest group, Paul Burstein (1998, p. 39) argues that "they are actually the *same thing* (his emphasis) . . . social scientists . . . have often thought that they were studying different things when in fact they were studying the same thing under different labels."

[99] See McCarthy and Zald (1977).

[100] On these examples, see Freeman (1975, chap. 2); Robnett (1997); and Espiritu (1992).

[101] On these themes, see Snow et al. (1986); Snow and Benford (1988); and Meyer (2002).

[102] See the writings collected in Morgan (1970) and the discussion in Cassell (1977).

[103] See, for example, Van Deburg (1992).

[104] See, for example, Nagel (1996); and Maki, Kitano, and Berthold (1999).

[105] For examples, see Sitkoff (1981, p. 90).

[106] The discussion in this section draws from the analysis and data in Norris (2001, especially, chaps. 4 and 11).

[107] The initial gender gap in Internet use seems now to have closed (Norris, 2001, p. 72). With respect to race and ethnicity, a 1997 report (NTIA, 1997, Chart 13) by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration demonstrates that, even within rough income groups, Blacks and Hispanics are less likely to own computers than are non-Hispanic Whites or, especially, other non-Hispanics (who are, presumably, principally Asian American). In the brief period between 1994 and 1997, when computer ownership was expanding rapidly in the United States, the proportion of PC owners in each racial or ethnic group increased. Nonetheless, at the same time that the number of Black households with computers grew, the number of non-Hispanic White households with computers grew even faster. Thus, in 1997 the racial gap in PC ownership was larger than it had been three years earlier, a result that obtains within each of the four income groups.

[108] The phrase is Norris's (2001, p. 229).