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The Unique Silencer

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THE UNIQUE SILENCER

A Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
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Christofer Ditscheit
University of Northern Iowa
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
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(Donna Hoffman), Honors Thesis/Project Advisor

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Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

Introduction

For decades people have been puzzled by the sudden drop in voter turnout that occurred in the 1970's and continued through the 1980's and 1990's. The demographics of those voting and not voting have been analyzed repeatedly for some clue as to why people were not turning out in the same numbers. Repeatedly, different factors have been addressed as contributors to the reduction of voter turnout. Studies have found that the United States has a unique factor contributing to the low voter turnout. Even after controlling for socioeconomic and institutional factors, there is something about the United States that has created decreased voter turnout. This conclusion is reinforced by other studies that have found American turnout is linked to factors outside of institutional and demographic influences but that there is another factor that is not being addressed (Powell 1986). Powell conducted research in which he compared the United States with other countries and isolated the types of factors that can affect voter turnout and found that political attitudes was one of those factors.

To gain a deeper understanding of the situation, it is important to look at the data and the history surrounding the decline in voting, as well as use a comparison for reference. Using this combination of analyses, a growing contradiction can be seen between the American populace's political culture and government actions. The conflict that results from the contradiction causes people to feel frustrated with the government's expanded powers. Frustration with the government has been found as a reason that people decide not to vote, since political efficacy is not there (Doppelt and Shearer 1999). A disconnect between political culture and the governmental actions is one factor that could lead to the frustration that depresses voter turnout.

The area of political culture being a factor in reduced voter turnout has been addressed before under different situations that researched different aspects that affect voting. Yet, the study of political culture has been susceptible to fads of popularity. Political culture studies have not been as popular in the last decade and the study of political culture's affect on the decline in voter turnout needs more current analysis. More voting data and analyses of the past political environment allow for a deeper analysis of the drop in voter turnout and the possible contributing factors.

The political culture of the United States is multi-faceted and complex, yet a strong part of the culture is classical liberalism. There are different ways that political culture has been addressed. Some political scientists believe that a national political culture is too broad and so it must be subdivided (Elazar 1984). The traditional view has been that America has two competing and, at the same time, symbiotic political cultures (Tocqueville [1835]). After analyzing the different components of American political culture by studying individual states and regions, the subcultures can be somewhat isolated and then compared to trends in voter turnout. When this evaluation is done, it is found that the drop in voting is nationwide yet there is some evidence that some political subcultures have not had the same rate of decline in voter turnout.

A comparison of American voting data to another country's voting patterns can help explain factors that could be negatively affecting voter turnout in the United States. Sweden was chosen as the country of comparison because of its history of strong voter turnout and its similarities in economic development. The strong voter trends of Sweden can be used to find factors that have helped to maintain high voting rates in Sweden without having to implement a

compulsory voting law. Upon the evaluation of Sweden's environmental factors related to its voting trends, it is found that its government's relationship with the people is positive and there is limited tension between political culture and government actions. By comparing these aspects, American political culture can once again be considered as a possible factor for decreased voter turnout. An analysis of the historical events and environment surrounding the downturn in voting helps to bring forth the situation under which people became frustrated with the government and removed themselves from the voting system. The first parts of the analysis are based more upon data, while the environmental study is more reliant on theoretical arguments as to what factors contribute to voter turnout.

America's Political Culture

The American political culture is an intricate combination of different forces acting upon the society. Since America has become a “melting pot” of people from all across the world, it brings to it an interesting interaction of many different attitudes. There are significant pockets of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans amongst the overall majority of Caucasian decent. Scholars have repeatedly addressed this unique situation of the United States. Elazar’s (1984) theory of multiple subcultures within the United States is based substantially upon the European immigration patterns and concentrations of different cultures. Also, people such as Lipset have discussed how the United States has had many unique experiences, including those of immigration, and how that has created a particular situation under which the politics work and interact (Lipset 1996).

To look at political culture, it must first be defined. Political culture has been defined in many different ways and tends to be elusive (Formisano 2001). For this thesis, the definition of political culture will come from Almond and Verba, since they are leaders in the study of political culture. Their working definition for political culture is “specifically political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of self in the system” (Almond and Verba 1963, 13). American political culture, as any political culture, does not change drastically over time. The ways of life and societal culture self-perpetuates from one generation to the next through tradition and upbringing.

One of the earliest evaluations of American political culture was done by Alexis de Tocqueville. He too saw that the United States had many exceptional aspects of its society. One of the ideas that he was able to analyze and develop considerably was political culture.

Tocqueville found that there were two parts of American political culture that sometimes came into conflict with each other. The first part was classic liberalism, which placed personal freedoms and choice at the forefront and drew upon Lockean principles (Patterson 1968). The second part of American political culture was called republicanism, which was the idea that people should put the good of society or nation above their own and be willing to make a sacrifice for the greater good. The republican part of the American political culture is ruled by “humanity, justice, and reason” (Tocqueville [1835] 456).

The way that these two sections of political culture interacted was found to be complex and at times divisive. In certain situations what is best for the community or society is not what is best for the individual. The classic liberal tradition would stress the importance of the individual doing what was best for them while the republican tradition would ask for the individual to sacrifice for the society. An example of this division in current day is military service. Many people take pay cuts and risk their personal well-being to serve the nation while pay incentives are also used to recruit because many people are persuaded to join, in part or whole, by the possible monetary and training benefits that are available.

To Tocqueville [1835] the two different parts of American political culture are part of what made America so successful. The republican part of ideology helped to produce charity and a common bond among the people while the classic liberal ideas stressed liberty and freedoms for everyone. Other aspects of American society also caused differing political cultures to coincide. For instance, Tocqueville made the observation that Americans were more willing to submit to others in power because they viewed them, and were viewed by them, as equals. The American people were willing to submit power to the politicians because they felt

that the real power was held by the populace and thus there was no threat in acquiescing at times (Tocqueville [1835], 273).

The very foundation of the American government, the Constitution, was advocated by people like James Madison, who stressed many of the classic liberal ideas. According to Madison's Federalist 51, the government should be limited because of an inherent mistrust but also to reduce governmental intrusion. The limitations on the government must be institutionalized because "a dependence on people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions" (Madison [1787], 319). In Madison's Federalist 10, he explains that the institutional restraints were put in place by the founders in the Constitution because "neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control" (Madison [1787], 75). The original embodiment of classic liberalism is engrained in the Constitution and the institutions over which it governs. For instance, individual and property rights are central to many different themes of the Constitution. Yet, as Constitutional interpretations become removed from the original intent, a division between the political culture and the institutions is created. The extension of power by the government could create a feeling that individual liberties have been lost, in a type of zero-sum game.

Political scientist, Louis Hartz, felt that classic liberalism was the dominant political culture in the United States. In his writing, he echoed Tocqueville in observing that it differed greatly from the European political culture even though it was formed substantially by descendents of Europe (Hartz 1955). Hartz also felt that during the 1950's the United States was starting to go through some challenging times in trying to get classic liberalism to coincide

smoothly with the environment and projects brought about with the New Deal. The expansion of the government under the New Deal had increased the Federal government's influence and power. At the same time, a major concern for Hartz (1955) was the loss of people's ability to move out West and to settle in a free reigning society. When the West was scarcely populated, people had the option to escape the restrictions of other areas and to work for themselves by traveling west. The ability to become one's own boss is part of the "American Dream", which is a fundamental offshoot of classic liberalism. Hartz also saw that the unique condition which led to the creation of the United States also helped to create an exceptional situation for the environment of political culture (Hartz 1955). The ability for people to help themselves and make one's own economic decisions is theorized as a substantial reason why socialism failed in America.

The study of political culture continued beyond Hartz and gained new momentum in the 1970's and 1980's. Political scientists continued to see the uniqueness of American political culture. It was found that American classic liberal political culture could affect participation through feelings of ownership and self-determination, which could increase voting (Patterson 1968). Lipset (1999) was later able to address the issue of what classic liberalism meant for demands on the government and found that among various Western democracies, Americans wanted less government activity in areas such as creating jobs or even passing seat belt laws. Political culture affects both the demands on the government of what intervention is appropriate and the factors involved in voting.

Internal Subculture Comparison

Traditional political theorists developed the ideas of America's classic liberalism and republicanism. Yet, there were many things not easily explained by national political identity and the variance among the states seemed too drastic for one political culture to be the answer for all of the questions. The different combinations of local cultures cause different sentiments, policies, and voting patterns (Patterson 1968). Elazar (1984) saw this dilemma and conducted a study of the different states and regions of the United States to try to explicate the missing links of American political culture.

What he found was that immigration patterns caused different political ideas and concepts to develop in different areas. For instance, the northern Midwest, which was settled by Scandinavians, tended to take on some of the characteristics of the Scandinavian politics. In this region, the government is viewed as something that can help those in need and corruption is not tolerated; he named this the moralistic region (Elazar 1984, 117-118). Elazar found that a different culture was concentrated in the Deep South, the traditionalistic subculture (1984, 118-119). This political subculture came from the nobilities of Europe and was reinforced by the large plantations that were formed. The traditionalistic culture believes that the status quo is appropriate and should be accepted. Anything that would maintain the power of those in political positions was accepted, including corruption, and knowing someone in power was more important than merits. The third subculture that Elazar found was individualistic, in which the government is a tool by which people can gain or extend their own power (1984, 115-116). This creates a very competitive environment but also is tolerant of a limited amount of corruption.

The subcultures are concentrated in certain regions but the different immigration patterns along with constant internal movement of the populous creates combinations of the subcultures and small pockets which are not compatible with the rest of the area. Some amount of the populous would inevitably assimilate into their political subculture but in some states all three subcultures are present. In states, the cities may have the characteristics of one subculture while rural areas have the characteristics of another. The different combinations of subcultures result in different registration rules, views of participation, and, ultimately, voter turnouts. The difference in turnouts between the states has been studied, and Elazar's model seems quite accurate in their ability to predict voting levels (King 1994).

Even though the political subcultures have been found to help fill in the gaps of the traditional analysis of American political culture, it is not to say that there is not an overarching national political culture that is imbedded within the subcultures. When looking at national voter turnout it is evident that there is a low, and decreasing, trend (see table 1). The historic voting data starts in 1964 because that is before the large downturn in voter turnout and the data continues until the late 1980's to show how the depressed voter turnout had not recovered. The table includes shows both presidential and mid-term elections. The table shows only the information on voters who took part of the congressional part of election in order to try and make the data more comparable. The congressional voter turnout is affected by the extra people that come out for the presidential election every four years, as can be seen. The general trend is a downturn in voter turnout in both presidential and mid-term elections from the early 1970's onward.

(Table 1)

Since there is a decreasing trend at the national level it is important to make sure that the national turnout was not affected mainly because of the downturn in one political subculture or region. By studying states the breadth of the downturn of voter turnout can be evaluated. Minnesota was one state chosen to evaluate because it is a representation of the moralistic state. The moralistic states formed their political subculture because they were the settling place for many Scandinavian immigrants. Currently the voter turnout in Minnesota is one of the highest in the nation and so it is important to see if even the highest voting states have suffered a decrease in voter turnout. The data shown begins in 1956 and continues until 1996. The timeframe has been selected because it allows for a clear comparison of what voting patterns were before the drop in the mid-1970's as well as a substantial amount of data points for voter turnout after the decline in voting. The Presidential and mid-term election years are divided into different tables since the turnouts in the elections vary greatly due to the emphasis placed upon the Presidential election (see tables 2-3). The turnout rates are divided into two tables, instead of the one table shown for national turnout, because there is not comparable data for only the congressional turnout during a presidential year election.

(Tables 2-3)

Other states, such as Indiana, California, and Michigan give a larger sample of the United States. These three states contain differing levels of the moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic subculture combinations (see table 4). In addition to giving a larger sample of subcultures, they also are examples of other parts of the United States, differing racial makeups, and various levels of urbanization, amongst other differences. At the same time, these states were also selected because they had credible data available for the time frame of which this thesis evaluates. With the voter decline existing in all of these states, it is clear that the drop in

voter turnout is at a national level. The factor or factors that are causing people to not vote are something that is widespread and integrated into the various subunits of the United States. Data on the turnouts in Michigan, Indiana, and California also use the time range of 1956 until 1996 in order to have a common comparison as well as sufficient information (see tables 5-10 and graph 1). There is a definite downward trend for all of the states involved but Minnesota continues to have a higher voter turnout and declines at a lesser rate than the other states.

(Tables 4-10 and Graph 1)

To go beyond just the subcultures, an evaluation of voter turnout in the different regions can also help to evaluate if the voting depression was regional. For the national political culture to be the reason for the lowered voting, there must be decreased voting among all of the regions. In the data collected, the United States was broke down into four regions: the South, Midwest, Northeast, and West. In three regions, there was a substantial lowering of voter turnout starting mostly after 1966 (Census Bureau 2008). As can be seen from the data in table 11, the different regions have different standard levels of turnout because of differing registration laws, cultures, demographics, and various socioeconomic factors that affect voting. Also, there are various national level factors that could have influence on voting levels and the variations.

(Table 11)

There are some missing pieces of data which, when explained, can help present the full picture. First of all, the data is missing for the elections from 1966 to 1972 in the Midwest and West regions. The voter turnout in 1964 is therefore used as a basis for comparison in all of the regions so that the basis is consistent. The data for 1964 is still sufficient since it is a data point before the substantial decline in voter turnout and is used as supplemental information with the

state turnout data. Two of the regions have voting data from 1964 until 1998 and trends can be seen with their data that follow the state trends and the national trend. The missing data should not be assumed but what information is given in the data does not contradict the scenario shown by other information provided.

Another interesting piece of this data is that the voter turnout in the South seems to be steady or even increase at times. When analyzing the data it is also important to remember that during the 1970's there was a larger turnout of African Americans who had been denied the vote, or coerced into not voting, in previous years. Legislation, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965, was at first slow in making a difference in African American voter turnout. Yet, as the legislation started to be enforced in the Deep South and word spread to the more rural areas, the African American population started to feel more comfortable and the voter registration and voter turnout levels increased substantially in the early to mid-1970's. The increased turnout among African Americans, who had substantial populations in the South, is the reason that the voter turnout was steady, even though other people were opting out of the voting system (U.S. Department of Justice 2009).

Comparison of American and Swedish Political Culture

The United States' low voter turnout is even more substantial when controlled for different institutional and demographic factors (Powell 1986). After controlling for institutional and demographic factors, and seeing their effect, it is important to look at a comparison of political culture as a factor. In the comparative portion of this thesis, Sweden was chosen for a number of reasons. The first major reason Sweden is the comparative country is because it possesses strong voter turnout. Sweden's voting rates have remained high over the past four decades even though they are susceptible to variation (see table 12 and graph 2). A country with long-term, strong voter turnout was used so factors that have affected the voting in both countries could be contrasted. A comparative study could therefore show how differing political cultures could be one of the factors of dissimilar voting patterns.

(Table 12 and Graph 2)

Sweden's voter turnout has remained strong. A potential reason for this is that it does not have the strong inner conflict between its political culture and the reality of its government that the United States possesses. Sweden's political culture is egalitarian, which means that the government is used as a tool to promote the welfare of the populace (Arter 1999). Although the United States uses its government to benefit the people it tries to do so in a more limited form in order to try and maintain classic liberal ideals. The government in Sweden has been established to help all of those in need and try to create and promote equality for everyone on an economic and social level. The United States in current history has tried to create social equality but has not stressed the equality of economic outcomes of the populace to the same extent that Sweden does. The individual and some of their freedoms, especially economic ones, are considered to be

secondary to the good of the population and those in need. Swedish political culture still encourages a modified form of free market economy and believes that the individual is ultimately responsible for themselves. In Sweden, 52 percent of those polled felt that individuals should take more responsibility for themselves, versus the government taking responsibility for them (World Values Survey 1999).

With government expansion and utilization, the people in Sweden feel a closer connection with the governmental power; this actually increased satisfaction with the populace (Einhorn and Louge 1989, 66). As long as the government is still assisting the people, it is encouraged to take the actions that are needed to attain its goals. Swedish political culture can also be seen in its tax system. Sweden's taxes are set up for the well-being of the individuals while the American system is set up for uniquely mirroring the classic liberal values and concentration on economic freedoms (Lockhart 2003). Growth of government is a natural progression of an egalitarian political culture, although there may be certain times of cutting back the government for efficiency, and so the entity of government is encouraged to grow as long as it is deemed effective. It was seen that a growth in regulation in economically developed countries was popular from the 1950's up until the 1980's. In the 1980's the economically developed countries, including Sweden and the United States, lowered their taxes levied on corporations and the populace in general (Swank and Steinmo 2002). When comparing the voting trends with different political movements in Sweden there seems to be an indication that the government responds well to the people's desires (Arter 1999).

The attitude towards government's responsibility as well as the trust of government is not shared by the United States. As the founders made clear, the government was to be limited and

to have internal checks which would help keep it from abusing power and becoming tyrannical (Madison [1787]). These checks can be seen as restraints on the ability of the government to abuse power. In the United States, the government is seen as a necessity, but one that should be treated warily. At the same time, the Swedish government is allowed to step in when needed and react to the needs of certain groups since that is part of creating equality. Yet, in the United States the people have tried to keep the government because such intervention is viewed as an intrusion. The basic comparison is that the United States stresses individual freedom while Sweden stresses the equality of the whole. The stress of freedom is a classic liberal tenant that the United States has yet the Swedish view of politics seems to be based more in republicanism.

The comparison of the United States to Sweden not only allows for a comparison of how different political cultures can lead to different institutional systems but also of how those institutions are viewed by the populace. Sweden has some crucial similarities to the United States that make comparison of their political cultures and voter turnouts relevant. The first of these similarities is that Sweden is an economically developed nation which allows the government to do more and it tries to ensure a reasonable standard of living for its citizens. Sweden also does not have compulsory voting laws which would have artificially increased the voter turnout in its nation compared to the United States (Powell 1986). Sweden is actually one of the few European countries to not have compulsory voting.

The Swedish political culture allows for Sweden to maintain a cooperative relationship between its populace and its government. When Swedish immigrants arrived in the United States they brought with them part of their political culture, and mixed it with American political cultures, including classic liberalism. If political culture is a contributing factor to the voting

patterns, then the turnout in Minnesota can be evaluated to see political culture's affect. With the more egalitarian form of political culture, under the umbrella of overall American political culture, Minnesota's voter turnout should have declined but to a lesser extent than that of other states or the nation as a whole. When the data are analyzed it is seen that this prediction is true and that this can be used as evidence of political culture being a factor of voting patterns (see tables 4-10 and graph 1). This higher turnout could be part of the moralistic subculture being more accepting of larger government, as long as it has a goal of creating more equality. Another example of the moralistic subculture being more resistant to the downturn in voting is evident in the regional voting data (see tables 2-3). The Midwest has a strong concentration of moralistic culture since there are a substantial number of decedents from Scandinavian immigrants, such as is seen in Minnesota (Elazar 1984).

Subculture pockets, such as those with the Scandinavian immigrants in Minnesota, will over time assimilate into the classic liberal political culture through population movements and interaction between groups. In states such as Minnesota, there are strong Scandinavian undertones which are part of the reason voter turnout is so relatively high compared to other states and that the subculture has stayed so strong over time. There still may have been a frustration in Minnesota about the expansion of government and its power but not to the extent of other places.

More comparison between the views of the populace can be seen by using information from the World Values Survey, which reveals the perceptions of people in both the United States and Sweden. The perception of whether the people or the government should take more responsibility for providing necessities is a basic area in which the difference between the United

States and Sweden can be seen. In the United States, 7 percent more of the people felt that individuals should take added responsibility, constituting almost 60 percent of those surveyed (World Values Survey 1999). A majority of the Swedish population felt that individuals needed to take more responsibility but the 7 percent differential relates to a difference in view. The survey data are examples of how the differences in political culture can carry over into the roles of the different governmental institutions.

Political Frustration

The decline in voter turnout has stemmed from a division between what people ideologically feel should be happening and what direction the government institutionally has moved. With classic liberalism as the dominant national political culture in the United States, there is a demand that the government be limited, checked, and efficient. The people desire to have economic freedoms and liberties and want taxes to remain low. For much of the history of the United States, it was custom for private charities and localities to be the module through which welfare assistances would flow. The government would still have been involved with welfare through the localities because federalism designated what powers are meant to be federal and then let the states decide the rest. Yet, in the 1930's, with the Great Depression, that changed. The transition from localities and private entities to the federal government providing welfare caused somewhat of a breakdown of traditional support networks (Fukuyama 1995).

During large government expansions such as the New Deal, the checks upon the government were weakened and Federal government spending and strength ballooned. The limit of federalism started to erode as the states became dependent on the funds coming from the Federal government. The Federal government's growth was not challenged much by the populace because it was perceived to be needed in order to provide the basic necessities for the majority of people. The government was no longer limited to providing security and the basics of trade but now was involved in providing jobs, welfare, and other services that were entirely new to the American governmental system at the Federal level. Yet, the extension of government powers had been established and precedent was now in place to change what had been the status quo.

Another large broadening of governmental powers and involvement occurred during the 1960's and 1970's. This expansion came on the coattails of the Vietnam War, new social programs, and the Civil Rights Movement. The 1960's saw the interpretation of the Constitution broadened in order to provide the Federal Government with the legitimacy and ability to pass laws and regulate areas which had previously been out of reach. Presidential powers and influences expanded substantially, as did the Legislature. An example of one of the powers that the president now possessed was the ability to wage an expansive and long war without a declaration from the Legislature. A power such as this limited the Legislature's power but other things, such as an expansion of the commerce clause, allowed Congress to still gain powers. The commerce clause now allowed the federal legislature to regulate things within the states which had been beyond its reach because of how federalism had been viewed. Some of the populace focused on different areas of policy or government that they felt were abuses of power. Many different political actions were stifled because of the turmoil of racial tensions and the growing unpopularity of the Vietnam War. The discontent caused by the war decreased as American involvement was reduced, yet the government still seemed to be involved in various social programs. The social programs were more difficult to eliminate since they were engrained in law and people began to become dependent upon them.

The extensions of the Federal government during the 1930's and the 1960's had some similarities but the situations surrounding them are what caused the differences in response. The programs during the 1930's were centered on the Great Depression, which was affecting everyone in the United States. The majority of the populace was looking for assistance because the disaster had become so widespread and immense. The growth of government and its programs that started during the 1960's had not been spurred by a devastating economic crisis

but instead by a more ideologically driven idea of equality. Many of the programs were directed at the protection and benefit of minorities and subgroups within society. The contrast of the goal and the target beneficiaries is a major cause in the differences in the long-term approvals of the ideals behind the movements.

The policies of the late 1960's and early 1970's are being analyzed because although individual programs can gain momentum in the short-run, a large combination of programs which go against the classic liberal ideals could cause repercussions upon popularity. As with many things in politics, there seems to be a honeymoon period during which the benefit of the doubt is given to politicians or programs in the initial stages. Yet, once issues start to arise and more evaluation of the program starts to develop, there can be a downturn in popularity. The programs and expansion of the 1960's started to see a downturn in popularity as the Democratic Party that had implemented many of them started to be targeted by members of the "New Left" in addition to Republicans (Dionne 1991).

The after-effect view taken also helps to explain the lack of disenfranchisement after the programs of the 1930's. As the Great Depression started to become resolved the effects of the expanded government and social programs were overshadowed by the immensity and demands on the government of World War II. Instead of analyzing, and possibly criticizing, the need for the different government programs and expanded powers, the people's attention was focused on the new and dangerous threat of war. The 1970's provided the opposite environment for the evaluation of government power and involvement. By the mid-1970's the nation was finishing the unpopular and costly Vietnam War and, on top of that, the Watergate Scandal brought more negative attention to politics. People found corruption at the highest level of American politics

and felt mistrust towards the government. At the same time, the government had gained substantial power and was more involved than ever in the private arena.

It was during the late 1950's that a downturn in trust for the government started but a substantial amount of the drop happened during the 1960's and 1970's (Keele 2007). In the 1980's, it was found that compared to seven other industrial democracies, Americans did not trust the national government to do what was right most of the time (Powell 1986). The classic liberal political culture would lead to this mistrust as the government seemed to be expanding and the people's desires seemed to be lost amongst the immensity of the growing government. In addition to the data on trust, it was found that government spending and trust are intertwined. As trust declines, the public support for redistributive and distributive spending also declines (Rudolph and Evans 2005). Since the government continues to provide the spending programs, because of institutional and societal restraints on action, the populace would feel that the government was not reacting to constituent's desires thus causing further decline in support.

The original mistrust of government felt by the founders also has created an additional problematic situation. The drafters of the Constitution wanted to slow the ability of the government to make hasty decisions and so established certain institutional checks within the system of government to slow reactionary movements (Lipset 1996). After the long build up of social programs and government expansion, the people's trust in government had become lost (Putnam 1995). Yet the same people who moved to limit government were being slowed by the institutional checks originally meant as governmental restraints. The reactionary ability of the government was still slow even though the people were demanding quick changes and society seemed to be moving towards a faster pace.

The populace's discontent for the institutions and growing division caused by a clash between expanding government and classic liberalism is one factor that could possibly explain the trend of decreased voter turnout. With the lack of trust for the government, the population is looking for reconciliation between its political culture and its government, but finding none. Research found that people starting in the mid-1960's started to feel increasingly like public officials do not care about them (Abramson 1983). It has also been found that many of the people who do not vote feel disconnected or frustrated with the institutions (Abramson 1983; Doppelt and Shearer 1999). Combining the frustration felt from the expanding governmental influence with the information about why people stop voting, it can be seen that these situations came together with other factors to create a decline in voter turnout.

Conclusion

Voter turnout is determined by a complex combination of variables. Social movements, registration laws, national economic performance, and numerous other factors can determine voting trends and turnouts. Yet, the strong and constant decline in voting is a clear pattern in the United States. By comparing the United States to Sweden, it is possible to evaluate another variable that has entered into the environment since the 1970's. Governmental growth of power does not seem to reconcile with the classic liberal tenants of political culture. With a division between political culture and the way that the institutional government has progressed, coupled with mistrust in government, a factor of the decline in voter turnout can be explained. There are countless other variables which cause voting to adjust from election to election but something as ingrained in society as political culture will not change as quickly. This thesis does not suggest a solution to this dilemma because that is beyond the scope of the data and research. Although, this research does help set the groundwork for future study on what affect political culture has on voting and possible alternatives that could be used.

The slow changing nature of political culture, along with the institutional resistance to change, will make solutions difficult to implement. At the same time, there is a debate about what the low voter turnout means to a democracy like the United States and how much damage it does, if any. The debate on the effects of low voter turnout is just as complex as trying to explain why the turnout has decreased. Yet, finding a significant factor in decreased turnout, such as the conflict between political culture and governmental movement, is a vital step to understanding the intricacies of voter turnout and its trends. Research in this area needs to continue in order to bring greater light to an area that is uniquely American. Gaining more

knowledge about the affect political culture has on voting can only further people's efforts to understand voting patterns and their impact on the government and democracy. This voting turnout factor is something that was established because of historical events, and by further analyzing the events and doing more comparative evaluation between countries the factor can be more deeply understood.

Tables and Graphs

Table 1 U.S turnout in national elections

Year	Turnout %
1964	57.7
1966	45.4
1968	55.0
1970	43.6
1972	50.6
1974	35.7
1976	48.8
1978	34.5
1980	47.5
1982	37.7
1984	47.4
1986	33.6
1988	44.9

Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau 2008

Table 2 Minnesota presidential year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1956	83.2
1960	79.4
1964	76.3
1968	74.0
1972	70.3
1976	73.0
1980	72.0
1984	70.4
1988	68.2
1992	72.6
1996	65.3

Source: Data from Minnesota Secretary of State
2008

Table 3 Minnesota mid-term year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1958	60.1
1962	62.4
1966	61.8
1970	62.4
1974	49.5
1978	58.0
1982	62.3
1986	47.6
1990	58.0
1994	54.1
1998	61.0

Source: Data from Minnesota Secretary of State
2008

Table 4 States and their political subculture

State	Political subculture
Minnesota	Moralistic
Michigan	Moralistic, Individualistic
Indiana	Individualistic
California	Moralistic, Traditionalistic

Source: Data from Elazar 1984

Table 5 Michigan presidential year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1956	67.9
1960	72.7
1964	68.8
1968	66.8
1972	59.4
1976	59.4
1980	61.1
1984	59.1
1988	55.5
1992	62.5
1996	55.3

Source: Data from Michigan Secretary of State
2008

Table 6 Michigan mid-term year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1958	50.0
1962	60.0
1966	52.2
1970	51.6
1974	44.0
1978	46.6
1982	47.8
1986	37.2
1990	38.7
1994	45.5
1998	43.3

Source: Data from Michigan Secretary of State
2008

Table 7 Indiana presidential year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1956	72.5
1960	76.3
1964	73.5
1968	69.8
1972	60.8
1976	61.7
1980	58.5
1984	56.8
1988	54.6
1992	55.9
1996	52.9

Source: Data from Indiana Secretary of State
2008

Table 8 Indiana mid-term year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1958	59.9
1962	63.5
1966	57.6
1970	56.0
1974	48.7
1978	36.9
1982	46.6
1986	39.7
1990	38.3
1994	37.6

Source: Data from Indiana Secretary of State
2008

Table 9 California presidential year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1956	67.6
1960	68.8
1964	66.0
1968	62.3
1972	64.5
1976	57.3
1980	57.0
1984	59.1
1988	53.5
1992	54.5
1996	52.6

Source: Data from California Secretary of State
2008

Table 10 California mid-term year turnout

Year	Turnout %
1958	60.2
1962	57.5
1966	57.7
1970	54.5
1974	46.5
1978	48.3
1982	50.5
1986	43.4
1990	41.1
1994	47.0
1998	41.4

Source: Data from California Secretary of State
2008

Table 11 U.S. voter turnout by region

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Year				
1964	74.4	76.2	56.7	71.9
1968	71.0	N/A	60.1	N/A
1972	66.4	N/A	55.4	N/A
1976	59.5	65.1	54.9	57.5
1980	58.5	65.8	55.6	57.2
1984	59.7	65.7	56.8	58.5
1988	57.4	62.9	54.5	55.6
1992	61.2	67.2	59.0	58.5
1996	54.5	59.3	52.2	51.8

Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau 2008

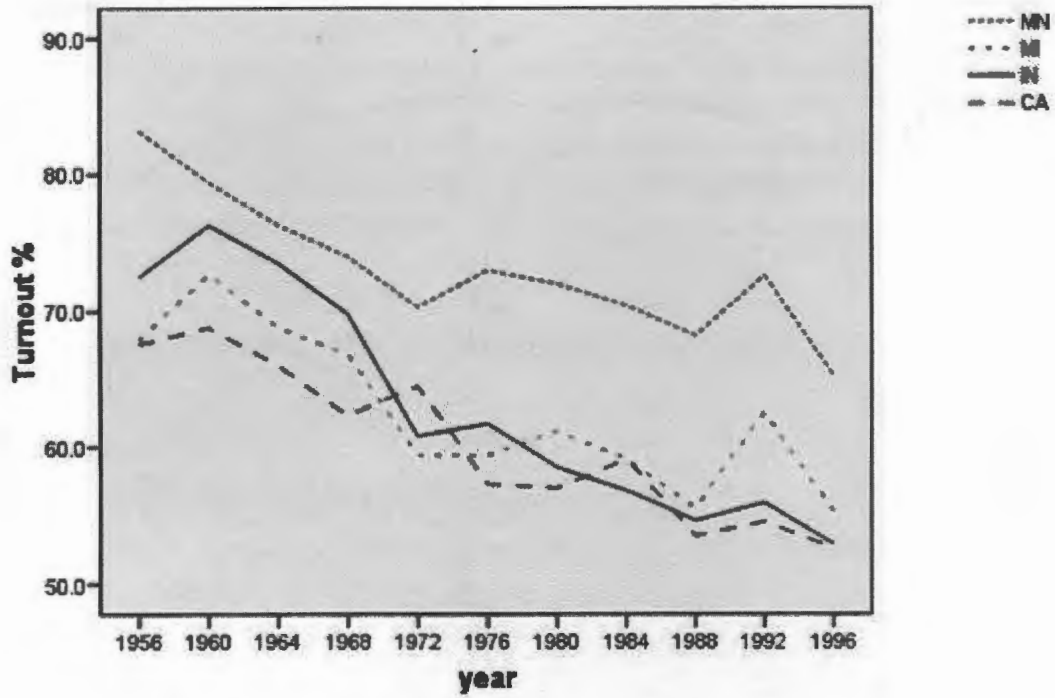
Table 12 Swedish voter turnout

Year	Turnout %
1956	79.8
1958	77.4
1960	85.9
1964	83.9
1968	89.3
1970	88.3
1973	90.8
1976	91.8
1979	90.7
1982	91.4
1985	89.9
1988	86.0

Source: Data from Einhorn and Logue
1989

Graph 1

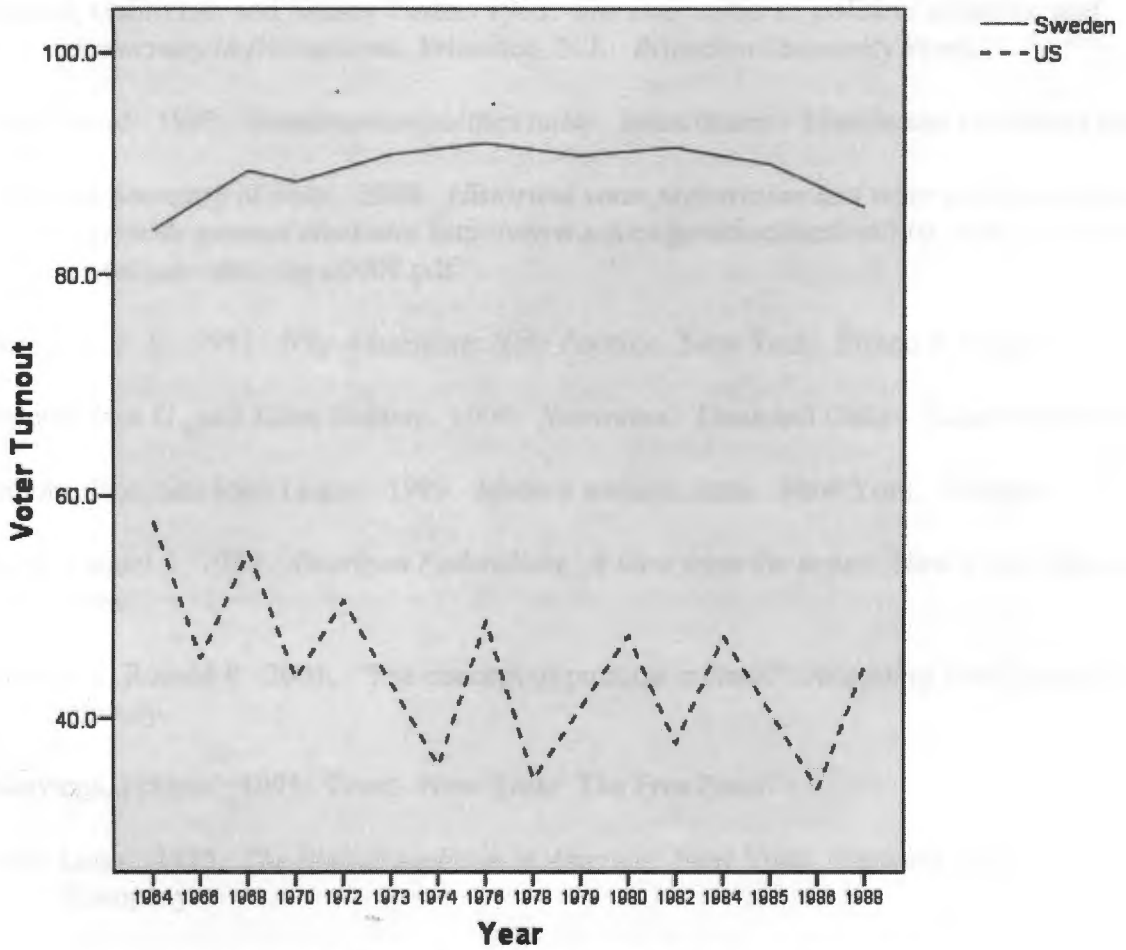
State Turnout, 1956-1996



Source: Secretaries of State, various states.

Graph 2

Voter turnout in Sweden and the United States



Sources: Einhorn and Logue 1989; U.S. Census Bureau 2008

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