

FROM MEMBERSHIP TO MANAGEMENT IN AMERICAN CIVIC LIFE

Theda Skocpol

Lecture 5. September 21, 2020

Plan for Unit II. CHANGES IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

-- *Today (September 21)*

“From Membership to Management in American Civic Life.”

-- *Wednesday, September 23*

“Voters, Movements, and Money in U.S. Elections.”

-- Monday, September 28

“From the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance and the Black Lives Protests.”

-- Wednesday, September 30

Guest Lecture by E.J. Dionne, “The Future of American Democracy”

To understand U.S. civic life today, we need to understand how it worked in the past and what has changed since the 1960s. Today we will learn the meaning of these badges worn a century ago by millions of ordinary Americans.

Knights of Pythias



Ancient Order of
Hibernians



Improved Benevolent
Order of Elks of the World



Hod Carriers Union



Today's lecture

- ***Flashback: Emergence of U.S. as a nation of joiners and organizers***
- ***How was civic life reorganized between the 1960s and the 1990s?***
- ***Why did civic changes happen?***
- ***How have civic reorganizations interacted with new equalities and inequalities?***
 - ***Civil Rights and other “rights” revolutions***
 - ***Expansion of the ranks of the higher-educated***
 - ***Rising inequalities of income and wealth***
- ***What difference do civic changes make for U.S. democracy?***

A NATION OF ORGANIZERS AND JOINERS

“In democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge....

As soon as several Americans have conceived a sentiment or an idea that they want to produce before the world, they seek each other out, and when found, they unite. Thenceforth they are no longer isolated individuals, but a power conspicuous from the distance whose actions serve as an example; when it speaks, men listen....”

**– Alexis de Tocqueville,
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA, 1830s**

“In nothing does the executive talent of the people better shine than in the promptitude wherewith the idea of an organization for a common object is taken up, in the instinctive discipline that makes everyone who joins in start falling into his place.... Associations are created, extended, and worked in the United States more quickly and effectively than in any other country.... The greater ones... ramify over the country....”

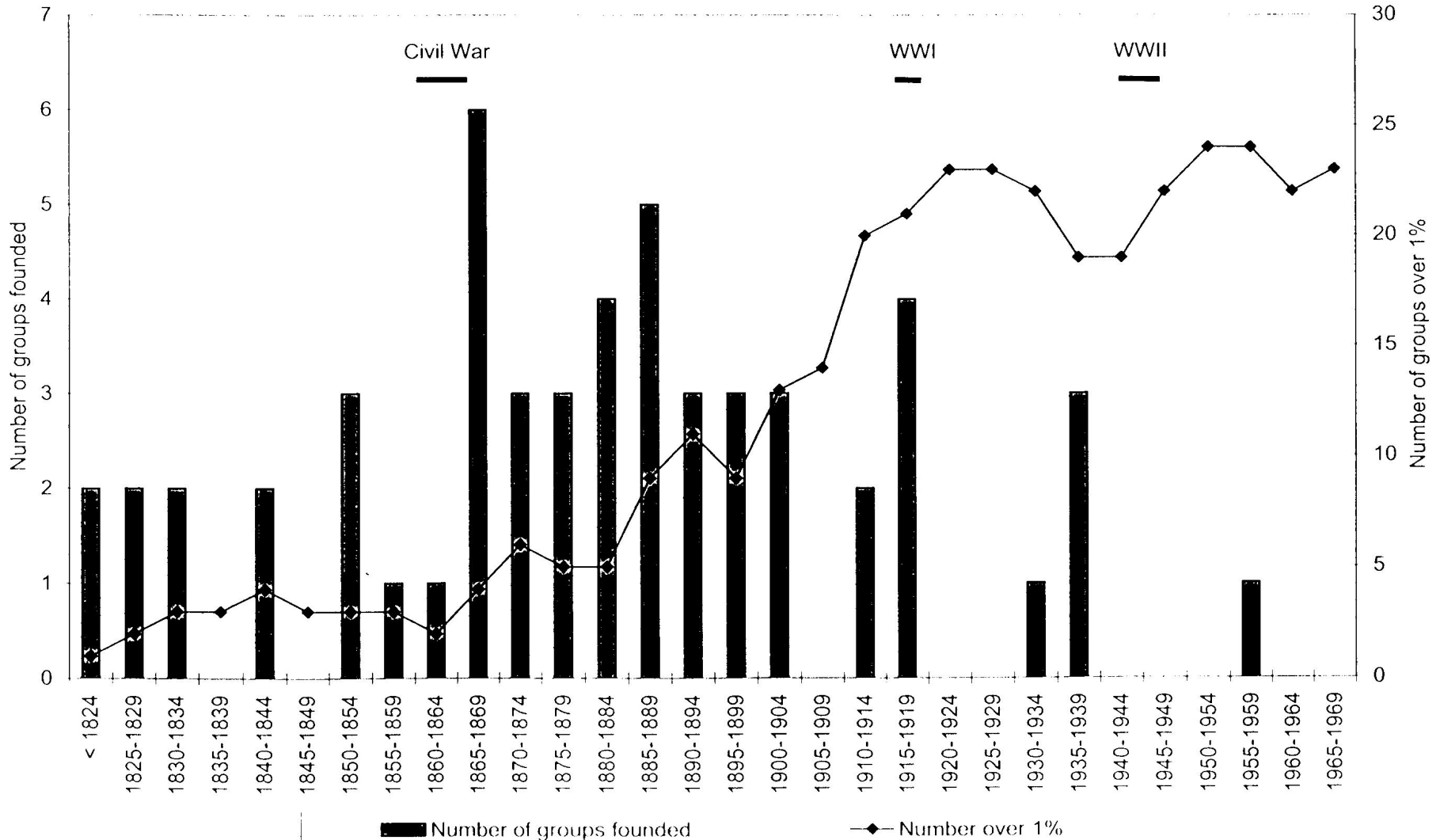
**– James Bryce, THE AMERICAN
COMMONWEALTH, 1895**

AMERICA AS A NATION OF JOINERS & ORGANIZERS

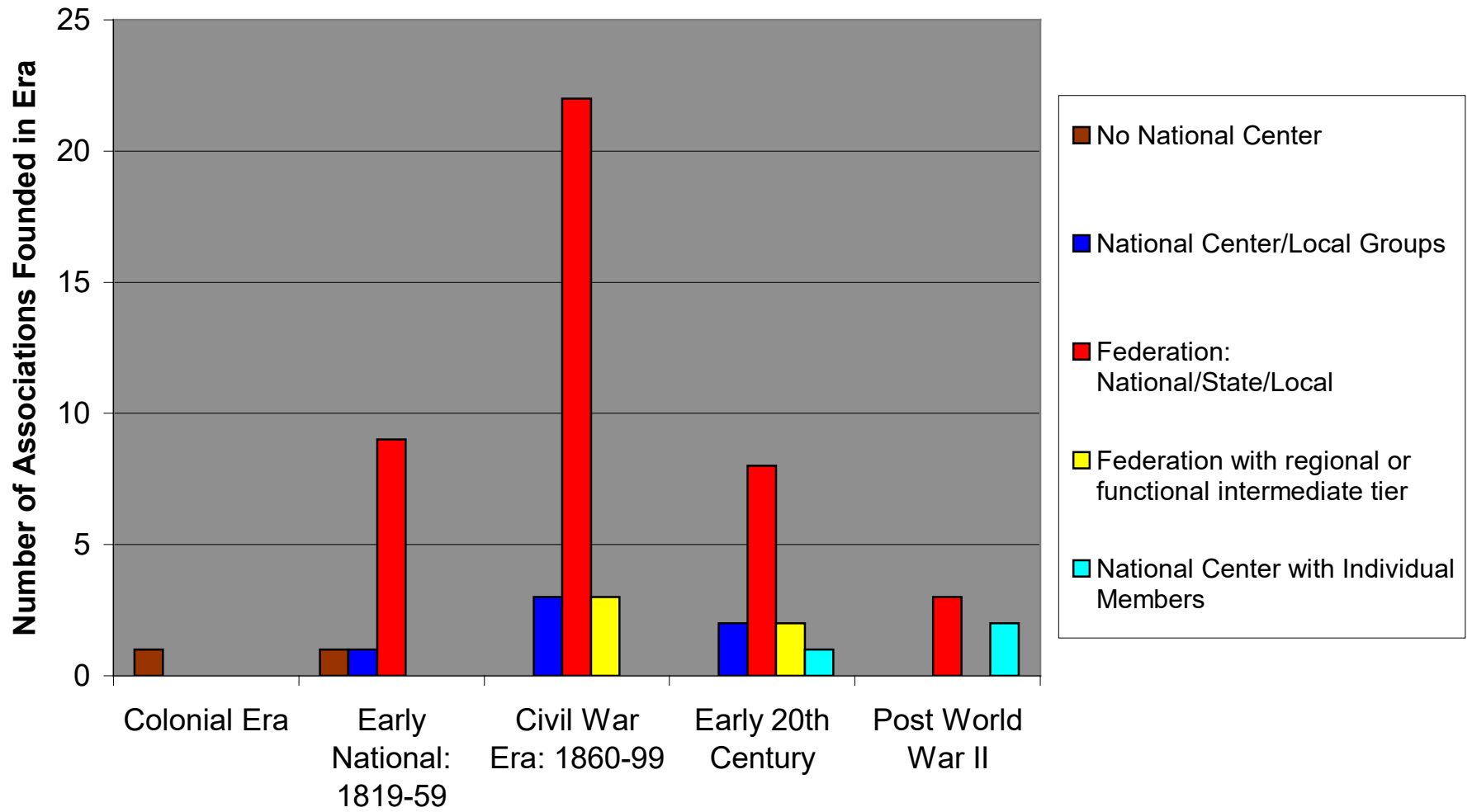
from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s

- **Large, nation-spanning voluntary membership associations emerged and spread starting before the Civil War (1861-65), and especially afterwards.**
- **Most were racially and gender exclusive, but not all.**
- **Most created three-level federal organizations – with local, state, and national meetings – parallel to U.S. government.**
- **Associations had constitutions and taught citizen values and skills to members: rules of order, dues payments, how to elect officers, how to fill offices.**
- **Many associations also agitated for community improvements and for state and national legislation – ranging from alcohol control to veterans' benefits to laws to help farmers, workers, and mothers.**

FOUNDINGS AND CUMULATIVE INCIDENCE OF VERY LARGE U.S. MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES OF VERY LARGE U.S. MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS



WHAT DIFFERENCE DID MEMBERSHIP IN FEDERATIONS MAKE FOR ORDINARY AMERICANS?

- **Opportunities for fun and recreation -- not just regular gatherings with neighbors and friends near home, but travel to district, state, and national conventions.**
- **Local chapters often covered travel expenses -- by the mile or the day -- to send their representatives to state and national meetings.**
- **District, state, and national meetings were eagerly anticipated in advance -- and discussed back home long after the fact.**

JAN. 20th '09
WABASH SPECIAL TO
KOKOMO. K OF P. MEET

K OF P.
DISTRICT MEETING
JAN. 20th
AT KOKOMO.



Participation in federations brought a sense of pride and nationwide identification.

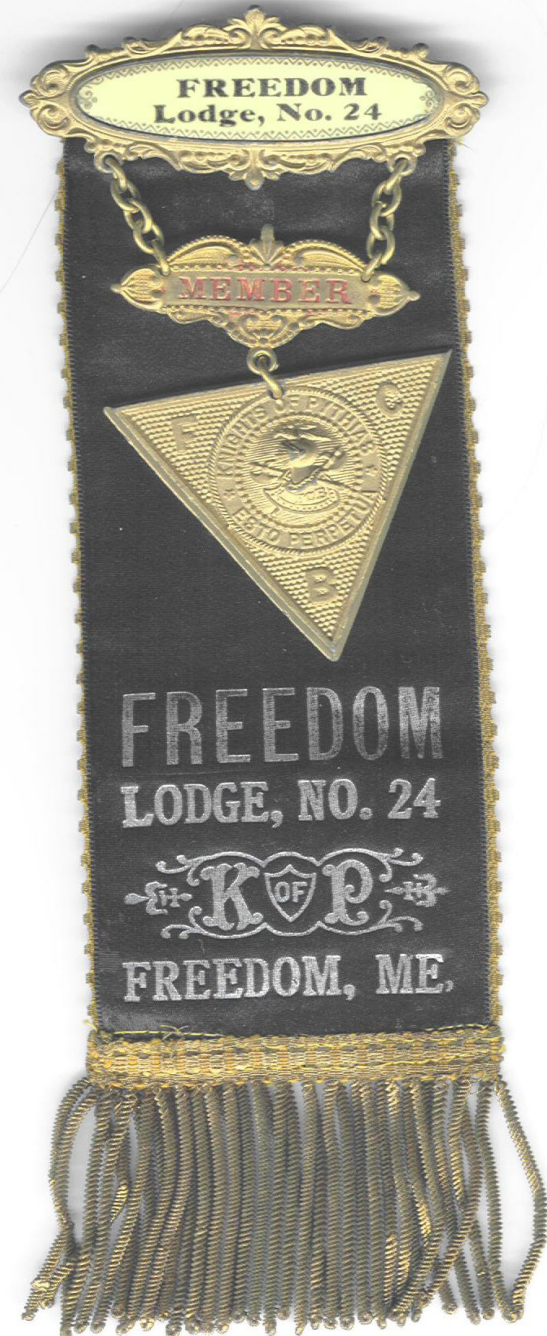
Millions of members of lodges, unions, and other groups wore colorful badges to celebrate their participation in classic voluntary federations. Badges had the symbols and slogans of the national group and indicated the name and number of the local affiliate along with the city and state where it met.

Here is a KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS badge for Freedom Lodge Number 24 of Freedom, Maine.



Most badges had two sides. A front for festive occasions like parades, and a reverse black and silver side worn at funerals.

This is the funeral side of the badge for the Freedom, Maine KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.



Union members had ribbon badges with symbols of their trades.

Two examples:

-- from the William Penn Lodge of the BROTHERHOOD OF RAILROAD TRAINMEN in Reading, PA;

-- and from the HOD CARRIERS Local Union in Allentown, PA.



**This badge is from
Division Number 9 of the
ANCIENT ORDER OF
HIBERNIANS of
Newburyport,
Massachusetts.**

**Like many ethnic
badges, it displays the
U.S. flag crossed with
the flag of the country
from which the
immigrants came -- in
this case, Ireland.**



African Americans built their own nationwide federated fraternal groups, too, including the IMPROVED BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS OF THE WORLD founded in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1898, after Pullman porter Arthur J. Riggs managed to procure a copy of the white Elks ritual and obtain a copyright from the Library of Congress (which the white Elks had failed to do). Because of his Elks activities, Riggs lost his job and was threatened with lynching. The black Elks defended their right to organize federal courts and built their order nationwide.

This badge for Lodge 954 of the Chicago IBPOE of W is unusual because it has two clasped African American hands at the top.



Because federations were translocal, members had a ready-made community wherever they went -- as this bus station sign welcoming "sojourning" Odd Fellows to Muncie, Indiana shows.

I. O. O. F.

All sojourning Odd Fellows are invited to attend any of the following lodges on their meeting nights.

Muncie Lodge, 74, meets every Tuesday Evening, I. O. O. F. Block.

Energy Lodge, 652, meets every Thursday Evening, Bishop Block.

Harmony Lodge, 784, meets every Wednesday evening, Johnson Block.

Naomi Rebekah, 3, meets every Friday evening, I. O. O. F. Block.

Industry Rebekah, 339, meets every Monday evening, Bishop Block.

Bethany Rebekah, 661, meets every Tuesday evening, Johnson Block.

Muncie Encampment, 30, 1st and 3rd Monday nights, I. O. O. F. Block.

John Reynolds Encampment, 297, 1st and 3rd Friday nights, Bishop Blk:

Canton Muncie, 4, 2nd and 4th Monday nights, I. O. O. F. Building.

Come Up and Be Welcomed.



Progressive Study Club

HENRY, SOUTH DAKOTA

1915-1916

Organized 1897

Federated 1900

Club Colors: White and Gold

Club Flower: Golden Rod

Club Motto:

"Strive to Improve, Strive to Help."

Even in very small places, some chapters held regular discussions of public issues.



for the

PROGRESSIVE STUDY CLUB

Topics covered by the women of the Progressive Study Club in just four months in 1915 ranged from the frivolous to the world-historical, from the concerns of homemakers to issues of state, national, and international public import.

Education of a Music Lover
JANUARY FOUR

Hostess—Mrs. Pease
Roll Call—My Favorite Instrument and Why?
Lesson—Chapter IX, "The Problem of Expression"
Mrs. Murphy
Review—Orchestral Music
Mrs. Morris
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. Martin

JANUARY EIGHTEEN

Hostess—Mrs. Martin
Roll Call—What Women Elsewhere are Doing
Mrs. Snyder
Travelogue
Review—Womans' Progress
Mrs. Goepfert
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. O. H. Tarbell

MARCH FIRST

Hostess—Mrs. Hopkins
Roll Call—Favorite Musical Selection
Musicals
Mrs. Martin
Review—New Methods of Child Education
Mrs. L. B. Parsons
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. Whooley

MARCH FIFTEEN

Hostess—Mrs. H. A. Tarbell
Roll Call—South Dakota Laws of Interest to Women and Children
Discussion—Ten Questions on Needed Legislation for Married Women of South Dakota
Mrs. Kreger
Magazine—Three Five-minute Articles
Mrs. Parsons

MARCH TWENTY-NINE

Hostess—Mrs. Baker
Roll Call—Current Events
Discussion—Our Immigration
Mrs. Pease
Review—America's Policy in Regard to Contraband Goods
Mrs. Brown
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. Babcock

FEBRUARY ONE

Hostess—Mrs. Goepfert
Roll Call—An Incident in the Life of a Musician
Lesson—Chapter X, to close (History and Biology)
Mrs. Duffner
Review—American Scientific Investigation
Mrs. Pease
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. Kreger

FEBRUARY FIFTEEN

Hostess—Mrs. Babcock
Roll Call—Patriotic Quotation
Lesson—Fathers' of the Constitution
Mrs. Whooley
Review—"Our National Defense Today"
Mrs. Snyder
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. Baker

APRIL TWELVE

Hostess—Mrs. Snyder
Roll Call—Scenic Wonders of the United States from Personal Observation
Fashions of Different Periods
Mrs. H. A. Tarbell
Ten-minute Monologue
Mrs. Murphy
Magazine—Three Four-minute Articles
Mrs. Stutenroth

APRIL TWENTY-SIX

Hostess—Mrs. Brown
Roll Call—Words Usually Mispronounced
Our Expositions and their Benefits to Our Country
Mrs. Goepfert
Review—Synopsis of a Standard Popular Book
Mrs. Neill
Magazine—Three Five-minute Articles
Mrs. Murphy

Voluntary Associations and U.S. Social Policies

- **Grand Army of the Republic**
- **WCTU; General Federation of Women's Clubs; National Congress of Mothers (PTA)**
- **Grange, Farm Bureau, and other farmers' associations**
- **Trade unions**
- **Townsend movement; Eagles**
- **American Legion; VFW**
- **Civil War pensions; soldiers' homes**
- **Mothers' pensions; Sheppard-Towner Act**
- **National and state programs for farmers**
- **Labor laws; social insurance**
- **Social Security**
- **GI Bill of 1944 and other veterans' benefits**

From the 1910s, the
**FRATERNAL ORDER
OF EAGLES**
championed public
social programs –
including workmen's
compensation, old-age
pensions and, finally,
Social Security. They
mobilized members to
press legislators to
support these
programs, and then
helped explain them to
many citizens.



Your Social Security

**Millions More Can Now Look Forward to a Happier Future,
Thanks to New Changes in Eagle-Pioneered Legislation**

By LLOYD GLADFELTER

ANOTHER TYPE of Declaration of Independence—the revised Social-Security Act of 1950—now assures millions of America's aged men and women freedom from fear of the poorhouse, or from total dependence upon their children, relatives or friends. The same law sets up more generous benefits for widows and their children, for veterans of World War II and for a wide variety of workers heretofore excluded from retirement pensions and death benefits.

Thus has been realized a long cherished Eagle goal, a goal which first became visible in 1921 when the Fraternal Order

of Eagles began its pioneering campaign for the national Society Security Law. The first phase of the campaign was climaxed when the late President Roosevelt, a life member of the Order, signed the measure in 1935, and presented the pen to an invited Eagle delegation. Now, with the extended legislation in effect, supported by the Eagles, and with the signature pen used by President Truman, a life member, too, of the Eagles, also turned over to the Fraternity, the Order's part in the struggle for a better economic deal for the nation's elderly citizens stands out with satisfying results.

Nearly 10 million new workers—many of them from the ranks of the self-employed—have been added to the 35 millions who have enjoyed the protection of the Social-Security Act since it became law in 1937. With many of these workers assured of supplemental retirement incomes through industrial pension systems, the one-time specter of an impoverished old age has been happily removed.

The law, let it be emphasized, is not an evidence of charity, where everyone gets something for nothing. Its benefits are not gifts from Uncle Santa Claus. They are payments made from the contributions

The **American Legion** -- hardly a liberal association -- led the way in drafting and lobbying for one of the most generous pieces of social legislation in U.S. history: the GI Bill of 1944, which offered education benefits, family allowances, and home, business, and farm loans to some 16 million veterans of World War II.



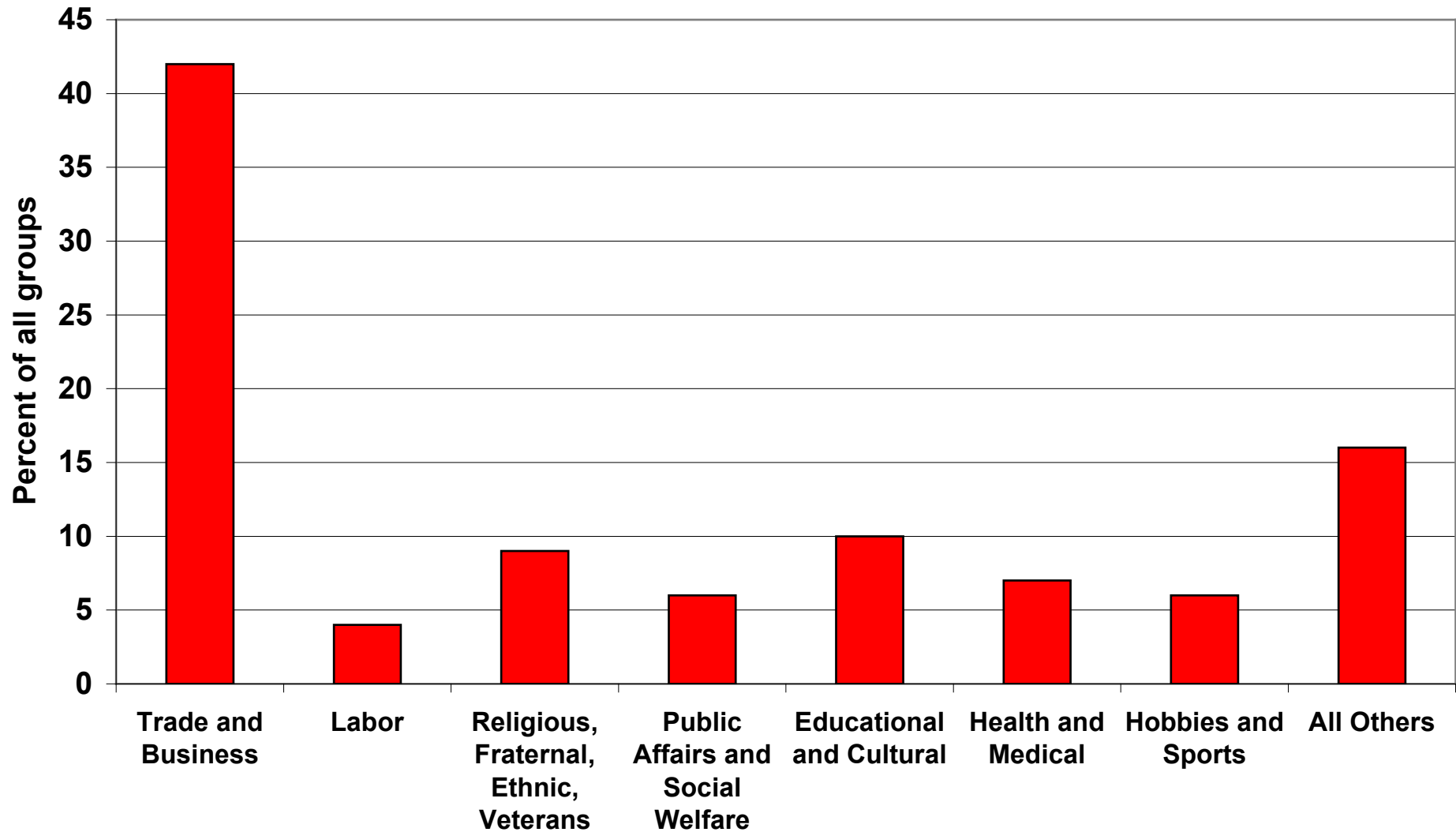
After federated voluntary associations flourished for more than a century, U.S. civic life was abruptly transformed from the 1960s to the 1990s – from a *nation of joiners and organizers* of membership federations ... into a *nation of organizers of national entities without participatory members*.

CIVIC AMERICA circa 1960

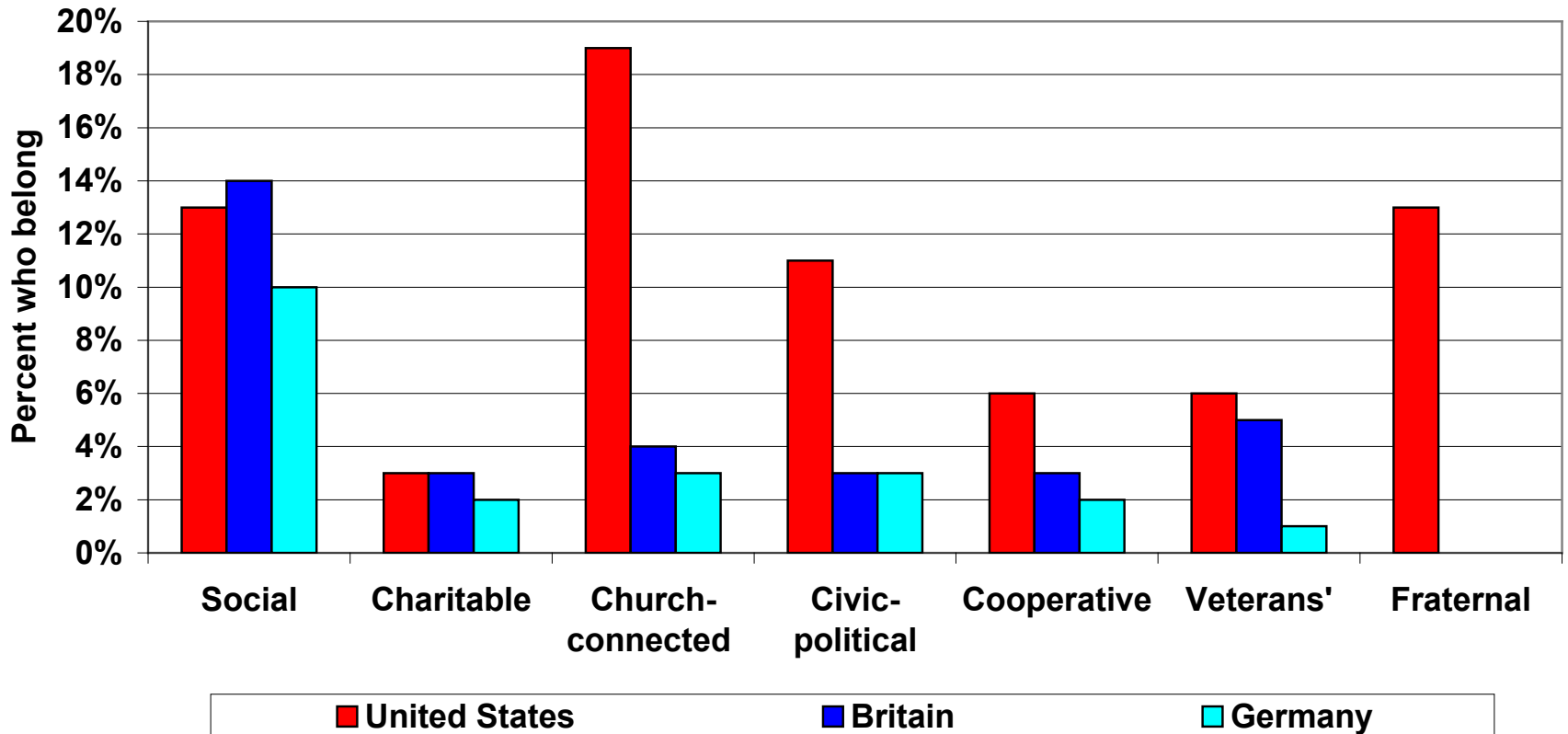
- **Business organizations were most numerous nationally**
- **But civic and fellowship-oriented membership federations were the largest, because they involved unusually high proportions of ordinary Americans**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES IN 1959

Data from the *Encyclopedia of Associations* on 5,843 groups



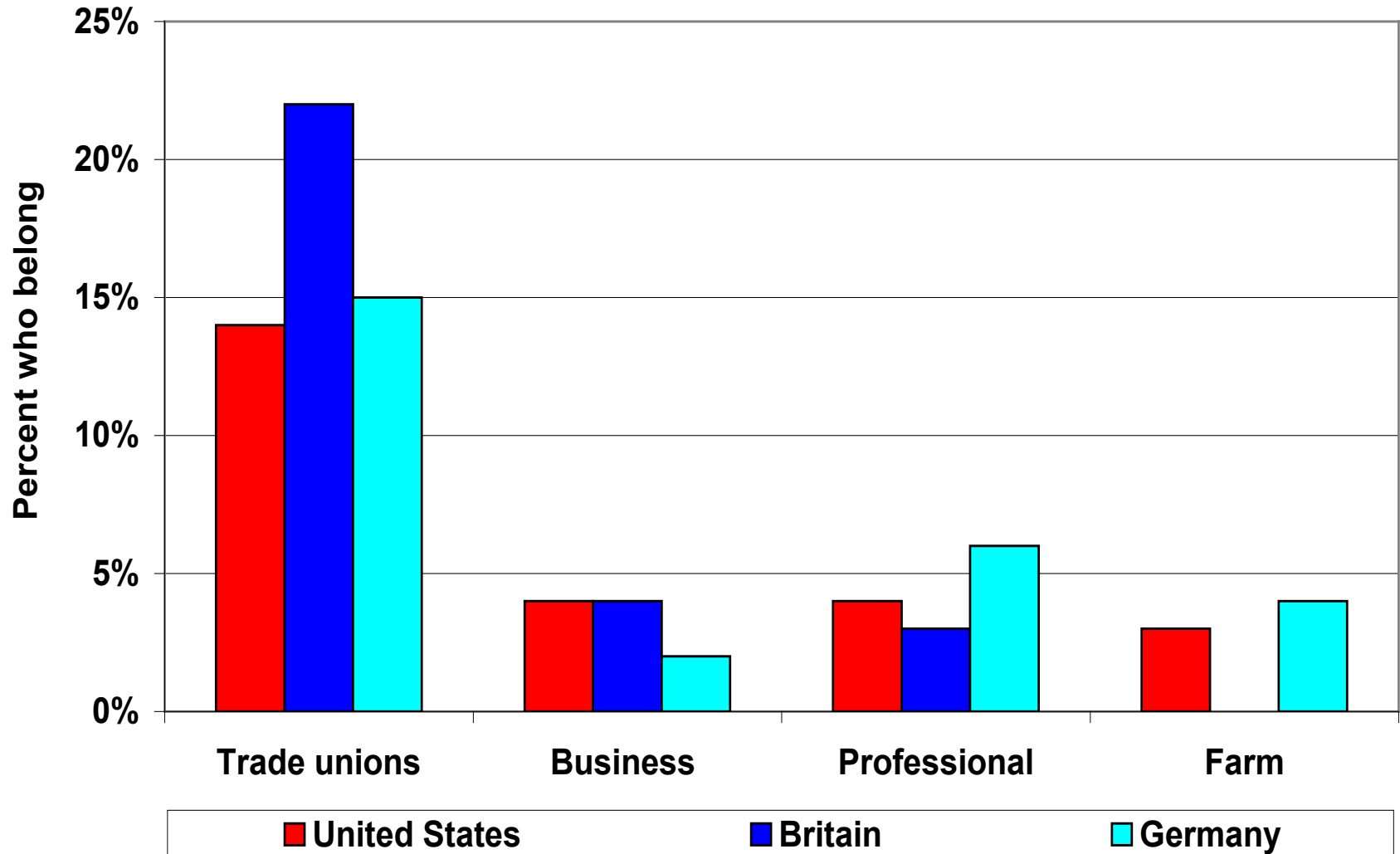
**MEMBERSHIP IN CIVIC, CHARITABLE,
AND FELLOWSHIP ORGANIZATIONS**
United States, Britain, and Germany, c. 1960



Source: Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (1963): 302.

MEMBERSHIP IN OCCUPATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

United States, Britain, and Germany, c. 1960



Source: Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (1963): 302.

Table 1. U.S. Membership Associations Enrolling One Percent or More of American Adults in 1955

<i>Name (Year Founded)</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Percent of Adults Who Belong</i>	<i>Number of Local Units</i>
AFL-CIO (1886)	12,622,000	12.05	NA
National Congress of Parents and Teachers (1897)	9,409,282	8.99	40,396 local PTAs
American Automobile Association (1902)	5,009,346	4.78	464
Ancient and Accepted Free Masons (1733)	4,009,925	7.86 (m)	15,662 lodges
American Legion (1919)	2,795,990	5.48 (m)	16,937 posts
Order of the Eastern Star (1868)	2,365,778	2.26	12,277 chapters
Young Men's Christian Association (1851)	2,222,618	2.12	1502
United Methodist Women (1939)	1,811,600	3.37 (w)	NA
American Bowling Congress (1895)	1,741,000	3.41 (m)	43,090
American Farm Bureau Federation (1919)	1,600,000 (est.)	1.53	3,000 (est.)
Boy Scouts of America (1910)	1,350,000 (est.)	1.29	53,804
Woman's Missionary Union (1888)	1,245,358	2.32 (w)	65,132
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (1867)	1,149,613	2.25 (m)	1,720 lodges
Veterans of Foreign Wars (1913)	1,086,859	2.13 (m)	7,000 (est.)
Loyal Order of Moose (1888)	843,697	1.65 (m)	1,767 lodges
General Federation of Women's Clubs (1890)	826,458	1.54 (w)	15,168 clubs
Knights of Columbus (1882)	800,486	1.57 (m)	3,083 councils
Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (1872)	761,179	1.49 (m)	166
Fraternal Order of Eagles (1898)	760,007	1.49 (m)	1,566 aeries
Women's International Bowling Congress (1916)	706,193	1.31 (w)	22,842
Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1819)	543,171	1.07 (m)	7,572 lodges
American Red Cross (1881)	*	*	3,713 chapters
March of Dimes (1938)	*	*	3,090 chapters

NOTES: Data come from the Civic Engagement Project, Harvard University.

(m) indicates men only; (w) indicates women only. (est.) indicates a best available estimate.

NA indicates data not available at this time.

* Membership data are not given for the Red Cross and March of Dimes, because they include contributors as well as participants.

CIVIC CHANGES, 1960s to 1990s

- **15 of 20 largest membership associations of the mid-1950s experienced sharp decline, usually starting in the 1970s. The greatest membership drops happened in cross-class gender-segregated groups, and in the AFL-CIO labor unions.**
- **Chapter federations of all sizes declined sharply – except a few mostly conservative federations added local units and members (NRA, NRLC, Christian Coalition).**

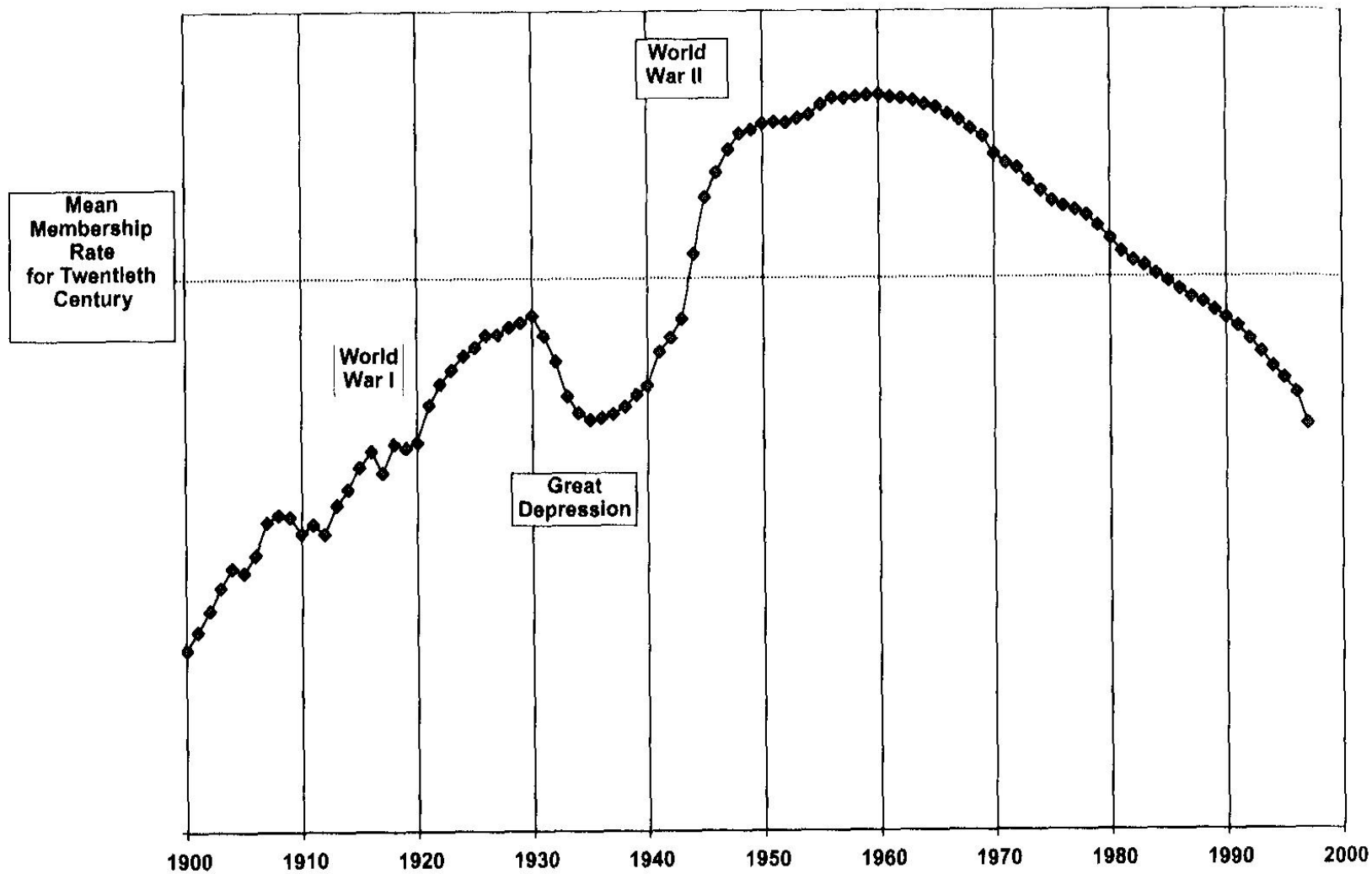
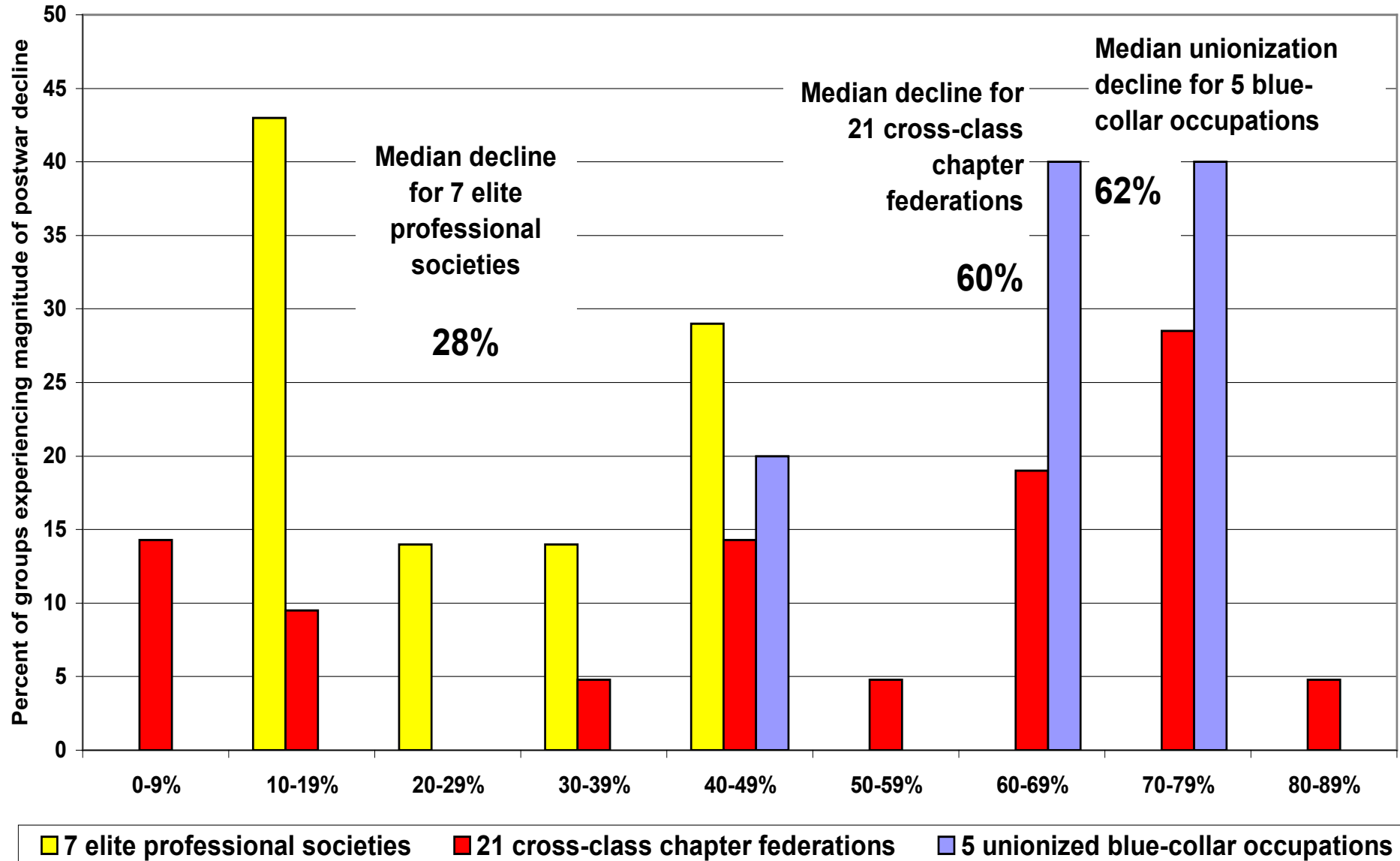


Figure 8: Average Membership Rate in Thirty-two National Chapter-Based Associations, 1900–1997

Source: Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (2000): 54.

AMERICA'S CROSS-CLASS CHAPTER GROUPS AND BLUE-COLLAR UNIONS ARE LOSING MORE MEMBERS THAN ELITE PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

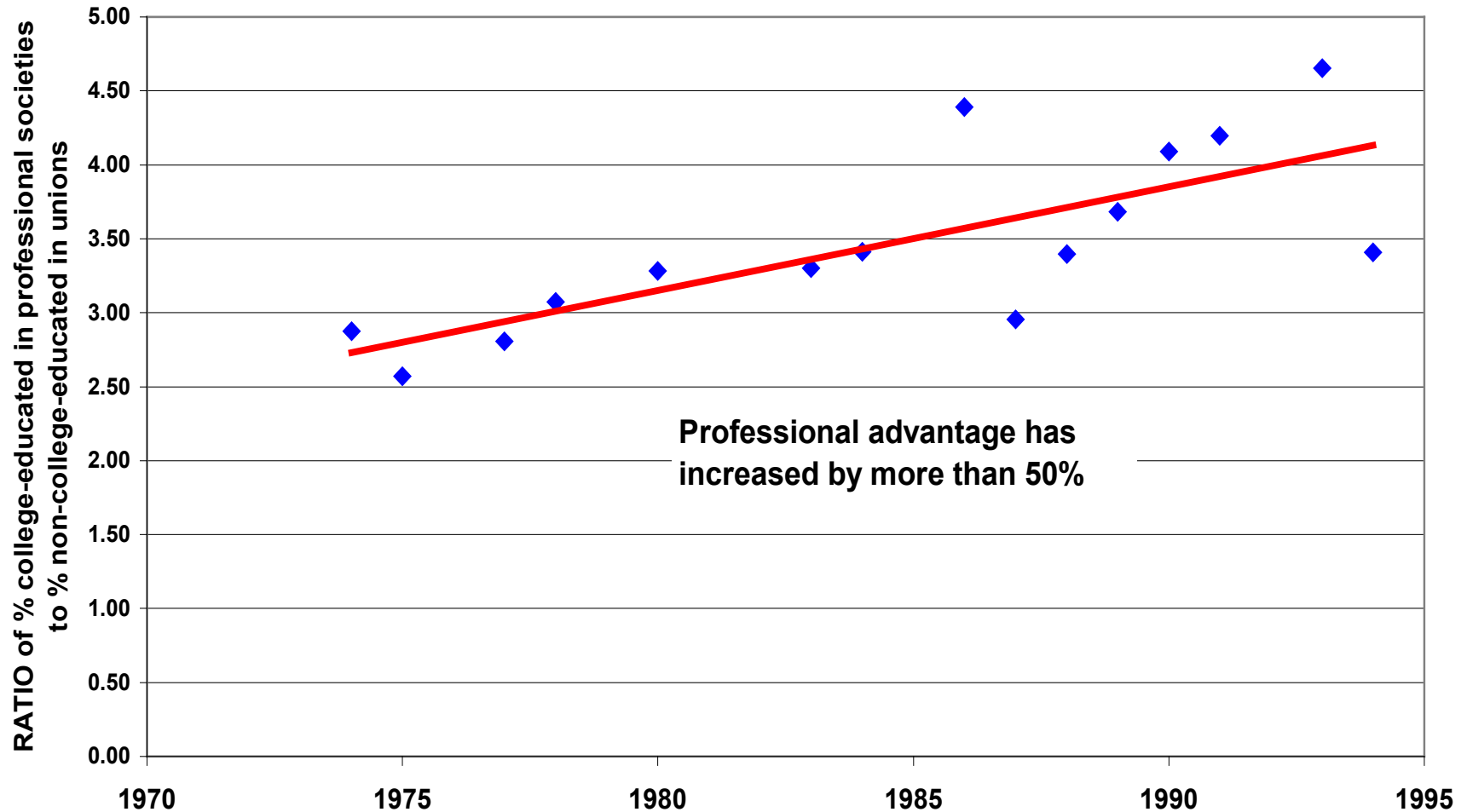
Data from Robert D. Putnam on percent decline in adult membership shares from postwar peak to 1997



OCCUPATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ARE INCREASINGLY FOR ELITES

The Growing Gap between College-Educated Americans belonging to Professional Societies and Non-College Americans enrolled in Unions

Data from the General Social Survey, 1974-1994



Even as Americans after 1960 were withdrawing from old-line chapter membership associations, they were organizing thousands of new nonprofit associations.

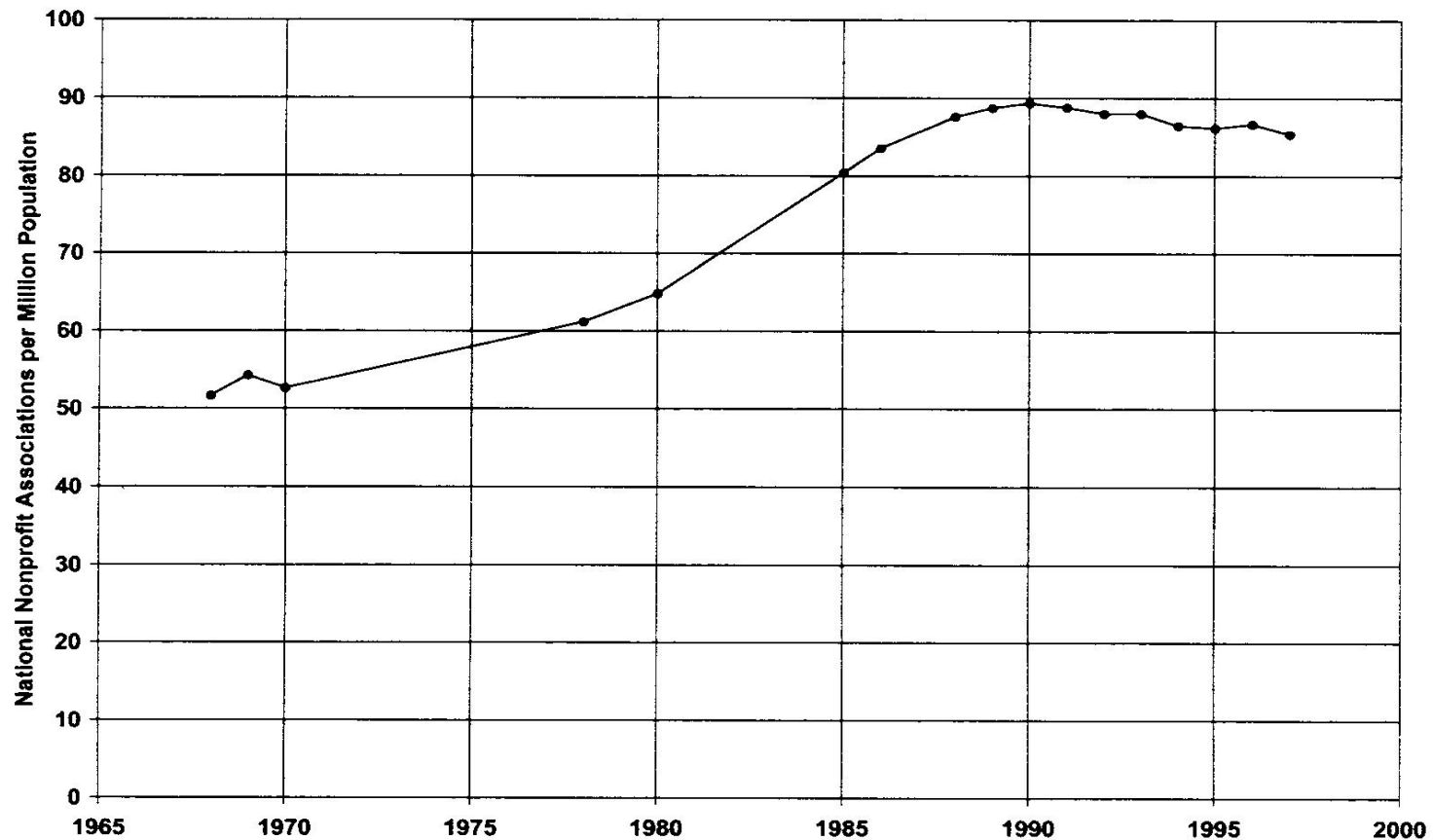
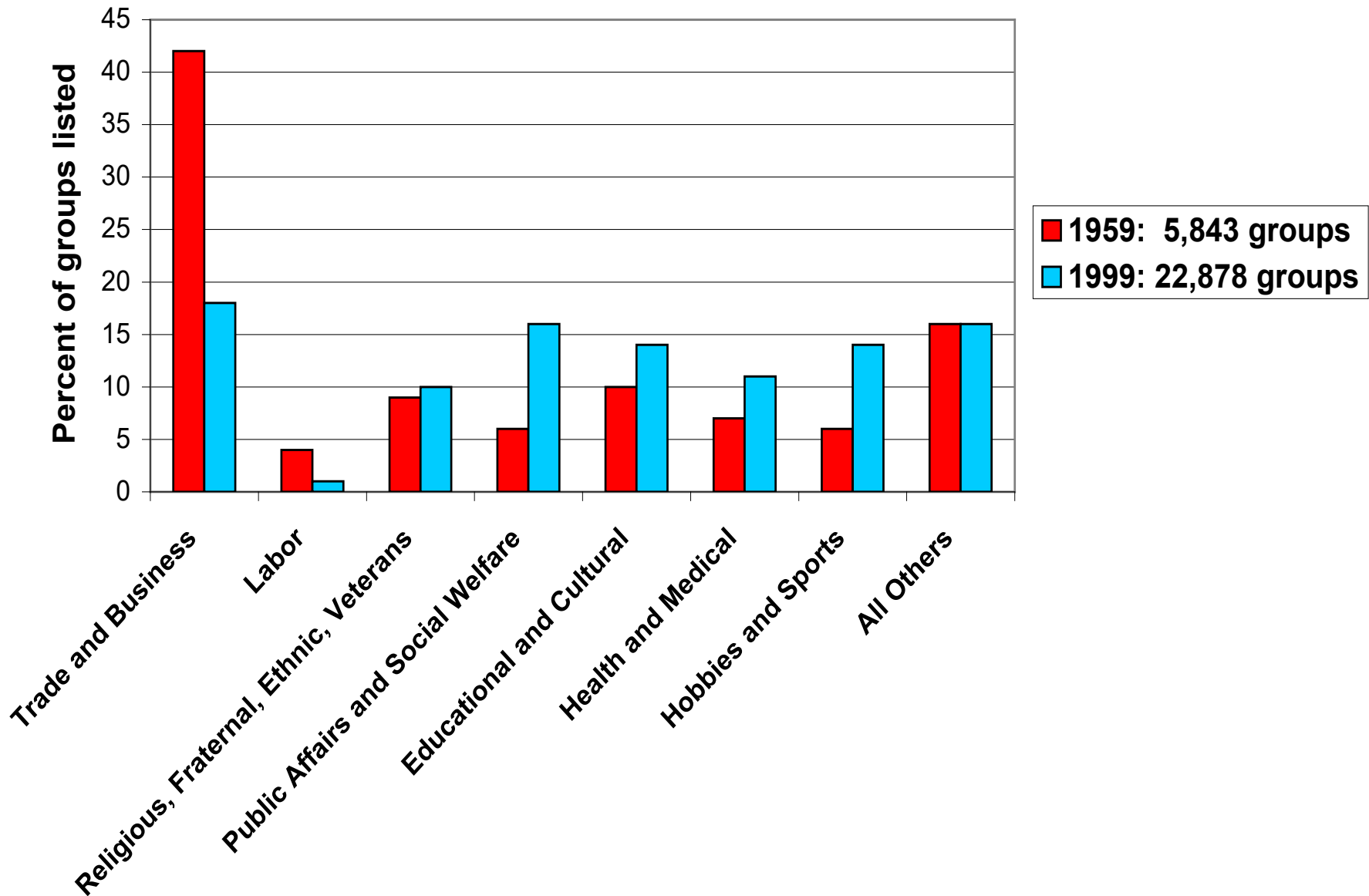


Figure 7: The Growth of National Nonprofit Associations, 1968–1997

Source: Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (2000): 50.

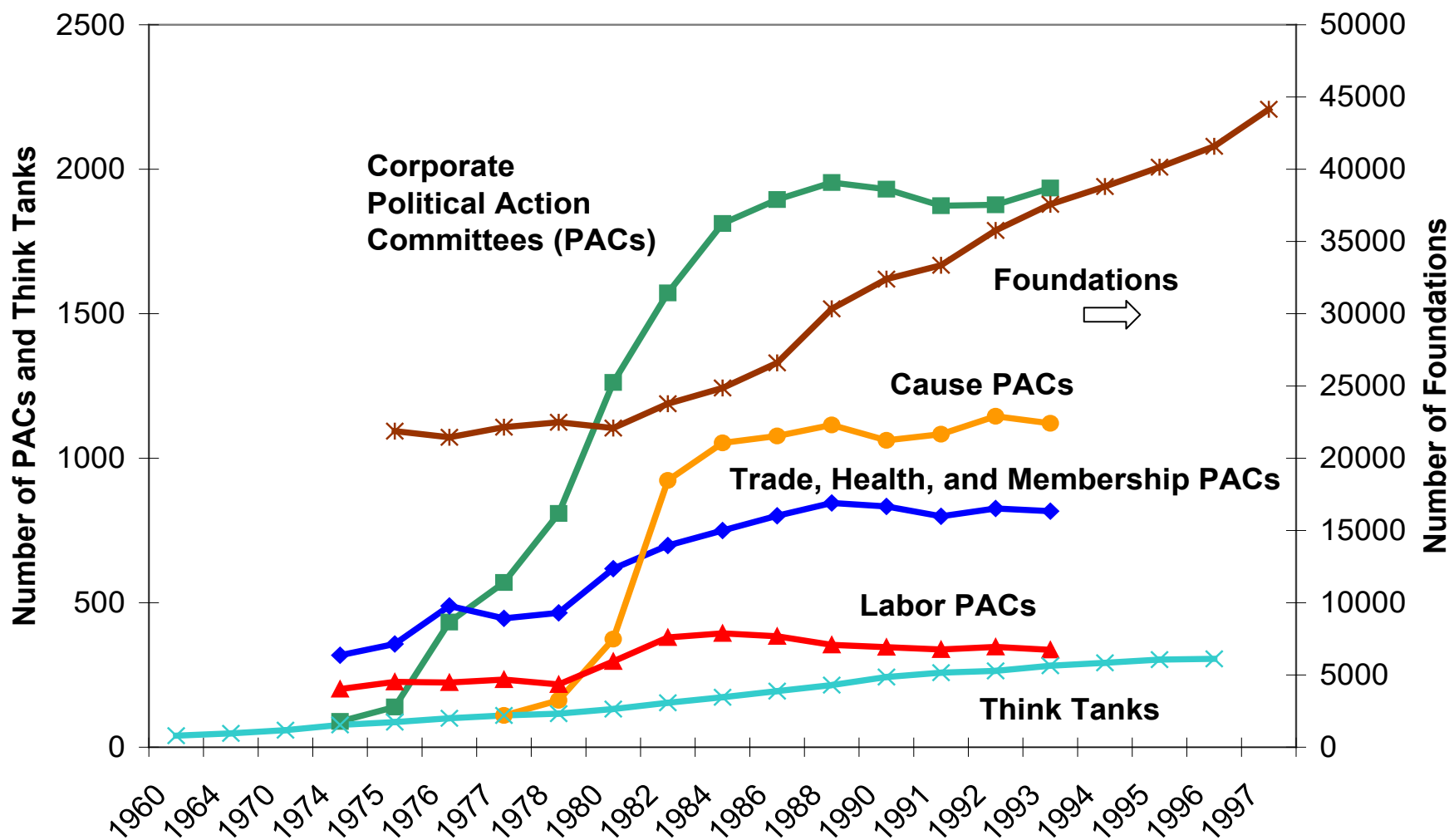
NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1959 and 1999

Data from the Encyclopedia of Associations



Many newly formed groups had no members at all ...

ORGANIZATIONS WIELDING MONEY AND IDEAS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS



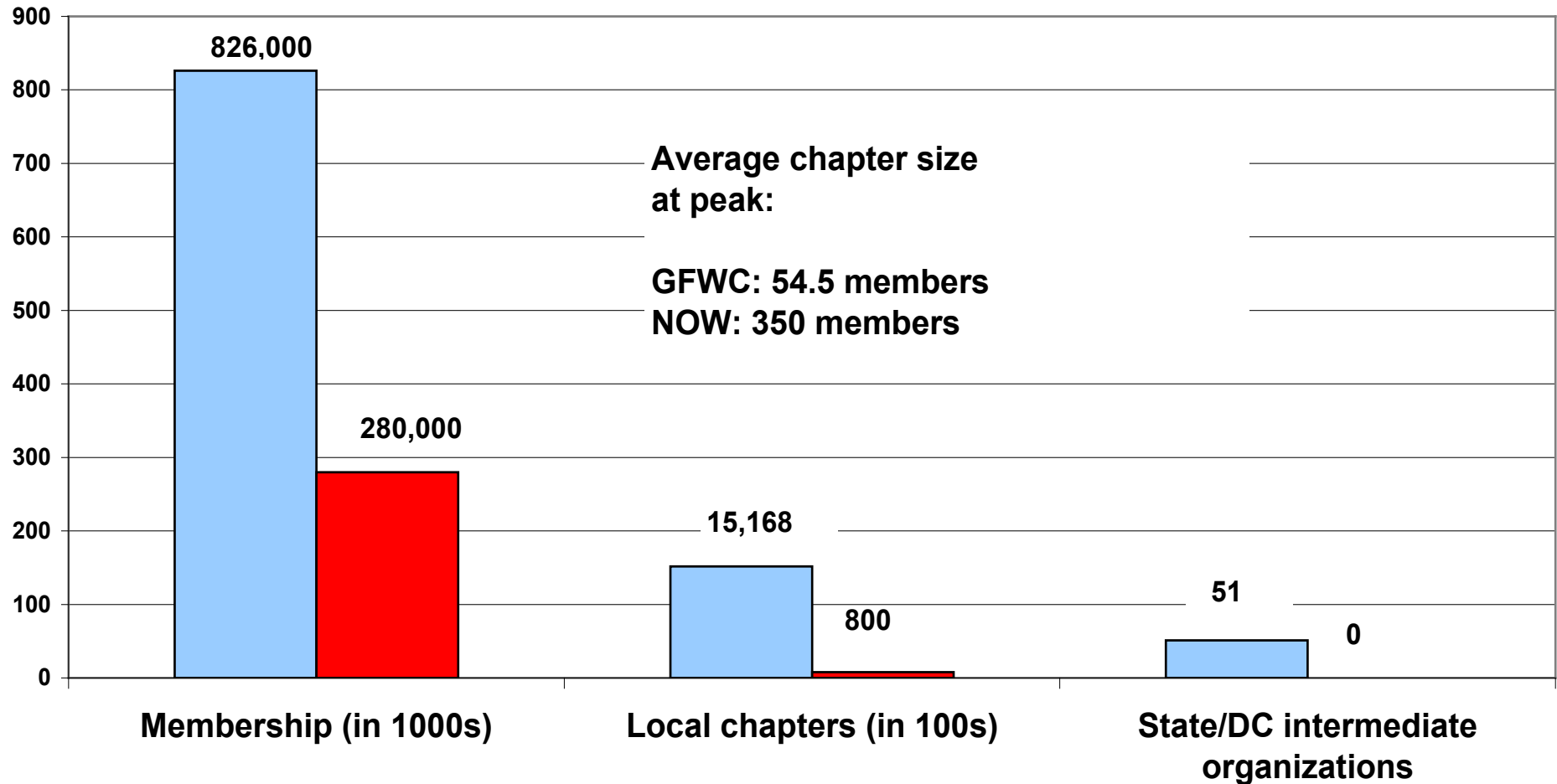
-- Jeff Berry, *Lobbying for the People* (1977): Of 83 public interest associations, most recently founded, two-thirds had no chapters.

-- Jack Walker, *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America* (1985): Survey of 205 citizens groups found that less than one-third had chapters for individual, dues-paying members.

-- A 1962 study of groups listed in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* found a median membership size of about 10,000. A 1988 study of groups listed in the *Encyclopedia* found a median membership size of 1000, with about half of groups reporting no members.

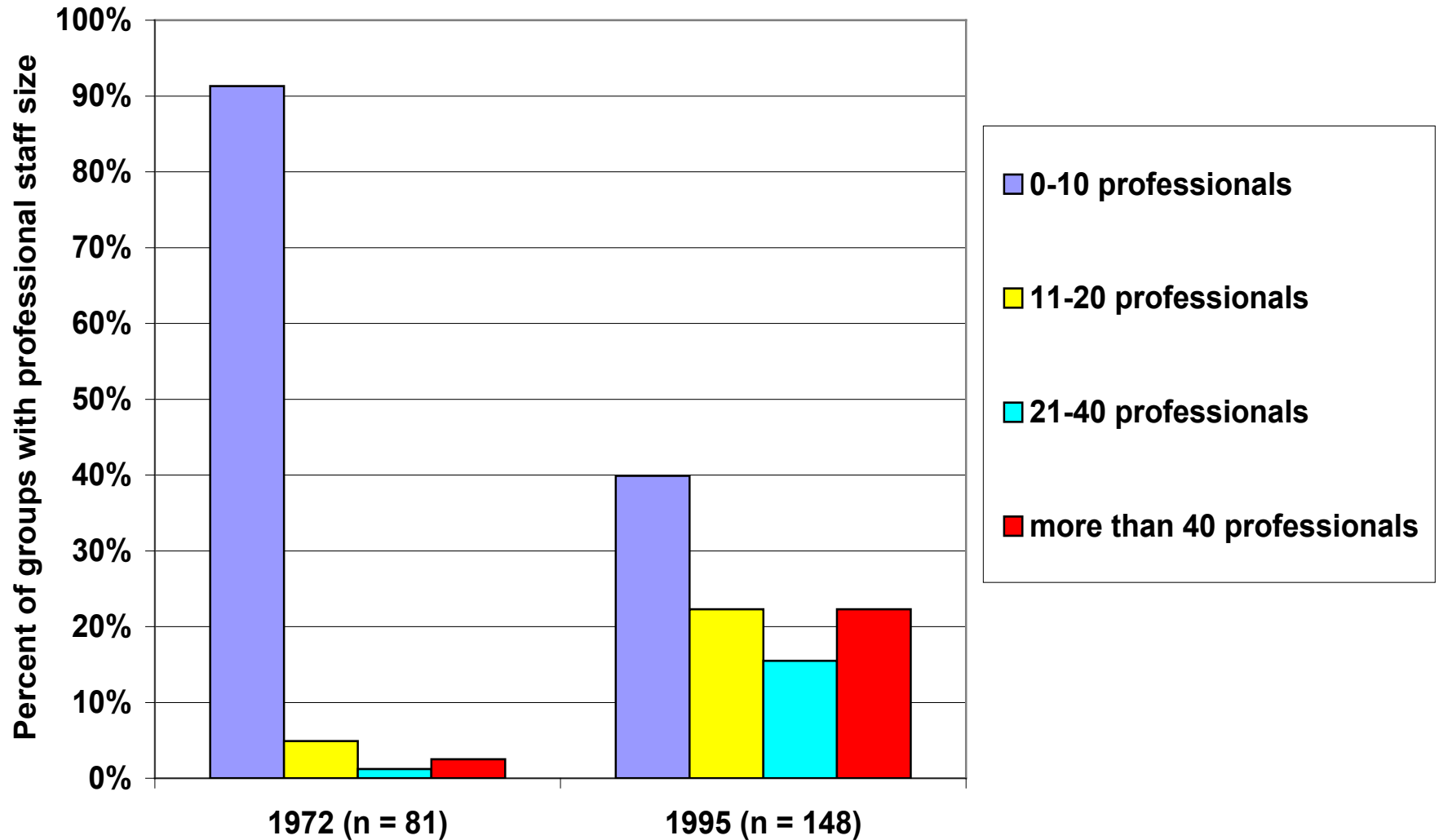
As Putnam (2000; 49) concludes, “over this quarter century the number of voluntary associations roughly tripled, but the average membership seems to be roughly one-tenth as large -- more groups, but most of them much smaller. **The organizational eruption between the 1960s and the 1990s represented a proliferation of letterheads, not a boom of grassroots participation.**”

MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION IN TWO MAJOR U.S. WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS, 1955 and 1993



■ General Federation of Women's Clubs (founded 1890) at peak in 1955
■ National Organization for Women (founded 1966) at peak in 1993

ORGANIZATIONAL STAFFING OF U.S. PUBLIC INTEREST ASSOCIATIONS, 1972 and 1995



Source: Shaiko 1999: 12, Table 1.5.

WHY DID CIVIC TRANSFORMATION HAPPEN?

Social, technological, and political shifts converged to *suddenly* change the behavior of civic organizers:

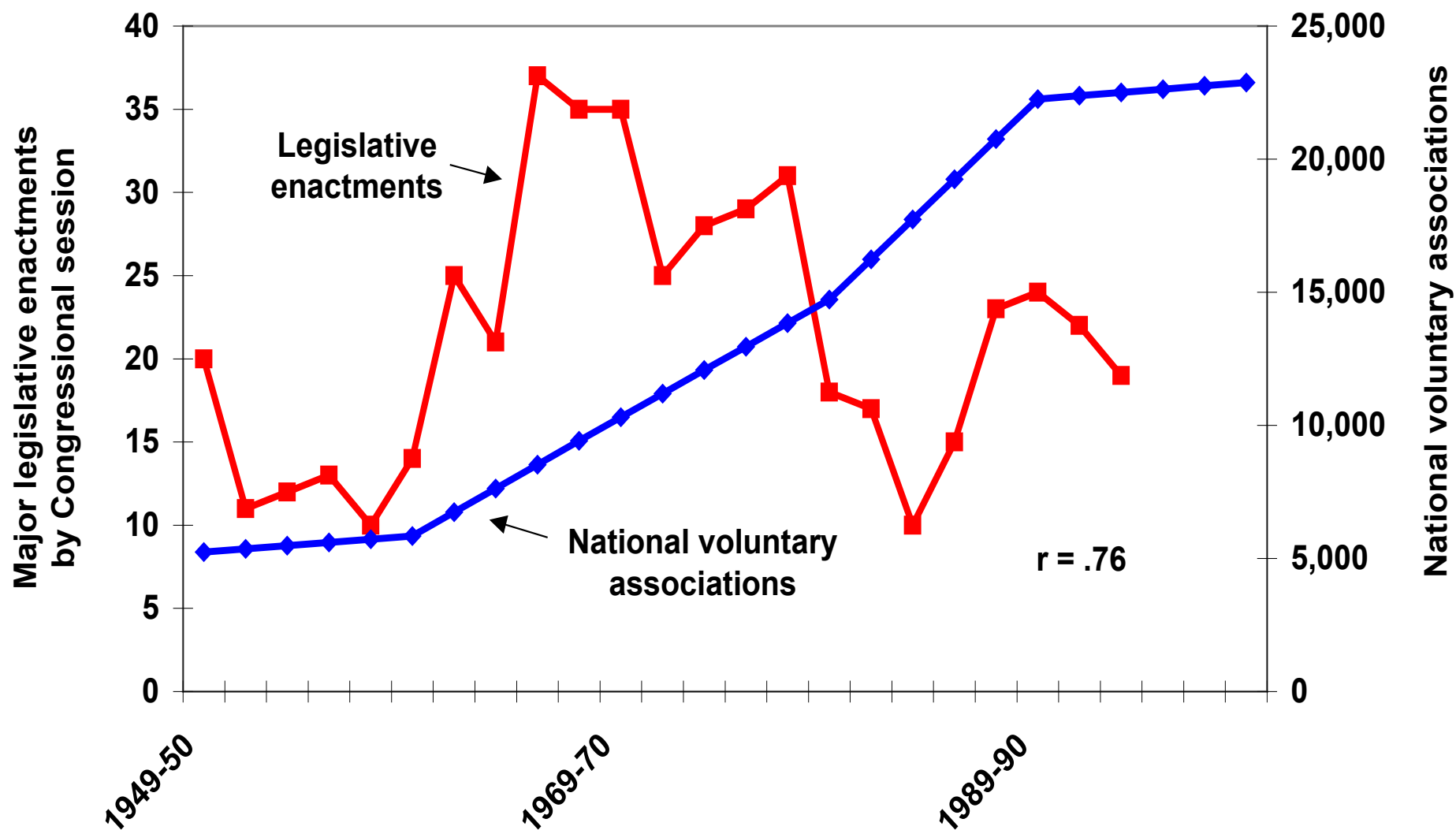
NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND RESOURCE FLOWS

- Traditional federations used social networks to recruit dues-paying members to local chapters that channeled some member dues and energies to state and national associations. *Resources flowed from the bottom up.*
- From the 1970s, television and computerized lists made it possible for civic organizers sitting in national offices to forego chapters. They can get big donations from wealthy sponsors or foundations and/or use electronic appeals to get adherents to sign petitions and give money. *Resources are raised/managed from the top.*

NEW POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

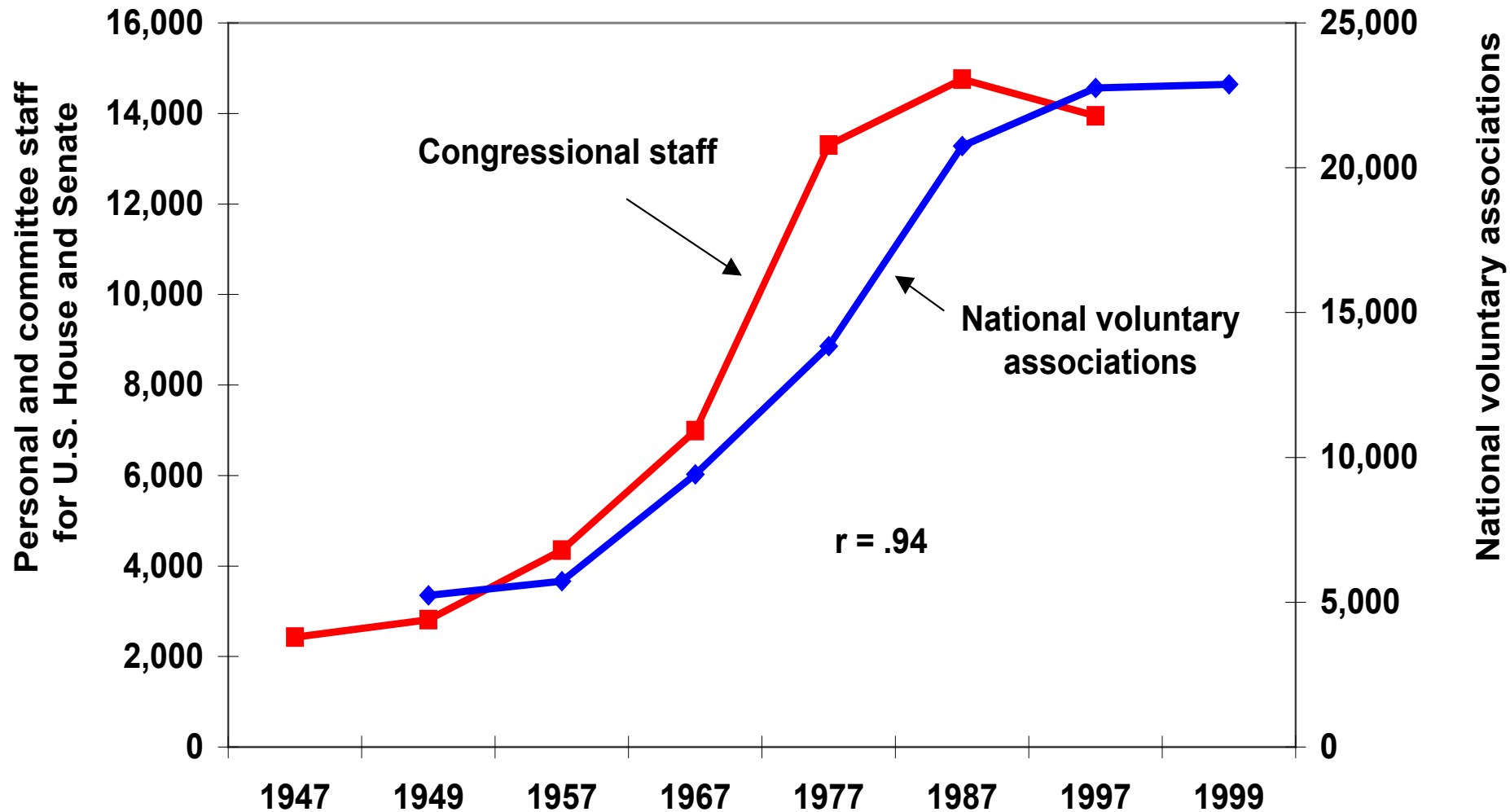
After the 1960s, the U.S. national state became more active and added professionally staffed agencies – *providing many more points of access for nationally focused and professionally run groups.*

MAJOR U.S. LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS AND THE GROWTH OF NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS, 1949-1999



Source: *Encyclopedia of Associations* data with intermediate values interpolated, from Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, p. 147. "A" and "B" enactments from Howell et.al., "Divided Government and the Legislative Productivity of Congress, 1945-94."

GROWTH OF U.S. CONGRESSIONAL STAFF AND NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS, 1947 to 1999



Source: *Encyclopedia of Associations* totals interpolated from Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, p. 147.

Staff numbers from Ornstein, Mann, and Malbin, *Vital Statistics on Congress 1999-2000*, pp. 131, 135.

Perceived political opportunities and challenges were not the same for conservative versus liberal groups in the critical period of U.S. civic reorganization.

Conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s felt they were excluded from the establishment. Groups like the National Right to Life Committee, the National Rifle Association, and the Christian Coalition organized from below as well as above, and used chapters and members in many communities to build influence in localities, states, and Congressional districts.

Liberal groups, by contrast, saw greater possibilities in creating national headquarters for professionally staffed advocacy groups to lobby and conduct lawsuits.

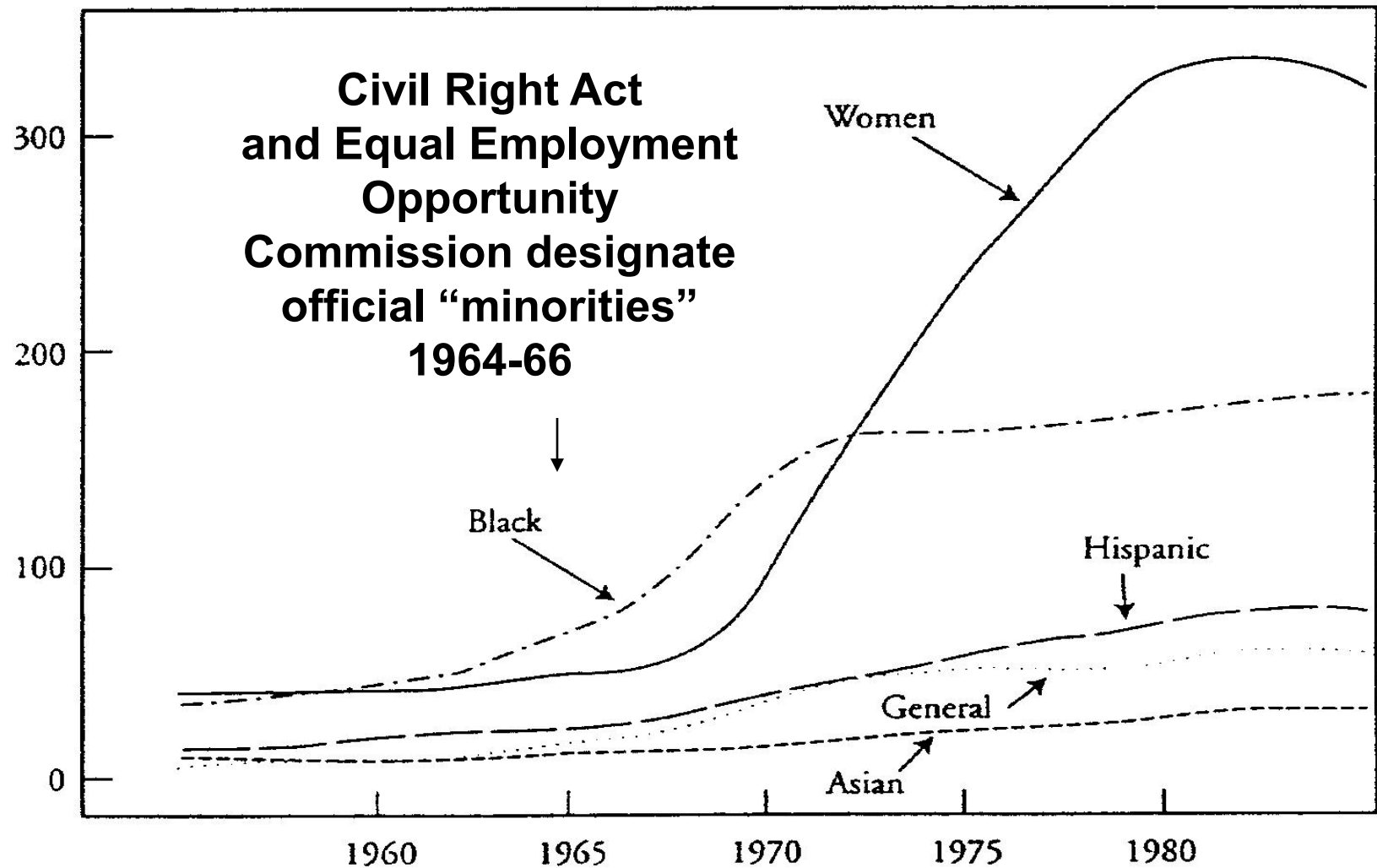
In addition to technological and political factors, late-twentieth-century shifts in U.S. social equalities and inequalities also help us to make sense of contemporary civic reorganizations.

“Rights” revolutions and civic change

- **Rapid changes in social attitudes about race and gender roles undercut the appeal of segregated old-line membership federations.**
- **Rights movements (and the War in Vietnam) helped to discredited old-line federations, opening the way for new, more agile advocacy groups led by youthful professionals.**
- **New federal government activism on “rights” issues encouraged the formation of professionally run groups speaking virtually for minorities, women, etc.**

Figure 13-2. *Women's and Racial-Ethnic Groups, by Constituency, 1955-85*

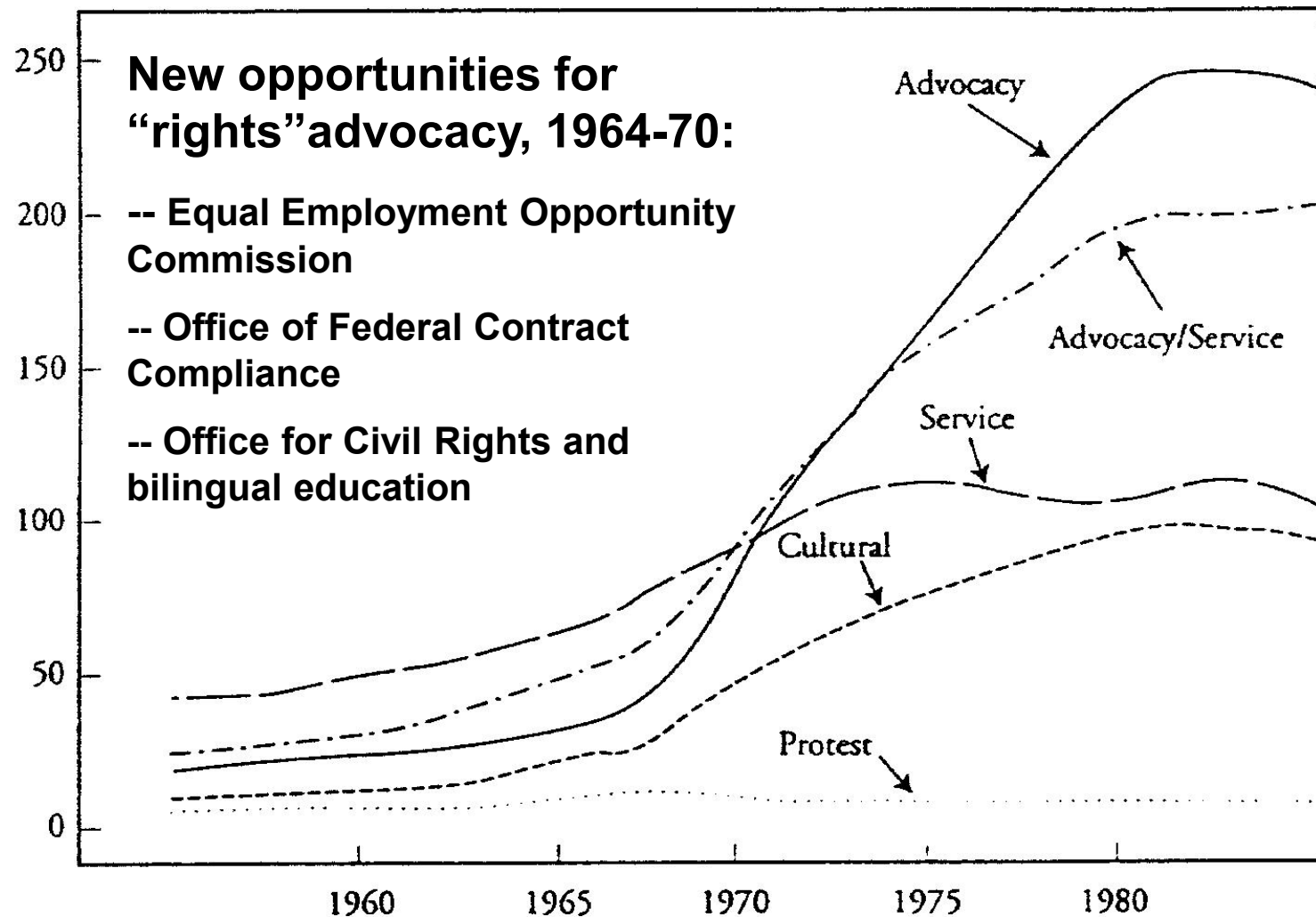
Number of groups



Sources: Debra C. Minkoff, *Organizing for Equality* (1995): 62; and John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (2002): ch. 4.

Figure 13-3. *Women's and Racial Ethnic Groups, by Strategy, 1955-85*

Number of groups



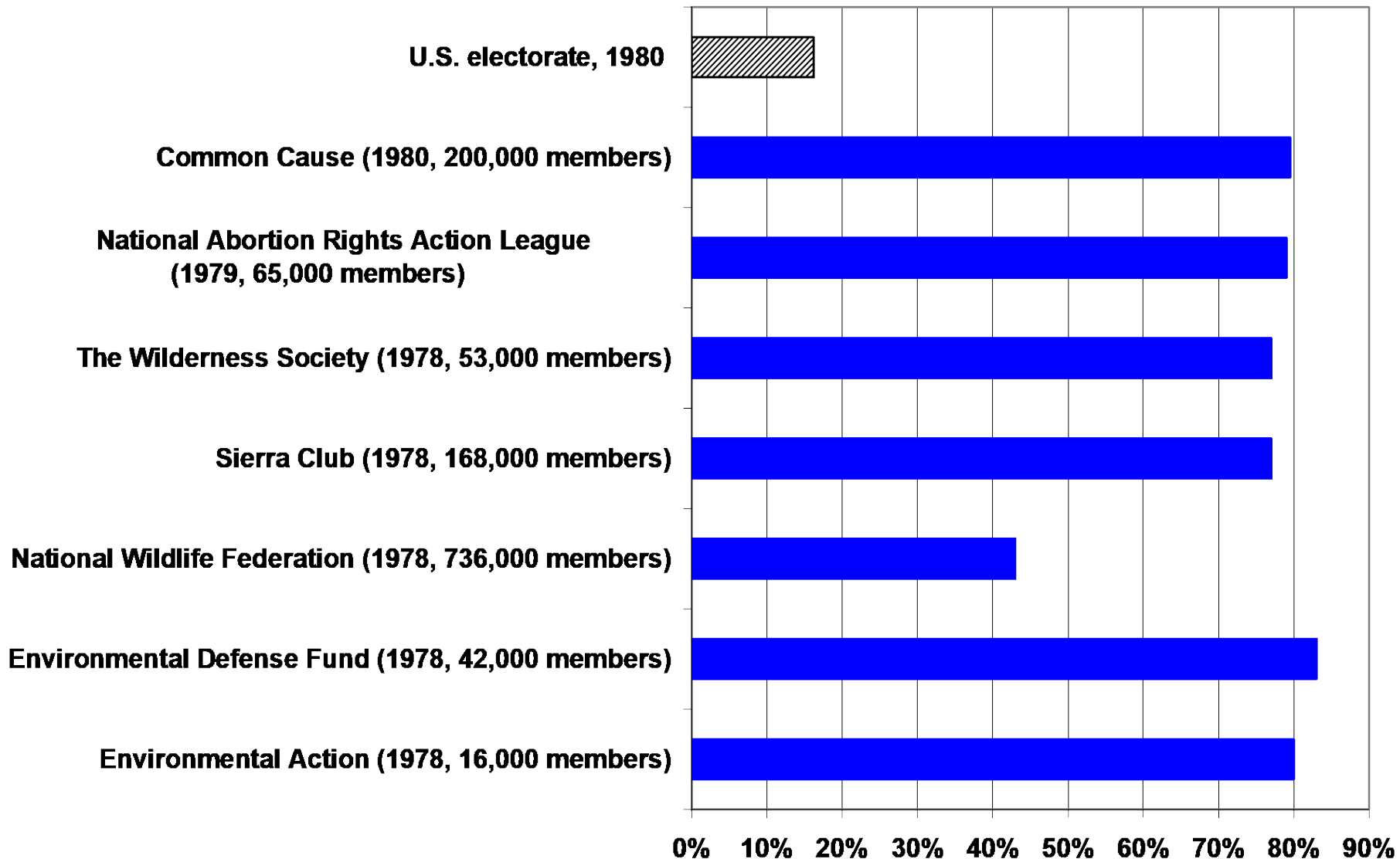
Sources: Debra C. Minkoff, *Organizing for Equality* (1995): 62; and John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (2002): ch. 4.

Higher Education and Civic Reorganization

The ranks of higher-educated Americans accumulated rapidly, from 7.7% college grads in 1960 to 25.2% in 1999. “Professionals” proliferated.

- College grads (and other elites) stopped affiliating with traditional cross-class membership federations.**
- College-trained professionals found expanded employment opportunities in advocacy and nonprofit associations.**
- College grads became the prime audience and check-writers for public interest advocacy groups.**

COLLEGE AND POSTGRADUATE MEMBERS OF U.S. ADVOCACY GROUPS



Sources: Rothenberg 1992: 8-11, 32; Mitchell, McCarthy, and Pearce 1979; Shaiko 1999: 42, 124-25.

Did Rising Economic Inequalities Cause Civic Changes?

- **Not initially: reorganizations were well under way *before* economic gaps burgeoned from the late 1970s.**
- **But over time foundations and wealthy patrons spurred the proliferation of staff-intensive organizations.**
- **Professional advocates court top 1% donors at fundraisers and in person. Or they sift through respondents to online appeals to find repeat donors from the ranks of the top 20%.**
- **Some argue that social media and other Internet modalities democratize civic life – but even if more projects can flourish, highly educated Americans are the most attuned to MoveOn-style efforts and social media campaigns**

SO WHAT? MORE VOICE, LESS EQUALITY

- U.S. civic democracy has become more pluralist, less business-centered, and more oligarchic -- all at once.**
- Professionally managed organizations have less popular “reach” and offer fewer opportunities for participation and interaction. Because they de-emphasize member involvement and rely on experts, big donors, and national media, they do much less than traditional membership federations to draw ordinary people into civic life and politics.**
- Recent civic changes enhance possibilities for conflicts over issues of interest to the top third of society, while doing less than blue collar trade unions and popular membership federations once did to raise and lobby for issues of concern to the lower middle class, blue collar workers, and the least economically privileged.**

Are there exceptions?

- **Local Tea Parties 2009-12 & anti-Trump citizen resistance groups 2016-18.**
Networked activists in environmental and BLM movements.
- **Enduring religious right networks.**
- **Regular innovations in social media organizing.**

Key question to be considered in next lectures:
Do any of these reduce participatory inequalities by income or education?