Pathways to Participation

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The premise of this article is that adult participation in politics is affected by strong preadult forces in addition to the contemporaneous factors emphasized by recent studies. To test this premise, data are drawn from the 1965-1973 national socialization panel study of young Americans and their parents. Four causal models depicting pathways to participation among young adults are evaluated; each includes civic orientations as intervening variables. Three of the models assess the direct and indirect effects of parental characteristics—socioeconomic status, political activity, and civic orientations. The fourth model assesses the impact of adolescent involvement in high school activities. Taken individually, each pathway is shown to have an effect on adult participation, with parent socioeconomic status and high school activism having the most impact. When the four pathways are combined in a single model to reflect the connections among them, all remain important. The combined model illustrates the importance of a variety of methods of political learning. The combined model also demonstrates the crucial role of civic orientations in converting preadult experiences into later participation. Civic orientations are the primary carriers of preadult political learning. Overall, the results rebut the critics of socialization research who have questioned the existence of a linkage between early learning and adult political behavior.

The central premise of political socialization research is that preadult political socialization affects adult political attitudes and behavior. While cognate disciplines may be interested in childhood orientations per se, the compelling justification for a political science interest in the preadult's political world is that understanding of that world can yield useful insights into adult political orientations. Working from this premise, the study of political socialization flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s.

With time, new research frontiers become more familiar and consequently less exciting, in no small measure due to the resolution of key research questions; but they can also languish with the widespread questioning of their underlying assumptions. Both fates have befallen the study of political socialization. Many of the original research questions have been answered, and attention has turned to other research frontiers. Additionally, researchers in the field have failed to rebut challenges to certain key assumptions, thus raising doubts about the theoretical foundations of the field itself.

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Among the most vigorous of the challenges to assumptions underlying the study of political socialization is the work of Donald Searing and his colleagues (Searing, Schwartz, and Lind, 1973; Searing and Schwartz, 1974; Searing, Wright, and Rabinowitz, 1976; see also Marsh, 1971). Their work shows the weak conceptualization and underlying myopia of some political socialization research and raises serious questions about the extent to which preadult learning enjoys primacy over later adult learning or structures adult political orientations. Some persuasive defenses have been erected against the Searing challenge (Clarke and Kenski, 1974; Greenstein, 1974; Rapoport, 1981). In the absence of longitudinal data connecting childhood to adulthood, however, neither challengers nor defenders have been able to employ *direct* tests of the assumptions in question.

One area in which preadult political socialization may influence adult political behavior is political participation. Research on participation has been dominated to date by perspectives drawn from analysis of cross-sectional data. The pioneering work of Verba and Nie (1972) follows this approach in its emphasis on contemporaneous factors—*e.g.*, social status, civic attitudes, organizational involvement, group consciousness, and age—to explain participation. Milbrath and Goel's (1977) survey of the determinants of participation adopts the same approach and il-

lustrates even more fully the dependence of participation research on correlations between activity and contemporary factors.

This approach neglects important alternative explanations for political participation, especially those in which current participative behavior is viewed as a product of preadult political learning. Viewing political participation from a socialization perspective offers the possibility of detecting preadult structuring for an important form of political behavior, which supports one key assumption in political socialization research and broadens our understanding of the determinants of participation.

Here we adopt the longitudinal perspective necessary to specify the effects of preadult socialization on adult political activity. Knowledge of the orientations and behavior of young adults during their adolescence eight years before, and those of their parents at that time, enables us to estimate pathways to young adult participation through the socialization process. In particular, we shall evaluate the contributions to the political participation of young adults that stem from parent socioeconomic status, parent political participation, parent civic orientations when the child was still in the home, and the young adult's participation in high school activities eight years earlier.

The data base for this analysis is a two-wave panel study of young Americans and their parents. The first wave is a representative cross-section sample of high school seniors and their parents, personally interviewed in the spring of 1965. The second wave, conducted in early 1973, consists of personal interviews with 1,119 of the youths and 1,118 of their parents as well as mail questionnaires for 229 youths and 61 parents.[1] Our attention is restricted to the 1,272 parent-child cases containing observations of the youths at each time and of the parents in 1965. For convenience we will refer to the "children" in 1965 as youths or adolescents and in 1973 as young adults.

These data are well suited for examining, in longitudinal fashion, the contributions of childhood socialization to young adult participation. They allow direct measurement of important factors in the socialization process: the attitudes and behavior of parents when the child was still in the home and of the children as late adolescents. These materials also embrace virtually the full range of significant participation for young adults as they aged from 17-18 to 25-26. Finally, the data contain extensive information on the young adults in 1973.

The political participation measure used in the study is an additive index based on nine different activities. Five of these reflect involvement in election campaigns from 1965 to 1973, including referenda and contests for public office at all levels, by means of persuading others how to vote, attending meetings or rallies, displaying buttons or bumper stickers, donating money, and doing any other type of campaign work. The four remaining items cover nonelectoral activities performed at any previous time: writing letters to the editor, contacting public officials, engaging in protests or demonstrations, and working with others to solve community problems. Although these activities represent several different modes of participation, they are sufficiently similar to be combined into a unidimensional index of political activity.[2]

The technique of path analysis, using standardized path coefficients, is employed to estimate the models developed below. Because of the special properties of the data, such as their longitudinal and parent-child pair characteristics, the linkages can be assumed to be unidirectional and can be estimated by recursive path modeling techniques. Although we recognize the perils of imputing causality, we shall interpret the results of the path analysis in cause-effect terms. Our data permit the strongest assumptions about causality that can be made in nonexperimental research.

The following analysis develops and tests four socialization models of political participation. The first three models conceive of adult participation as influenced by parents through their socioeconomic status, political activity, and civic orientations. These models illustrate a variety of ways, through different mechanisms of socialization, in which parents may contribute to the outlooks and behaviors of their offspring. The fourth model involves another important agent of political

[1]The study was conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan under the direction of M. Kent Jennings. The 1965 youth and parent samples represent the populations of 1965 high school seniors and their parents, respectively. Reinterview rates of 81 percent for the youths and 75 percent for the parents, as well as insubstantial differences in 1965 characteristics between those reinterviewed and not reinterviewed in 1973 (see Jennings and Niemi, 1981, Appendix A), asssure us that the 1973 samples represent these same populations well eight years later. The data are now available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (study number 7779.)

[2]All nine activities were intercorrelated substantially with one another ($r \geqslant .35$) and loaded well ($\geqslant .35$) on the first factor in a principal component factor analysis. See Beck and Jennings (1979) for an extensive discussion of the construction of this measure.

socialization, the school, in positing that adult political activity is fostered by earlier involvement in extracurricular activities. These certainly are not the sole means of political socialization, but careful examination of them should suffice to show whether the seeds of adult political activity are planted by preadult socialization experiences and to suggest, more generally, how the political socialization process contributes to adult political attitudes and behavior.

The Intergenerational SES Model

Several decades of empirical research have established socioeconomic status as a major determinant of political participation. Higher-status people have been found to be more active in politics than lower-status people regardless of how status is measured (Milbrath and Goel, 1977) or of the political system under study, except where political conditions lead to the mobilization of low-status groups (Nie, Powell, and Prewitt, 1969; Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1978). Status differentials in participation seem the normal condition of political life.

Although attributes of status per se may facilitate participation, it is generally conceded that status represents factors tied more directly to activism. Verba and Nie (1972) identify civic orientations as the most important of these factors. Civic orientations increase the psychological benefits of and the attitudinal resources for participation. Civic orientations in turn are thought to be strongly influenced by socioeconomic status, especially education. Although these orientations cannot account fully for the empirical relationship between status and participation, they explain a sizable portion of it.

An SES model of political activity, with civic orientations as mediating variables, is employed by Verba and Nie (1972) as the primary predictor of participation and as a baseline against which to gauge the effects of other factors. After the Verba and Nie study, what they titled "the standard SES model" stood as the foremost explanatory model of participation.

While the standard SES model is not our principal concern, we have estimated its parameters for the young adults in order to compare them with the Verba and Nie results. The socioeconomic status of the young adults is measured by respondent educational achievement alone, because neither income nor occupation is a meaningful indicator of SES at this life stage. The young adult civic orientations measure combines political efficacy, political knowledge, and political interest.[3]

The SES model fits the young adults quite well. Socioeconomic status has a substantial direct effect on participation ($\beta = .27$). It also has a sizable indirect effect through civic orientations: the path from status to civic orientations is $\beta = .30$, whereas that from civic orientations to young adult participation is $\beta = .29$. Compared with the results of the Verba-Nie study for all ages, however, the effects of socioeconomic status for the young adults are substantially less mediated through civic orientations.

This analysis illustrates the importance of socioeconomic status for participation in the earliest stages of adulthood. Even before many of these young adults have settled down, educational attainment is strongly related to political activity. It is reassuring that the Verba and Nie result is replicated for this unique age cohort and time period. This finding is all the more significant in light of the restricted variation in education within the youth sample. By sampling from the population of high school seniors in 1965, the quarter of the age cohort who had dropped out of school is eliminated. Their absence may restrict the role of civic orientations in the status-participation relationship.

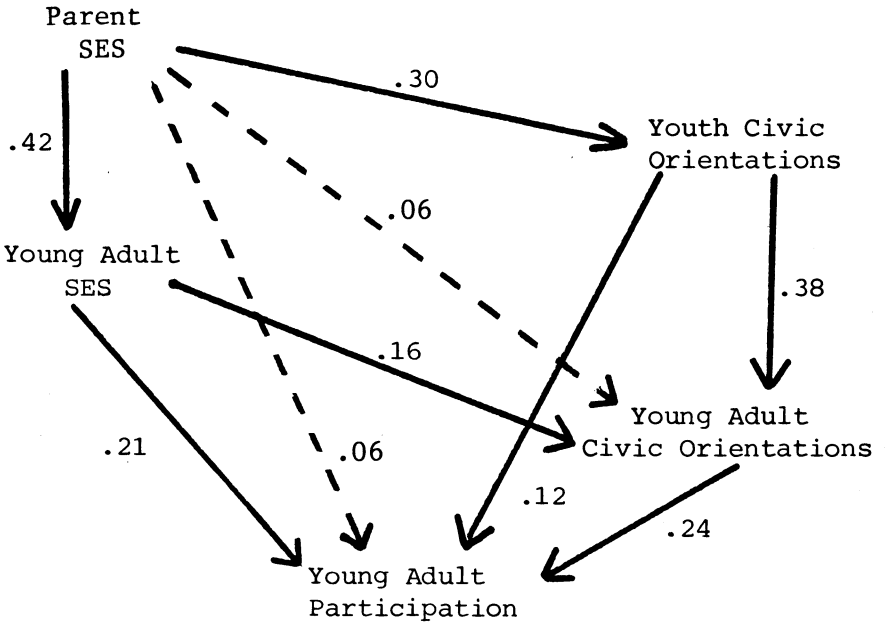
The parent-child socialization panel enables us to move beyond this static SES model to investigate the preadult precursors to adult political activity. In large part, this investigation leads us away from a focus on status variables towards explicitly political forces in childhood socialization. Yet even a status explanation of adult political activity can be enriched by consideration of preadult forces, namely the parental contribution to young adult SES. One of the verities of social life is the stability of socioeconomic status across generations (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Featherman and Hauser, 1978). Parent SES may be a powerful force behind the operation of the standard SES model.

Parent SES can contribute to offspring political

[3]The civic orientations measure is the sum of the standardized scores on a single-item measure of political interest, a six-question political knowledge test, and a two-item index of the subjective competence (or internal efficacy) component of political efficacy (Balch, 1974). The civic orientations measures for youths and parents are constructed in parallel fashion. In each the three components are significantly related to one another and load well enough on the first factor of a principal component factor analysis to be combined into a single index. For young adults, $r \geq .22$ and all loadings exceed .24; for youths, $r \geq .28$ and all loadings exceed .51; and for parents, $r \geq .31$ and all loadings exceed .53.

activism in several ways. As suggested above, it is an important determinant of the offspring's own SES. The effects of parent socioeconomic status also may be reflected in child-rearing practices. Lipset (1960), among others, has identified social class variations in child-rearing practices and has shown how middle-class practices contribute to the development of conventional democratic political orientations. This hypothesis is supported by evidence of a relationship between SES and political efficacy found as early as ages eight and nine for American children (Easton and Dennis, 1967). Finally, parent SES may influence the child's political orientations through placement of the child in a social milieu which encourages civic attitudes and involvement (Connell, 1972).

These theoretical expectations are formalized in the intergenerational SES model presented in Figure 1. This model extends the standard SES model by adding measures of parent SES and preadult civic orientations. Parent socioeconomic status is operationalized as educational attainment of the head of the household. Education is used to maximize equivalence with the young adult measure. Head of household education is adopted because it is a more valid indicator of family SES in the parental generation than is respondent education. The youth civic orientations measure combines the child's political efficacy, knowledge, and interest in 1965 (see Footnote 3).



Source: 1965-73 Parent-Child Socialization Panel, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

*Entries are the standardized regression or path coefficients estimated for the model depicted by the arrows. Solid lines indicate significance at the .01 level. Dashed lines indicate an estimated path coefficient that was insignificant. Residual path coefficients are not shown. The R^2 of young adult participation on all predictor variables is .23.

Effects of Parent Socioeconomic Status

Direct = .06
Indirect (through civic orientations) = .08
Indirect (through young adult status) = .10
Total = .06 + .08 + .10 = .24

Figure 1. The Intergenerational SES Model*

Parents exert a substantial influence on young adult political participation through the intergenerational SES model. These effects are in large part indirect, carried by both the child's civic orientations and SES. While the indirect effects through young adult SES exceed those through civic attitudes, both are sizable. Direct effects of parent status fail to attain significance at the .01 level.

This analysis establishes the *intermediate* role of the standard SES model in explaining political activity. Neither socioeconomic status nor civic orientations spring to life upon attainment of adulthood. Rather, the roots of both lie in parent socioeconomic status and the economic, social, psychological, and political resources for later life that it provides. This requires some revision in interpretations of the standard SES model. In particular, these interpretations must recognize that political orientations develop prior to the attainment of adult socioeconomic status and that this fact raises serious questions about the impact of the respondent's own status. The standard SES model is only the most recent chapter in the story of the development of adult political participation.

The Parent Civic Orientations Model

The intergenerational SES model describes a pathway to participation that is nonpolitical in nature. An alternative approach to parental influence, potentially as rewarding in explaining why adults participate in politics, is to focus attention on explicitly political characteristics of parents and preadult family life.

The seeds for later participation may be sown directly through the process of *political* socialization with parents playing the leading role. The participation of young adults is linked to their civic orientations. These civic orientations may be as much the legacy of childhood political socialization as the products of socioeconomic status. Parental political involvement and civic competence may be transmitted to offspring through traditional socialization mechanisms. In particular, highly politicized parents may foster a family atmosphere charged with positive civic orientations, thus endowing their children with the motivational prerequisites for later participation. In sum, one pathway to participation may lie through the intergenerational transfer of political attitudes.

These theoretical expectations are formalized in the parent civic orientations model presented in Figure 2. The measure of parent civic orientations in this model combines political interest, political knowledge, and the subjective competence component of political efficacy (see Footnote 3). Parent data are from 1965, when the child lived in the home.

The estimates for this model show that parent civic orientations influence significantly the participation of children as young adults eight years later. Parental outlooks apparently leave a lasting impression that can be translated later into political activity. This influence is largely indirect. Parent civic orientations in 1965 were related to the orientations of their children as high school seniors in the same year. In turn, these childhood orientations contributed to subsequent political activity, both directly and through young adult civic orientations. The most important compound path is the longest: from parents through youth orientations to young adult orientations then on to participation. Parent civic orientations also enjoyed a significant direct, or unmediated, impact on young adult political activities.

These results trace the roots of adult political activity to the child's political world—before the citizen's involvement in the adult world of politics. The primary influence here can be attributed to parents, long considered the foremost agents of political socialization (Beck, 1977). That influence, furthermore, seems to be carried by explicitly political orientations—the first indication in our study that *political* socialization structures subsequent adult behavior.

Our data cannot reveal the mechanisms through which parental orientations toward civic involvement influence their offspring, but we can picture how this might occur. Parent civic orientations may set the tone of family discourse on politics. Parent interest probably promotes discussion of politics in the home, awakening the child's interest in the world of politics. Parent political knowledge can enhance the child's own understanding of politics in these discussions. Less cognitively based orientations, such as political efficacy, probably are transmitted less consciously by parents, but they are no less likely to be included in the attitudinal baggage the young carry with them into adulthood.

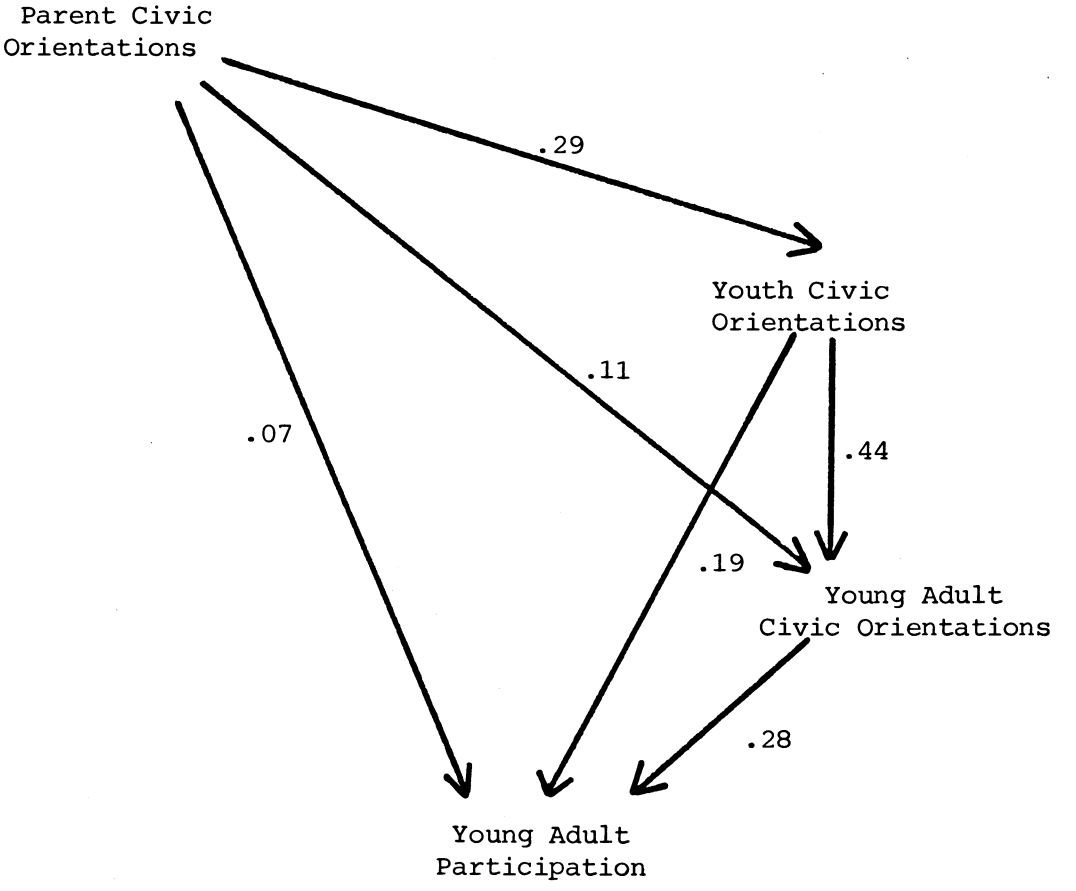
The Parent Political Participation Model

Another possible source of parent political influence is parent political involvement itself. Through the mechanism of imitation, the offspring of activists may adopt an activist stance themselves. Biographical accounts of famous political leaders and period pieces on student radicals in the youth generation (Keniston, 1968) are replete with examples of people who have followed in their parents' footsteps by becoming political activists. Imitation surely is not the only mechanism operating in these families. Parent political activity may affect children's attitudes

about politics and consequently their participation. Thus, there is good reason to build civic orientations into this model too, in order to capture effects of parental participation that may be mediated through the child's orientations toward political life.

These theoretical expectations are assessed in the parent political participation model presented in Figure 3. Parent participation is measured by the number of campaign activities performed by the parent.[4] Although the measure is restricted to only one of three recognized dimensions of non-

[4]The six campaign activities are attempting to influence others, attending rallies, belonging to political clubs, using campaign buttons or stickers, donating money, and performing any other campaign-related activities. These activities are significantly intercorrelated ($r \geq .24$) and fall on the first dimension (loadings $\geq .52$) of a principal component factor analysis. As a result



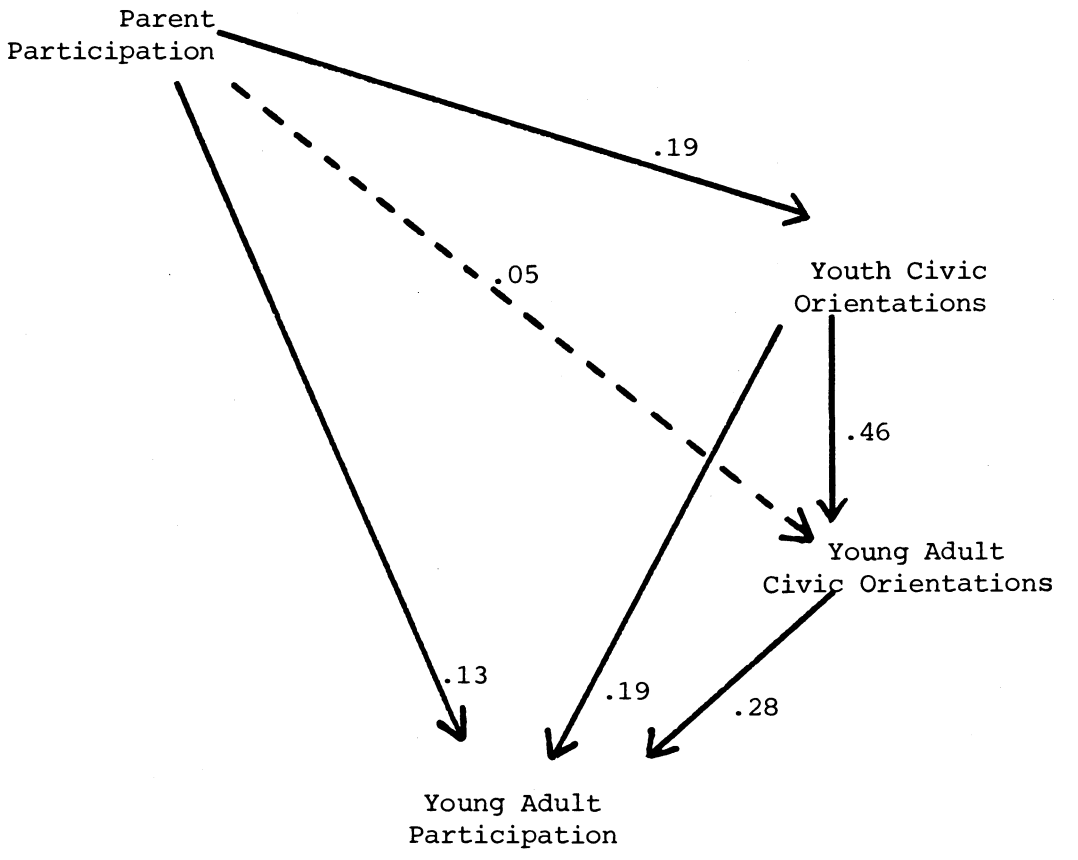
Source: 1965-73 Parent-Child Socialization Panel, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

*Entries are the standardized regression or path coefficients estimated for the model depicted by the arrows. Solid lines indicate significance at the .01 level. Dashed lines indicate an estimated path coefficient that was insignificant. Residual path coefficients are not shown. The R^2 of young adult participation on all predictor variables is .19.

Effects of Parent Civic Orientations

Direct = .07
Indirect (through youth civic orientations) = .06
Indirect (through young adult civic orientations) = .07
Total = .07 + .06 + .07 = .20

Figure 2. The Parent Civic Orientations Model*



Source: 1965-73 Parent-Child Socialization Panel, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

*Entries are the standardized regression or path coefficients estimated for the model depicted by the arrows. Solid lines indicate significance at the .01 level. Dashed lines indicate an estimated path coefficient that was insignificant. Residual path coefficients are not shown. The R^2 of young adult participation on all predictor variables is .20.

Effects of Parent Participation

Direct = .13
Indirect (through civic orientations) = .07
Total = .13 + .07 = .20

Figure 3. The Parent Political Participation Model*

electoral political activity, making it narrower than that for the young adults, the campaign activities dimension is highly representative of political participation in general. It was strongly correlated (r = .88) with overall participation in the Verba and Nie study (1972, p. 75).

The path coefficients for this model provide evidence of substantial parent contributions to young adult political activity through the parent's own political participation. The direct effects are twice the indirect effects, suggesting that pure imitation without an attitudinal boost is a powerful socialization force in this case. Yet parent participation does exert some indirect impact on young adult activity by stimulating the development of civic orientations. Interestingly, the indirect effects are slightly stronger when relayed through youth civic orientations rather than through the contemporaneous young adult orientations. These relationships, however, are of

they can be combined into a single measure. Unfortunately, information on noncampaign participation was not collected for the parents in 1965.

modest strength. Parents are often active without any apparent impact on child civic orientations, and children develop positive civic orientations in the absence of parent participation.

The parent political participation model contributes to an understanding of young adult political activity, rivaling the parent civic orientation model in total effects. Neither is as successful, though, as the parent socioeconomic status model. One reason is that their key variables are not gauged as well as is status. For one thing, the participation or civic orientations of one parent may not reflect the levels of the other (Jennings and Niemi, 1971; Niemi, Newman, and Weimer, 1981). By contrast, parent SES is shared by both parents, particularly since it has been measured by the status of the head of the household. The measure of status, education, also surely is more reliable than the measures of political attitudes and activity.

The School Activities Model

We have examined the influence of parents on young adult political activity from several perspectives. Parents, though, are not the only contributors to the preadult's political learning. The school is another important agent of political socialization (Beck, 1977; Hess and Torney, 1967; Jennings, 1980; Merelman, 1980; Sigel and Hoskins, 1981). American schools have been assigned special responsibilities for civic education, highlighted by their mandate to Americanize the children of immigrants who flooded large cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the earlier grades, classroom life is full of rituals designed to inculcate in children such valued political orientations as patriotism, allegiance, and support for democratic norms. In later grades, virtually all schools require courses in government or civics, as well as American history, usually under the mandate of state law. Secondary schools also offer a variety of extracurricular activities and permit a degree of student self government on the assumption that schools can and should serve as laboratories for civic training.

For all their attention to civic training, it is doubtful that most school efforts can account for differences in adult political participation. Curriculum and classroom rituals are relatively uniform throughout American schools. Experiences shared by all can not explain wide variations in political activity. Nor does the quantity of these experiences seem to matter. The sheer number of civics courses taken bears little relationship to student political orientations, primarily because their content is redundant for all but a few students (Jennings, Langton, and Niemi, 1974; Ehman, 1969), and it exhibits no relationship to young adult political participation in our study ($r = .00$).

A more likely source of school influence on political participation is the extracurricular life of the school. The voluntary nature of these activities and the limited number of leadership roles produces a wide range of involvement levels. This form of school civic training clearly can be received differentially rather than uniformly.

Involvement in school activities can be expected to influence later participation in several ways. As intended, it may foster development of the civic orientations that promote adult political activity. Previous research yields a mixed verdict on the impact of school involvement on political attitudes. Almond and Verba (1963, pp. 352-63) found that subjective competence was somewhat higher among respondents in each of five nations who remembered that they had participated in school decisions. But Ziblatt (1965) reported that participation in extracurricular activities in an Oregon high school had no direct bearing on student attitudes towards politics. School activities also may affect later participation by providing adolescents with the direct experience in political association and interaction that can be drawn upon subsequently to ease entry into adult activism. A third possible path of influence for school activities involves its role in implanting activist orientations toward one's environment. Involvement in school activities, like parental participation, may help to shape the individual's style of interaction with community, nation, and world.[5]

These theoretical expectations are set forth in the school activities model presented in Figure 4. The only new variable in this model is an index of youth school activities. High school seniors were asked if they had voted in school elections and why they had done so, if they had run for office or helped someone campaign, and if they had won an election. They also were asked if they belonged to different types of extracurricular organizations: school publications groups; hobby, subject, and occupation clubs; neighborhood, religious,

[5]Political participation may be merely a manifestation of general social activity. To test this hypothesis, parent and young adult organizational involvement were modeled along with youth and young adult civic orientations as potential contributors to young adult participation. The effects of parent involvement in nonpolitical organizations were modest initially and vanished in the combined model. Parent social activism appears to contribute little to the development of political activism in young adults. Furthermore, the correlation between political and social participation for the young adults is only .22—suggesting that political participation is not merely reflecting general social participation.

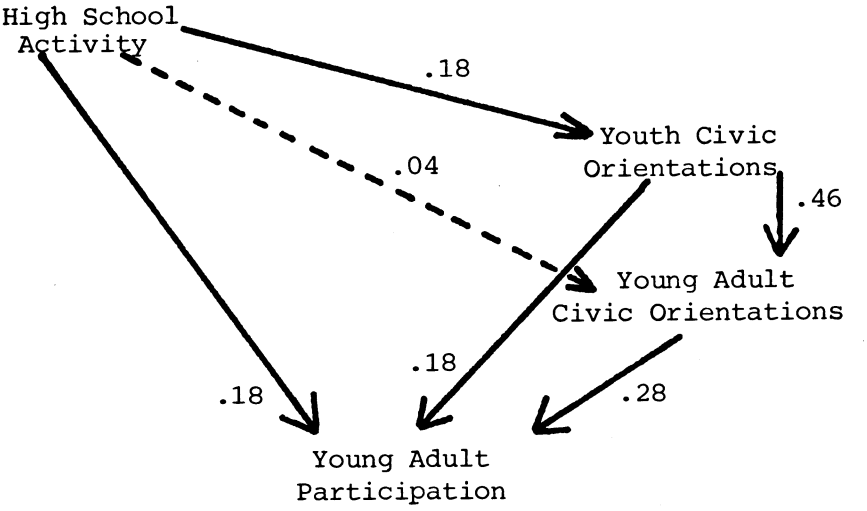
and service organizations; and organizations of any other type. In constructing the index of school activities, one point was awarded for each school political activity but voting and for each organizational membership. An extra point was awarded for being a club officer and for each political justification offered for voting in school elections.[6]

Previous involvement in high school activities appears to exert a substantial influence on the political participation of young adults. Most substantial by far are the direct effects, which outweigh the indirect effects by a margin of almost three to one. The experience gained by involvement in school activities, and perhaps even the activist style that it encourages, contributes much more to young adult political participation than the civic orientations that may be nurtured by participation. It is understandable that adolescent participation as a behavioral expression should be more closely linked to adult participation than are attitudes. While the civic orientations influence adult political participation, their weak relationship to school activism limits the explanatory power of this path. Ironically, given the emphasis of schools on cognitive development, school activities seem to promote "doing" more than "thinking."

School activities exert considerable influence on young adult participation.[7] Their total effects exceed those of parent socioeconomic status, parent civic orientations, and parent participation. Based on this evidence, the secondary role typically assigned to schools in the political socialization process needs to be reconsidered. Where the student can "elect" exposure to civic training, the school can have a substantial impact on adult

[6]Two other versions of this index (involvement in school politics only and extra points for active involvement in organizations) produced smaller empirical estimates than the overall school activities index.

[7]As we shall see later in Figure 5, these effects remain substantial even when other preadult influences are taken into account.



Source: 1965-73 Parent-Child Socialization Panel, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

*Entries are the standardized regression or path coefficients estimated for the model depicted by the arrows. Solid lines indicate significance at the .01 level. Dashed lines indicate an estimated path coefficient that was insignificant. Residual path coefficients are not shown. The R^2 of young adult participation on all predictor variables is .22.

Effects of School Activities

Direct = .18
Indirect (through young adult civic orientations) = .01
Indirect (through youth civic orientations) = .06
Total = .18 + .01 + .06 = .25

Figure 4. The School Activities Model*

political behavior. What limits school influence more generally in explaining variations in political behavior is that most civic training in the schools is required rather than elective.

Comparing Alternative Pathways to Participation

The techniques of path analysis have enabled us to evaluate four separate models of the effects of childhood socialization on young adult political participation. Parent socioeconomic status, parent political participation, parent civic orientations, and youth school activities in 1965 all have been shown to influence the participation of young adults eight years later, both directly and through youth and young adult civic orientations.

The analysis to this point, however, has ignored the reinforcing and competing aspects of the political socialization process. The paths to young adult participation in each model, for example, pass through the individual's civic orientations. What remains to be specified is the relative contribution of each of the socialization variables to these civic orientations. Furthermore, the exogenous variables in these models are themselves interdependent. To gauge the role of each pathway to participation, therefore, it is necessary to merge the four models considered previously into a single model.

The combined socialization effects model forces us to make explicit assumptions about the existence and direction of relationships between variables. The directional assumptions are based in large part on the temporal ordering of the variables. Variables that represent 1965 characteristics can be considered causally prior to those representing traits in 1973. Among the 1965 variables, furthermore, parent characteristics are obviously antecedent to offspring characteristics. Causal ordering is established between remaining pairs of variables by employing assumptions about the nature of influence. Following Verba and Nie (1972), we assume for both parents and young adults that socioeconomic status is causally prior to civic orientations and that civic orientations are prior to political participation.

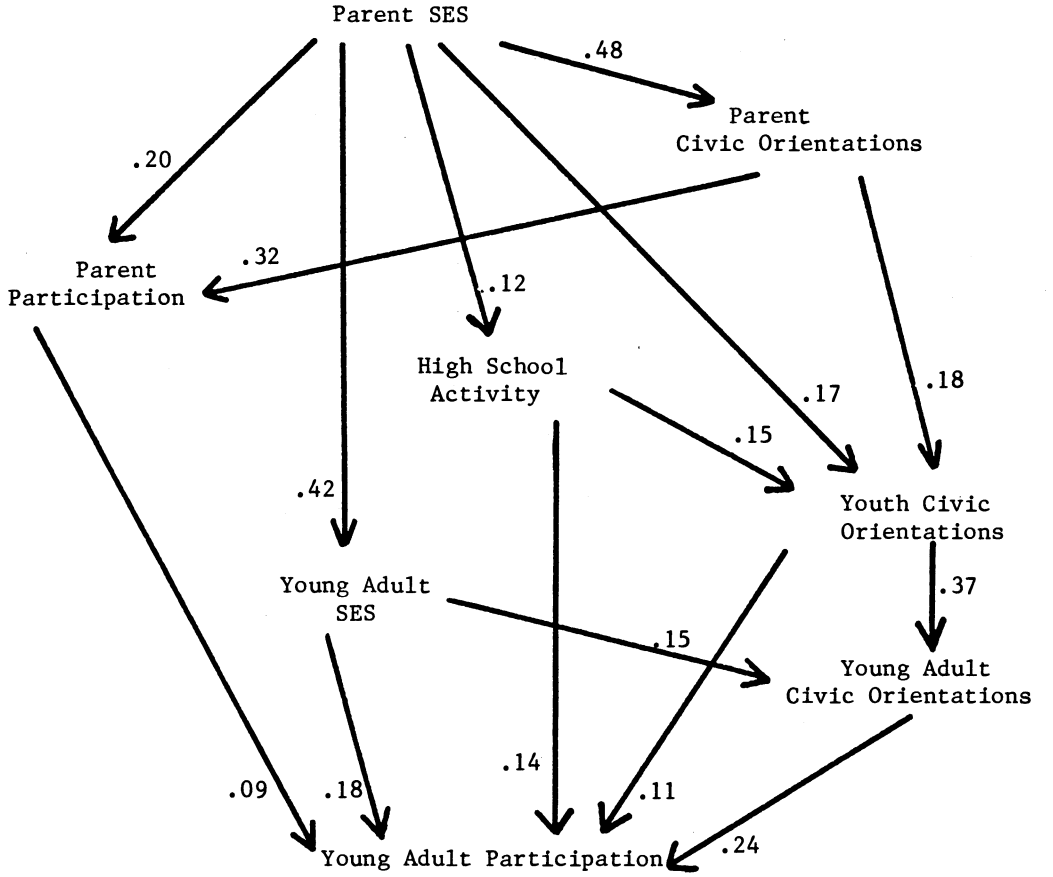
Theoretical considerations lead to the assumption that high school activities are causally prior to youth civic orientations in the combined model. High school activities are seen as fostering democratic attitudes in socialization research, and it is this hypothesis that we wish to test in the model. High school activities also are primarily nonpolitical in the traditional sense, and it is widely assumed in socialization research that the primary flow of socialization is from the nonpolitical to the political realm.[8]

Another set of assumptions eliminates several paths involving young adult socioeconomic status on the grounds that their theoretically-expected values should be insignificant. Parent socioeconomic status can be posited as the only cause of young adult status. No direct linkage between the prior political variables and SES should be expected. Only in rare instances, such as where the highly efficacious and active student is attracted to college in spite of family background, can these orientations and behavior be thought to contribute to subsequent SES.

The significant path coefficients for the combined model are shown in Figure 5. Figure 6 shows the full estimated model. (The direct and indirect effects for each of the four socialization variables are presented in the Appendix.) These figures shed considerable light on the contributions of preadult socialization to adult political participation. The variables employed in the model explain over one quarter of the variance in participation when used as exogenous variables in a multiple regression analysis—impressive testimony to the power of socialization variables. Of greater theoretical interest are the various pathways to participation revealed in the path analysis, however, and we turn our attention to them.

The results of the combined path analysis underscore the importance of parent SES for young adult political activity. Not surprisingly, given the formative position of parent SES in the model and the widespread emphasis on SES as the prime determinant of participation, no other variable exerts more influence than this one. But the influence of parent socioeconomic status is overwhelmingly indirect. The path coefficient between parent SES and young adult participation falls far short of significance. A leading carrier of the legacy of parent SES, accounting for about a third of its effect, is young adult SES. (See the Appendix for calculations of effects.) Young adult status is influenced heavily by parent socioeconomic status and in turn exhibits both a direct and indirect impact on participation.

[8]To be sure that this assumption did not affect our conclusions adversely, we estimated the combined model with the arrow running in the opposite direction, from youth civic orientations to high school activity. While the direct relationship between the two variables in question necessarily changed dramatically in this alternative model, the other coefficients were virtually undisturbed. Thus, assuming that high school activities affect youth civic orientations and not the reverse has little bearing on the overall results.



Source: 1965-73 Parent-Child Socialization Panel, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan.

*Entries are standardized path coefficients. All paths shown are significant at the .01 level. Residual paths are not shown. For the full model that was estimated, see Figure 6. The R^2 of young adult participation on all predictor variables is .26.

Figure 5. The Combined Socialization Effects Model*

The socialization variables rival young adult socioeconomic status as a carrier of the parent socioeconomic status legacy. They account for more of the indirect effects than young adult SES, thus signifying the importance of the political socialization process. Parent SES sets the stage by contributing to parent participation and parent civic orientations. These explicitly political characteristics then affect the child's political attitudes and behavior. Parent SES also exhibits a direct impact on political behavior while the child is in the home, as is evidenced by the paths to high school activity and youth civic orientations. But no direct influence of parent SES on political orientations remains by the time the children are young adults.

These results leave no doubt that the parents' socioeconomic status plays a major role in fostering the subsequent adult political activity of their offspring. They also make it clear that parents remain off-stage in exerting this influence, playing a "coaching" rather than a "starring" role while extending this "coaching" beyond SES per se to the world of politics. The *simple* SES model of participation has rather *complex* foundations.

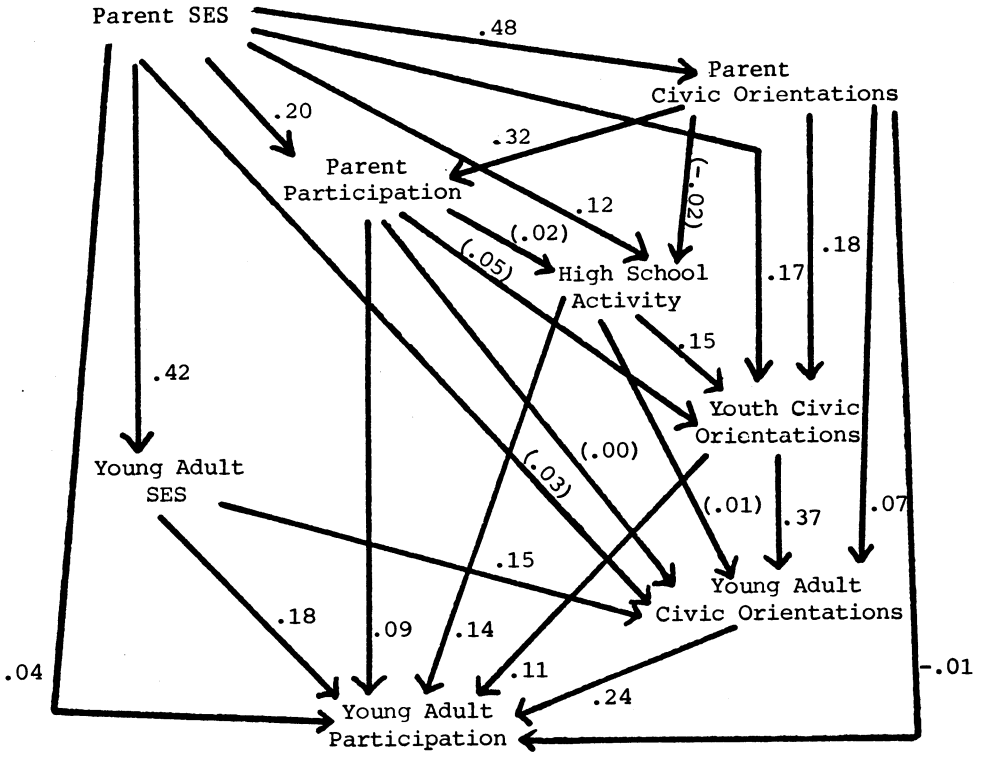
The path model suggests how the various forces of childhood political socialization operate in structuring later political participation. Parent participation and parent civic orientations influence young adult political activity in contrasting ways. The effects of parent participation are largely direct, since only the coefficient of the path between it and young adult participation is significant. On the other hand, the influence of

parent attitudes is carried by the civic orientations parents instill in their young, as only these paths attain significance.

These contrasting pathways of parental influence illustrate alternative methods of political learning.[9] The relationship between parent and young adult participation suggests copying or imitation—the child doing what he or she has observed the parent doing. Imitation of parents appears to play a role in participation even after other consequences of parent participation are taken into account. On the other hand, the effects of parent civic orientations depict the more familiar socialization of attitudinal dispositions towards politics, followed by attitude-to-behavior transfer. That this is a two-step flow with no direct intergenerational transfer is indicated by the insignificant path coefficient between parent civic orientations and young adult participation. For parent civic attitudes to influence offspring participative behavior they apparently must be internalized by the child.

High school activity occupies a special place in the model because it is not influenced by parent political attitudes or behavior but affects the political views and actions of the young adult. This illustrates the apprenticeship mechanism of socialization. The high school activities we have utilized are either strictly nonpolitical or represent the contrived "shadow politics" of the high school. That they are influenced only by parent socioeconomic status, not by parent political characteristics, further symbolizes their nonpolitical nature. Yet those who engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to become politically active later on. They may have developed skills and orientations that can be transferred to the political world. One of the justifications for extracurricular activities and student government in the school is that they prepare children to assume adult participative roles. Our results show in ways that have not been obvious before that these efforts are somewhat successful. High school activity does propel people into political activity later, even those who lack status

[9]Various methods of political learning are reviewed in Dawson, Prewitt, and Dawson (1977), pages 93-113.



*The only difference between this model and Figure 5 is that here the arrows are retained and coefficients are added (in parentheses) for the paths that proved to be insignificant at the .01 level.

Figure 6. Paths Estimated in the Combined Socialization Effects Model*

and attitudinal advantages. In this respect, the school can serve as an alternative avenue for political mobilization.

Finally, these results make it obvious that civic orientations play a significant role in inducing participation. They are the prime repositories of the impact of parent civic orientations and carry some of the influence of high school activity and parent socioeconomic status. These effects predate the development of young adult SES. The results also show that the development of young adult civic orientations owes more to earlier civic orientations than to the individual's own socioeconomic status. All of these influences lie outside the realm of the simple SES model.

Young adult civic orientations exhibit more direct influence on young adult participation than any other variable in the model. The contribution of the child's own political orientations is heightened when youth civic orientations from eight years before are taken into account. These results show how political attitudes, developed largely through direct political learning, may lead to political behavior. They demonstrate an attitude-behavior linkage for the domain of political participation.

Conclusion

We have evaluated four different pathways to adult participation that originate in the preadult years. Taken individually, each is shown to influence adult participation. This influence persists even when interdependencies among the four models are taken into account. Parent socioeconomic status, parent participation, youth high school activity, and parent civic orientations all make distinct contributions to young adult political participation. For parent status and parent civic orientations, the influence is largely indirect. For parent participation and high school activity, it is almost entirely direct.

These results demonstrate that political activity is a consequence of noncontemporaneous forces, signifying the importance of the political socialization process. Through a variety of socialization mechanisms, parents and schools leave a legacy for later participation profiles. While it may be reflected in adult characteristics, this legacy is established long before adult characteristics have formed. To be sure, contemporaneous adult characteristics remain important predictors of participation. All that our results require is that socialization influences be considered along with them if we are to explain political participation adequately.

These results have interesting implications for the biases of political participation. It is well established that the activists in American politics "sing with a strong upper-class accent," to quote Schattschneider's (1960, p. 35) famous metaphor. While the results of our study hardly dispute this point, they also uncover alternative paths to participation that bypass status. Some forces in the home and school operate to counteract the socioeconomic status bias of participation—forces which themselves are only weakly related to SES. If the operations of these forces are imperiled or become dependent upon status, however, the SES bias of participation will be accentuated. Seen in this light, restricted opportunities for high school extracurricular activity or a weakening of partisan and material inducements for participation among parents can limit the chances for nonstatus based participation in the next generation.

Most importantly, the findings of this study lend strong support to the premise that preadult socialization affects adult attitudes and behavior. Challenges to this premise have survived in part because of the absence of data linking preadulthood to adulthood among the same individuals. Armed with such evidence, we have shown that the challenge can be rebutted in the domain of political participation. At least for young adults in the late 1960s and early 1970s, political activity was *structured* to a significant degree by the socialization process. If such an effect appears here, it may appear for other attitudes and behaviors as well. Perhaps a search for the effects of preadult political socialization can refocus the field of political socialization and consequently increase our understanding of the wellspring of adult political attitudes and behavior.

Appendix

Direct and Indirect Effects in Figure 5

PARENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Direct = .04

Indirect (through young adult status) = .09

Indirect (through parent participation) = .02

Indirect (through high school activities) = .02

Indirect (through parent civic orientations) = .04

Indirect (through youth civic orientations) = .03

Indirect (through young adult civic orientations) = .01

Total = .24

1965 PARENT CIVIC ORIENTATIONS

Direct = -.01

Indirect (through parent participation) = .03

Indirect (through youth civic orientations) = .04

Indirect (through young adult civic orientations) = .02

Indirect (through high school activities) = .00

Total = .08

1965 PARENT PARTICIPATION

Direct = .09

Indirect (through youth civic orientations) = .01

Indirect (through high school activities) = .00

Indirect (through young adult civic orientations) = .00

Total = .10

HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Direct = .14

Indirect (through youth civic orientations) = .03

Total = .17

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