



AMERICAN UPSWING, THE GILDED AGE TO THE PRESENT

SGL: BILL DANNEY



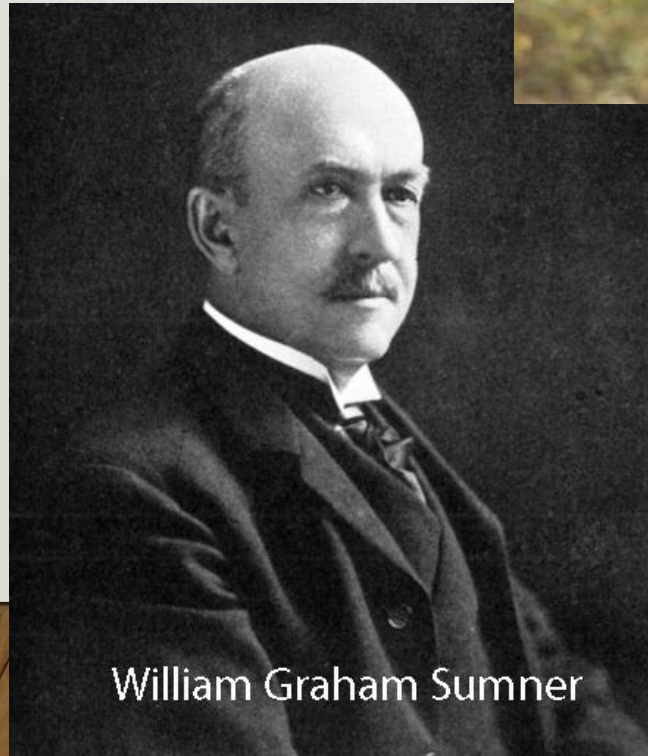
EIGHT CLASSES

1. What's Past Is Prologue
2. Economic Inequality
3. Politics from Tribalism to Comity and Back Again
4. Society Between Isolation and Solidarity
5. Culture, Health and the Evolution of the “American Dream”
6. Race, Religion, Ethnicity and Gender
7. Other Thoughts on Polarization and Culture
8. The Arc of the 20th Century and Its Implications

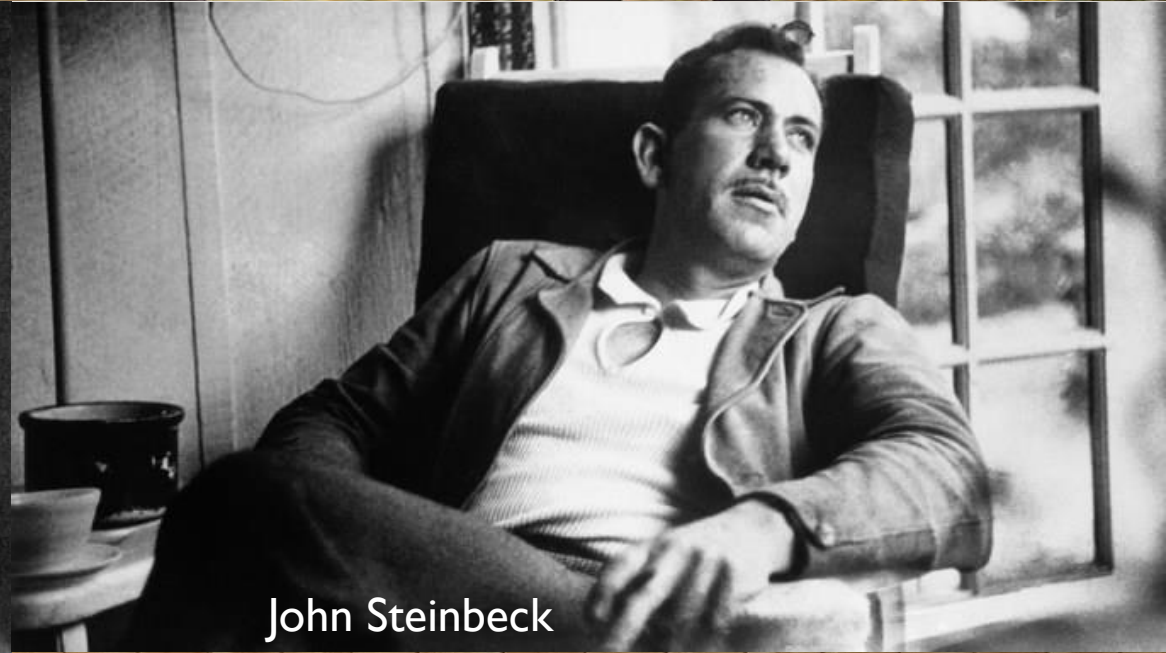
Class 5: Culture, Health and the Evolution of “The American Dream”



Jane Addams



William Graham Sumner



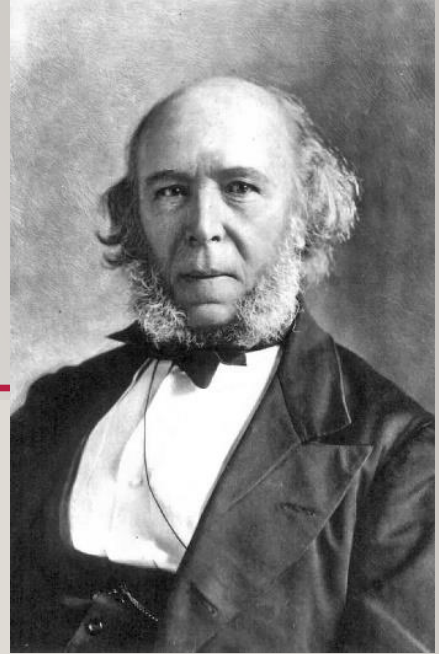
John Steinbeck

Struggles Over Individualism and Community (1870 – 1920)

- Frontier life in the US was associated with a culture of boot-strap self-reliance and hostility to economic redistribution.
- In the late 19th century, Charles Darwin wrote *On the Origin of the Species* and proposed the concept of evolution where only the strongest survived and the weak quickly perished. In Europe, Herbert Spencer began to propose “social Darwinism” based on Darwinian principles.
- Social Darwinism gave birth to scientific racism, eugenics and to pseudo-biological defense of laissez-fair capitalism. Many came to believe that the ills of the Gilded Age were the inevitable price of progress.
- H. L. Hanifan, and John Dewey responded by introducing the concept of “social capital” to express profound beliefs in the importance of democracy, schools and civil society.
- Teddy Roosevelt, Jane Addams and other progressives were explicit in rejecting “individualism.” They emphasized “cooperative ideal of mutual assistance.” They had a variety of labels for their alternative vision: “Christian Socialism,” “neighborliness,” and “community” were common terms but the most widely used were “association” and “cooperation.”
- Under Woodrow Wilson’s leadership, Congress approved progressive legislation on child labor, the eight hour work day, the estate tax and a more progressive income tax.

HERBERT SPENCER

(1820 – 1903)

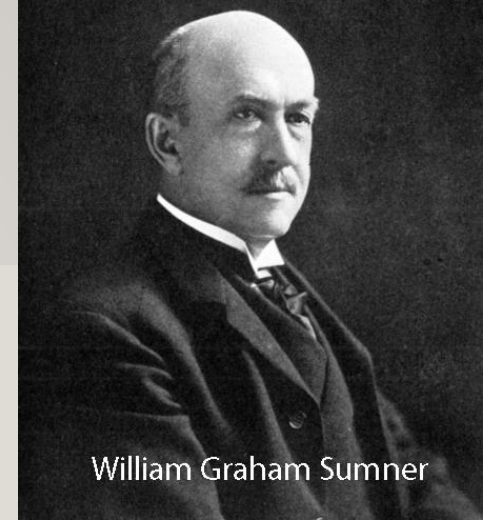


- Was an English philosopher, biologist, anthropologist, sociologist, and prominent political theorist of the Victorian era.
- Many considered Spencer "the single most famous European intellectual in the closing decades of the 19th century."
- After reading Darwin's work he coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest' as his own term for Darwin's concept.
- Spencer argued that the state was not an "essential" institution and that it would "decay" as voluntary market organization would replace the coercive aspects of the state.
- Spencer's reputation owed a great deal to his agnosticism. He was condemned by religious thinkers for advocating atheism.

WILLIAM GRAHAM SUMNER

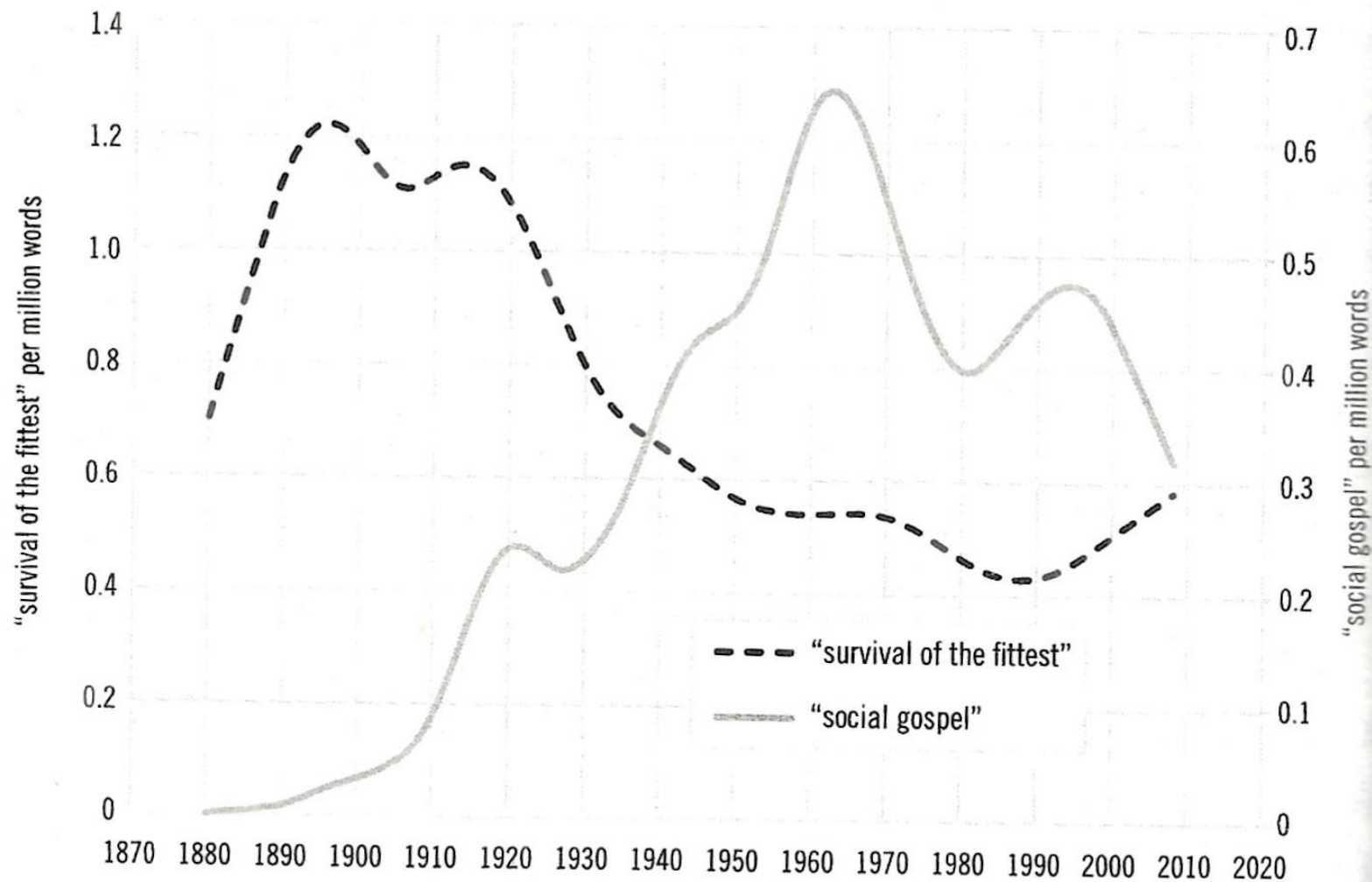
(1840 – 1910)

- **William Graham Sumner** taught social sciences at Yale, where he held the nation's first professorship in sociology. Spencer had a dominating influence upon Sumner's thought.
- He supported *laissez-faire* economics, free markets, and the gold standard.
- Sumner beliefs:
 - Reformers believe government has the obligation to help those less off. This is the road to disaster. “Heal Thyself”
 - Equality is dangerous, poverty is deserved.
 - Paternalistic government kills individualism.
 - He was a spokesman against imperialism and in favor of the "forgotten man" of the middle class, a term he coined.
 - He had a long-term influence on conservatism in the U.S.
- Sumner followed Spencer in applying “survival of the fittest” to human society arguing that “some people were better at the contest of life than others.”



William Graham Sumner

FIGURE 5.1: CULTURAL SALIENCE OF “SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST” AND “SOCIAL GOSPEL,” 1880–2008

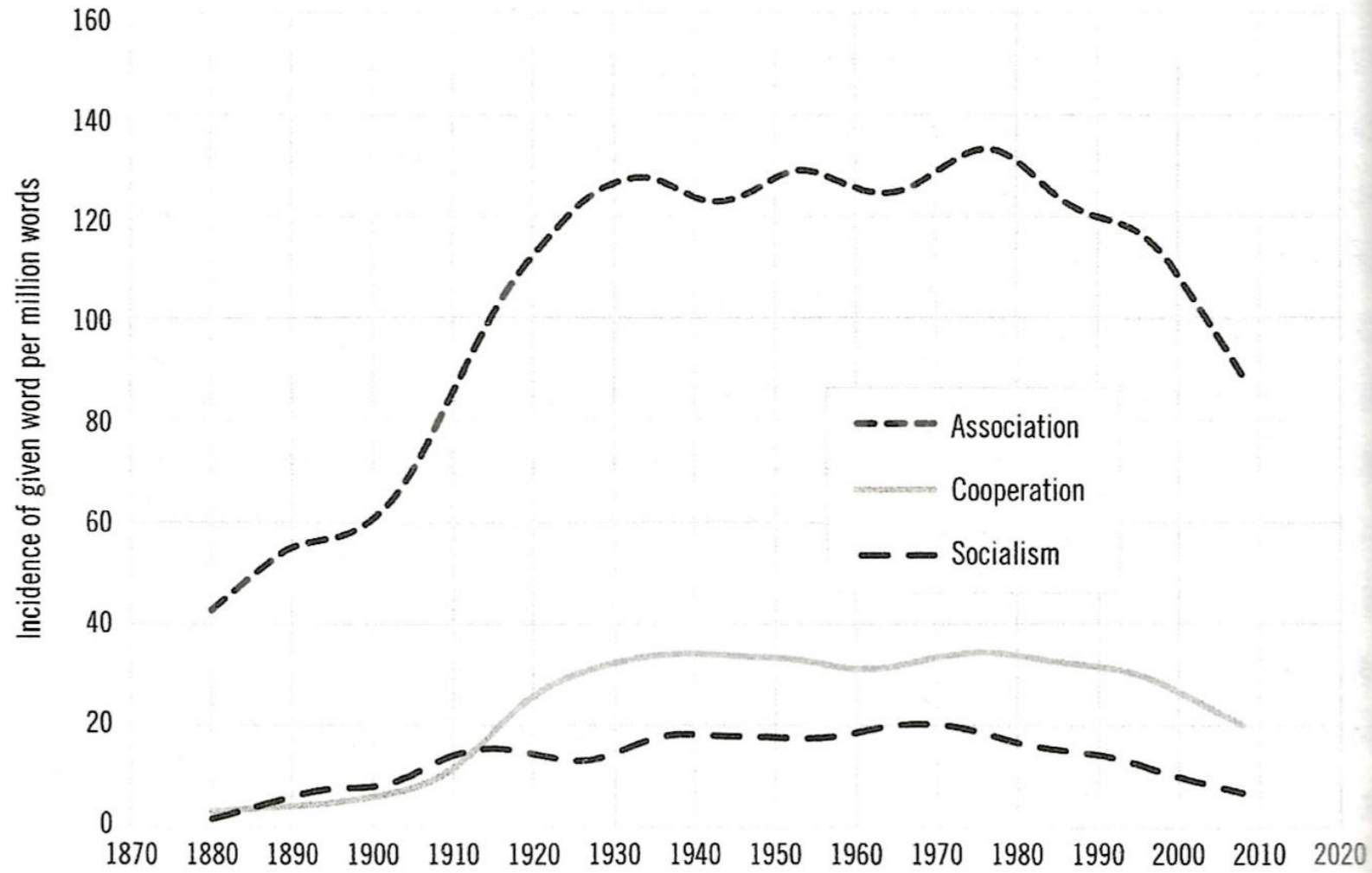


Google has digitized millions of books. It is now possible to display the relative frequency of any word or group of words over long periods of time and thus to estimate trends in the cultural salience of words or concepts.

Around the turn of the 20th century a socially engaged theology emerged in Cristian cultures under the label of “Social Gospel.” The Social Gospelers attacked the philosophy of social Darwinism.

Source: Ngram. Data LOESS smoothed: .10.

**FIGURE 5.2: CULTURAL SALIENCE OF “ASSOCIATION,” “COOPERATION,” AND “SOCIALISM,”
1880–2008**



Source: Ngram. Data LOESS smoothed: .15.

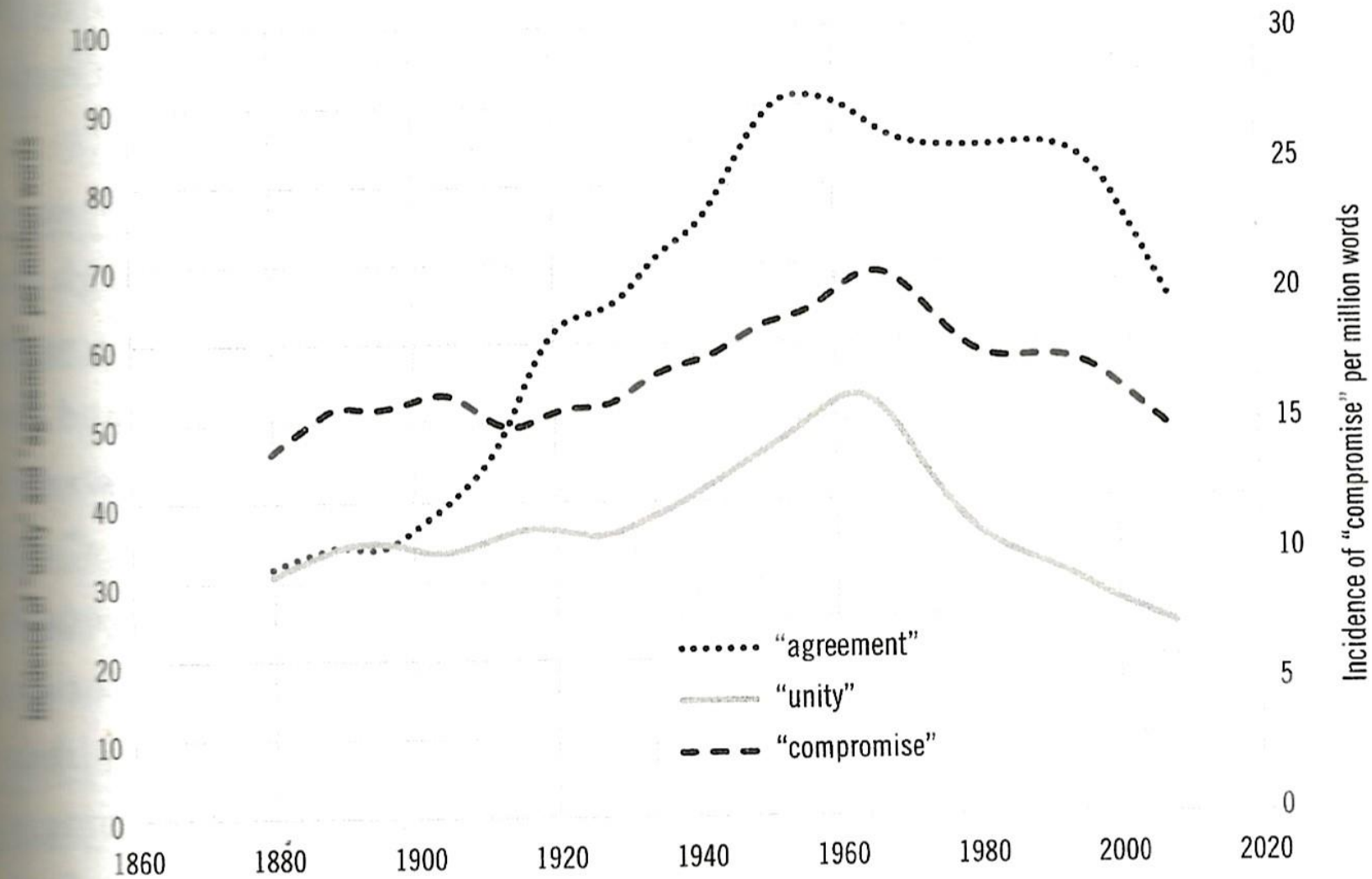
The Thirties, the New Deal and the “American Dream”

- The stock market crash of 1929 dropped the curtain on the Roaring Twenties. The idea that joblessness was due to character flaws was hard to recon with reality as unemployment shot up from 3% to about 25% in 1933.
- In literature and cinema, social realism prevailed culminating in:
 - John Stienbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and *Cannery Row* (1945)
 - Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)
- FDR was a communitarian progressive from his days at Harvard (1900-1903) and likely from the influence of his fifth cousin, then in the White House.
- The term “American Dream” was popularized by James Truslow Adams. In his 1931 book *The Epoch of America* he explained: “It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of their birth.”

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington



FIGURE 5.4: CULTURAL SALIENCE OF “AGREEMENT,” “COMPROMISE,” AND “UNITY,” 1880–2008



Source: Ngram. Data LOESS smoothed: .15.

The late 1940s and early 1950s

- Men returning from war went to college paid for by the government under the GI Bill.
- Fewer than 500 companies were responsible for almost half the nation's output.
- The largest corporations could not risk competition. Advanced planning was essential. Collusion was accepted.
- “Engine Charlie” Wilson, GM President and chief executive was quoted as saying, “What's good for General Motors is good for the country and vice versa.”
- Top earners paid a marginal tax rate of 91% but “high taxes” did not seem to constrain the economy.
- Big business was matched by big labor. Business and labor cooperated as costs could be spread and passed on to consumers due to lack of competitive pressures.
- In 1955 a third of workers belonged to unions. Many non-union workers got similar pay and benefits as their employers did not want to attract unions.

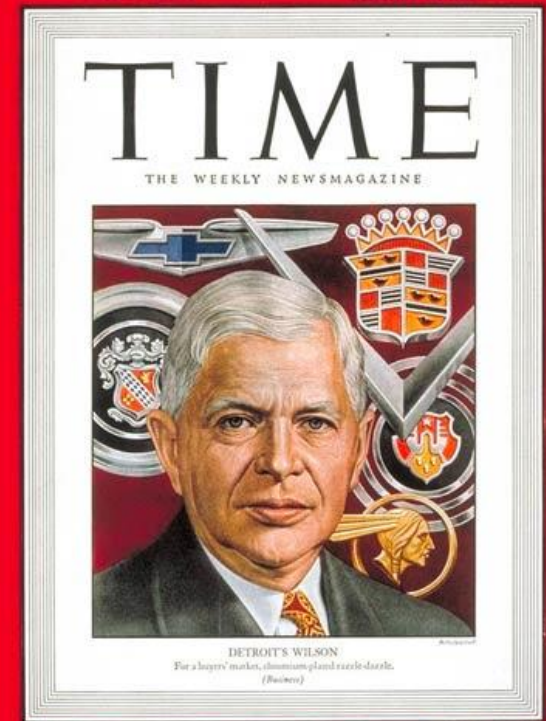
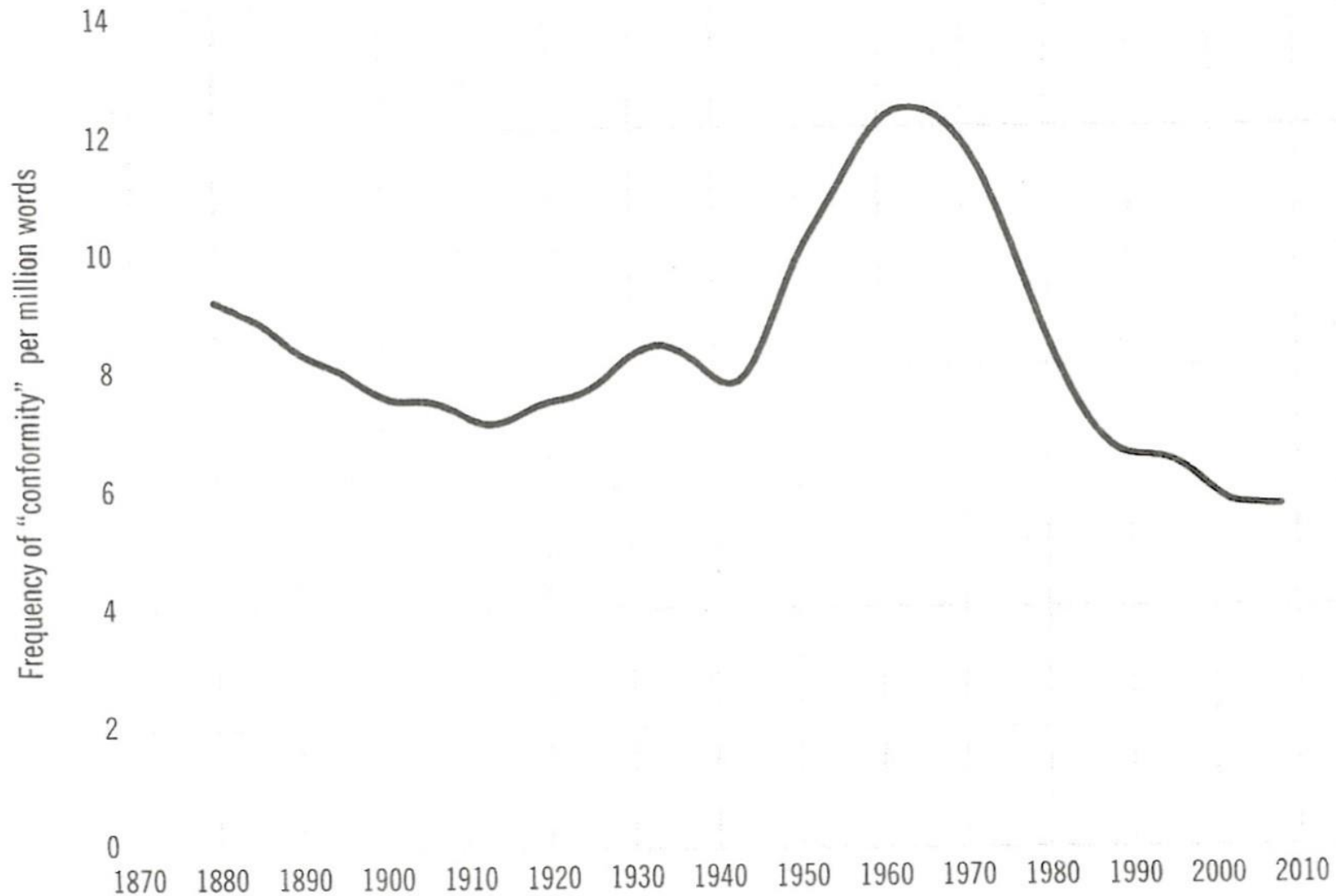


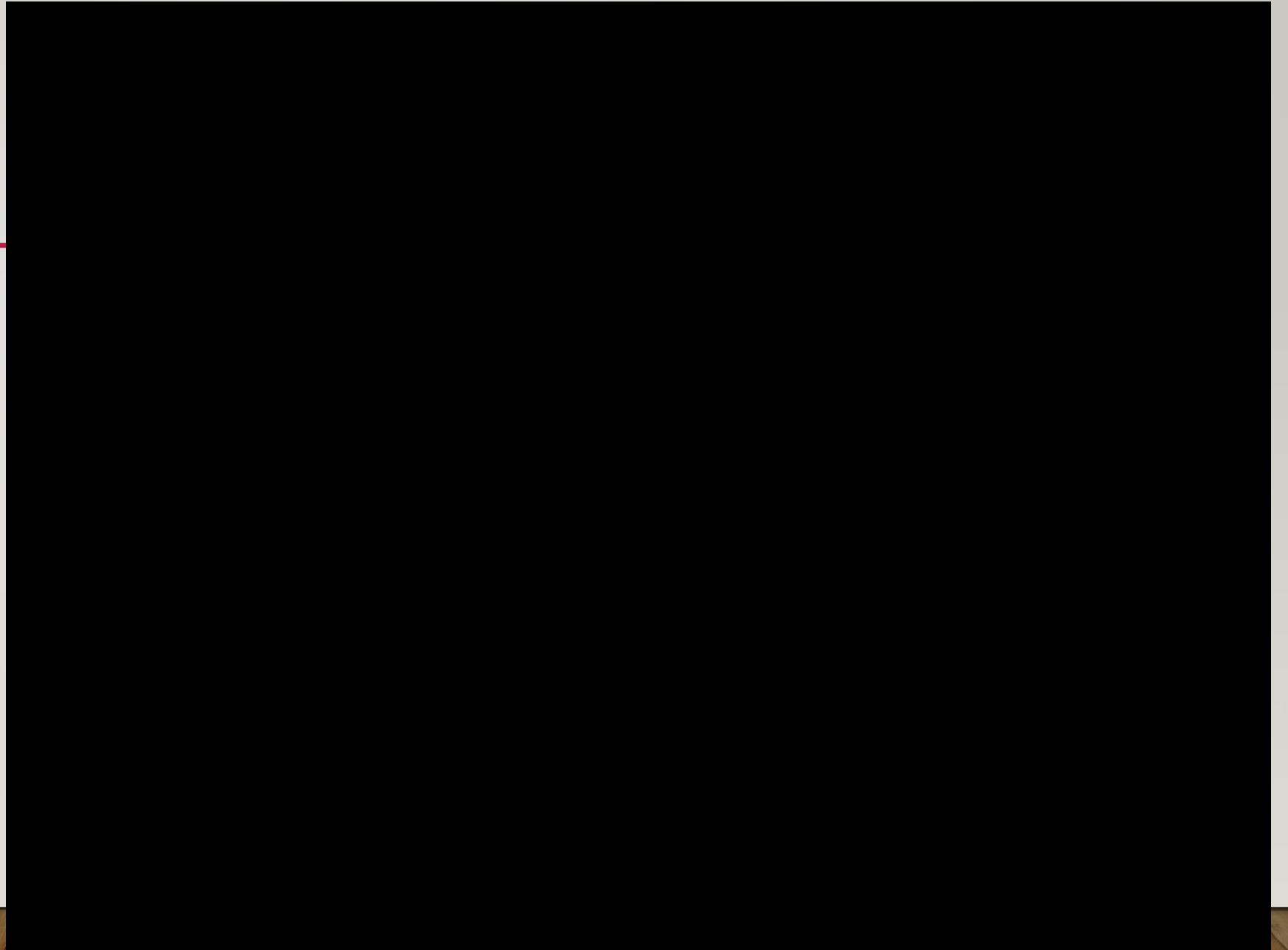
FIGURE 5.7: CULTURAL SALIENCE OF “CONFORMITY,” 1880–2008



Source: Ngram. Data LOESS smoothed: .10.

- But cultural rebellion against convention, repression and consumerism emerged. In cinema, this trend was embodied in James Dean, the lead actor in the movie, *Rebel Without a Cause*.
- If the communitarian “we” is defined too narrowly, “conformity” to social norms punishes dissidents and deviants, whether political, sexual or racial.

Rebel Without a Cause



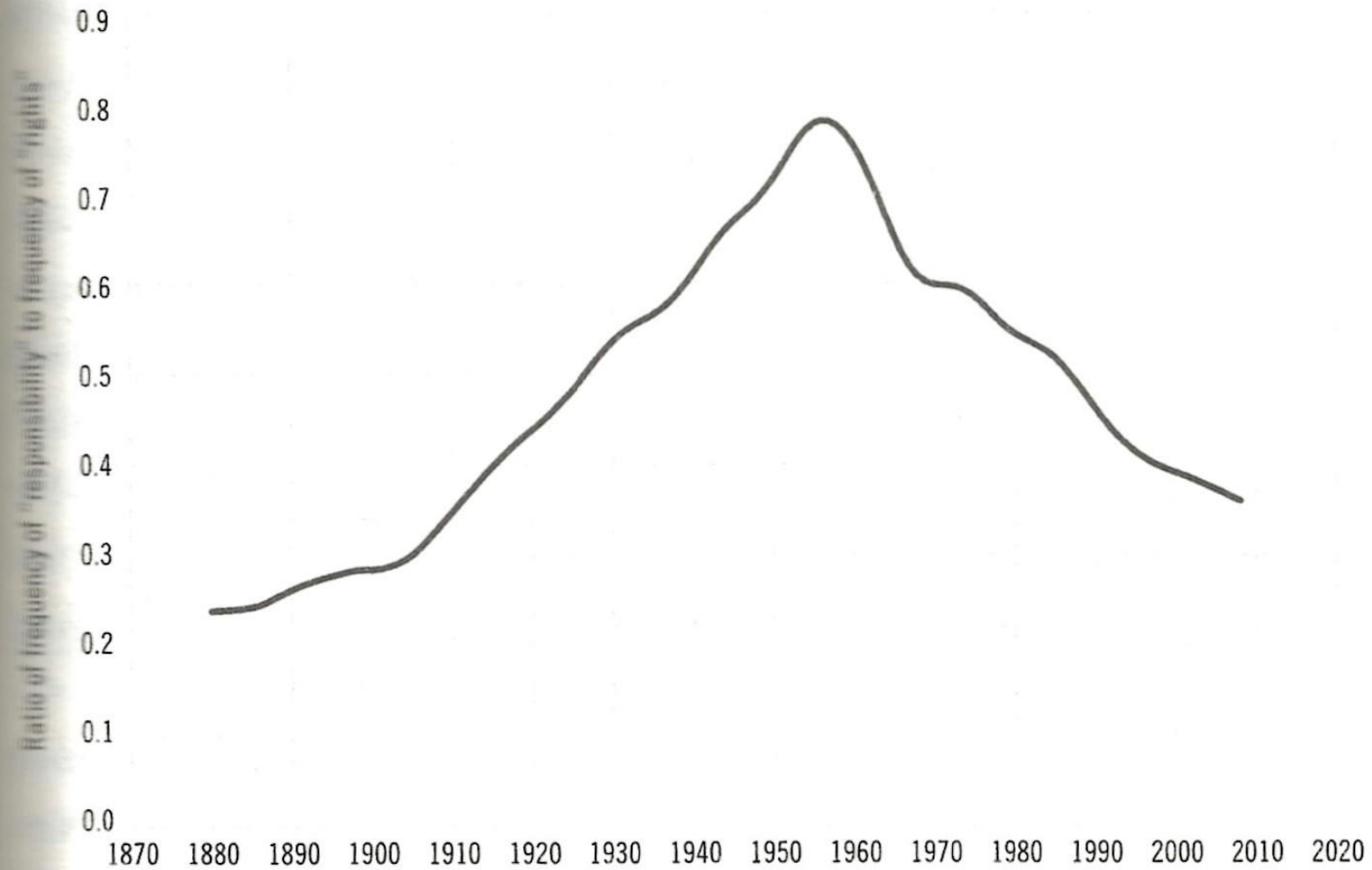
The Rise of Individualism in the 60s and Beyond

- The “New Right” emerged led by Ayn Rand, author of *The Fountain Head* and *Atlas Shrugged* and Friedrich Hayek, author of *Road to Serfdom*. They appealed to younger conservatives because their libertarian ideas seemed fresh and attractive in an era of tired “big government.”
- Hayek was the better thinker but Rand was a better writer. *Atlas Shrugged* is sometimes said to be the most widely read book in the 20th century, trailing only the Bible.
- An equal and opposite evolution was more slowly getting under way at the far left end of the political spectrum. The New Left wanted to free people from community bonds and constraints. For the Left, constraints are on lifestyle. For the right, constraints are on money.
- Most interpretations of the 60s are framed in terms a struggle where the initial victories of the left (LBJ’s Great Society and Civil Rights) triggered a conservative backlash. But a more durable and pervasive change was from communitarianism to individualism.
- The shift in the 60s was less from left to right (or the reverse) than from “we” to “I.”

Ayn Rand Interview



FIGURE 5.9: RELATIVE CULTURAL SALIENCE OF “RESPONSIBILITY” AND “RIGHTS,” 1880–2008

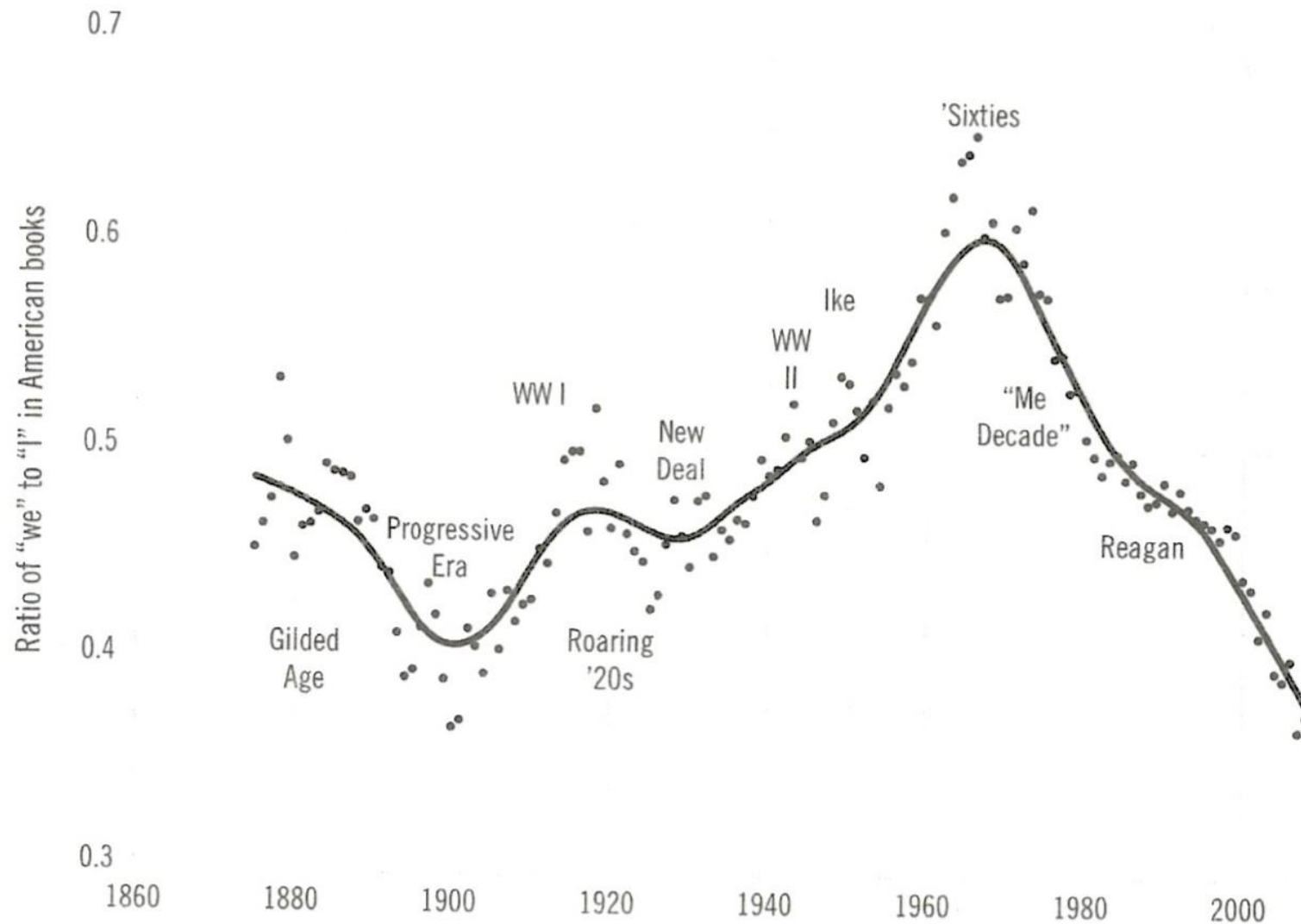


Source: Ngram. Data LOESS smoothed: .10.

One of the competing claims involved the balance between rights and responsibilities. Historically, American political culture has been committed to the “Bill of Rights.” But our strong normative commitment to rights has been counterbalanced by a commitment to civic responsibilities.

The figure shows the ratio of “responsibility” to “rights” in American publications.

FIGURE 5.11: FROM “I” TO “WE” TO “I” IN AMERICAN BOOKS, 1875–2008



Source: Ngram. Data LOESS smoothed: .20.

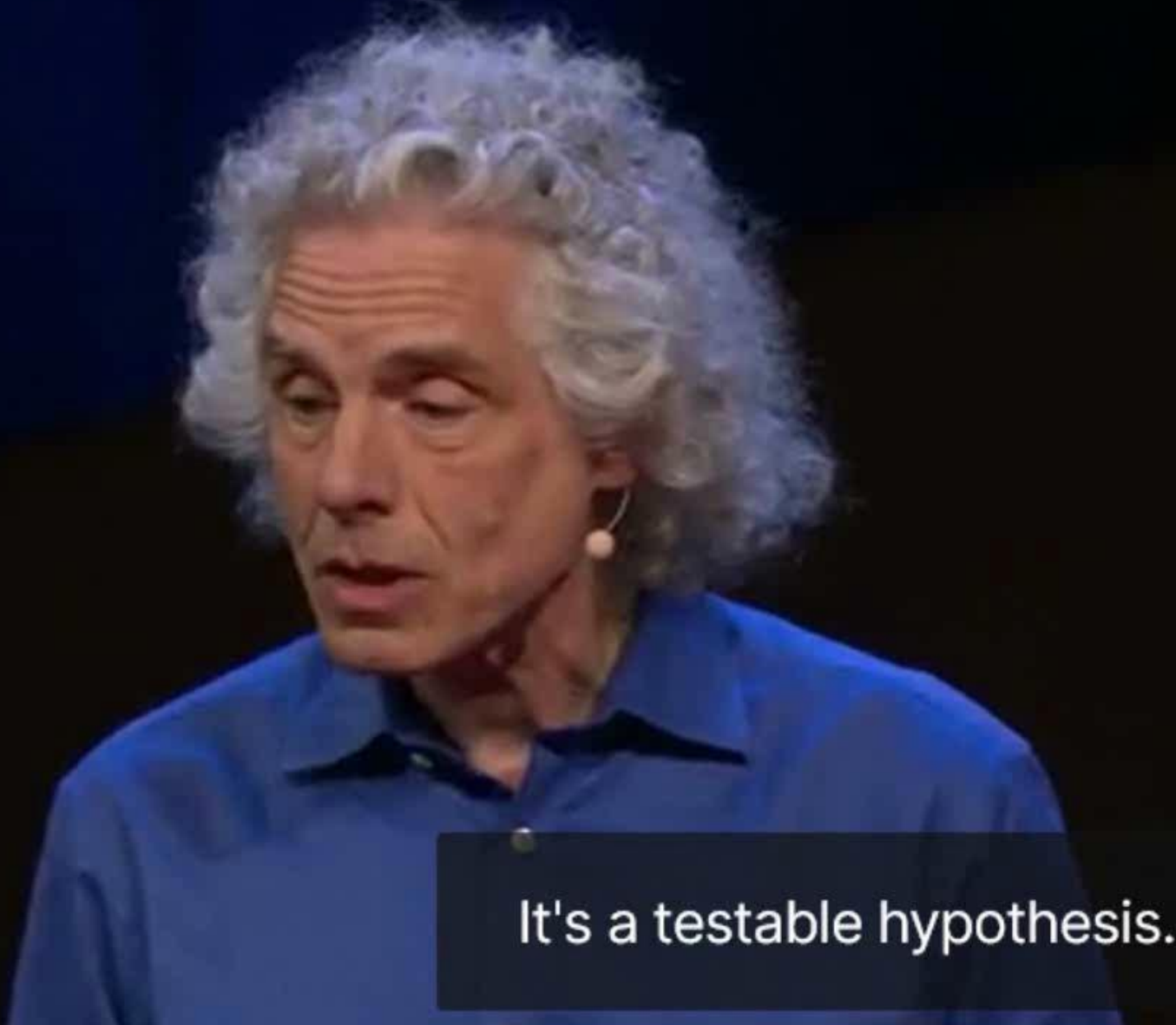
In the period from 1900 to 1965 the word “I” appears less often in American publications but after 1965 that trend reversed itself.

“We” is less common in general and its changes over time are less marked.

Figure 5.11 combines both pronouns by showing the ratio of “we” to “I.”

But “we” is a slippery pronoun and largely ignored blacks, many women and the poor.

Steven Pinker on World Progress

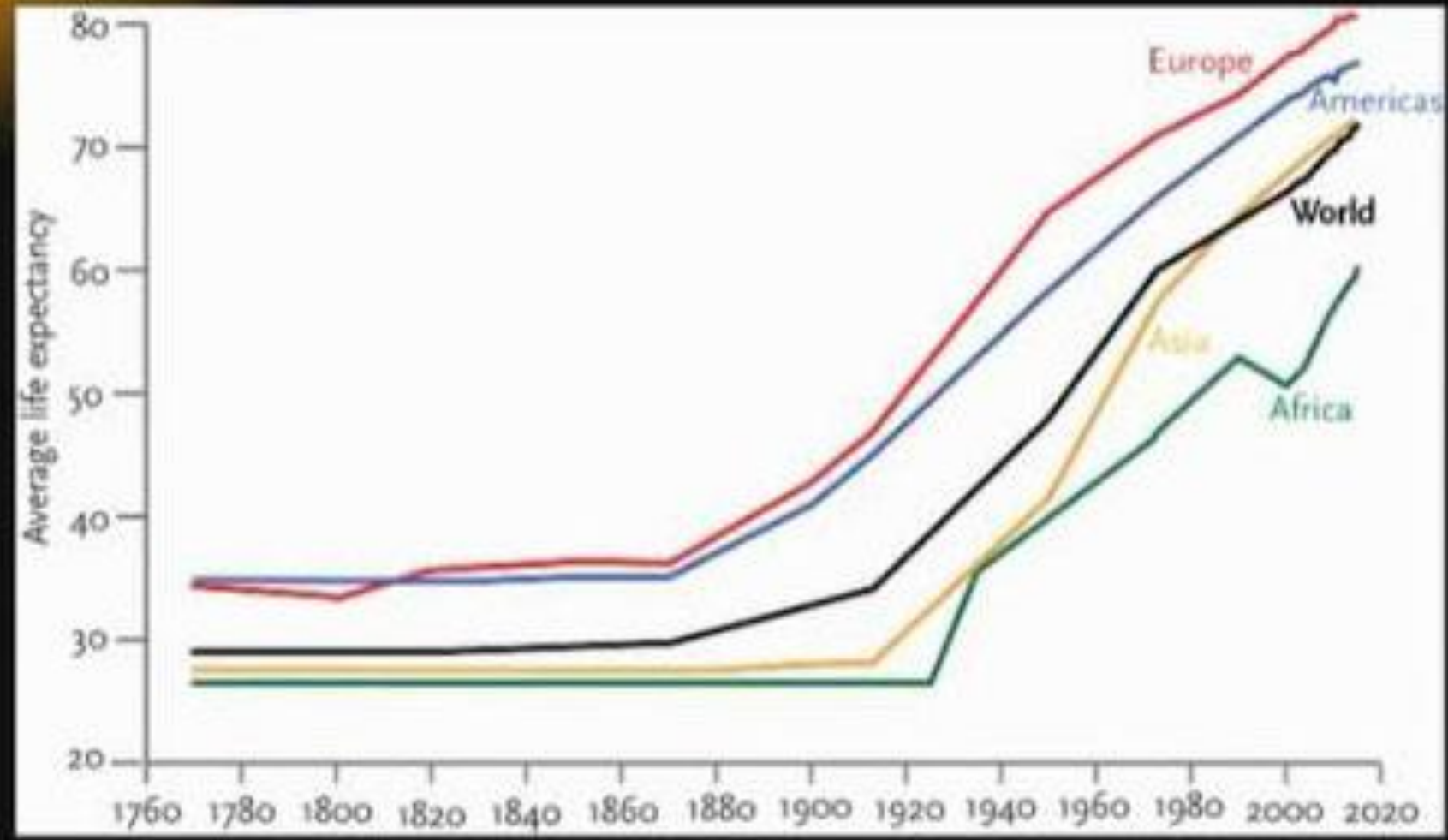


It's a testable hypothesis.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

- Today an average person in the world can be expected to live 71.4 yrs.
- In 1840, no country in the world had a life expectancy above 40.

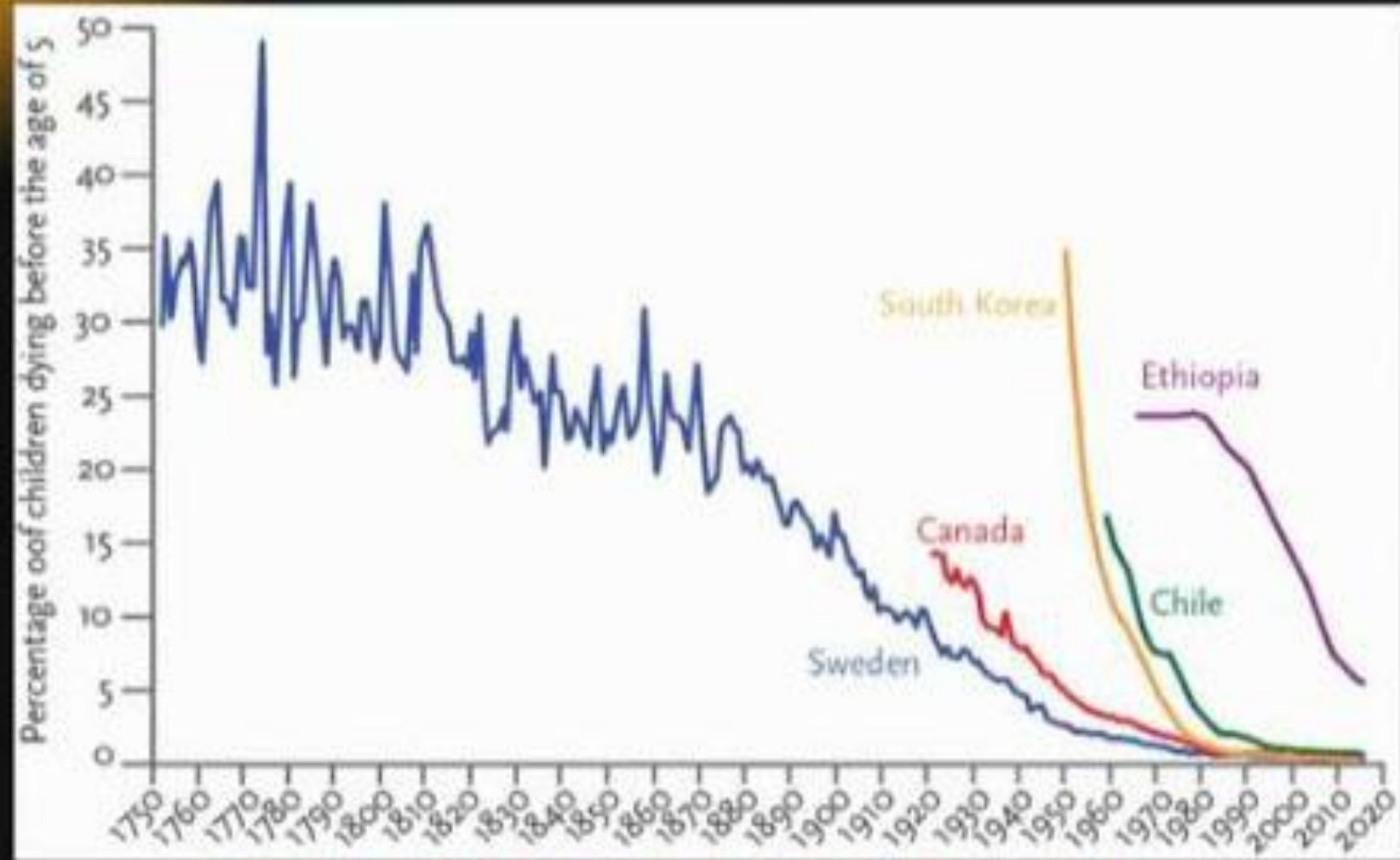
Life Expectancy, 1771-2015



Source: Our World In Data, based on Riley 2000; WHO; World Bank

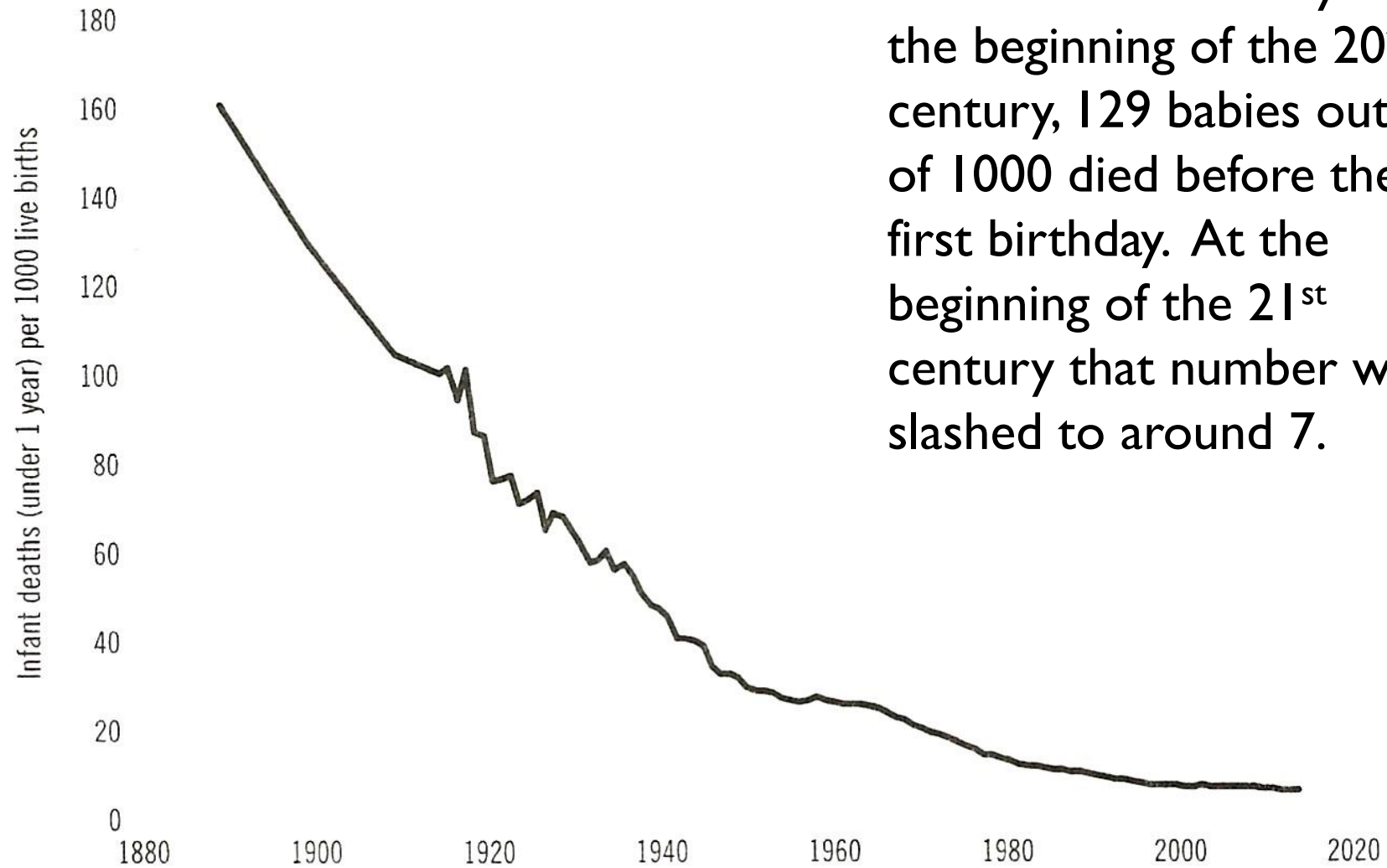
Child Mortality, 1751-2015

- The decrease in infant mortality has greatly influenced life expectancy statistics. Declining poverty and disease have also been large contributing factors.
- The global rate has fallen from 18% to 4%.



Source: Our World in Data, based on UN; Human Mortality Database

FIGURE 2.4: INFANT MORTALITY, 1890–2013



Infant mortality has declined dramatically. At the beginning of the 20th century, 129 babies out of 1000 died before their first birthday. At the beginning of the 21st century that number was slashed to around 7.

Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Table Ab 920.

US LIFE EXPECTANCY

FIGURE 2.5: LIFE EXPECTANCY, 1900–2017



Source: National Center for Health Statistics.

RECENT STUDIES: U.S. MORTALITY RATES

- Angus Deaton is a British and Scottish-American economist. He is a Professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton.
- In 2015, he was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics for his analysis of consumption, poverty, and welfare.
- Anne Case worked as an assistant professor at Dept. of Economics at Harvard University 1988-1991. She has worked at Dept. of Economics, Princeton University since 1991.
- In 2015, Case and Deaton reported that in the 20 years prior to 1998, the mortality rate of middle aged white Americans fell by about 2% per year. But after 1999 death rates rose. In their 2020 book, *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* they offer evidence of deaths that can be traced to deep seated social inequalities.
- Meanwhile in Europe mortality rates continued to fall.



Age Adjusted Mortality Rates

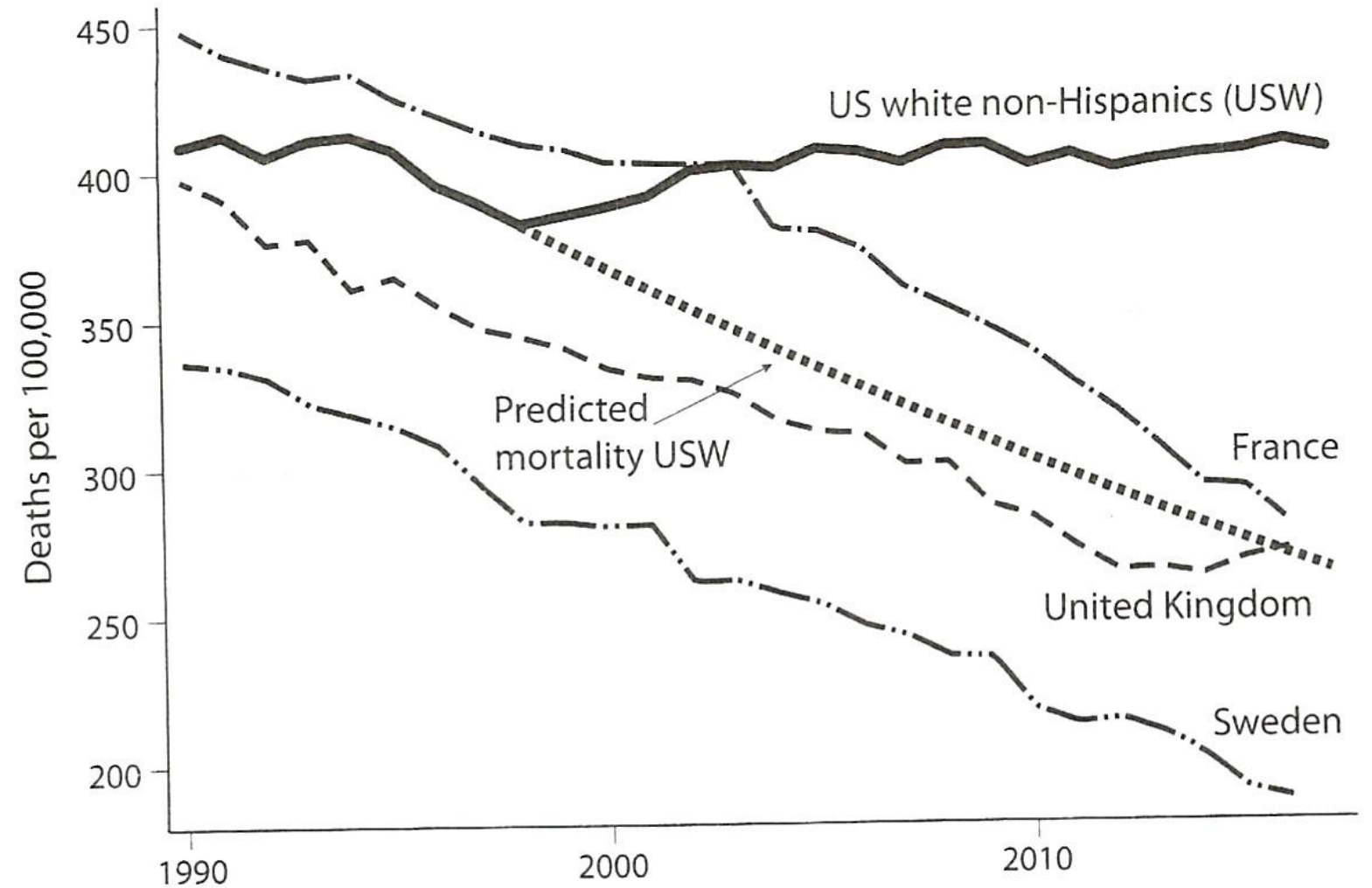
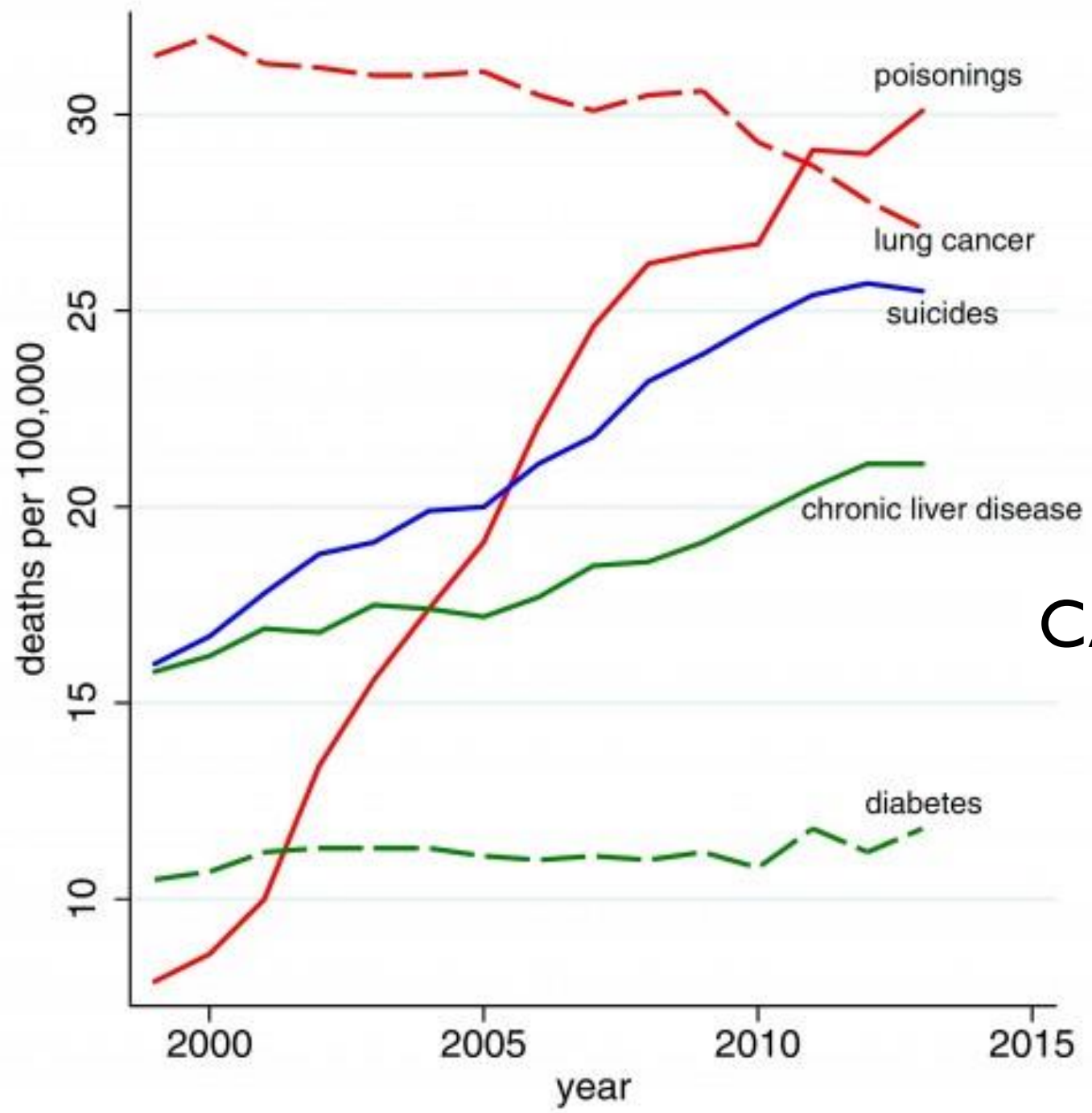


FIGURE 2.1. Age-adjusted mortality rates, ages 45–54, for US white non-Hispanics (USW), France, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, and a predicted mortality rate for USW, a counterfactual that assumes the mortality rate for USW would continue falling at 2 percent per year after 1998. Authors' calculations using CDC data and the Human Mortality Database.



CAUSES OF DEATH

Suicide, Drug Overdose and Alcohol Liver Disease

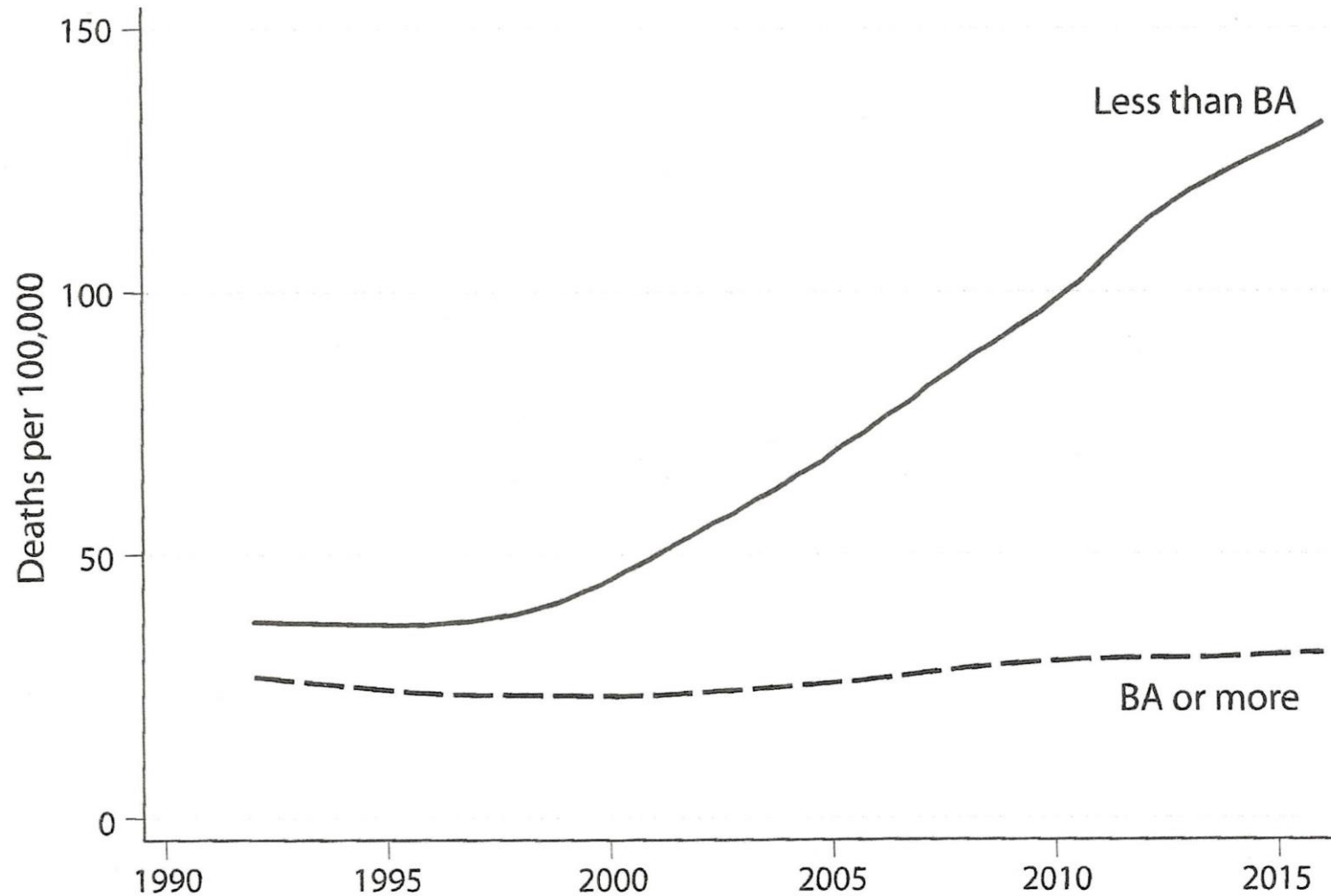
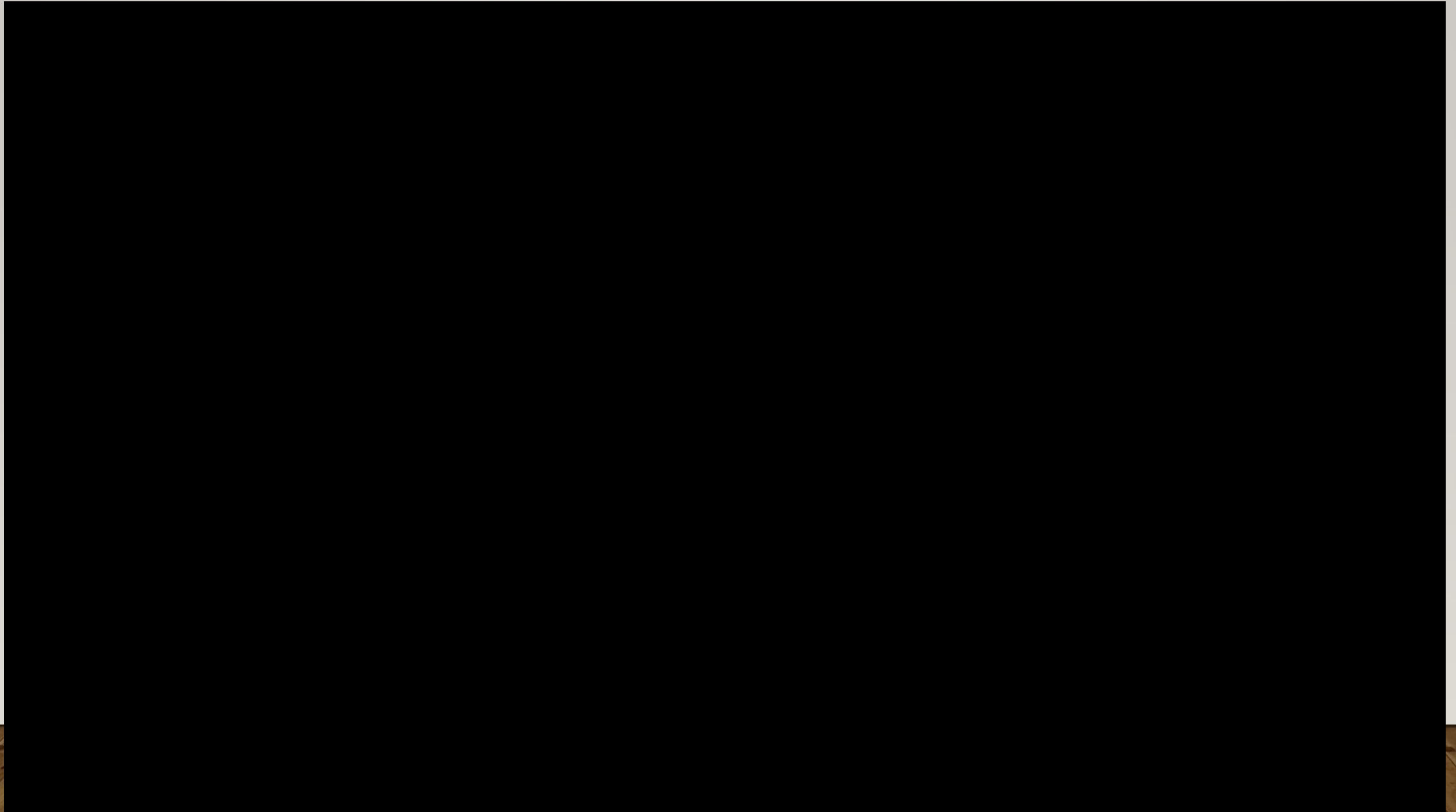


FIGURE 4.1. Suicide, drug overdose, and alcoholic liver disease mortality in Kentucky, by educational attainment, white non-Hispanics ages 45–54. Authors' calculations using Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

CASE AND DEATON: DEATHS OF DESPAIR



Class 6: Race, Religion, Ethnicity and Gender

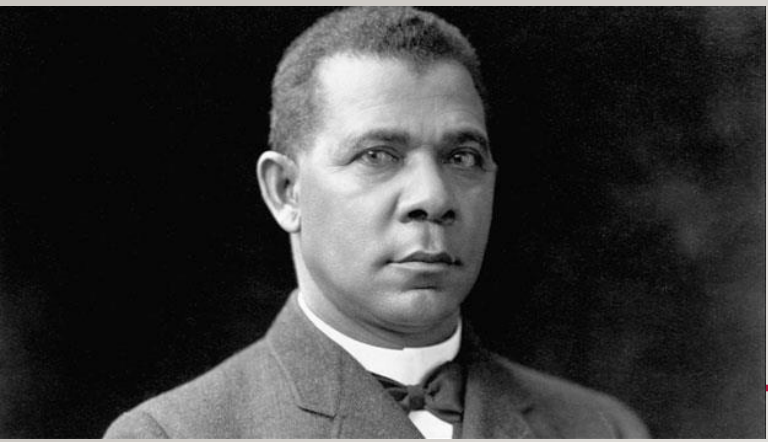


THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA

- Passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments is the constitutional legacy of Reconstruction.
- This era focuses on the transformation of the Southern U.S. from 1863 to 1877, as directed by Congress and the President.
- Most historians consider it a failure because the South became a poverty-stricken backwater attached to agriculture, white Democrats re-established dominance through violence, intimidation and discrimination, forcing freedmen into a second class with limited rights.
- Historian Eric Foner argues, "What remains certain is that Reconstruction failed, and that for blacks its failure was a disaster whose magnitude cannot be obscured by the genuine accomplishments that did endure."
- The 14th Amendment is now one of the most litigated parts of the Constitution.

THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

- The **Fourteenth Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution was adopted on July 9, 1868.
- The amendment's first (and most litigated) section: All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.
- The 2nd through 5th sections are rarely litigated.
- The amendment was bitterly contested by Southern states, which were forced to ratify it in order for them to regain representation in Congress.



Reconstruction: Legacy and Historiography

- Nearly all historians hold that Reconstruction ended in failure but for different reasons.
- The first generation of Northern historians believed that Johnson was a Confederate ally who threatened to undo the Union's constitutional achievements.
- By the 1880s, however, Northern historians argued that Johnson and his allies were not traitors but had blundered badly in rejecting the 14th Amendment and setting the stage for Radical Reconstruction.
- Booker T. Washington (1856 – 1915), an educator, author, and orator concluded later that, "the Reconstruction experiment in racial democracy failed because it began at the wrong end, emphasizing political means and civil rights acts rather than economic means and self-determination." His solution was to concentrate on building the economic infrastructure of the black community, in part by his leadership of Tuskegee Institute.

Reconstruction: Legacy and Historiography

- The Dunning School of scholars was founded by **William Archibald Dunning** (1857 to 1922), an American historian and political scientist at Columbia University.
- Dunning analyzed Reconstruction as a failure because it took freedoms and rights from qualified whites and gave them to unqualified blacks. Politicians were being duped by corrupt “carpetbaggers, scalawags” and Northern idealists.
- Modern historian Jean Edward Smith wrote that the Dunning School “despite every intention to be fair” wrote from a white supremacist perspective. Blacks were depicted as inherently incapable of meaningful political participation while terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan were applauded for their efforts to restore the South's natural order.”
- Historian Howard K. Beale stated that, "The emphasis of the Dunning school was upon the harm done to the South by Radical Reconstruction and on the sordid political and economic motives behind Radicalism.”

Supreme Court Decisions: Plessy v. Ferguson

- ***Plessy v. Ferguson*** was a **landmark decision** of the **US Supreme Court** in which the Court ruled that **racial segregation** laws did not violate the **Constitution** as long as the facilities for each race were equal in quality.
- Homer Plessy violated the Louisiana Separate Car Act of 1890 when he boarded a “whites only” car.
- May 18, 1896, the Supreme Court issued a 7–1 decision against Plessy that upheld the constitutionality of Louisiana's train car segregation laws.
- *Plessy* legitimized state laws establishing racial segregation in the North and **South** and provided an impetus for further segregation laws.
- The effect of the *Plessy* ruling was immediate; there were already significant differences in funding for the segregated school system, which continued into the 20th century; states consistently underfunded black schools, providing them with substandard buildings, textbooks, and supplies. States which had successfully integrated elements of their society abruptly adopted oppressive legislation that erased reconstruction era efforts

Women and Blacks in the Early 20th Century



The Long Civil Rights Movement

- While a detailed account of the long civil rights movement could fill volumes, it is useful to highlight a few actions and victories.
- The NAACP was founded in 1909 under the leadership of W.E.B. Du Bois.
- In 1917, following the brutal race riots that left 48 dead, the NAACP organized some ten thousand African Americans to march down 5th Ave. in New York. It was the first mass protest of its kind.
- During the depression, the New Deal provided jobs for black Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration.
- Beginning in the early 1940s, Northern Democrats began to champion civil rights legislation.
- The Roosevelt administration failed to end segregation in the military but FDR issued EO 8802 banning racial discrimination in federal agencies and defense contractors. Harry Truman finally issued the long awaited ban on segregation in the military on July 26, 1948.
- As black servicemen came home from fighting in WW II, their willingness to submit to undemocratic realities at home frayed. NAACP membership jumped from 50K to 450K.

THE MODERN LEGACY

- ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka***, (1954), was the Supreme Court case in which state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional. Segregation was ruled a violation of the the 14th amendment.
- Also in *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954), the Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment protects those beyond the racial classes of white or "Negro" and extends to other racial and ethnic groups, such as Mexican Americans in this case
- In the 1960s historians rejected the Dunning school and found a great deal to praise in Radical Reconstruction. A Second Reconstruction was needed in the 20th century to complete the goal of full equality for African Americans. They emphasized that suppression of the rights of African Americans was a worse scandal and a grave corruption of America's republican ideals.

Emmett Till and George Floyd



The Long Civil Rights Movement, Continued

- In the late 50s The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King emerged as the leader of the Civil Rights movement.
- When JFK became president, he began actively identifying the Democratic Party with the Civil Rights movement.
- In March 1963, in the march on Washington, some 300K civil rights advocates assembled to call for action.
- Lyndon Johnson succeeded in securing the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Right Act and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.
- The victories were slow but capped America's ascent from a fragmented "I" society to a more altruistic and cohesive "we" society.

Supreme Court Decisions In the 60s and Later

- Since *Wesberry v. Sanders* (1964) and *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964), the Supreme Court has interpreted the Equal Protection Clause as requiring the states to apportion their congressional districts and state legislative seats according to "one man, one vote."
- *Reed v. Reed* (1971), struck down an Idaho probate law favoring men. It was the first decision in which the Court ruled that arbitrary gender discrimination violated the Equal Protection Clause.
- The 14th amendment formed the basis for landmark decisions in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), regarding abortion.
- In *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), the amendment was used to strike down same-sex marriage bans throughout the United States.

Civil Rights in the Mid 60s

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964



- The **Civil Rights Act of 1964** is a landmark law in the U.S. that outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, racial segregation in schools, employment, and public accommodations.
- The legislation had been proposed by President John F. Kennedy in June 1963. After his death President Lyndon B. Johnson embraced the legislation and pushed it forward.
- The bill was filibustered for 83 days in the Senate. Never in history had the Senate been able to muster enough votes to cut off a filibuster on a civil rights bill. Only once since 1927 had it agreed to cloture for any measure. The bill was passed by both houses of Congress, and was signed into law by President Johnson on July 2, 1964

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

- In January 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders organized several demonstrations in Selma that led to violent clashes with police. These marches received national media coverage.
- With the nation paying increasing attention to voting rights, President Johnson announced he would send a proposal to Congress to address voting rights.
- The bill which became the **Voting Rights Act of 1965** prohibited racial discrimination in voting. It specifically outlaw literacy tests and similar devices that were historically used to disenfranchise minorities.
- Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC) claimed the bill would lead to "despotism and tyranny."
- Nearly 250,000 African Americans registered in 1965, one-third of whom were registered by federal examiners. In covered jurisdictions 29% of the African American population was registered in 1965; by 1967, this number increased to more than half 52%.

Jonathan Haidt



- Currently a social psychologist and Professor of Ethical Leadership at NYU's Stern School of Business.
- His academic specialization is the psychology of morality and moral emotions and author of two books.
- Haidt's principal line of research has been on the nature of moral judgment. He developed the "Social Intuitionist Model of Moral Judgment" which posits that moral judgment is mostly based on automatic processes – moral intuitions – rather than on conscious reasoning. People engage in reasoning largely to find evidence to support their initial intuitions.
- Author of *The Righteous Mind, Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, 2012

Haidt / Moyers Interview: Three Reasons for Polarization

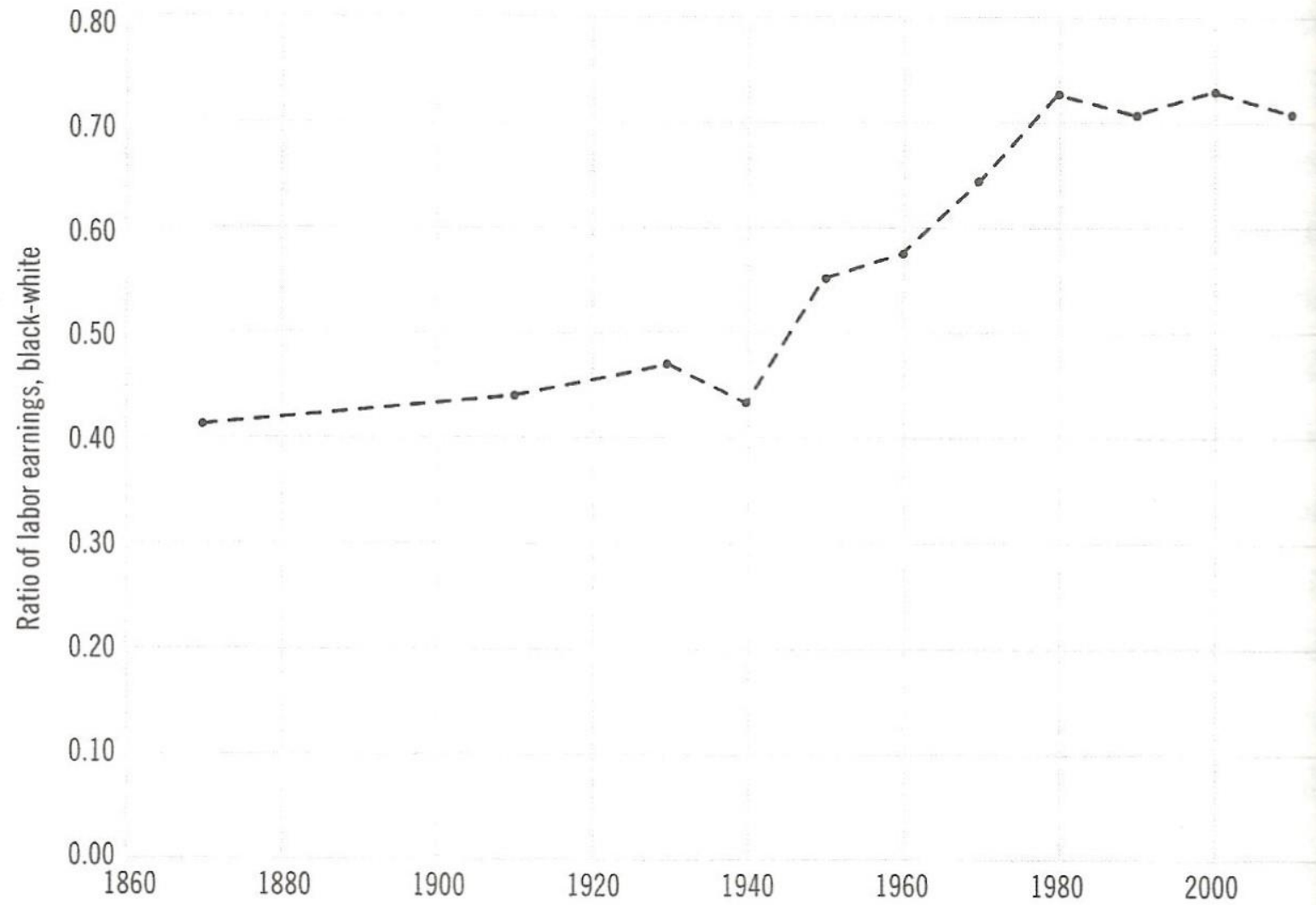


FIGURE 6.1: LIFE EXPECTANCY, BLACK-WHITE RATIO, 1900–2017



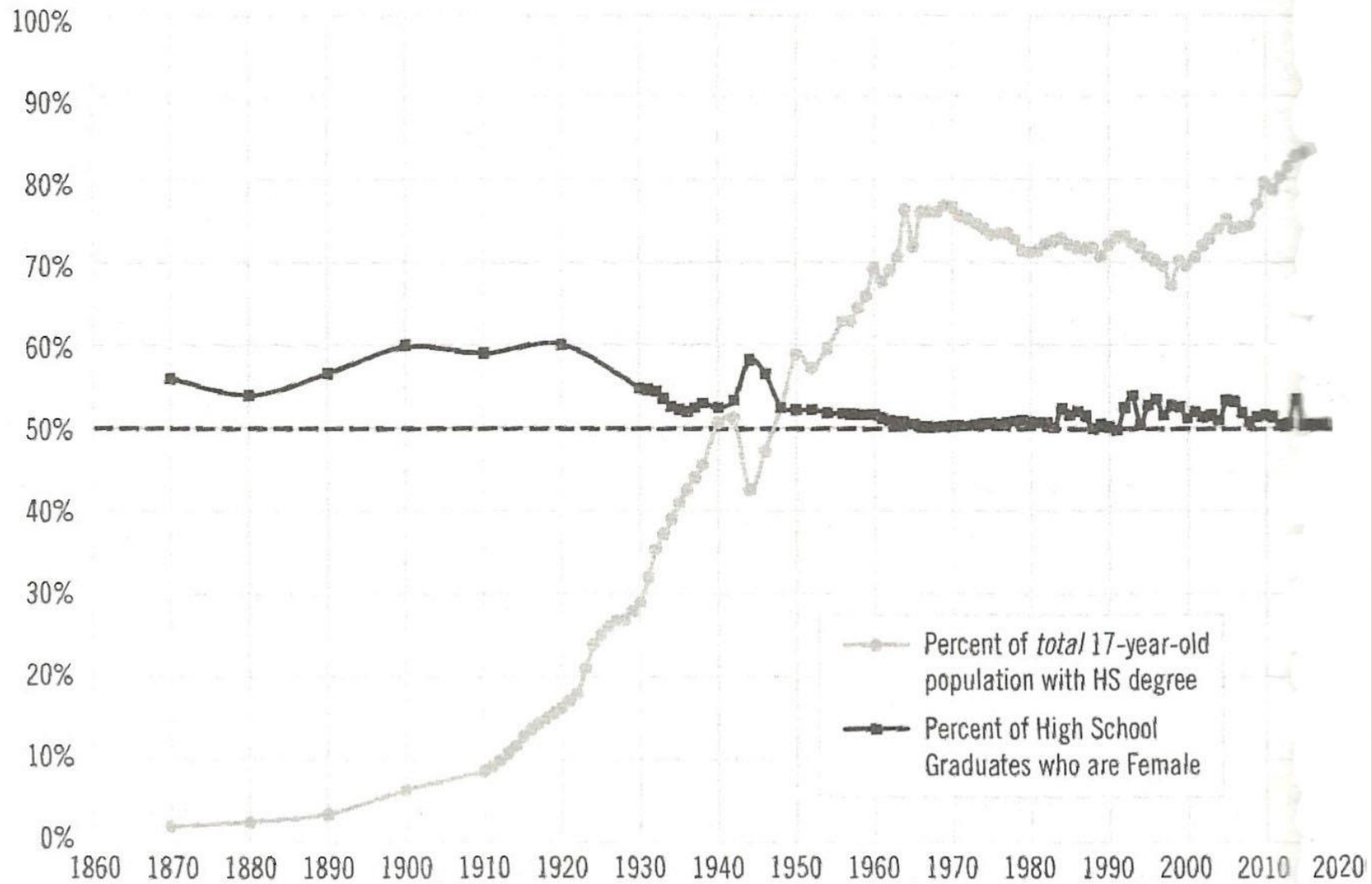
Source: National Center for Health Statistics, "Death Rates and Life Expectancy at Birth."

FIGURE 6.4: BLACK-WHITE INCOME EQUALITY, 1870–2010



Source: Lindert and Williamson, *Unequal Gains* (2016), 190.

FIGURE 7.1: TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE AND GENDER BALANCE, 1870–2018



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*; National Center for Educational Statistics.

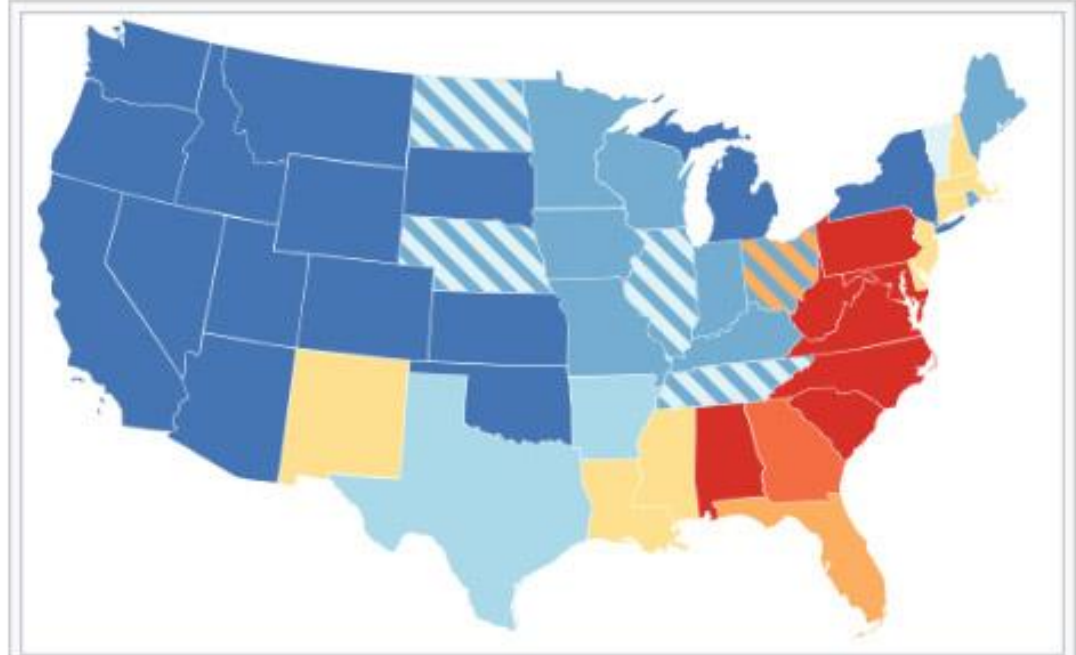
FIGURE 7.2: GENDER BALANCE AMONG NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES, 1870–2017



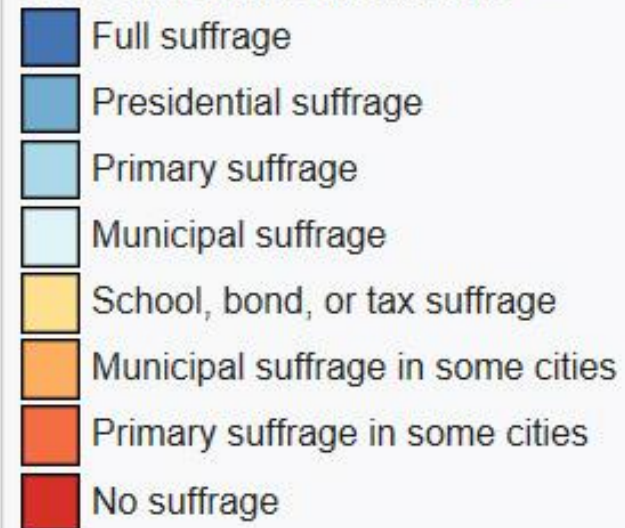
Source: U.S. Census; Current Population Survey; National Center for Education Statistics.

THE 19TH AMENDMENT

- The **Nineteenth Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution prohibits the state and federal governments from denying the right to vote on the basis of sex.
- There were several attempts to grant universal women's suffrage in the 19th century. One attempt, the "Petition for Universal Suffrage", signed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, among others, called for an amendment to "prohibit the several states from disenfranchising any of their citizens on the ground of sex" in 1865.
- The 19th Amendment was originally introduced in Congress in 1878 by Senator Aaron A. Sargent. In 1919, Congress submitted it to the states for ratification.
- It was adopted on August 18, 1920.



Highest level of women's suffrage laws just before adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment^{[1][2]}



INDUSTRIALIZATION HELPED TO LIBERATE WOMEN

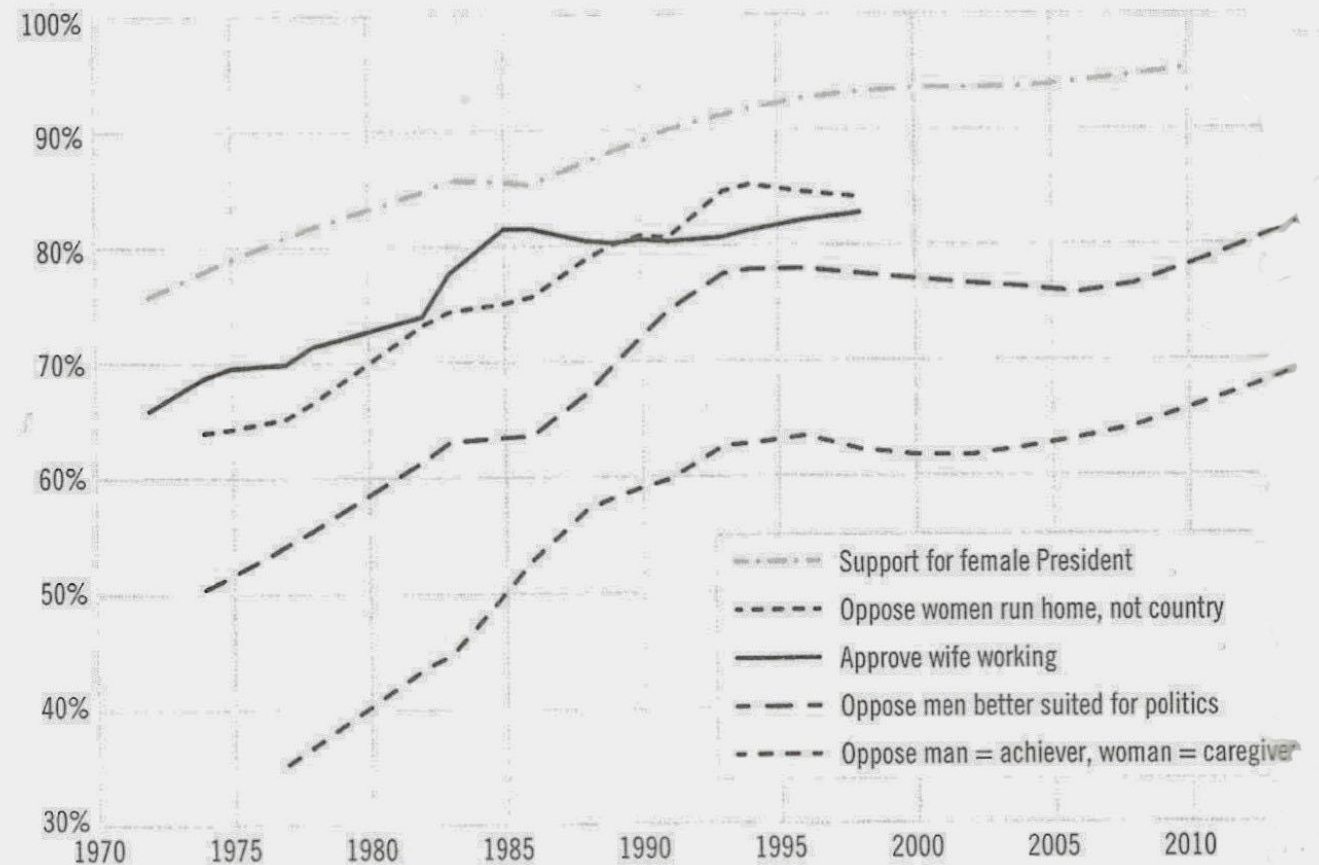


They had fewer children, read more books, had more leisure time due to the advent of new inventions, and developed a “cult of domesticity” that blossomed as never before. The emphasis was on home and family, and the key person in this ideal was the woman, who ruled the home as mother and wife.

Changing Attitudes Towards Gender

- Public opinion polls have shown attitudes towards women changed significantly between 1972 and 2014.
- But much of the change is due to changing people (as older generations are replaced by younger generations) rather than individuals changing their minds. There were and are significant intergenerational differences of opinion.
- Finally, the chart shows that the pace of change towards a liberalization of attitudes dramatically slowed down as the 21st century arrived.

FIGURE 7.11: SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY, 1972-2014

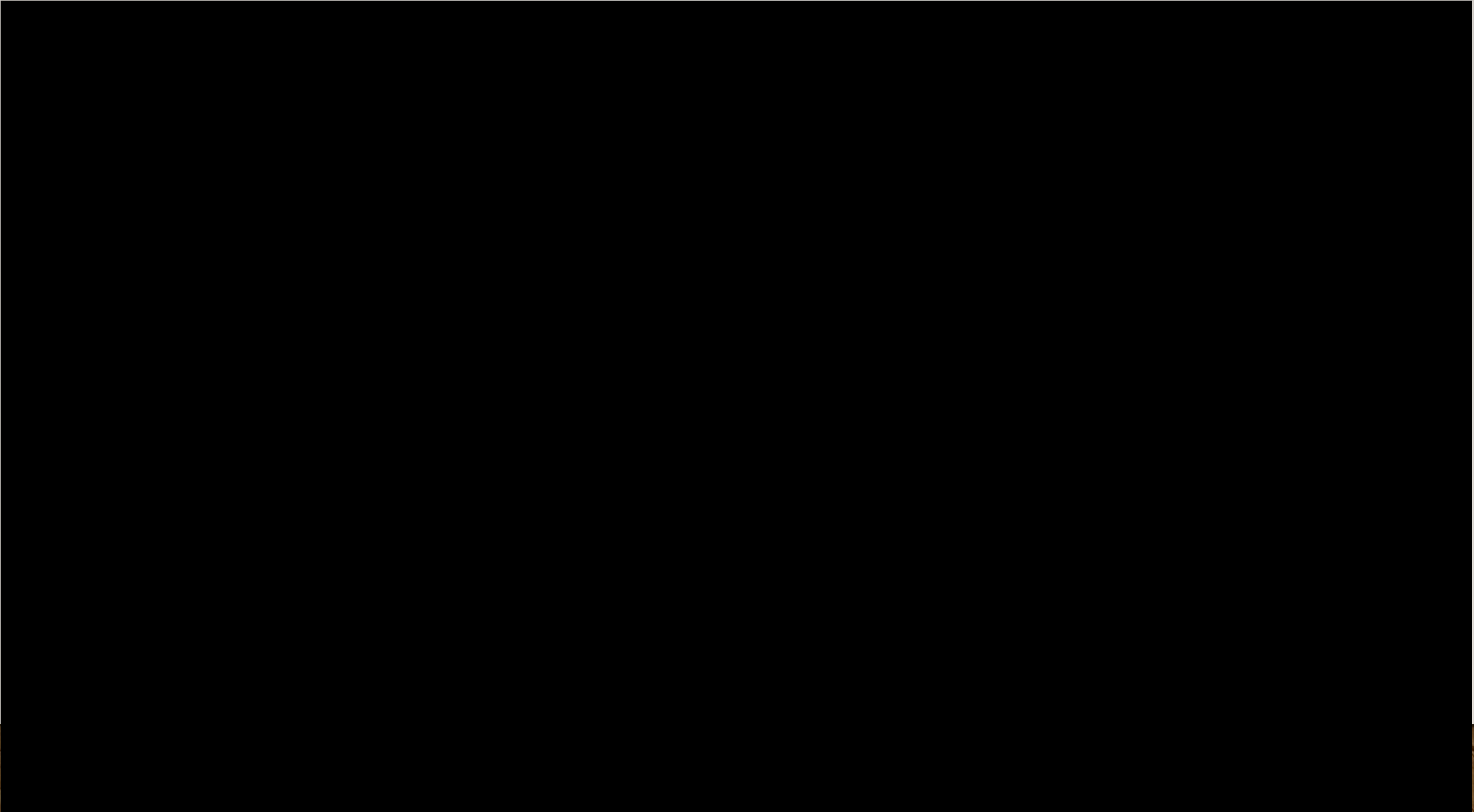


Source: General Social Survey. Data LOESS smoothed: .33.

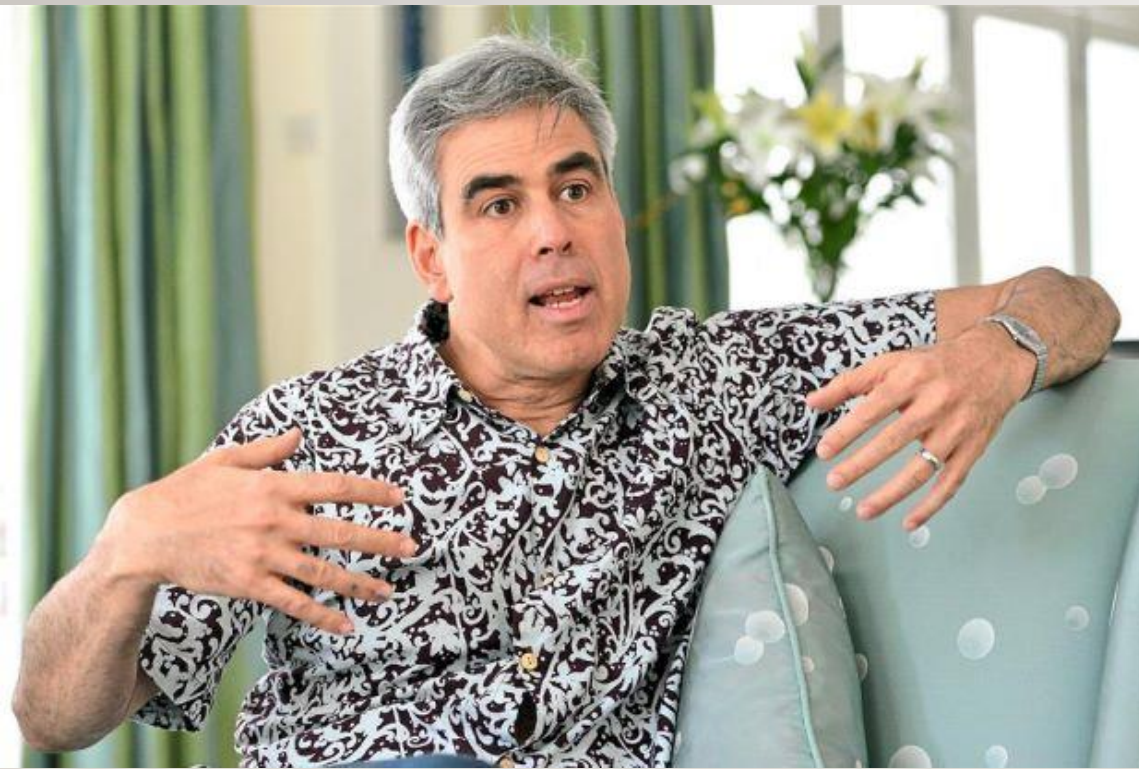
The Women's Movement in the Late 60s and Afterwards

- The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966. It currently consists of 550 chapters and over 500K members. NOW campaigns for constitutional equality, economic justice, reproductive rights, LGBTQIA rights and racial justice.
- Some of the women's movement significant legal victories include:
 - Executive Order 11246, 1967, extended full affirmative action rights to women
 - The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972
 - Title IX, 1972, which added gender as a protected class in federally aided education
 - The Women's Educational Equality Act, 1974
 - *Roe v. Wade*, 1973, legalized abortion in all states
 - The Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974
 - The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978
 - The initial outlawing of marital rape and legalization of no-fault divorce
- Many women who lived through this period experienced it as a complete transformation of how women were perceived and what paths were open to them.

Millennials Are Leaving Organized Religion



Class 7: Other Thoughts on Polarization and Culture



CORNEL WEST AND ROBERT GEORGE



THOUGHTS ON HOW WE BREAK THE CYCLE OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION

- Mann & Ornstein - “Punish a party for ideological extremism by voting against it... Promote the essential norms of the republican form of government (respect for opposing views, acceptance of the opposition party’s legitimacy, bargaining and compromise) by demanding that elected representatives and their parties adhere to the norms and punishing those who don’t.”⁴
- Steven Pinker – “A challenge of our era is how to foster an intellectual and political culture that is driven by reason rather than tribalism and mutual reaction.”⁵
- Steven Pinker – “For several decades fans of reason have pressured schools and universities to adopt curricula in ‘critical thinking.’ Students are advised to look at both sides of an issue, to back up their opinions with evidence and to spot logical fallacies like circular reasoning, attacking a strawman and reducing a graded issue to black and white... People understand concepts only when they are forced to think them through, to discuss them with others and to use them to solve problems.”⁶

Haidt / Moyers Interview

KEY POINTS: HAIDT – MOYERS

- **Teams and competition are good up to the point we begin to see the other side as evil. (Manichaeism)**
- **Republicans reject compromise. To them, compromise means they are selling out their most loyal followers.**
- **Inequality is growing but the left has not made the case about the problems with capitalism (e.g. externalities, monopolies)**
- **“Confirmation bias”**: when someone gives us a proposition which our intuition supports, we just look for supporting facts.
- **We “sacralize” reason itself. But because of the confirmation bias, reason is often not good at finding the truth.**
- **Science works because colleagues and competing scientists challenge each other’s confirmation bias and offer constructive criticism. Politicians used to do this.**
- **Haidt believes we should moralize around preventing:**
 - *Demonization*
 - *Corruption (money in politics)*

THE RATIONALIST DELUSION

- From Plato through Kant many rationalists have asserted that the ability to reason well about ethical issues *causes* good behavior.
- If that were the case then moral philosophers should be more virtuous than other people.
- The philosopher Eric Schwitzgebel studies this. He attempted to measure how often moral philosophers give to charity, vote, call their mothers, donate blood, clean up after themselves, and respond to e-mails from students.* The moral philosophers were no better than professors in other fields.
- French scientists Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber reviewed the literature on motivated reasoning.* They concluded, “skilled arguers... are not after the truth but after arguments supporting their views.”
- Confirmation bias is a built in feature, not a bug that can easily be removed.
- But if you put individuals together in the right way you can create a group that ends up producing good reasoning as an emergent property of the system. This is called “synergy.”

* *The Righteous Mind* by Jonathan Haidt (pg. 104)

CONFIRMATION BIAS

- People seek data that are likely to be compatible with the beliefs they currently hold. Daniel Kahneman in his book, “Thinking Fast and Slow” says our brain functions in two modes: System 1 is the automatic mode that quickly and effortlessly acts on the basis of instinct or previous learning. System 2 is what we use when faced with more complex situations. System 1 is gullible and biased to believe anything that does not conflict with our prior beliefs. System 2 is in charge of filling in the blanks where answers to questions don’t readily come to mind, doubting and unbelieving, but system 2 is often busy or lazy.
- Peter Wason published a report on the “2-4-6 problem.” He showed subjects a series of three numbers and asked them to guess the rule that was followed. When told they had not guessed correctly people had no trouble generating new hypothesis. They were allowed to offer new triplets to test their new hypothesis but they hardly ever offered triplets that did not conform to the hypothesis.
- For example proposing 2-4-5 (yes) and 2-4-3 (no) would have helped people zero in on the actual rule: any series of ascending numbers.
- Watson called this phenomenon the “**confirmation bias.**”
- Deanna Kuhn found further evidence for confirmation bias. People given evidence for a food that made a group of people sick rather quickly locked into a hypothesis. Even when given evidence that showed stronger indication for another source of the sickness, people stuck with their first hypothesis.

THOUGHTS ON HOW WE BREAK THE CYCLE OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION

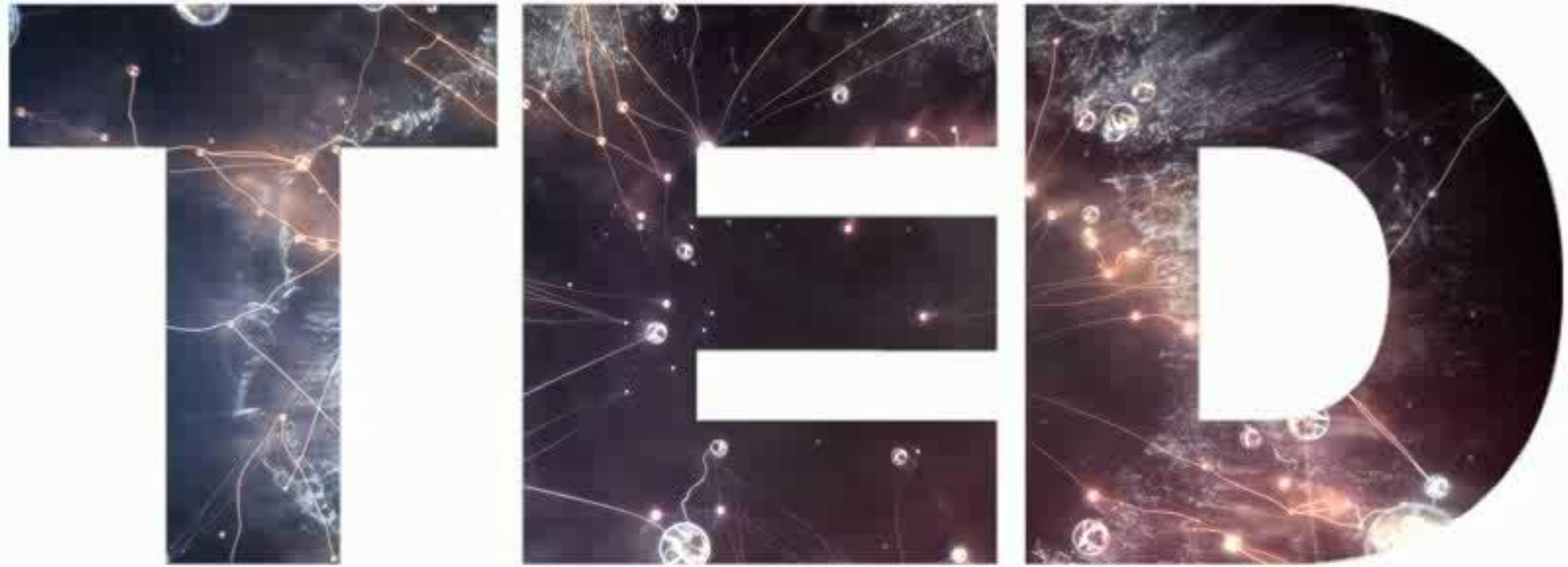
- Daniel Kahneman – “The only test for rationality is not whether a person’s beliefs and preferences are reasonable, but whether they are internally consistent. A rational person can believe in ghosts so long as her other beliefs are consistent with the existence of ghosts. A rational person can prefer being hated over being loved, so long as his preferences are consistent. Rationality is logical coherence – reasonable or not.”⁷
- Arthur Brooks – “Overcoming a culture of contempt will require more than a rousing chorus of ‘Kumbaya’ and a basket of platitudes. Building real harmony in the face of differences and disagreement is hard work... Nevertheless, equipped with a new outlook on our culture, a better approach to leadership, the right tools of communication and a healthy dose of courage, we can bridge the political divides that have proliferated across the country in recent years.”⁸
- Arthur Brooks – “The truth is that highly partisan conservatives and liberals are shockingly clueless about the other side – about their motives and everything else. One 2018 study from the *Journal of Politics* has revealed that the average Democrat believes that more than 40% of Republicans earn over \$250,000 per year, when in fact just 2.2% do. And Republicans believe that nearly 40% of Democrats are gay or lesbian, when just over 6% are.”⁹

RICHARD WILKINSON



- Is Professor Emeritus of Social Epidemiology at the University of Nottingham. He retired in 2008. He is also Honorary Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London.
- In 2009, Richard co-founded The Equality Trust.
- He is the author of 13 books and numerous articles.
- He is best known for his book with Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level*, first published in 2009, which shows that societies with more equal distribution of incomes have better health and fewer social problems.

RICHARD WILKINSON



ROBERT SAPOLSKY

- Is an American neuro-endocrinologist and author. He is currently a professor of biology, and professor of neurology and neurological sciences and, by courtesy, neurosurgery, at Stanford.
- Sapolsky received his B.A. in biological anthropology *summa cum laude* from Harvard.
- He then went to Kenya to study the social behaviors of baboons in the wild; after which he returned to New York; studying at Rockefeller University where he received his Ph.D.
- Sapolsky is currently the John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn Professor at Stanford University, holding joint appointments in several departments, including Biological Sciences, Neurology & Neurological Sciences, and Neurosurgery.
- His books include *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*, 2017



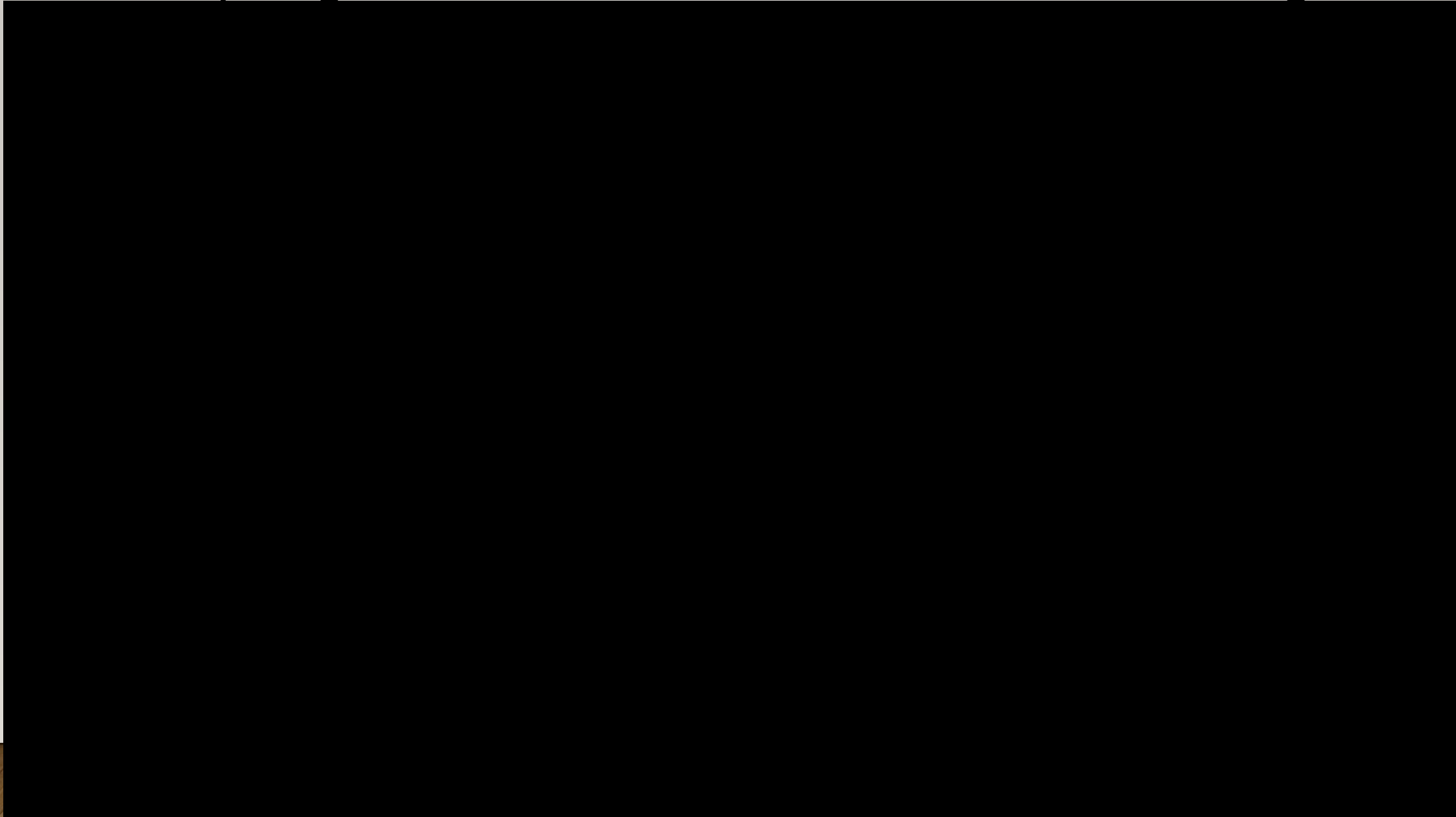
“US” vs. “THEM”

big
think

HOPE & OPTIMISM

Conceptual and Empirical Investigations

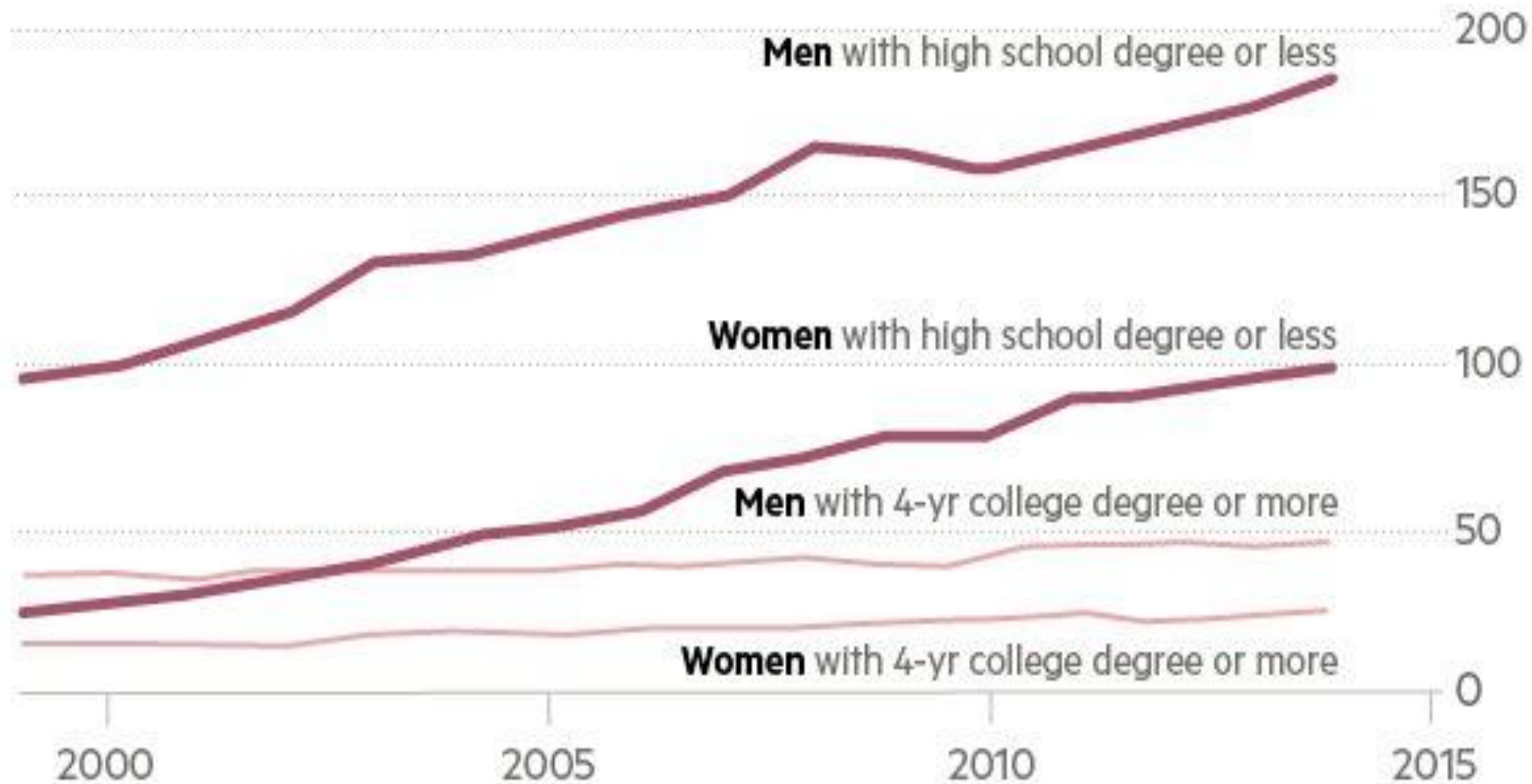
Everything You Think You Know About Addiction Is Wrong



MEN VS. WOMEN

“Deaths of despair” have skyrocketed for less-educated whites

Deaths by drugs, alcohol and suicide per 100,000 white, non-Hispanic 50-54 year olds



Source: Anne Case and Angus Deaton, Brookings Papers

Class 8: The Arc of the 20th Century and Its Implications

If you don't know
where **you are going**,
you might wind up
someplace else.

– Yogi Berra

AZ QUOTES

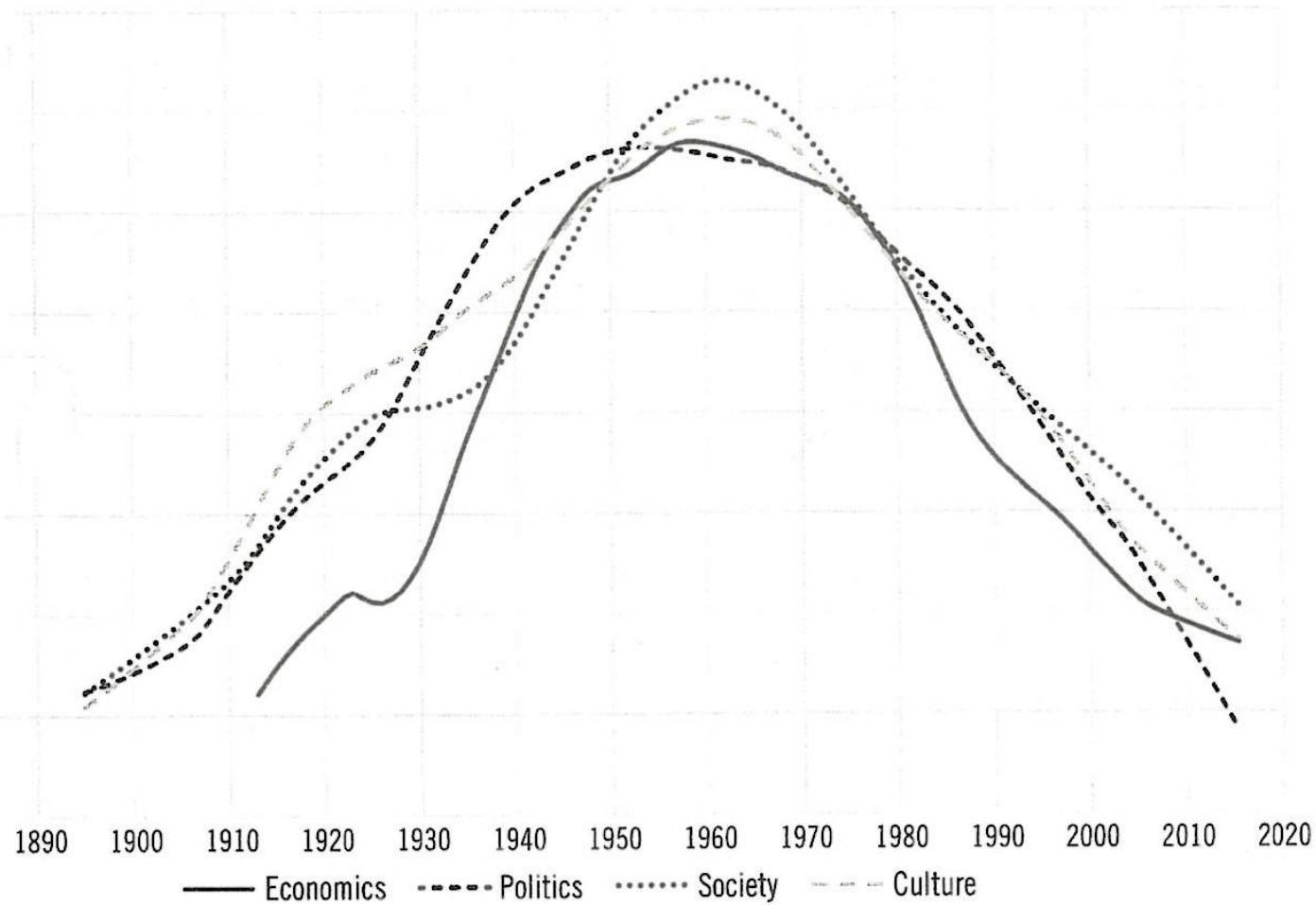


“It is tough to make predictions,
especially about the future...”

“The future ain’t what it use to be.
- Yogi Berra

Economic, Political, Social and Cultural Trends, 1895-2015

FIGURE 8.1: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL TRENDS, 1895–2015



Economic, Political, societal and cultural trends have been remarkably similar over the last 120 years.

Source: See endnote 1.4. Data LOESS smoothed: .2.

Causation: A Few Thoughts

- Correlation does not imply causation. There are almost certainly different causal backgrounds to each of our empirical indicators as well as complicated feedback loops. There is no simple causal story.
- The “I-we-I” arc had implications for equality, politics, social capital and for culture. It led to an increasingly zero-sum, tribal view of society and eventually Trumpism.
- Some of the more popular causal explanations include Millennials and the internet. But the longer time frame of our study shows that these recent trends cannot possibly be responsible for declines over the last half century.
- Conservative politicians point to big centralized government. Empirical evidence strongly suggests that government size is a consequence of the “I-we-I” curve, not a cause.
- World War II no doubt contributed to the shape of the curve. However cultural solidarity began to increase long before the start of the war and continued for decades after. War cannot be the primary for the curve.
- Economic inequality seems to be a slightly lagging indicator and we have been unable to detect consistent correlation between the curve and prosperity or hard times.
- In considering race and gender, we do find evidence of backlash in explain the reversal of the curve in the rights revolution of the sixties.
- Immigration and globalization has been blamed as a cause by many white nationalist groups. The bipartisan Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was passed at the peak of the “I-we-I” curve. But given recent studies, any claim that this is a primary cause lacks credibility.

A Wide Angle View of History

- The previous chart, Fig. 8.1, gives us a wide angle view of history over the last 125 years.
- Starting at the turn on the 20th century, the direction of movement of the four key metrics pivoted upwards.
- Then in the 1960s, the metrics pivoted again. Since then, America has become steadily less equal, more polarized, more fragmented and more individualistic – a second Gilded Age. The key question is: What caused this pattern?
- Putnam looked for leading indicators among the dozens of variables he measured. He found virtually none. Wealth inequality in particular turned out to lag the others.
- Political polarization was easy to measure (looking at congressional voting patterns) but it turned out also not to precede the other factors.
- In most conventional accounts of the history of 20th century America, the New Deal and World War II constituted the central pivot points. But from Putnam's perspective, America pivoted in the 1960s, not the 30s or 40s.
- One is tempted to employ the metaphor of a pendulum swing. But the curves we have encountered do not exhibit the smooth movements of a pendulum. The curves in all four spheres display fits and starts, periods of rapid change and interludes of stasis.

Putnam: Can America Come Together Again?



The Sixties and Early Seventies: Hinge of the 20th Century

- There is one thing that virtually all historical scholars agree upon: the 60s was a time when America changed dramatically in a short period of time.
 - The Civil Rights movement culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.
 - The poverty rate was cut from 22% to 11% in 1973. Medicare was enacted to pay the health care costs of senior citizens.
 - Almost nothing seemed beyond our power including going to the moon in a decade.
 - The Vietnam war protests (1966-1970) and the uprisings on college campuses raised questions about the credibility of the government.
 - The rise of the Black Panthers (1966-1968), the “law and order” counterattack (1968-1972), the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy (1968) and the stagflation and gas lines of the 1970’s represented “days of rage.”
 - The “silent majority” fueled a backlash against the liberal establishment.
- Best selling popular books described deep social problems that triggered major intellectual movements.
 - Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) generated a half century of environmentalism
 - James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time* (1963) foreshadowed the racial strains of the coming years.
 - Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) inspired the feminist movement.
- Watergate and Roe v. Wade further inflamed political passions in the 70s.

The Concatenated Period of Change

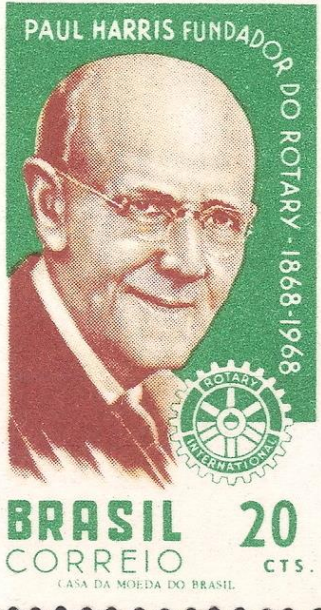
- The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 inaugurated a period of optimism for many people but his assassination in November 1963 came as a shock to almost everyone.
- Many long simmering conflicts came to a boil:
 - The urban crisis
 - The demonstration at the Democrat's 1968 Chicago convention.
 - The counterculture and the drug epidemic
 - Recognition of an environmental crisis
- The FDA approved the birth control pill in 1960. In 1965 the U.S. Supreme Court in *Griswold v. Connecticut* declared it unconstitutional for states to outlaw the use by married couples. This was extended to unmarried women in 1972.
- Americans who believed that premarital sex was “not wrong” doubled from 24% in 1969 to 47% in 1973.
- In 1972 The Equal Rights Amendment was passed in the US Senate and sent to the states for ratification. It was to provide for legal equality of the sexes. It was never ratified by the required number of states.
- The term “stagflation” was coined to describe the simultaneous conditions of high inflation and high unemployment in the 1970s. This was compounded by the oil shortages.
- While unrelated, these various changes and crises seemed to have a synergistic effect producing something like a national nervous breakdown.
- The 1970s were famously dubbed “The Me Decade” by Tom Wolfe in a 1976 essay.

Lessons from the Turning Point

- The movement of the 60s to “liberate” individuals in many cases had the unintended side effect of elevating selfishness.
- We have paid a high price for the 60s pivot:
 - The indefensible economic inequality of the second Gilded Age
 - The political polarization that is endangering our democracy.
 - The social fragmentation and isolation that ignore the basic human need for fellowship
 - The self centeredness that makes it difficult to achieve the unity of purpose required to change our course.
- Those that lived through the reversals we have discussed understand that the current situation is not normal.
- Meanwhile, to the GenXers, Millennials, and younger Americans, deepening inequality, polarization, isolation and narcissism may seem normal. This is the America into which they were born.

Early Inspirations for Change

- Paul Harris moved to Chicago in 1896 from rural Vermont. He was struck by the anonymity of life in the big congested city.
- In 1905 he and three other men gathered in an office in downtown Chicago for the first meeting of a new club called Rotary. The initial vision for the club was simply to provide “fellowship and friendship” for urban businessmen.
- The club expanded and by 1910, 15 new clubs had been founded across the US. In 1911 the organization adopted the motto “He Profits most Who Serves Best.” A second motto was added in 1950: “Service above Self.”
- Hundreds of similar organizations started during the Progressive Era. These groups proved remarkably enduring creating social capital that fueled the nation’s upswing for decades.



- Ida B. Wells was born into slavery but grew up to become the editor and co-owner of *The Free Spirit and Headlight*, a newspaper based in Memphis. She took up the cause to investigate lynching, exposing the real reason behind the brutal acts.
- She moved to Chicago and was instrumental in the founding of the NAACP.
- Wells joined the ranks of many progressive journalists who worked to expose the hypocrisy and brutality of the Gilded Age.
- Lincoln Steffens uncovered the rampant corruption in city politics, Jacob Riis used photojournalism to lay bare the inhumane living conditions in urban tenements and Ida Tarbell exposed the excesses of corporate monopolies such as Standard Oil. They became known as “muckrakers.”



The New Political Story That Could Change Everything



Haidt Interview: Can a Divided America Heal



A Trade-Off Between Individualism and Community?

- What is the proper balance between guarding the interests and autonomy of individuals on one hand and maintaining a strong sense of unity and shared purpose on the other? Many political thinkers have argued that these two values are in competition.
- Does the question imply a zero-sum trade-off between communitarian equality and individualistic freedom? Putnam does not believe we must choose one side or the other.
- The post-sixties trends have led to a dead end that few Americans find appealing. But we learned that once before, Americans have gotten ourselves out of a mess like the one we are in now.
- Can we resurrect the earlier communitarian virtues in a way that does not reverse the progress we have made in terms of individual liberties? Both values are American and we require a balance of both.
- This task will not be an easy one but nothing less than success is required. The American experiment is at stake. As Teddy Roosevelt said, "...the rule which underlies all others – is that, on the whole, and in the long run, we shall go up or down together."