

## Chapter 13

### American Exceptionalism?

The case presented so far in this book rests heavily upon the comparative evidence derived from aggregate data across OECD countries and the Eurobarometer surveys available for the fifteen member states of the EU. It would be argued, however, that the evidence we have presented so far misses the point if videomalaise turns out to be a case of 'American exceptionalism'. Many accounts of videomalaise are focused on specific aspects of the news media and campaigns in the United States, and it may be that these propositions cannot be generalized more widely to other systems. This potential criticism needs addressing because there are many plausible reasons why the United States could prove different to the pattern established in other post-industrial societies, including the nature of the media environment, political system, and historical culture<sup>1</sup>. This chapter considers these reasons then explore the evidence for specific and diffuse videomalaise effects in the American context. Far from indicating American exceptionalism, the conclusion suggests that the results serve to confirm the positive impact of the news media that we have already established in Europe.

### Reasons for American Exceptionalism?

There are many reasons why the videomalaise case may still remain accurate for America. The political system and institutions in the United States have many features that may produce distinctive patterns of political communications. Compared with other established democracies this includes, inter alia, the extreme fragmentation of powers among and within institutions; the permeability of the system allowing multiple opportunities for pressure group bargaining, input and blocking; the weakness of national party organizations and the predominance of one of the few remaining two-party system; the unique number, frequency, capital-intensive, candidate-centered and professionalized nature of American election campaigns; and the judicialization of the policymaking process<sup>2</sup>. Other Latin American countries have emulated certain features of the US constitution, notably Presidential systems with a division of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary, often unhappily<sup>3</sup>. Yet as Wilson observes, "*Nothing is more distinctive about the United States than its institutions. Parliamentary democracies are a dime a dozen...In contrast, no stable First World democracy is based on the institutions of the United States.*"<sup>4</sup> The results of the extreme fragmentation of authority among government institutions, the permeability of the institutions, combined with the weakness of parties as the 'glue' holding the political system together, may allow the news media (especially network TV news, the major newspapers, and a handful of policy-oriented monthlies) to play a much more powerful role in the policymaking process than in most other established democracies.

American culture may also play an important shaping a distinctive set of fundamental values and beliefs about politics and government. Louis Hartz and Seymour Martin Lipset have long argued that the liberal political tradition established by the founding fathers has shaped an American political culture far more distrustful of government power - especially central government - than is common in European welfare

states, or in other English-speaking nations<sup>5</sup>. The United States is unique among industrialized democracies in never having had a strong social democratic movement or a socialist party with a widespread popular following. A recent review of the evidence from public opinion polls concluded that Americans do subscribe to the 'liberal tradition' in the abstract, although not necessarily when it comes to discussing specific policies or problems<sup>6</sup>. American attitudes towards the role of the news media may also be distinctive, with stronger adherence to the ideals of an 'objective' rather than 'partisan' press, although few differences have been found in terms of some other indicators of civil liberties, such as attitudes towards freedom of publication<sup>7</sup>. The particular wrenching experiences of American politics in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, with events surrounding Vietnam and Watergate, while receiving echoes in the counter-culture on the streets of London, Paris, and Bonn, is regarded by many as critical in the growth of a more adversarial news culture<sup>8</sup>.

Lastly, to recap just some of the key contrasts in the news industries, discussed in Part II, the US proved far more television-centric than most countries, with higher than average TV viewing and lower newspaper readership. American newspapers are characterized by lack of market competition, the absence of a strong tabloid sector, and falling sales. Moreover American television is far more commercially dominant than almost all other systems under comparison. Historically most post-industrial societies have had public service television monopolies. When commercial channels became more widely available throughout Europe in the 1980s, the tradition of television had already become established. The strict regulation of political balance common in public service television, along with an ethos committed to providing serious coverage of news and public affairs, is still evident in the news culture in European television. The fragmentation of channels produced by cable, satellite and broadband TV has gone further in the US than in many OECD countries, although others have been quickly catching up. For all these reasons, the negative impact of the news media - and particularly television - on civic engagement may perhaps prove another case of 'American exceptionalism'.

#### **Evidence for 'American Exceptionalism'?**

How can we test this thesis? As discussed in chapter 3, different studies have drawn upon both individual-level survey data and aggregate time-series data about public opinion trends.

The most common approach, established in the 1970s by Robinson and by Miller et al., emphasizes that we should expect those most attentive to television news or newspapers to display the highest levels of political mistrust and disengagement<sup>9</sup>. This can be termed the '*specific*' version of the videomalaise thesis since the effects are expected at individual-level. This approach suggests a significant association between habitual patterns of media use, such as groups of people who watch a great deal or little TV news, and indicators of civic malaise. The most recent American National Election Survey (NES) can be used to test this thesis. If we find that use of the news media is associated with civic malaise in the United States, despite the positive picture that we have established in Europe, then this could be

accounted for by systematic differences in the political system or culture, such as those we have already discussed.

In contrast, trend analysis can be used if we expect the effects of videomalaise to be evident at *diffuse* level. Here we need to look at long-term indicators of civic engagement to see whether any systematic changes relate to developments in the news media. Like 'cultivation' theory, in this view it is the diffuse influence of a steady stream of media messages displaying a systematic bias, not the specific impact of exposure to particular media on particular audiences, which is believed to be important<sup>10</sup>. The literature suggests two hypotheses, based on cultural or structural changes in journalism, which can be examined.

One perspective suggests that the American news culture altered in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to Vietnam and Watergate, producing a more adversarial journalistic-government relationship, more negative campaign news, and a stronger strategic focus in election campaigns<sup>11</sup>. If so, then like an air-borne virus, the effects may have spread beyond those who are most attentive to the news to infect the broader American political culture in this era. We lack direct evidence of the contents and direction of news in the 1960s and 1970s in this study. But as a working hypothesis we can assume that American campaign news did become more negative, strategic and adversarial in the late 1960s and early 1970s, following these events, and then examine whether the timing of any decline in civic engagement fits this thesis. If we find either a period-specific stepped shift in civic engagement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, or a secular trend downward that started in this era (with a modest lag), then this provides *prima facie* support for the Vietnam/Watergate hypothesis. Of course we still cannot disentangle the effects of actual events surrounding Vietnam and Watergate, from the possible impact of any change in the news culture following these events. But if we establish a pattern of either trendless fluctuations around the mean, or stable trends, or if the timing of any fall in civic engagement does not fit the Vietnam/Watergate hypothesis, then this casts serious doubts on this explanation.

Along similar lines, the structural account of videomalaise by those like Neil Postman suggests that standards of American journalism started to head south in the early 1980s, with the shrinkage of the audience for network news, the blending of entertainment and news values in magazine formats filling the airwaves on cable and satellite stations, and the downsizing of news divisions after they merged into larger entertainment-oriented corporations<sup>12</sup>. Again, following the same logic, if this shift in news and current affairs affected public engagement with the political process, this should be evident in public opinion trends in the early 1980s.

To examine a wide range of indicators of civic malaise we draw upon the rich legacy of fifty years of survey data from the series of American national election studies stretching from 1948, prior to the television age, until 1998.

### **American Media Use and Civic Engagement**

We can start by using individual-level survey analysis to see whether use of the news media in America is associated with civic engagement, reflecting patterns we have already observed in Europe, replicating similar models to those employed earlier<sup>13</sup>. The NES items on media use and political attitudes are not identical to those in the Eurobarometer, so we might expect to find only an approximate fit, but to facilitate comparison the study used functionally equivalent items of attention to campaign media, political knowledge, political trust and civic engagement. Since the European elections were second-order contests, characterized by low turnout and interest, the 1998 mid-term NES was selected for comparison, with the Congressional election representing an equivalent low-salience campaign. The NES included standard 7-point scales of how many days per week people read newspapers, watched national and local television news, and listened to radio news, comparable to the 5-point European measures of attention to the news media. For the Internet the NES also monitored whether Americans went online to get information about the campaign. These items were run separately and, since there was much overlap, they were also analyzed as a combined 29-point media exposure scale.

### **Political Knowledge**

Few items monitoring knowledge were available in the 1998 NES but open-ended questions asked people whether they could name the job or political office held by Al Gore (Vice President), William Rehnquist (Chief Justice of the Supreme Court), Boris Yeltsin (President or leader of Russia), and Newt Gingrich (Speaker of the House). People were also asked whether they knew which party had the most members in the House of Representatives and in the US Senate prior to the 1998 elections. These six items, while tapping mostly the 'civics' dimension, provide a consistent and balanced scale of knowledge of political leaders and parties (with an intercorrelation measured by Cronbach's Alpha of .70). It can be argued that being able to identify the office held by Rehnquist or Yeltsin is of little practical relevance for most people's lives but understanding which party controls Congress is important for evaluating the legislative branch and for holding parties accountable for their actions. In the 'open-ended' leadership items the correct result could not be the result of mere guesswork although with control of Congress people had a 50% chance of hitting the right party.

[Table 13.1 about here]

Table 13.1 shows that the vast majority of the American public (88%) knew that Al Gore was Vice President of the United States, and two-thirds knew that the Republicans had control of the House. A majority of the public got the right answer to most of the other items, with the exception of the ability to identify William Rehnquist as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, which only one in ten Americans knew. Most people got about half correct; out of six items the average score was 3.3. At the bottom of the class, a small group (8%) flunked every answer and in contrast a few people (6%) got everything right.

The key question for this study is the relationship of media use to these indicators of political knowledge. The simple frequency distributions, without any social controls, show a clear pattern: use of Internet campaign news, newspaper, and national television news, was

consistently and significantly associated with higher knowledge. This pattern was particularly clear on the more demanding indicators, such as identifying which party held the Senate, where there was a 15 to 20-point knowledge gap between those who regularly watched network news, or read a daily newspaper, or surfed net news, and those who did not. At the same time, watching local TV news made no significant difference to political knowledge, which is consistent with its greater emphasis on local issues of crime, sports and weather, and its neglect of national politics. The difference by media outlets is important because it suggests that it is not just the characteristics of the TV audience per se, but rather the characteristics of those who tune into network news, which makes the difference in political awareness. Overall Internet news users proved the most knowledgeable (getting 4.3 out of 6 right), followed by newspaper readers (3.8), and national TV news viewers (3.6). Local TV news viewers were no different to the score of the average American (3.3).

[Table 13.2 about here]

Regression models were run to see whether these relationships were maintained after controlling for the usual indicators used in previous models in the book, including social background (age, education, gender and income) and attitudinal indicators (willingness to engage in political discussion and liberal-conservative ideology). The first model used a composite indicator of media use and the second analyzed each of the different types of media. The results in Table 13.2 show that, as before, education, gender, age and income all proved significant predictors of political knowledge, in that respective order. As many previous studies have found, the well educated, men, and the older generation, had a better understanding of parties and leaders. The attitudinal factors were also significant. After entering these variables, the composite scale of media exposure continued to prove significant. Use of the news media was positively associated with what Americans know about political leaders and parties, even after controlling for the prior background of readers and viewers. In the second model, breaking out the different types of media, most strikingly it was use of network television news and Internet news that proved the strongest predictors of political knowledge. These results also lend further support to reviews of the literature that concluded that, contrary to the conventional wisdom in the 1970s, recent studies suggest that television news does provide American voters with an important source of information about politics<sup>14</sup>.

Most importantly, using an independent dataset, these overall results confirm that the pattern found earlier in practical knowledge of EU affairs (see Table 9.3) was not just applicable to Europe, since strikingly similar findings are also evident in the United States. As with any cross-sectional survey analysis, taken as a snapshot at one moment of time, we cannot hope to pin down the direction of causality of this relationship. We know that the better educated are more likely to use the news media, as shown earlier. But the most plausible interpretation to draw from these results is that habitual attention to the news media - reading about Congressional politics, hearing political analysts, or following foreign affairs on national TV news - continues to add to our sum of knowledge about public affairs, in an interactive virtuous circle. The more we know, the more we watch or read. The more we watch or read, the more we know. And the 'virtuous

circle' holds for TV news. These results lend further confirmation to the conclusions of Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter's exhaustive study of the components of political knowledge in the United States, which also found media attention to exert a positive influence over what Americans know<sup>15</sup>. The results suggest that if the public lacks knowledge of public affairs - if many Americans remain unaware that Boris Yeltsin is President of Russia, or that William Rhenquist is Chief Justice on the Supreme Court, - then we should not blame the news media per se for this sorry state of affairs.

### **Political Trust**

Yet the heart of videomalaise theory is less about cognitive learning than about the public's orientation towards the political system. Is there evidence that any journalistic cynicism towards government resonates more strongly among American readers and viewers than among Europeans? The 1998 NES includes the standard index used for forty years to gauge trust in government, including how much people say they can trust government in Washington to do what is right, how many public officials are believed to be 'crooked', how much government is run by a 'few big interests', and how much tax is wasted by people in government. The internal political efficacy scale, tapping people's sense of their own ability to influence the system, includes four standard items: 'officials don't care what people like me think', 'people like me don't have any say in what government does', 'sometimes politics seems so complicated that a person like me can't understand what's going on', and whether elections make government 'pay attention to what people like me think'.

[Table 13.3 and 13.4 about here]

As is well-known, the indicators of trust in government plummeted sharply and steadily from the mid 1960s until the early 1970s, bottomed out then experienced a slight recovery in the mid-1980s under Reagan's watch, experienced another fall from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, then recovered slightly again in recent years. The long-term fall has caused widespread concern and fuelled much of the current revival in attention to videomalaise theories. Many writers have coupled the decline of public trust in government and politicians with the rise of a more cynical news media. But are these factors related? Table 13.3 examines the relationship at individual-level between attention to different news media and trust in American government. The results confirm the pattern found in Europe, presented in Chapter 11, namely that attention to the news media proves either neutrally, or positively related, to political trust. In the multivariate regression model in Table 13.4 none of the social or attitudinal variables prove to be significantly related to political trust except for media use. The model predicting political efficacy shows a slightly different pattern, with most of the social and attitudinal factors proving significant (with the exception of gender). After these controls are introduced, media use remains positively related to efficacy but statistically insignificant at the conventional .05 level. The findings on political trust lend further confirmation to the results of previous research by Bennett et al.<sup>16</sup> who examined the association between media exposure (including use of local and national TV news, entertainment television, and newspapers), media attention (to campaign news and to talk radio),

and trust in politicians, using the 1996 NES survey. The study concluded that none of the media exposure variables proved significant, although attention to campaign news was positively related to trust. Far from a case of American exceptionalism, the results in this chapter replicate and thereby increase our confidence in the earlier patterns observed in Europe.

### **Political Activism and Participation**

Does use of the news media produce passive couch potatoes, with the illusion rather than the reality of civic engagement, as Hart suggests?<sup>17</sup> And does watching television damage face-to-face community activism and social capital, as Putnam argues?<sup>18</sup> Campaign activism is measured in the NES by a battery of six items monitoring whether people had contributed money to candidates and parties, worked for a candidate or party, persuaded others how to vote, attended a candidate meeting, or displaying a campaign button. The items were intercorrelated and formed a consistent activism scale<sup>19</sup>. These measures, designed in an earlier era, are rather old-fashioned: when was the last time Americans actually wore an election button, as opposed to buying them as a collector's item? The newer forms of engagement, like Internet discussion groups, are excluded. But the scale still taps some of the most common conventional forms of electoral participation.

[Table 13.5 about here]

The first model in Table 13.5 shows that all the demographic indicators were associated with campaign activism, especially education that many have found to be one of the strongest predictors of political participation. Even after controlling for background and attitudes, use of the news media emerged as one of the strongest positive predictors of campaign activism. Far from disengaging, those most attentive to campaign news were more likely to become involved, such as to contribute time or money to the campaign. In the second model we examined the separate effects of the different types of media and again it was use of national TV news and the Internet that proved most strongly linked to activism.

[Figure 13.1 and 13.2 about here]

Moreover these patterns extend more widely to forms of civic engagement outside of the campaign. An earlier study compared attention to television, TV news and current affairs programs with a wide range of different dimensions of political participation in America, ranging from voting and campaign activism to protest politics, organizational membership and community mobilization<sup>20</sup>. In each dimension, the number of hours devoted to watching TV (including mostly entertainment) did have a consistently depressing effect (see Figure 13.1), and this pattern was also found in other established democracies as well<sup>21</sup>. The amount of leisure time that people devote to television entertainment does seem to detract from their involvement in politics and community affairs, lending some weight to Gerbner's argument that it is television watching, not TV news, which causes malaise<sup>22</sup>. But we cannot blame journalism per se, since the effects of attention to TV news and current affairs consistently has a positive relationship with all types of civic engagement (see Figure 13.2)<sup>23</sup>. This relationship remains

significant in multivariate analysis after the usual battery of controls.

Therefore exposure to negative ads by politicians may demobilize the American electorate, as Ansolabehere and Iyengar suggest<sup>24</sup>. People who choose to spend their evenings watching TV are less likely to join organizations or go to community meetings, as Putnam argues, which may reduce the overall stock of social capital<sup>25</sup>. But attention to the news journalism is consistently and positively associated at individual-level with a wide range of indicators of political knowledge, political trust and civic engagement, in both Europe and the United States. Although there are many plausible reasons to suspect that one might find a different pattern on both sides of the Atlantic, this turns out not to be the case.

#### **Long-term Trends in American Civic Engagement**

So far we have examined the individual-level association between groups of media users and their attitudes and behaviour. We have found little support for the videomalaise claims but it could be argued that the effects of news coverage are far more diffuse, affecting all the American public, not just the most attentive viewers and readers. We tend to rely upon many overlapping sources of news, not just one, as well as learning about events from discussions with colleagues and friends. As a result public opinion could be shaped by certain well-publicized events in popular culture, like the Lewinsky affair or the death of John F. Kennedy Jr., without paying much attention to any particular media.

Some proponents of the videomalaise thesis suggest this is the most plausible way to understand long-term changes in American politics. Cultural accounts suggest that following events in Vietnam and Watergate, American election news become more negative, strategically-oriented and adversarial, across all media, with the result that in the late 1960s and early 1970s the public become increasingly turned off by campaign coverage. "*If Vietnam and Watergate marked a time when the press turned against the politicians*", Patterson suggests, "*the recent period represents a time when the press turned on them.*"<sup>26</sup> Alternative structural accounts by Postman and others suggest that changes in the news industry created a more entertainment-oriented journalism, or news lite, which started to occur in the early 1980s with the widespread proliferation of cable TV and the erosion of network news, and which accelerated in the 1990s. If changes in American campaign journalism had a diffuse effect upon American public opinion in these eras, this should be evident as period-specific effects, or as the start of a secular trend, across different indicators of civic engagement including political interest, government trust, and electoral activism.

#### **Trends in Campaign Interest**

If campaign journalism became more negative in the 1960s and early 1970s, the first possible impact could be that the American public decided to switch off in droves, preferring baseball, movies and sit-coms to election news. Yet if we examine long-term trends in American attention to campaign news, the pattern that emerges most strongly from the NES data since the 1960s is one of stability, rather than any steady linear decline. In this chart we focus on Presidential elections, to remove the fluctuations caused by mid-term contests,

although Congressional elections display a similar pattern. Figure 13.3 shows that from 1952 to 1960, television shot into first place at the media most popular among Americans for following election news, causing a fall in the use of radio news and the print media. But from the 1960 election onwards, attention to television, newspapers, radio and magazines proved fairly stable, with the exception of a few random fluctuations like the temporary dip in the use of newspapers in 1972, which could be the result of measurement error. Reliance upon TV news did not fall consistently over successive elections in the post-Vietnam and post-Watergate era. The only major temporary dips in use of TV news occurred in 1984 (counter-intuitively, under the sunny 'Morning Again in America' Reagan campaign), before recovering in 1988 (equally ironically, under the 'revolving door/Willie Horton negativism of Bush v. Dukakis). These blips are in the opposite direction to the videomalaise thesis. Another dip in TV use occurred again in 1996, but it remains too early to see whether this represents another temporary fluctuation or the start of a new trend, and use of radio and magazines experienced a slight surge in these years. If we compare American use of the campaign media during the last fifty years there is no consistent major slide across all indicators.

[Figure 13.3 about here]

Of course, it could still be the case that despite the aggregate trends some Americans have become progressively more disengaged from the campaign, while others have become more involved. There is considerable concern that poorer groups, ethnic minorities, and the less educated have become effectively disenfranchised by American elections. Videomalaise could turn off the politically marginalized, rather than mainstream America. To examine the evidence, regression models were run to predict attention to campaign news in successive American Presidential elections, examining the strength of predictors for the major demographic variables (age, education, income, gender and race) as well as political interest. The standardized betas were then plotted by year to examine trends from 1952-96.

[Figure 13.4 about here]

The results in Figure 13.4 show a mixed pattern. Sharp fluctuations in the 1950s can plausibly be attributed to the rapid spread of TV ownership from the affluent elite to mainstream America. Since the 1960s, the clearest trend is by age, where, although the pattern is far from linear, interest in the campaign has become progressively more concentrated among the older age groups. This may be a life-cycle effect, since we have already established that due to a more sedentary lifestyle, older people usually watch far more television (and TV news) than younger groups. We already established that in Europe age proved one of the strongest predictors of attention to TV news, although this pattern has remained stable, not strengthened, during the last thirty years. Alternatively, if a generational rather than life-cycle effect, as Miller and Shanks suggest in their exhaustive study, this represents a genuine cause for concern<sup>27</sup>. This pattern can be linked to diffuse theories of videomalaise, since Putnam argues that these findings reflect the development of a 'post-civic' baby-boom generation who grew up in the television era<sup>28</sup>. It remains to be seen whether the Internet generation will surf to alternative sources of political information.

Other findings in Figure 13.4 provide less support for the videomalaise thesis. The effects of income and race show a modest downward slope, indicating that the audience for campaign news has slightly widened in these regards over time. The fluctuations in campaign attention for African-Americans can plausibly be traced to the saliency of racial issue in particular elections, like in 1968 (civil rights) and 1984 (the presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson). The coefficients for education and gender fluctuate quite sharply around the mean, with a slight upwards slope. Despite closure over the years, and the reversal of the gender gap in electoral turnout, even today women continue to display slightly less interest and activism in many conventional forms of political participation in many countries. For reasons that remain unclear, the effects of education rise sharply from the early 1960s to the 1976 election, and then fall again over successive elections. Lastly, the effects of political interest on media attention remain stable and the strongest predictor of news use. What the general pattern suggests is that some fluctuations over time are probably caused by measurement error, such as slight differences in question wording and sampling in successive NES surveys, but overall attention to American presidential campaigns has not become progressively more concentrated among demographic groups, with the important exception of the effects of age.

[Figure 13.5 and 13.6 together about here]

Other indicators of civic engagement concern whether the American public follows the campaign and public affairs. If election coverage became more negative in the 1960s and early 1970s, then plausibly people could switch off from politics. Figures 13.5 and 13.6 show long-term trends in these indicators, in Presidential and mid-term elections. The results show that interest in the campaign was slightly stronger in successive elections from 1952 to 1976, and then fell to a lower level from 1978 to 1998 (with the exception of the 1992 election where attention rose again). The pattern is far from uniform, for example interest in the 1956 campaign proved similar to that in 1996. Variations over time could plausibly be produced by many factors, including the closeness of the race, whether an incumbent president was standing for reelection, competition from third party candidates, the salience of the political issues, and so on<sup>29</sup>. The decline of political interest indicates a period-specific shift, but this change seems to have occurred between 1976 and 1978, later than the Vietnam/Watergate thesis would suggest and earlier than the structural proposition of changes in the news industry. Of course Vietnam/Watergate could plausibly have produced a lagged shift, as the journalistic culture gradually changed, but this should still have been evident, all other things being equal, in the 1976 race. In addition, the decline in political interest could be attributed to many things beyond changes in the news culture, for example the heightened generational and racial tensions in American politics could have increased political interest during the 1960s.

Trends in attention to government and public affairs, rather than campaigns, present a slightly different picture (see Table 13.6). The proportion of Americans who follow government and public affairs either 'most' or 'some' of the time in the 1990s is similar to the situation in the early 1960s. Like a rat in a python, the main exceptions to the overall trend concerns heightened attention in the 1964, 1972, 1974 and

1976 elections. As many have observed, the events of these years stimulated political awareness - from conflict over civil rights and urban riots, to anti-Vietnam demonstrations, political assassinations, the rise of second-wave feminism, generational culture wars, and the aftermath of Watergate. From 1976 to 1998 attention returned to the 'normal' level evident in the early 1960s. There is no linear decline in interest in American politics. The 1992 Bush v. Clinton v. Perot election, for example, registered the 5<sup>th</sup> highest level of interest in the entire series. The common assumption that Americans have become increasingly bored with government and turned off from public affairs in recent years, and that this can be attributed to increasingly negative, trivial or strategic coverage in the news media, receives no support from this evidence.

#### **Trust in Government and Politicians**

Yet the effects of a more cynical culture in journalism should be evident more directly in indicators of political trust in American government and politicians. After all, much of the concern about growing alienation has been generated by the long-term slide in the standard NES indicators of civic malaise. The key question here is whether the timing of the decline in political trust mirrors the events that are believed to have transformed the news culture.

[Figure 13.7 about here]

Figure 13.7 maps trends in the standard NES indicators of trust in government, discussed earlier, from the 1958 until 1998. The pattern confirms relatively high levels of trust from the 1958-1964, the sharp plunge from 1964 to 1974, the modest slide until 1980, then the revival under Reagan's first term in the early 1980s, the slide again from 1984 to 1994, then a distinct revival during Clinton's second term. While earlier observers saw only a linear decline, the most recent figures suggest a far clearer pattern of trendless fluctuations. The key question for this study is how far these patterns can be related to the timing of any assumed changes in the news culture and industry. The 'Vietnam/Watergate' hypothesis is certainly given some support from the trends in the early 1970s, although it should be noted that the slide started in 1964-66, before journalists started to provide highly critical coverage of Vietnam<sup>30</sup>. But the subsequent pattern in the 1980s and 1990s, with the rise and fall and rise in American political trust, strongly suggests that rather than a secular phenomena, driven by cultural or structural trends in the nature of American journalism, this represents a more events-driven or performance-driven political explanation<sup>31</sup>. If 'negative' campaign coverage increased in the early 1980s, as Patterson suggests, this may be associated with the popularity of presidential candidates but it is unrelated to broader trends in support for the American political trust, which became more positive during this era. Of course we cannot assume that there is any simple and direct link between attitudes towards the political system and the broader pattern of news coverage, since multiple factors can influence political trust. But at the same time if the timing of trends in these indicators of civic engagement fails to match the timing of any hypothetical change in the culture of the news media, even with lags, then we have failed to establish convincing evidence for these hypothetical effects at diffuse level.

#### **Political Mobilization**

There remains the issue of falling turnout and campaign activism, generating much concern. Even if interest and trust are unrelated to the pattern of campaign coverage in the news media, it could still be that more negative news demobilizes the public. Is there any evidence that trends in American political participation support the diffuse version of the videomalaise argument?

[Figure 13.8 about here]

In Chapter 12 we have already noted that postwar turnout in established democracies has generally remained fairly constant, down only 3% from 1970 to 1990 in the countries under comparison. Yet turnout in the US has remained far lower than in most other comparable post-industrial societies and it has slid further. The postwar trends shown in Figure 13.8 confirm that voting turnout peaked at 63.1% of the voting age population in the 1960 presidential election. In contrast, in the 1996 presidential election less than half (47.2%) of the voting age population cast a ballot. As discussed in Chapter 12, many factors may have contributed towards particularly low turnout in the US, including the barriers caused by institutional procedures for registering and voting, the exceptional frequency of American elections, the erosion of partisanship, the two-party system limiting electoral choice, the fragmentation of powers in the US system reducing the saliency of elections, and the weakness of party organizations as mobilizing agencies<sup>32</sup>. But what is the role of the news media here?

Turnout in presidential contests proved moderate throughout the quiescent 1950s, voting peaked in the 1960s, and then recent decades experienced a return to the levels common in the 1950s. Rather than a long-term linear decline in turnout in presidential elections since the early 1970s, the pattern shows a plateau in the 1960s with trendless fluctuations around the mean. Again turnout, like interest, can also suddenly bounce back: for example, the 1992 election shows the 5<sup>th</sup> highest voting participation in the series. Such volatility strongly points to political explanations, not secular trends. It is only mid-term elections where there has been a more consistent fall in turnout that started in 1974 and persisted at about the same level, rather than sliding further, in successive elections to date. The contrasts between the pattern in general and mid-term elections suggests that we should look more closely at the reasons for American disengagement from Congressional politics, rather than at broader changes in the news industry or culture. The fluctuations in presidential-level turnout are plausibly explained by systematic differences in the choices facing American voters in each election: the presence of third parties, the closeness of the race, the strength of the incumbent, the effectiveness of get-out-the-vote drives, and the saliency of hot button election issues, rather than by long-term shifts towards a more negative campaign media 'turning off' the American public.

[Figure 13.9 about here]

Yet turnout by itself can be the product of many institutional factors. What of other indicators of conventional political participation and campaign mobilization? The NES battery of items, already used at individual level, monitors whether Americans have become less engaged in campaigns. If campaign coverage has become more negative, this should certainly have turned off voters. Yet the evidence across the long series of general elections in Table 13.9

shows that the proportion of Americans who persuaded others how to vote by discussing the candidates, arguably the least demanding form of participation, remains fairly high. The pattern shows trendless fluctuations rather than a secular decline, closely following trends in the other indicators of campaign interest that we have already observed. The sharpest decline is the proportion of Americans wearing a button or displaying a bumper sticker, both minor activities that have become unfashionable. Since the sixties there has also been a modest long-term decline in activism within parties, indicating the erosion of grassroots party organizations, although the proportion of party workers active today is similar to the situation in the 1950s. As Rosenstone and Hansen have found, the proportion of Americans engaged in other types of campaigning remains fairly stable, such as those contributing money or going to a political meeting<sup>33</sup>. Despite concern about declining civic engagement, and dramatic changes in the nature of American campaigns, activism has been remarkably stable over the last fifty years. The idea that more negative campaign news has discouraged participation, either in the early 1970s or the early 1980s, receives no support from the trends.

#### **American Non-Exceptionalism**

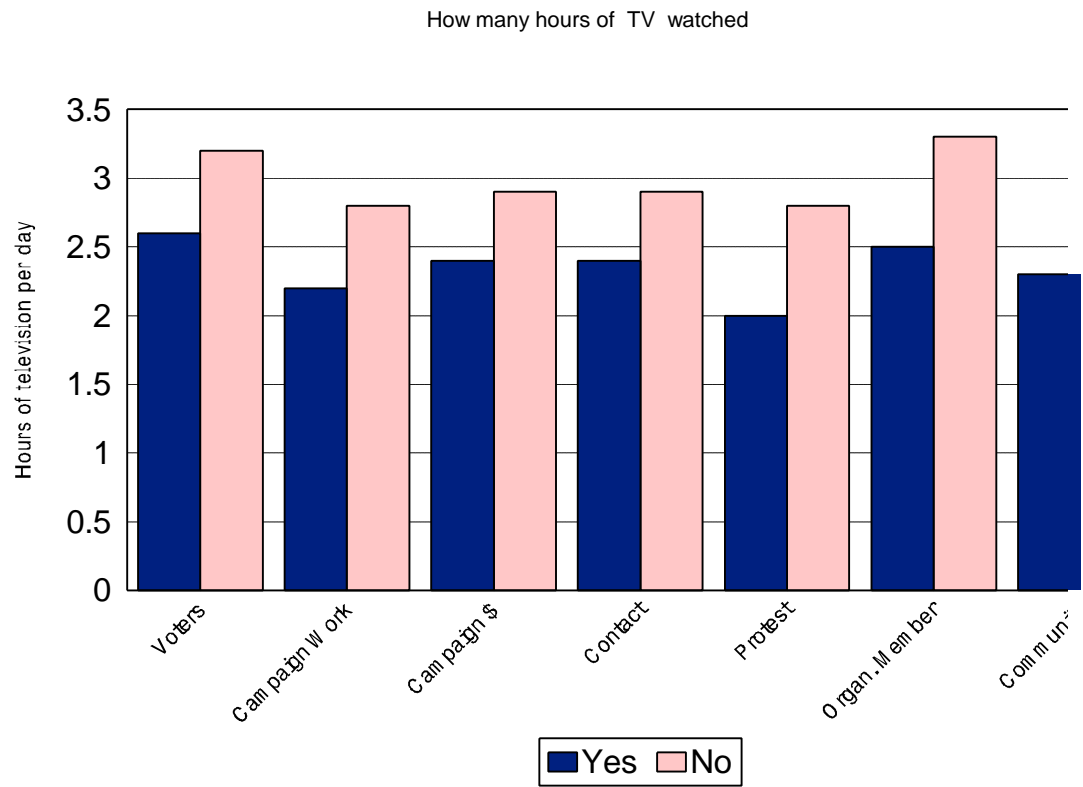
It turns out that despite all the possible reasons why America may be 'different' to other democracies, in fact the evidence seems to point towards a remarkably similar pattern in the United States and in Europe. At individual level, when testing the effects of exposure to the American news media upon particular groups of users, these proved consistently positive or occasionally neutral, but, as in Europe, in no case did we find negative relationships. These generalizations seem robust enough to withstand multiple tests in independent datasets across many different years, media environments and political systems, increasing confidence in the results. No single piece of evidence can be regarded as decisive but the sheer weight of findings points in a consistent direction. The only exception that lends some credibility to Gerbner's theory of videomalaise is the findings that use of TV *entertainment* is associated with slightly lower levels of political participation. This pattern may be because, as Gerbner suggests, a 'mean world syndrome' develops from watching TV dramas about cops, courtrooms, and crime. Yet, equally plausibly, the association can be attributed primarily to leisure patterns; the less sociable, for whatever reason, choose to stay home and watch *Friends* and *E.R.* rather than attending community meetings in drafty town halls or volunteering to help with local initiatives and campaigns. The many theories suggesting that *journalism* in general, and TV news in particular, contributes towards public cynicism and disengagement received no support from the individual-level level survey evidence.

The long-term pattern of trends in American civic engagement raises many puzzles requiring further analysis. This chapter can only sketch some of the possible explanations. But blaming the news media for changes in American political interest, trust, and participation fits the timing of these trends too loosely to prove convincing. American journalism may, or may not, have changed as a result of the experiences of Vietnam and Watergate in the late 1960s/early 1970s or the rise of entertainment values in the news industry in the 1980s. But, if so, these events did not have any discernable impact upon the American public, according to the indicators we have examined.

Equally important, even the general 'declinism' thesis that has become so pervasive in accounts of American democracy receives little support from the evidence. Yes, there have been important shifts over time in American civic engagement but the pattern in political interest, trust and turnout reflects '1960s exceptionalism', a bump in the road, rather than a steady secular decline. As always, with any analysis of trends, the selection of starting and ending points is critical. It is disingenuous and misleading to take the peak of turnout, in 1960, as the starting point for any analysis rather than examining the continuous series available in the NES from the early 1950s. Arguably most Americans would willingly opt for the more quiescent politics of the 1950s and the 1990s, rather than the heated and conflictual, if more participatory, 1960s. At the end of the twentieth century it appears that American democracy, and the American news media, is far healthier than many naysayers would have us believe.

Figure 13.1

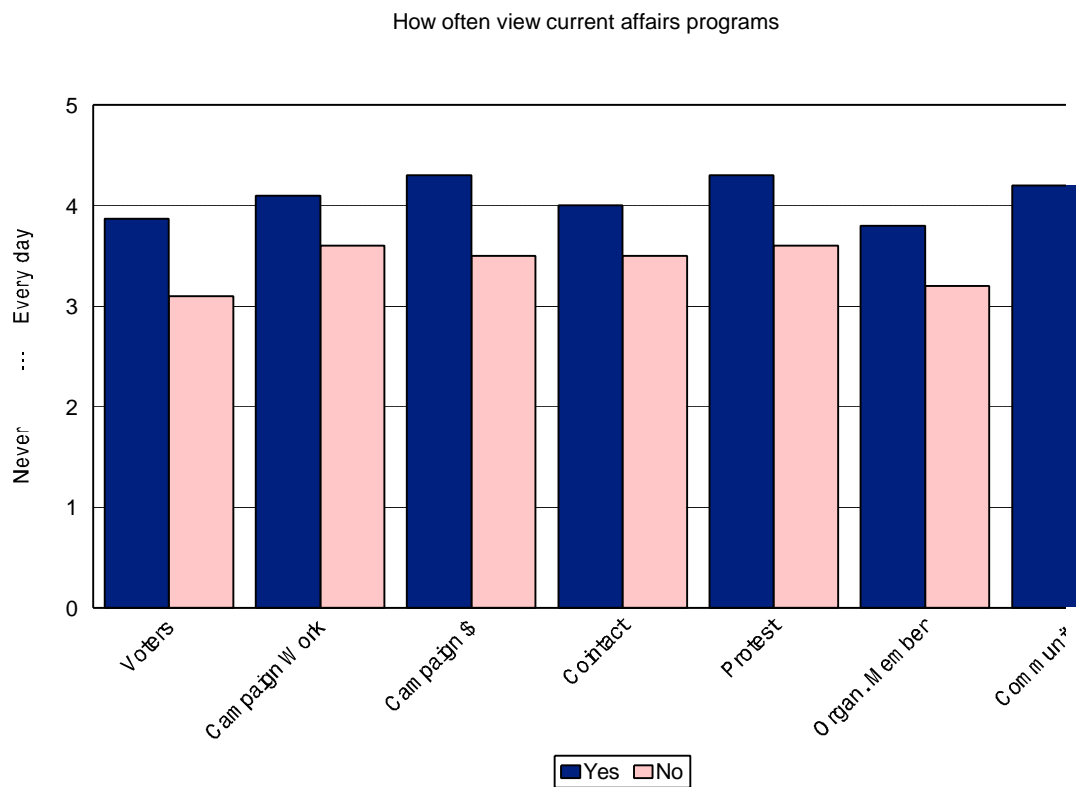
## Watching TV and Participation, US 1990



Source: American Citizen Participation Study, 1990.

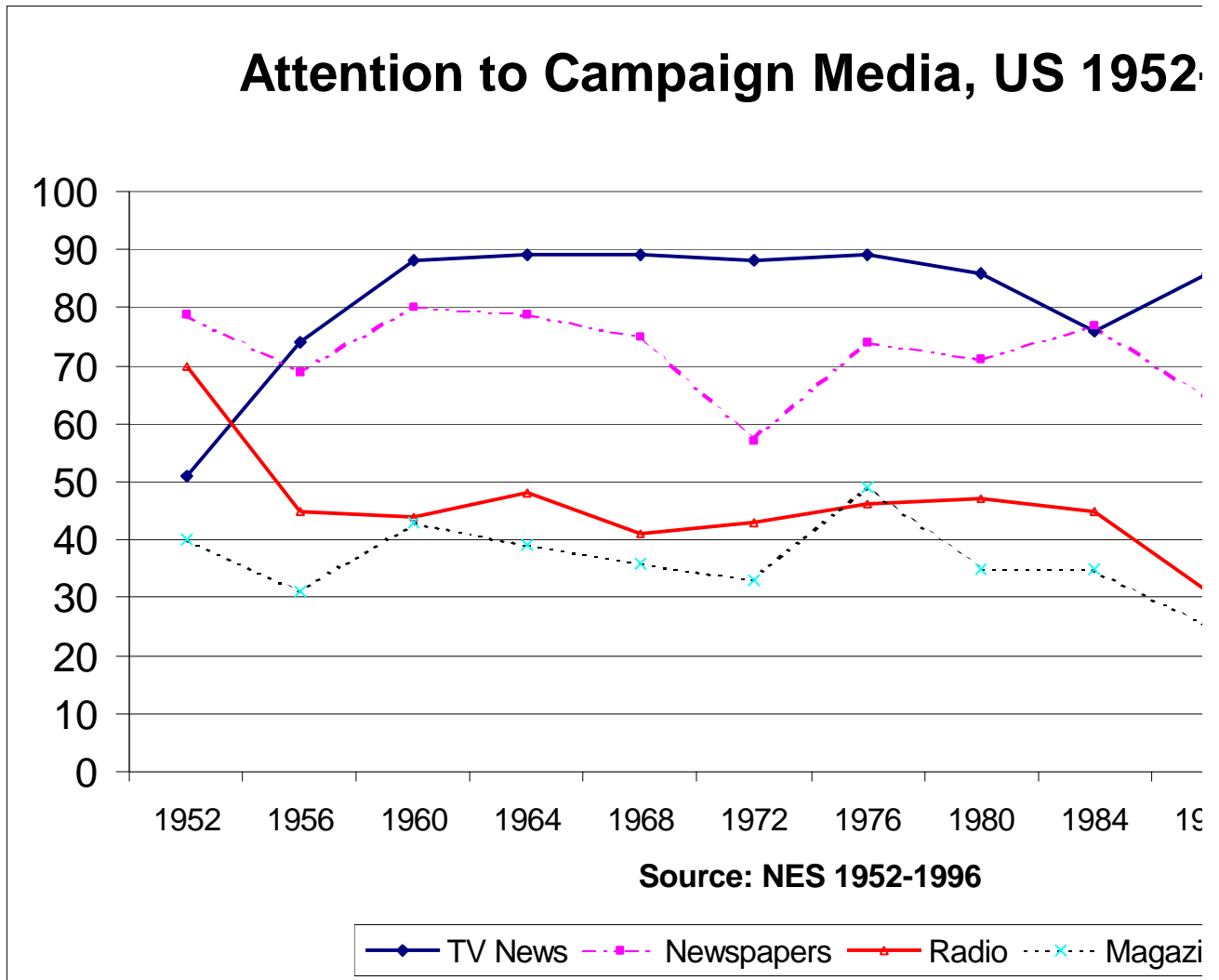
Figure 13.2

## Watching Current Affairs TV and Participation, US



Source: American Citizen Participation Study, 1990.

Figure 13.3



Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." ( Press, Fall 2000)

Figure 13.4

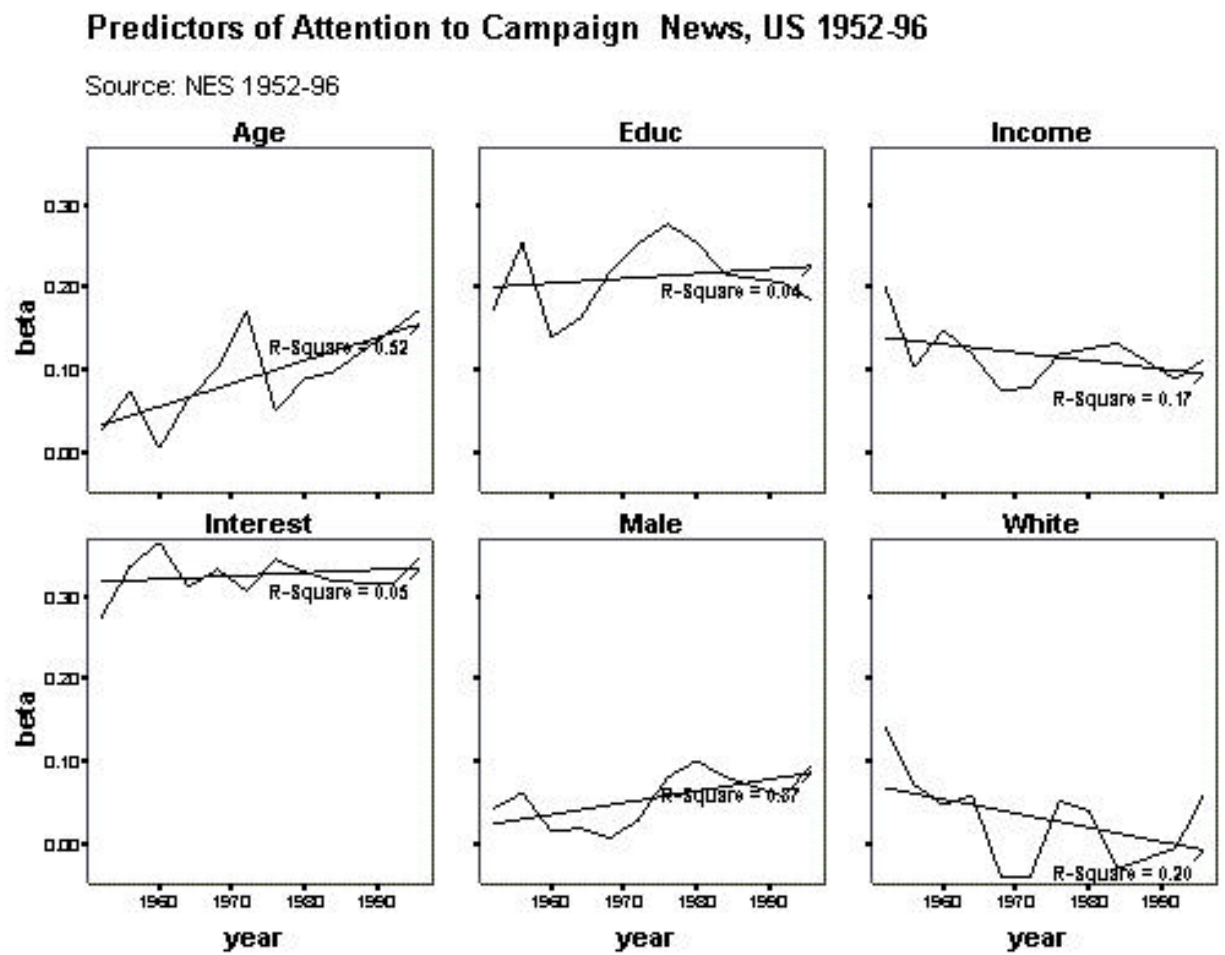


Figure 13.5

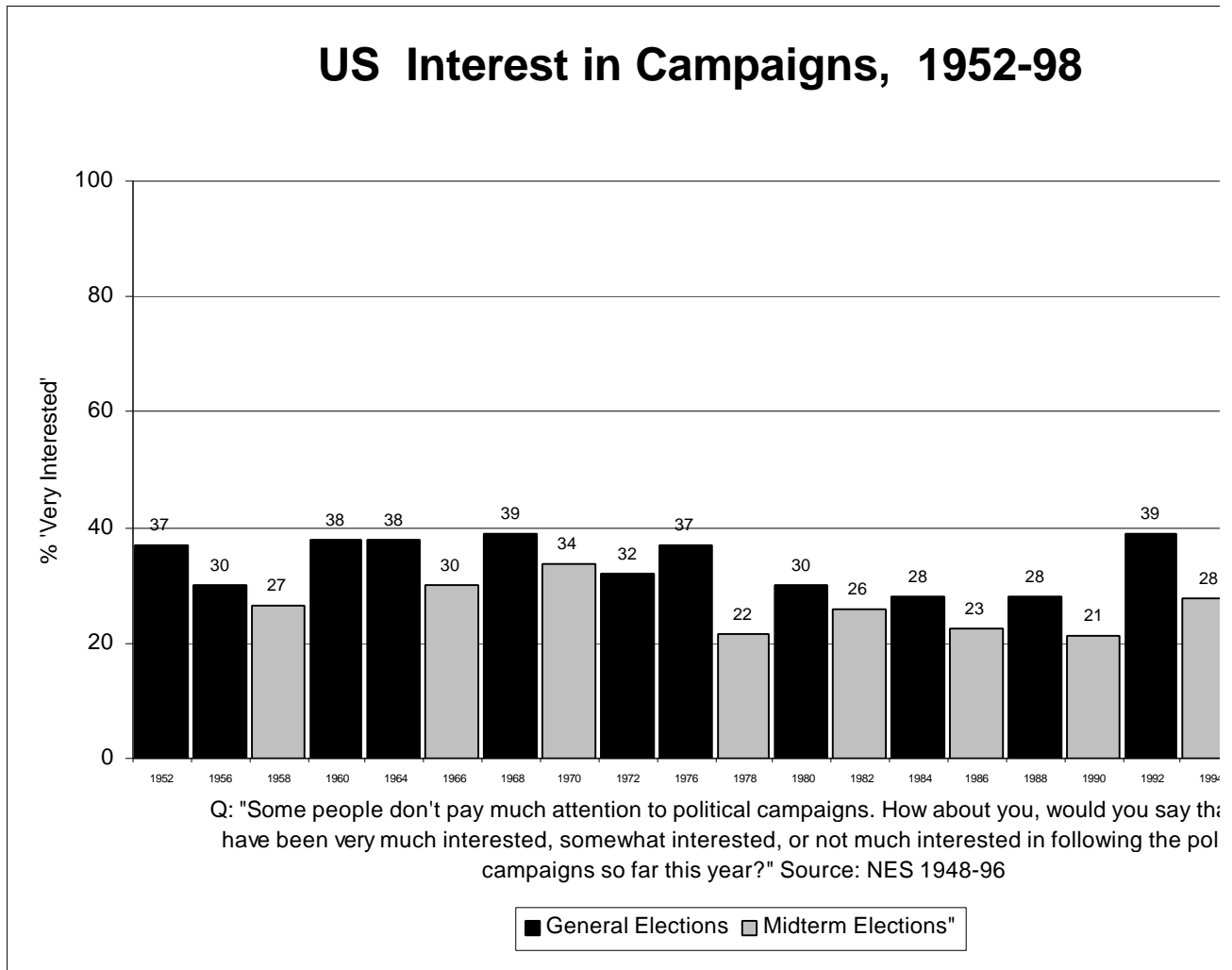


Figure 13.6

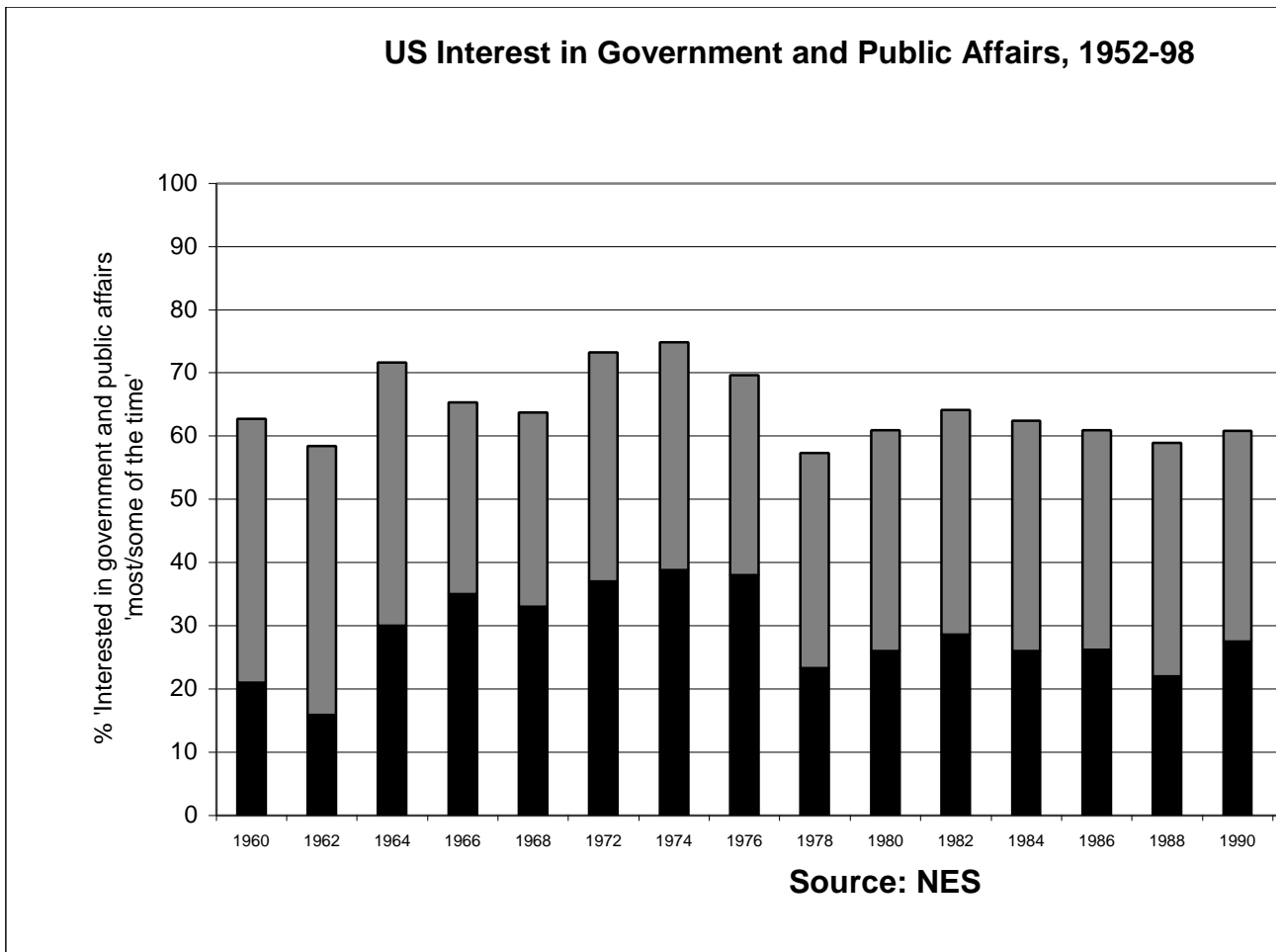
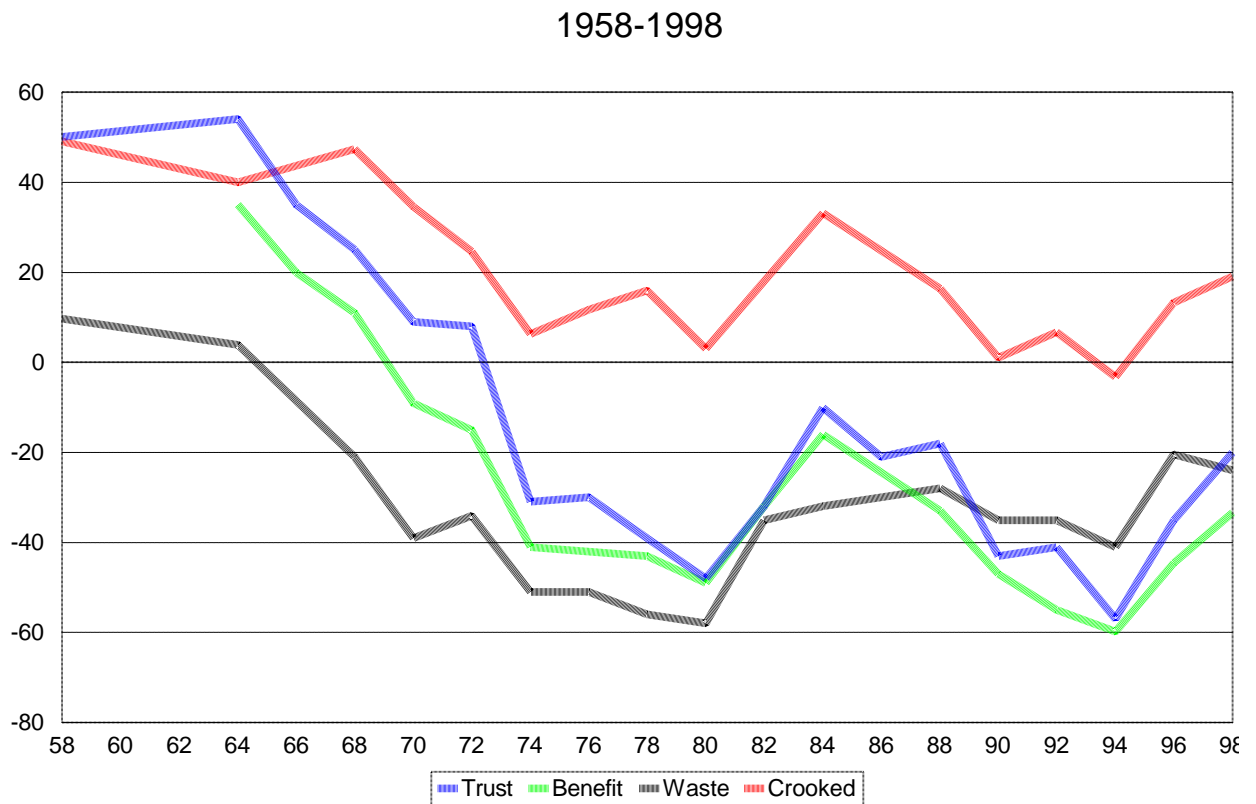


Figure 13.7

## Trends in American Political Trust



Source: NES Percentage Difference Index #

Figure 13.8

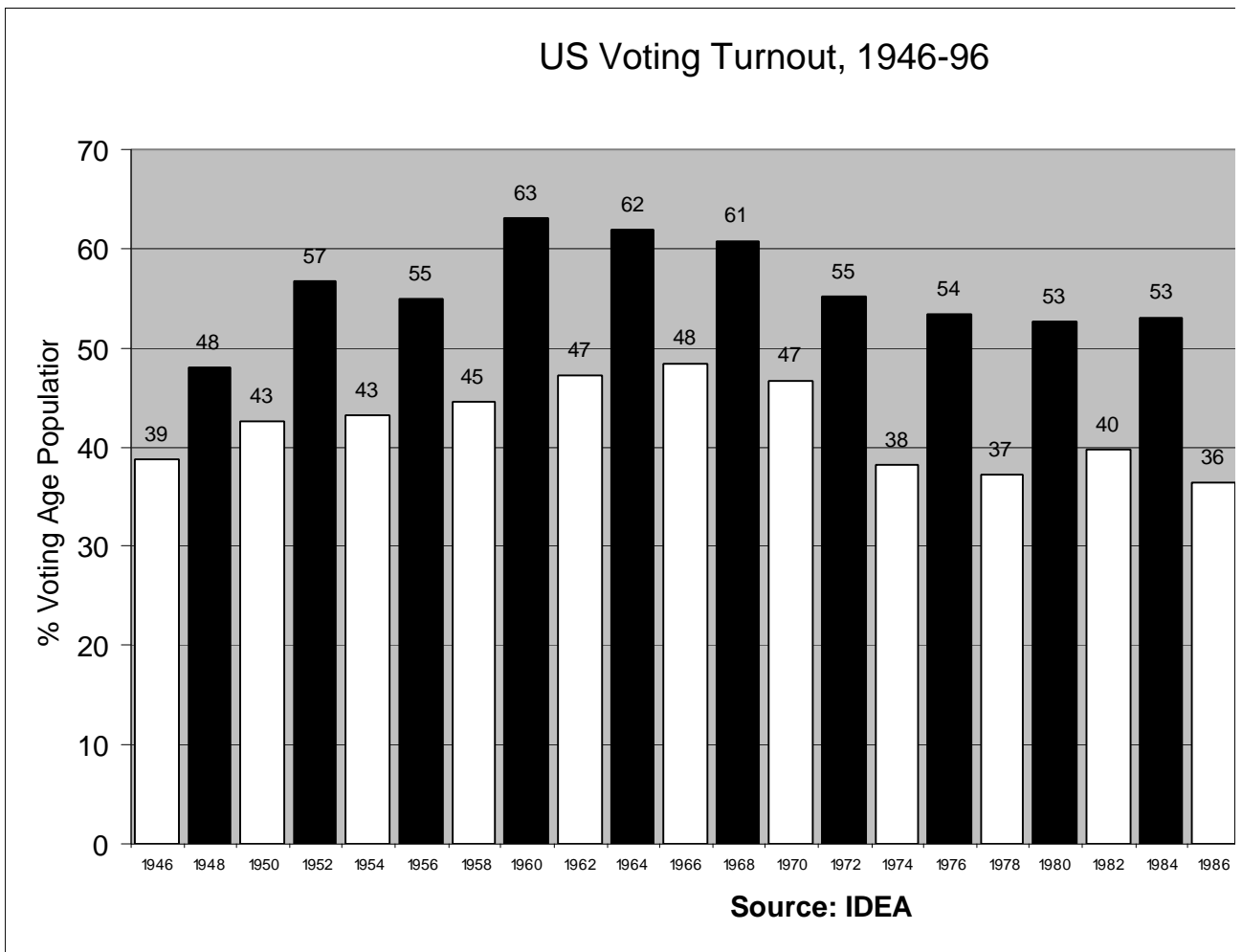
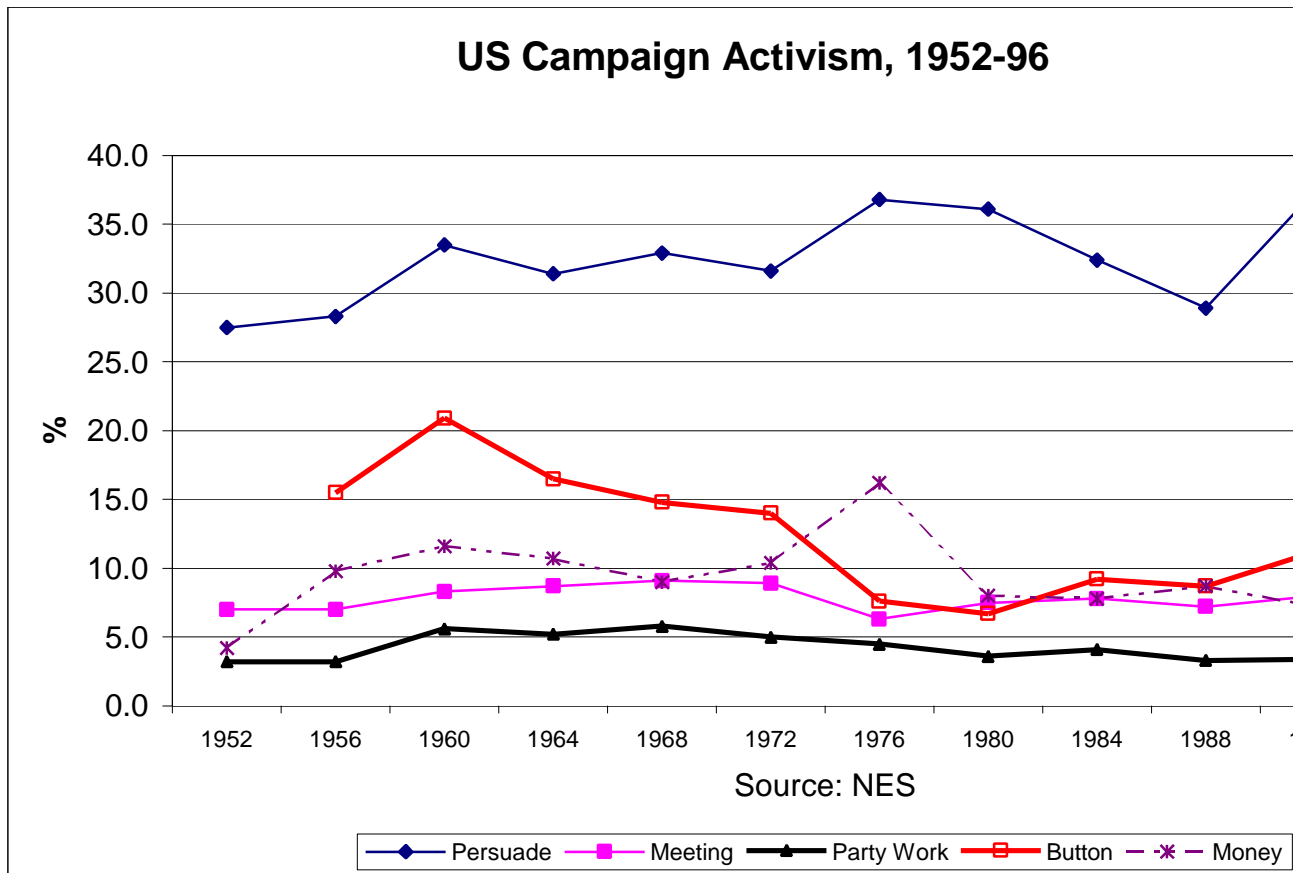


Figure 13.9



Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 13.1: Knowledge of Political Leaders and Parties by Media Use, US 1998**

| % Correct                                 | All   | Paper     |       | National TV News |       | Local TV News |       |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
|                                           |       | Not daily | Daily | Not Daily        | Daily | Not Daily     | Daily |
| Proportion of the Electorate              | 100   | 65        | 35    | 65               | 35    | 56            |       |
| Know Gore is Vice President               | 88    | 86        | 94    | 87               | 91    | 89            |       |
| Know GOP controlled House                 | 67    | 61        | 79    | 62               | 67    | 66            |       |
| Know Gingrich is/was Speaker of the House | 60    | 55        | 69    | 57               | 64    | 60            |       |
| Know GOP controlled Senate                | 56    | 49        | 69    | 50               | 65    | 54            |       |
| Know Yeltsin is President of Russia       | 50    | 48        | 54    | 48               | 53    | 53            |       |
| Know Rehnquist is Chief Justice           | 11    | 8         | 16    | 10               | 12    | 12            |       |
|                                           |       |           |       |                  |       |               |       |
| None correct                              | 8     | 10        | 3     | 9                | 6     | 7             |       |
| 1-3 correct                               | 41    | 45        | 34    | 44               | 36    | 40            |       |
| 4-5 correct                               | 45    | 40        | 54    | 41               | 52    | 45            |       |
| All correct                               | 6     | 5         | 9     | 6                | 7     | 8             |       |
| Mean score                                | 3.3   | 3.0       | 3.8   | 3.1              | 3.6   | 3.3           | 3     |
| Zero order correlation.                   | .26** | .19**     |       | .17**            |       | .01           |       |

Chapter from Pippa Norris *"A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies."* (Press, Fall 2000)

**Note:** Q: "Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like. AL GORE. What job or political office does he now hold?"

Q"Do you happen to know which party had the most member IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES the election (this/last) month?" *Daily* = use media every day. *Not daily* =do not use media

**Source:** American NES 1998

**Table 13.2 Predictors of Knowledge of Leaders and Parties, US 1998**

|                          | Political Leaders<br>and Parties<br>(i) | Sig       | Political Leaders<br>and Parties<br>(ii) | Sig       | Operation                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| <b>STRUCTURAL</b>        |                                         |           |                                          |           |                             |
| Education                | .31                                     | **        | .27                                      | **        | Education scale             |
| Gender: Male             | .22                                     | **        | .19                                      | **        | Male (1) Female (0)         |
| Age                      | .15                                     | **        | .15                                      | **        | Age in years                |
| Household Income         | .07                                     | *         | .05                                      |           | Household income scale      |
| <b>ATTITUDINAL</b>       |                                         |           |                                          |           |                             |
| Political discussion     | .10                                     | **        | .08                                      | **        | How often discuss: never, , |
| Lib-Con Ideology         | -.07                                    | *         | -.09                                     | *         | 7 point scale: From libera  |
| <b>USE OF NEWS MEDIA</b> |                                         |           |                                          |           |                             |
| <b>Media News Use</b>    | <b>.11</b>                              | <b>**</b> |                                          |           | 29-point use of TV news + ; |
| <b>Newspaper</b>         |                                         |           | <b>-.04</b>                              |           | 7-point scale: How often r  |
| <b>National TV News</b>  |                                         |           | <b>.15</b>                               | <b>**</b> | 7-point scale: How often w  |
| <b>Local TV News</b>     |                                         |           | <b>-.08</b>                              |           | 7-point scale: How often w  |
| <b>Radio News</b>        |                                         |           | <b>.01</b>                               |           | 7-point scale: How often l  |
| <b>Net Campaign News</b> |                                         |           | <b>.13</b>                               | <b>*</b>  | Yes (1) No (0)              |
| Constant                 | .674                                    |           | 1.47                                     |           |                             |
| R2                       | .25                                     |           | .21                                      |           |                             |

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (Harvard University Press, Fall 2000)

**Notes:** Columns report the standardized beta coefficients predicting knowledge based on ordinary least squares regression. The dependent variable is the 6-point scale measuring knowledge. See Table 13.1 for details. Model (i) with controls and separate scales for each media. Sig. P. \*\*>.01 \*>.05

Source: American NES 1998 N.1,281

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 13.3: Political Mistrust and Media Use, US 1998**

| % Mistrusting Response                                      | All | Paper     |       | National TV News |       | Local TV News |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
|                                                             |     | Not daily | Daily | Not Daily        | Daily | Not Daily     | Daily |
| 'Quite a few in Government are crooked'                     | 40  | 46        | 31    | 42               | 37    | 43            |       |
| 'Government wastes a lot of tax'                            | 62  | 64        | 58    | 61               | 63    | 61            |       |
| Government does what is right 'Only some of the time/never' | 60  | 62        | 57    | 61               | 59    | 63            |       |
| 'Government is run by a few big interests'                  | 67  | 67        | 66    | 67               | 67    | 67            |       |
|                                                             |     |           |       |                  |       |               |       |
| Zero order correlation media use and political trust scale. |     | .07*      |       | .01              |       | .06           |       |

Note: *Daily* = use media every day. *Not daily* =do not use media every day.

Source: American NES 1998

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (Harvard University Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 13.4 Predictors of Political Trust and Efficacy, US 1998**

|                          | <i>Trust in Government</i> | <i>Sig</i> | <i>Political Efficacy</i> | <i>Sig</i> | <i>Operation</i>            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>STRUCTURAL</b>        |                            |            |                           |            |                             |
| Education                | .02                        |            | .28                       | **         | Education scale             |
| Gender: Male             | .05                        |            | .05                       |            | Male (1) Female (0)         |
| Age                      | .03                        |            | -.08                      | **         | Age in years                |
| Household Income         | .01                        |            | .09                       | **         | Household income scale      |
| <b>ATTITUDINAL</b>       |                            |            |                           |            |                             |
| Political discussion     | -.02                       |            | .11                       | **         | How often discuss: never, , |
| Lib-Con Ideology         | -.05                       |            | -.07                      | *          | 7 point scale: From libera  |
| <b>USE OF NEWS MEDIA</b> |                            |            |                           |            |                             |
| <b>Media News Use</b>    | <b>.11</b>                 | <b>**</b>  | <b>.05</b>                |            | 29-point use of TV news + ; |
| Constant                 | 6.7                        |            | 5.6                       |            |                             |
| R2                       | .02                        |            | .15                       |            |                             |

**Notes:** Columns report the standardized beta coefficients predicting trust and efficacy based on ordinary models. See Table 13.3 for details. Sig. P. \*\*>.01 \*>.05

Source: American NES 1998 N.1,281

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (Cambridge University Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 13.5 Predictors of Campaign Activism, US 1998**

|                          | Campaign Activism<br>(i) | Sig       | Campaign Activism<br>(ii) | Sig | Operation                     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|
| <b>STRUCTURAL</b>        |                          |           |                           |     |                               |
| Education                | .13                      | **        | .04                       |     | Education scale               |
| Gender: Male             | .09                      | **        | .04                       |     | Male (1) Female (0)           |
| Age                      | .08                      | *         | .03                       |     | Age in years                  |
| Household Income         | .08                      | *         | .15                       | **  | Household income scale        |
| <b>ATTITUDINAL</b>       |                          |           |                           |     |                               |
| Political discussion     | .12                      | **        | .11                       | **  | How often discuss: never, ... |
| Lib-Con Ideology         | .01                      |           | .06                       |     | 7 point scale: From libera    |
| <b>USE OF NEWS MEDIA</b> |                          |           |                           |     |                               |
| <b>Media News Use</b>    | <b>.13</b>               | <b>**</b> |                           |     | 29-point use of TV news + ... |
| <b>Newspaper</b>         |                          |           | <b>.08</b>                |     | 7-point scale: How often r    |
| <b>National TV News</b>  |                          |           | <b>.11</b>                | *   | 7-point scale: How often w    |
| <b>Local TV News</b>     |                          |           | <b>-.01</b>               |     | 7-point scale: How often w    |
| <b>Radio News</b>        |                          |           | <b>.05</b>                |     | 7-point scale: How often l    |
| <b>Net Campaign News</b> |                          |           | <b>.12</b>                | *   | Yes (1) No (0)                |
| Constant                 | -.82                     |           | -1.01                     |     |                               |
| R2                       | .10                      |           | .08                       |     |                               |

**Notes:** Columns report the standardized beta coefficients predicting campaign activism based on ordinary least squares models. The participation variable is the 6-point scale measuring attending a candidate meeting, working for a candidate, donating money to a candidate or party, displaying a campaign button, and talking to others for or against a candidate. \* > .05

Source: American NES 1998 N.1,281

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (Press, Fall 2000)

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent thorough discussion of the 'American exceptionalism' thesis see Graham K. Wilson. 1998. *Only in America? The Politics of the United States in Comparative Perspective*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

<sup>2</sup> See Anthony King. 1997. *Running Scared*. New York: The Free Press.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart. Eds. 1997. *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Graham K. Wilson. 1998. *Only in America? The Politics of the United States in Comparative Perspective*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House. P.103.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Hartz. 1955. *The Liberal Tradition in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace; Seymour Martin Lipset. 1996. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York: Norton.

<sup>6</sup> Graham K. Wilson. 1998. *Only in America? The Politics of the United States in Comparative Perspective*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House. P.38.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Taylor-Gooby. 1989. 'The Role of the State.' In *British Social Attitudes: Special International Report*. Ed. Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon and Lindsay Brook. Aldershot: Gower.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Patterson. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Vintage.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Robinson. 1976. 'Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of "the Selling of the President".' *American Political Science Review*. 70(3): 409-32; Arthur Miller, Edie H. Goldenberg, and Lutz Erbring. 1979. 'Type-Set Politics: The Impact of Newspapers on Public Confidence.' *American Political Science Review*. 73: 67-84.

<sup>10</sup> George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorielli. 1982. 'Charting the Mainstream: Television's Contribution to Political Orientations.' *Journal of Communication*. 32(2): 100-27; George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorielli. 1984. 'Political Correlates of Television Viewing.' *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 48(1): 283-300.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Patterson. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Vintage.

<sup>12</sup> Neil Postman. 1985. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. London: Methuen.

<sup>13</sup> These models are not intended to include all the attitudinal and behavioural variables that might contribute towards a comprehensive explanation of civic engagement, but rather to include only the social and attitudinal controls that are strictly comparable across the Eurobarometer and NES surveys. The aim of the analysis is not to 'explain' civic engagement but to see whether use of the news media

remains significant even after introducing prior controls that might plausibly influence such use.

<sup>14</sup> Steven Chaffee and Stacey Frank. 1996. 'How Americans get Political Information: Print versus Broadcast News'. In *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: The Media and Politics* edited by Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Volume 546: 48-58; David Weaver. 'What Voters Learn from Media.' In *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: The Media and Politics* edited by Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Volume 546:34-47.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Earl Bennett, Staci L. Rhine, Richard S. Flickinger and Linda L.M. Bennett. 1999. 'Videomalaise Revisited: Reconsidering the relation between the public's view of the media and trust in government.' *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 4(4):XXX-XXX.

<sup>17</sup> Roderick Hart. 1994. *Seducing America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Putnam. 1995. 'Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America.' *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* XXVIII(4):664-83.

<sup>19</sup> The Cronbachs' Alpha measuring intercorrelations for the activism scale was 0.69.

<sup>20</sup> Pippa Norris. 1996. 'Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam.' *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* XXIX(3).

<sup>21</sup> Pippa Norris. 2000. 'Television and Civic Malaise.' In *What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracies*, eds. Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>22</sup> George Gerbner. 1980. 'The Mainstreaming of America.' *Journal of Communication*, 30:10-29.

<sup>23</sup> Pippa Norris. 1996. 'Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam.' *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* XXIX(3).

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar. 1995. *Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Putnam. 1995. 'Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America.' *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* XXVIII(4):664-83.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Patterson. 1994. *Out of Order*. New York: Vintage Books. P. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Warren Miller and Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The Changing American Voter*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Putnam. 1996. 'The Strange Disappearance of Civic America.' *The American Prospect*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion see Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan. P.179.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Hallin. 1989. *The Uncensored War*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of alternative explanations of these trends see Joseph S. Nye, Philip D. Zelikow and David C. King. 1997. *Why People Don't Trust Government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. For performance-based explanations see Ian McAllister 'The Economic Performance of Governments' and also Arthur Miller and Ola Listhaug 'Political Performance and Institutional Trust.' Both in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, edited by Pippa Norris. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

<sup>32</sup> Arend Lijphart. 1997. 'Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma.' *American Political Science Review*. 91: 1-14; Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>33</sup> For a general discussion of these trends see Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan. The temporary increase in donations that occurred in 1976 may have been caused by the new campaign finance reforms regulated by the Federal Election Commission.