CITIZEN ACTIVITY: WHO PARTICIPATES? WHAT DO THEY SAY?

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We use responses to a large-scale national survey designed to oversample political activists to investigate the extent to which participant publics are representative of the public as a whole. Building upon the finding that while voters differ from nonvoters in their demographic attributes, their attitudes as measured by responses to survey questions are not distinctive, we consider a variety of political acts beyond voting that citizens can use to multiply their political input and to communicate more precise messages to policymakers. In addition, we consider not only respondents' demographic characteristics and policy attitudes but also their circumstances of economic deprivation and dependence upon government programs. Although activists are representative of the public at large in terms of their attitudes, they differ substantially in their demographic attributes, economic needs, and the government benefits they receive. Furthermore, in terms of the issues that animate participation, groups differentiated along these lines bring very different policy concerns to their activity.

Questions of representation, long central to democratic theory, present themselves in several contexts in empirical studies of American politics. They constitute one of the fundamental theoretical anchors in studies of legislatures and other deliberative bodies; they arise in considerations of what kinds of organizations—and what kinds of interests—are active in pressure politics; and they are germane to understanding citizen political participation. Through the multiple forms of political activity, citizens have an opportunity to communicate their concerns and wishes to political leaders and thus to attempt to influence public outcomes. Those in public life are more likely to be aware of, and to pay attention to, the needs and preferences of those who are active.[1] Thus, it would seem to matter for the democratic principle of equality that studies of citizen participation in America concur in showing political activists to be unrepresentative in their demographic characteristics of the public at large.[2]

That political activists are not in demographic terms descriptively representative of the public at large does not necessarily imply, however, that there is a gap in policy preferences between those who take part and those who do not. Wolfinger and Rosenstone apply to voter turnout an important lesson from the literature on elected assemblies, namely, that although elected representatives are more likely to be male, well-educated, affluent, and drawn from the dominant racial and ethnic groups, demographic characteristics are a very imperfect predictor of either their policy preferences or their behavior in office (1980, 108–14).[3] Wolfinger and Rosenstone confirm the demographic differences between voters and nonvoters, but they also demonstrate that differences between the public and the voters on such issues as government welfare policy, health care, and abortion are negligible. (The exception is party identification, where there is a genuine, though not terribly large, Republican electoral advantage among voters in comparison with the public as a whole.) Moreover, any small differences between voters and nonvoters in attitudes on these policy issues are not systematically in a liberal or conservative direction. On issues of domestic economic policy, other researchers find some tilt in a liberal direction among nonvoters but agree that the differences are not very great.[4]

We use data from a large-scale study of citizen activity that was designed to include a disproportionate number of political activists in order to explore the question of the representativeness of the participant population. (See Appendix A for a description of the sample.) Our data on voting and policy preferences are consistent with Wolfinger and Rosenstone's. Using responses to standard seven-point-scale survey questions, we replicated Wolfinger and Rosenstone's analysis of the representativeness of the attitudes of voters with respect to such issues as whether the government should provide all citizens with an adequate job and standard of living or let each individual get ahead on his or her own and whether the government should reduce social spending or maintain government services. In terms of the question about government provision of jobs, voters are slightly more conservative than the public as a whole. Otherwise the differences are minuscule. In short, our data support the conclusion that voters and nonvoters do not seem to differ substantially in their attitudes on public policy issues.

For several reasons, however, data about policy preferences of voters and nonvoters construe much too narrowly the problem of the representativeness of the participatory input. First, the lessons contained in the literature on representation in pressure politics

(in which the existence of politically relevant, jointly interested constituencies is taken as axiomatic and potential constituencies not represented by organizations are thought to be at a disadvantage in the policy process)[5] suggest that we should not simply dismiss demographic characteristics as irrelevant even when they are not associated with differences in opinion on public issues. When demographic distinctions are pertinent to political conflict (as they often are), disparities in participation may be significant. There is implicit information contained in the conspicuous social characteristics of activists, particularly when those characteristics are relevant to public policy. When a group (especially one with identifiable, politically relevant attributes) is active, it becomes visible to an elected representative and is incorporated into his or her salient constituency. Although they do not necessarily have an accurate reading of the overall distribution of opinion within the constituency on each policy issue, politicians attend to their constituencies and know who is watching what they do. (As a former representative is said to have remarked about the town in which two of us live, "One-tenth the votes. Half the mail.") Even in the absence of explicit directives (and constituents often do not send detailed messages), elected officials anticipate the needs and make inferences about the preferences of potentially active constituents.[6] Thus, it matters not only how participants differ from the nonparticipants in their opinions (whether they want higher or lower taxes, greater or lesser attention to social welfare) but who they are.

Comparisons between voters and nonvoters in terms of their policy attitudes cannot fully address the issue of the representativeness of activist publics in that they focus only on differences in preferences as revealed in questions about public issues preselected by authors of surveys. These policy issues are not necessarily the matters of most concern to respondents. Even more important, they are not necessarily the issues that activists address when they actually take part in politics.

In addition, voting is only one of the many kinds of participation; and it differs from other forms of participation in several ways that are germane to our concerns. For one thing, the vote is the one participatory act for which there is mandated equality: each citizen gets one and only one. Other forms of activity necessitate no such equality of inputs. Individuals may make as many phone calls to public officials, spend as many hours campaigning for as many candidates, and attend as many demonstrations as their time and inclination permit. Within certain limits, they can even write as many checks of whatever size their bank balances allow. Moreover, for some forms of participation, when the volume of activity is multiplied, the possibility that it will be accompanied by pressure to respond is enhanced. A candidate can ignore with impunity a single voter or a single letter writer, even one who writes frequently. The campaign volunteer who works many hours and the donor who makes a large contribution has potentially greater leverage. Finally, the vote also differs from many kinds of activity in being a rather blunt instrument for the communication of information about the needs and preferences of citizens. In contrast to the vote, a letter to a Senator, a sign carried at a protest, and a conversation between members of a neighborhood group and a city councillor all permit the transmission of much more precise messages about citizen concerns.

We examine the representativeness of participatory input by considering participation beyond the vote and by considering characteristics other than positions taken on standardized policy scales. In particular, we shall distinguish between policy attitudes as revealed by answers to survey questions about policies and policy-relevant circumstances, that is, various social and economic characteristics that make government policies relevant to an individual. We focus on respondents' economic attitudes and economic situation, considering not only their incomes, education, and attitudes on issues of economic and welfare policy but also the extent to which they have faced real economic deprivation in recent times and are dependent upon various governmental programs. Furthermore, we consider a variety of political activities in addition to voting: working in electoral campaigns, making campaign contributions, getting in touch with public officials, attending protests or demonstrations, engaging in informal efforts to solve community problems, attending meetings of a local governing board or council on a regular basis, and serving in a voluntary capacity on such a board. In addition, we examine the *amount* of political activity—not only the number of different activities but also the volume for any particular act (e.g., the number of dollars donated and the hours devoted to campaigning or to contacts with public officials). Finally, we investigate the actual content of the participatory input probing the nature of the policy concerns that animate political activity and the messages that accompany participatory acts.

POLICY RELEVANT CIRCUMSTANCES AND POLICY ATTITUDES: WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU WANT, AND WHAT YOU NEED

We begin by considering the level of political activity of population groups defined in terms of who they are, what they want, and what they need. Figure 1 considers several characteristics connected to economic position and political preferences in order to determine in what ways activists differ most from the population as a whole: attitudes expressed on standard survey questions, demographic characteristics, or economic circumstances and needs.

Our consideration of economic needs and circumstances concentrates on two dimensions: efforts by respondents (and others in their households) to get by economically and receipt of various government

benefits by respondents or immediate members of their families living with them. In our survey we asked whether, in order to make ends meet, the respondent or any immediate family member living in the household had to "put off medical or dental treatment," "cut back on the amount or quality of food," or "delay paying the rent or making house payments." We inquired, as well, about two other strategies for making ends meet: did anybody "cut back on spending on entertainment or recreation"? and did anybody "work extra hours or take an extra job"? In addition, we asked whether the respondent or a member of the immediate family living in the household received means-tested government benefits (food stamps, subsidized housing, Medicaid, or Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC]) or non-means-tested benefits (Social Security, veterans' benefits, Medicare, or educational loans).[7] We are thus able to locate those who have real financial needs or depend upon government programs. These measures are, of course, closely related to income; but they give a more direct indication of respondents' potential interests with respect to government support.

Figure 1 uses an overall additive measure of political activity, based on all the political acts about which we asked in our survey, thus expanding our view of participation beyond the vote.[8] The score for any group is simply the mean number of political acts. (Exact wording for these and other questions is in Appendix C.) The data make clear that large differences in attitudes on public issues or partisan attachments are associated with little variation in political activity compared with the substantial differences in activity of groups distinguished by their significant demographic characteristics, their needs, or their receipt of government benefits. Note that self-identified liberals and self-identified conservatives are slightly more active than the population as a whole, with ideological moderates somewhat below average in activity. Similarly, self-identified Republicans and Democrats are somewhat, though not substantially, more active than the population at large.

We are concerned not only about differences in policy preferences as measured by responses to survey questions (which questions tell us neither whether respondents care about an issue nor whether they might be active in relation to it) but also about differences in who people are and their actual life circumstances.[9] With respect to socio-economic status (income and education), the activity disparities among groups are much more substantial. For example, those with family incomes over fifty thousand dollars per year score much higher in overall participation than those with incomes under twenty thousand dollars. These demographic differences are paralleled by substantial differences in rate of political activity across groups distinguished by financial need or by the receipt of services. Consider the activity of those who report some financial pinch. They are less active than the population as a whole, with the divergence from the average for all citizens increasing with the severity of the financial squeeze. Those who report the relatively mild—and quite widespread—recourse of cutting back on recreation do not differ from the population as a whole very much. Those who had to cut back on spending for food or who delayed paying the rent, however, are substantially less active. Clearly, those with real needs are less visible.

This pattern is even more pronounced if we consider those who reported that they or a member of the immediate family received one of a number of government benefits. The receipt of benefits per se does not imply a low level of activity. Those who receive non-means-tested benefits such as student loans or veterans' benefits, Medicare, or Social Security are at least as active as the public as a whole. In contrast, those who receive means-tested benefits such as AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, or subsidized housing are substantially less active than is the public as a whole. The differences imply that those who would be in most need of government response because they are dependent on government programs are the least likely to make themselves visible to the government through their activity.

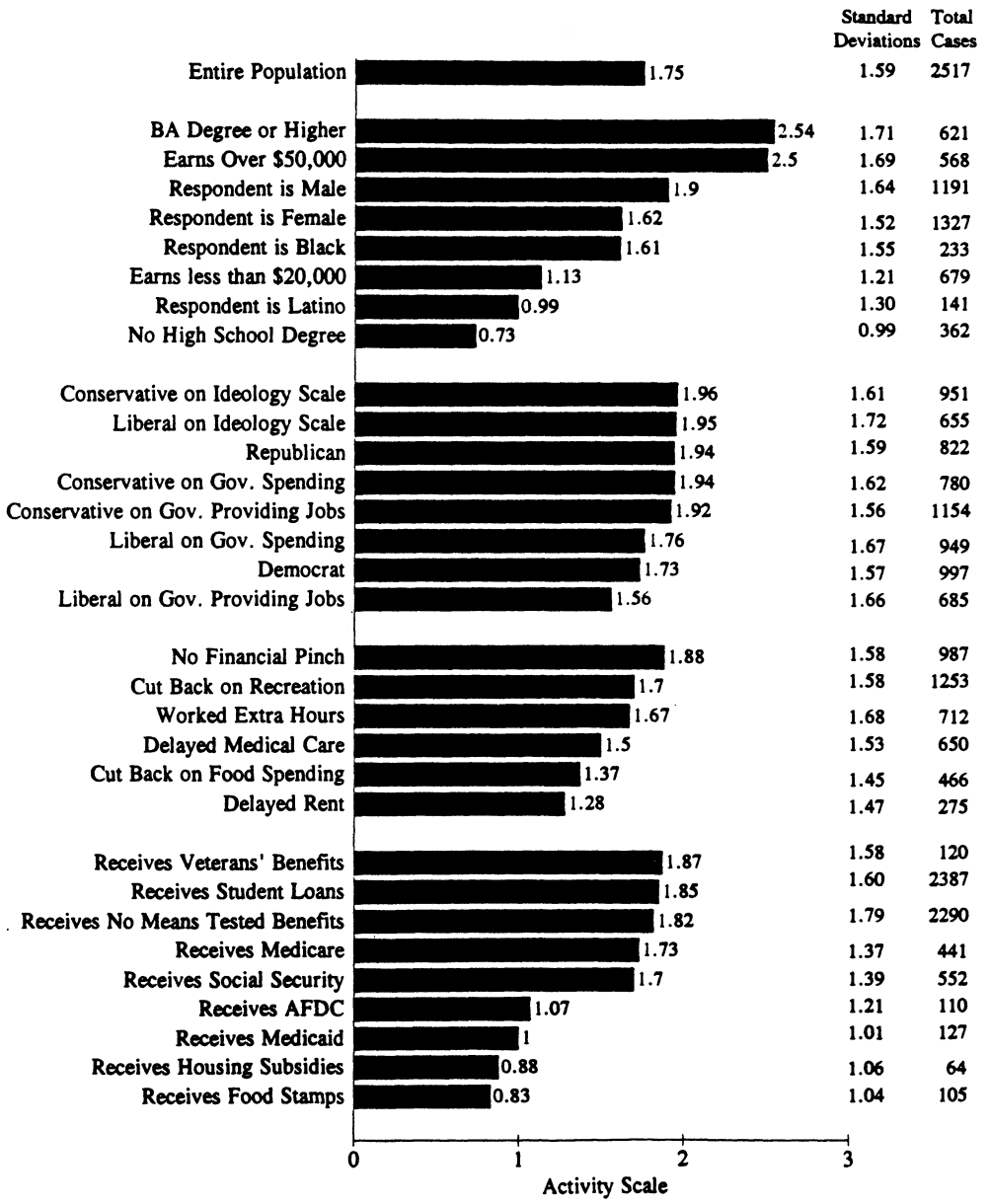
What You Want, Need, and Get—and What You Do

It is useful to decompose the data in Figure 1, in which activity is measured by a summary of several participatory acts, in order to consider the kinds of participation separately. As we have seen, voters do not differ much from nonvoters when it comes to policy preferences. But what about in terms of their actual needs or their actual dependence on government programs? And do those who do more than just vote—who engage in participatory acts that may involve more pressure or convey more information—differ from the population as a whole?

Since it is difficult to compare representation across different activities and different characteristics, we use a summary index of representation based on a generalization of the index developed by Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, 105–14). Our measure of over- and underrepresentation is based on the ratio of the percentage that a particular group is of the activist segment of the population to the percentage that group is of the population as a whole. By taking the log of the ratio, we create a logged representation scale (LRS) with some useful properties. Because the LRS is a dimensionless number like a correlation coefficient or beta weight, one value can be compared with another. Furthermore, it is a symmetrical index: it ranges from plus infinity to minus infinity. An index of zero indicates that a group is represented exactly proportionately; negative numbers, that it is underrepresented; positive numbers, that it is overrepresented. The scores on our LRS scale are the logarithm of the ratio of the likelihood that a group member is in the activist population to the likelihood that any individual is in the activist population. An

FIGURE 1

Mean Activity Score by Demographic Characteristics, Attitudes, Needs, and Receipt of Benefits

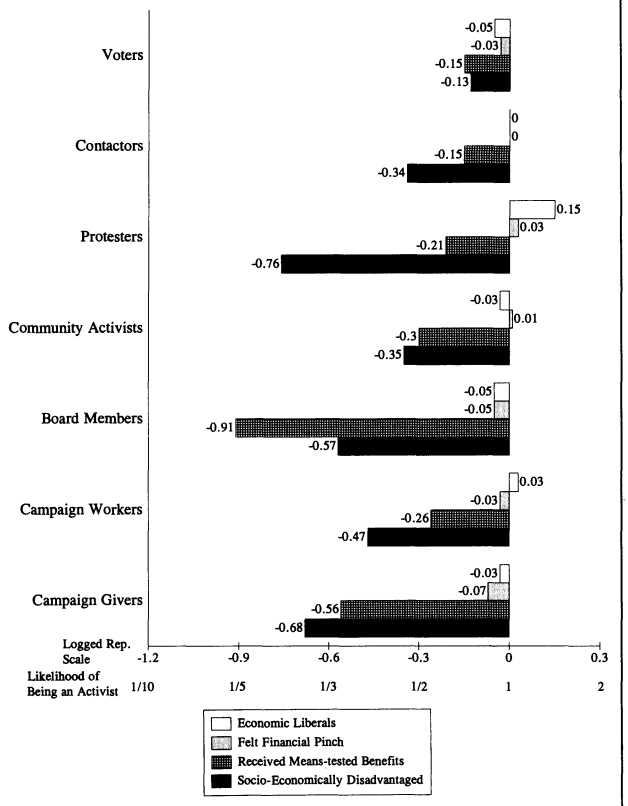


LRS score of .30 indicates that a group member is twice as likely to be in the activist portion of our sample than in the population as a whole; an index of −.30 indicates that the group member is half as likely to be found among the activists. An LRS score of 1 indicates overrepresentation by a factor of 10; −1 indicates underrepresentation by the same amount. To aid in understanding our measure, we put these ratios that indicate the degree of over- and underrepresentation—labeled "likelihood of being an activist"—below the LRS scores on Figure 2 and subsequent figures. (A more complete explanation of this measure is contained in Appendix B.)

Figure 2 reports for various kinds of activity the LRS for groups of individuals defined by their political attitudes on economic issues;[10] circumstance of socio-economic disadvantage;[11] needs (in this case, the need to cut back or delay payment for a necessity such as food, medical care, or housing); and receipt of a means-tested benefit (Medicaid, AFDC, food stamps, or housing subsidies). The degree of over- or underrepresentation is measured for several different activist groups: voters, campaign workers, campaign contributors, contactors, community activists, members of local boards, and protesters. By varying both the *characteristics* of activists and the *activities* through which they can be over- or underrepresented, Figure 2 tells us something about both parts of our puzzle:

FIGURE 2

Representation of Liberal Attitudes, Financial Pinch, Receipt of Means-tested Benefits, and Socio-economic Disadvantage: Logged Representation Scores by Type of Activists



Note: Voting = voted in 1988 presidential election; contacting = contacted an official in the past year; protest = took part in a protest in past two years; community activity = took part in informal community activity or attended a community meeting in past year; board member = served in past two years; campaign work = worked during 1988 campaign; campaign giver = gave a contribution during 1988 campaign.

what characteristics of citizens are better represented through activity and what activities better represent citizen characteristics.[12] It also tells us something about the extent of the under- and overrepresentation. For instance, the top line of the figure tells us that among voters, liberals are represented proportionately to their representation in the population as a whole, those who felt a financial pinch are somewhat underrepresented, and those who receive means-tested benefits are the most underrepresented among voters.

For all kinds of activities, participants represent most accurately the attitudes of individuals as measured by the standard questions. Although economic liberals are twice as likely to have reported attending a protest, they are otherwise represented proportionally among activists. However, when we consider the representation index for differences based on the actual needs of citizens and, even more when we consider the index for differences based on receipt of welfare benefits, we find that the disparities are much greater. There are also significant variations in terms of types of activity. (Figure 2 lists the activities roughly in order of the extent of the disparity between the sample as a whole and the activist population.)

For various activities associated with elections, the voting population and the population of campaign workers are, as we have mentioned, representative of the population at large with respect to attitudes and only somewhat unrepresentative of those who have had to cut back on necessities. However, those who receive means-tested benefits are substantially underrepresented among voters and, especially, among campaign workers. Among campaign contributors, the underrepresentation of those who have had to cut back on necessities or who receive welfare is most pronounced. This is hardly surprising. We would not ordinarily expect those who have severe economic problems to be campaign contributors. But that does not change the substantive implication of that fact for the messages that are received through participatory channels—in this case, one of the most effective and salient channels. Compared with campaign contributors, the underrepresentation of those who have had to cut back or those who receive means-tested benefits in other activist populations is more moderate. The differences, however, are still substantial compared with the representation of policy attitudes.

For three modes of activity that might be particularly relevant for needy citizens (getting in touch with public officials, attending protests and demonstrations, and being active in the community) there is a slight degree of underrepresentation of those who have felt financially strapped. But for those who receive means-tested benefits, the underrepresentation is more severe. Contacting is, presumably, especially important for citizens who receive government benefits, since ensuring the flow of benefits may entail the need to deal with officials. Recipients of means-tested benefits, however, are substantially underrepresented among the contactors. As the form of activity that is often described as "the weapon of the weak," protest is also relevant for disadvantaged groups that lack financial resources or connections; but those receiving a means-tested benefit are underrepresented in that participant population, as well. And the recipients of means-tested benefits are about half as likely to be community activists as their proportion in the population would warrant.

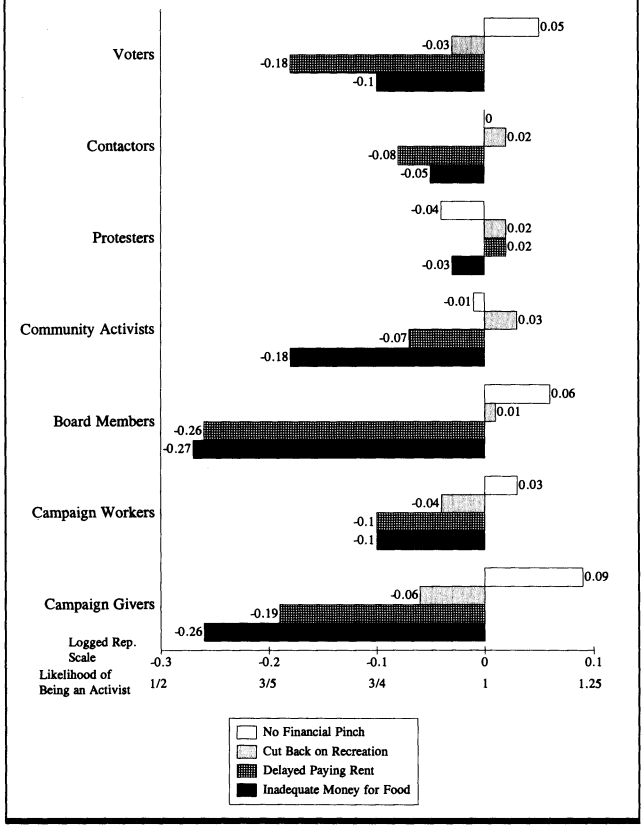
Political acts vary with respect to the number of people who perform them. We might have expected that the smaller the number of people who have engaged in a particular form of participation, the less representative the activist group. Although voters are both the most numerous and the most representative of the activist groups, overall, the pattern does not hold. Much larger proportions of the population reported making campaign contributions than sitting on local boards or attending protests, but the contributors deviate from the population as a whole much more than do the board members or the protesters.

Severity of Financial Need

As Figure 2 shows, those reporting a financial pinch are not as severely underrepresented in political activity as are those who receive means-tested benefits or those who are in the socio-economically disadvantaged category. This is probably the case because those who report such a financial pinch may, given our questions, be reporting a more episodic and less basic economic deprivation. They are a larger proportion of the population than are the other two groups. It is useful to look more closely at those who have cut back on spending in order to refine our analysis of the representation of various participant groups. Not all citizens who have to cut back on spending are needy—at least, not equally needy. In Figure 3 we compare four groups with different levels of economic strain: those who made no cutbacks in expenditures (even for recreation), those who cut back on recreation but nothing else, those who delayed rent or house payments, and those who cut back on the amount or quality of food purchased. (Since the differences between the financially pinched and the population as a whole are not as great as those for receipt of needs-tested benefits, we have expanded the horizontal axis in Figure 3 to make it visually clearer. The reader should note that the differences on Figure 3 are within a narrower range of variation than those on Figures 2 or 4.) Curtailing expenditures for housing or food clearly bespeaks more severe deprivation than economizing on recreation or making no cuts at all. Figure 3 shows that those who took the more drastic measures are less visible in the participant population. They are somewhat underrepresented among the voters and strikingly underrepresented among those who sit on local governing boards or take part or contribute to campaigns. Those who report a shortage of funds for food are even somewhat underrepresented among those who engage in the activity that is supposed to require the fewest resources—protest. The one exception to the underrepresentation of those with severe need is the slight overrepresentation among protesters of those who have had to delay paying their rent.[13]

FIGURE 3

Representation of Various Levels of Need: Logged Representations Scores by Type of Activists



THE VOLUME OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Earlier, we pointed out that the vote is unique among political acts as the one for which there is mandated equality in each citizen's input. We can learn more about the representativeness of participatory input by using the volume of activity, rather than the number of individuals, as the unit of analysis. Presumably, the more active individuals are in any particular way (the more hours they spend working on a campaign, the more letters they write to public officials, the more dollars they contribute), the more visible they and their needs, problems, and preferences become to public officials.

Table 1 shows the proportion of activity (votes, hours devoted to campaign work, total protests attended, contacts with public officials, dollars donated to campaigns) that arises within different segments of the population.[14] We focus on groups differentiated by their attitudes, their receipt of means-tested benefits, and their circumstance of socio-economic advantage or disadvantage. The differences among groups and types of activity are noteworthy. Once again, there is little distortion with respect to attitudes as expressed in response to survey items. With one exception, liberals and conservatives on economic issues are represented roughly proportionally with respect to the volume of input for various kinds of participation. The exception is protest: liberals attend more than their share, conservatives, less than their share, of protests. With respect to the disadvantaged and those who receive means-tested government benefits, the pattern is also familiar. We have already seen that regardless of the form of participation, those who are less well off by a variety of measures are less likely to take part than are those who are better off. When it comes to the amount of participatory input, they are also underrepresented more or less uniformly across activities.

There are, however, striking differences among the various participatory acts, differences that reflect whether the underrepresentation derives simply from the fact that the economically disadvantaged

TABLE 1

Proportion of Votes, Campaign Money, Contacts, and Protests from Various Population Groups

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES	SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS		ATTITUDES		BENEFITS	
	ADVANTAGED	DISADVANTAGED	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL	NON-MEANS-TESTED	MEANS-TESTED
Percentage of sample	17	19	38	30	29	9
Votes[a]						
Activists	26	13	38	34	30	9
Activity	26	13	38	34	30	9
Campaign work						
Activists	36	6	36	40	27	7
Activity	31	7	33	43	30	10
Contributions						
Activists	40	4	40	36	27	4
Activity	65	1	42	35	25	2
Contacts						
Activists	30	7	38	36	28	7
Activity	34	6	38	36	27	6
Protests						
Activists	30	2	28	46	20	7
Activity	31	2	25	52	22	6
N	425	469	945	761	732	227

[a]The principle of one person, one vote dictates that the proportion of activists and activity will be the same for voting.

are less likely to become activists or whether, once active, they also do less (write fewer letters, give less time or money to a campaign, etc.) than activists who are better off. We can differentiate activities in terms of whether they require an investment of money or of time and, if the latter, whether they are performed sporadically or require a commitment of time on a more sustained basis even if over only a short period.

When we compare the proportion of activists that come from any particular group with the proportion of total activity that arises from that group, we find that with respect to activities that require time, the underrepresentation of the disadvantaged seems to spring from the fact that they are less likely to be active. Once active, they do not do less. Indeed, with respect to an activity that requires time on a more sustained basis, getting involved in a campaign, the disadvantaged actually give more hours than activists who are better off. For example, those who receive means-tested benefits constitute 9% of the sample but only 7% of those who worked in a campaign. However, they account for 9% of the total hours volunteered in campaigns.

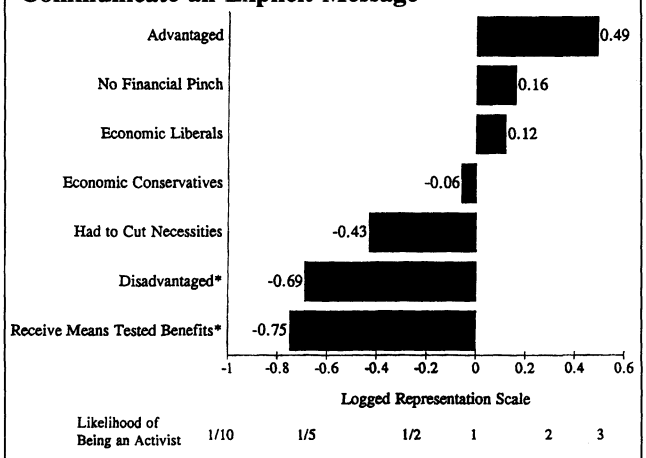
When it comes to total input of money, however, the pattern is very different. Not only are the disadvantaged less likely to make contributions but (not surprisingly) their donations are much smaller when they do. Thus, the 9% of the sample that receives means-tested government benefits make up only 4% of the contributors and a mere 2% of the total dollars contributed. Similarly, those with family incomes below twenty thousand dollars and no education beyond high school are 19% of the respondents but 4% of the campaign donors. They account for only 1% of all dollars. In contrast, those with incomes over fifty thousand dollars and at least some college education constitute 17% of the respondents but fully 40% of the contributors. Their donations make up nearly two-thirds (65%) of all funds collected.

SENDING A MESSAGE

Participatory acts differ not only in the extent to which their volume can be multiplied but also the extent to which they can convey to policymakers detailed information about citizen concerns. Our data allow us to investigate in several ways the communications that accompany political activity. Let us begin by considering one group of activists who join an activity of substantial dimensions with an explicit message. The group is those who contributed $250 or more to a political campaign and who reported that they "communicated to the candidate or to someone involved in running the campaign [their] views on an issue of public policy—for example, about what [they] wanted the candidate to do when in office." Figure 4 indicates how well various subgroups defined by their attitudes and socio-economic circumstances are represented within a group of participants whose activity is high in its potential both for generating pressure and conveying information to candidates. As usual, those with liberal or conservative

FIGURE 4

Representation of the Big Campaign Givers who Communicate an Explicit Message



* The values for the disadvantaged and those that received means tested benefits are only for big campaign givers and not big givers who communicated an explicit message. There were no big givers who communicated a message among the disadvantaged and those that received means tested benefits. The LRS for these groups would be negative infinity.

policy preferences with respect to government provision of jobs or services are roughly proportionally represented among those who make major campaign donations. In contrast, there are substantial deviations from proportionality when it comes to actual circumstances. The advantaged are nearly three times as likely—those who have had to cut back on necessities, roughly half as likely—to appear in this politically potent group as is their proportion of the population. The most marked underrepresentation is found among the disadvantaged and those in households where a family member receives a means-tested benefit.

Political Activity and Program Participation

We have shown that those receiving such means-tested benefits as AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, and subsidized housing are much less active than those receiving such non-means-tested benefits as Social Security, veterans' benefits, or Medicare. We can take the analysis one step further, however, and probe whether these activities are in any way directly connected to these benefit programs and whether, therefore, the government receives more messages about benefits programs from recipients of non-means-tested benefits than from recipients of means-tested benefits.

In our survey we inquired whether recipients of various government benefits had been active *in relation to* that benefit. For each government program for which the respondent was a recipient, we asked: Had they taken that program into account in deciding how to vote? Had they given a campaign contribution based, at least in part, on concern about it? Had they contacted an official to complain about the program? Did they belong to an organization concerned about that program? (This battery of questions was asked of all respondents who indicated that they, or any family member in the household, received a particular government benefit.) Figure 5 presents data on the percentage of the recipients of each benefit who report an activity related to the benefit program. The data are consistent with what we know about the overall activity levels of the recipients of government benefits. For each kind of activity (voting, contributing, contacting, and being a member of an organization) recipients of non-means-tested benefits are more likely to have been active than recipients of means-tested benefits.

The difference is especially striking with respect to membership in an organization associated with the benefit program (with the American Association of Retired Persons and veterans' organizations presumably playing a major role) and with campaign donations. However, it applies, as well, to the considerations that enter into voting decisions.[15] The data on contacting are interesting. We might expect that inclusion in the non-means-tested programs would be more or less automatic and so would require fewer contacts. Nevertheless, Medicare recipients are more likely than Medicaid recipients, and Social Security recipients, more likely than AFDC recipients, to contact about their benefits.[16] Clearly, the government hears more from those on some programs than others; and the ones it hears from are the more advantaged citizens.[17]

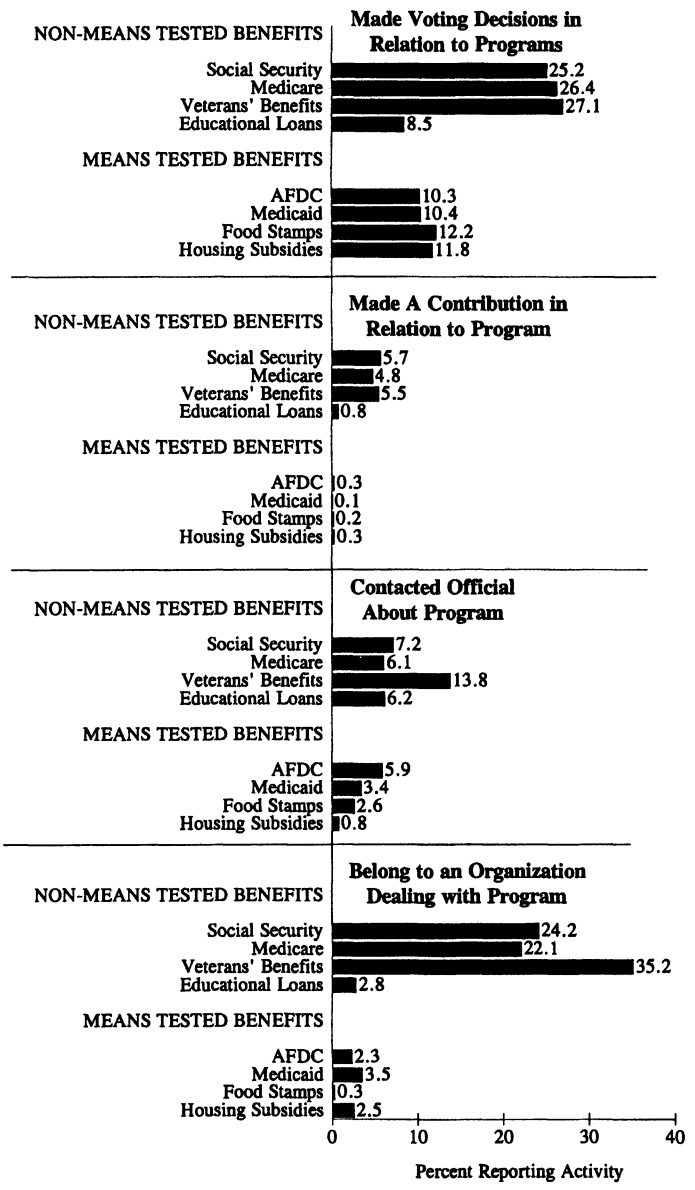
What Do They Say?

We can extend our analysis one step further by examining directly the issue basis of citizen activity. We have probed who is active in what ways, but we have not investigated the substantive content of that activity. Let us now consider what activists actually say.

Earlier we mentioned that political activities differ in their capacity to convey explicit messages to policymakers. For example, votes are limited in their ability to transmit precise information about citizen priorities and preferences in contrast to contacts or protests. Forms of participation also vary in how far those who take part bring public policy concerns to their activity. Each time a respondent indicated having engaged in a particular activity, we inquired whether there was any particular issue or problem, "ranging from public policy issues to community, family, and personal concerns," that led to the activity. Across the totality of more than thirty-seven hundred political acts discussed by our respondents, in 62% of cases, respondents provided a comprehensible, "codable" answer about the policy concerns that animated the activity. Considering some of the acts separately, we find that only 43% of voters (in contrast to 82% of those active in their communities, 87% of contactors, and 95% of protesters) cited at

FIGURE 5

Activities Directly Related to Benefit Programs



least one identifiable public policy issue as the basis of their activity. By analyzing the substantive concerns behind what we shall call "issue-based activity," we can characterize more accurately the representativeness of participatory input.

Table 2 summarizes the subject matter behind the political activity in which a codable issue concern was expressed and compares advantaged and disadvantaged respondents with respect to the issue concerns that animate their participation. In order to ensure that what is on people's minds was actually communicated to public officials, we focus solely on those activities in which an explicit message can be sent: contacting, protesting, campaign work, or contributions accompanied by a communication, informal community activity, or voluntary service on a local board.[18] The issue-based political act is the unit of analysis, and the figures represent the proportion of all issue-based activities for which the respondent mentioned, among other things, a particular set of policy concerns.[19]

Although the advantaged and disadvantaged are similar in having wide-ranging policy concerns, they differ in the distribution of their concerns.[20] Compared with the issue-based activity of the advantaged, that of the disadvantaged is more than twice as likely—that of respondents in families receiving means-tested benefits, four times as likely—to have been animated by concerns about basic human needs, such as poverty, jobs, housing, and health.

TABLE 2

What Respondents Say: Percentage Mentioning Particular Issues as the Subject of Their Activity (Information-rich Activities Only)

ISSUES	POPULATION GROUPS			
	ALL	DISADVANTAGED	ADVANTAGED	RECEIVES MEANS-TESTED BENEFIT
Basic human needs	10	21	8	32
Economic issues	10	5	12	9
Social issues	10	6	12	9
Education	12	10	15	18
Environment	9	2	8	2
Crime or drugs	9	10	6	8
Foreign policy	3	0	3	0
N of respondents	2,517	480	425	228
N of issue-based acts	1,556	123	432	73

Note: Information-rich acts are those in which an explicit message can be sent to policy makers: contacting, protesting, campaign work or contributions accompanied by a communication, informal community activity, and voluntary service on a local board. The numbers in the cells represent the proportion of such acts having identifiable issue content in which there was a reference to the particular issue.

Moreover, their activity is more likely to have been motivated by concern about drugs or crime. The activity of the advantaged, in contrast, is more likely to have been inspired by economic issues such as taxes, government spending, or the budget or by social issues such as abortion or pornography.

When we consider the actual number of communications, however, a very different story emerges. Because the disadvantaged are so much less active than the advantaged, public officials actually hear less about issues of basic human need from the disadvantaged as from the slightly smaller group of advantaged respondents, even though references to basic human needs occupy relatively greater space in the bundle of communications emanating from the disadvantaged.[21]

These findings might suggest that although the disadvantaged are underrepresented with the respect to participatory input, their concerns and needs are, nonetheless, being expressed by others. When the disadvantaged speak for themselves on issues of basic human need, however, their communications differ in two fundamental ways from those sent by others. First, when the disadvantaged communicate with public officials about basic human needs, they are much more likely than the advantaged to be concerned about problems that affect them personally. Even affluent citizens may have need for government assistance with respect to basic human needs. They may have health problems or a handicapped child in school. If elderly, they receive Medicare and Social Security. Still, a much larger proportion of the messages from the disadvantaged about basic human needs involve particularized communications about problems specific to themselves or their families: a question about eligibility for Social Security, a complaint about the conditions in a housing project, a request by a disabled respondent for special transportation. (These are actual examples from our data.)

Such particularized concerns were behind fully 56% of the issue-based activity in which human needs issues were mentioned by the disadvantaged but only 8% of the activity in which they were mentioned by the advantaged. Even when the human needs issue was framed as a policy issue, rather than a particularized concern, the disadvantaged were much more likely to report that the problem was one that affected themselves or their families, as well as others in the community. When discussing basic human needs policy issues, 34% of the disadvantaged and 23% of the advantaged indicated that the issue affected them as well as others. Taken together, of those who communicated to public officials about issues of basic human needs, 71% of the disadvantaged but only 29% of the advantaged were discussing something with an immediate impact upon themselves or their families. It is axiomatic in the literature on lobbying that public officials listen more carefully to self-interested advocates who are affected by the policies they discuss. Presumably, the analogous principle applies to communications from individuals: stories about basic human needs sound different to policymakers when told by those who are in need.

The responses of advantaged and disadvantaged differ even more fundamentally when it come to their actual content. So far, we have concentrated solely on the subjects people talk about without considering what they actually say. The appropriate governmental role in addressing problems of basic human need is an issue about which liberals and conservatives disagree deeply. In Table 3 we differentiate advantaged and disadvantaged respondents in terms of their liberalism or conservatism on economic issues. Overall, the activity of disadvantaged liberals is the most likely to be animated by concerns about issues of basic human needs. Among the advantaged, there is almost no difference between the ideological groups in terms of the proportion of their activity that is inspired by such concerns. However, the activity of

TABLE 3

What Liberal and Conservatives Say: Percentage Mentioning Particular Issues as the Subject of Their Activity (Information-rich Activities Only)

	DISADVANTAGED		ADVANTAGED	
ISSUES	LIBERALS	CONSERVA-TIVES	LIBERALS	CONSERVA-TIVES
Basic human needs	21	17	10	8
Economic issues	7	7	7	17
N of respondents	168	125	98	219
N of issue-based acts	45	38	126	199

Note: Information-rich acts are those in which an explicit message can be sent to policy makers: contacting, protesting, campaign work or contributions accompanied by a communication, informal community activity, or voluntary service on a local board. The numbers in the cells represent the proportion of such acts having identifiable issue content in which there was a reference to the particular issue.

advantaged conservatives is the most likely to spring from concerns about economic issues. Given that there are more than twice as many conservatives as liberals among the advantaged, a majority of the activity from the advantaged on issues of basic human need comes from conservatives. Given that the advantaged are so much more active than the disadvantaged, activity inspired by concerns about basic human needs on the part of advantaged conservatives far outweighs such activity on the part of disadvantaged liberals.

Since the largest share of activity animated by concerns about basic human needs emanates from advantaged conservatives, we should examine just what is said by the activists. Some of the policy statements about human needs clearly take a liberal point of view. Various respondents discussed the issue basis for their activity in terms of, for example, concern about "insufficient effort and expenditure to deal with poverty and other social problems," "a bill to help the homeless," and "the needy people in the United States regardless of race, color, or creed." Other statements were as identifiably conservative. For example, one respondent asserted that "welfare should be done away with." Another discussed protesting against a Puerto Rican family moving into the neighborhood. Still another got involved in a campaign out of a "dislike of big government, welfare state, and big brothers." Not all the policy statements about issues of basic human need could be so readily categorized. Unadorned references to "Social Security," "housing," or "health issues" do not reveal the direction of respondents' preferences.

Close reading of the verbatim responses shows marked differences between what liberals and conservatives say when they discuss policy about basic human needs. Consistent with figures given earlier, among disadvantaged liberals a substantial share—and among disadvantaged conservatives nearly all—mention of basic human needs in conjunction with issue-based activity involves particularized communications. The remaining statements by disadvantaged liberals are divided evenly between those that are not identifiably liberal or conservative and those that are clearly liberal; the few remaining statements by disadvantaged conservatives are ambiguous. Thus, to the extent that disadvantaged respondents, regardless of ideology, made policy statements about basic human needs in association with political activity, none of those statements urge reduced public attention to issues of basic human need.[22]

Among the advantaged, verbatim responses about basic human needs are both more numerous and more likely to focus on policy issues, rather than particularized concerns. Among the liberals, brief recitations of issues without obviously liberal or conservative content account for one-third of the statements. The remaining two-thirds are unambiguously liberal. For advantaged conservatives, the pattern is very different. Half of their issue statements have no identifiable ideological direction, and the other half are divided evenly between clearly liberal and clearly conservative content.

In short, with respect to concerns about basic human needs, information-rich forms of participation carry different kinds of messages from different groups. The issue-based activity of the disadvantaged and recipients of means-tested government benefits is more likely to be inspired by such concerns. However, because these groups are less active, they actually send fewer messages about basic human needs than do more advantaged respondents. The communications from the advantaged differ in two fundamental ways from those sent by the disadvantaged. First, the advantaged are much less likely to be discussing problems that they experience in their own lives. In addition, policy statements from the advantaged are not uniformly supportive of greater efforts to meet problems of basic human needs.

CONCLUSION

We have investigated the consequences for the representativeness of participatory input of the substantial differences among Americans in their propensity to take part. Our analysis has shown that although similar in their preferences as measured by standard NES attitude questions, citizens who are active and those who are not are quite different in their demo-

graphic attributes, their economic needs, and the government benefits they receive. These disparities are exacerbated when we move from the most common political act, voting, to acts that are more difficult, convey more information, and exert greater pressure. With respect to the volume of activity, the disparity is especially great for electoral contributions: the advantaged account for the overwhelming share of the dollars donated to campaigns.

When we examined the issues that animate political participation, we found that while all groups bring diverse concerns to their activity, the particular mixture differs substantially among groups. In terms of a set of issues of particular salience to those who are economically disadvantaged, namely, concerns about basic human needs, the disadvantaged speak with a distinctive voice. Not only do such issues weigh more heavily in their lists of concerns, but when they communicate about these matters to public officials, they are more likely to be discussing issues that touch their own lives and more likely to be prescribing greater public attention to these needs.

If those who take part and those do not were similar on all politically relevant dimensions, then substantial inequalities in participation would pose no threat to the democratic principle of equal protection of interests. As our analysis has demonstrated, this is hardly the case. Those whose preferences and needs become visible to policymakers though their activity are unrepresentative of those who are more quiescent in ways that are of great political significance: although similar in their attitudes, they differ in their personal circumstances and dependence upon government benefits, in their priorities for government action, and in what they say when they get involved. In short, it does matter who participates.

APPENDIX A: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION SAMPLE

Our data come from a two-stage survey of the voluntary activity of the American public. The first stage consisted of over 15,000 telephone interviews of adult Americans conducted by the Public Opinion Laboratory of Northern Illinois University and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) during the last six months of 1989. These screener interviews, which were between 15 and 20 minutes in length, provided a profile of political and nonpolitical activity, as well as basic demographic information. At this stage respondents were selected randomly from phone exchanges matched to the primary sampling units of the NORC national, in-person sampling frame. This clustered phone sample was designed to be representative of the American population. Within each household, adults were chosen at random using a Kish table. To select respondents for a second stage of in-person interviews, the sample of 15,000 was first reweighted to adjust for the fact that the screener had yielded a disproportionate share of women. The sample was then stratified by race and ethnicity (black, Latino, and "all other") and by level and type of political participation. Blacks, Latinos, and political activists were oversampled with weights ranging from 1 for inactive Anglo–Whites to 16 for highly active Latinos. In the spring of 1990, NORC conducted in-person interviews of an average length of almost two hours each with 2,517 of the original 15,000 respondents. All data reported in this paper come from the longer reinterview.

In a complex survey design like this, the effective sample size depends not only upon the weights but also upon the specific statistical technique used, the population concerned, and the question being asked (Skinner, Holt, and Smith 1989). We have followed the standard procedure of reweighting our sample to make it representative (using the reciprocal of the sampling weights) and setting the effective sample size to 2,517. The proportion of each subgroup (e.g., blacks) in the reweighted file is therefore equivalent to their proportion in a representative sample of the population. The number of actual cases in various subgroups of the reweighted file varies beyond the difference in their proportions. Because the sample was designed to oversample activists, blacks, and Latinos, we interviewed more activists and more minorities than their weighted number and proportion in the reweighted file would indicate. Thus, using the weighted number of cases to calculate standard errors for the characteristics of these groups (such as their mean activity on Figure 1) overestimates the amount of uncertainty in our results. On the other hand, since inactive whites were undersampled, there are fewer of them in the reweighted sample than their proportion or reweighted numbers would indicate. Thus, using the reweighted number of cases for inactive whites underestimates the amount of uncertainty.

The most conservative estimate of the actual standard errors can be computed by taking the simple random sample obtained from our data after dropping from each stratum the "extra" cases that come from oversampling. When we do this, we have a simple random sample of about 1,000 embedded within our larger sample. The standard errors for this sample would be [square root(2517/1000) = 1.59] larger than what we estimate. This is an exceptionally conservative estimate. Studies of complex samples suggest that the effective sample size is much more appropriately set at the number of interviews, or 2,517 (Kish and Frankel 1974). Moreover, for many of the subgroups that we examine, such as the samples of activists on Figure 2 (except for voters), we have effective samples that are at least four times greater than the numbers obtained when we reweight to produce a representative sample. Readers of an exceptionally conservative bent might still want to inflate all standard errors by 1.59. This seems excessively cautious, however, because standard errors for participants in all activities except voting should be divided by at least a factor of 2 (square root of 4). On balance, we believe it is easiest (and not at all misleading) to use standard errors based on an assumption that we have a representative sample of 2,517.

APPENDIX B: LOGGED REPRESENTATION SCALE

The basis of LRS can be understood by considering a two-by-two table of some act of participation by some attribute:

	Attribute		
Political Act	Blacks	Whites	Marginal %
Participants	q_{11}	q_{12}	P
Nonparticipants	q_{21}	q_{22}	N
Marginal %	B	W	—

Here, q_{ij} is the percentage of each cell in the total population; and B, W, P, and N are marginal percentages. If participation and being black are unrelated (i.e., if we have equal representation by race), then q_{11} is the product of the marginals: $q_{11} = P * B$. This suggests a representation scale (RS) that is $q_{11}/(P * B)$. Values greater than 1 indicate overrepresentation of blacks relative to their proportion in the population, and values less than 1 indicate underrepresentation. This measure

has an unfortunate feature: it ranges from zero (when q_{11} is zero) to infinity (when P * B is near zero). Taking the logarithm of $q_{11}/(P * B)$ produces the LRS ranging from minus infinity to plus infinity, with zero indicating equal representation.

The LRS has many appealing attributes. First, it has the value zero for the situation in which participation and some characteristic (e.g., being black) are unrelated. Second, the measure has some informative interpretations. The quantity $q_{11}/(P * B)$ can be written as

RS = $q_{11}/(P * B) = (q_{11}/B)/P$
= probability of participation given that one is black/ Probability of being a participant
= $q_{11}/(P * B) = (q_{11}/P)/B$
= Probability of being black given you are a participant/ Probability of being black

The first interpretation is the ratio of the likelihood that a group member is a participant to the likelihood that any individual in the population is a participant. A ratio greater than zero indicates that group members are more likely to be participants than those in the general population and a ratio less than zero indicates the reverse. The second interpretation is the ratio of the likelihood that a participant is a group member to the likelihood that any individual in the population is a group member. A positive ratio indicates that participants are more likely to be group members than those in the general population. The equality of these measures indicates that if blacks are underrepresented among participants, then participants are just as underrepresented among blacks. Finally, the measure provides a way of indexing cells in two-by-two tables according to their representativeness; and it uses all three independent pieces of information in any two-by-two table.

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS USED IN THIS PAPER

Activities

1. In talking to people about elections, we find that they are sometimes not able to vote because they're not registered, they don't have time, or they have difficulty getting to the polls. Think about the presidential elections since you were old enough to vote. Have you voted in all of them, in most of them, in some of them, rarely voted in them, or have you never voted in a presidential election?
2. Thinking back to the national election in November 1988, when the presidential candidates were Michael Dukakis, the Democrat, and George Bush, the Republican, did you happen to vote in that election?
3. Since January, 1988, the start of the last national election year, have you worked as a volunteer—that is, for no pay at all or only for a token amount—for a candidate running for national, state, or local office?
4. Since January, 1988, did you contribute money—to an individual candidate, a party group, a political action committee, or any other organization that supported candidates?
5. In your best estimate, about how much money in total did you contribute since January, 1988? Just give me the letter from this card. [$50 or less, $51–$100, $101–$250, $251–$500, $501–$1,000, $1,001–$2,500, more than $2,501]
6. During the campaign, did you communicate to the candidate or to someone involved in running the campaign your views on an issue of public policy—for example, about what you wanted the candidate to do when in office?
7. In the past twelve months, have you initiated any contacts with a *federal elected* official or someone on the staff of such an official: I mean someone in the White House or a Congressional or Senate Office?
8. What about a non-elected official in a *federal government agency*? Have you initiated a contact with such a person in the last twelve months?
9. What about an *elected* official *on the state or local level*—a governor or mayor or a member of the state legislature or a city or town council—or someone on the staff of such an elected official?
10. And what about a non-elected official in a *state or local government agency or board*? Have you initiated a contact with such a person in the last twelve months?
11. In the past two years, since [current month 1988], have you taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration on some national or local issue (other than a strike against your employer)?
12. Now some questions about your role in your community. In the past *two years*, since [current month 1988], have you served in a voluntary capacity—that is, for no pay at all or for only a token amount—on any official issues such as a town council, a school board, a zoning board, a planning board, or the like?
13. Have you attended a meeting of such an official local government board or council in the past *twelve months*?
14. Aside from membership on a board or council or attendance at meetings, I'd like to ask also about informal activity in your community or neighborhood. In the past twelve months, have you gotten together *informally* with, or worked with, others in your community or neighborhood to try to deal with some community issue for problem? (If you have mentioned this activity elsewhere, perhaps in connection with your church or synagogue, or an organization or local campaign, don't repeat it here.)

Demographics/Policy Views

1. Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino?
2. What is your race? (Which category best describes your racial background?)
3. Did you get a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency test?
4. What is the highest degree you have earned?
5. Which of the income groups listed on this card includes the *total* 1989 income before taxes of *all members of your family living in your home*? Please include all salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income. [If uncertain:] What would be your best guess?
6. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?
7. We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a scale on which the *political* views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?
8. Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point number 1. Others think that the government should just let each person get ahead on his or her own. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale?
9. Some people feel that the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. (Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point number 1.) Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. (Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.) Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Notes

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1. We consider the representativeness of the participatory input from the perspective of a concern with its impact on the communication of citizen needs and preferences to political elites and thus a concern with equal protection of interests. Participation may also perform other functions (e.g., legitimating a regime, increasing popular commitment to democratic values, developing the capacities of those who take part, and enhancing their self-esteem). On these themes, see Bachrach 1967; Barber 1984; Mansbridge 1980, chap. 17; Parry 1972; and Pateman 1970. With respect to voting in particular, see Bennett and Resnick 1990.

2. For discussion of the literature on citizen activity and extensive references, see Bennett and Bennett 1986; Conway 1991; and Milbrath and Goel 1977.

3. The literature on representation is voluminous. The classic theoretical statement is Pitkin 1967. There are several noteworthy studies of delegates to presidential nominating conventions, namely, Jackson, Brown, and Bositis 1982; Jackson, Brown, and Brown 1978; Kirkpatrick 1976, esp. chap. 10; and Miller and Jennings 1986.

4. With respect to presidential elections, data and conclusions similar to Wolfinger and Rosenstone's are contained in Schaffer 1982. Using data from several elections (1984, 1986, and 1988), Bennett and Resnick modify the Wolfinger and Rosenstone conclusion somewhat, finding that although nonvoting "does not skew most foreign policies" and nonvoters "are not more egalitarian than voters, or more hostile to business, or more in favor of extensive government ownership and control of key industries," nonvoting "does have an impact on some domestic policies, especially spending on welfare state programs" (1990, 799). Calvert and Gilchrist (1991) draw similar conclusions. All authors agree, however, that the impact of nonvoting per se does not skew the policy debate very much. Nevertheless, Bennett and Resnick add that while "it may be true that nonvoters' and voters' opinions on many political issues are indistinguishable, it is equally true that large numbers of nonvoters grant enhanced importance to the small number of intense activists" (1990, 800). There is evidence that nonpresidential elections may not adhere to these patterns. In primaries, which engage a smaller and more politicized group than general elections, differences between voters and nonvoters on policy questions seem to be more pronounced. According to Ranney voters in primaries tend to have more extreme preferences than the public at large (1975, 129).

5. While acknowledging the impossibility of imputing political preferences to those who might be assumed to share political concerns, students of organized interests demonstrate that certain kinds of interests are especially likely to achieve representation in pressure politics and that certain groups with potential political interests (e.g., the unemployed, homemakers, and welfare recipients) are not represented at all among the organizations active in Washington. Just because a particular interest achieves strong representation by a well-endowed organization does not, of course, mean that it will necessarily prevail in political controversies. However, while vigorous advocacy by an organization cannot guarantee political victory, it never seems to hurt; and absence from the fray is a disadvantage. The seminal statement of this point of view is Schattschneider 1960. More recent considerations of these matters include McFarland 1992; Salisbury 1991; and Schlozman and Tierney 1986.

6. There are many linkage studies that combine data about constituents and representatives. On the disputes in the measurement of linkage see, e.g., Achen 1977 and Eulau and Karps 1977. Erikson and Wright 1989 provide citations to the many studies that find a positive relationship between constituent characteristics and preferences and the roll-call behavior of legislators. Other studies, using a variety of approaches, demonstrate the responsiveness of elected officials to the views of active constituents, especially activists who have supported them. See, e.g., Bullock and Brady 1983; Fenno 1978; Huddleston 1984; Markus 1974; Mayhew 1974; and Verba and Nie 1972. Although these studies are suggestive for the issues raised here, they do not provide a definitive characterization of the characteristics (attitudes, economic circumstances, demographic characteristics) that officials are likely to note when they observe their constituency and try to infer its needs and preferences.

7. Note that the referent in the questions about government benefits was the respondent or any immediate family member living in the household. In the text we shall, in the name of parsimony, refer frequently to "food stamp recipients" or "those who receive veterans' benefits" when, in fact, it may be another family member in the household who receives the benefits. Also note that although there is a means test for student loans, we are categorizing them with nonmeans-tested benefits. The level of permissible income for student loans is much higher than for other means-tested benefits such as food stamps or AFDC, and the beneficiaries are not located primarily among the poor.

8. The scale includes the following activities, with proportions engaging in them in parentheses: voting in the 1988 presidential election (70%); working in a campaign in the 1988 election cycle (8%); making a campaign contribution in the 1988 election cycle (24%); contacting a government official within the past year (34%); attending a protest, march, or demonstration within the past two years (6%); working informally with others in the community to deal with some community issue or problem within the past year (25%); and serving in a voluntary capacity on a local governing board or attending meetings of such a board on a regular basis within the past two years (3%).

9. Unfortunately, we did not screen for salience when we asked respondents about policy issues or ask respondents to list the issues that are most important to them. Similarities or differences on such measures would be relevant to the question of the representativeness of participatory input. We shall, however, report data about the issues that animated political activity and the actual messages that activists send.

10. We define liberals and conservatives by responses to two seven-point NES items—policy view questions 8 and 9—listed in Appendix C. Liberals are those who were either on the liberal side of the scale on both items or on the liberal side on one item and in the middle on the other. Conservatives are those who were either on the conservative side of the scale on both items or on the conservative side on one item and in the middle on the other.

11. We define the advantaged as those with at least some college education and a family income over fifty thousand dollars. We define the disadvantaged as those with no education beyond high school and family incomes below twenty thousand dollars. These are groups of roughly equal size representing about one-sixth of the sample each.

12. In order to move through a large amount of data, we present, in Figure 2, the representation index for those who take a liberal position on policy and those who manifest some economic need or receive some welfare benefit from the government. The argument would not be any different if we had looked at the other side of the divide—those with conservative views and those who do not receive such benefits.

13. It was suggested to us that rent strikes were responsible for the slight overrepresentation of those who delayed paying rent or house payments among protesters. We asked all those who reported attending a protest or demonstration what the issue was. None of those who delayed rent or house payments mentioned anything related to housing as the issue at stake in the protest.

14. We asked our respondents not only whether they were active in a particular way but, if active, how much they did. For voting, of course, each voter is responsible for only one vote. We asked those active in campaigns or community politics the average number of hours per week devoted to the effort. We inquired about the precise number of protests but not about the number of contacts. However, we did ask about getting in touch with four different kinds of public officials, thus creating the opportunity for up to four contacts. Finally, we queried respondents about the total amount given to political campaigns during the 1988 campaign year.

15. It has been suggested to us that the seeming salience of entitlement programs for voting decisions is only a reflection of the fact that political leaders have drawn attention to these programs in campaigning and thus tells us more about political leaders than about citizens. However, the fact that candidates make promises about protecting Social Security or veterans' benefits but not about means-tested benefits may be a reflection of what they are hearing from citizens and the organizations to which they belong.

16. Student loans are an exception. There is relatively little activity in relation to student loans. However, there is still more activity in relation to student loans than in relation to most means-tested programs.

17. One alternative explanation might be that the recipients of such non-means-tested benefits as Medicare and Social Security are elderly. For the elderly, certain private strategies for dealing with economic difficulties (e.g., seeking additional employment) are less feasible, putting a premium on political activity as a means of coping with problems. However, if we control for age and compare the level of activity between the recipients of the two kinds of benefits, a disparity remains, as the following table of mean activity rate among benefit recipients shows:

Age	Non-means-tested	Means-tested
Under 40	1.8	1.4
41–65	2.2	1.4
Over 66	2.0	1.5

The difference between the activity rates of the two types of benefit recipients is a function, in part, of education. Those receiving means-tested benefits are, on average, less well educated than those receiving non-means-tested benefits. Controlling for education, we find that among those with no college education, the recipients of means-tested benefits are less active than the recipients of the non-means-tested benefits across all four activities measured on Figure 5. However, among those with at least some college, the two types of benefits recipients are similar in their likelihood of contacting, or in the likelihood that they will take into account the position of, a candidate on the benefit program when deciding how to vote. The means-tested recipients in this educational group are, however, still substantially less likely to make a campaign contribution or the belong to an organization related to the program. Our point is not, however, to argue that receipt of means-tested benefits causes low levels of activity but, rather, to demonstrate that a group that is dependent upon the government is, by virtue of its lack of education or any other factors, less active in expressing its concerns and therefore less visible to public officials.

18. Thus, we omit voting, attending meetings of a local board on a regular basis, and campaigning for (or contributing to) a candidate or electoral organization when the activity is not accompanied by an explicit message.

19. It should be noted that the categories in Table 2 are not exhaustive. Issue concerns ranging from gun control to local economic development have been omitted from the table. If the universe of issue concerns had been included, the figures in each column would add to more than 100%. A single political act is often inspired by more than one issue concern. The contactor who expressed concern about "public housing, teenage pregnancy, and the child care bill" would have been coded as mentioning three separate issues.

20. In coding the open-ended responses we created over 60 relatively narrow categories. In analyzing the data, we have combined these narrow categories in various ways. The components of the categories in Table 2 are as follows:

Basic human needs. Various government benefits (welfare, AFDC, food stamps, housing subsidies, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid); unemployment (either as an economic issue or in terms of the respondent's own circumstances); housing or homelessness; health or health care; poverty or hunger; aid to the handicapped or handicapped rights.

Economic issues. Local or national economic performance; taxes; inflation; budget issues or the budget deficit; government spending; other economic issues.

Social issues. Traditional morality; abortion; pornography; family planning, teenage pregnancy, sex education, or contraception; school prayer; gay rights or homosexuality.

Education. Educational issues (school reform, school voucher plans, etc.); problems or issues related to schooling of family members; guaranteed student loans.

Environment. Specific environmental issues (e.g., clean air, toxic wastes) or environmental concerns in general; wildlife preservation; animal rights.

Foreign policy. Relations with particular nations or to foreign policy in general; defense policy or defense spending; peace, arms control, or international human rights issues.

Note that many of the categories encompass respondents with quite different issue positions. For example, the social issues category includes many respondents who are not social conservatives such as those who are prochoice, rather than prolife, or those who are concerned about making contraceptives more easily available to teenagers.

21. That the number of issue-based acts per respondent is so much lower for the disadvantaged than for the advantaged is largely a function of their lower rates of activity. Among activists, the disadvantaged are as likely to cite issue concerns in conjunction with issue-based, information-rich activity as are the advantaged.

22. This paragraph, based on a close reading of actual verbatim responses, focuses upon policy-based activity and omits particularized activity. We do not give precise figures because we read each response as a unit without applying sample weights. Because the data are unweighted, the actual number of verbatims is higher than the numbers given in Table 3.

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