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Author(s): John F. Zipp

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Perceived Representativeness and Voting: An Assessment of the Impact of "Choices" vs. "Echoes"

JOHN F. ZIPP
Washington University

The persistent decline in voting in presidential elections since 1960 has resulted in serious scholarly attention being given to nonvoting. Despite the quality of these studies, however, the ratio of what we know about nonvoting to what we do not know is rather low. In the hopes of improving this situation, I advance the hypothesis that one reason that individuals do not vote is that their interests are not represented by any of the major candidates. To test this hypothesis, I used the SRC election studies (1968-1980) to construct measures of individuals' perceived distance from the major candidates on a variety of issues. Net of an extensive set of factors usually invoked to explain participation, increased distance from candidates significantly decreases the probability of voting. The implications of these results are discussed.

The persistent decline in voter turnout in presidential elections since 1960 has resulted in serious scholarly attention being given to nonvoting. There is now a growing number of studies that attempt primarily to explain this trend and secondarily to explain nonvoting in general (e.g., Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Boyd, 1981; Cassel & Hill, 1981; Cavanagh, 1981; Hadley, 1978; Katosh & Traugott, 1982; Ladd, 1978; Reiter, 1979; Rosenstone & Wolfinger, 1978; Schaffer, 1981; Tarrance, 1978; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Despite the quality of these studies, serious gaps in our knowledge of nonvoting still exist, and I hope that this study will begin to fill some of them.

Recent nonvoting studies have emphasized three principal kinds of factors: 1) socioeconomic and demographic (e.g., income, education, age, and sex); 2) social psychological (e.g., party identification, citizen duty); and 3) rational choice variables (e.g., the perceived closeness of the election) (Cassel & Hill, 1981; Cavanagh, 1981; Reiter, 1979; Shaffer, 1981). The procedure for testing these relationships is generally the same: through some extension of the general linear model, a dichotomous dependent variable of voting-nonvoting is related to some subset of known or suspected correlates. These studies suggest that the

most important factors contributing to the decline in turnout have been the changing age structure (see also, Boyd, 1981), a decrease in participation among lower status citizens with no counterbalancing increase, and declines in both political partisanship and feelings of political efficacy.

Despite their value, however, these analyses have a major shortcoming. In line with the dominant emphasis in electoral research in the United States, they focus primarily on individual factors and do not consider the importance of the options available to individuals. Turnout among any segment of the electorate is known to be decreased by the absence of a realistic party or candidate choice expressing the interests of that segment (see Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Zipp & Smith, 1982), but this finding has not been incorporated into studies of recent voting declines. In this article, I present evidence of how consideration of the options available to individuals helps to explain nonvoting.

Background

Converse (1971) listed three broad factors that keep people from voting: accidental, legal, and motivational. Accidental factors do not concern us because there is little that can be done about them. Legal factors, on the other hand, clearly explain some portion of nonvoting, as it is harder both to register and to vote in the United States than in virtually any western democracy. However, legal factors cannot explain the decrease in turnout since 1960 because since that time legal restrictions on registration and voting have been relaxed (e.g., Rosenstone & Wolfinger, 1978). The third set of factors, motivational ones, is generally considered to be the most important. Converse surmised that typically motivational factors in-

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volve some indifference or apathy to voting. He further distinguished two types of motivational factors: internalized motivation (the learned need for citizen participation), and external stimulation (the mobilizing effects of the excitement surrounding a presidential campaign).

Although attention has been given to both of these aspects of motivation, perhaps much more has been given to internalized motivation. Brody (1978), Cassel and Hill (1981), Cavanagh (1981), Reiter (1979), and Schaffer (1981) all cite the expectation that increased levels of education during this period should have resulted in increased turnout. In other words, because more people became aware of the need for and the benefits of participation, more people should have voted. The effects of education, however, may have been offset by external factors: the enfranchisement of 18-year-olds and the increased distrust of and cynicism toward the government in the wake of the Vietnam war and Watergate. Lowering the voting age increased the size of the electorate and artificially lowered turnout rates (when compared to earlier years), because 18-20 year olds have low rates of turnout (e.g., Boyd, 1981). The same cannot be said for political trust, as Schaffer (1981) found no significant independent effect of trust on turnout.

There is one major external factor which generally has been ignored. After finding that lower status whites had higher rates of nonvoting than others, Reiter (1979) drew on Burnham (1967) and mentioned that a reason for this failure to vote might be the lack of a viable socialist party for them to support. In comparative terms, the socio-economic gap in participation is greater in the United States than in most other western democracies (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978; Zipp, Landerman, & Luebke, 1982). Although this is a provocative idea, there has been no direct test of it in the United States and, indeed, Reiter (1979) went so far as to speculate that such a test might not be possible with current data.

Although it is not my purpose to determine whether or not lower status citizens want a socialist party, I do contend that turnout among various groups in the electorate is affected by the presence or absence of a party that represents the interests of those groups. In their study of voting behavior in Canada, Zipp and Smith (1982) found that nonvoting among members of the working class decreased in constituencies in which there was a viable candidate of a mildly socialist party (the New Democratic Party), the party that they presumed to represent the interests of the working class. Furthermore, research done by Campbell and his colleagues, along with others, has found that turnout increased when people perceived clear and attractive alternatives in a particular

election (Campbell, 1960, 1962; Campbell et al., 1960; Rokken & Valen, 1962). Based on this work, I have tested the hypothesis that accounting for whether or not one's interests are represented among the various candidates increases our ability to explain turnout.

Data and Methods

The data for this article are drawn from the Survey Research Center's American National Election Studies. These data are available from the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan and are a standard source for studies of voting in presidential elections.

Because my hypothesis concerns the idea that the options available to individuals affect voting, a central task is to obtain measures that indicate whether or not the respondents felt that their interests were represented by any candidate in the relevant election. Although there is no direct information on this, I was able to construct measures that reflect on a 7-point scale the distance between the respondent's position on a particular issue and the respondent's perception of each candidate's position on that same issue. The closer a respondent is to a candidate, the more that respondent feels his or her interests on that issue are represented by that candidate. Perhaps the situation most conducive to high levels of voting would occur when all citizens are close to one candidate but a considerable distance from the others, so that there would be clear, representative choices for everyone. The least conducive situation, on the other hand, would occur when all individuals are equidistant from all candidates. In the latter case, individuals would be indifferent about who wins the election, whereas in the former instance, who wins would make a difference to the voters. What I have outlined, in fact, is very similar to Brody's and Page's (1973) notion of indifference. Drawing on the idea of rational abstention (Downs, 1957), Brody and Page demonstrated that those who felt equally about the candidates were less likely to vote than those who clearly favored one candidate.¹ Thus, *indifference* is one way in which the lack of representation can lead to nonvoting.

As Brody and Page also noted, it is possible to have a relatively clear choice but yet, at the same time, not to feel favorably disposed toward any of the candidates. Brody and Page termed this notion, which draws most closely from Con-

¹Brody and Page (1973) did not use these perceived distance measures, but rather used a summary evaluation of how favorably the respondent felt toward each candidate.

verse's (1966, p. 24) idea of "dynamic nonvoting," *alienation*. Brody and Page found that even though alienated citizens might not be indifferent, they were also less given to voting. Thus, it is through both indifference and alienation that the absence of preferred options can lead to nonvoting.²

The questions on which the measures of both indifference and alienation are based are listed in the Appendix. Because these questions were included only in the SRC surveys from 1968 through 1980, my analysis must be confined to those years. In each year I use the absolute value of the difference between a respondent's position and the respondent's perception of the candidate's position. Absolute values are used because I am concerned not with the direction of the distance between the respondent and the candidates, but with the gap itself. In each of the four elections, I measured the gap between the respondent's positions and the perceived positions of the major candidates: Nixon, Humphrey, and Wallace in 1968; Nixon and McGovern in 1972; Ford and Carter in 1976; and Reagan, Carter, and Anderson in 1980.

Indifference. I expect the situation most conducive to voting to occur when one candidate's positions are close to one's own position and all other candidates' are distant from it. To operationalize this notion, I took the absolute value of the difference between the respondent's position on a particular issue and the respondent's perception of each particular candidate's position on that same issue (*pdD*, *pdR*, and *pdM* for the absolute value of the perceived distance from the Democratic, Republican, and minor party candidates). Thus, in 1968 there were six measures: the absolute distance between the respondent and 1) Nixon on the Vietnam War and on urban unrest; 2) Humphrey on the Vietnam War and on urban unrest; and 3) Wallace on the Vietnam War and on urban unrest. In 1972, there were eight measures; that is, the absolute distance from the respondent and both Nixon and McGovern on each of four issues: liberalism, jobs, minority

rights, and equality for women. Similar measures were obtained for the same four issues in 1976 and 1980, with the latter including distance from Anderson's position.

To construct a measure indicating whether one was close to or distant from any or all candidates, I proceeded as follows. In 1972 and 1976—when there were only two major candidates—I took the absolute value of the difference between the respondent's and Democratic candidate's positions (*pdD*) and the respondent's and Republican candidate's positions (*pdR*) on each issue and reversed the scoring ($(|pdD - pdR| \times -1) + 7$). Thus, if the respondent were close to one candidate and distant from the other, the respondent would get a low score on this measure for each particular issue. Similarly, if the respondent was close to or distant from both candidates, he would receive a high score. Thus, we would expect a negative relationship between scores on these indexes and voting: as the choice between candidates becomes less clear (i.e., as indifference increases), individuals should be less likely to vote.

I wanted to retain the same scoring and scale for the 1968 and 1980 elections, and to do so I had to adjust for the presence of a third candidate. In each election I made contrasts for each issue similar to the ones described immediately above. To illustrate this process for 1968, I created three new terms: *RD* = the absolute value difference between the respondent and Nixon (*pdR*) and the respondent and Humphrey (*pdM*); *RM* = the respondent and Nixon (*pdR*) vs. the respondent and Wallace (*pdM*); and *DM* = the respondent and Humphrey (*pdD*) vs. respondent and Wallace (*pdM*). I then subtracted the smallest of these new terms from the largest and reversed the scoring (as above). This allowed me to capture how clear one's choice was: if there is little difference between the largest and smallest of these measures (*RD*, *RM*, *DM*), then the respondent is indifferent. If, on the other hand, there is a big gap, the respondent is not indifferent. For example, assume that a respondent is 0 units from Humphrey, 5 units from Nixon, and 6 units from Wallace. From these scores it is obvious that the respondent has a clear choice (Humphrey) and is therefore not indifferent, and my measure of indifference must apprehend this. In this case, *RD* is $|5 - 0| = 5$; *RM* is $|5 - 6| = 1$; and *DM* is $|6 - 0| = 6$. Indifference would be measured as the largest of these (*DM*) minus the smallest (*RM*), with the scoring reversed: $((6 - 1) \times -1) + 7 = 2$. Thus, the respondent would have a very clear choice, as the only clearer choice would be indicated by a score of 1, and my measure of indifference reflects accurately the respondent's perceived choices. To reiterate: voting should be negatively related to indifference.

²In a somewhat similar vein, Kelley and Mirer (1974) used both partisanship and affect toward candidates and parties to predict (primarily) the direction of voting. Although they also looked briefly at nonvoting, they acknowledged that there was an important difference between studying decisions of whether to vote and the direction of the vote. "A comparison of candidates resulting in a choice among them should be one consideration—but not the only one—in the decision about whether to vote" (Kelley & Mirer, 1974, p. 574). I agree with them and include some of these other factors in my model (e.g., political efficacy, political interest, whether one was mobilized to vote).

Alienation

The measure of alienation is more straightforward. The concept of alienation is similar to the situation described above: respondents are distant from all the candidates on the perceived distance measures (*pdD*, *pdR*, *pdM*). I have operationalized alienation as the minimum of the absolute values of the perceived distance measures on each of the items.³ A low score on these minimum distance variables—or alienation—indicates that the respondent is close to at least one candidate (i.e., the respondent is not alienated), whereas a high score means that one is not close to any candidate (i.e., alienated). Thus, the alienation variables also should be negatively related to voting: as alienation increases, the likelihood of voting should decrease.

In sum, the lack of representation can lead to nonvoting through the absence of a clear choice (indifference, as measured by the joint distance variables), through the lack of any candidate close to one's positions (alienation, as indicated by the minimum distance measures), or through some combination of both.

Unlike earlier researchers (e.g., Brody & Page, 1973), I developed an extensive model of factors thought to explain voting and only considered the impact of indifference and alienation net of these other factors. This approach should help to guard against reaching a spurious interpretation of the relationship between interests and voting. All of these other independent variables and their coding are listed in Table 1. For each of them, missing data were recoded to the mean. Because I am only assessing the impact of the distance variables after controlling for age, sex, race, region of the country, education, occupation, income, whether one was contacted by the parties, political efficacy,⁴ political interest,⁵ and party identification, these will be conservative tests of my hypothesis that having one's interests represented increases the probability that one will vote.

Before continuing, it is important to note the

³The measure of indifference does not distinguish between two different reasons for nonvoting: being indifferent because one is equally close to all candidates and being indifferent because one is equally distant from them all. Alienation addresses this in part, as it captures whether one is close to any candidate. I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this to my attention.

⁴I used two items to measure external political efficacy (e.g., Abramson & Aldrich, 1982): 1) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does," and 2) "I don't think that public officials care much about what people like me think."

⁵Political interest is a measure of the respondent's interest in the political campaign.

limitations of these measures. First and most serious is the direction of causal flow between the perceived distance measures and voting. I have assumed that the perceived distance variables precede voting causally, but it is plausible that the reverse is true. Justification for this reasoning can be found in cognitive dissonance theory under the rubric of "post-decisional conflict reduction" (e.g., Brehm, 1956; Crawford, 1976). Basically this term describes a process in which once a choice is made among various options, the subjects tend to evaluate their chosen option much more positively than they did before making the choice, with the reverse being true for the options that were not chosen. Thus, in a postelection interview—in which voting decisions already have been made—it is possible that respondents first decided whether or not to vote and then rationalized whether they were close to any of the candidates.

Although this is a realistic possibility, I feel that the predominant causal flow is from attitudes to behavior. I base this judgment on the work of Brody and Page (1973). In their study of the 1968 election, they tested this notion by comparing pre-election and postelection candidate evaluations. Even though they found some evidence of post-decisional rationalization, they concluded that it "was not sufficiently prevalent" to warrant a reversal of causal attribution.⁶ However, because some rationalization does occur, the conclusions need to be tempered by this fact, and the reader should bear this in mind.

Second, there is no guarantee that the issues that have been measured are salient and ones upon which voting decisions are made.⁷ Given these and the fact that the major party candidates often do not differ very much from each other (e.g., Page, 1978), it may be better to view our analyses as suggestive.⁸

⁶What ideally would be needed is a comparison of the pre- and post-election evaluations of those who were undecided immediately before making the decision to vote or not to vote. According to my approach, these voters with no clear choice should not vote and should still have no clear choice after the election. Should they vote and have a clear choice after the election, this would indicate the presence of post-decisional conflict reduction.

⁷In 1968, questions were asked concerning the importance of these particular issues in the respondent's voting decision. These results indicate that these two issues were of substantial importance to the respondents.

⁸Fiorina (1981, pp. 139-143) pointed out that measures such as those which ask one to compare someone else's position with one's own position are subject to a psychological process in which one rationalizes the other's position as being near to one's own. Although

Table 1. Independent Variables Used in the Analyses

Variable	Description	Coding
Middle aged	R's age	1 = 35-54, 0 = All else ^a
Older aged	R's age	1 = 55+, 0 = All else
Sex	R's sex	1 = Male, 0 = Female
Race	R's race	1 = White, 0 = Nonwhite
South	Region where R lives	1 = South, 0 = Nonsouth
Some high school education	R's education level	1 = 9-11 yrs., 0 = All else ^b
High school graduate	R's educational level	1 = 12 yrs., 0 = All else
Some college education	R's educational level	1 = 13-15 yrs., 0 = All else
College graduate	R's educational level	1 = 16+ yrs., 0 = All else
Professional-technical	Occupation of head of household	1 = Professional, technical jobs, 0 = All else ^c
Clerical-sales	Occupation of head of household	1 = Clerical, sales job, 0 = All else
Blue collar	Occupation of head of household	1 = Blue collar job, 0 = All else
Family income	R's family income	In dollars
Contact	Whether R was contacted	1 = Contacted, 0 = Not contacted
Political efficacy	R's feelings of political efficacy	0-2; lowest to highest
Political interest	R's interest in politics	1-5; Not interested to Very interested
Democratic ID	R's party identification	1 = Democrat, 0 = All else ^d
Republican ID	R's party identification	1 = Republican, 0 = All else
Indifference: Liberalism	R's joint distance from all major candidates on the liberalism scale.	1-7, with 1=R close to or distant from all candidates, and 7=R close to one and distant from all other candidates.
Indifference: Jobs	R's joint distance from all major candidates on the jobs question.	Same as above
Indifference: Minority rights	R's joint distance from all major candidates on the minority rights question.	Same as above
Indifference: Women	R's joint distance from all major candidates on the women question.	Same as above
Indifference: Urban	R's joint distance from all major candidates on the urban question.	Same as above
Indifference: Vietnam	R's joint distance from all major candidates on the Vietnam question.	Same as above
Alienation: Liberalism	Minimum of the absolute value of R's perceived distance from any of the candidates on the liberalism scale.	1-7, with 1=R close to at least one candidate and 7=R distant from all candidates.
Alienation: Jobs	Minimum of the absolute value of R's perceived distance from any of the candidates on the jobs question.	Same as above
Alienation: Minority rights	Minimum of the absolute value of R's perceived distance from any of the candidates on the minority rights question.	Same as above
Alienation: Women	Minimum of the absolute value of R's perceived distance from any of the candidates on the women question.	Same as above
Alienation: Urban	Minimum of the absolute value of R's perceived distance from any of the candidates on the urban question.	Same as above
Alienation: Vietnam	Minimum of the absolute value of R's perceived distance from any of the candidates on the Vietnam question.	Same as above

^aOmitted category is young—age 21-34.^bOmitted category is 8 or fewer years of education.^cOmitted category is managerial jobs.^dOmitted category is independent, other or no party identification.

Results

The dependent variable is a dichotomous, vote-nonvote one with voting coded 1 and nonvoting coded 0. Because there are problems with the use of ordinary least squares regression with dichotomous dependent variables, I have chosen to use logistic regression. Good discussions of the problems of OLS with dichotomous variables and the benefits of logit analysis can be found in Dwyer (1983) and Hanushek and Jackson (1977).

The results of the logit analyses are shown in Table 2. Because I am interested only in the distance variables, I discuss only their effects. Furthermore, because I have no a priori reason to expect any of these distance variables to be more important than the others and because they are positively correlated with each other, I am more concerned with the performance of each set of them rather than any particular one.

For this reason, and because there is no clear rationale for the order in which the alienation and the indifference variables should be entered into the equations relative to each other, I chose to present the results of all the possibilities. I entered the alienation variables first, the indifference ones first, and both sets together. In order to determine whether or not the lack of representation is related to voting, I compared the increments in chi-square associated with including both the alienation and the indifference factors.⁹ I also examined the chi-square increments of alienation alone and alienation net of indifference, and vice versa. Taken together these comparisons should enable us to assess 1) if accounting for whether or not one's interests are represented increases our ability to explain nonvoting, and 2) if this is the result of indifference, alienation, or both.

In all four elections, the alienation and indifference variables when considered together significantly increase our ability to explain nonvoting (see Table 2). In 1968 this is primarily the result of the effects of indifference to the Vietnam

War (-.16), in 1972 to indifference to liberalism (-.15), in 1976 to indifference on the role of women (.19), and finally in 1980 to alienation on the jobs question (.19). At the most general level, then, this constitutes initial evidence that the lack of representation increases nonvoting.

One still needs to consider the separate impacts of alienation and indifference. Turning first to alienation, as a set the alienation variables alone significantly increase the explanation of nonvoting in 1972 (chi-square increment = 22.62 with 4 *df*), in 1976 (chi-square increment = 9.78 with 4 *df*), and in 1980 (chi-square increment = 14.14 with 4 *df*). In 1972 the lack of representation of liberalism (-.30) and minority rights (-.14) is primarily responsible, in 1976 liberalism (-.23) again is significant, whereas in 1980 it is because of alienation on the jobs question (-.21). Finally, in all elections the direction of the significant coefficients is as expected: increases in alienation are associated with decreases in voting.

Accounting for indifference significantly enhances our understanding of voting in 1968 (chi-square increment = 9.60 with 2 *df*), in 1972 (chi-square increment = 33.79 with 4 *df*), and in 1976 (chi-square increment = 16.69 with 4 *df*). In 1968, it results primarily from the joint distance between the respondents' and the candidates' views on the Vietnam War (-.18), with the gap between the respondents' and the candidates' views on liberalism (-.20) and on minority rights (-.10) statistically significant in 1972, and liberalism (-.14) and an equal role for women (.19) significantly related to voting in 1976. Further, except for the women issue in 1976, the direction of the coefficients is as expected: as indifference increases, voting decreases.¹⁰

From the above, it is clear that both indifference and alienation lead to nonvoting. To determine better which factor has a greater impact, I have undertaken two procedures. First, I examined the increments in chi-square for each of the two sets of distance variables net of the other set. The results of these comparisons (also listed in Table 2) indicate that, net of indifference, aliena-

this is a problem, if such a process is operating in these data, it will result in having most people report being closer to the candidates than they actually are. This will attenuate the relationships between these measures and voting, and thus the results may underestimate the effects of having one's interests represented on the likelihood of voting.

⁹Testing for the significance of a set of variables involves comparing the chi-square value obtained from a model with those variables to the chi-square value obtained from a nested model excluding that set of variables. If there is a significant increment in chi-square when the set is included, then that set of variables has significantly increased our explanatory power.

¹⁰As an anonymous reviewer brought to our attention, failure to answer the candidate placement questions could lead to nonvoting if this failure indicated that the respondent was unable to perceive a candidate's position. I checked for this possibility by creating new variables representing missing-nonmissing on each of the self- and candidate-placement items. As a set, these variables were not significant in 1968 and 1976, and in the other two elections their significance is mainly due to the respondents' failing to answer the self-placement questions (these respondents were then not asked the candidate placement questions). Thus, this explanation largely is not valid.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Voting, 1968-1980

	1968			1972			1976			1980		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Middle aged	.92*	.92*	.92*	.67*	.64*	.66*	.99*	.95*	.96*	.78*	.74*	.76*
Older aged	1.24*	1.24*	1.24*	.80*	.74*	.76*	1.01*	.97*	.96*	1.23*	1.17*	1.22*
Sex	.19	.21	.21	.15	.15	.14	.37*	.32*	.32*	.11	.07	.06
Race	.09	.24	.21	-.17	-.08	-.08	-.11	-.05	-.06	-.09	-.03	-.07
South	-.38*	-.35*	-.36*	-.46*	-.54*	-.51*	-.45*	-.44*	-.44*	-.24	-.25	-.24
Some high school education	.31	.31	.30	.20	.15	.16	.17	.14	.14	.00	.03	.02
High school graduate	.97*	.98*	.98*	.76*	.74*	.74*	.63*	.59*	.58*	.74*	.71	.74*
Some college education	.52	.52	.52	1.12*	1.04*	1.04*	1.26*	1.22*	1.20*	.68*	.67*	.66*
College graduate	.72*	.71	.71	1.15*	1.10*	1.06*	.98*	.92*	.91*	1.67*	1.71*	1.66*
Professional-technical	.32	.30	.32	.22	.22	.22	.46	.48	.48	-.28	-.27	-.28
Clerical-sales	.41	.46	.44	.20	.16	.18	.05	.06	.07	-.01	-.02	-.01
Blue collar	-.29	-.30	-.30	.05	.05	.05	.04	.06	.07	-.17	-.18	-.16
Family income ^a	.64*	.66*	.66*	.45*	.44*	.44*	.29*	.30*	.28*	.10	.08	.09
Contact	.56*	.54	.55*	.76*	.74*	.74*	.71*	.73*	.74*	.71*	.68*	.70*
Political efficacy	.41*	.45*	.44*	.44*	.30*	.29*	.30*	.31*	.30*	.48*	.49*	.48*
Political interest	.34*	.33*	.32*	.32*	.30*	.30*	.33*	.33*	.33*	.42*	.43*	.42*
Democratic ID	.63*	.63*	.63*	.61*	.62*	.62*	.42*	.39*	.40*	.74*	.71*	.74*
Republican ID	.57*	.57*	.56*	.79*	.78*	.78*	.56*	.56*	.55*	.83*	.78*	.80*
Alienation: Urban	-.07		-.05									
Alienation: Vietnam	-.14		-.09									
Indifference: Urban		-.04	-.02									
Indifference: Liberalism		-.18*	-.16*									
Alienation: Liberalism												
Alienation: Jobs				-.39*		-.16	-.23*		-.17	-.20		-.12
Alienation: Minority rights				.00		.04	.03		.07	-.21*		-.19*
Alienation: Women				-.14*		-.12*	-.06		-.04	-.14		-.15
Indifference: Liberalism				-.02		.03	-.02		-.06	-.01		-.03
Indifference: Jobs					-.20*	-.15*		-.14*	-.08		-.14	-.08
Indifference: Minority rights					-.06	-.08		-.06	-.07		-.10	-.06
Indifference: Women					-.10*	-.08		-.04	-.03		-.01	-.02
Constant	-.2.22	-3.36	-2.96	-1.30	-2.99	-2.46	-1.79	-2.56	-2.00	-1.53	-2.95	-1.70
Chi-square	335.78*	340.67*	342.53*	514.91*	526.08*	534.52*	446.23*	453.14*	458.54*	391.63*	394.37*	401.11*
df	20	20	22	22	22	26	22	22	26	22	22	26
Basic Model Chi-square ^b	331.07*		492.29*			436.45*				384.98*		
df	18		18			18				18		

Table 2 (continued)

	1968			1972			1976			1980		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Increment in Chi-square for: Alienation and indifference <i>df</i>	11.46*			42.23*			22.09*			16.13*		
Alienation	4			8			8			8		
Alienation net of indifference	4.71			22.62*			9.78*			14.14*		
Indifference	1.86			8.44			5.40			9.48†		
Indifference, net of alienation <i>df</i>	9.60*			33.79*			16.69*			6.65		
	6.75*			19.61*			12.31*			1.99		
	2			4			4			4		

^aMultiply coefficient by .0001.

^bAll independent variables, except for alienation and indifference.

**p* < .05.

†*p* approximately .055.

tion never produces a significant increment in chi-square, whereas accounting for indifference significantly augments our understanding of non-voting—net of alienation—in 1968 (chi-square increment = 6.75 with 2 *df*), in 1972 (chi-square increment = 19.61 with 4 *df*), and in 1976 (chi-square increment = 12.31 with 4 *df*). Thus, it appears at this point that indifference is more important than alienation.

I have approached this issue in a second way. Logistic regression coefficients, unlike OLS coefficients, do not have a constant effect on the dependent variable across all values of the independent variables, so the effect of one independent variable must be evaluated at its different values and at certain values of all other independent variables. It is conventional to make these evaluations at the means of the other independent variables. Thus, to provide further insight on the impacts of alienation and indifference, I have calculated the probabilities of voting for the alienation and indifference variables, holding all other variables—including whichever set of distance variables is not being evaluated—at their respective means (see Table 3). I can illustrate how I arrived at these figures by using alienation in 1968 as an example. (The same procedure was used in all years and also for indifference.) I first multiplied the logistic coefficient of each of the independent variables listed in Table 3, column 3, except for the alienation measures, by the mean of the respective variable. For each alienation measure, I multiplied the logistic coefficient by the respondent's actual score on the respective variable. Thus, each respondent was given the mean value on all the independent variables except for alienation, on which they received their actual value. After summing these together along with the intercept and terming this new quantity *XB*, I calculated the probability of voting as equal to: $1/(1 + \text{exponent}(-XB))$. This gives the probability of voting across levels of alienation, with every other factor held at its mean. Because all variables, except for alienation, are fixed at their means, all the variance in the probability of voting results from alienation (or likewise from indif-

ference, when I calculate the results for it). Thus, the standard deviations of these probabilities supply information about the relative effects of alienation and indifference.

These results, shown in Table 3, indicate that in all but 1980 the standard deviations of indifference are considerably larger than those of alienation.¹¹ This difference in standard deviations can be interpreted to signify that there is greater variability in the likelihood of voting across levels of indifference than across levels of alienation. To illustrate, let us assume that being one standard deviation above or below the mean indicates that one is very high or very low on a particular measure. Given this, in 1968 the difference in the probability of voting between a highly indifferent (.7825) and not indifferent person (.8511) was almost 7%. The same comparison for an unalienated (.8241) and an alienated individual (.7923) produced a difference of slightly more than 3%. Similarly, the differences between those who were one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean were 9% for indifference and 6% for alienation in 1972, and 8% for indifference and 5% for alienation in 1976. Taken together, these results confirm that both alienation and indifference lead to non-voting, but that indifference has a greater impact.

Summary and Discussion

The most important finding is that measuring the gap between an individual's positions on issues and his perceptions of all the candidates' positions on the same issues, net of a host of factors usually invoked to explain voting, significantly increases one's ability to explain turnout. In general, if one has a clear choice among the candidates (is not indifferent) and one's policy preferences are close to at least one candidate (one is not alienated), one is much more likely to vote. Furthermore, although both alienation and indif-

¹¹The means are approximately equal throughout, as they should be.

Table 3. Probabilities of Voting by Alienation and Indifference, 1968-1980^a

	Alienation				Indifference			
	\bar{X}	SD	+1SD	-1SD	\bar{X}	SD	+1SD	-1SD
1968	.8082	.0159	.7923	.8241	.8168	.0343	.7825	.8511
1972	.7835	.0297	.7538	.8132	.7712	.0449	.7263	.8161
1976	.7829	.0269	.7560	.8098	.7849	.0392	.7457	.8241
1980	.7652	.0447	.7205	.8099	.7757	.0253	.7504	.8010

^aAll other variables are evaluated at their means.

ference can lead to nonvoting, being indifferent to the candidates has a greater impact on nonvoting than does being alienated from them. The fact that these results were obtained net of an extensive set of factors related to voting in different elections provides additional evidence of their existence and persistence.

There are several implications of these results. First, this research was prompted by a concern that the options available to individuals generally have been neglected in explaining nonvoting in the United States. The extant literature focuses almost solely on individualistic characteristics, ignoring the interplay between the attributes of individuals and the choices presented to them. For example, in his study of turnout Cavanagh (1981, p. 63) contended that "the current rightward drift in policy initiatives may owe its source to the contemporaneous class shift in participation patterns." Thus Cavanagh blames the victim: if more lower class people had participated, the current rightward shift might not have occurred. His interpretation assumes that the politics of the elite faithfully mirror those of the mass electorate. Although this assumption is central to responsive democratic government, research in both the United States (e.g., Hamilton, 1972) and other countries (see Zipp, 1978, for a summary) calls it into question. Although we know that various individual-level factors are associated with nonvoting (see Table 2) and cannot be ignored, I am suggesting that the fit between individuals and the options presented to them also needs to be incorporated into explanations of nonvoting.

These results have a second implication for individualistic approaches to explaining nonvoting. Another way of saying that the lack of a representative candidate decreases voting is that nonvoting may be the outcome of a reasoned, thoughtful political position. However, recent research on nonvoting tends to treat it as the failure to act politically rather than as a chosen form of political action. The difference between these two is quite important. For example, treating nonvoting as a failure to act, Brody (1978), Cassel and Hill (1981), Cavanagh (1981), Reiter (1979), and Schaffer (1981) all predicted that increased levels of education from 1960 to 1980 would result in increased levels of voting, because education increases the awareness of the needs for and the benefits of voting. The underlying assumption is clear: nonvoting stems from a lack of education or knowledge, not from an intelligent, reasoned position. Thus, the solution to the problem of nonvoting is to educate the nonvoters. However, taking the perspective that nonvoting may be a thoughtful, chosen stance directs one away from educating the nonvoter and toward an examination of the factors that cause nonvoting

to be a legitimate alternative way of expressing political preferences. In this article I have contended that one of these reasons is that individuals do not have their interests represented in the political sphere. For some citizens, nonvoting may be a failure to act politically, but for others it is a chosen form of political action. Neither reason for nonvoting can be treated as the other.

There is one approach to explaining nonvoting with which my results generally are quite consistent: rational choice theory and the idea of rational abstention (e.g., Brody & Page, 1973; Davis, Hinich, & Ordeshook, 1970; Downs, 1957; Ordeshook, 1970). At the risk of oversimplification, this view argues that, given the costs of voting, if the outcome does not make any difference, the rational citizen does not vote. Indeed I have shown that not having a clear choice among the candidates (i.e., not having a preferred outcome) leads to nonvoting, and thus these results can be used to support this notion of rational choice theory.

However, as noted above, this research was not motivated by seeking to test the utility of Downsian spatial models. Rather, I was influenced most by a concern for the lack of options that exist for many individuals,¹² and because I have established that the absence of representation leads to nonvoting, it is appropriate for scholars to ask why these options do not exist for many citizens. Although a thorough examination of this question is beyond the scope of this article, a brief outline is suggested. Single district, single member, "first-past-the-post" presidential electoral systems encourage the development of two centrist, brokerage-style parties and weaken support for third parties. Combined with historical and other forces (e.g., American Political Science Association, 1950), such rules have resulted in a less-than-responsible two-party system in which the parties do not provide coherent and distinct ideologies and programs. This system negates even the requisites of the "competitive theory of democracy" and elevates nonvoting to the level of a third choice. In addition, several current factors create a considerable distance between candidates and most citizens: the upper-middle-class backgrounds of most candidates; the need of candidates to have or to be able to attract the large sums of money required to conduct viable cam-

¹²Looking only at the marginals for the indifference variables, for 10 of the 14 variables more than 50% of the respondents are in the two lowest categories—i.e., the "least representation" categories. In two of the remaining four, more than 40% are in these categories. Thus, it is safe to say that these options do not exist for a good number of citizens.

paigns; the importance of the media and their almost complete neglect of third-party candidates; and, perhaps owing to the increased role of the judiciary and other unelected officials (Burnham, 1967), the belief on the parts of some that elected candidates cannot really make good on their promises (e.g., Kimball, 1972; Parenti, 1980, especially chap. 11).

In conclusion, I feel that it would be more fruitful intellectually if scholars shifted their focus away from explaining nonvoting primarily by noting the deficiencies of nonvoters to one that also includes an understanding of the circumstances that lead some individuals to use nonvoting as a reflection of political beliefs.

Appendix:

Candidate Distance Questions, 1968-1980

(1) Urban (1968 only)

There is much discussion today about the best way to deal with the problem of urban unrest and rioting. Some say it is more important to use all available force to maintain law and order—no matter what the results. Others say it is more important to correct the problems of poverty and unemployment that give rise to the disturbances. And, of course, other people stress opinions in between. Suppose the people who stress the use of force are at one end of this scale—at point number 7. And suppose the people who stress doing more about the problems of poverty and unemployment are at the other end—point number 1. Where would you place (yourself, Humphrey, Nixon) on this scale?

(2) Vietnam (1968 only)

There is much talk about “hawks” and “doves” in connection with Vietnam and considerable disagreement as to what action the United States should take in Vietnam. Some people think that we should do everything necessary to win a complete military victory, no matter what results. Some people think we should withdraw completely from Vietnam right now, no matter what results. And, of course, other people have opinions somewhere between these two extreme positions. Suppose the people who support an immediate withdrawal are at one end of this scale at point number 1. And suppose people who support a complete military victory are at the other end of the scale at point number 7. At what point would you place (yourself, Humphrey, Nixon)?

(3) Liberalism (1972-1980)

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals

and conservatives. I'm going to show you a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place (yourself, the Democrats, the Republicans) on this scale, or haven't you thought much about it?

(4) Jobs (1972-1980)^a

Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of this scale—at point number 1. Others think that the government should just let each person get ahead on his own. Suppose that these people are at the other end—at point number 7. And, of course, some people have opinions in between. Where would you place (yourself, the Democrats, the Republicans) on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

(5) Minority Rights^a (1972-1980)

Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every possible effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks and other minority groups. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves. Where would you place (yourself, the Democrats, the Republicans) on this scale, or haven't you thought much about it?

(6) Women (1972-1980)

Recently there's been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government. Others feel that a woman's place is in the home. Where would you place (yourself, the Democrats, the Republicans) on this scale, or haven't you thought much about it?

^aThere were slight changes in wording from 1972 to 1980, but only in the way in which the respondent was informed about the ends of the scale. In all cases, the options were the same, as was the substance of each question.

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