Class Bias in the U.S. Electorate, 1972-2004

Despite numerous studies confirming the class bias of the electorate, we have only a limited number of studies of *changes* in class bias over the past several decades–a time of notable increases in economic inequality in the U.S–and these few studies disagree as to whether or not class bias has increased since the 1960s (Leighley & Nagler 1992*b*, Freeman 2004). Moreover, this literature has also failed to acknowledge one other demographic change that has become increasingly relevant to political representation, electoral politics and public policy: notable increases in the population of individuals who are ineligible to vote by virtue of their status as convicted felons or non-citizens. We discuss the theoretical rationale underlying expectations of increased class bias; review the methodological challenges in addressing this question; and use Current Population Survey data to assess changes in class bias since 1972. Our initial analyses indicate that increasing class bias began only in 1988 and that this increase is even greater when using our alternative measure of class representation that incorporates the resident voting age population, as opposed to citizen voting age population.

Jan E. Leighley
University of Arizona

Jonathan Nagler
New York University

August 26, 2006

1 Introduction

Aside from death and taxes, it is said, few things are certain. Yet few would dispute one critical trend in American society over the past forty years: that there is a bigger gap between the rich and the poor today than in decades past (Danziger & Gottschalk 1995, Farley 1996, Gottschalk & Danziger 2005). As reported by the APSA's Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, rising levels of income inequality in the U.S. are remarkable, and notably greater than in other industrialized democracies: "By 1998, the share of income held by the very rich was two or three times higher in the United States than in Britain and France." (APSA 2004: 3),

Economic data on income inequality in the U.S. echoes this sober observation, although there is some disagreement as to precisely when or why such changes have occurred. Between 1967 and 2001, for example, the proportion of aggregate income held by the lowest fifth of the population decreased from 4.0 to 3.5 percent, while the proportion of aggregate income held by the highest fifth increased from 43.8 to 50.1 percent (U.S. Census, Table IE-3). Related, Jones and Weinberg (2000) report that substantial increases in economic inequality occurred during the 1980s, regardless of the particular choice of inequality measures (e.g., Gini coefficient, Atkinson, MLD, and comparisons of aggregate shares of income), while changes in the pre-1980 and post-1990 periods were far smaller or even non-existent. Despite these shifts in the consistency and magnitude of changes in income inequality over the 1967-2001 period, the bottom line is clear: Americans live in a more unequal economic society today than they did in 1967.

The political consequences of such changes in inequality challenge key aspects of democracy in the U.S. As the APSA report suggests, economic inequality is associated with "inequalities in the political voice expressed through elections and other avenues of participation;" that "government institutions are much more responsive to the privileged than to other

Americans;" and that public policies today are less devoted to reducing economic inequalities than they were in decades past. As we discuss below, the empirical evidence regarding changes in political voice over the past several decades, however, is neither overwhelming nor undisputed.

Our paper seeks to expand on inconsistent findings from previous research on one particular type of inequality of political voice: class bias in the electorate (i.e., the overrepresentation of the wealthy in the electorate relative to their representation in the population). That the "privileged" are more likely to vote than the poor has been confirmed across a wide range of studies and time periods (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, Leighley & Nagler 1992*a*). Yet we have only a limited number of studies of *changes* in class bias over the past several decades, and these few studies disagree as to whether or not class bias has increased since the 1960s (Leighley & Nagler 1992*b*, Freeman 2004).

Moreover, this literature has also failed to acknowledge one other demographic change that has become increasingly relevant to political representation, electoral politics and public policy: notable increases in the population of individuals who are ineligible to vote by virtue of their status as convicted felons or non-citizens. Because this increasingly large proportion of the population on average poorer than eligible voters as a group, failing to explicitly incorporate ineligible individuals in analyses of changes in class bias might well lead to underestimating changes in class bias over time. We thus also provide new empirical evidence as to changes in class bias by incorporating this distinctive feature of political life in the U.S. today.

2   Previous Research

Scholarly attention to the nature of changes in class bias over the past several decades reflects a normative commitment to equality in a democratic society, one that became of greater concern as voter turnout apparently declined between the 1960s and 1980s. Of course, were voters randomly "selected" from the population, declining turnout would elicit little comment. But we know that voters are not a random subset of the population: they are wealthier and have higher levels of income than non-voters (see, for example, Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde (2005); Leighley (1995); Leighley and Nagler (1992*b*); Rosenstone and Hansen (1993); Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980)).

Moreover, as Rosenstone and Hansen (2003: 234-44) report, there is a strong correlation between the level of citizen participation and the representativeness of participants. Averaging American National Election Study data from 1952-1988, for example, they find that voters in presidential elections are more representative of citizens with respect to education and income than voters in off-year elections are representative of non-citizens, while contributors to presidential and congressional campaigns are far less representative of citizens than are voters in either presidential or congressional elections, activities in which much larger proportions of individuals engage. Consistent with this logic, they conclude (2003: 241) that participatory equality was ". . . greatest in the high-turnout elections of the 1960s and least in the low-turnout elections of the 1980s. As turnout declined between 1960 and 1988, class inequalities multiplied."

The assumption underlying this observation is that the decline of turnout resulted from poorer individuals dropping out of the electorate at a faster rate than wealthier individuals, with some early evidence based on limited samples and time periods offering support for this belief (e.g., Burnham (1980), (1987), and (1988); Reiter (1979)). More generally, and in retrospect, Rosenstone and Hansen's scenario seems all the more reasonable given

the notable increase in economic inequality in the U.S. during the 1980s: as individuals "fell behind" in the economic realm, their political involvement and attachments likely weakened as well. Yet subsequent analyses, more comprehensive in their treatment of the question, offer somewhat mixed evidence on the nature of changes in class bias.

Leighley and Nagler (1992*b*) examine turnout rates across education, income and occupation groups between 1964 and 1988 using Current Population Survey (CPS) and American National Election Study (NES) data. They find that differences in the turnout rates of these different demographic groups over time are indicator-specific: changes in the turnout rates of the bottom and top income halves are quite small compared to changes in the turnout of low- and high-status education and occupation groups. Leighley and Nagler argue that the occupation data are neither reliable (due to a coding change in the 1970 census) nor valid (due to the variable being a categorical, rather than ordinal, measure) as measures of class differences in turnout over time. Consequently, they conclude that the notably large differences in blue vs. white collar turnout should not be used as evidence regarding increases in class bias.

Instead, they argue that income is a superior measure of class over time, and focus most of their analyses on two different tests of changes in class bias. First, they consider changes in the turnout of different income quintiles over time. Increasing differences between the turnout of members of the top and bottom income quintiles over time would be evidence of class bias, as would differences between the turnout rates of each income quintile and overall turnout. They find these differences to be surprisingly small over time, a point underscored by the fact that Gini coefficients (measuring inequality of turnout rates across the income distribution) are estimated to be quite stable over time (ranging from .094 to .111).

Second, they test for changes in the marginal effects of income, controlling for other

demographic characteristics associated with voter turnout (i.e., race, gender, age, marital status, living in the South), to assess whether income as an explanatory variable becomes stronger over time. Should class bias in turnout be increasing, then the marginal effect of income should increase as a predictor of voting. Using a probit model of voter turnout, they find that the marginal effects of both income and education have been relatively stable over time.

These two sets of evidence inform their conclusion that there has been very little ("almost no") change in class bias since 1964. In their concluding remarks (1992: 734), they note that 1988 (the year in which the self-reported vote was most class-biased) was a "deviant" election, and speculate that the "class consequences of Reagan administration policies beginning in 1981 may have influenced the composition of the electorate . . . " but that "whether these differences persist in the 1992 election is obviously an unanswered question."

Using a similar approach, Shields and Goidel (1997) both expand on and confirm Leighley and Nagler's conclusions in the case of mid-term elections between 1958 and 1994. As in presidential elections, each mid-term year is marked by a notable bias in the over-representation of wealthy individuals, yet the marginal effect of income is typically less in more recent (post-1978) elections than in earlier elections, and the difference in reported turnout rates between the lowest income quintile and the highest income quintile is actually *smaller* in more recent elections than in earlier elections. Interestingly, the marginal impact of education increases somewhat, but the difference across low and high education groups remains relatively stable (approximately 30 percentage points difference) between 1958 and 1994. In conclusion, they note that their findings (relying on both NES and CPS data) conflict with the earlier conclusions offered by Rosenstone and Hansen (as noted above) and affirm that while the demographics of mid-term electorates have changed, they have not become more biased with respect to class.

Other analyses of changes in class bias, however, dispute the conclusion that class bias did not increase over the past several decades. Freeman (2004) considers both NES and CPS data used in previous research, focusing largely on education and income as indicators of class, and concludes that inequality in voting has increased substantially over the past several decades. Offering several important methodological reminders regarding the general difficulties of assessing changes in class bias over time, he also offers several criticisms of Leighley and Nagler's evidence and inferences (noted below). Substantively, Freeman differs in his approach to assessing changes in class bias by focusing more heavily on education than did Leighley and Nagler, but also draws on Darmofal's (2005) exhaustive analysis of changes in class bias since 1960.

Freeman especially criticizes Leighley and Nagler's (1992) interpretation of the evidence, suggesting that even slight or small increases in class differences in turnout supports the conclusion that class bias has increased, rather than that "the voters essentially remain the same." Freeman's essay thus underscores not only the critical importance of methodological and measurement issues in assessing changes in class bias (especially if such changes are relatively small) but also the fact that interpretation of such changes might reflect scholars' priors as to expectations of their magnitude.

2.1 Measurement Issues

We think it important to underscore the fact that systematic empirical analyses regarding changes in class bias do not offer the kind of irrefutable evidence that is implied by the APSA's Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. That serious scholars relying on similar data are led to different conclusions suggests the critical importance of a number of methodological issues confronted by scholars addressing the relatively "simple" question of whether class bias has increased over the past several decades. While some of these are

mentioned above, and most are discussed in greater detail in Leighley and Nagler (1992) and Freeman (2004), we note them here as a means of motivating the analysis below.

First, reliance on the self-reported vote in either the CPS or the NES to measure turnout may introduce errors in our estimates of changes in class bias to the extent that misreporting varies by class, or over time. Previous research comparing the reported and validated vote in the NES suggests that higher-status individuals are more likely to over-report than are lower-status individuals, in part because they are more sensitive to the norm of voting as expected of "good citizens" (Silver, Anderson & Abramson 1986, Granberg & Holmberg 1991, Hill & Hurley 1984). For those years in which validated voting is available, then, we have more accurate measures of class differences in turnout. But the validated vote is available only for the NES in a limited number of elections, and so drawing inferences regarding changes in class bias over the longer time period of interest is simply impossible.

Whether the over-reporting rates estimated from the NES data can be used to correct the CPS self-reports may be somewhat risky, and again would be limited to the particular election years when the validated vote was collected. Even riskier, one might argue, would be to infer that class-based differences in mis-reporting rates are essentially the same in 2000 and beyond as when they were originally collected, some thirty years earlier. (Freeman?) We thus conclude that relying on the self-reported vote is the best available measure to address our question, but that it likely results in a noisy, perhaps inflated measure of the extent of class bias. As a consequence, we believe that estimates of changes in class bias relying on raw CPS data should be interpreted conservatively, given the likelihood of this "over-estimation," and we frame our discussion accordingly. In addition, however, we also offer a (simple) correction for over-reporting in our estimates of the CPS data.

Second, education, income and occupation as measures of class are also plagued with measurement error, a key reason for some of the conflicting findings reported in previous

research. As we argued earlier (1992: 727, 730-32), we believe that income is the best measure of the three, as income is the most widely-used and recognized demographic criteria by which government distributes benefits and therefore seeks to influence social and economic life; income is also more meaningful in comparing individuals over time than is either education or occupation. Occupation is especially troublesome with respect to categorizing particular jobs as either white or blue collar, as well as with respect to temporal validity (made all the worse in the CPS by a notable coding change in 1970). We thus focus primarily on income in comparing the turnout rates of different "classes" over time in the analyses below.

Third, analyses of changes over time are fundamentally constrained by the time period considered as well as assumptions regarding the linearity of changes over time, either in theory or practice. That is, if we seek to test for an increase between two points in time, then which two points are chosen may make a difference for our conclusions. This is especially the case if changes in what we are studying appear to be dominated by year-specific variations as opposed to singular trends over time. From a practical perspective, this means that evaluating graphical data on class bias over time must consider whether year-to-year changes are as notable as an underlying trend over time.

The possibility of election-specific changes in class bias independent of overall turnout is intriguing, as we know that candidates, issues and party strategies often differ substantially across elections, or that some elections take place in periods of increasing economic inequality (i.e., the 1980s) while others (pre-1980s, post 1980s) do not. Hence, class bias might be observed only in particular periods within the broader time frame of the analysis. While we do not focus on explanations for changes in class bias either as a trend over time or as an election-specific phenomenon, we do emphasize that our substantive answer to the question must explicitly address this temporal dimension.

Fifth, and related, how much of a change is a change? Again, we think the question

of "has class bias increased" has an obvious answer based on the statistical estimates, i.e., a certain number of percentage points. But is any increase in the turnout rates between the lower-status and high-status individuals sufficient to conclude that "inequality in the electorate has increased"? Our initial answer to this question in earlier work was negative, as based on previous research (relying primarily on sub-groups of the population or occupation status) we expected relatively large changes in the difference in the turnout rates across income groups. When those changes seemed to be closer to zero than anything more substantial, we interpreted the evidence to suggest that the voters "essentially remained the same." In our analyses below, however, we do two things. First, in our substantive conclusions we stay as close to the data (i.e., positive vs. negative, and how much) as possible but then, in addition, interpret the specific changes we observe (whether increases or decreases) in light of other indicators, patterns over time, and other indirect evidence about the nature of electoral politics since the 1960s.

Finally, as noted above, we introduce a "new" measurement issue in this analysis of class bias: measuring class bias with respect to the subset of eligible (i.e., citizen) population. The "bias" that scholars have sought to measure has been defined as the representation of the *eligible* wealthy individuals (i.e., citizens) relative to the representation of the *eligible* poor individuals. We offer a theoretical motivation for considering a measure of class bias that is independent of voting eligibility (i.e., citizenship) and repeat our initial analyses relying on the standard indicator with this alternative, more inclusive, measure as well.

3   Theoretical Elaboration

Normatively we believe that in a fair world, poor people and rich people should have proportionately equal shares of electoral votes. For example, the people in the bottom fifth of the income distribution should have 20% of the votes, and the people in the top fifth of the

income distribution should have 20% of the votes.

Theoretically, one group's proportion of the population may differ from its proportion in the electorate for two very different reasons: 1) differences in behavior across income groups, and 2) differences in legal status across income groups. First, income (or other relevant) groups may differ in their likelihood of voting, and those groups such as the poor who are less likely to vote than the rich will be under-represented in the electorate, i.e., represent a smaller proportion of votes than their presence in the population. Most studies and discussions of class bias focus on this first explanation in that ample evidence documents that the poor are less likely than the wealthy to vote in any single election.

Differential (behavioral) changes in the propensity of poor individuals to vote relative to the likelihood of wealthy individuals might reflect factors unique to individuals or instead the differential effects of political factors on the poor vs. the wealthy. Poor people might vote more (or less) based on the nature of government policy, e.g., eliminating "welfare as we know it," or implementing tax cuts for the rich, or the poor may be increasingly distracted from political involvement as they confront the challenges of economic adversity (Rosenstone 1982). Alternatively, political elites might choose to target poor people less over time as a reflection of changing electoral strategies (see (Rosenstone & Hansen 2003): 238-242). These differences in the turnout of the poor vs. wealthy might be observed in trends over time or simply in election-to-election differences, whether stimulated by individuals' calculations of the rationality of turnout or as a consequence of changes in elite behavior that might also modify such a calculus. But should the poor change their behavior by voting less, or the wealthy change their behavior by voting more, class bias would increase as a consequence.

In contrast to this behavioral explanation for the under-representation of the poor in the electorate, the second explanation for why the proportion of the poor in the population

might differ from their proportion in the electorate is due to differences in the legal status of the poor and wealthy with respect to voter eligibility. One extreme example highlights the important distinction between this and the behavioral explanation for under-representation of the poor: the poll tax was effectively used in numerous states to keep the poor, and especially blacks, from voting. In effect, this voter eligibility requirement necessarily resulted in the under-representation of blacks and the poor at the polls in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although poll taxes and such devices have been effectively eliminated, states nonetheless maintain the ability to determine who is eligible to vote. The key requirement common to state electoral requirements is citizenship. While this does not explicitly disenfranchise the poor, non-citizens residing in the U.S. are more likely than citizens to be poor. And because the poor are more likely than the wealthy to be ineligible to vote, then they are less likely to be represented in the electorate.

Importantly, previous studies of class bias have ignored this key electoral difference between the poor and the wealthy. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, non-citizens (and therefore those ineligible to vote) have significantly lower median incomes than native citizens (in 2002, $36,580 compared to $54,686; Foreign-Born Population of the United States Current Population Survey - March 2003, Table 1.9); non-citizens are also much more likely to live in poverty (20.7% vs. 11.5% in 2002) (U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003, Table 1.11).

One might argue that analyses of class bias that are restricted to the *eligible* poor and privileged misconceptualize the population that merits representation were elections to truly reflect the interests of all those governed by elected officials. With substantially higher proportions of non-citizens among the poor in the U.S. as opposed to the wealthy, studies of class bias very likely misrepresent the extent of class bias in the electorate.

This important theoretical challenge to these studies reduces to a very specific

methodological issue: what is the appropriate electorate-to-population comparison by which we assess class bias? An important alternative approach to assessing class bias in the electorate is to compare the relative proportion of the poor in the resident population (rather than eligible voting population) to their proportion of the electorate. Changes in class bias can then be documented using this different, and more inclusive, conceptualization and provide a more valid assessment of the representation of the poor and the wealthy in U.S. politics today.

3.1 Analytical Approach, Data and Measures

These theoretical interests and methodological issues, then, lead us to address the following questions about changes in the representation of the privileged and the poor in the U.S. electorate since 1972.

1. Has representation of the wealthy in the electorate relative to the representation of the poor in the electorate decreased since 1960?

2. Are changes in class bias different when both eligible and non-eligible individuals are included in the sample?

To address these questions we rely on data from the Census Bureaus' Current Population Survey, November Supplement. The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly survey of households conducted by the Census Bureau. Each month approximately 50,000 households are surveyed. Respondents are asked about behavior of other household members, providing information on approximately 90,000 'respondents' per month. In November of even-numbered years the CPS includes a short battery of questions on voter participation. In particular, respondents are asked whether or not they voted in that month's election, and whether or not they were registered.

We use the CPS from 1972 to 2004 to compute the reported turnout rate of respondents in each income quintile. Since the CPS records incomes in a set of arbitrarily defined categories for each year, we had to combine the categories into quintiles. As the categories do not map perfectly into quintiles (i.e., the first several CPS income categories may yield slightly more or slightly less than 20% of the respondents), we randomly assign people in 'overlapping' categories into quintiles.[1]

For our basic measure of turnout, we are only using the responses of citizens. And as the CPS is a survey of households, we are further restricted to persons who are not incarcerated at the time of the survey. Thus our measure of turnout is a measure of the turnout of citizens in the voting age population (cVAP). However, the exclusion of incarcerated persons, many of whom have lost the right to vote, makes it somewhat more restricted than cVAP. As McDonald and Popkin (2001) have shown, changes in the proportion of non-citizens in the population, as well as changes in the proportion of persons inelligible to vote based on felony-conviction status, can affect turnout calculations. Thus we also compute a second measure of turnout, based on the voting age population. In this measure we 'count' non-citizens, they are obviously all non-voters, and appear in the denominator of our measure when we compute turnout.

As we mentioned above, over-reporting of voting can create errors in our estimates of class-bias. Our intention is to correct this by using published measures of over-reporting by different income groups derived from the NES validated vote. By assuming that the relative likelihood of misreporting for top quintile voters and bottom quintile voters remains constant over time, we will be able to correct for over-reporting. Those corrections, however, are not yet incorporated in this version of the paper.

4   Evidence

Figure 1 shows reported turnout in presidential election years from 1972 through 2004 for each income quintile using the standard measure that includes eligible voters (i.e., that excludes non-citizens).[1] As expected, in each election year individuals in the highest income quintile are much more likely to vote than individuals in the second highest income quintile, and this pattern is consistent across all income groups, with turnout declining across income groups. In 2004, for example, 86.3% of individuals in the highest income group reported voting, compared to only 56.4% of individuals in the lowest income group. Interestingly, this difference in turnout rates between the top and bottom income groups is almost exactly the same in 1972, when 82.2% of the highest income group reported voting, compared to 53.1% of the lowest income group.

[**Figure 1 About Here**]

Changes in turnout for each group across years are also fairly uniform: in years when turnout goes up (or down), it goes up (or down) for each group. As a result, most changes in the reported turnout rate for each income quintile move in the same direction (more or less of the group voting), with some elections eliciting greater turnout than others. As reported elsewhere, turnout in 2004 was higher than in any other election in this period, and was the highest reported for each group (with 1992 being similar, and not far behind, in both respects).

Of course, these observations are clearly limited by the crude and yet complex nature of these graphical data. A more precise assessment of changes in class bias is provided by focusing on one measure of class bias: the difference in turnout rates (of eligible voters) between the top and bottom income group in each election over the period. We begin here by examining year-to-year variation in the difference in turnout between the top and bottom

---

[1]This measure also includes no currently incarcerated felons.

quintiles, as shown in Figure 2. Between 1972 and 2004, the difference in turnout rates between the top and bottom income groups never exceeds 32 percentage points, but also is never less than 26.5 percentage points.

[**Figure 2 About Here**]

Importantly, expectations of a continuous trend in changes in class bias over the entire period are not evident using this measure, for class differences in turnout increase in the 1970s, decrease in 1980 and then increase over the next three elections, only to be followed by slight decreases in the 1990s and 2000s. However, it is very clear that the five observations since 1988 are all higher than any of the four observations prior to 1988. Based on this comparison, then, we conclude that class bias is greater in the 1990s and 2000s than it was in the 1970s and 1980s.

As we noted above, the increased number of non-citizens among the population has the potential to increase the class-bias in turnout if one considers turnout among the voting population, rather than just turnout among citizens. In Figure 3, we show the turnout of persons of voting age in each of the five quintiles. The patterns are essentially identical to those in Figure 1.

[**Figure 3 About Here**]

In Figure 4 we show the differences in turnout between the top and bottom income quintiles and again expand these groups to represent the size of the resident population – rather than just the voting eligible population – in each group. As expected, using this broader (and increasingly relevant) conceptualization of class groups in American society suggests that class bias is somewhat greater than when considering the representation of the voting-eligible poor in the electorate. As shown in Figure 4, changes in class bias are certainly similar to the pattern seen in Figure 2, but the absolute values of the difference in turnout between the highest and lowest income groups are greater. In 1992, for example,

the difference in turnout between the two groups is 33.8 percentage points (compared to 31.7 using the citizen based measure) while the lowest level of turnout differences, in 1980, is about the same, just over 26 points.

[**Figure 4 About Here**]

And as we would expect with the increase in non-citizens inflating the denominator of the VAP based measure, the graph in figure 4 does *not* show the same decreasing slope post 1992 that the graph of the citizen-only turnout measure does. Instead we actually see a slight *increase* in class bias from 2000 to 2004 with this measure. We believe this provides an important reminder as to the small, yet important bias introduced by assessing class bias only with respect to voting eligible individuals.

5   Conclusion

Our goals in this paper were two-fold: to re-consider and perhaps reconcile conflicting findings in previous literature on class bias, but also to begin a more systematic, and theoretically-informed, consideration of the nature and changes of class bias in the electorate over the past forty years. By addressing some of the methodological criticisms offered earlier by Freeman (1992), we have moved toward addressing the concern that methodological limitations of our earlier work left our substantive findings on shaky ground. We have further work to do in this vein, but here we began that important task.

The most consistent and notable finding in our analyses of class bias from 1972 to 2004 is that changes in the magnitude of class bias in the electorate seem to be notably different prior to and after the 1988 election. While we do not speculate here on why that shift occurred at that political moment, we think this careful consideration helps to reconcile previous findings: using quite similar measures and modes of analysis, we do find an increase

in class bias in the post-1988 era. Thus, as Freeman and many others have noted, answers to questions regarding changes over time are keenly sensitive to the beginning and end point that one considers.

As we extended our time period and offered a longer time series than anyone else has, we revise our substantive conclusion: up through 1988, the voters "essentially remain the same," while analyses of post-1988 elections suggest indeed that class bias has increased substantially. In addition, the differences we observe when we base our measure of turnout on voting age population, rather than just citizens of voting, show that the choice of measure here can lead to different inferences about changes in class bias.

There is much future work to do, of course, in addressing the myriad of other methodological issues that plague this body of literature, as well as in expanding on our notion of the importance of voter eligibility–as opposed to behavioral tendencies–as sources of class bias in the electorate. We think a careful consideration of these issues is essential for political scientists to understand the nature of representation, inequality and participation in the U.S. today.

Notes

1. We believe that this correction is a necessary and useful response to Freeman's (2004) criticism of our earlier work.

References

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich & David W. Rohde. 2005. *Change and Continuity in the 2004 Elections.* Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Burnham, Walter Dean. 1980. The Appearance and Disappearance of the American Voter. In *Electoral Participation: A Comparative Analysis*, ed. Richard Rose. Sage pp. 35–73.

Burnham, Walter Dean. 1987. The Turnout Problem. In *Elections American Style*, ed. A. James Richley. Brookings.

Burnham, Walter Dean. 1988. "The Class Gap." *The New Republic* .

Danziger, Sheldon & Peter Gottschalk. 1995. *America Unequal.* New york and Cambridge: Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press.

Darmofal, David. 2005. "Socioeconomic Bias, Turnout Decline, and the Puzzle of Participation." unpublished MS.

Farley, Reynolds. 1996. *The New American Reality: Who We Are, How We Got Here, Where We Are Going.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Freeman, Richard. 2004. What, Me Vote? In *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn M. Neckerman. New York: Russell Sage Foundation pp. 703–728.

Gottschalk, Peter & Sheldon H. Danziger. 2005. "Inequality of Wage Rates, Earnings, and Family Income in the United States, 1975-2002." *Review of Income and Wealth* 51:231–254.

Granberg, Donald & Soren Holmberg. 1991. "Self-Reported Turnout and Voter Validation." *American Journal of Political Science* 35:448–59.

Hill, Kim Quaile & Patricia A. Hurley. 1984. "Nonvoters in Voters' Clothing: The Impact of Voting] Behavior Misreporting on Voting Behavior Research." *Social Science Quarterly* 65:199–206.

Leighley, Jan E. 1995. "Attitudes, Opportunities and Incentives: A Review Essay on Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 48:181–209.

Leighley, Jan E. & Jonathan Nagler. 1992*a*. "Individual and Systemic Influences on Turnout - Who Votes, 1984." *Journal of Politics* 54:718–740.

Leighley, Jan E. & Jonathan Nagler. 1992*b*. "Socioeconomic Class Bias in Turnout, 1964-1988 - The Voters Remain the Same." *American Political Science Review* 86:725–736.

McDonald, Michael P. & Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review* 95:963–974.

Reiter, Howard L. 1979. "Why is Turnout Down?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 43:297–311.

Rosenstone, Steven J. 1982. "Economic Adversity and Voter Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 26:25–46.

Rosenstone, Steven J. & John Mark Hansen. 2003. *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America.* New York: Longman.

Rosenstone, Steven J., John Mark Hansen, Paul Freedman & Marguierite Grabarek. 1993. "Voter Turnout: Myth and Reality in the 1992 Election." *APSA* 999:Washington DC, September, 1993.

Silver, Brian D., Barbara A. Anderson & Paul R. Abramson. 1986. "Who Overreports Voting?" *American Political Science Review* 80:613–624.

Wolfinger, Raymond E. & Steven J. Rosenstone. 1980. *Who Votes?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Figure 1: Reported Turnout by Income-Quintile, 1972-2004 (cVAP, Source = CPS)
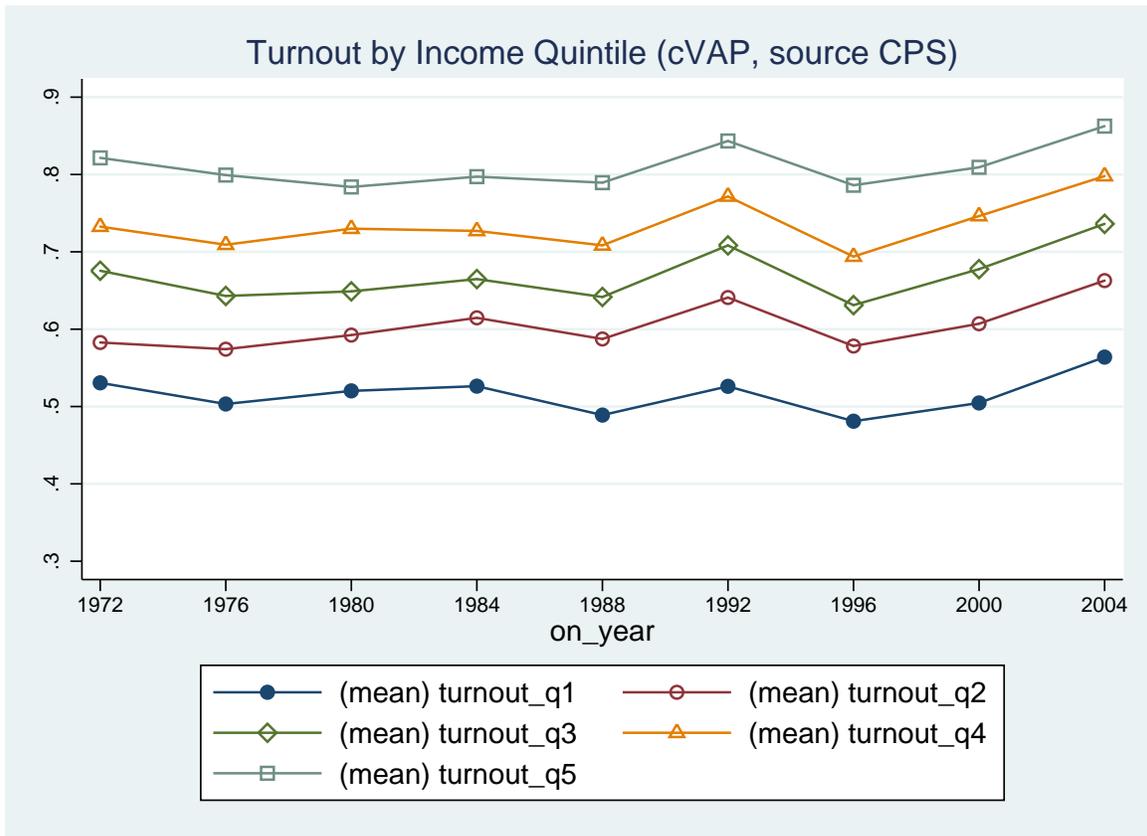
Figure 2: Difference in Reported Turnout: Top Quintile Minus Bottom Quintile, 1972-2004 (cVAP, Source = CPS)
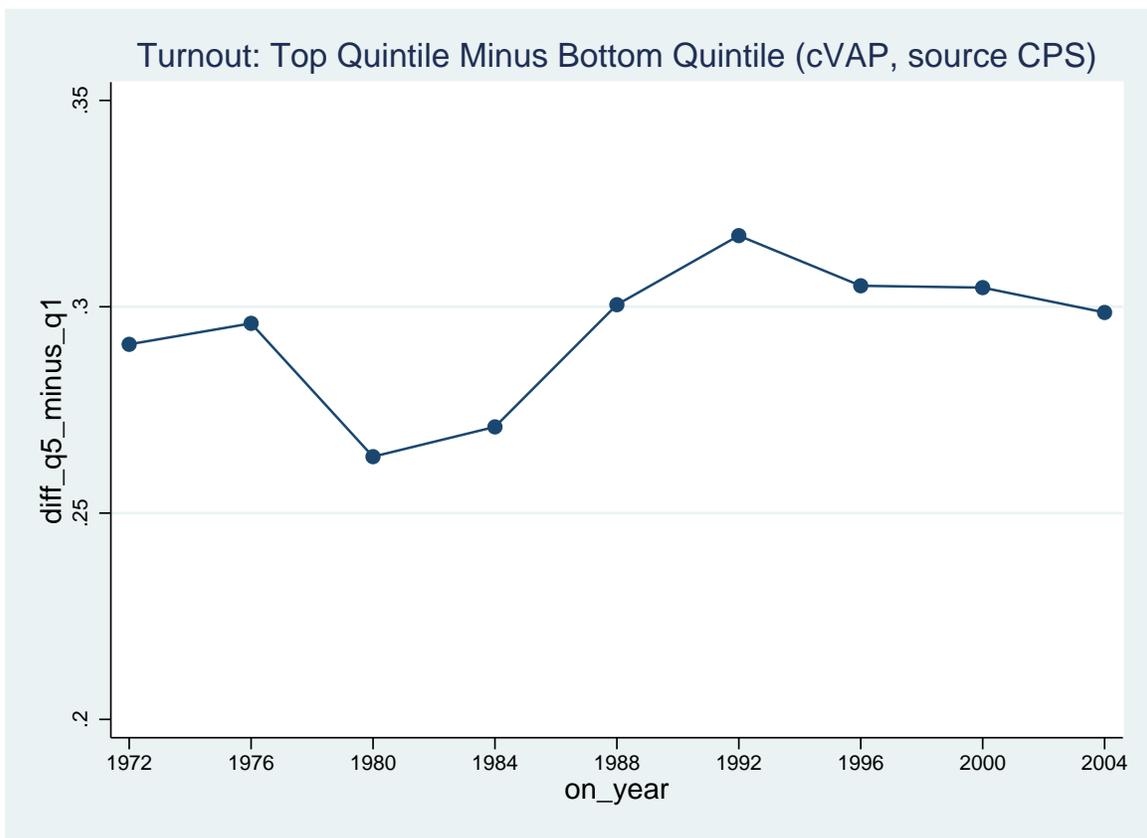
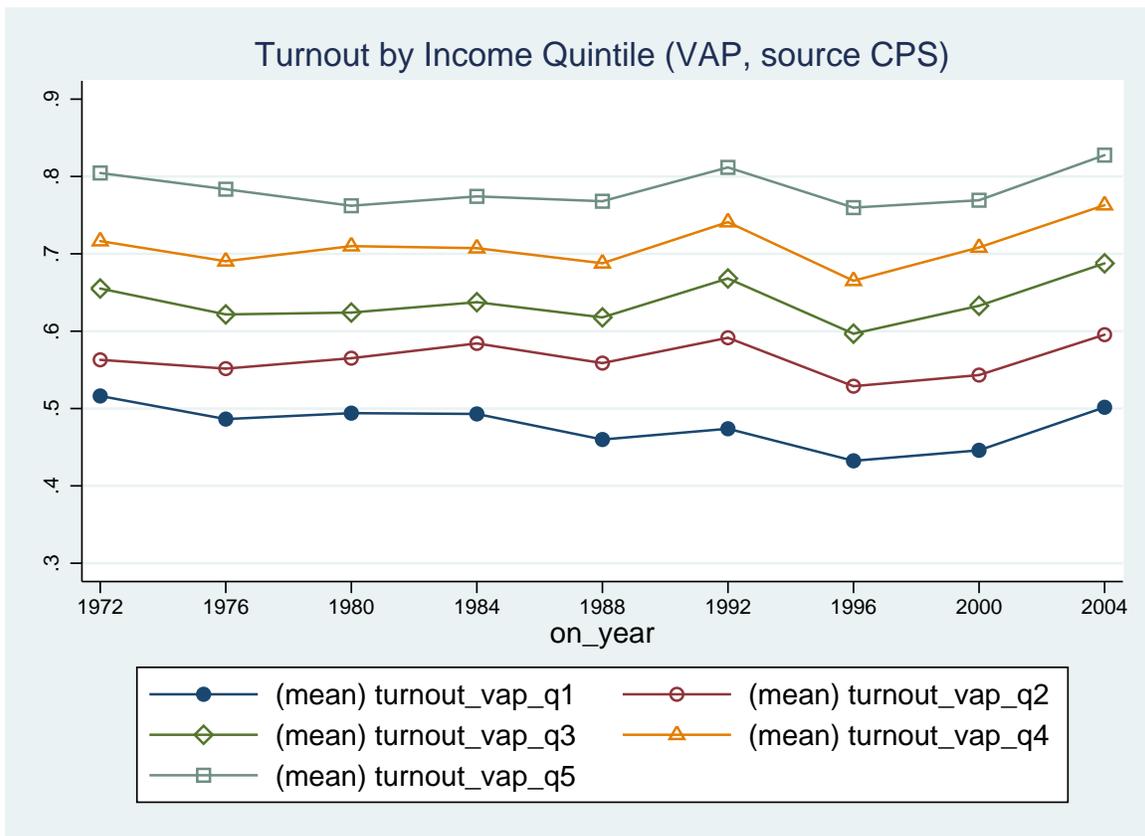Figure 3: Reported Turnout by Income-Quintile, 1972-2004 (VAP, Source = CPS)

Figure 4: Difference in Reported Turnout: Top Quintile Minus Bottom Quintile, 1972-2004 (VAP, Source = CPS)