

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE MEDIAN VOTER?*

**Morris P. Fiorina
Stanford University**

**Prepared for the MIT Conference on Parties and Congress,
Cambridge, MA, October 2, 1999**

***Thanks to Steve Ansolabehere, Dave Brady, Tim Groseclose, Doug McAdam, Rebecca Morton and Ken Shepsle for helpful comments. Corrections and suggestions are welcome.**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE MEDIAN VOTER?

Morris P. Fiorina
Stanford University

In the middle decades of the 20th century conventional wisdom held that American politics was inherently centrist. On most issues, most of the time, the two major party candidates would take middle-of-the-road positions. Not everyone was happy with this state of affairs. Some political commentators (especially on the Republican side) complained about “me too” politics, and some prominent political scientists (APSA 1950) even proposed institutional reforms designed to foster clear partisan differences. But first generation models offered by political theorists (Downs 1957) provided a logical explanation for the apparent centripetal tendency of two-party competition, and the Republican debacle of 1964 (“a choice, not an echo”) was notably consistent with the theoretical account.¹

Time has not been kind to the mid-century conventional wisdom. Today political commentary (Dionne 1991) decries the needless polarization of American politics. Reformers worry less about fostering clear partisan differences than about muting them via the blanket primary and front-loading. Empirical indications of polarization have stimulated a generation of younger political theorists to extend and complicate the Downsian spatial model in ways that permit opposing candidates to take distinct positions away from the center of gravity of the voter distribution. And by the last election of the millenium the notion of targeting the median voter had all but disappeared from popular commentary. Instead, journalistic analysis of the 1998 elections focused

¹ So might the 1972 Democratic debacle, although some scholars (eg. Popkin, et. al.1976) claim that McGovern's defeat owed less to extreme issue positions than to his perceived incompetence.

on “revving up,” “firing up,” and “energizing” the party’s base by feeding them “red meat” and other political energy foods:

The problem for both parties is that hard-core voters might decide that the midterm elections are inconsequential, staying home in droves. In what is expected to be a low-turnout election anyway, this scenario has strategists in both parties worried. (Cook 1997).

Pandering to the ideological extremes would not be necessary if the officeholders thought that moderation and modest achievements would be rewarded by voters who say that limited government and common sense solutions are what they want. But with the prospect of low turnouts, it is the most motivated—and militant—elements at the edges of the ideological spectrum who will receive the most attention. (Broder 1997).

As they gear up for the election, Republicans and Democrats are operating on the premise that turnout will be low and the outcome will be determined by partisan activists. Consequently, GOP leaders intent on revving up the party’s conservative base are about to serve up as much red meat as a Kansas City steak house. (Doherty 1998).

Even if there is a backlash against Starr, Republicans don’t really care. They are not focused on swing voters or fence-sitters. Their strategy for the fall is clear and calculating: Appeal to the hard-core Republican base. Get them as outraged as possible. Make sure they give money and vote heavily. (Roberts and Roberts 1998).

The biggest question for both parties is who will vote and who will stay home on November 3. Core republicans right now are angrier and thus more motivated to vote than core Democrats, polls show. (Lawrence 1998a).

But turnout, not Clinton, is the specter stalking the political landscape this fall. That is why both parties have returned to the old-time religion: GOTV, shorthand for “get out the vote.” (Lawrence 1998b).

Whatever happened to the median voter? Rather than attempt to move her “off the fence” or “swing” her from one party to another, today’s campaigners seem to be ignoring her. Instead, they see their task as making sure that strong partisans and ideologues don’t pout and stay home. Why has a model of centrist, politics that seemed

like an appropriate description of American politics in the 1950s and even the 1960s² become an inappropriate model by the 1990s? I do not have an answer as yet, but I think the question is one of the more important ones now facing the elections subfield.

POLARIZATION IN AMERICAN POLITICS

A skeptic might ask whether the image of polarized politics is overdrawn. Didn't Bill Clinton pick the Republican "lock" on the presidency by running as a centrist Democrat in 1992 (helped along by anti-Bush retrospective voting, to be sure)? And didn't Clinton win reelection in 1996 by "triangulating" to a centrist position between congressional Republicans and Democrats? Didn't George Bush win in 1988 by tarring Michael Dukakis with the "L-word" and seizing the center for himself? And doesn't some research (Stimson 1991) indicate that even Ronald Reagan was closer to the center in 1980 than many at the time thought? Even as I write George W. Bush seems to be putting some distance between himself and the conservative Republicans in Congress. Clearly, centripetal forces continue to operate in American politics, especially at the presidential level.

At other levels of government, however, scholars comment on increased polarization. The specter of a unified Republican House delegation doggedly pursuing the impeachment of President Clinton is fresh in everyone's mind, of course. But more comprehensive and systematic evidence of national political polarization is available as well. Poole and Rosenthal (1984) titled a 1980s article "The Polarization of American Politics" and currently have a larger project by that name underway. Collie and Mason (1999) report a secular increase in the distance between Democratic and Republicans in

² As late as 1968 George Wallace could strike a chord with his charge that "there's not a dime's worth of difference between the Democrats and Republicans."

Congress: the mean difference in ACU scores has doubled, while median distance has increased 50 percent (figure 1).

[Figure 1. Collie and Mason ACU score plot]

As I have noted previously (Fiorina 1974: 22-23), discussions of polarization often confuse two different senses of the term. Parties can be polarized *across* districts and/or *within* districts. The Republican and Democratic incumbents plotted in Figure 1 could be very far apart in *Congress* while still taking positions very close to the Democratic and Republican challengers *in their districts*. This does not contradict the traditional centripetal models; candidates still converge in their races, but some empirical factor has changed the distribution of districts won by the two parties. The transformation of the South is a likely candidate (Rohde 1991). If, however, Republican and Democratic candidates *in the same contests* (as in the 1964 presidential race) are polarized, that does contradict the older models. Comparing winning Republicans to winning Democrats from different districts as in Figure 1 says little or nothing about the latter kind of polarization.

Both varieties of polarization probably are politically consequential, and inter-district polarization plays a role in formal models of internal organization (Krehbiel 1991) and policy-making (Krehbiel 1998). But from an electoral standpoint, intra-district polarization is of greater interest.³ It is not puzzling to learn that a New York City

³ Indeed, Medina (1999) points out that if a standard median voter model were operating, there would be intra-district convergence, and all district elections would end in ties. If ties are broken fairly, just as many Republicans would be elected from “left” districts as Democrats, and just as many Democrats would be elected from “right” districts as Republicans. Consequently, a plot such as Figure 1 would show no difference between Democrats and Republicans. Given that Figure 1 takes the form that it does, the standard median voter model can not be operating at the district level.

Democrat Congressman is strongly anti-gun while a rural Texas Republican is strongly pro-gun. It is far more puzzling if the Republican challenger to the New York City Democrat is an NRA life member, and the Democratic challenger to the southern rural Republican is on the board of Handgun Control Inc. Systematic data on candidate positions within districts are not generally available, so scholars have been forced to investigate the question of intra-district polarization in an indirect way. Looking at districts that experienced changes in party representation in successive elections I found evidence that House candidates were clearly distinct in the late 1960s (Table 1). Analogous recent analyses by Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (1998) and King (1999) report similar findings: within congressional districts the candidates are quite far apart. Thus, there appears to be significant polarization *within* districts. Even if one candidate in each district is exactly on the district median, then at least half the candidates are far off the district median; more likely, both candidates are off the median, but in different directions.

[Table 1 here]

Has intra-district polarization *increased*? Did centripetal forces dominate at some earlier time but give way to centrifugal forces at some point? As noted, I found considerable divergence as early as the mid-1960s, and Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (1999) find considerable divergence as far back as the 1870s. Still, data reported in an earlier version of the latter authors' paper shows evidence of steadily increasing candidate divergence until the past decade.⁴ Thus, I regard polarization in

⁴ Regressions on the data reported in Table 4 of the July 29, 1998 version of their paper shows that party replacements became about .025 standardized Heckman-Snyder points more distant each decade, about .035 points more distant if the most recent decade is excluded.

congressional elections as an established phenomenon in need of theoretical explanation, and increased polarization as a related hypothesis that rests on shakier empirical ground. The body of this paper engages in some arbitrage between subfields. I review explanations of candidate divergence offered by formal theorists, consider how these theoretical suggestions match up with what we know about American politics, raise some questions, and suggest gaps in both the theoretical and empirical literatures that need to be filled.

WHY POLARIZATION?

Theoretical development after Downs has identified a number of considerations that support candidate divergence. I survey these with emphasis on whether they are consistent with data and findings about American electoral politics in recent decades.⁵ I do not judge the theoretical generality or robustness of the models; rather, the intent is to gain a better understanding of the possible empirical sources of candidate divergence.⁶

Explanation I: Abstention

Downs identified abstention as a possible brake on the tendency of candidates to converge to the median. If extremists abstain as the closer party becomes more distant

⁵ What follows is by no means an exhaustive survey. For the most part I cite only the articles that first offered a consideration that produced divergence, not the subsequent articles that extended and refined the original results. For those wishing more detail a particularly useful theoretical review article is that of Osborne (1995).

⁶ In particular, I will ignore the generic problem that in the multidimensional case, existence of candidate equilibria is exceedingly rare (McKelvey 1976, Schofield 1978). I tend to believe that the importance of this problem is somewhat exaggerated. In the absence of equilibria a wide variety of models (Kramer 1977, Ferejohn, Fiorina, and Packel 1980, McKelvey, 1986) suggest that outcomes tend toward “central” regions of the voter distribution. I will assume that this remains true when the models are complicated with the considerations discussed below. While this belief may prove false in specific instances, it is better to cast a wide net in an enterprise like this one.

(abstention due to alienation), a candidate may lose more votes than she gains as she moves toward the center, a possibility that seems more likely if centrist voters also abstain as the candidates become more indistinct (abstention due to indifference). In short, policy-based abstention could diminish the electoral rewards and increase the electoral costs of moving to the center. Downs' original discussion is rather casual, but Hinich and Ordeshook (1969) formalize these notions of abstention and analyze their role more rigorously. General propositions are hard to come by, but under some special conditions candidates do not converge, even with unimodal distributions of voter preferences (Riker and Ordeshook 1973: 343).⁷

Abstention has increased since the early 1960s, hence, if candidate divergence were a function of abstention, there is variation in the latter that might correspond in some way to variation in divergence. But although policy-based abstention might seem to be an intuitively plausible explanation for candidate divergence, it seems not to have much empirical relevance. Brody and Page (1973) report that indifference and alienation have some relationship to presidential election turnout, but the effect is small. Similarly, Weisberg and Grofman (1981) conclude that abstention traceable to indifference, alienation, or satisfaction is "minimal."⁸ These findings are consistent with a vast political science literature that concludes that turnout largely reflects resource and cost considerations that are pretty much constant from election to election. Contrary to some of the journalists quoted above, turnout simply is not much affected by election-specific factors. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 156), for example, report that people who care which party wins are only about 6 percent more likely to vote than those who

⁷ Slutsky (1975) argues however, that the abstention and indifference formulations of abstention in the spatial modelling literature are neither theoretically well-grounded, nor logically consistent.

⁸ Abstention from "satisfaction" is a somewhat nebulous category: citizens are not indifferent, but they are basically satisfied with both candidates.

don't care; similarly, those who strongly prefer one candidate are only about 6 percent more likely to vote than those who have no preference. Especially given that such survey responses partly reflect people's rationalizations of decisions to vote based on other grounds, election-related abstention does not seem important enough to be a significant explanation of the extent of candidate divergence that is our central concern.⁹ Why, then, do campaigners put so much emphasis on issues as generators of turnout? Are they focusing on small, but consequential variations in a few specific close races, or do they believe the effects are larger than the political science literature suggests?

Explanation II: Policy-Oriented Candidates

The Downsian model assumes parties are motivated solely by the desire to win office. One does not have to be a starry-eyed idealist to believe that policy and ideology also matter to party elites and candidates. Wittman (1977) was the first theorist to examine this possibility seriously, and Calvert (1985) derived the first rigorous results from a model in which candidate utility depends on policy outcomes as well as winning.¹⁰ Calvert shows that policy-oriented candidates who have perfect information about voter preferences converge to the median in exactly the same manner as office-oriented candidates. Thus, contrary to intuition, policy-oriented candidates are not sufficient to

⁹ This is not to say that GOTV ("get out the vote") efforts do not matter. On the contrary, Rosenstone and Hansen find that they do, as have various earlier studies (Kramer 1970) and more recent ones (Gerber and Green 1999). But Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 175-7) conclude that mobilization works by underwriting the costs of participation and attaching people to networks of valued others. These mobilization studies do not show that issue appeals are what mobilize people.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that in Calvert's and other models that presume a trade-off between a candidate's desire to win and a concern with policy, the concern is with the policy *outcome* of the election not the policy *position* advocated by the candidate. That is, a candidate gets the same utility from her opponent implementing a given platform as from implementing that same platform herself; moreover, a candidate is not troubled by advocating a policy far from her personal ideal point. I am not aware of any models that assume the candidate's utility function depends directly on the *positions* she advocates.

produce divergence (nor are they necessary, as discussed below). But if voter preferences are uncertain, policy-oriented candidates can diverge, and with great uncertainty and strongly policy-oriented candidates, considerable divergence may result. Alesina (1988) shows that lack of candidate believability can have the same effect as uncertainty about voter preferences. Assume that candidates know voter preferences, but cannot credibly commit to implement the policy position they run on. In a one-shot game citizens know that candidates can not be trusted; thus, they will ignore candidate pronouncements, and the winning candidate will implement his or her most preferred position. If elections are embedded in a sequence, however, so that candidates have incentive to form reputations, this result no longer holds.

The preceding theoretical contributions suggest three possible sources of increasing candidate divergence: increasingly polarized candidate preferences, increasing uncertainty about voter preferences, and shortening time horizons of the candidates. Of the three the first seems like the most empirically fruitful possibility. With the explosion of polling and the proliferation of two-way communication (WATS lines, email, fax) today's politicians have more information about voter preferences than ever before (Geer 1996). This runs counter to the informational implication of Calvert's model--that divergence is positively associated with uncertainty. Similarly, counter to the "shadow of the future" effect in Alesina's model, there is little evidence that candidates' time horizons have shortened in recent decades. On the contrary, an entire cohort of scholars has focused on the decline of competition in congressional elections, and scholars have documented growing incumbency advantages (Jewell and Breaux 1988) and increasing tenure levels (Niemi and Winsky 1987) at the state legislative level as well. There is little reason to suppose that today's candidates are more short-sighted than those of yesteryear.

This leaves candidate preferences. Do the Democratic and Republican candidates who contest American elections today have personal policy positions more distinct than their counterparts of a generation ago? Unfortunately, the only systematic information we have on this subject is ambiguous: when candidate positions are measured by their roll call records, the answer is clearly yes, as shown in Figure 1. But roll call records are “induced” or “revealed” or “public” preferences that surely reflect party and constituency considerations as well as personal ideology (Jackson and Kingdon 1992). What we need but don’t have is a time series of survey data on candidate attitudes.¹¹

Possibly we could accumulate indirect evidence of candidate preferences. Recruitment patterns are the most likely place to look. At one time most candidacies were generated by local party organizations. If the historical literature is correct, party organizations selected for such characteristics as loyalty and electability more so than ideological purity. As local party organizations declined under the cumulative effects of civil service reform, public sector unionization, suburbanization, television and so forth, other recruitment patterns became more common. One obvious source of candidacies is the numerous social movements and single-issue organizations that became common in the 1960s and afterwards. Presumably people coming out of such organizations are more policy-oriented and more likely to have distinctive views than the party stalwarts of previous eras.¹²

¹¹ Fragmentary evidence exists that might possibly be of use. Miller and Stokes (1963) surveyed 1958 candidates as part of their classic representation study, Sullivan and O’Connor (1972) analyze a 1966 survey conducted for NBC News, and Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (1998) analyze a Project Vote Smart survey for 1996. Even setting aside questions of item comparability, however, given their media sponsorship the 1966 and 1996 surveys arguably measure revealed or public preferences.

¹² I am indebted to a conversation with Doug McAdam on this point.

Explanation III: Citizen Preferences

Downs asserted that the location of electoral equilibria would depend on the shape of the distribution of citizen preferences. In particular, bimodal distributions would lead the two parties to take distinct positions near the differing modes. Downs' conjecture was wrong, of course. The precise statement of the median voter theorem is that if everyone votes and votes sincerely, and voters have single-peaked preferences, then the ideal point of the median voter defeats any other position in a pairwise vote (Black 1963: ch. 4). This proposition holds irrespective of the shape of the distribution of voter preferences. Thus, the shape of the voter distribution in itself will not support divergent candidate positions.¹³

Still, many analysts—both those of theoretical and empirical bent—believe that diverging citizen preferences must have something to do with the divergent positions taken by today's candidates. The relevant empirical research¹⁴ takes at least three forms: (1) a more polarized *population*, (2) a more polarized *electorate*, (3) a *nomination process* that generates polarized candidates.

1. A More Polarized Population?

If the decision to vote is treated as endogenous to the campaign—contrary to the large literature noted above—then the preferences of the entire age-eligible population are relevant. There is very little evidence that the country as a whole is any

¹³ There is a technical exception to this conclusion. If the number of voters is even, then the median is not unique: it is the continuum of points bounded by and including the ideal points of the two median voters. If there were a bimodal distribution of preferences with a long, completely empty middle range, then one candidate could locate at the rightmost ideal point of the left mode and the other at the leftmost ideal point of the right mode, and the election would be a tie. I do not think this case has much empirical relevance.

¹⁴ All of the evidence is—at best—inter-district, but if republican and democratic sympathizers were diverging in district after district, we presumably would see some reflection of this in the aggregate figures.

more polarized today than a generation ago. As is well-known, the country is not as partisan as it was in the 1950s--strength of partisan identification has weakened. The ANES ideological self-classifications and thermometer scales show no evidence of increased polarization. Nor do the ANES seven-point issue scales that have been asked over time (eg. government spending, jobs and standard of living, health insurance).¹⁵ In an exhaustive analysis of GSS and ANES items in connection with the “culture wars” controversy DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson (1996) report only a few examples of increasing polarization since the 1970s, and these are offset by numerous examples of convergent opinion.

Even if population preferences are stable, of course, it is possible that the constituencies of the two parties have grown more distinct. DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson do note, importantly, that the one exception to their null findings about polarization is that Democratic and Republican identifiers have diverged on a number of issues, especially so-called “social issues” (1996: 734-38). There is a serious endogeneity question here, but whatever is causing what, it appears that partisans have moved apart on some issues while independents have converged.

Collie and Mason (1999) take this sorting idea a bit further. Perhaps Congress has polarized because the constituency bases of the congressional parties have grown more distinct even if there has been no change in the aggregate. Collie and Mason divide Democrats and Republicans in ANES national samples into those who have incumbent representatives of their own party, and those who have incumbents of the other party.¹⁶ Their expectation is that party constituencies have become more

¹⁵ Standard deviations of responses to the seven-point issue scales show no trend. In fact, to the extent that any movement at all is discernible, respondents seem to be creeping toward the center on some scales.

¹⁶ They report that independents can be added to party reelection constituencies without changing their findings.

homogeneous internally, and more distinct from each other. In some contrast to DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson, they find only weak evidence that such changes have occurred between 1972 and 1996. Republicans in Republican districts are slightly more conservative today, but Democrats in Democratic districts show no significant change.

In sum, there is little evidence that the population as a whole has become more polarized. There is some evidence that party identifiers have moved apart, although whether that is a cause or reflection of party polarization is unknown.

2. A More Polarized Electorate?

The journalists quoted earlier make reference to the related facts of low mid-term turnout and its presumably unrepresentative nature. The post-1960 turnout decline has resulted in a presidential electorate only half as large as the eligible electorate, and a midterm electorate scarcely a third as large. Thus, there would seem to be plenty of room for an increasingly unrepresentative electorate to affect candidate positioning.

Political scientists long have known that partisanship is related to turnout. Strong partisans are somewhat over-represented in the electorate, while independents are under-represented, and the relationship between strength of partisanship and turnout has increased as turnout has declined (Figure 2). Similarly, strong ideologues are somewhat over-represented, while non-ideologues are under-represented (Figure 3). Thus, today's shrunken electorate is more partisan and more ideological than that of a generation ago. Still, the relationships were weak to begin with and they have not become much stronger over time. The correlation (Somers's d) between turnout and strength of partisanship in presidential elections rises from .12 in 1960 when turnout was at a modern high, to .21 in 1996 when turnout hit its modern low. The corresponding

figures for midterm elections are .18 in 1962 to .24 in 1998. Correlations between ideological intensity and turnout are similar in magnitude and change.

[Figures 2 and 3: time trends of reported turnout of partisans/ideologues]

Combining party and ideology reveals somewhat more evidence of polarization between voters and nonvoters (Figure 4). Republican (Democratic) party identifiers who vote are increasingly more conservative (liberal) than those who do not. The effect is stronger for Republicans, but not huge in any case.

[Figure 4: voter v. nonvoter partisanship/ideology]

The Collie and Mason observation is relevant here as well. Perhaps the distinctiveness of the parties' *actual* supporting constituencies—voting partisans--has grown while that of their potential supporting constituencies—all partisans--has not. But the two proportions differ only marginally, and the trend for voting identifiers to become more distinct from each other is no stronger than that for all identifiers (Figure 5).

[Figure 5: Reported turnout of Identifiers, voting identifiers, and activists in districts with incumbents of the same party]

In sum, *electorates* are slightly more partisan and more ideological than the country as a whole, but as documented by numerous empirical studies (most recently, Teixeira (1992: ch. 3) the differences are not major. Sliced and diced in various ways the national electorate is only slightly more polarized than it was two decades ago. In the absence of models that show exceptional sensitivity of candidate positions to the

shape of the voter distribution, increasing polarization of mass preferences seems an unlikely explanation of candidate divergence.

3. *Caucus and Primary Electorates*

Probably empirically minded scholars have attributed candidate divergence more to the nomination process than to any other single factor. There are innumerable claims in the literature to the effect that the presidential nomination process pulls Democratic presidential candidates to the left and Republicans to the right.¹⁷ Systematic evidence exists as well. For example, Brady and Schwartz (1995) argue that the abortion issue hurts Republican senatorial candidates more than Democrats, because increasingly the Republican primary electorate locates itself on the extreme pro-life end of the issue, whereas the Democratic primary electorate resembles the general election electorate on the issue. Francis, Kenny, Morton and Schmidt (1994) conclude that the decisions of U.S. Representatives to run for the Senate are best explained by a divergent platform specification which they interpret as a reflection of the preferences of the state's primary voters. And Gerber and Morton (1998) find that U.S. Representatives elected in closed primary states are the most extreme, *ceteris paribus*.

The earliest theoretical treatment of elections as two-stage processes (that I am aware of) is that of Coleman (1971), who reports a suggestive analysis of the reaction functions of candidates interested both in winning and in policy outcomes. Aranson and Ordeshook (1972) model candidates who must choose a single strategy that maximizes the joint probability of nomination and election. Drawing on the stylized facts about primary electorates, Aranson and Ordeshook assume that Republican nominators lie to the right of the median, while Democratic nominators lie to the left. Candidates form

¹⁷ There are a number of empirical studies that contest this claim, however, or at least suggest that it is exaggerated. See Geer (1988) and Norrander (1989).

probability estimates of the strategy choices of their nomination and general election opponents, then calculate probabilistically best responses for themselves. While the analysis rests on specific mathematical assumptions to a greater extent than one would like, under some conditions optimal strategies in which candidates do not converge exist even with symmetric unimodal distributions of voter preferences.

Aranson and Ordeshook treat party activists as exogeneously given, but in a rich analysis Aldrich (1983a) endogenizes activism, showing that in equilibrium party activists emerge who are relatively homogeneous and distinct from each other. While these results assume unidimensionality, they do not depend on the shape of the preference distribution, and under less general conditions they extend to a multidimensional world (Aldrich 1983b). If activists (who, contrary to most other models are motivated in part by the expressive benefits of working for a party) constrain candidate strategies, then Aldrich suggests that party activism may exert a stabilizing influence on electoral competition.

The one place where it is possible to find strong empirical evidence of increasing polarization is in the ranks of party activists. Defining activists as those who have engaged in three or more campaign activities typically isolates about 5 percent of an ANES sample. Over time, the activists have become increasingly separated in terms of their ideological views.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the first year for which we have data—1964—shows considerable polarization, with party activists being about 25 points apart on the liberal-conservative thermometer index. The difference subsides a bit in 1968 to 18

¹⁸ There are many other studies that define activism differently and reach analogous conclusions about increasing polarization in the activist ranks. Miller and Jennings (1986) study delegates to the national conventions, Bruce, Clark and Kessel (1991) survey county-level leaders of presidential campaign organizations, McCann (1996) examines delegates to state conventions, and Brown, Powell and Wilcox (1995) survey financial contributors. Although these studies are not strictly comparable and only look at a few points in time, all conclude that activists are polarized, probably more so than a generation ago.

points, but the activists then progressively diverge, with the difference doubling to 35 points by 1996 (Figure 6). The Collie-Mason wrinkle--comparing activists in districts represented by an incumbent of their own party--shows that the difference in liberal-conservative scores of party activists has increased far more than those of similarly-situated party identifiers and voting party identifiers (refer back to Figure 5).¹⁹ If candidate polarization is a response to constituency polarization, there is strong circumstantial evidence that activists are a key component in this process. This suggests further attention to models such as Feddersen's (1992, 1993) in which the parties are endogeneous—representing coalitions of policy-oriented voters that take distinguishable positions in equilibrium.

[Figure 6. Activist Polarization]

Summary: Citizen, Voter, and/or Activist Polarization

There is evidence of significantly increased polarization among behaviorally defined party activists, if not among voters, or the citizenry at large. Thus, if polarization of constituency preferences is the explanation for congressional polarization, it would seem to lie within a minority of party activists as opposed to the larger electorate. The principal caveat to this tentative conclusion is that most of the available survey data comes from the 1970s and later. Only partisanship can be traced back to the 1950s, which is the natural starting point for this sort of analysis. If we could extend our time series back to the 1950s, we might find a sharp increase in citizen or voter polarization

¹⁹ The evidence for *steadily increasing* polarization is stronger using the ANES 7 point liberal-conservative scale (Figure 5b). The liberal-conservative thermometer index (Figure 5a) shows more of a jump to a higher plateau in 1980. Generally, I rely on the latter because there is less missing data and it extends farther back in time, but at times the two measures suggest somewhat different conclusions.

prior to the relatively stable levels depicted in Figures 3-6.²⁰ Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1976): 142-144) report just such polarization between 1956 and 1973, but the conclusion is subject to the objection that ANES question wording changed between 1964 and 1968 (Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus 1978; Bishop, Tuchfarber and Oldendick 1978). Similarly, McCloskey, Hoffman, and O'Hara (1960) report that in the late 1950s Democratic and Republican identifiers differed significantly on only seven of 24 public policy issues (compared to 23 of 24 significant differences for 1956 national convention delegates), a finding that contrasts with the data in Figure 6, where ideology scores of identifiers are significantly different in every year. Whether these contrasting findings indicate that a real shift occurred or merely reflect item format differences is what needs to be determined.

Stimson (1991) has developed a technique to use different survey items to measure the general trend in public opinion over time. I am presently compiling the data necessary to use his technique to estimate the policy distance between the parties' mass bases over long periods where comparable survey data are not available. This would appear to be the only way of ruling out the hypothesis that mass polarization, albeit in the 1950s or 1960s, underlies the increased polarization at the activist and/or candidate levels.

Explanation IV: Incumbency

Londregan and Romer (1993) develop a model in which the incumbency advantage leads to candidate divergence. Specifically, candidates compete on a policy dimension and also on an "ability" dimension that refers to their capacity to do

²⁰ Carmines and Stimson (1989) report that Democratic and Republican identifiers diverged on racial issues beginning in about 1963, although their account views mass identifiers as responding to candidate behavior, not causing it.

constituency service. More ability always is preferred to less. Thus, the ability dimension captures Stokes' (1963) notion of a "valence issue. The parties are policy-oriented and know the distribution of voter preferences on the policy dimension, but parties are uncertain about the ability levels of their nominees. Voters presume that incumbents have higher ability on average than challengers.

Equilibrium positions in the Londregan-Romer framework are divergent.²¹ Moreover, the more weight voters attach to the ability dimension, the more divergent equilibrium platforms may be. In effect, the parties will indulge their issue positions the more willing are voters to trade off good constituency service and issue agreement. Londregan and Romer argue that under reasonable conditions the size of the incumbency advantage will be correlated with polarization, and report that 1978 ANES data show such a relationship.

Groseclose (1999) generates similar findings in a somewhat different framework. He shows that in the standard one-dimensional model, if one candidate has a valence advantage, however small, then the median ideal point is no longer the equilibrium.²² Expanding Calvert's framework (candidates value both policy outcomes and winning and are uncertain about voter policy preferences) Groseclose finds that the candidate disadvantaged on the valence issue takes a position farther from the center, whereas the advantaged candidate moves toward the center. As with Londregan and Romer, a natural interpretation of the valence advantage is incumbency, where an incumbent's experience and seniority gives her an edge over the challenger, other things being equal. Under this interpretation, challengers should take positions that are more

²¹ Ansolabehere and Snyder (1998) note that this equilibrium depends on the assumption that candidates maximize vote share. If candidates maximize probability of winning, the Londregan-Romer model has no equilibrium.

extreme than incumbents. This is what Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart (1998) report.

Thus, we need not have increasingly divergent candidate policy preferences to produce electoral divergence. Instead, an increased incumbency advantage may be the simplest explanation for divergence. Prior to the mid-1960s the advantage of incumbency was small and barely significant (Alford and Brady 1989), but it jumped in the mid-to-late 1960s and peaked in the late 1980s (Gelman and King 1990). Other things being equal this would have allowed candidates to take increasingly divergent positions.

The one problem with this interpretation that I can see is that Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart report evidence that candidates have been polarized as far back as the 1870s. Since a personal incumbency advantage did not exist for most of the years in the analysis, it cannot be the explanation for divergence apparent before the most recent three decades. I know of no other plausible candidate for a valence advantage prior to the 1960s, so if the Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart findings stand, we have a theoretical account somewhat at odds with the data.

Explanation V: Distributive Politics

Incumbency plays a different role in a little-known model proposed by Kramer (1983). Kramer observes that in standard spatial models competition revolves around what are implicitly public goods. Voter preferences reflect different valuations of the good and/or different tax burdens, but the assumption that everyone has a preference for an issue position implicitly presumes that everyone is affected by the position that the

²² A similar intuition earlier was used by Feld and Grofman (1991) to show the opposite—that in a multidimensional policy space, if incumbents received the “benefit of the doubt” from voters, it would often produce stability (an incumbent victory) where instability previously reigned.

election determines. In contrast, consider a pure distributive politics game: in effect, the government mails out personal checks (bills) to each individual voter. Candidates compete by offering allocations consisting of a net benefit (cost) to each voter. In such a game, there are as many “issue” dimensions as there are voters.

Kramer assumes that the winning candidate keeps the surplus—the public budget less the amount paid to voters. An incumbent has already implemented an allocation, so a challenger has the advantage of optimizing against the incumbent’s winning allocation. But, offsetting this advantage, the challenger labors under the handicap that his promises are discounted, because they are merely promises, in contrast to the incumbent’s actions, which are observable. In such a distributive politics game, incumbents and challengers follow different strategies: in Kramer’s (1983: ii) summary, “challengers pursue a ‘divide and conquer’ strategy of bidding for a minimum winning coalition of voters. Incumbents, by contrast, pursue a more even-handed strategy, attempting to appeal to all their constituents.”

Thus, if what we commonly call “centrist” positions correspond to allocations that distribute net benefits widely, and what we call “extreme” positions correspond to allocations that concentrate benefits and costs on smaller subsets of the electorate, Kramer’s model generates both candidate divergence and the kind of relative divergence that Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart find—challengers more extreme than incumbents. Since Congress has been concerned with distributive politics since the beginning, Kramer’s model can account for long-standing candidate divergence. Conversely, should further research indicate increasing divergence over time, in Kramer’s framework this might reflect a change in the nature of political competition-- with politics becoming increasingly based on distributive considerations rather than more

general public goods considerations.²³ But in view of studies that suggest increasing nationalization of elections (eg. Brady, D'Onofrio and Fiorina 1999), this would seem to be a hard argument to make empirically.

Explanation VI: Entry

Most theoretical work takes the existence of two parties as exogeneous. In the absence of a constitutional specification or statutory barriers to entry, however, two-party competition is an equilibrium phenomenon to be explained, not taken for granted. This opens the door to a huge literature (eg. Lijphart 1994) that I will not walk through in this paper. With an eye on the more limited concern of this paper Palfrey (1984) observes that if two parties converge to the median, a third party could win the election by entering and locating just to one side of the median.²⁴ He demonstrates that the existence of potential entrants leads to an equilibrium in which the established parties diverge and the third party takes a position between them--and always loses. Greenberg and Shepsle (1987) raise a number of modeling questions about the Palfrey conclusion and suggest that in general the prospect of entry is destructive of electoral equilibrium.

Entry is a prospect to be taken seriously empirically--third party candidates are fairly common in presidential elections (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1984), and consistent with Palfrey's result, they generally lose (although it is doubtful that they typically locate between the Republicans and Democrats). In lower-level races, however, third parties are less common. Indeed, one of the standard explanations of the failure of third parties in the United States is the difficulty they face in finding candidates

²³ I am admittedly on somewhat thin ice here—the comparative statics in Kramer's model are not self-evident.

²⁴ Assume the third party enters just to the left of the median. Then it would get all the votes to its left—nearly half--while the other two (identical) parties would split the remaining votes evenly.

for the hundreds of congressional races and thousands of state races. Third *presidential candidate* rather than third *party* seems to be a more accurate description, particularly for the 20th Century. Thus, it is doubtful that many House districts find their candidates separating because of a potential third party threat.

Still, there is another sense in which the idea of entry may play an important role. Earlier I noted that there had been some attempts to model a two-stage election process in which the first stage involved a caucus or primary and the second stage the general election. Rather than assume that every candidate must go through the two stages, it is empirically more accurate to model an incumbent as anticipating the *potential* of a primary challenge, and behaving in such a fashion as to discourage it, or to defeat it should it occur. In the recent impeachment proceedings in the House of Representatives Republican moderates who appeared to favor censure generally moved to a more extreme position--into the impeachment camp. A common explanation was that they faced the threat of primary challenges from the hard-core conservative activists in their districts. Even if victorious, they would go into their general election campaigns having used up valuable resources in the primary and with a divided partisan constituency.

Assuming that the threat of a primary is related to the distance of an incumbent from her party's base, the empirical findings on activist polarization might provide empirical grounds for primary-anticipating candidates to separate.²⁵ I am not aware of

²⁵ In the 1998 version of their paper Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 1998 suggest that hard-fought primaries are not likely to be the explanation for divergence because candidates who experience them are more moderate. An alternative interpretation is that candidates who feel they must moderate to win the general election are more likely to provoke extreme elements of the party to challenge them. Burden (1999) concludes the opposite of Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart—that candidates who experience hard-fought primaries take more extreme positions. An alternative interpretation is that their extremity provokes moderate elements of the party to challenge them. Clearly, the situation cries out for a good model.

any attempts as yet to examine a model which incorporates these considerations, but I agree with King (1999) that it appears to be a fertile area for such a modeling effort.²⁶

Explanation VII: Balancing

Nearly all models of candidate competition focus on a single contest for a single office. An exception to this generalization is a recently developed class of models that posit that voters take into consideration the fact that different public officials share in the responsibility for government outcomes. Thus, Fiorina (1988) and Alesina and Rosenthal (1989) posit that voters expect government output to be a combination of executive and legislative positions. An implication of such models is that policy-oriented parties can take divergent electoral positions, but moderate voters will use their ballots to insure a more middle-of-the-road outcome. Voters can split their tickets in simultaneous elections, and switch their party choices over time, conditional on party control.

While some critics initially expressed doubts about the ability of voters to behave in such seemingly sophisticated fashion, more recent work indicates that voters indeed are aware of the separation of powers and have preferences for parties conditional on the control of other offices (Lacy and Paolino 1998; Smith, et. al. 1999). But why would candidates show an increasing tendency to diverge over the years? Increasing extremity of candidates' personal preferences is one possibility. Another is that under some conditions the more extreme a position taken by one candidate, the more extreme a position that may be taken by the opponent (Alesina, Fiorina, and Rosenthal 1994). Thus, a centrifugal dynamic can occur in which candidates progressively "top" one

²⁶ Incidentally, I have been unable to locate any time series tabulation of the number of House candidates who faced primaries in a given year. There seems to be general agreement that the trend has been upward, but no one has the data.

another in moves away from the center. The latter seems doubtful as an empirical possibility.

Explanation VIII: Parties

Snyder (1994) has offered another model that abandons the notion of elections as contests for a single office. Following an earlier effort by Austen-Smith (1984), Snyder notes that in a typical election numerous candidates contest numerous offices under the banners of just two parties. Consider that in U.S. off-year elections for example, 435 House seats, 33 or 34 Senate seats, and thousands of state and local offices are contested by almost twice that number of Republicans and Democrats. These elections obviously are not independent of each other. Snyder assumes that candidates are office-seekers motivated primarily by the desire to be elected,²⁷ but that voters make their decision entirely on the basis of the party platform, not the individual candidate platforms. The party platform is chosen by a majority vote of the party's incumbents before the election; thus, it is the median of the (electorally-induced) ideal points of the party's incumbents.

Snyder assumes an infinite sequence of elections, a not uncommon theoretical move made somewhat more palatable in this case because parties are long-lived collective actors. In equilibrium the model produces a strong form of differentiation: one party wins all seats to the left of a certain point, and the other party all seats to the right. Intuitively, running incumbents do better with differentiation than with convergence; incumbents from liberal districts do better if their party platform is liberal, not middle-of-the-road, and incumbents from conservative districts do better if their party is conservative, not middle-of-the-road. Incumbent self-interest in reelection blocks the

²⁷ Snyder assumes lexicographic preferences where candidates have a secondary preference for the number of seats won by the party.

incentive to move the party platform toward the center in order to take seats from the other party.

Can Snyder's model explain increasing divergence? Since party positions are the same across all districts, intra-district divergence is merely a reflection of inter-party divergence. Thus, increasing divergence of the constituencies in which incumbents run would generate greater inter-district divergence, but the Collie-Mason findings and extensions presented earlier suggest that there is not much empirical mileage in this possibility. Another possibility lies in a temporal shift from more locally-oriented to more nationally-oriented elections that would make Snyder's model more applicable empirically. If voters are locally oriented, they pay relatively little attention to the national platform, which consequently is of little concern to incumbents, who adopt personal platforms. But if voters are more nationally-oriented, incumbents naturally would be concerned with the spillover effects of the national party platform in their districts. There is empirical evidence of increasing nationalization of House elections in the 1990s (Jacobson, 1999). Indeed, the beginning of the trend goes back into the mid-to-late 1970s (Brady, D'Onofrio and Fiorina 1999). Thus, increased polarization of the parties could be a by-product of the secular change from a more locally to a more nationally-oriented electorate. The responsible party theorists (APSA 1950) believed that party polarization (differentiation) would increase nationalization, so here is a possible point of contact between older and newer lines of theorizing.

Others? {Suggestions are welcome}

SUMMARY

At mid-century popular commentary often derided American politics as “issueless.” Candidates imitated each other with “me too” strategies. Prominent political scientists proposed institutional reforms intended to produce clear partisan differences. And political theorists proposed models of the centripetal logic of two-party competition. Today, popular commentary bemoans the polarization of American politics. Candidates sharply differentiate themselves from each other. Political scientists ponder institutional reforms designed to mute the strident voices that characterize politics today. And political theorists propose models of the centrifugal logic of two-party competition. What are the sources of this change in the overall character of American politics?

This paper has surveyed some of the literature relevant to answering this question. Specifically, I have identified considerations that *in theory* are capable of supporting divergent candidate positions and considered their promise as actual empirical explanations of the change that has occurred. My reading of the rich literature surveyed leaves me with one puzzle, two lines of empirical study, and one exhortation for theorists. The puzzle is that commentators on elections attribute great importance to election-specific variation in turnout whereas the political science literature discounts its importance. Are we missing something? The first line of empirical work is to determine whether changes in recruitment patterns now select for candidates whose personal preferences are more extreme and more intensely held than those of mid-century. Lots of digging in the historical record is necessary to evaluate this hypothesis. The second line of empirical work is to formulate ways of comparing the electorate of the 1950s with that of the post-1970s in order to determine whether changes in mass preferences before our current monitoring methods were developed predate the rise of candidate divergence. The exhortation to theorists is to develop new models of how the spread of contested primaries might force incumbents to give greater weight to the activists in their

districts. At this time we do not have good theoretical treatments of this common observation.

The preceding are only tentative judgments, however; my emphasis has been on raising questions more than drawing conclusions. Indeed, the only obvious conclusion is that a large and lengthy agenda lies before us.

REFERENCES

Aldrich, John. 1983a. "A Downsian Spatial Model with Party Activism." *American Political Science Review* 77: 974-990.

Aldrich, John. 1983b. "A Spatial Model with Party Activists: Implications for Electoral Dynamics." *Public Choice* 41: 61-100.

Aldrich, John, and Richard Niemi. 1996. "The Sixth American Party System: Electoral Change, 1952-1992." In *Broken Contract*. Edited by Stephen Craig. Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 87-109.

Alesina, Alberto. 1988. "Credibility and Convergence in a Two-Party System with Rational Voters." *American Economic Review* 78: 796-805.

Alesina, Alberto, and Howard Rosenthal. 1989. "Partisan Cycles in Congressional Elections and the Macroeconomy." *American Political Science Review* 83: 373-98.

Alford, John, and David Brady. 1989. "Personal and Partisan Advantage in U.S. Congressional Elections." In *Congress Reconsidered*. Edited by Larry Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 4th ed.: 153-169.

Ansolabehere, Stephen and James Snyder. 1998.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, James Snyder, and Charles Stewart. 1999. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." Ms.

APSA Committee on Political Parties. 1950. "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System." *American Political Science Review*. 44: supplement.

Aranson, Peter, and Peter Ordeshook. 1972. "Spatial Strategies for Sequential Elections." In *Probability Models of Collective Decision Making*. Edited by Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisberg. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill: 298-331.

Austen-Smith, David. 1984. "Two-Party Competition with Many Constituencies." *Mathematical Social Sciences* 7: 177-198.

Bishop, George, Tuchfarber, Alfred, and Robert Oldendick. 1978. "Change in the Structure of American Political Attitudes," *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 250-269.

Black, Duncan. 1963. *The Theory of Committees and Elections*. Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press.

Brady, David, and Edward Schwartz. 1995. "Ideology and Interests in Congressional Voting: The Politics of Abortion in the U.S. Senate." *Public Choice* 84: 25-48.

Brady, David, Robert D'Onofrio, and Morris Fiorina, 1999. "The Nationalization of Electoral Forces Revisited." In *Continuity and Change in House Elections*. Edited by David Brady, John Cogan, and Morris Fiorina. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Broder, David. 1997. "Vicious Cycle in Governing." *The Times-Picayune*. November 13: B7.

Brody, Richard, and Benjamin Page. 1973. "Indifference, Alienation and Rational Decisions." *Public Choice* 15: 1-17.

Brown, Clifford, Lynda Powell, and Clyde Wilcox. 1995. *Serious Money*. Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, John, John Clark, and John Kessel. 1991. "Advocacy Politics in Presidential Parties." *American Political Science Review* 85: 1089-1105.

Burden, Barry. 1999. "The Polarizing Effects of Congressional Primaries." In XXXXX. Edited by Peter Galderisi and Michael Lyons.

Calvert, Randall. 1985. "Robustness of the Multidimensional Voting Model: Candidate Motivations, Uncertainty, and Convergence." *American Journal of Political Science* 29: 69-95.

Coleman, James. 1971. "Internal Processes Governing Party Positions in Elections." *Public Choice* 11: 35-60.

Collie, Melissa, and John Mason. 1999. "The Electoral Connection Between Party and Constituency Reconsidered." In *Continuity and Change in House Elections*. Edited by David Brady, John Cogan, and Morris Fiorina. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Cook, Charles. 1997. "Both Parties are Missing 'Bold Colors' to Appeal to their Bases in 1998." *Roll Call Monthly*. December: 7.

DiMaggio, John Evans, and Bethany Bryson. 1996. "Have Americans Social Attitudes Become More Polarized?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 690-755.

Dionne, E.J., Jr. 1991. *Why Americans Hate Politics*. New York: Simon and Shuster.

Doherty, Carroll. 1998. "Lots of Inertia, Little Lawmaking as Election '98 Approaches." *CQ Weekly*. July 18: 1927.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

Feddersen, Timothy. 1992. "A Voting Model Implying Duverger's Law and Positive Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 938-62.

Feddersen, Timothy. 1993. "Coalition-Proof Nash Equilibria in a Model of Costly Voting Under Plurality Rule."

Feld, Scott, and Bernard Grofman. 1991. "Incumbency Advantage, Voter Loyalty and the Benefit of the Doubt." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3: 115-137.

Ferejohn, John, Morris Fiorina, and Edward Packel. 1980. "A Nonequilibrium Approach to Legislative Decision Theory." *Behavioral Science* 25: 140-148

Fiorina, Morris. 1974. *Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.

Fiorina, Morris. 1988. "The Reagan Years: Turning to the Right or Groping Towards the Middle?" in *The Resurgence of Conservatism in Britain, Canada and the United States*. Edited by Barry Cooper and Allan Kornberg. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press: 430-460.

Francis, Wayne, Lawrence Kenny, Rebecca Morton, and Amy Schmidt. 1994. "Retrospective Voting and Political Mobility." *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 999-1024.

Geer, John. 1988. "Assessing the Representativeness of Electorates in Presidential Primaries." *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 929-945.

Geer, John. 1996. *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gelman, Andrew, and Gary King. 1990. "Estimating Incumbency Advantage without Bias." *American Journal of Political Science* 34: 1142-64.

Gerber, Alan, and Don Green. 1999. "The Effects of Canvassing, Leafleting, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.

Gerber, Elizabeth, and Rebecca Morton. 1998. "Primary Election Systems and Representation." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 14: 304-324.

Greenberg, Joseph, and Kenneth Shepsle. 1987. "The Effect of Electoral Rewards in Multiparty Competition." *American Political Science Review* 81: 525-538.

Groseclose, Tim. 1999. "Character, Charisma, and Candidate Location: Downsian Models When One Candidate Has Valence Advantage." In press.

Hinich, Melvin, and Peter Ordeshook. 1969. "Abstention and Equilibrium in the Electoral Process." *Public Choice* 7: 81-106.

Jackson, John, and John Kingdon. 1992. "Ideology, Interest Group Scores, and Legislative Votes." *American Journal of Political Science*. 36: 805-823.

Jacobson, Gary. 1999. "Reversal of Fortune: The Transformation of U.S. House Elections in the 1990s." In *Continuity and Change in House Elections*. Edited by David Brady, John Cogan, and Morris Fiorina. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jewell, Malcolm, and David Breaux. 1988. "The Effect of Incumbency on State Legislative Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 13: 495-514.

Kessel, John. 1968. *The Goldwater Coalition*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

- King, David. 1998. "Party Competition, Primaries, and Representation in the U.S. Congress." Ms.
- Kramer, Gerald. 1970. "The Effects of Precinct-Level Canvassing on Voter Behavior." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34: 560-572.
- Kramer, Gerald. 1977. "A Dynamical Model of Political Equilibrium." *Journal of Economic Theory* 16: 310-334.
- Kramer, Gerald. 1983. "Electoral Politics in the Zero-Sum Society." *Social Science Working Paper 472*. Pasadena, CA: Caltech.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Lacy, Dean, and Philip Paolino. 1998. "Downsian Voting and the Separation of Powers." *American Journal of Political Science* 42: 1180-99.
- Lawrence, Jill. 1998a. "Dems Hope 2nd Wind Carries Them to Success in Nov." *USA TODAY*. September 28: 7A.
- Lawrence, Jill. 1998b. "Parties Channel Efforts, Funds to Get Out the Vote." *USA TODAY*. October 19: 16A.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1994. *Electoral systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Londregan, John, and Thomas Romer. 1993. "Polarization, Incumbency, and the Personal Vote." In *Political Economy: Institutions, Competition, and Representation*. Edited by William Barnett, Melvin Hinich, and Norman Schofield. New York: Cambridge: 355-77.
- McCann, James. 1996. "Presidential Nomination Activists and Political Representation: A View from the Active Minority Studies." In *Pursuit of the White House*. Ed. by William Mayer. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House): 72-104.
- McClosky, Herbert, Paul Hoffman, and Rosemary O'Hara. (1960). "Issue Conflict and Consensus among Party Leaders and Followers." *American Political Science Review* 54: 406-427.
- McKelvey, Richard. 1976. "Intransitivities in Multidimensional Voting Models and Implications for Agenda Control." *Journal of Economic Theory* 12: 472-82.
- McKelvey, Richard. 1986. "Covering, Dominance, and Institution-Free Properties of Social choice." *American Journal of Political Science* 30: 283-314.

- Medina, Luis. 1999. "Legislatures vs. Political Parties: Endogenous Policy with Strategic Voters." Unpublished Ph.D. Essay, Stanford University.
- Miller, Warren, and Kent Jennings. 1986. *Parties in Transition*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Miller, Warren, and Donald Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57: 45-56
- Niemi, Richard, and Laura Winsky. 1988. "Membership Turnover in U.S. State Legislatures: Trends and Effects of Redistricting." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 12: 115-124.
- Nie, Norman, Sidney Verba, and John Petrocik. 1976. *The Changing American Voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Norrander, Barbara. 1989. "Ideological Representativeness of Presidential Primary Voters." *American Journal of Political Science* 33: 570-587.
- Osborne, Martin. 1995. "Spatial Models of Political Competition Under Plurality Rule." *Canadian Journal of Economics* 28: 261-301.
- Palfrey, Thomas. 1984. "Spatial Equilibrium with Entry." *Review of Economic Studies* 51: 139-56.
- Poole, Keith, and Howard Rosenthal. 1984. "The Polarization of American Politics." *Journal of Politics* 46: 1061-79.
- Popkin, Samuel, John Gorman, Charles Phillips, and Jeffrey Smith. 1976. "What Have You Done for Me Lately? Toward an Investment Theory of Voting." *American Political Science Review* 70: 779-805.
- Riker, William. 1973. *An Introduction to Positive Political Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Roberts, Cokie, and Steven Roberts. 1998. "GOP Strategy: Make Clinton a Bad Poster Boy." *San Jose Mercury News*. September 28: 6B.
- Rohde, David. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rosenstone, Steven, Roy Behr, and Edward Lazarus. 1984. *Third Parties in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rosenstone, Steven and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan.
- Schofield, Norman, 1978. "Instability of Simple Dynamic Games." *Review of Economic Studies* 45: 575-94.
- Slutsky, Steven. 1975. "Abstentions and Majority Equilibrium." *Journal of Economic Theory* 11: 292-304.

Smith, Charles, Robert Brown, John Bruce, and L. Marvin Overby. 1999. "Partisan Preference in Two Institutional Dimensions, Policy balancing, and Voting for Congress in the 1996 National Election." *American Journal of Political Science* (in press).

Snyder, James. 1994. "Safe Seats, Marginal Seats, and Party Platforms: The Logic of Platform Differentiation." *Economics and Politics* 6: 201-14.

Stimson, James, 1991. *Public Opinion in America*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Stokes, Donald. 1963. "Spatial Models of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review* 57: 368-377.

Sullivan, John, and Robert O'Connor. 1972. "Electoral Choice and Popular Control of Public Policy." *American Political Science Review* 66: 1256-1268.

Sullivan, John, Piereson, James, and Geroge Marcus. 1978. "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public." *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 233-249.

Teixeira, Ruy. 1992. *The Disappearing American Voter*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Weisberg, Herbert, and Bernard Grofman. 1981. "Candidate Evaluations and Turnout." *American Politics Quarterly* 9: 197-219.

Wittman, Donald. 1977. "Candidates with Policy Preferences: A Dynamic Model." *Journal of Economic Theory* 14: 180-89.

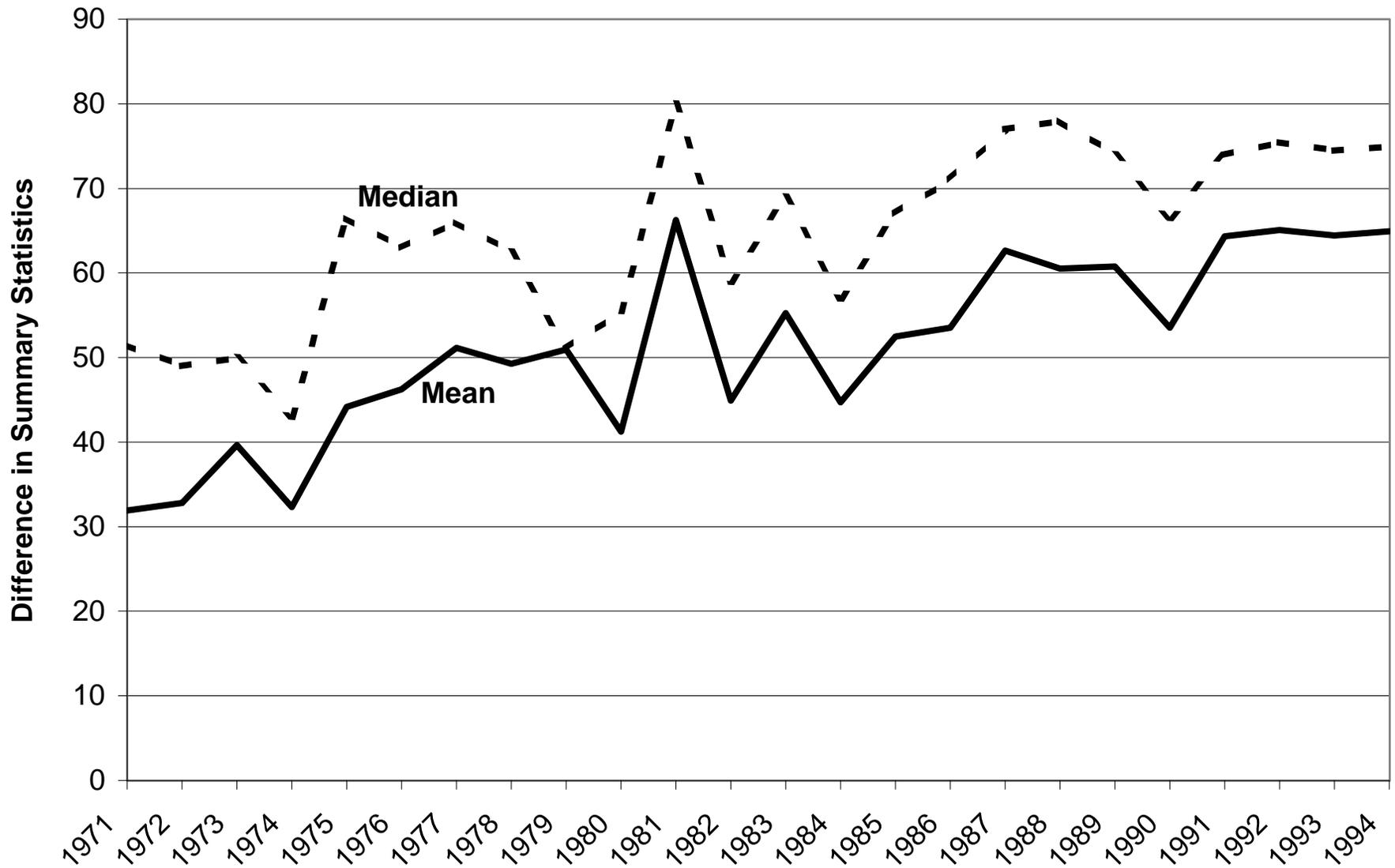
Table 1. **Divergent Congressional Incumbents in Marginal Districts**

	Mean Change in CC Support	Mean Change in LFR Support	
88 th – 89 th	61%	51	n=37
89 th – 90 th	55	40	n=29
All	58	47	n=66

Figures include only districts where the previous incumbent sought re-election and was defeated.

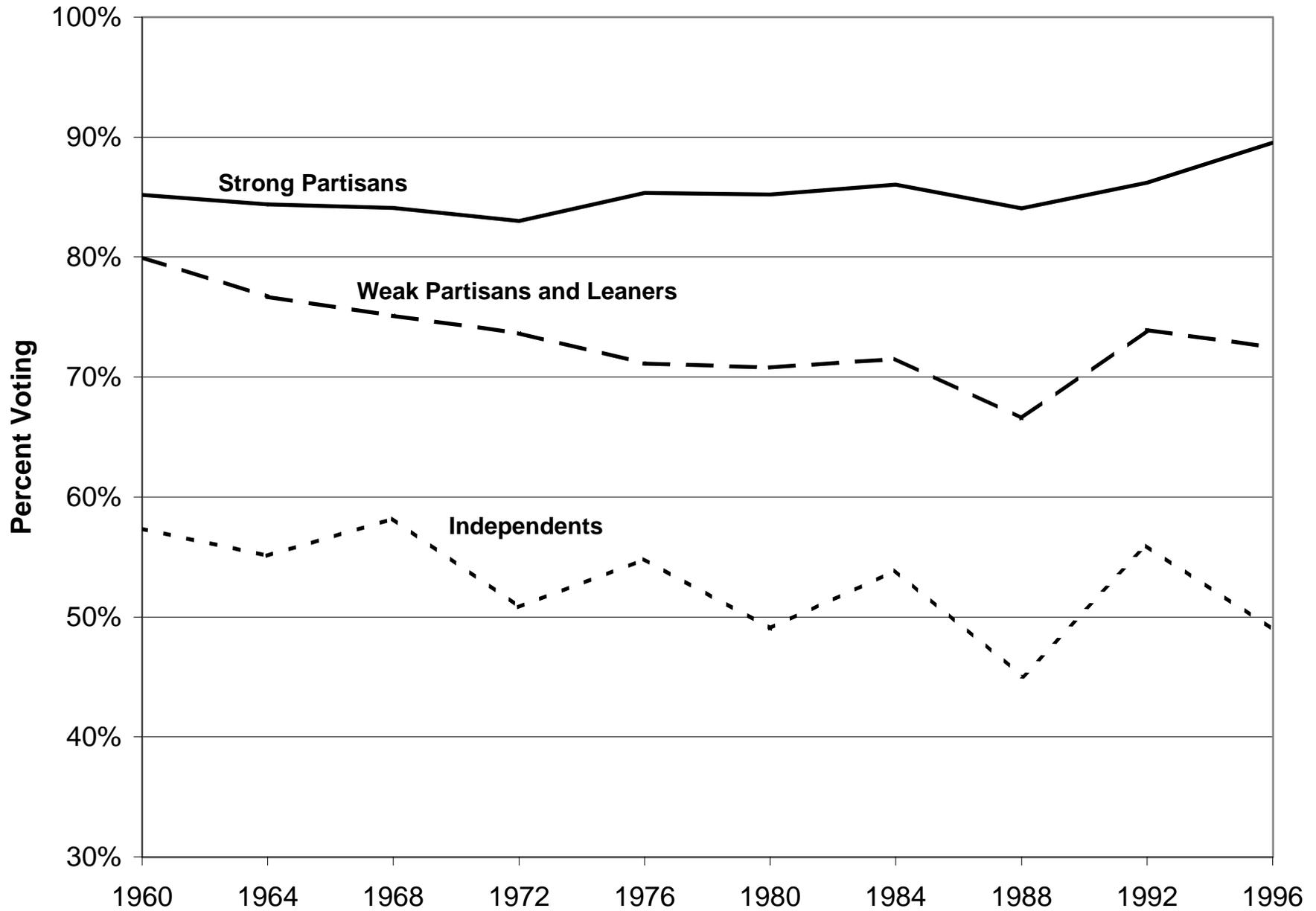
Source: Fiorina (1974, table 5-6)

Figure 1. Difference Between ACU Scores of Republican and Democratic Representatives



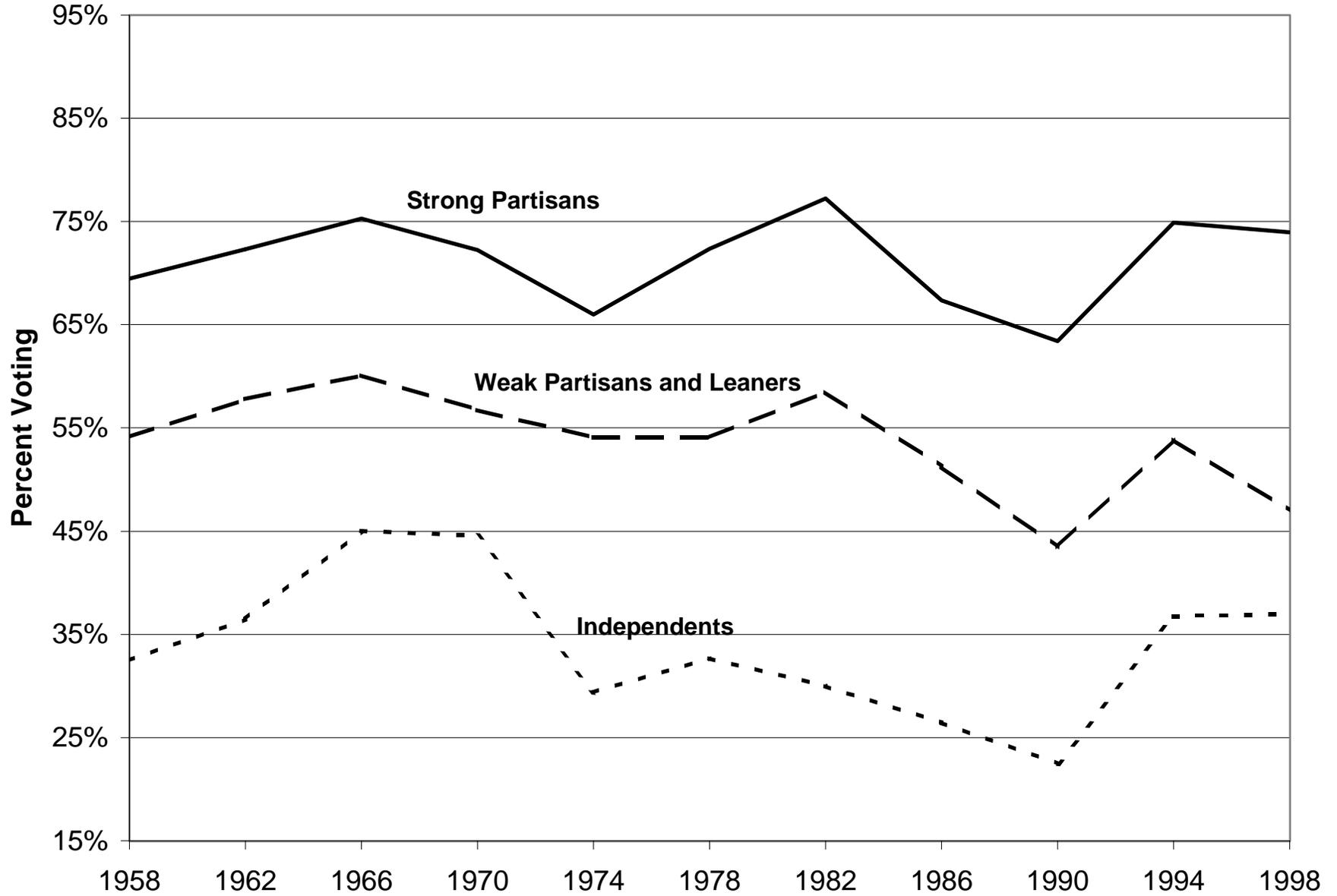
Source: Collie, Melissa P. and John Lyman Mason. Forthcoming 1999. "The Electoral Connection between Party and Constituency Reconsidered: Evidence from the U.S. House of Representatives, 1972-1994." In *Congressional Elections in the Post WWII Era: Continuity and Change*. David W. Brady and John F. Cogan, Eds.

Figure 2a. Voter Turnout by Strength of Party Identification (Presidential Elections)



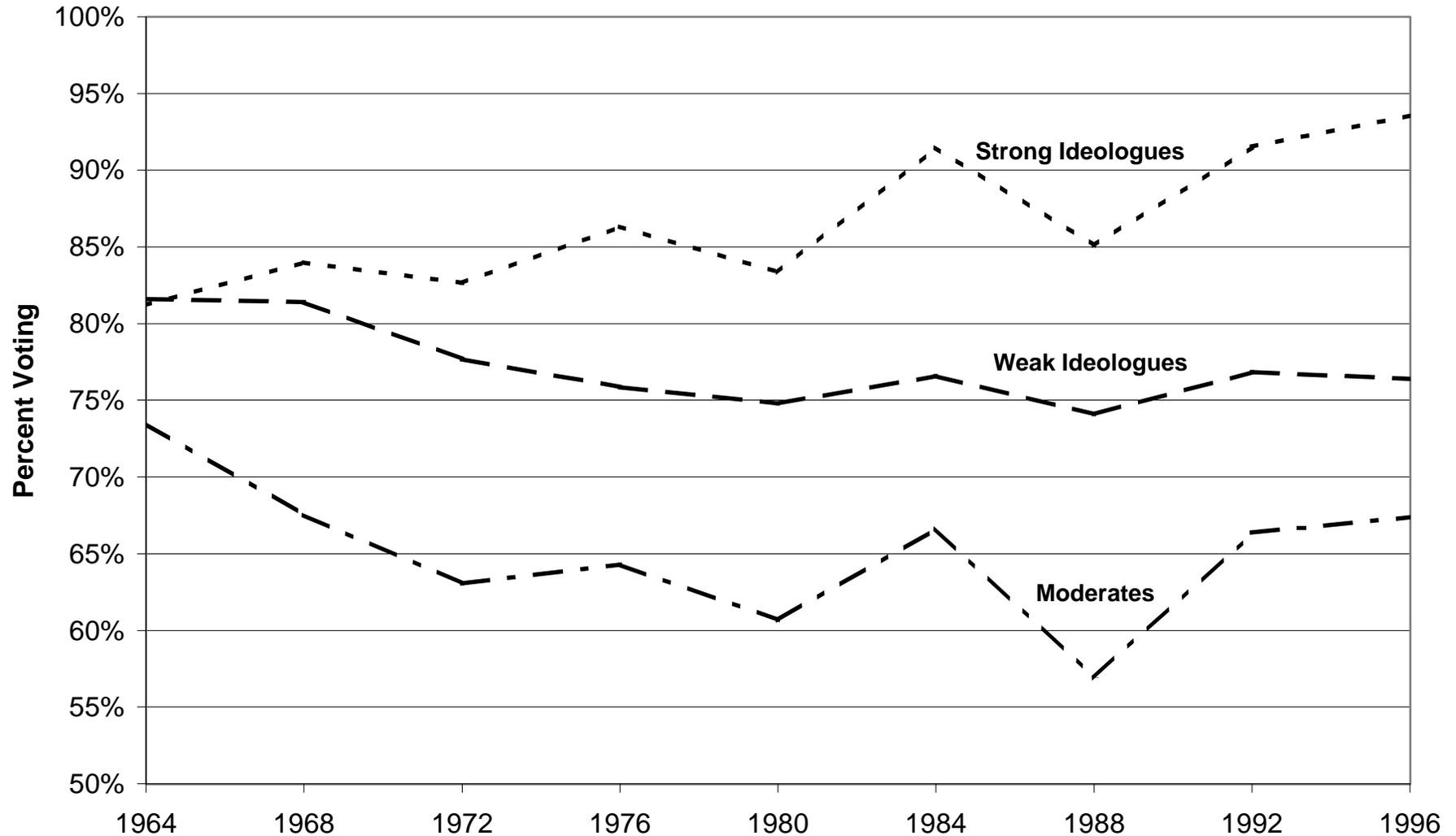
Source: Calculated using the ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File.
Notes: Apoliticals are coded as Independents. Cases are weighted by vcf0009.

Figure 2b. Voter Turnout by Strength of Party Identification (Midterm Elections)



Source: Calculated using the ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File and the ANES 1998 file.
Notes: Apoliticals are coded as Independents. Cumulative file cases are weighted by vcf0009.

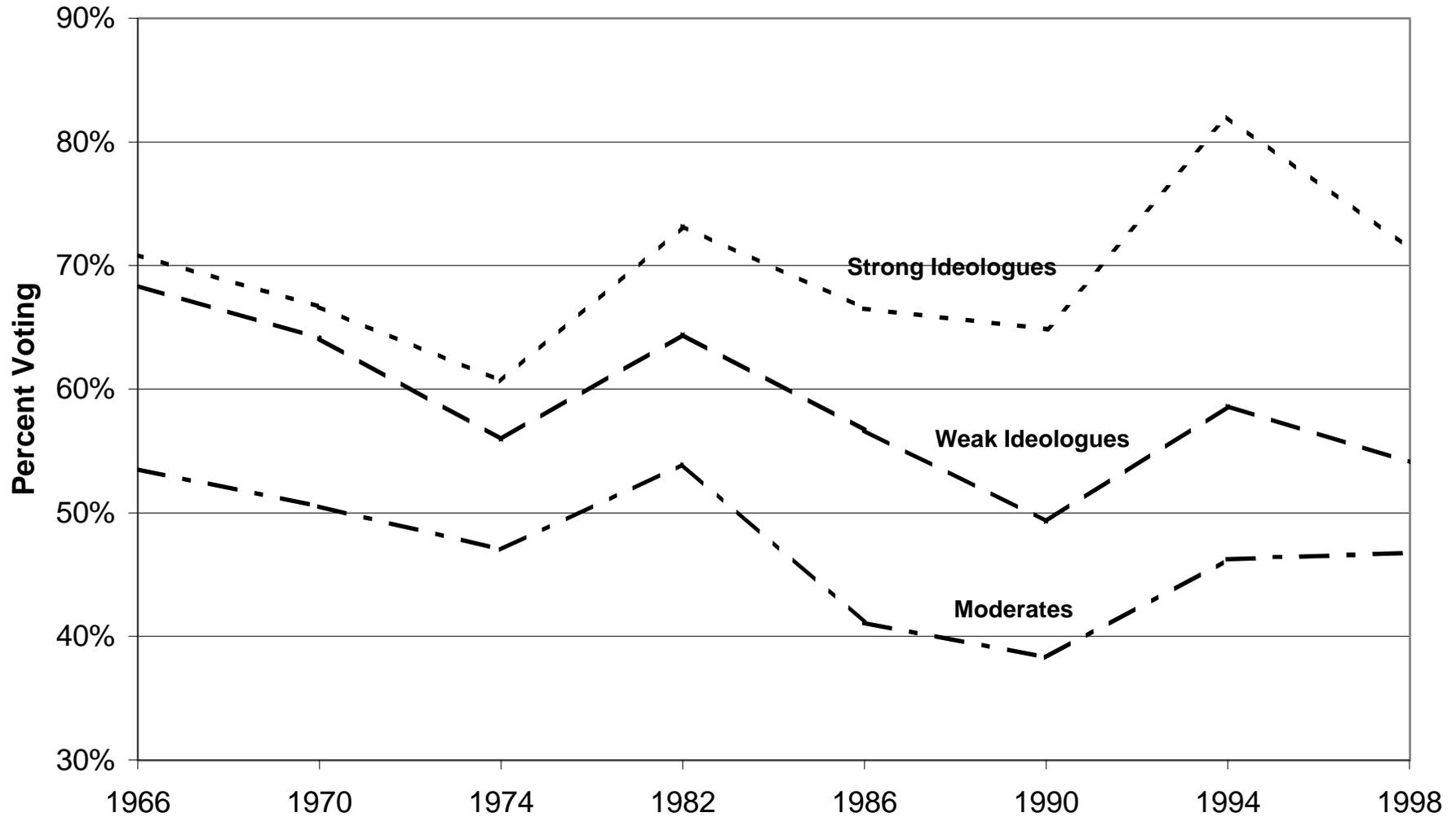
**Figure 3a. Turnout by Ideological Extremism on the Liberal/Conservative Scale
(Presidential Elections)**



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

Notes: Extremism of ideology is recoded from a respondent's scores on the Liberal and Conservative Feeling Thermometers (vcf0211 and vcf0212). To maintain consistency with the NES coding prior to 1970, respondents who answered "don't know" to either feeling thermometer are coded as 50 on that feeling thermometer. Using these recoded thermometers a modified version of the Liberal/Conservative Index is constructed following the procedure used to construct vcf0801. Finally, the modified Liberal/Conservative Index is recoded into categories of ideological extremism. Codes 0-24 and 75-97 are recoded as Strong Ideologues, 25-48 and 50-74 as Weak Ideologues and 49 as Moderates. Cases are weighted by vcf0009.

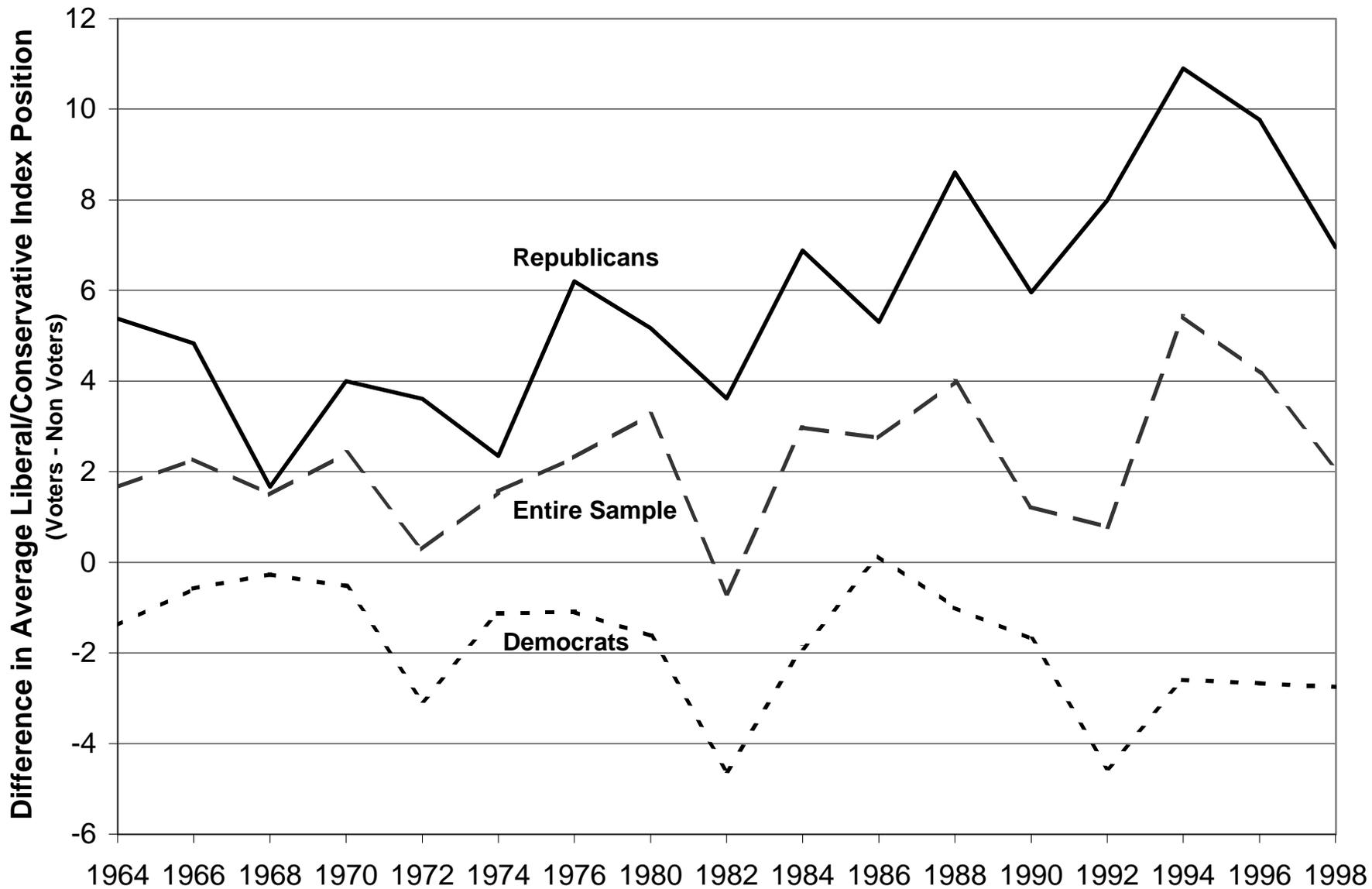
**Figure 3b. Turnout by Ideological Extremism on the Liberal/Conservative Scale
(Midterm Elections)**



Source: Calculated using the ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File and the ANES 1998 file.

Notes: Extremism of ideology is recoded from a respondent's scores on the Liberal and Conservative Feeling Thermometers (vcf0211 and vcf0212). To maintain consistency with the NES coding prior to 1970, respondents who answered "don't know" to either feeling thermometer are coded as 50 on that feeling thermometer. Using these recoded thermometers a modified version of the Liberal/Conservative Index is constructed following the procedure used to construct vcf0801. Finally, the modified Liberal/Conservative Index is recoded into categories of ideological extremism. Codes 0-24 and 75-97 are recoded as Strong Ideologues, 25-48 and 50-74 as Weak Ideologues and 49 as Moderates. Cases in the cumulative file are weighted by vcf0009.

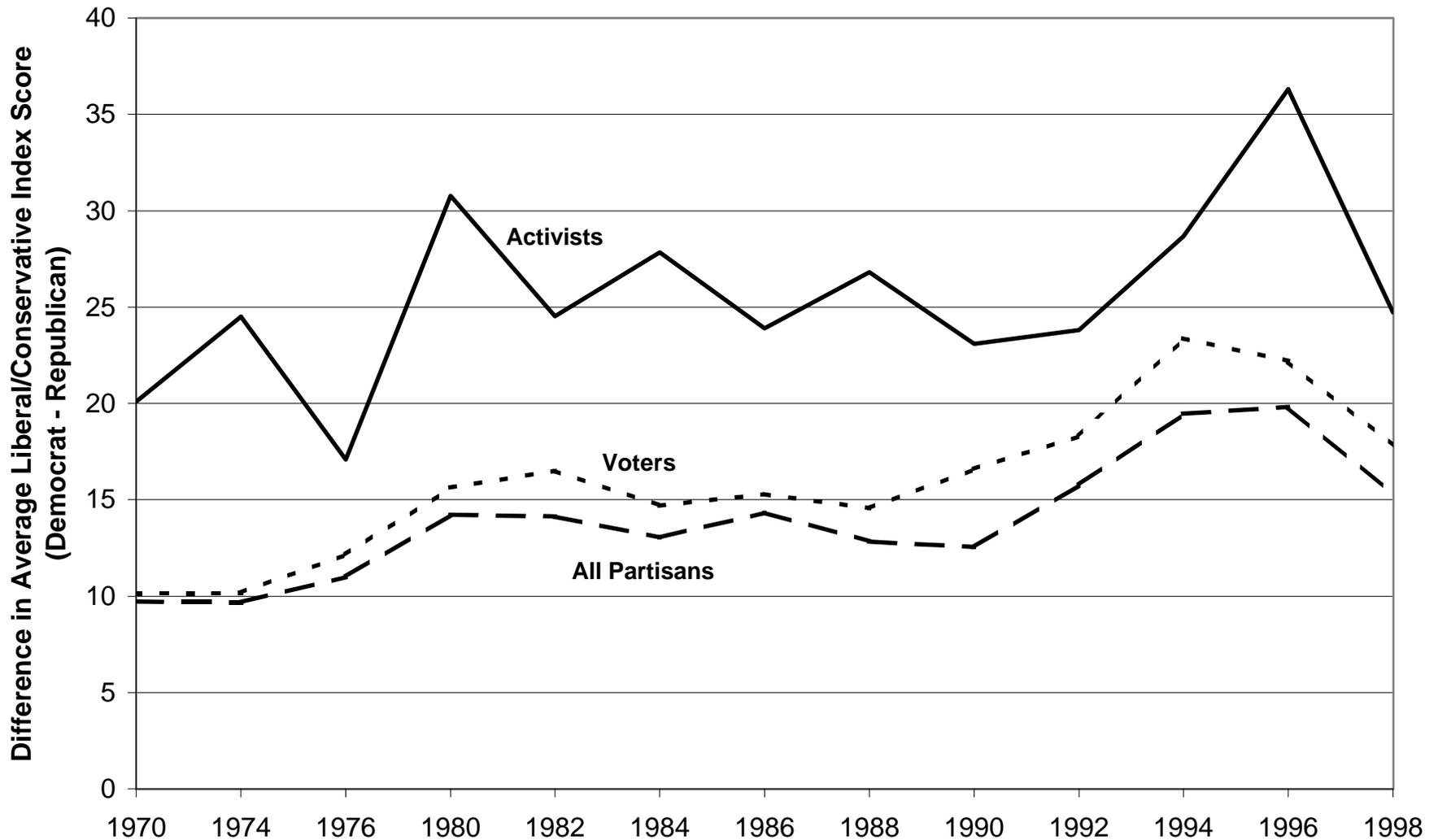
Figure 4. Difference Between Ideology of Partisan Voters and Non-Voters



Source: ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File and 1998 file.

Notes: Positive numbers indicate that voters are more conservative than nonvoters, negative numbers indicate the opposite. Leaners are coded as partisans. Cases in the cumulative file are weighted by vcf0009.

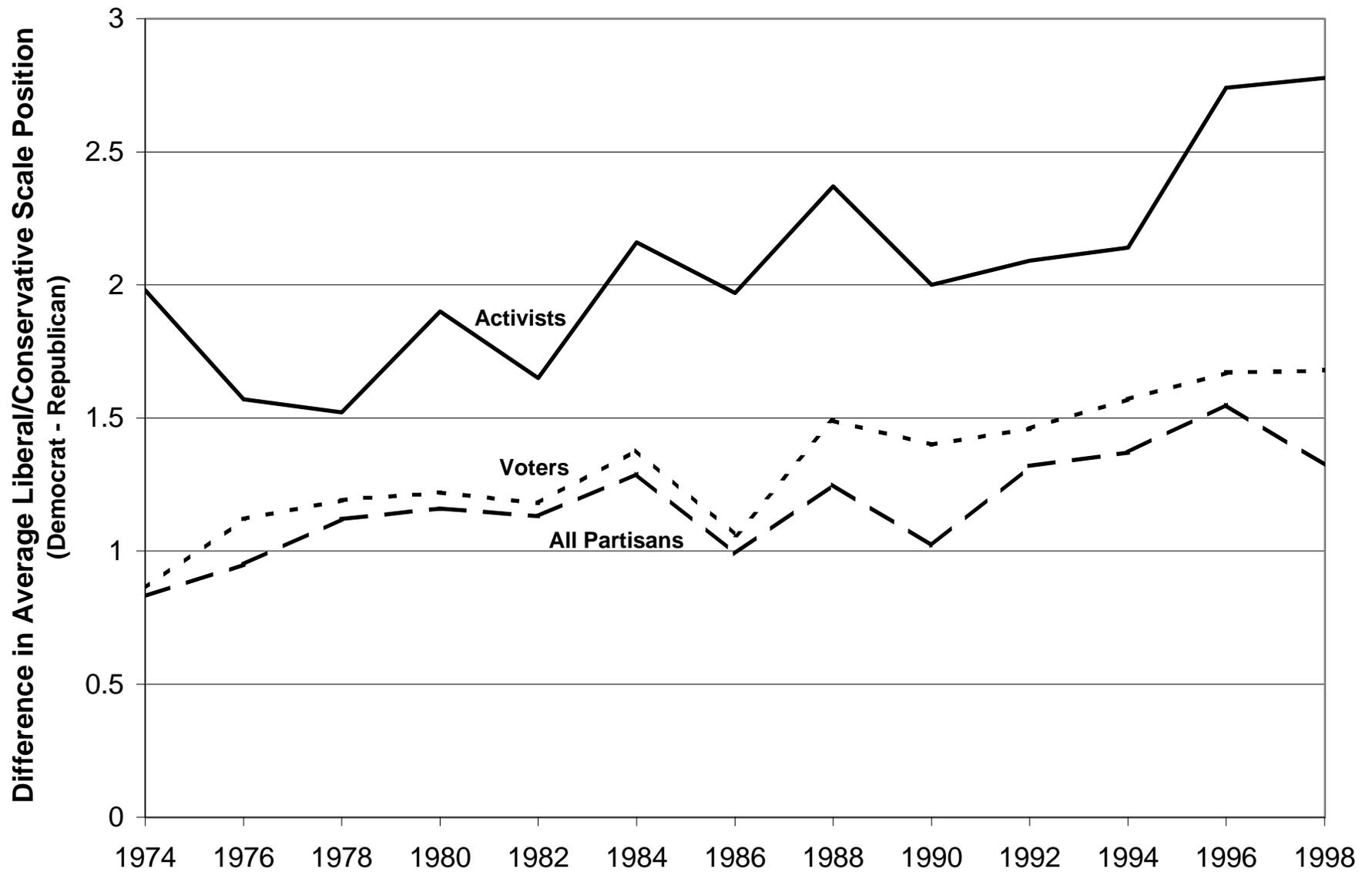
Figure 5a. Difference in Average Ideology of Democrats and Republicans in Districts with Incumbents of the Same Party (Liberal/Conservative Index)



Source: ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File and ANES 1998 file.

Note: Party of respondent and Incumbent is recoded from vcf1004. Leaners are coded as partisans. Activists are defined as respondents who engaged in 3 or more campaign activities as coded in vcf0723. In 1970 only 4 of 5 campaign activity questions were asked so the maximum number of activities is 4. If the threshold of activism is reduced to 2 activities in 1970 the difference drops to 13.27. Cases in the cumulative file are weighted by vcf0009.

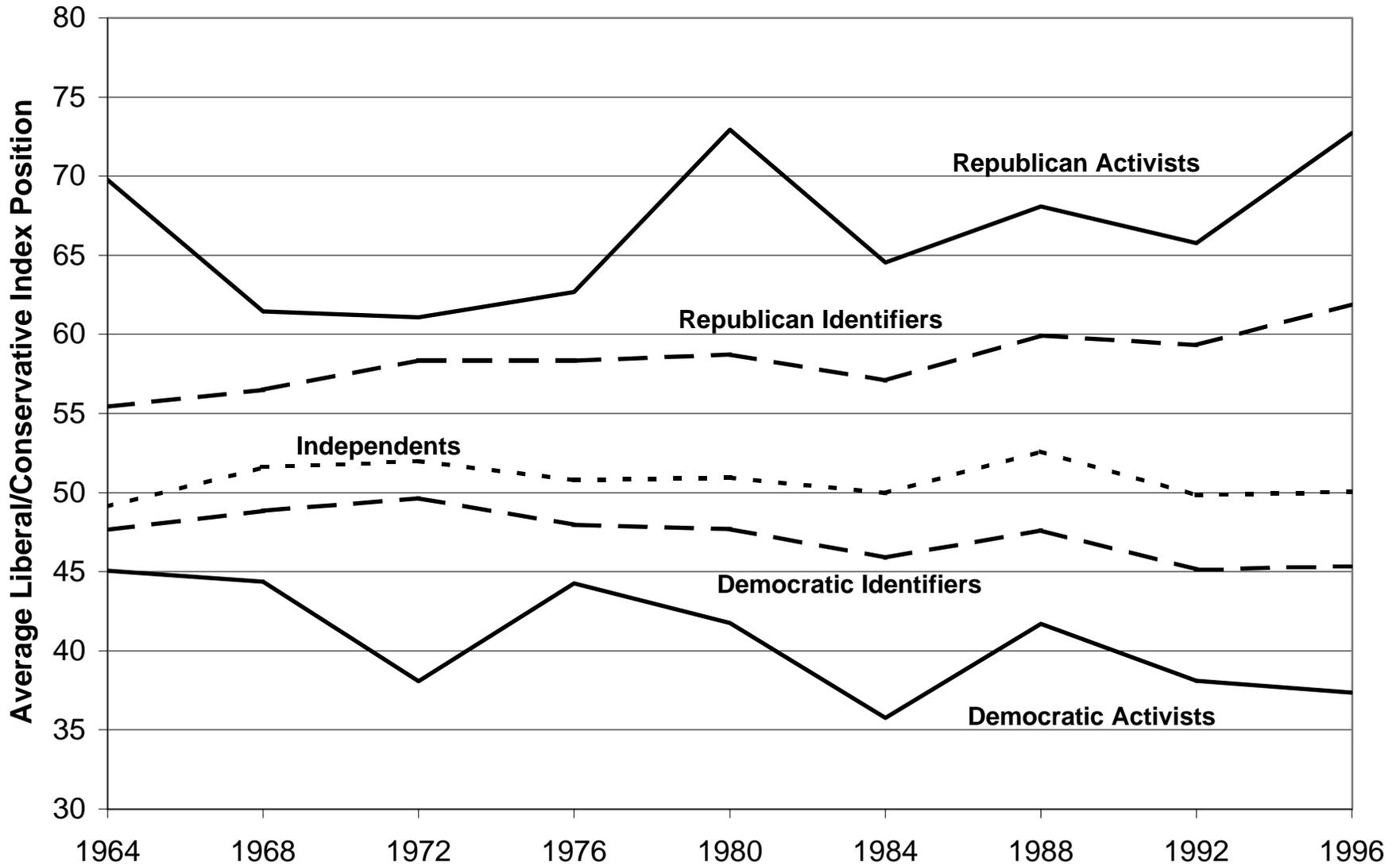
Figure 5b. Difference in Average Ideology of Democrats and Republicans in Districts with Incumbents of the Same Party (Liberal/Conservative Scale)



Source: ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File and ANES 1998 file.

Notes: Party of respondent and incumbent is recoded from vcf1004. Leaners are coded as partisans. Activists are defined as respondents who engaged in 3 or more campaign activities as coded in vcf0723. Cases in the cumulative file are weighted by vcf0009.

Figure 6. Ideology Thermometer Scores of Party Identifiers and Activists



Source: ANES 1948-1996 Cumulative Data File.

Notes: Activists are defined as respondents who engaged in 3 or more campaign activities as coded in vcf0723. Leaners are coded as partisans. The Liberal/Conservative Index (vcf0801) measures a respondent's relative thermometer ratings of "Liberals" and "Conservatives." It is calculated by subtracting the Liberal Thermometer score from 97 and averaging the result with the Conservative Thermometer score. Cases are weighted by vcf0009.