



# Introduction

## The Politics of Nonparticipation

### The Virtues of Apathy

In their influential 1954 book, *Voting*, Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee made the startling claim that political apathy is good for democracy. How could “a mass democracy work,” they ask, “if all the people were deeply involved in politics? Lack of interest by some people is not without its benefits.”<sup>1</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, Samuel Huntington, the eminent former president of the American Political Science Association, articulated a modern elaboration of Berelson’s claim. Although more self-conscious about the problematic nature of apathy within democracy, Huntington writes,

the effective operation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and noninvolvement on the part of some individuals and groups. . . . In itself, this marginality on the part of some groups is inherently undemocratic, but it has also been one of the factors which has enabled democracy to function effectively.<sup>2</sup>

George Will speaks more plainly in a 1983 essay in *Newsweek*. Using as evidence the fact that the Nazis were brought to power in 1933 in an election in which turnout hit nearly 89 percent, he argues that high rates of participation may actually indicate lack of stability. Low rates, therefore, may be explained by the health and maturity of a political order.<sup>3</sup>

In a 1990 essay for *Time* magazine, the journalist Charles Krauthammer calls low turnout “a leading indicator of contentment,” reminding one of political scientist Heinz Eulau’s comment, thirty-five years before, that apathy indicated the “politics of happiness.”<sup>4</sup> Nonvoting, he suggests, makes “more room for the things that really count: science, art, religion, family and play.”<sup>5</sup>

In the 1993 edition of their very influential textbook, *The Irony of Democracy*, Thomas Dye and Harmon Zeigler argue that “Democracy is government ‘by the people,’ but the survival of democracy rests on the shoulders of elites. This is the irony of democracy: Elites must govern wisely if government ‘by the people’ is to survive.”<sup>6</sup> But because the “masses are authoritarian,

intolerant, anti-intellectual, nativistic, alienated, hateful, and violent," one important responsibility that falls to the "enlightened elite" is to protect democracy by formulating policies that—while "public-regarding"—do not stir the public out of its natural (and rational) political indifference.<sup>7</sup>

The conclusions of Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, Huntington, Will, Krauthammer, Eulau, and Dye and Zeigler, strike an odd tone in the democratic ear, but they resonate cleanly within the outlook on democracy held historically by many political elites, including political theorists and writers. Nor should this be surprising.

The history of American democracy and political thought is, in part, a history of the fear of democracy. Indeed, as the concept *democracy* metamorphosed from a term of disapprobation to an imprimatur sought by all, some writers increasingly equated and confused democracy with a distilled conflation of republicanism and liberalism.

Historically, there has been a contest over the very meaning of democracy. Theoretically, the debate has been about what are the proper criteria for a democratic political system. Politically, the struggle has been over whom to include, how much political equality to countenance, how much and what kind of participation to allow, and most essentially, how much power to disperse.

One of its terrains is explaining nonparticipation in politics, a place where evidence is gathered and judgments are made as to whether a polity deserves to be called a *democracy*. This book is first of all an effort to uncover historical, philosophical, and political roots of nonparticipation in politics, as well as the way it has been explained. Second, it analyzes, compares, and critiques representative classic models through which nonparticipation has been and is explained. Finally, it suggests a way to approach the problems of nonparticipation and political apathy that also serves to overcome both.

## Inequality and Democracy

Today almost all Americans would agree that until the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, or the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the United States did not fully meet one basic criterion of democracy: the right of all adult citizens to participate in the political process. Just as Susan B. Anthony was arrested for trying to register to vote in Rochester, New York, 1872, Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested for trying to register voters in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. Each event, for its time, marked reasons why certain classes of Americans did not vote. But the reasons given from the top down differed sharply from those of the bottom up.

The nineteenth-century "gentleman" who opposed suffrage for women and the twentieth-century segregationist who opposed it for African-American men and women both would use rationales similar to those democratic

Athens used to refuse slaves, women, and people of non-Athenian birth (or *metics*) citizenship—the excluded did not meet the criteria of responsible adult citizens. For Anthony and King, these criteria themselves were based on sexist and racist attitudes, and consequently a stunted view of citizenship embodied in disenfranchising laws, institutions, and practices, all of which were incompatible with real democracy.

In a more subtle but equally compelling way, explanations of nonparticipation given by political scientists, journalists, and other students of politics over the past half-century have also had as a backdrop their own conceptions of what democracy means.

In the 1993 edition of his widely used text, *The American Polity*, Everett Carl Ladd reports, "Today there is also concern over the low and somewhat diminished level of voter turnout in the United States."<sup>8</sup> He states that "millions of Americans take their job of assessing candidates very seriously. It must be acknowledged, however, that other millions stand on the sidelines, deciding not to vote."<sup>9</sup> Although those who "stand on the sidelines," he implies, do so freely if irresponsibly, he continues that "people of high socioeconomic status generally vote at a much higher rate than those of low status," and that turnout is significantly lower in the United States than virtually all other democracies.<sup>10</sup> Now his conclusion:

This is partly because the United States has so many elections that it is hard for any one to seem a special event. The low turnout is also partly a response to a system where political stresses have been relatively manageable. The perceived cost of not voting, in short, has not been nearly as high in the United States as in most other democracies.<sup>11</sup>

Not only doesn't he explain adequately why the "cost of not voting" should be lower here than in Europe and Japan, but why it should be lowest among our poorest citizens. Inexplicably, the class differentials that he reports don't find their way into his concluding summary.

In *Equality in America*, Sidney Verba and Gary R. Orren report that

the United States ranks among the most open and participatory of modern democracies when it comes to politics and among the least egalitarian when it comes to economic matters. The nation embodies democratic polity and capitalist economy at their fullest!<sup>12</sup>

In *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, Kevin Phillips also recounts that by "several measurements, the United States in the late twentieth century led all other major industrial countries in the gap dividing the upper fifth of the population from the lower—in the disparity between top and bottom." From the New Deal on, these gaps have not lessened and have been consistent and enduring features of the socioeconomic landscape. In fact, during the Reagan presidency, he suggests, the disparity grew even wider: in the years 1977 to

1988, those in the bottom 10 percent of family income lost an average of 14.8 percent (a loss of \$609) in constant (1987) dollars, while the top 1 percent gained 49.8 percent (an annual increase for them of \$134,513). Overall, the bottom 80 percent lost some ground. Looked at over time, he says, the average American was no better off than twenty-five years before, as after-tax real median family income, with some ups and downs, remained stagnant since 1973. By the middle of Reagan's second term, the top 1/2 percent of the population, Phillips argues, "had never been richer."<sup>13</sup>

In spite of wider gaps of income and wealth, Verba and Orren note, the United States ranks consistently at or near the bottom of western nations in using government to mitigate inequality, measured by social insurance coverage, public income maintenance as a percent of gross domestic product, percent of gross national product spent on Social Security, social transfers, and others. Regarding "the extent to which taxes reduce inequality," for example, "U.S. policy produces little redistribution, and the United States ranks near the bottom of the industrial nations." And though the United States adopted its Medicare and Medicaid programs in 1965, undemocratic Prussia committed itself to medical care in 1883 and "most other industrialized democracies had followed suit."

They find one major exception. The United States ranks first in per capita expenditure for education and first in the percentage of people that get a higher education—not surprising, they suggest, since the more educated people are, the more likely they are to participate. Therefore, while education is a "main channel for upward mobility," actually it turns out "it is a source of economic inequality rather than equality." Verba and Orren conclude, the United States is "a nation which tolerates, even celebrates, economic hierarchy."

But is it possible for a "democratic polity at its fullest" to reside, as Verba and Orren claim, in such an inequalitarian economic order, and one that does not address inequality effectively through democratically elected governments at that?

## Who Doesn't Govern?

Comparing the United States to other democracies, Verba and Orren themselves report:

Although the United States ranks first in the diffusion of political participation, having a much higher proportion of moderately active citizens than in comparable nations, it also ranks first or second in the correlation between participation and socioeconomic status. . . . In other words, there are proportionately fewer activists in other nations, but they represent a wider variety of income and educational levels. In the United States,

activists come disproportionately from the better educated and more affluent.<sup>14</sup>

Let's consider nonvoting. In his 1992 analysis, *The Disappearing American Voter*, Ruy Teixeira reports that, of twenty industrial democracies, the United States ranks nineteenth in voting turnout, about 53 percent in presidential years, well below eighteenth-ranking Japan at 68 percent, and number one Belgium at 94 percent, during comparable elections. Moreover, by 1988, turnout had declined to the lowest point since 1924, a drop of 13 percent since 1960.<sup>15</sup>

Within the United States, nonvoting is sharply skewed by education, occupation, class, age,<sup>16</sup> and to some degree by race and gender. While drops in turnout since 1960 were across all demographic groups, in 1988, 77.6 percent of people with college degrees or more reported voting, while only 36.7 percent of those with eight years of school or less did so; 75.7 percent of professional-technical workers voted, while 38.2 percent of laborers did; the highest sixth in income voted at a rate of 74.1 percent, while the lowest at 40.7 percent; whites at 61.8 percent, African-Americans at 52.1 percent, and Latinos (citizens only) at 48 percent.<sup>17</sup> According to M. Margaret Conway, while controlling for educational level and region reduces black-white turnout differentials, black citizens "are nevertheless less likely to vote than are white citizens of the same socioeconomic status." Lawrence Bobo and Franklin D. Gilliam Jr., however, "find that blacks generally participate at the same rate as whites" when socioeconomic status is controlled for.<sup>18</sup> Conway also suggests that while turnout disparities between men and women are narrowing—and largely disappear when age and level of education are held constant—they remain in the 5–10 percent range. Norman R. Luttbeg and Michael M. Gant report somewhat different findings: even without controlling for socioeconomic status, they claim, women actually now vote at a slightly higher rate than do men—2.1 percent higher, for example, in the 1992 presidential election.<sup>19</sup>

According to Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, in Europe, economic class and education are not themselves significant determinants in voting turnout levels. Nor were they in the United States in the nineteenth century, when educational levels were lower while turnout of eligible voters, often reaching near 80 percent, soared way beyond what would become the best twentieth-century levels. While other "democracies have many people with low levels of education and income . . . nowhere are these demographic factors so dramatically associated with high rates of nonvoting as they are in the United States." Theories that focus on individual attributes, therefore, are "pernicious as well as wrong," they charge, preventing "popular understanding of institutional barriers to voting and falsely point the finger of blame at individuals." Legal and administrative barriers, party mobilizing strategies, party and candidate ideological appeals, all

impinge less on the well-off and well-educated than they do on the poor and uneducated. . . . [P]eople with lower levels of education vote less in the United States because the political system tends to isolate them, and not because less education is an inherent impediment to voting. *Apathy and lack of political skill are a consequence, not a cause, of the party structure and political culture.* . . . The political system determines whether participation is predicated on class-related resources and attitudes.<sup>20</sup>

As Verba and Orren point out, while voting participation is extremely low, in one way America is actually more participatory than other democracies. Here, there are extensive networks of activist organizations; consequently those who participate may do so intensely and in a variety of ways. But activists differ in class and educational background from nonactivists, and there are various magnitudes of difference based on gender, race, and ethnicity, since women, African-Americans, and Latinos participate less. For example, Lawrence Bobo and Franklin D. Gilliam Jr. found on eight of fifteen measures of participation, including voting, donating money and working in campaigns, and contacting officials, a statistical difference between black and white sociopolitical participation.<sup>21</sup> For Latinos, the problem is compounded by language and/or recent immigration. For all three, there is the question of how they will be received should they try to influence political events for which white men are still overwhelmingly the gatekeepers, with these strata greatly underrepresented in elected offices.<sup>22</sup>

As Teixeira suggests, the "needs and interests" of "high-impact" activists—those who contact officials, are involved in community organizations, contribute to campaigns, and so on—"differ ever more sharply from those of the rest of the population." And what he calls "special interest" activity is on the rise, a form of participation that attempts "to influence public policy directly through extensive personal contacts and the dispensation of favors." That kind of participation needs to be democratically balanced. Teixeira concludes, "Widespread nonvoting makes it less likely that electoral participation by ordinary citizens will be that counterweight."<sup>23</sup>

Philip Green cautions, however, that "the great democratic revolutions of Eastern Europe" suggest that we need to look beyond the formal institutional processes of liberal democracies. Otherwise, we miss a critical face of democracy itself, in which people in their search for greater equality and more justice engage in direct action: "The great moments of *this* democratic process are strikes, demonstrations, marches, occupations, even funerals." Democracy, in his view, is better understood "as a series of moments: moments of popular insurgency and direct action, of unmediated politics." The "real history of democracy" is "the history of popular struggle,"<sup>24</sup> he concludes.

Two questions emerge. First, what is to count as legitimate democratic political participation? Second, does this question gain added legitimacy if

important inequalities do exist within institutional political practices? This leads precisely to the moral question posed to democracy by the civil rights movement: How do we decide whether direct action or institutional political practices fall within the purview of what we want to consider democratic and/or appropriate—most especially when the majority view is clearly represented and held to be immoral by a minority?

Taken together, these questions and these studies point to several important conclusions. First, American democracy is distinct in several ways from other democratic nations. Given the nature of political development, institutions, and electoral laws, socioeconomic class and educational disadvantages here have a major impact in depressing voting turnout. Second, for all people, regardless of class or education, it seems harder to get to the polls in the United States than in other democracies in spite of generally more positive attitudes here toward government. Third, there are relatively large numbers of politically active people here. Still, U.S. political participation and the setting of the political agenda has an oligarchical quality in which, like Europe and Japan, elites have disproportionate influence; but unlike them, the “democratic counterweight” of voting is lighter. Finally, in all settings, what type of political participation will truly reveal the popular will is itself a political question.

## Explaining Nonparticipation

The investigation of nonparticipation, then, is an exploration of how power is implicated in the relationship between nonparticipants and their act of not participating. Does a person withdraw from politics voluntarily, freely consenting not to participate because he or she is simply not interested? Have unfair voter eligibility requirements disenfranchised a particular race? Do cumbersome registration requirements make withdrawal more likely by less educated citizens? Does either of the two main political parties represent concerns that speak to the needs of nonparticipants? If not, are there other political avenues open to them? What, in fact, is genuine political participation?

Are nonparticipants unable to articulate grievances as political issues because there are no political ideas, forums, or aggregating institutions to help give form to their deepest troubles? Do the present political structure and its elites socialize and perhaps manipulate nonparticipants into a posture of apathy?

Questions like these are the natural backdrop as we explain nonparticipation. They help us decide whether an agent freely chooses not to participate in politics, or whether there may be constraining factors, some of which the agent may not be aware. Explanations of nonparticipation, intentionally or not, sometimes suppress questions of interests, ethics, and political power. They cannot eliminate them.

Explanations of nonparticipation, in fact, are predicated on a collateral analysis of how power is distributed in society and on a particular understanding of power as a concept. But they are not just about power.

They really tell a story using a full array of concepts—apathy and power, freedom and political responsibility, what is real participation and what is fake, and in turn how each of these infuses and clarifies nonparticipation. And how this shapes our hopes for democracy. And this, our sense of what human interests really are. An explanation of nonparticipation tells a story about people, and one as well about the explainer.

The most central idea in the story I will try to tell is that of apathy. But by itself, apathy is not the most important one. It is more a clue about the others, about how free we are, how much power we really have, what we can fairly be held responsible for, whether we are being well served—by others or even by ourselves.

## The Power of Ideas

What we mean by words has always been at the heart of politics. When politics takes the form of a contest, a good one, the debates are fueled by powerful ideas, not semantics. Each word is loaded. Yet there is also a conversation that makes the contest possible. To engage another on whether democracy really exists, how it can be enhanced, even what it means, requires more than a touch of common commitment and meaning. The contest is important precisely because it is over a shared ideal, an idea with drawing power for each and for those each cares about.

The same is true for competing political explanations. As we review how various schools explain nonparticipation, we'll repeatedly see partial agreements and partial contests over the meaning and application of key terms and, reflexively, skirmishes over allied ideas. Perhaps it seems surprising that a discussion of how to explain the facts of politics should involve such controversy. Aren't we talking about a *science* of politics?

If by science one means a view that there is a way to determine and analyze something called "facts" without reference to world views, paradigms of understanding, or values, then the answer is no. Even in the natural sciences, such a view cannot be sustained. Facts and values are different things, and the values one brings to inquiry, the suppositions one makes, the questions one asks, the tools one uses, can help determine what will count as a "fact," what a theory will see—and what it will hide, even from itself. All social scientific analysis privileges certain hunches, chooses certain methods, defines concepts in such a way, implies the direction it will take, ultimately sees the world in a certain way. And so while insisting on a meaningful distinction between facts and values, I reject the notion that one can sort them in a way that does not itself implicate one in making normative judgments.



Therefore, I also don't share the belief that explanation or even description is a kind of cloth that can be scrubbed free of embedded evaluative grit. Evaluation is a thread interwoven with explanation, both are in the cloth, and pulling at either weakens the fabric.

An essential corollary is that there are no value-neutral ways to define essential concepts in political explanation. They can't be scientifically "operationalized"—if by that is meant developing from the "real world" or logic itself criteria that fully stipulate their precise contours and when they are operative—in such a way that all fair-minded people will agree. Fair-minded people will disagree about the nature and shape of explanatory concepts, and they will disagree most emphatically when the concept is an important one. Although political analysis and explanation should be, and often are, more objective, more careful, more refined in technique than political rhetoric, they too fight over ideas.

So, following W. B. Gallie, I subscribe to the notion that important concepts are "essentially contested," there is debate over their meaning precisely because they are important to how we view life.<sup>25</sup> As we'll see, the terms *political participation, democracy, power, freedom, interests, equality, public, private, economic, political, citizenship, and apathy* itself are all contested among competing explanations of nonparticipation.

Proceeding through a range of theories, then, we will find debate over facts and values, over concepts, goals and dreams, and even over what the debate is really all about. Every one can't be pointed out, but the important ones will become clear.

There is also common ground. The different schools explaining nonparticipation disagree based on prior agreement that democracy is a valued way of political life. They agree enough to disagree, to try to show the illogic of their adversaries' position, to try to draw the same audience into each's position. Political wars are civil wars.

The methodology presumed here accepts that objective inquiry at its best (or, if you like, most scientific) has at its heart the goal of demonstrating—with imperfectly shared ideas but within a common language—why one's interpretation of ideas, and ultimately one's construal of human interests, is the better one. It does not fault a theory for having different ideas, just for not having good ones. Far from arguing that all inquiry is relative, it considers that any efforts to plainly state the explanatory catch and the moral net of a theory are the hallmark of a responsible, objective science of politics. Theorists can't choose whether their theories imply certain notions of human interests. But they can choose to take responsibility for those notions implied by their theories.

Most critically, decisions about how to develop, choose, and deploy explanations of nonparticipation have direct methodological and indirect (but equally powerful) political implications. In stipulating one explanation, or a

particular array of them, an analyst (1) projects a view about what contemporary American politics looks like and whether this is an acceptable or desirable state of affairs; (2) stipulates a range of what should count as political; (3) suggests a view of human nature, including anthropological assumptions about how much and what kind of participation is desirable for the individual and the society; (4) describes and evaluates contemporary nonparticipation against this view; (5) considers whether and when contemporary social structure, ideologies, and beliefs enable or inhibit free action, nurture or discipline differences; (6) implies at least one contrast model of political participation against which contemporary affairs are judged; (7) explains nonparticipation in a way that has implications for the decision whether to (and how to) design future strategies to increase participation, and for the evaluation of such decisions and designs; (8) ultimately offers an interpretation of the political world that, if taken seriously, becomes part of the political reality that it studies.

That these are entailed by each of the explanations of nonparticipation we'll look at is not a defect of any of them. It is inherent in theorizing. To the degree we respectfully entertain these inevitable consequences of theory, we enable a fuller examination and testing of our theories, and give them a chance to be as strong as theories can be within the human sciences.

## Political Apathy

Political apathy itself, it turns out, is a contested concept, with competing claims as to its meaning and criteria of application. In democratic discourse, political apathy is an important appraisive concept, yet in accepting a particular set of criteria for its proper application, one goes some way toward accepting, even ratifying, a complementary democratic theory as well. Prior to the debate over particular interpretations of the concept, however, there is important shared meaning which makes the debate possible.

Because America takes pride in being democratic, and political democracy is generally thought incompatible with pervasive indifference, Americans generally agree that, all other things being equal, apathy should be discouraged. Within democratic discourse, widespread apathy is a clear signal that something is fundamentally wrong. As we'll see, writers as diverse as (elite) empirical democratic theorist Bernard Berelson and participatory democratic theorist Peter Bachrach recognize that political participation plays a special role within democracies, in contrast to traditional regimes or modern totalitarian ones. Even Berelson and his co-authors would acknowledge these presumptions, and agree that apathy in a democracy needs some justification. Indeed, they feel compelled to begin by explaining why present conditions in America differ sufficiently from the past or from "classical" models to warrant praising apathy today.

While Berelson and Bachrach share common reference points, they disagree profoundly over the meaning of democracy, the concept of apathy and its criteria of application, and the function the term should serve within a grammar of democracy. Their explanations of nonparticipation are radically different, and their explanatory dispute is partly a political one.

If important political concepts stand in a reflexive relationship with the political and social structures we sustain or develop and the way we understand these arrangements, then debate over the use of concepts carries political import. Consider what is involved in the type of conceptual reform Berelson and his colleagues attempt by altering the normal meaning that the term *apathy* has in ordinary usage as well as democratic discourse. William E. Connolly writes,

To reform successfully a notion embedded in our political life that bears close conceptual ties to our basic ideas of responsibility is to infuse the norms of responsibility themselves more deeply into the political practices of modern society. Debates over the grammar appropriate to such concepts are at root debates over the extent to which such infusions are justified.<sup>26</sup>

When Berelson and Bachrach witness nonparticipation in politics, and especially when they both describe it as political apathy, their common reference points about democracy erode. Apathy, for Berelson, carries with it one set of responsibilities and reflects one set of norms, one version of political power; for Bachrach, quite another. Where Berelson focuses on the behavior of disparate but free individuals, Bachrach sees groups and classes of people subordinated to a disempowering political system. They are each looking at one of the two faces of apathy.

## Power and the Two Faces of Apathy

Where the first face of apathy indicates individual responsibility for nonparticipation, the second shifts responsibility or attributes causal agency to other sources, perhaps elites, institutional practices, social structures, or even the organizing principles of a society. The first face is inherent in the idea of free choice—one becomes apathetic to some issue, but one could have made other choices that would not have led to apathy. The second face implies a condition under which one suffers—apathy is a state of mind or a political fate brought about by forces, structures, institutions, or elite manipulation over which one has little or no control, and perhaps little knowledge. Both suggest passivity. Both are rooted in ordinary language. Each assigns responsibility in radically different ways.

Part I of this book is an overview and analysis of the historical, philosophical, and methodological background to competing contemporary explanations of nonparticipation and of debates over the concept of apathy. Part

It organizes these explanations of nonparticipation into various schools of thought according to their attitude to the concept of power, and analyzes each in turn. To elucidate the characteristic points of view of each, I choose classic as well as representative thinkers. I do not claim to cover either each school or all of the work of each writer thoroughly. I do attempt to give fair exegeses.

Some years ago, Steven Lukes identified three dimensions of power, each of which has different implications for the facts seen, the theories developed, and the adopted view of the political world. The two faces of apathy are reflected differently in each of the three dimensions of power. The first face, within what I call the republican liberal school, investigates political power in a way that closely parallels Lukes's first dimension. The theorists of this school include Berelson and his co-authors, Huntington, an early Robert Dahl, and William Riker. They share certain fundamental assumptions of a modern brand of liberalism wedded to a peculiar notion of republicanism, downplay the importance of political participation and popular rule within democratic theory, have a similar understanding of what a science of politics is, and ground their conclusions in a common notion of how political power is properly conceived in inquiry. According to Lukes, the one-dimensional view of power

involves a focus on *behaviour* in the making of *decisions* on *issues* over which there is an observable *conflict* of (subjective) *interests*, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation.<sup>27</sup>

Because this school tends to view adopted political roles as freely arrived at, it downplays the ways in which other dimensions of power curtail political participation. In this view, if there is no cue of overt conflict over clearly articulated issues, political nonparticipation reflects the contentment or personal indifference of the apathetic citizen. It is here we find, prototypically, the first face of apathy—apathy issuing from free choices of consenting citizens who have the power to do otherwise.

The second school, what I call plain democratic theory, includes within it the work of E. E. Schattschneider and an early Peter Bachrach. This group is united by the belief that political participation is important to democracy, that people know what they need, but that the scope of politics, through the alternatives presented by political institutions, keeps issues that would satisfy certain needs off the political agenda. This school presents what I call a normal thesis of depoliticization as central to a full explanation of nonparticipation. It generally employs Lukes's second dimension of power:

a *qualified critique* of the *behavioral focus* of the first view . . . it allows for consideration of the ways in which *decisions* are prevented from being taken on *potential issues* over which there is an observable *conflict* of (subjective)

interests, seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances.<sup>28</sup>

Tending to see nonparticipation as rejection of a political agenda that fails to meet nonparticipants' needs, this framework tends not to use the concept of apathy as an explanation. There is no corollary face of apathy.

Finally, the works of C. Wright Mills and Herbert Marcuse fall into what I call the radical democratic school of explaining nonparticipation. These authors have been specifically chosen because, although they were not political scientists, their accounts most clearly manifest the second face of apathy; indeed, they were probably two of the most politically influential exponents of it.

According to this view, power may corrupt participation not only by preventing subjectively felt needs from being represented politically, but by shaping the need structure itself. Moreover, power may restrain both participation and development of interests not just by ideological manipulation, but by the way in which the normal workings of institutions and society enable and facilitate certain kinds of thoughts and behaviors, and disable or impede others. Here the question is put most forcefully of whether even participation such as voting is actually democratic political participation at all. Lukes's third dimension of power, embedded within their work, involves

a *thoroughgoing critique* of the *behavioural focus* of the first two views as too individualistic and allows for consideration of the many ways in which *potential issues* are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individuals' decisions. This, moreover, can occur in the absence of actual, observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted—though there remains here an implicit reference to potential conflict. This potential, however, may never in fact be actualised. What one may have here is a *latent conflict*, which consists in a contradiction between the interest of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude. These latter may not express or even be conscious of their interests, but . . . the identification of those interests ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses.<sup>29</sup>

It is in the radical democratic explanation, prototypically, that we find the second face of apathy employed extensively—apathy as a condition of consciousness, created by an exercise of power, that thoroughly restricts freedom. Marcuse's "one-dimensional man," and Mills's "cheerful robot" are paradigms. As we will see, however, none of the theorists, including those in the radical democratic mold equipped with the three-dimensional view of power, sufficiently consider the role of race and gender in depoliticization.

Organizing these explanatory frameworks according to their formal defi-

nitions of power, however, is not to suggest that the theorists considered do not range beyond their confines. In fact, not only do they but, whether or not they formally acknowledge these dimensions of power, they cannot help but do so. In investigating the reasons for a lack of social conflict, for example, an analyst cannot help but decide whether it reflects a (true) consensus based upon freely held values, or a (false) consensus based upon some form of ideational control.

This, of course, is not all there is to say about power,<sup>30</sup> and since Lukes has described power in this way, his view has been subject to a variety of critiques. But Lukes's breakdown is an excellent first design, particularly well suited to organize this study.

In Part III, I extend Lukes's conception of power to help refine explanations of nonparticipation and suggest strategies through which participation may be enhanced. I develop a thesis of complex depoliticization, including a notion I call *displacement of interpretation*, and suggest these are useful ways of understanding how power may keep people from fully participating in political life. I also suggest two related ideas: *Political subordination* indicates how the normal working of a polity may suppress political understanding from emerging, while *political mortification* specifies how "apathetic" individuals or groups participate in suppressing, killing off, deflecting, and ultimately denying themselves political interpretation of what appears to be their personal or collective fate.

Finally, after an analysis of the empirical explanations of nonparticipation and proposals for reform of Ruy Teixeira, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, and Walter Dean Burnham, and a comparison of the latest proposals for democratic renewal of the old adversaries Robert Dahl and Peter Bachrach, I end the work where it began—with some proposals for political reform, and a challenge in the form of questions to each of us.

My goal is that this work in some small way will help contribute to reinforcing the consensus around political democracy itself and its foundational idea, political equality. My hope is that this consensus may extend to working toward the ideal of *real* political equality—political equality in fact as well as principle or even law—a consubstantiation in which political equality actually means that each citizen has similar resources of political power, as well as the same liberties and rights. It is political democracy of this unfulfilled sort that really protects every individual and to which we should commit ourselves.