Social Movements and the Rise of New Issues

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Abstract

Using a comprehensive database showing the range of issues discussed in Congress over the entire post-World War Two period, this paper focuses on the dramatic rise of new issues in American politics. Some of these issues, such as health care, have arisen as government programs have expanded. Others, such as environmental issues, have social movements clearly at their core. However, all issues show a complex interdependence between social movements and pre-existing or newly created government programs. As more social movements have demanded and justified the growth of a variety of government programs over the decades since World War Two, dramatic changes have occurred in the nature of government itself. These changes, in turn, have affected the nature of social movements and professional communities. Thus, the paper focuses on the interconnections between social movements and public policies.

This paper focuses on the areas of activity of the U.S. federal government, with only secondary evidence concerning social movements themselves. Extensive data collection is planned over the next several years that will allow for the explicit linkage between the growth of social movement organizations (SMOs), professional groups, and other associations and the public agenda data reported here. In the absence of these more systematic data on social movements themselves, I focus on the public policy side of the equation, exploring some likely areas of linkage between public policy and social movements.

Introduction

There is no doubt that social movements often have strong impacts on public policy.[1] Any number of examples can demonstrate the truth of that assertion, from women's rights to the rights of the handicapped, environmental protection, and other areas. Similarly, there is no doubt that public policies channel the future participation and attitudes of established social movements and the organizations that spring from them. But how can we demonstrate these links systematically? To say that social movements often cause large policy changes is certainly not to say that social movements dictate public policy directions, or even that social movements are more important than other causes of policy change. After all, policy changes can be caused by many other sources including business activities, stochastic shocks, the preferences of policymakers, or public opinion, for example. The relative importance of social movements compared to other possible causes of policy change is a large issue beyond the scope of any single paper. Here, I explain an approach to the question. My hope is that this approach, if not this single paper, will take us some distance in assessing the relative importance of social movements and other sources of policy change as well as the reciprocal relations between social movements and public policy over time. This long-term research agenda may now be feasible because of newly available data resources.

This paper presents an overview of a new dataset on public policy freely available to all users: The Policy Agendas Project (see Baumgartner and Jones 2001, 2002). The datasets that comprise the Policy Agendas Project include comprehensive compilations of: 1) all

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congressional hearings; 2) all public laws; 3) all stories in the Congressional Quarterly *Almanac*; 4) a sample of abstracts taken from the *New York Times Index*; and 5) a consistently coded, inflation-adjusted, time-series of the federal budget. Each of the datasets covers the time period of 1947 to recent years. Most importantly, most are coded according to a complex, highly detailed, and historically consistent set of some 226 topic and subtopic codes. This allows one to trace government and media attention to such questions as water pollution, inflation, health insurance availability, defense appropriations, or any other topic of government activity over the entire second half of the twentieth century. This new data resource should be useful to scholars of public policy and social movements alike. This dataset was originally collected with public policy scholars in mind; one of my goals here is to introduce its value to the sociological community as well.

The data we have collected as part of the agendas project allow us to trace not only the growth of new issues, but also the size, composition, and structure of the governmental agenda as a whole. As I will note below, the size of the agenda and the areas of activity of the U.S. federal government changed quite dramatically over the fifty years following World War Two. These changes, in turn, can be linked to changes and activities in the social movement realm. While my focus will be on the changing focus and attentions of the federal government, links to the activities of social movements and interest groups will be apparent throughout. Later work, or that of other scholars, may focus on particular issue areas where more extensive social movement data are available. In any case, in order to discuss the impact of social movements on public policy, one must know the parameters of public policy and how it has changed over the decades. With that in place, we can then assess the potential impact of social movements on these developments.

The Transformation of the Policy Agenda of the Federal Government

During the period from World War Two to the present, the federal government has been dramatically transformed. Many have noted these changes, in particular the size of government: we have moved from a minimalist government to a major social welfare state (even if the movement here has been less dramatic than in other western countries). Employment by government has grown, the size of the federal budget has grown, the numbers of regulations have grown, the numbers of federal programs have grown, and all this is well known (see for example Light 1995). Of course, state governments employ many more people than the federal government, and their growth over the past 50 years has been even more dramatic than that at the federal level; further, tax expenditures, outside contracting, privatization of services, and tax subsidies have grown over the decades as federal policymakers have attempted to shield the true size of government (see Light 1999; Howard 1997). What may be less apparent is something that immediately strikes any user of the policy agendas datasets. The government has not only a larger set of activities, but even more importantly it has a more diverse portfolio of activities.

Scores of activities that we routinely think of as natural and accepted areas of federal intervention are in fact relatively new areas of federal government activity. For example, in the early post-war period over fifty percent of congressional hearings were on just three topics: defense-related items; government operations themselves; and public lands, Interior Department issues, and water/irrigation projects. Other topics of attention, such as science and technology, housing and community development, foreign trade, transportation, social welfare programs, education, domestic commerce, environment, law enforcement, or health care received less then five percent of attention each. Government under Eisenhower simply did not do very much in very many areas of activity; scores of activities where the federal government has been active

now for decades were simply not the object of much federal attention or activity in the early post-war period. Table 1 presents data on this topic.

(Table 1 about here)

Table 1 shows the 19 major topic areas of the Policy Agendas Project. It is worth reading the table first with attention to the left-most column of data. This column shows the percentage of days of hearings during the ten-year period beginning in 1947 on each of the 19 topics. There were a total of 29,494 days of hearings during this period—not significantly fewer than the total number in the later period shown to the right. However, congressional attention in the early period was much more narrowly focused on just a few traditional areas of government activity including those mentioned in the previous paragraph. Many areas of considerable current attention were simply not on the radar screen at the time. Health-care before the creation of the Medicare program; environmental issues before the creation of the EPA; space, science, and technology policy before the creation of NASA; foreign trade before the more recent expansion of our integration into the world economy; all these are areas where Congress simply did not pay much attention. The later period, covering 1983 to 1992, shows considerable attention to many issue-areas not subject to much attention in the early period, as well as a much more even spread of attention across the issue-areas.

Table 1 shows the shifting and expanding attention of Congress, and it also presents a rough breakdown of the 19 topic areas into those that correspond to important social movements during the post-World War Two period and those that are more traditional, business-oriented, or in any case not associated with a particular social movement. The seven categories listed as "social movement" topics of course are not perfect measures of this concept. Labor, employment, and immigration issues, for example, contain important social movement elements

but also major business and traditional elements. The category of law, crime, and family issues is similarly diverse. Health care includes insurance companies clamoring for increased Medicare reimbursement rates, not only social movements of seniors or disease-related groups pushing for more attention to their causes. Defense might be considered a "social movement" issue, since of course there were important anti-war movements. As Congress considers the issue, however, much more attention is on defense-related issues than on the peace movement overall, so for my purposes here I have included defense, like foreign affairs, in the second category. International affairs, coded a traditional area here, includes some discussion of human rights issues, clearly a social movement subtopic. The distinctions laid out here are imperfect; nonetheless even this rough cut at the data show an unambiguous rise in the proportion of the congressional agenda taken up by these topics: They move from 17 to 27 percent of the congressional agenda during this period. Attention to defense, public lands, and other traditional topics declines, sometimes dramatically, as a proportion of congressional effort.

There are a number of complications in Table 1 that make it an imperfect indicator of the impact of social movements on government attention; further, social movements are far from the only cause of increased government attention. Many of the non-social movement areas have increased in attention; international affairs and foreign aid as well as the topic of foreign trade, for example, have increased quite substantially on the congressional agenda as the US has become more involved in foreign trade and international affairs other than defense. Energy, transportation, and many other areas of growth have demographic or technological developments at their roots rather than new social movements, it would appear at first glance. Civil liberties issues have declined as a proportion of congressional attention partly because of the considerable attention paid to anti-communist activities during the 1950s; these are reflected in the higher

level of attention to these issues in the earlier period. Certainly the tone and purpose of congressional attention to civil rights and liberties has changed dramatically during this period, a fact not reflected in this simple table. In spite of the imperfections of this rough indicator, it does show an increase in attention to new issues. Traditional issues decline from 83 percent of attention to just under 73 percent; still the vast bulk of attention, but less so than in the earlier period. Figure 1 shows how this was not an artifact of the time periods reported in Table 1—the increase in the proportion of attention to new social issues continued throughout the period.

(Figure 1 about here)

Figure 1 uses the same classification of seven major topic areas as "social movement issues" as in Table 1, and reports the percentage for each Congress from the 80th (1947–48) to the 102nd (1991–92). The trends apparent in Table 1 are consistent throughout the period, but the aggregation to only 19 major topic areas obscures several more clear-cut examples of the rise of new social issues. Figures 2 and 3 show the most dramatic risers and decliners on the congressional agenda.

(Figures 2 and 3 about here)

Figure 2 shows the growth of environmental, health, and law, crime, and family issues on the congressional agenda during the post-World War Two era. These issues consistently combined to represent about five percent of attention until a steady growth began to occur around the 88th Congress (1964–65). The late-1960s saw a further spike in attention and the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a steady increase in attention to all three areas as established federal programs in all areas demanded and justified continued congressional oversight of them. Congressional attention to these three topics was regularly over three times greater during the later periods than in the earlier years. Figure 3 shows a consistent and continuing trend towards

declining congressional attention—expressed as a percentage of days of hearings—to three topics that previously had dominated the agenda. Government operations, public lands, and defense declined from 60 percent of attention in the 82nd Congress (1951–52) to 30 percent in the 102nd (1991–92).

We can look at the data at the subtopic level to explore these issues with greater care. Each of the 19 major topics listed above is further divided into a number of subtopics—there are 226 subtopics in the dataset in all. Using the same counts (days of hearings) it is straightforward to distinguish those subtopics that show increases in attention from those that exhibit declines. At this more detailed level of analysis, dramatic changes in the composition of the congressional agenda, and the links to social movements, are apparent. To make this clear, I have identified the 25 subtopics with the greatest trend toward increase over time and the 25 subtopics with the greatest decrease in attention (measured, again, as a percentage of the total number of hearing-days in each Congress from the 80th to the 102nd).[2] Figures 4 and 5 show the growth in attention to the new issues and the decline in attention to the old ones. Tables 2 and 3, presented below, identify the particular categories that make up two groups.

(Figures 4 and 5 about here)

Figure 4 shows how dramatic the rise of many new issues on the congressional agenda has been over the past 50 years. This set of policy concerns typically received less than two percent of total attention throughout the 1940s and 1950s, but beginning around the 86th

[2] Data on the percent of days of hearings in each Congress for each of the 226 subtopics were correlated with a counter variable. This produced a measure of trend, and the subtopics were then sorted from highest to lowest correlations with time. Those increasing most consistently over time were ranked highest; those with no discernable trends were ranked near zero; and those with the most consistent decreases over time were ranked lowest. The twenty-five highest and lowest topics therefore represent roughly 10 percent of the topics at the two ends of this distribution.

Congress (1960–61) began a steady increase. In recent years these topics combine to constitute almost 20 percent of total attention.

Figure 5 tells an even more dramatic story than Figure 4. A small set of topics of attention previously constituted by itself almost one-half of all congressional attention. At the same time as new issues rose on the agenda, these issues declined so that at the end of the period they were regularly combining to account for only about 10 to 15 percent of the total. Together, these two figures show how great the changes in the nature of the political agenda have been. Though not apparent in this presentation of the data, it is also clear that congressional attention, once dominated by a small number of topics, increasingly is spread among many (on this question see Baumgartner, Jones, and MacLeod 2000; Baumgartner and Jones 2002).

Now, what can we say about the particular topics of growth and decline? Were social movements at the core of these changes? Tables 2 and 3 present the data underlying Figures 4 and 5. They use a format similar to that in Table 1, showing for each topic of attention the percentage of days of hearings in the early and late periods respectively.

(Tables 2 and 3 about here)

Looking first at the areas of growth, Table 2 shows for the 25 subtopics of greatest growth that most of them can be linked to well-known social movements. As in Table 1, but with some greater precision because the topic areas are more finely defined, the table breaks out those areas related to social movement activity from those in more traditional areas related to commerce or other non-social movement activities. Of course these distinctions are not perfect, but the data still reveal some obvious trends. Grouping together those topics related to health-care, the environment, family issues, civil rights and human rights, the table shows 17 of the 25 areas of greatest growth to be related to these "social movement" issues. These topics rose from

less than two percent of attention in the early period to over 12 percent later. Of course, they were not the only issues to gain in attention: eight other topics of attention rose even more dramatically, from two to 16 percent of the total. Social movements are not the only source of new issues, but they are an important one.

Table 3 shows the declining topics. This is perhaps an even more compelling statement about the importance of social movements in affecting the policy agenda in government than that presented in Table 2. Scanning through the topics covered in these areas of decline, only one falls into a social-movement area: employee relations and labor unions (topic 504). Others are consistently within the areas of defense, government operations, agriculture, and other traditional areas. Social movement areas constitute a majority of the 25 topics of greatest growth but are a minor part of the list of the 25 most dramatic decliners.

The federal government at the end of the twentieth century focused its attention much more broadly on a great number of new issues and areas of activity compared to the situation some fifty years before. Traditional areas of government activity, including government operations, defense, and interior affairs and federal land-use questions, have declined from over 50 percent of the congressional agenda to about 30 percent. New areas have risen dramatically: environmental concerns, energy, education, health care, etc. Many of the areas of greatest growth in government attention have been those with the most prominent social movements at their cores. The next section focuses on what we can say about this linkage.

Social Movements, Professional Communities, and Public Policy

Can we link the observed changes in the nature of the federal government's agenda to social movement activities? Certainly social movements must be part of the explanation, and the analysis above has hinted at some possible links. However, the relations are likely to be more

complex than simple. While one may pick examples of successful social movements that have altered the federal agenda, knowing whether social movements as a whole have a large or insignificant effect on the policy agenda of the federal government as compared to other potential sources of policy change will require a larger research project.

Clearly, the relations between public policy and social movements, as David Meyer points out in his organizing paper for this conference (2002), are complex and interdependent. Public policies are both the cause and consequence of the growth of social movements. Social movements are both the cause and consequence of changing public policy orientations. Where should we be looking? There are several important avenues. One is the direct effect of social movements on policy. A second is on the relations between social movements and professional associations and other types of Washington interest groups, including not only the traditional social movement organizations (SMOs) but also the myriad groups of service providers, clientele organizations, professionals, and businesses that revolve around established government programs.

In *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* Bryan Jones and I argued that government activities and new programs are often the legacies of social movements and agenda-setting processes (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In contrast to the Downsian view suggesting that issues rise onto and recede from the public agenda with little long-term impact on government (Downs 1972), we noted that a common reaction in government to the rise of new issues is to create a program, agency, or budget designed to deal with the new issue (or, perhaps more commonly, to create multiple programs, agencies, and budgets). Once these new programs are established they rarely disappear. Rather, they grow into established programs, generating their own constituencies and affecting professionals, service providers, contractors, and

beneficiaries. Examples could be multiplied but would include the Medicare and Medicaid programs, various environmental and pollution control efforts (including the creation of the EPA itself in 1970), conservation and land-use initiatives, civil rights and non-discrimination policies, and a great range of other programs having been created and cultivated during the period covered in this study. Growth of government was dramatic during the second half of the twentieth century; this was partly due to the efforts of new social movements to place new issues on the federal agenda. As they succeeded in doing this, the programs that were put in place then generated new interests themselves, as affected constituencies, service providers, and others entered into established relations with the government officials responsible for these new programs. The result is often self-perpetuating.

Social movements have often been at the core of these processes, though not always. Table 2 above showed clearly that a number of topics, such as scientific research and development, international affairs dealing with Asia and the Pacific Rim, drug trafficking, and the international competitiveness of American businesses, have clearly grown on the congressional agenda; it is hard to argue that a social movement was at the center of this increased interest. Rather, changing economic circumstances, technological innovation, and business lobbying may be more important here.

Even when social movements may play a role in the initial emergence of an issue on the public agenda, issues may be sustained in the public eye (or in the congressional calendar) for more complex reasons. In an interesting and compelling analysis, Lisa Miller has discussed the rise of crime as a federal issue (2001). The federal government got involved in crime issues (previously more of a state and local concern) in the 1960s in response to objective indicators that the crime rate was worsening and as public concern with crime issues rose to historically

high levels. Further, the topic was politically controversial as the Republicans advocated a law-and-order approach but the Democrats focused on other topics such as the plight of residents of the urban ghettoes. Once massive federal financial assistance programs were put in place, and after many large budgets were established, however, any link between the crime rate, public concern, and the level of federal attention to crime ceased to exist. The huge crime-fighting budgets available at the federal level established such a large national constituency that the issue became self-perpetuating one. Fighting crime, like military procurement, can be seen as a geographical pork-barrel issue in many ways. Partisanship declined as federal attention to crime increasingly became focused on large budget transfer schemes to state and local law enforcement agencies—an activity both Republicans and Democrats in Congress found appealing, and one that generated tremendous political support in various communities and professional associations. At some point there may have been broad social concern with crime as a policy problem, but it is hard to argue that a national social movement was at the heart of this, especially in the later period after the funds were being disbursed. More likely, local elected officials, law enforcement professionals, and other interests were responsible for this policy change. In any event, the effect was similar: Once the issue was part of the established federal agenda, it did not disappear. Rather, it perpetuated itself as service providers, constituents, and interest groups provided support and encouragement.

Data on levels of attention presented above can be linked to information on federal spending patterns to shed some light on these questions. Using the 73 categories of spending as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in their annual budgets, adjusting for changes in how given programs and activities have classified over the years (thus creating the only historically consistent time-series of the federal budget going back all the way to 1947), and

presenting the data as percentages of total federal spending, we can see if and how attention and spending are linked. Figure 6 presents the case of law, crime, and family issues just discussed.

(Figure 6 about here)

During the period from 1948 to 1968, federal spending on crime, justice, prisons, and law enforcement issues represented less than 0.4% of the annual federal budget. This figure doubled within just a few years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with a further increase in the 1990s so that spending on crime and law enforcement reached one percent of total federal spending at the end of the series. Congressional attention to the issue, once sporadic but relatively low, jumped in the mid-to-late 1960s, just before the spending increase and, according to Miller's analysis (2001) partly in response to objectively rising crime rates, partly due to public opinion and concern, and partly for other reasons. Once the attention grew, however, and once the budgets increased, congressional attention never declined; the period before 1966 regularly saw congressional attention to the issue in the one-to-two percent range; after 1968 it averaged over four percent of total congressional attention. Clearly, money talks here. No matter how the issue came to the agenda, once it was there and such large amounts of money were being spent, it was not about to disappear. Figures 7 through 9 make clear this linkage in a number of areas; some have clear social movement roots, others not.

(Figure 7 about here)

Figure 7 shows attention and spending to four new issues: Environment; Education; Health Care; and Medicare. Environmental spending was minimal throughout the first half of the series, though congressional attention began a steady rise in the early 1960s, then saw a much steeper rise in the late 1960s as Earth Day approached in 1970, a zenith of congressional attention for almost two decades. Spending began to increase very sharply in the mid- to late-

1970s then settled down at a lower level than its initial spike, but still much higher than the earlier series. Congressional attention stayed much higher once these spending programs were in place. Education spending, shown in Figure 7B, indicates an even clearer linkage between attention and spending. As with environmental issues, attention preceded spending, but both show the pattern of a dramatic and sustained shift upwards in both series beginning in the 1960s. The cases of health care in general (Figure 7C) and the Medicare program in particular (Figure 7D; these data are also subsumed in Figure 7C) show a pattern of increased attention and then a close tracking of ever-increasing spending and steadily increasing congressional attention to the issue. In all four examples we see a clear and long-lasting linkage between levels of attention and levels of spending, and these graphs make clear what a dramatic impact on the federal budget these processes can have. Health care alone as moved from less than two percent of federal spending to over 15 percent in about 30 years. These processes are not peculiar to social movement issues, but also occur in other areas. Figure 8 shows the cases of four non-social movement areas.

(Figure 8 about here)

Space, science, and communications, shown in Figure 8A shows a pattern remarkably like that of the environment or education from Figure 7. An initial spike in congressional attention quickly led to a spike in spending. The space race was on, and it was expensive even by federal standards, moving from almost nothing to four percent of total spending in just a few years. Spending declined to settle in at almost two percent of federal spending and congressional attention also settled at a sustained level of attention that was much higher than it had ever been before the large spending programs were initially enacted. Similarly we see with the case of energy (Figure 8B) a connection between spending and attention, though not the same sustained

spending pattern. Transportation issues, long a traditional concern of Congress, show a consistent tracking of attention and spending both in periods of increase and decline. Social welfare issues, a matter of consistently increasing spending over the entire period of study, become the object of sustained and substantial congressional attention only in the post-1967 period, perhaps in reaction to the riots and social unrest at the time. Congressional attention, once institutionalized, never declines to its previous level. These examples indicate some degree of linkage between spending and attention, even in the cases that are not so clearly linked to social movement questions. The example of transportation hinted at a reverse phenomenon in these series: declining attention to issues with declining shares of the budget. Figure 9 makes clear that this is not unique.

(Figure 9 about here)

Federal spending on agriculture (Figure 9A), defense (9B), and public lands/irrigation/water management (9C) have declined dramatically over the decades. Almost as though the Members of Congress were allocating their time in proportion to the share of the federal budget, attention to these topics declines as spending declines. Why did spending decline? The case of defense is obvious and includes substantial declines from the high of the Korean War. As expensive irrigation and dam projects were completed in the western states spending on public lands issues declined dramatically in the early- to mid-1970s, following a decline in congressional attention some 10 years before. Agriculture spending, always very volatile because of the nature of price support payment programs, has nonetheless tended towards decline roughly in sync with declining congressional attention.

Figures 6 through 9 present strong evidence for the linkage between spending and agenda-status. That is, pushing issues up on the congressional agenda demonstrably has

budgetary implications. Declining budgets are in the areas of declining attention. Of course the process is not so simple as this and there are many examples in our data where the linkages are not so clear. (For example, international aid spending in the period of study shows a dramatic decline even while attention to international affairs grows steadily over the period.) Some of the counter-examples may be because of imperfect fits between the topics of our measures of congressional attention and the objects of federal spending—for example, international affairs includes many topics that Congress may talk about but the areas of spending are relatively limited. Similarly congressional discussion of macro-economic policies, interest rates, unemployment, and other such issues can be quite high even though there are few spending programs focused directly on these issues. Some issues simply are not the areas of spending. In this section, I have illustrated a few cases where there are clear links. These data show that agenda-setting has clear, strong, and long-lasting policy implications.

New issues come from many sources. Once they emerge and budgets are allocated, many further dynamics ensue—some of these are completely unrelated to social movements even if social movements were originally at the cause of government attention. What can we say about social movements as a source of spending and attention as compared to other sources? Certainly, going back to Table 2, earlier, many of the greatest growth areas in public attention would seem on the face to have been pushed up by social movements, and Figure 7 provides some evidence that this can have a dramatic impact not just on attention, but on spending as well. At other times it seems clear from specific examples that professional organizations, local government officials, businesses, economic shocks, international actors, or other sources are the cause of policy change. Figure 8 showed that issues coming from economic transformation, technological innovation, or other sources can display quite a similar pattern. In both sets of cases, whether or

not social movements are at the core of the rise in attention, increased attention leads to increased spending.

This means that Table 3, above, and Figure 9, which we just reviewed, showing the areas of declining attention, are particularly worth pondering. The more profound implications of social movement issues may be that the issues they spawn may be unlikely to fade away. Contrary to much popular myth, federal programs and government budgets often decrease just as they often increase over time. Issues do recede as important foci of government attention, and as they do their budgets can shrink dramatically as a proportion of total spending (or even in absolute terms; budget cuts are more common that many people seem to believe; see Jones, Baumgartner, and True 1998). Rarely has this occurred in areas with social movements at their cores, however. Rather, as we saw in Figure 9 in the cases of defense, agriculture, and public lands, attention declines as spending dwindles. Spending does not dwindle, however, in those areas such as environmental protection, education, or health-care where social movements are clearly present and powerful. The spending reinforces the interest-group community, and the interest-group community reinforces the spending. Long-lasting social movements, bolstered by spending programs, may be self-perpetuating. Certainly the Medicare program is not likely to disappear soon.

More information is needed on the growth of professional communities and social movement organizations to make more explicit the links between their activities, congressional attention, and public policy. In an attempt to get at some of these issues, at least in part, Bryan Jones and I counted the numbers of environmentally related groups that were listed in the Encyclopedia of Associations from 1961 onward, at ten-year intervals (1993, Ch. 9). We saw that the growth in numbers of groups, but also their combined staffs and budgets, linked closely

to the rise of the environment as a growing federal issue. Beth Leech and I tracked the growth of different types of organizations in a similar way in our discussion of changes in the nature of the national interest-group system over time (1998, table 6.1). We saw that public affairs groups, health-care groups, social welfare organizations (especially service-providers) and others that can be linked to many of the areas of growth documented here, were among the fastest growing sectors of the group system, as assessed by the Encyclopedia. Veterans' groups, agricultural groups, among others, were among the categories with the slowest growth. There is probably more than coincidence in the fact that these areas of fast and modest growth in the group system correspond to the areas with the areas of increasing and decreasing attention and spending at the federal level.

Jack Walker's analysis of growth rates of groups similarly showed different rates of growth among the profit sector, nonprofit, and citizens' sector, and Walker clearly saw these developments as tightly linked to the changing nature of the political agenda (1991; see also 1966). In his 1977 article on agenda-setting Walker explicitly linked new issues on the congressional agendas not only to social movements but also and perhaps more strongly to established communities of professionals working in Washington and elsewhere (1977). Berry's recent analysis of the changing nature of the federal agenda, and the rise of post-material issues in particular, clearly points to the importance of new social movements and in particular the institutionalization of the new-left citizens' organizations in Washington over the past several decades (1999). So, not only are social movements important, according to a range of suggestive studies, but in particular these may have an impact on public policy to the degree that they spawn SMOs and other professional associations endowed with the staff and resources to monitor and to affect government policy over the long-haul and from within the beltway.

Social movements are clearly at the center of much policy change. Tracing the particulars of the linkages between movements and policy systematically will not be a simple story, however. Social movements are not the only sources of new issues; there are many other sources of new topics of attention. Even when they rise, social movements may or may not spawn well-financed SMOs active in keeping their issues in the limelight. (Berry notes in particular the failure of the conservative organizations of the1980s to establish the same kind of powerful Washington presence as the liberal groups of the 1960s and 1970s did to great effect). Perhaps the greatest long-term impact of social movements, among the scenarios that seem apparent here, may be as they develop SMOs and these interact over time with established professional communities, especially among service providers, be they social workers, medical researchers, environmental engineers, or the manufacturers of pollution abatement equipment. Becoming part of a Washington policy community, reaching compromises with businesses or service providers seeking to profit from government spending programs, and dealing with questions of policy implementation may seem like the worst fate for a group of idealistic and often ideologically committed activists in their later years. It is apparent from the data presented here, however, that such an outcome may be one of the most important and influential in the long term.

Conclusions

This paper gives some idea of where we may look for the impacts of social movements on public policy. It also should make clear that social movements are neither the only sources of new public policies nor likely to have an impact on their own. Rather, when they have a long-term impact on public policy they often interact closely with allied or unrelated interest groups active in the same issue-areas. Further, as government activities have grown, often in response to initial demands by social movements, different constituencies are mobilized. Thus, the chain reactions

of attention, spending, and vested interest that social movements may put into action can have long-lasting effects on public policy, social movements themselves, and other organizations such as professional and trade groups. The dynamics of public policy ensure that new sets of participants will become active in issue-areas as these areas become the objects of considerable state activity, spending, and regulation. From health care to elderly issues to environmental causes of all kinds, we can see the tremendous impact of various social movements in American politics. Similarly, in the traditional areas of extensive government activity that have not been the objects of social movement mobilizations, we have seen a steady atrophy not only in attention but in spending as well. The agenda of the federal government has been transformed in the post-World War Two period in large part (though not exclusively) by the rise of new social movements.

More systematic research on these linkages is clearly needed. Certainly much of it will come from detailed analysis of particular policy areas such as those built up around particular social movements. Some of it may hopefully also ask the question more broadly of where new issues come from; some come from social movements but some do not. One particular project that may prove useful is just getting underway. That is the extension of the Policy Agendas Project to include a greater range of indicators. Among other things, John McCarthy and I are working towards the creation of a complete longitudinal time-series of all associations listed from 1959 to present in the annual volumes of the Encyclopedia of Associations. Linking these births, deaths, and mergers (along with staff and membership information) to the areas of activity as defined in the policy agendas project will hopefully allow us to address many of the questions

I have raised here in a more systematic fashion.[3] In any case, in this paper I have tried to lay out a number of factors that may help to create a future research agenda in this field.

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[3] "Database Development for the Study of Public Policy," NSF grant # SBR–0111611 covering the period from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2005, with Bryan D. Jones. This project allows for updating and expanding the Policy Agendas databases as well as for expansions of our web-based data distribution and analysis facilities. With John McCarthy, it also involves addition of data concerning social movements and interest groups from the Encyclopedia of Associations.

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Table 1. The Rise of Social Movement Topics on the Congressional Agenda.

Topic Code	Topic Area	Percent of Days of Hearings: Early Period (80 to 84th Congress)	Percent of Days of Hearings: Later Period (98th to 102nd Congress)
16	Defense	21.24	12.32
20	Government Operations	18.30	11.79
21	Public Lands and Water Management	13.02	6.81
4	Agriculture	5.81	4.26
10	Transportation	5.69	4.58
15	Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce	5.61	7.08
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties*	5.35	1.99
5	Labor, Employment, and Immigration*	4.45	3.53
19	International Affairs and Foreign Aid	3.54	7.46
1	Macroeconomics	2.77	4.66
12	Law, Crime, and Family Issues*	2.52	5.22
14	Housing and Community Development	2.49	2.33
8	Energy	2.46	4.05
3	Health*	1.70	6.34
18	Foreign Trade	1.60	3.79
6	Education*	1.15	2.74
7	Environment*	0.92	5.27
17	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications	0.71	3.68
13	Social Welfare*	0.68	2.11
	Subtotal for Non-Social Movement Topics	83.23	72.80
	Subtotal for Social Movement Topics*	16.77	27.20
	Grand Total	100.00	100.00
	Number of Days of Hearings	29,494	30,287

NOTE: Social Movement Topics marked with an asterisk. Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Table 2. The Twenty-five Subtopics with the Greatest Growth in Days of Congressional Hearings.

Topic Code	Topic Area	Percent of Days of Hearings: Early Period (80 to 84th Congress)	Percent of Days of Hearings: Later Period (98th to 102nd Congress)
704	Hazardous Waste and Toxic Chemical Regulation, Treatment, and Disposal	0.38	3.13
306	Regulation of Prescription Drugs, Medical Devices, and Medical Procedures	0.15	1.03
705	Air pollution, Global Warming, and Noise Pollution	0.04	0.88
303	Medicare and Medicaid	0.05	0.83
1207	Child Abuse and Child Pornography	-	0.71
300	General Health	0.16	0.86
708	Indoor Environmental Hazards	0.38	1.06
1925	Human Rights	0.02	0.55
312	Infants, Children, and Immunization	0.10	0.60
501	Worker Safety and Protection, Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA)	0.13	0.46
1208	Family Issues	0.24	0.54
349	Specific Diseases	-	0.24
311	Elderly Health Issues	-	0.24
710	Coastal Water Pollution and Conservation	-	0.20
204	Age Discrimination	0.24	0.43
310	Medical Fraud, Malpractice, and Physician Licensing Requirements	-	0.19
703	Waste Disposal	-	0.17
	Totals for Social Movement Issue Areas	1.90	12.13
1919	Asia (other than China), Pacific Rim, Australia, New Zealand and Oceania	0.22	1.38
800	General Energy	0.02	0.62
1000	General Transportation	0.02	0.57
1203	Illegal Drug Production, Trafficking, and Control	-	0.46
2013	Census	0.04	0.46
1605	Arms Control and Nuclear Nonproliferation	-	0.29
1806	Productivity and Competitiveness of U.S. Business, U.S. Balance of Payments	-	0.27
1798	Research and Development - Science	-	0.14
	Total for Non-social Movement Issues	0.30	4.18
	Totals for all Issues	2.20	16.31

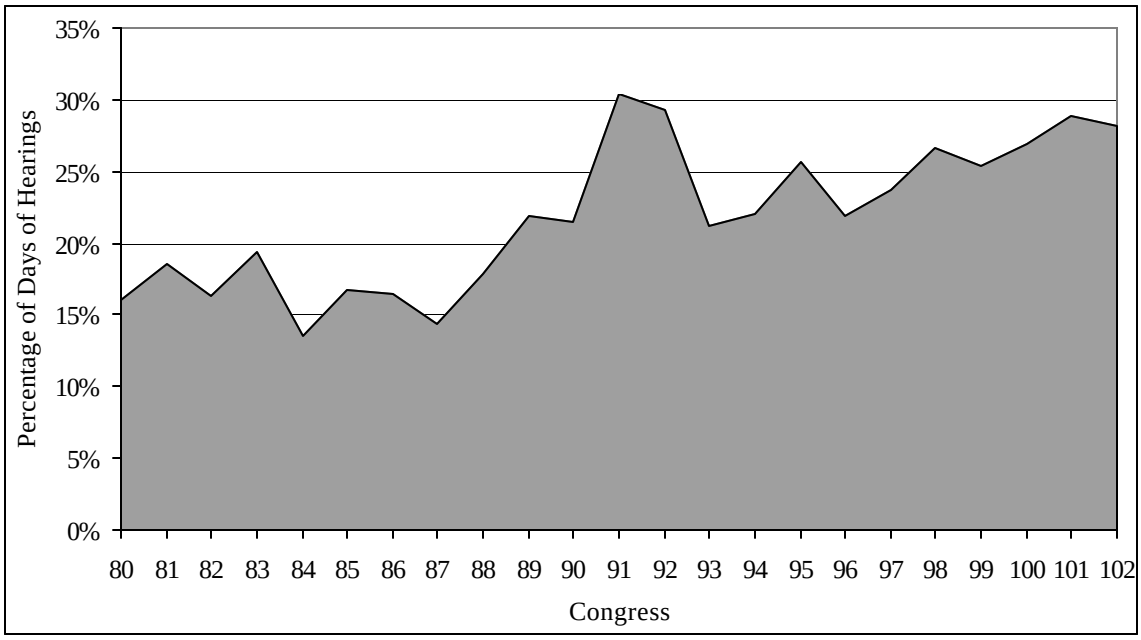
NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Table 3. The Twenty-five Subtopics with the Greatest Decline in Days of Congressional Hearings.

Topic Code	Topic Area	Percent of Days of Hearings: Early Period (80 to 84th Congress)	Percent of Days of Hearings: Later Period (98th to 102nd Congress)
1499	Other – Housing	0.02	-
2008	Government Property Management	0.71	0.27
1602	U.S. and Other Defense Alliances, U.S Security Assistance	1.36	0.21
2199	Other – Public Lands	0.02	-
2015	Torts Against the U.S. Government	0.72	-
1609	VA Issues	1.36	0.68
1599	Other – Banking	0.32	0.05
1604	Military Readiness, Coordination of Armed Services Air Support and Sealift Capabilities, and National Stockpiles of Strategic Materials	1.91	0.32
1407	Veterans Housing Assistance and Military Housing Programs	0.57	0.14
402	Government Subsidies to Farmers and Ranchers, Agricultural Disaster Insurance	2.00	0.92
2103	Natural Resources, Public Lands, and Forest Management	2.95	1.38
2000	General Government Operations	5.56	3.11
504	Employee Relations and Labor Unions	1.84	0.32
110	Price Control and Stabilization	0.39	-
1620	Torts Against U.S. Government (Defense Related)	0.63	-
2003	Postal Service Issues (Including Mail Fraud)	1.41	0.53
2105	U.S. Dependencies and Territorial Issues	1.26	0.28
209	Investigation of Anti-Government Activities	4.41	-
1612	National Guard and Reserve Affairs	0.63	0.10
2014	District of Columbia Affairs	3.00	0.94
1615	Civil Defense (War Related)	0.90	0.03
1611	Military Installations, Construction, and Land Transfers	2.98	0.77
1608	Manpower, Military Personnel and Dependents (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines), Military Court	3.28	0.49
2104	Water Resources Development	3.69	1.06
1007	Maritime Issues	2.35	0.82
	Totals	44.26	12.42

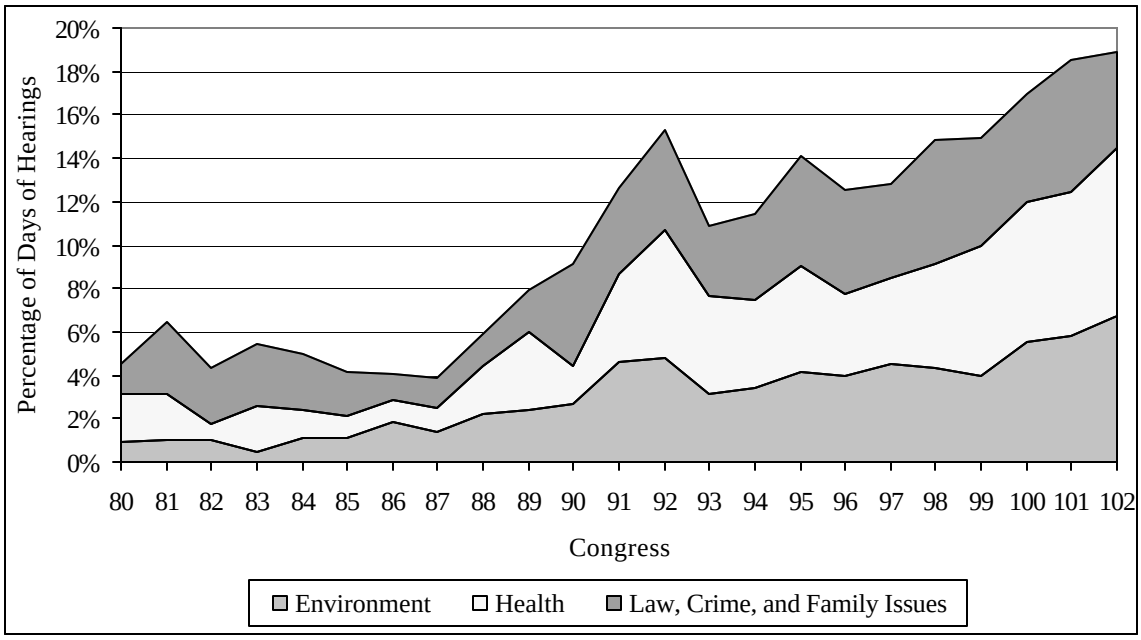
NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 1. Increasing Congressional Attention to Social Movement Topics.



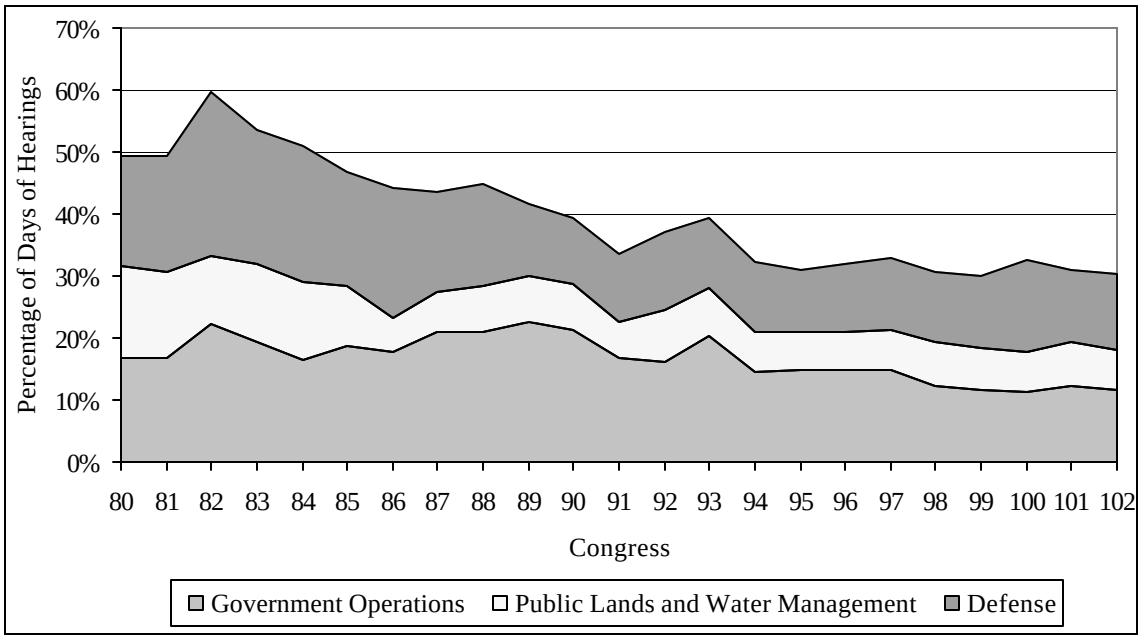
NOTE: Figure includes attention to the 7 major topics listed as social movement topics in Table 1. Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 2. The Rise of New Issues in Congress.



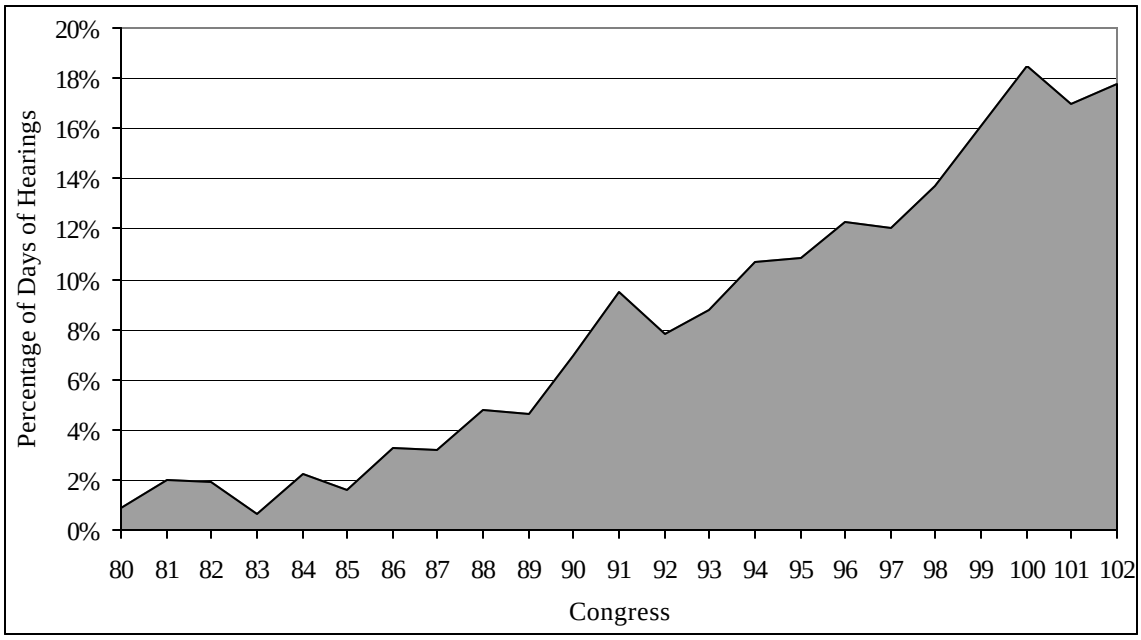
NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 3. The Decline of Old Issues in Congress.



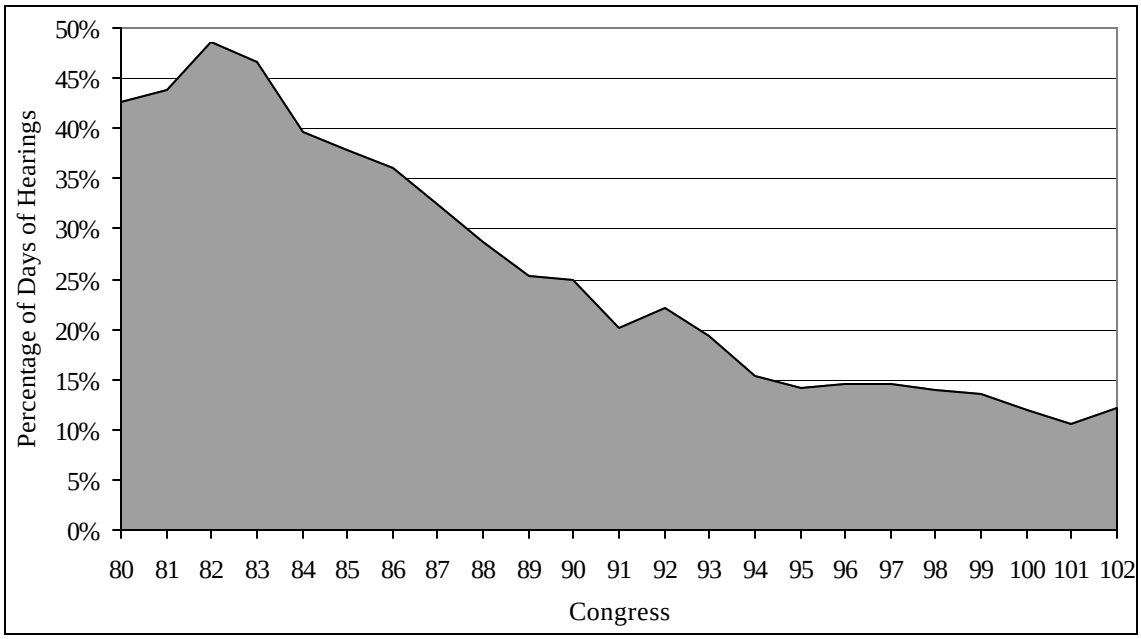
NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 4. Increasing Congressional Attention to 25 New Topic Areas



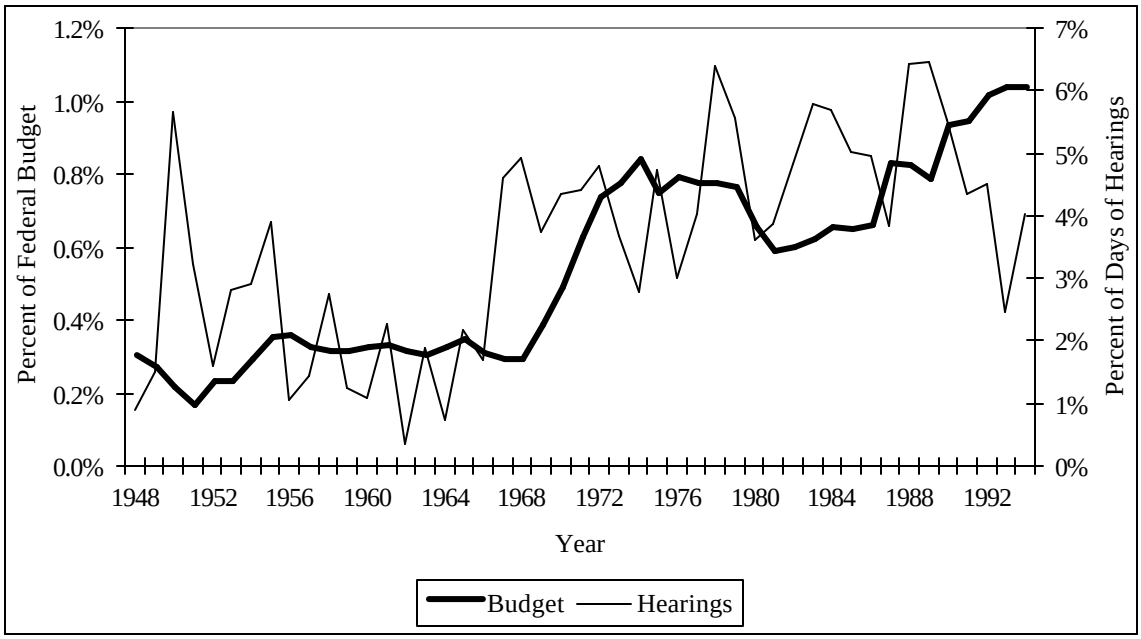
NOTE: See Table 2 for the list of 25 subtopics included here. Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 5. Decreasing Congressional Attention to 25 Old Topic Areas



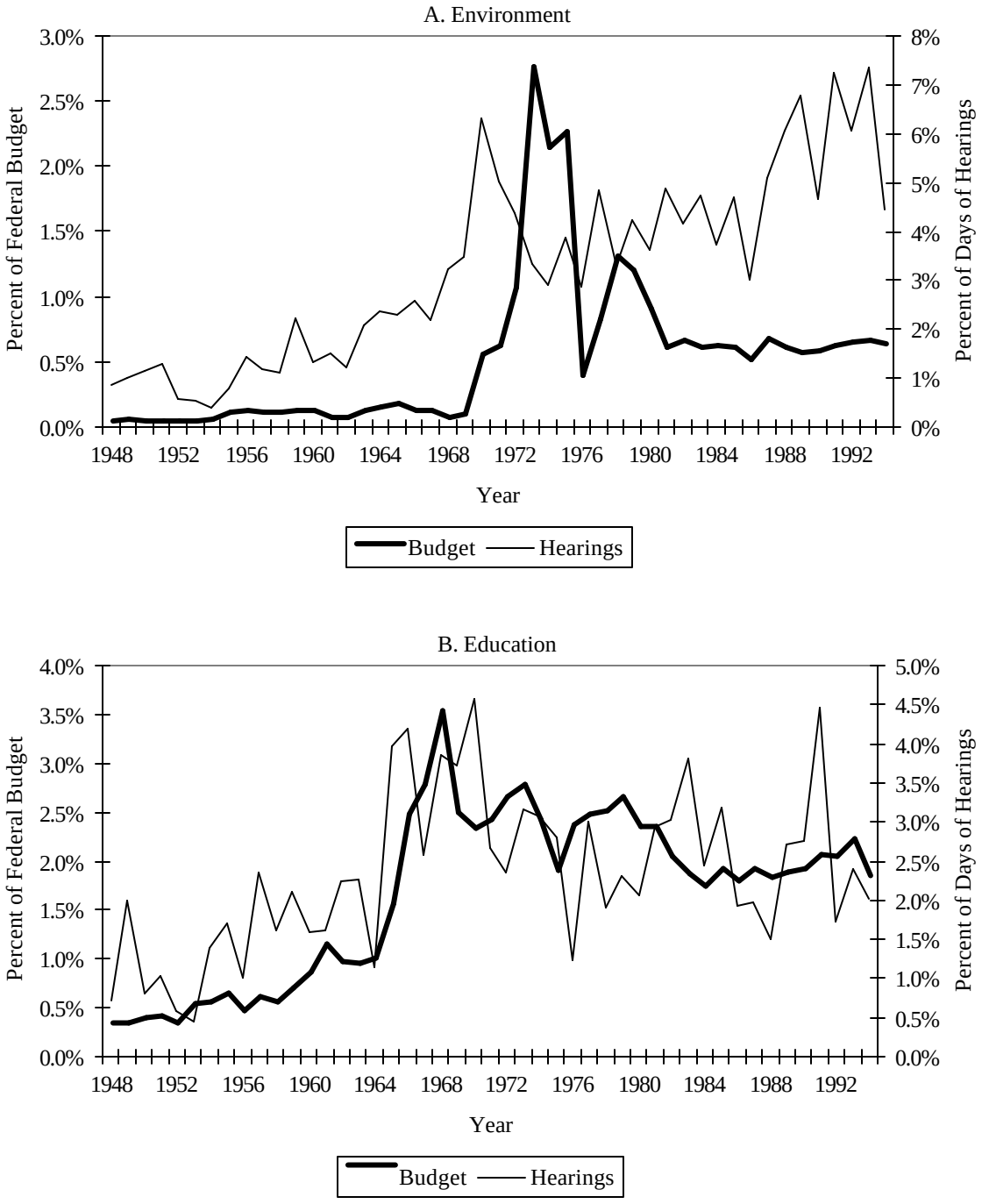
NOTE: See Table 3 for the list of 25 subtopics included here. Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 6. Congressional Attention and Federal Spending on Crime and Law Enforcement.



NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 7. Attention and Spending on Four Social Movement Topics



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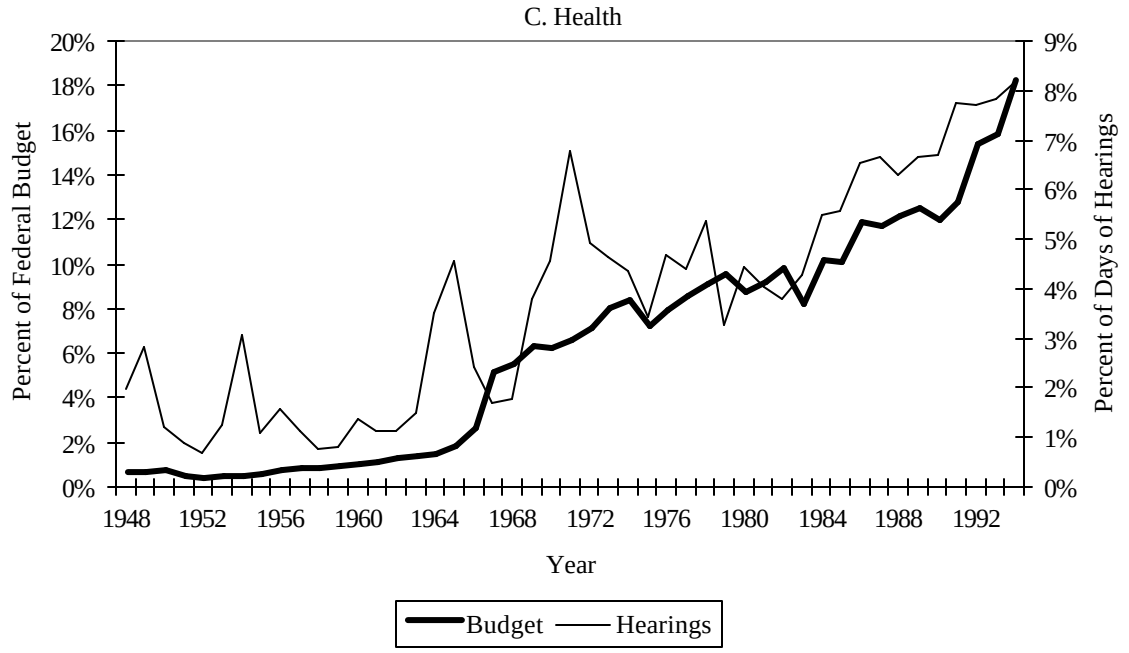
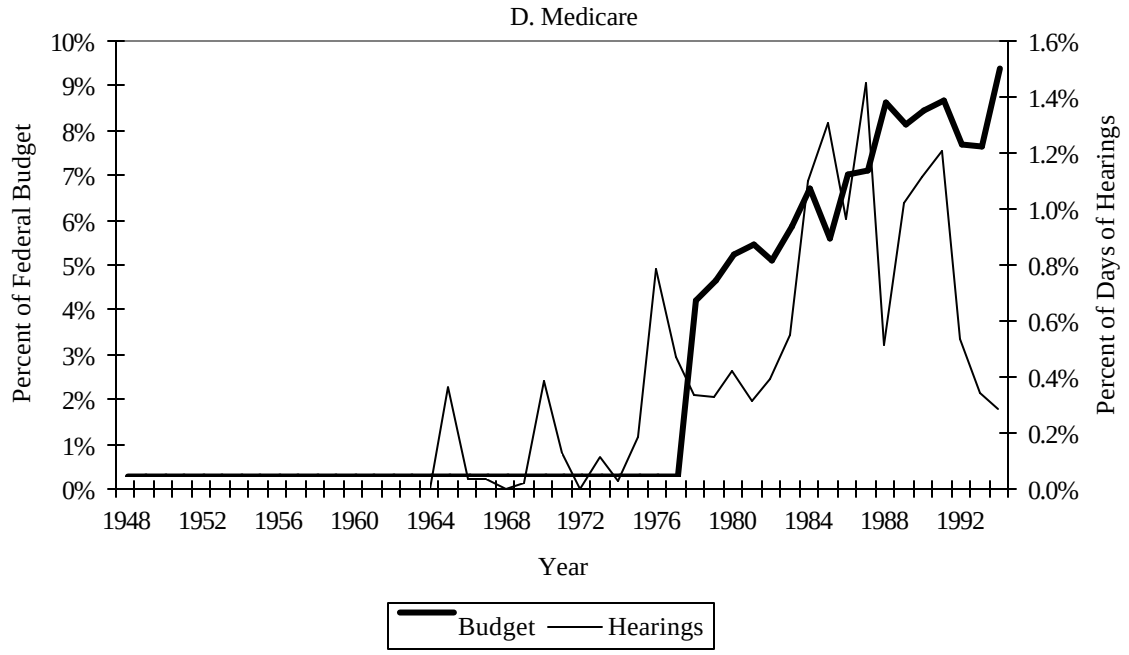




NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 8. Attention and Spending on Four Non-Social Movement Topics

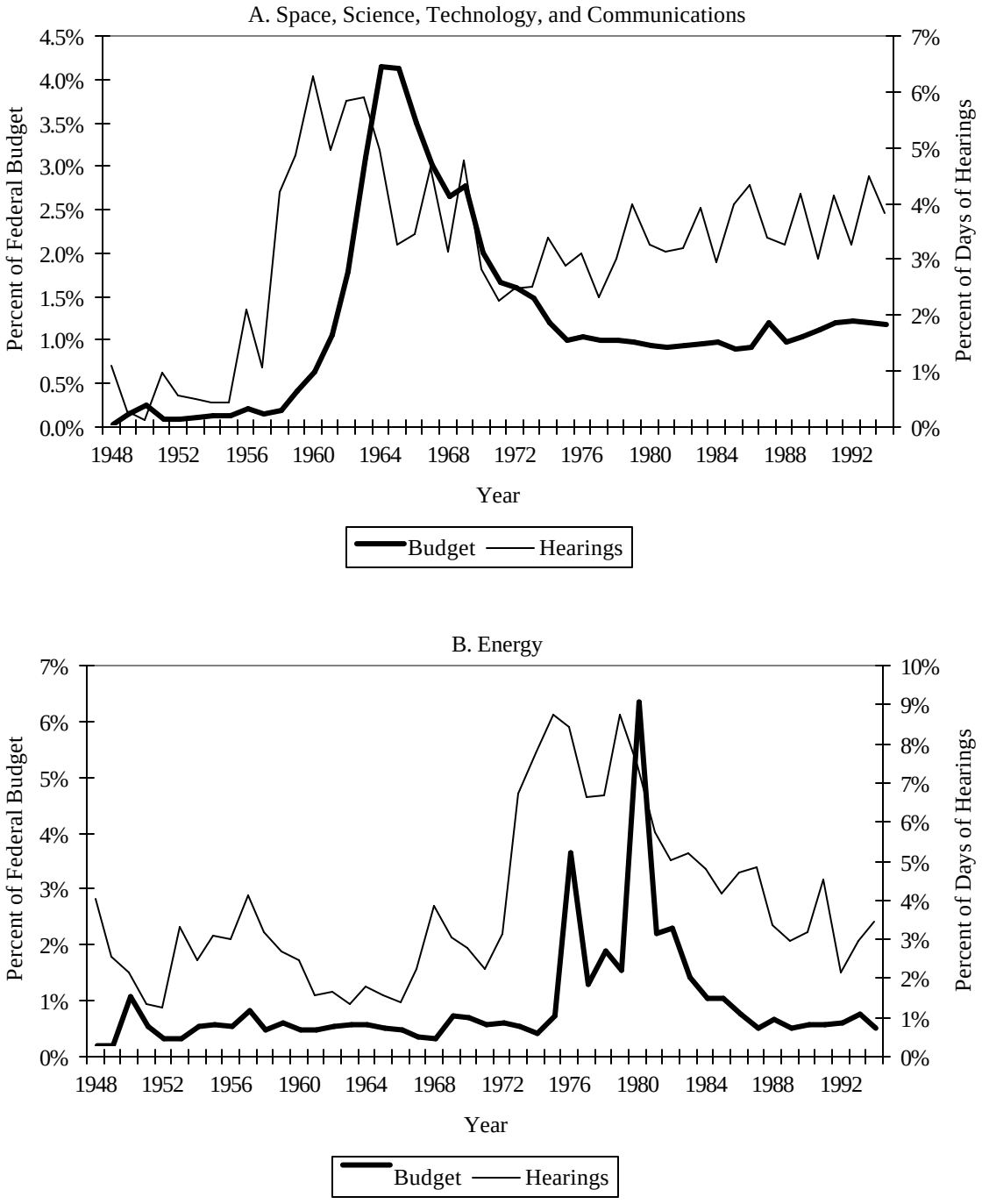
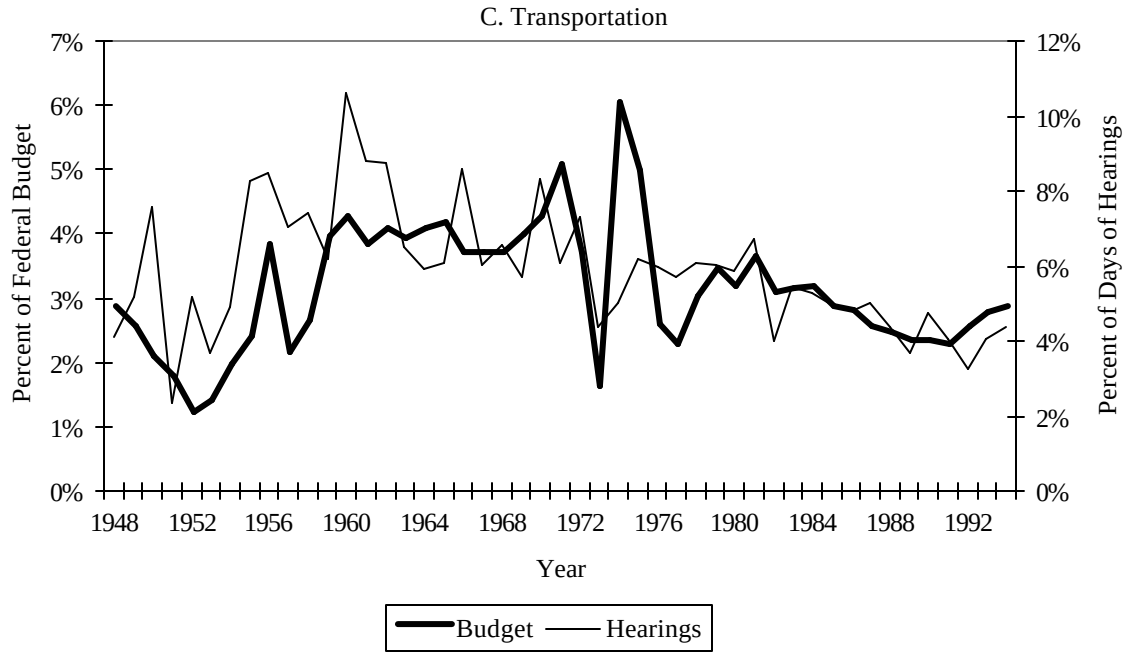
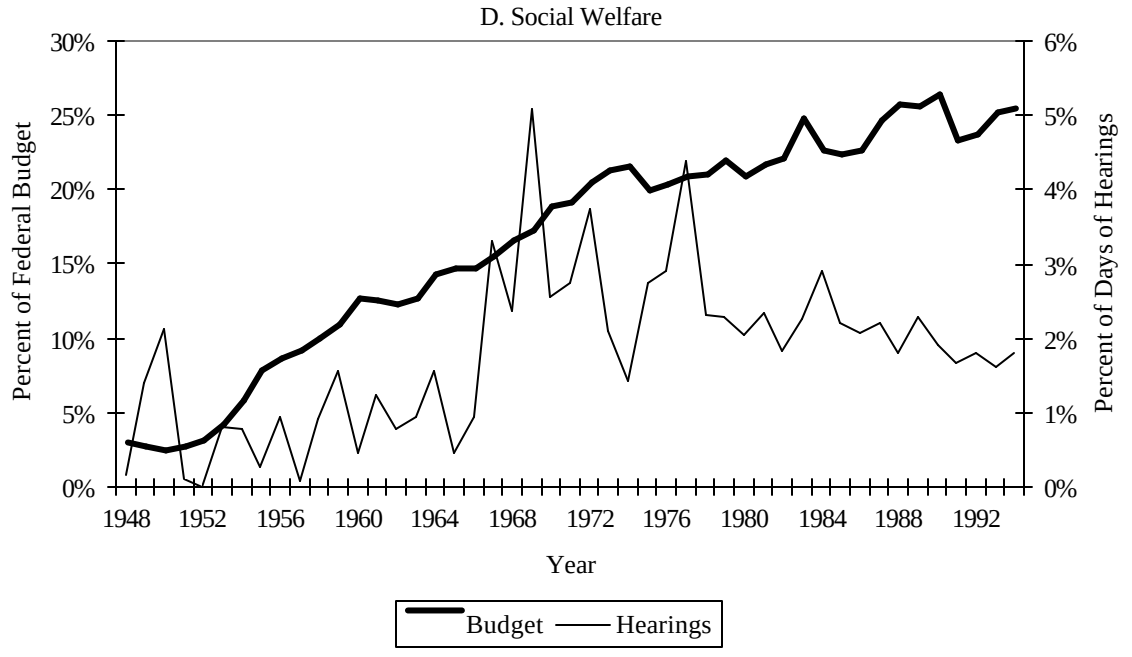


Figure 8 (cont.)





NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.

Figure 9. Attention and Spending on Three Declining Issues

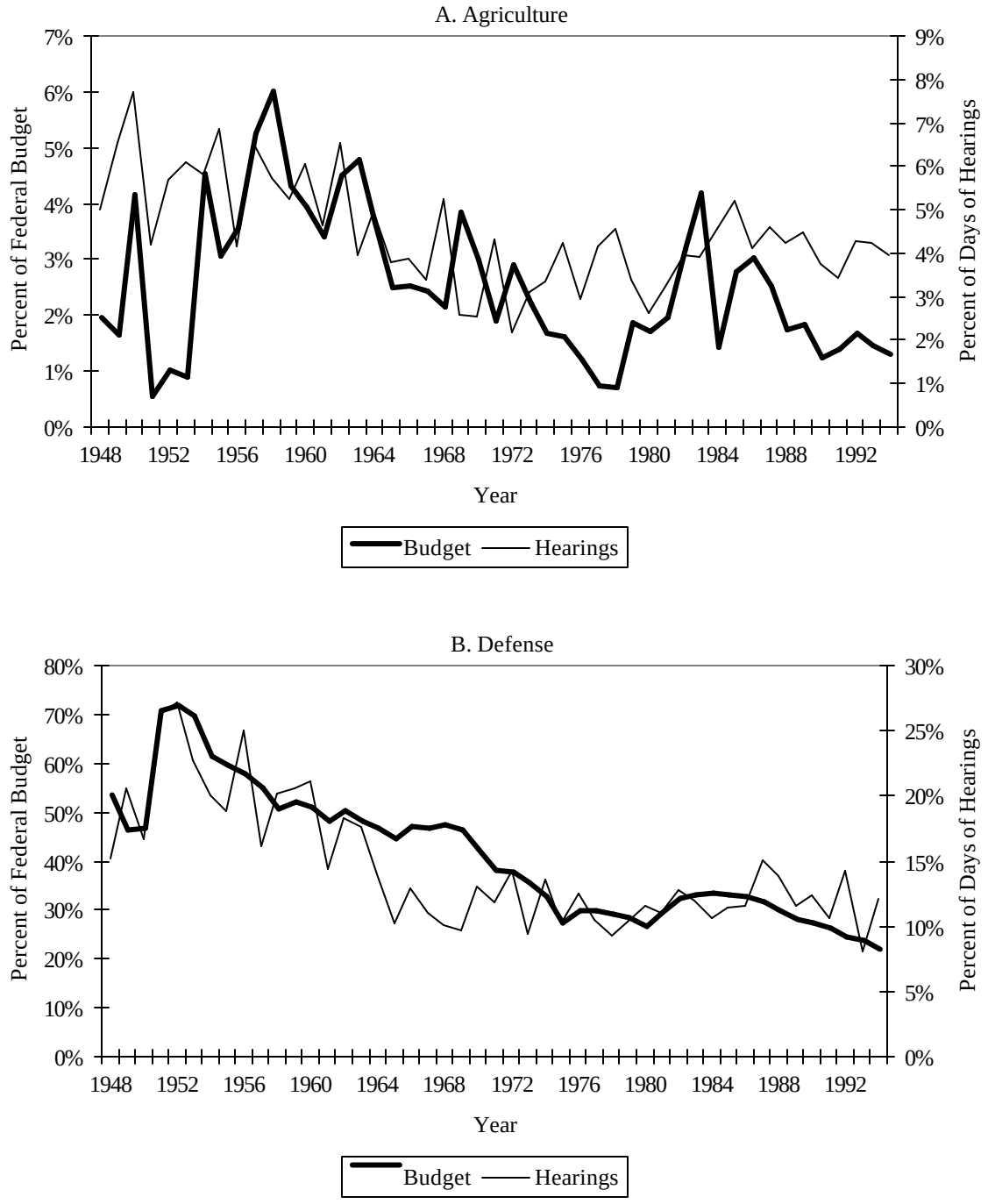
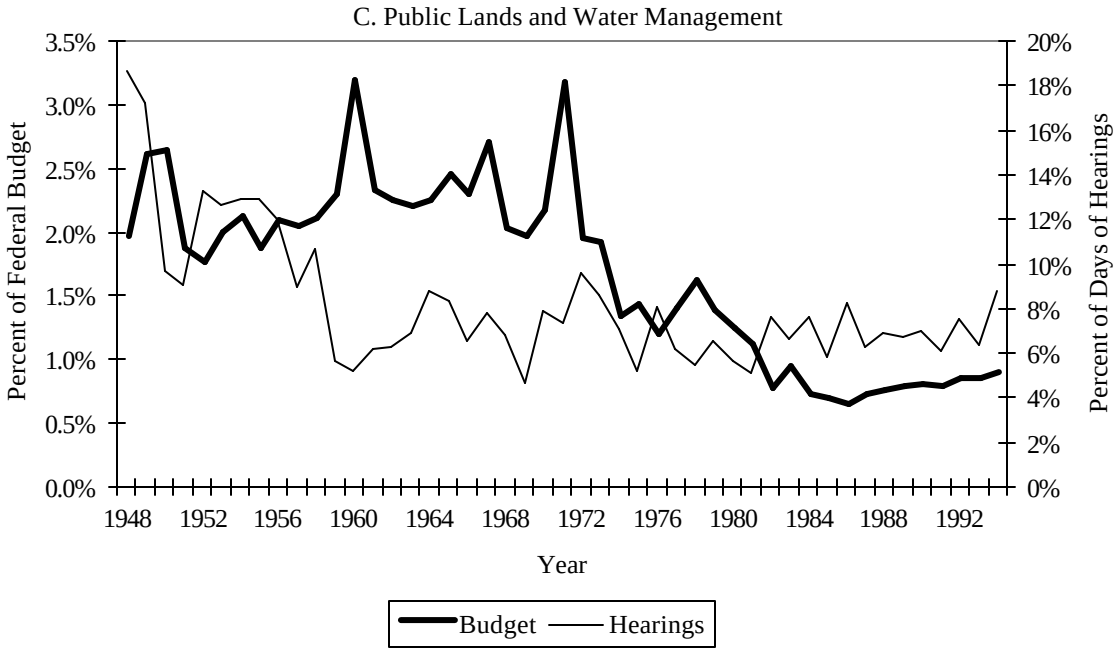


Figure 9 (cont.)



NOTE: Data from the Policy Agendas Project.