A Framework For Studying The Dynamics of Political Participation

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Although 50 years of excellent scholarship have taught us a great deal about the cross-sectional side of political participation, scholars do not know much about how political participation changes over time within the lives of individuals. Thus, they do not know much about how to study it as a dynamic process, let alone think about it in this way. This paper presents a framework to help political scientists understand what stimulates or inhibits episodes of political activity in the lives of ordinary Americans. I hope that this paper will change the etiology, or causal story, of political participation and will thus expand the agenda for scholars in this field. In the end, I suggest that a research program on political participation must include scrutiny of two kinds of factors: those that affect the *potential* of a person to engage in civic activity and those that *precipitate* actual moments of activity.

In the next section of the paper, I quickly describe the state of the art when it comes to research on political participation. After developing a series of expectations for participation as a dynamic process based on these past findings and theory, I then show that these expectations are not borne out by the best available data on political participation as it changes over the lives of individual Americans. The following section explains why the strong findings of the past 50 years do not appear to provide much purchase on this phenomenon when seen from a dynamic perspective, and I describe what features a framework for studying political participation as a dynamic process needs to have to be at least credible on its face. I then propose a framework that has these attributes, which helps us understand features of political participation that have

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heretofore been unexplained, but also helps us understand past findings as well.

A Very Quick Overview of What We Know

Most of what social scientists understand about political participation has relied on cross-sectional survey data. Based on such data, the most comprehensive theory of political participation to date is the "resource mobilization theory" proposed and tested by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995). According to this theory, those individuals who participate are likely to be those who have "resources" such as money, time, and skills. Verba, Schlozman and Brady's nearly encyclopedæic book also accounts for the importance of "mobilization" — that is, people (usually acting as part of organizations) asking other people to do some particular political act.[2] In addition, Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry (1996) have shown that, beyond resources or mobilization, social status also matters — individuals who know the mayor, for example, are much more likely to call the mayor than those individuals who are not part of the mayor's social circle. Put together, these recent works have explained much about exactly why education has been found to correlate strongly with participation across both time and place since the beginning of quantitative social science. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) summarize the state of the art succinctly:

> . . . When political participation requires that knowledge and cognitive skills be brought to bear, people with more education are more likely to participate than people with less education. Participation, that is, requires resources that are appropriate to the task.
>
> On the other hand, education also indicates both the likelihood that people will be contacted by political leaders and the likelihood that they will respond. Educated people travel in social circles that make them targets of both direct and indirect mobilization. Politicians and interest groups try to activate people they know personally and professionally. (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993, page 76)

All of these studies (which are merely the most recent and comprehensive of hundreds), rely on comparisons between people at a single point in time to understand political involvement.

[2] Mobilization as a cause of political activity was argued and examined in-depth by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993).

A few scholars have also recently begun to study what stimulates political action. One strong result of research over the last decade is that if people are asked to participate, they are more apt to do so than if they are not asked (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Brady, Schlozman and Verba, 1999) — this is the "mobilization" finding referenced above.[3] The findings about mobilization have been further explored using field experiments in the case of vote turnout (see Green and Gerber, 2002, for a review of this work) and donations to interest groups (Miller, 2002; Miller, Krosnick and Lowe, 2000). In addition, Campbell (2003*a*,*b*) has shown that the aggregate participation of older people rises during moments when social security policies are attacked in Congress. What I hope to accomplish in this paper is to weave together these few strands of research on the dynamics of political participation, to strengthen the resulting cloth with an approach that will help us generalize beyond the particular cases so far examined, and to help stimulate and organize future research in this area.

[*Note:* I think I need to add two sections here. A brief literature review of political science and sociological work on social movements and collective action (e.g Kaplan and Brady, 2004; Klandermans, 1996, 1984; Doug McAdam and Tilly, 2001; Olson, 1965; Piven and Cloward, 1978; Tarrow, 1989) and a brief literature review of psychological work on helping behavior and fear appeals (e.g. Beck and Frankel, 1981; Darley and Latané, 1968; Howard Penn Krisher III and Darley, 1973; Witte and Allen, 2000). In these sections I should explain how the framework I propose here draws on these two bodies of research while extending those findings and perspectives to fit the particular case of the political participation of individuals.]

What would theories based on resources, mobilization, and status suggest we ought to see if we could observe political participation over time within the lives of ordinary Americans? Most of the cross-sectional research that I described above is predominantly concerned about inequality between those who participate and those who do not. This concern is echoed in the title of

[3]It is worth noting that two other articles have been recently published which are concerned with the dynamics of political participation, but not on the stimulation of episodes of action. Plutzer (2002) shows that vote turnout becomes a habit over time, and Berinsky, Burns and Traugott (2001) show that people who are already voters can be induced to continue voting in subsequent years if the act of voting is made easier (by using mail-in ballots).

Robert Dahl's seminal book "Who Governs?" (1961), and Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) focus explicitly on this problem as they develop resource mobilization theory: "Since democracy implies not only governmental responsiveness to citizen interests but also equal consideration of the interests of each citizen, democratic participation must also be equal" (1). The problem is, as they see it, that the reality is far from this ideal. The few people who participate at any given time in a democracy are quite different from those who do not, and so, "... the voice of the people as expressed through participation comes from a limited and unrepresentative set of citizens" (2). This quote is representative of the main political concern animating the research on political participation. This focus on inequality, and the consistent findings that the educated, rich, and socially connected are much more likely to participate in politics than the uneducated, the poor, and socially disconnected, all paint a picture in which a small subset of the population engage actively, and more or less constantly, in politics — essentially ruling the large mass of the people who do not get involved. In the dynamic context, this would suggest that we ought to see some few individuals nearly constantly involved, with most of the rest of people nearly completely inactive. The few studies that have examined participation over time, focusing only on voting, support this expectation since these early results suggest that voting is quite habitual (Plutzer, 2002) and can be made more so by making voting easier (Berinsky, Burns and Traugott, 2001).

Puzzling Empirical Regularities

In fact, these expectations are not borne out when they are matched against the best (and only) currently available data on political participation as it changes over time within the lives of individuals. Figure 1 shows raw data on participation in non-electoral activities reported by a random sample of 20 respondents from among all of those individuals who did any of these types of activities over a 32 year study period (using data from the Political Socialization Study 1965 to 1997 (Jennings and Stoker, 1997)).[4] Each panel of the figure shows the data for a particular

[4]These individuals are part of a panel study that began with a random national sample of 1669 members of the High School Class of 1965. The data presented here rely on the 935 respondents who were interviewed in person in 1965, 1973, 1982, and 1997. The annual data are the result of the individuals' retrospective reports at each of the interviews in 1973, 1982, and 1997.

person, and the height of each line represents the number of activities reported by that person in a particular year considering only the following four types of political activity: Working with others in the community, Contacting elected officials, Attending protests or rallies, and Writing letters to the editor.[5] For example, Person 354 reported attending a protest or demonstration in 1969. Then, in 1977, 1978, and 1979, he contacted an elected official. Also in 1978, he did some work with others in his community, and in 1982, he did some community work again. This shows up as "spikes" of height 1 for each of 1969, 1977, 1979, and 1982, and a spike of height 2 for 1978. Using data such as that shown in Figure 1, my research shows (1) that participation occurs sporadically across the lives of many individuals, and (2) that spells of participation tend to last only one year, which is the minimum temporal resolution of this dataset (Bowers, 2003).

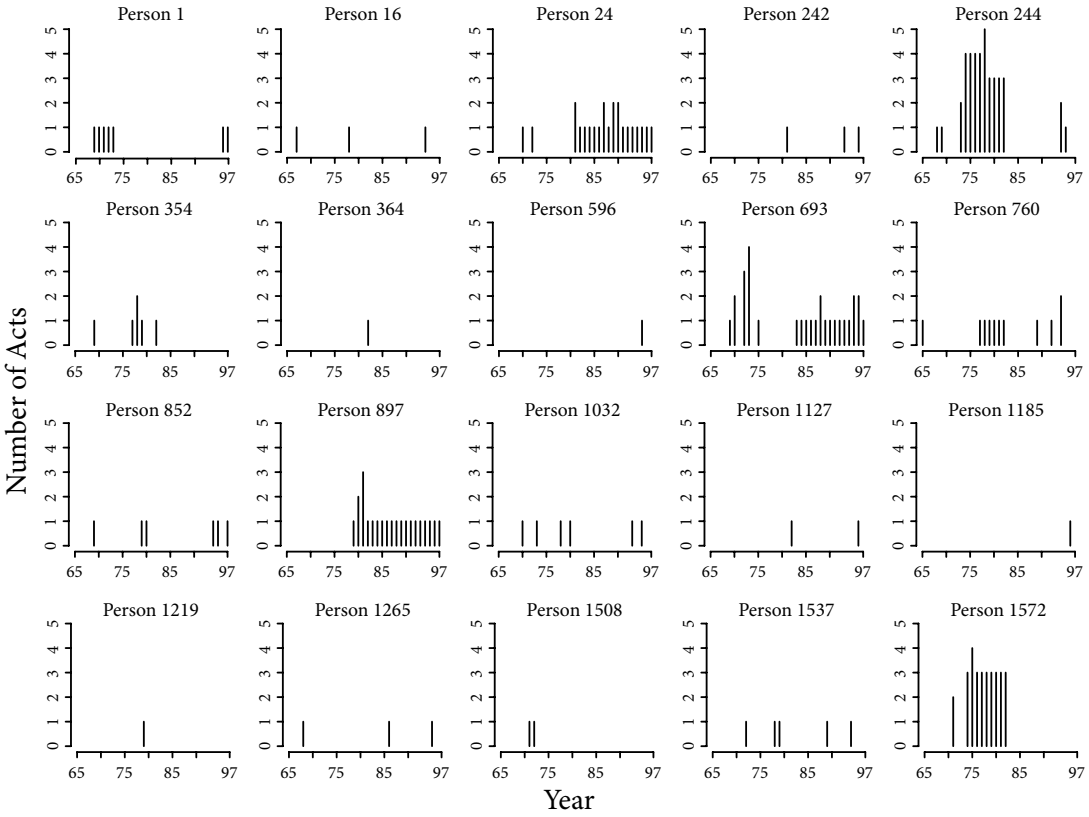

Figure 1: Profiles of Individual Participation Beyond Voting: The Class of 1965, age 18 to 50

Of course, Figure 1 is only a small sample from the Political Socialization study. It is possible that,

[5]See Appendix B for the complete question wording for all of the political participation questions in the Political Socialization study.

if one could somehow look directly at all 935 graphs, we would draw other conclusions. For this reason, in the next section I will show a series of results using all of the Political Socialization respondents, as well as three of the NES panel studies, to emphasize what I take to be a fact: that political participation in the US is a dynamic process that occurs as short, sparse moments of activity in the lives of many individuals. I am not alone in thinking that this is so. Sigelman et al. (1985) showed that, out of 10 elections (1978-1982), only 5.5% of registered voters in Kentucky voted in all 10, while 28.2% voted in one or two elections out of the 10 recorded in the state administrative database (from their Table 1, page 752). Dahl (1961) notes several times in his landmark study of governance in New Haven that most ordinary people move into and out of the political sphere over time. He says that the use of "resources" (like money, skills, and status) varies

> . . . [a]s different events take place and different issues are generated in the political system. Most people employ their resources sporadically, if at all. For many citizens, resource use rises to a peak during periods of campaigns and elections. Some citizens are aroused by a particular issue . . . and then lapse into inactivity (page 273).

Is Participation Really Sporadic in General?

One way to find if participation is really sporadic, in some overall sense, is to ask: To what extent does participation at one moment relate to activity in the previous moment? If people who participated last year also tend to participate this year and in subsequent years, then participation cannot be seen as sporadic, and explanations based on time-constant attributes of people (like education) are plausible. If past participation is not highly associated with present participation, then something else that changes over time must be stimulating the activity and we need a new theory.

Consider, for example, the cross-tabulation of community work one period in the past by community work in the "present" respondents Political Socialization Study:

Out of all 30855 person-years (935 respondents $\times$ 33 years), 27090 included 0 acts of community

Table 1: Transitions From One Period to the Next in Amount of Community Work Among the Class of 1965

		Number of Past Acts			
		0	1	2	3
Number of Present Acts	3	27	5	5	185
	2	90	46	283	8
	1	903	1154	33	5
	0	27090	890	106	24

work followed by 0 acts of community work, 903 included 0 acts followed by 1 act, and 890 included 1 act followed by 0 acts. It is usually easier to look at this kind of table as a "transition matrix" which uses the column percentages of Table 1 as an estimate of the probabilities of observing the different types of movements between states. This matrix is shown as **T**.

$$\mathbf{T} = \begin{pmatrix} .0010 & .0024 & .0117 & .8333 \\ .0032 & .0220 & .6628 & .0360 \\ .0321 & .5508 & .0773 & .0225 \\ .9637 & .4248 & .2482 & .1081 \end{pmatrix}$$

Of the people who did 0 acts of community work in the past year, 3.2% did one act in the current year. Of the people who did 1 act in the past, 42.5% of them did 0 acts in the present. Notice the large numbers on the main diagonal. These numbers imply that among the few people who manage to start participating at a certain rate (say doing 1, 2, or 3 acts in a year), many are apt to continue — at least across adjacent periods.[6]

Figure 2 summarizes the information in **T** and Table 1 graphically — using shaded squares to provide a quick sense of which kinds of transitions are most common. The shading of the squares is proportional to the number of person-years in that transition-category. The area

[6]About 35% of this generation reported no community work over the study period, 20% reported only one act of community work, about 13% reported doing two acts, 7% reported three acts, and about 20% reported anywhere from 4 to 19 acts. See the Appendix for more detailed information about participation over the lives of the individuals in the Political Socialization Study.

above the diagonal represents movements from less activity one period in the past to more activity in the present. The diagonal represents continuance of the same level of activity across adjacent periods. And, the area below the diagonal represents transitions from more to less activity. The actual numbers of person-years in each square is printed on the plot. This figure shows that movements from less activity to more activity do happen — there were 903 moments of 1 action that followed a moment of no action. However, **T** shows that these 903 moments only represent 3% of the possible transitions from a moment of no action — the vast majority of inactive moments were followed by other inactive moments. Thus, this square is white. That is, the fact that a square has color (or not) only has to do with the proportion of the activity observed in the present conditioned on a past value. For example, of those years where people did 3 acts of community work, 185 were followed by years where people continued to do 3 acts (this is about .05% of the total number of person-years in the dataset — this is very rare behavior). This is about 88% of the total number of years in which people did 3 acts, and so it is colored in nearly as dark as the square representing the 27,090 person-years where no activity followed no activity.

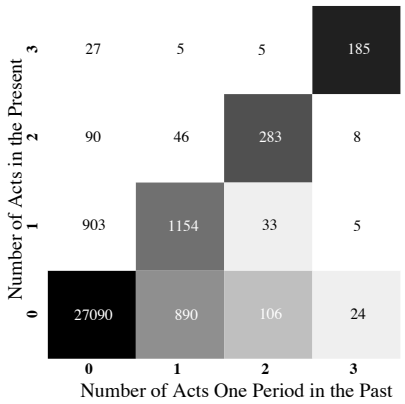

Figure 2: *Community Work* — Transitions from One Year to the Next: Youth

To avoid presenting 8 different matrices like **T**, Figure 3 presents transition plots for each of the acts of participation measured in the Political Socialization dataset. You can see how the transition matrix **T** for *Community Work* maps onto the panel in the upper left corner of the Figure 3. The highest value (.96) is colored black and occurs at x=0 and y=0 (i.e. present participation is

0 following 0 past participation). As the legend shows, the darkness of color is proportional to the values in the squares, so the dark black squares contain values near 1 and the light gray (and white) squares contain values nearer to 0.

One general pattern that is evident from these plots is stability across adjacent periods — especially for 0 and 3 acts. Periods that contain zero acts are more apt to be followed by "empty" periods than by moments full of activity; persons engaging in 3 acts are more apt to do 3 acts in the next year than otherwise. Doing 1 or 2 acts in the past year is also strongly related to continuing to do 1 or 2 acts in the present, but not quite as strongly as 0 and 3 acts — and larger proportions of 1 and 2 act years are followed by decreases than increases. In fact, for all types of activity except for *Community Work*, 1 act in the past is more likely to be followed by 0 acts in the present than by 1 or more acts.

The other general pattern concerns the paucity of shaded squares above the 45 degree line and the row of shaded squares at the bottom of each chart: people are much more likely to transition *to* 0 acts than *from* 0 acts. It seems as if people are likely to either continue participation at the same level as they did in the previous period OR stop altogether (rather than "ramping up" and "tapering off" their level of activity over the years).

Figure 3 tells a story where one generation's participation appears sporadic. And, most of the person-years in the dataset contain zeros followed by zeros — that is, non-voting political participation is rare. It is possible that the appearance of dark squares on the diagonal is an artifact of the survey procedure. Respondents were allowed to name ranges of dates as they remembered their past activities: some respondents used ranges to mean "every year between X and Y dates," other respondents probably used ranges to mean "some year in between X and Y dates, I don't remember exactly." Unfortunately, given the data, there is no way to distinguish between these two possibilities. In the end, the fact that some very few people, over very few years, engaged in rather intense multi-year episodes of participation doesn't materially affect the overall conclusion that participation is not even close to constant over the lifespan, but occurs overwhelmingly

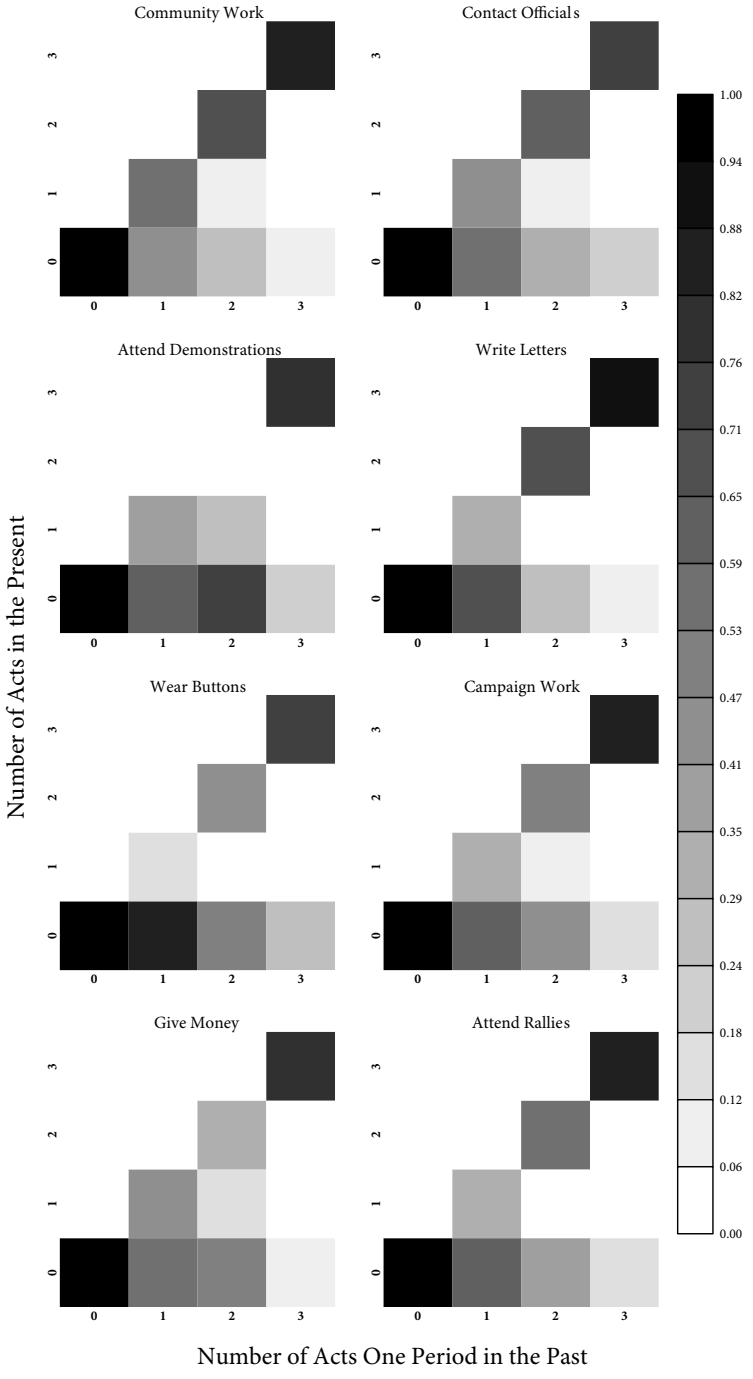

Figure 3: Participation Transitions from One Year to the Next: Youth

Note: The colors show the proportion of person-years where activity in the present (shown on the y-axes) followed activity one period in the past (shown on the x-axes). The key at right shows the proportions represented by the colors.

as short bursts separated by long periods of inactivity.

This pattern of sporadic participation from year to year is not merely an artifact of the particular cohorts in the Political Socialization study. The panel studies conducted by the National Election Studies show similar patterns over the short-term. These datasets have the strength that the respondents were only asked about their participation in the past 12 months, thus forgetting is probably a minor problem and dating the participation to a particular years is easier than in the Political Socialization Study. The weakness of these panel studies, however, is that they only cover 3 waves, usually 2 years apart and so ask about participation only every other year rather than yearly. That said, they are still useful for checking and corroborating the longer term longitudinal data from the Political Socialization study.

Figure 4 shows the kinds of information about participation available from three of these datasets. The information for the 1956-1960 NES Panel Study is in the left column of figures, and the information for the 1972-1976 NES Panel Study is in the middle column, and the 1990-1992 NES Panel Study is on the right. Rather than person-years, these figures are based on persons — and the numbers of persons in each cell of the transition table is shown in each block.

These figures show that most respondents in the NES Panel Studies did not engage in electoral participation in either of the years in the studies (shown by the dark black boxes at (no, no) for each activity). However, among people who participated at all, a pattern of participation in only one of the two panel-years is more common than participation in both. That is, the blocks at (no, yes) and (yes, no) tend to have more people in them than (yes, yes). The two exceptions to this "rule of rare activity" are *Wear Buttons* and *Give Money* in the 1956 to 1960 panel. Of the NES respondents who reported wearing buttons in the 1956 campaign, about 52% (n=94) did not wear them in the 1960 campaign, but about 48% (n=88) did it again. Of the NES respondents who reported donating money in the 1956 campaign, about 51% (n=63) did not give more money in the 1960 campaign, but about 49% (n=60) did it again. Comparing within rows of this figure, one sees differences between historical periods for button wearing and money

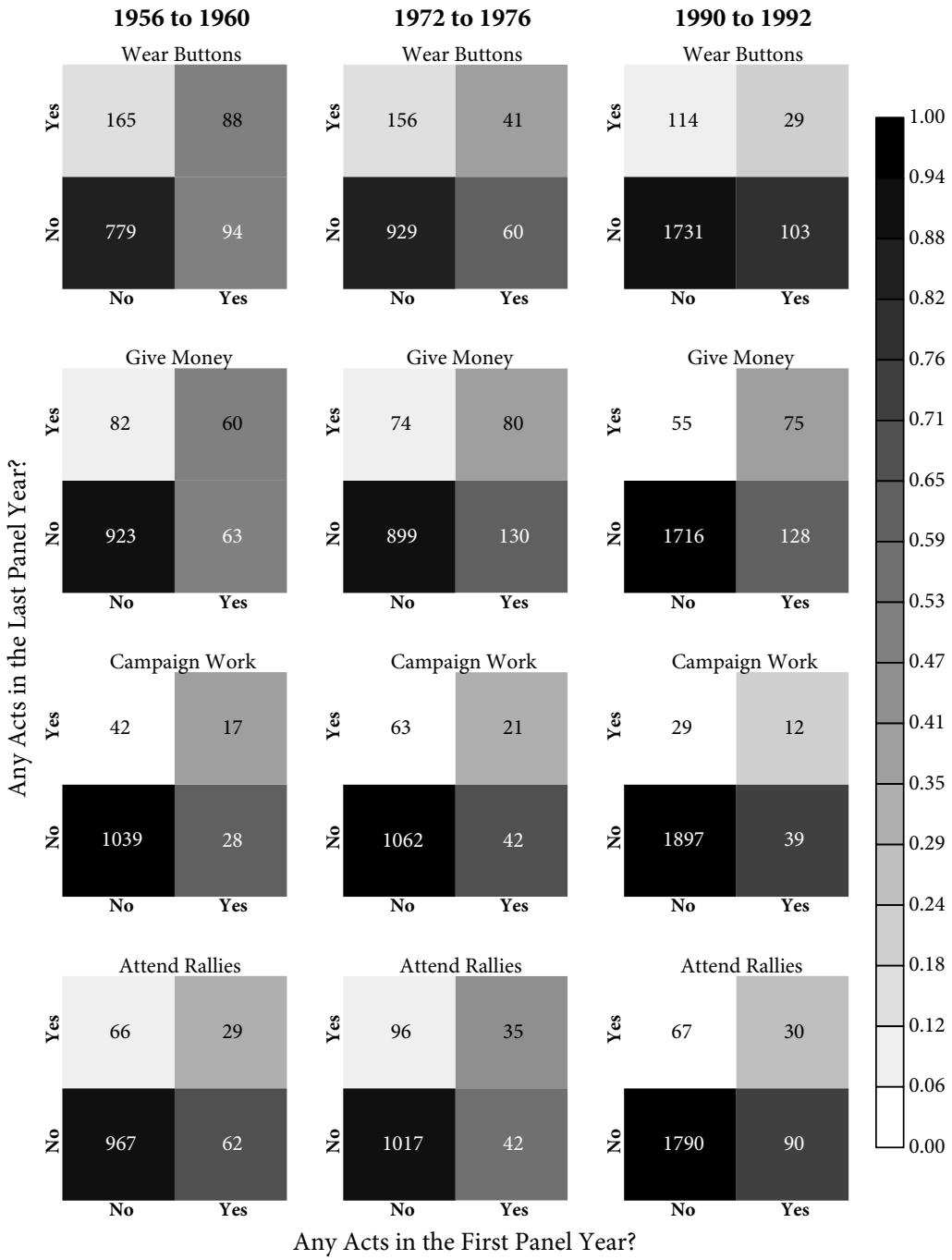

Figure 4: Participation Transitions across Panel Years: National Election Study Panels

Note: The colors show the proportion of respondents whose activity in the last panel year (1960, 1976, or 1992) (shown on the y-axes) followed activity in the first panel year (1956, 1972 or 1990) (shown on the x-axes). The key at right shows the proportions represented by the colors.

giving, but not for campaign work or rally attendance. Overall, this figure provides a quick bit of corroboration for Figure 1, that non-voting participation in the USA seems both rare in any one cross-section of the public (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995), but also is sporadic within people across time — a finding that is the same across historical periods.

It is also possible that previous work can completely explain the patterns shown here — after all, mobilization is a prominent current explanation for participation. And, although changes in education occur too rarely to explain these patterns, changes in mobilization can be plausible causal factors. In fact, mobilization will be a part of the framework that I propose in the next section, but mobilization cannot explain it all. Table 2 shows that many of the people who reported engaging in electoral activities in 1990 and 1992, did not remember being contacted by someone urging them to get involved.[7]

Table 2: Percent Participating Without Mobilization (NES 1990-1992 Panel)

Type of Participation	**Percent Acting Without Mobilization**
Donations (in 1992)	31
Dinners/Rallies (in 1992)	47
Other Campaign Work (in 1992)	44
Any Participation (in 1990)	52

Table 2 suggests that mobilization is relevant, but it is merely one of many events that provide the crucial input to make political activity possible. In addition, mobilization is not usually an event that *prevents* people from participating — and an approach to participation that takes seriously the sporadic nature of this phenomenon needs to account for both catalysts and inhibitors. If mobilization is seen as just one of a variety of events that stimulate political participation (and not an event that inhibits it), then we will also understand more about mobilization itself. At the moment, both Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) and Fiorina (2002) note that we do not have a good understanding about why some people refuse calls to action, and when they might

[7]Tragically, the Political Socialization data do not contain measures of mobilization.

tend to accept rather than refuse them.[8]

So far I have shown that what previous theory would lead us to expect is not found in the best available data on the dynamics of political participation. For example, previous work emphasizes the importance of education for political participation, but people don't gain and lose education from year to year while they do enter and exit from political involvement from year to year (and probably day to day). The problem is that a theory that relies on time-constant attributes of individuals cannot plausibly explain the sporadic, time-varying patterns that represent the "facts" about political participation.

Precipitating versus Potentiating Factors:

How can we make sense of the strong findings from past research at the same time as confronting the fact that participation is a sporadic, irregular phenomenon? I think the answer lies in understanding that any etiology about this phenomenon requires two kinds of factors: potentiating factors and precipitating factors. Potentiating factors are those aspects of individuals that enable them to be *ready to act* when an opportunity arises. Take heart disease as an example. We know that people who eat vegetables and exercise regularly are less likely to have heart attacks than people who eat only hamburgers and do not exercise. In theories of heart failure, healthy eating is a potentiating factor, which helps explain the potential for heart failure for a given person. However, when a person has a heart attack, the paramedics do not arrive carrying carrots. They carry equipment that uses electricity to restart a stopped heart. In other words, the precipitating factor for a heart attack is disruption to the electrical system of the heart. The theory of heart failure thus must include *both* information about healthy eating *and* information about electricity — and ideally come to an understanding how healthy eating and the electrical system of the heart interact to produce heart health.

[8] Miller (2002) and Miller, Krosnick and Lowe (2000) suggest that feelings of "threat" or "opportunity" might motivate political activity. This idea is pursued and developed below as a piece of the mechanism by which events might be turned into action.

In the case of political participation, nearly all of the attention has been on potentiating factors. This focus has been so overwhelming that "theories of political participation" almost exclusively refer to the potentiating side.[9] As the example of heart disease indicates, one must have both sides of the causal story in order to intervene effectively. At the moment, however, if called upon to design a policy to change the political participation of a person beyond voting, political scientists would look a lot like paramedics carrying carrots rather than shock-paddles — good for healthy people, but a disaster for those in need.

A Framework for Understanding the Dynamics of Political Participation

The best available evidence shows that political participation beyond voting ought to be thought of as a series of short moments of activity that occurs over the lifetimes of individuals. This evidence creates a puzzle for students of political involvement: current understanding is grounded quite firmly in attributes of individuals that do not change much (often called "resources"), if at all, within the adulthoods of people and thus seemingly cannot account for political participation as a dynamic process that changes from one year to the next. What would a compelling explanation of what precipitates (or inhibits) episodes of political participation have to have in order to be minimally persuasive? First and foremost, it must involve factors that change over time. Second, it must also involve the fact that resources do matter — given the massive amount of research that has shown this to be so.

Figure 5 depicts a framework for understanding political participation that brings the cross-sectional account into the dynamic context, while adding some essential pieces of the puzzle that have been previously overlooked. The path to participation represented here slopes sharply upward, representing a hill that must be climbed before action is possible. There are five stages in this process, each offering the individual a chance to stop the climb. Thus, the output of this

[9] In fact, it takes an appreciation that political participation is a dynamic, sporadic process to even recognize that there might be a distinction between the two types of causal theories.

approach will be that participation is relatively rare in so far as it depends on a conjunction of factors all lining up.

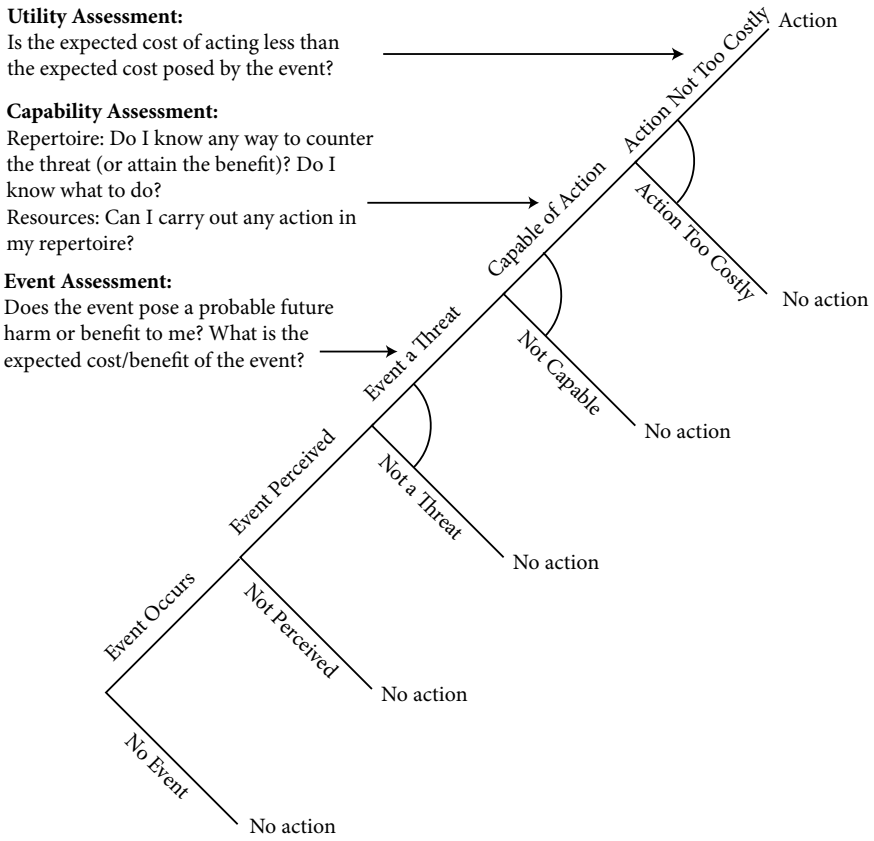

Figure 5: A Framework for Studying of Political Action

The Stages of the Process

Stage 1: Event Occurrence. The most plausible account for the sporadic patterns in Figure 1 is an approach that is based on events that precipitate political participation. That is, moments of political participation must have precipitating factors associated with them, just as we know that they have potentiating factors associated with them. If political participation does occur in short, sporadic bursts, what might provide the stimuli for such actions? It is hard to imagine that individuals would generate these stimuli themselves in a static environment. Rather, I suggest that we see these spikes of activity as reactions to a changing environment; furthermore, the changes in the environment are discrete and abrupt, not smooth or slow. Following common usage I call such exogenous shocks, "events". Thus, the first stage of this framework begins with

the occurrence of an event in the world. There is no arc connecting the branches of this segment of the path, indicating that either an event occurs or it does not, with no "almost occurrence".[10] An event occurs whenever something in the environment of a person changes. Thus, a pothole forming in the road is such an event, as is the arrival of a mobilizing neighbor, or the publication of a dramatic story in the media, or a cross-burning on one's lawn. Events can also inhibit participation. In preliminary work, I have shown that crossburnings can both stimulate *and* depress political activity among African-Americans (Bowers, 1997), and that childbearing inhibits participation in the short term among women but spurs it among men (Bowers, 2003).[11] Whether an event turns out to be a catalyst or inhibitor (or an irrelevant factor) depends crucially on the later stages of this process, especially perception. I have separated perception from event occurrence to make explicit that *the sequence of participation for any given person depends crucially on the supply of events in his or her environment and life, given extant conditions like historical period or political campaigns.*

Events must occur before any participation can occur — regardless of resources. Thus, all things being equal, we should observe more participation in places where more events occur; participation is an output that depends on the existence of inputs to occur.

Stage 2: Perception. Of course, a pothole in the road will not matter much to a person who never drives. Nor will events reported on in the media spur action if they do not somehow make it into the consciousness of the individual (either via direct exposure to the media or word of mouth). It has long been found that political interest helps differentiate those who participate from those who do not, above and beyond resources, status, and mobilization (see Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995, for recent evidence of this). The approach presented here locates the

[10] It would be tempting to write "Nature" at the crux of this segment of the graph, and it is plausible that politically relevant events might be somehow produced at some identifiable rate (constant or otherwise) within an environment. I have resisted adding this label to the graph, leaving open the possibility that actions themselves create events and that resources can help determine what kinds of events one is exposed to. In addition, I do not want to add any assumptions about the form of the particular stochastic process that generates these events.

[11] For, similar cross-sectional findings on parenthood, see Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001).

effect of political interest in the perception stage of the climb up the slope toward participation. Those individuals who are attentive to their political environment, who are actively scanning the temporal horizon for harm or benefit, are those who are more likely to move up the path at this early stage than those who are not attentive and thus drop out. Of course, attention can fluctuate over time. There are moments when one cannot spare attention for anything other than, say, a new baby, an ill parent, or the details of moving into a new town — both moving and having a baby can been seen as events that inhibit participation at least in part by blocking the perceptions of events that would otherwise catalyze action. The fact that previous literature has found that "political interest" seems to matter, "controlling for" so many other factors, also suggests that resources and attentiveness do not go exactly hand in hand. *Thus, lack of perception can block a moment of participation well before resources even come into play (Stage 4).*

When people ignore their environments (because of other pressing concerns or lack of interest), they will not participate (or even go through the steps of asking if participation is worth doing).

Stage 3: Threat/Opportunity Assessment. A single pothole may not matter that much to a person, even during the brief moment when the car bounces and the morning coffee nearly hits the windshield. This part of the path has a smooth arc connecting the two branches, indicating that the output of this part of the process is a continuous measure. The path leading toward participation is labeled "Event a Threat" to indicate that the person perceiving the event has assigned it some non-negligible expected cost (i.e. considers it a threat) or some non-negligible benefit (i.e. considers it an opportunity).[12] "Probable" is important in this context. For example, if I drive a military tank, then I may not see a pothole as a threat since there is no possibility that it would harm me.

In this context, however, I would consider "harm" or "benefit" to be very loosely defined. How-

[12] I use the words "threat" and "opportunity" here in a technical sense: an event is a threat if it poses a probable future harm, and an event is an opportunity if it poses a probable future benefit. Here I am following the conceptual analysis of "threat" that I elaborated on in Bowers (1998*a*,*b*, 1997).

ever individuals understand the event, I argue that they must see it as a potential source of change to their utility (either negatively as a threat or positively as an opportunity) before they can continue to climb the slope toward eventual action. This is not an argument for "homo-economicus" narrowly defined. However, there is ample evidence that individuals do engage in some cost/benefit calculus (perhaps in some very bounded and "irrational" way) when it comes to expending resources on action. For example, Green and Cowden (1992) found that those individuals most active in protesting busing in Louisville, KY were those people who had children they expected would be harmed by the busing.[13]

The idea that a "threat" or an "opportunity" might provide impetus for action is an old one in social science. For example, Key (1949) explained the antipathy of Southern whites toward blacks based on the idea that whites living near many blacks perceived blacks to be a threat.[14] More recently, Miller (2002) and Miller, Krosnick and Lowe (2000) have suggested that *either* threat *or* opportunity could spur donations to political organizations. Campbell (2003*a*,*b*) shows that aggregate participation among senior citizens closely tracks changes in public policy that pose harm to this group, i.e. "policy threats" against social security. Huddy et al. (2002) show that perception of personal threat due to terrorism has weaker effects on attitudes about terrorism than perceptions of national level threats.[15]

Thus, this stage in the process is based on several groups of literature, all of which use the word "threat" (and some of which use the word "opportunity") to denote politically relevant events that might motivate changes in political behavior or attitudes. I think it adds another important part to the story of participation. For example, when people who are poor, not socially well connected, or relatively uninterested in politics suddenly appear at a march, a meeting, or else-

[13] Green and Cowden (1992) also found that anti-busing attitudes were *not* predicted by a cost/benefit calculus. Thus, this argument for assessing an event as a future harm or benefit only holds plausibly when people are being asked to put money or time on the line, not when they are able to provide "cheap talk" to a survey interviewer.

[14] A large line of research on "power threat theory" emerged from observations by Key (1949) and Blalock (1967). Critical reviews of this literature can been found in Wong (2002); Bowers (1998*b*,*a*, 1997).

[15] A related body of literature focuses on how intolerance and other seemingly anti-democratic personality characteristics may be activated, intensified, and made salient parts of attitude formation among people with certain personality predispositions (for examples of this work, see Feldman and Stenner, 1997; Feldman, 2003).

where, political scientists are tempted to say, "These people shouldn't be here" (not as a normative statement, but as an empirical implication of extant theories). It is quite intuitive, however, that even a person with few resources is likely to act in the face of a large threat. Thus, this part of the framework can help us understand the instances where the poor and disadvantaged do get involved in politics, and it can help us understand why many people in a democracy stay home, too. In the end, even if an event happens and it is perceived, unless a person understands the event as a threat or an opportunity, participation will be blocked even before resources are considered.

Events that are assessed as very mild threats or opportunities can still spur participation if (1) a person has a very low cost of action for that particular kind of event (Stage 4) or (2) the threat is part of a sequence of low cost events for which the costs cumulate to create a high overall cost in the mind of the individuals — thus allowing for "last straw" phenomenon. Even people with very few resources may participate if the cost or benefit expected from an event is high enough.

Stage 4: Capability Assessment. Once a person predicts that the event she perceived is apt to cost or gain her some utility, the next question is whether the person either knows how to avoid the costs (or attain the gains) and whether the person is able to execute the plan.

The first sub-stage of this segment of the path to participation is called "Repertoire" to indicate that different kinds of activities are cognitively available to a person facing a threat or opportunity.[16] For example, protests were a more common mode of political activity in the late 1960s than they are now in this country, and this type of activity was especially popular among people under the age of 35 (Bowers, 2003). Structural conditions and fashion largely determine the repertoire of activity available to an individual in any given place in the world and moment in time. For example, during the dictatorship in Chile, opposition to certain government policies was often expressed by individuals coordinating the banging of pots and pans outside

[16] I borrow this concept of a "repertoire" from Tilly (1986), who first developed it to explain why different social movements in France used different forms of protest over time.

their kitchen windows, by whistling certain tunes en masse at soccer games, and by anonymous leaflets scattered around the roads and the central plazas after midnight (Bowers, 1992). In Argentina between 1955 and 1972, mass strikes gave way to covert bombings, kidnaping and assassination after the week long riot/strike in the city of Cordoba in May of 1969 (Bowers, 1995). I use these examples only because they are ones that I have studied. However, these examples show that any given threat or benefit must be matched with some kind of appropriate response within a given political and historical context — that is, events occur and must be reacted to within contexts. The participation research that focuses on voting has made great strides precisely because of its focus on the repertoire part of the participation path. Registration is a crucial structural constraint on voting (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), to the extent that if individuals do not think of registering to vote, they cannot vote, even if they have the resources available to do so, and even if the appropriate response to a perceived threat is to vote.

The second sub-stage of this segment is called "Resources" to indicate that, even if a person can think of an appropriate action to take to stave off a threat or take advantage of an opportunity, resources are a crucial constraint on the ability of an individual to take this action. It is here that most of the research on non-voting participation has provided a rich description. For example, we have learned that individuals who know how to write letters, speak in public, and hold meetings are much more likely to do those things when it comes to politics (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). We have also learned that social networks are crucial in differentiating those who participate from those who do not; people who know the mayor in some senses face lower costs in calling the mayor to express an opinion (Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry, 1996), and the social status of individuals interacts with the status of others around them to either incite or depress participation (Huckfeldt, 1979). We have also learned that small inequalities in resources can cumulate over a lifetime to create serious inequalities in participation between men and women, and presumably between any other groups who have similar experiences to women when it comes to wages, time, socialization, etc. (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001). Thus, if we compare two people who have seen an event and understand it in the same way, and who

both can think of how to act to prevent the threat or seize the opportunity, we would assume that the person with more resources will be better able to act. Thus, this approach takes advantage of the ground-breaking work done over the past 5 decades; it helps us understand where in the process of participation resources matter, and how they could produce inequality as observed in cross-sectional surveys. However, the theories based on cross-sectional surveys do not deal with (in any synthetic way) all of the steps leading up to the point where resources come to matter. If we do not understand the steps involved in the climb toward participation—placing all of our understanding on part of one stage— then, when people with low resources participate, or people with high resources do not (and if mobilization is nowhere to be found), we are like the doctors who say, "I don't understand why this person had a heart attack — we gave him plenty of carrots." Thus, although this framework builds (gratefully) on the previous research in this field, it also represents a major step toward understanding this phenomenon, above and beyond previous research.

Even if an individual is exposed to an event, perceives it as politically relevant, and assesses it as a threat, a lack of resources and/or a lack of knowledge about an appropriate response can prevent political participation in the end.

Stage 5: Putting it All Together. I have drawn a fifth stage on this mountain and called it "Utility Assessment" because this is the moment where the costs posed by the event and the available resources are compared. I depict it as a separate stage merely for clarity of exposition. I suspect that most individuals do not in fact engage in a clearly separate moment of cost/benefit analysis on the route to participation. Nonetheless, some rough comparison of the costs posed by the event perceived, and the costs involved in taking appropriate action must occur before an individual acts. If the costs portended by the threat are higher than the costs expected from the action, then this framework predicts that the individual will act. If the the costs of action are too high compared to the threat (or benefit) then the individual will not act.

This segmented path allows different individuals to react to events in their surroundings differently depending on attentiveness, threat/benefit assessment, repertoire and resources. If all of the segments except for resources were to be held constant, then we have the situation commonly assumed in cross-sectional surveys. However, this framework allows for participation by those who "shouldn't be participating" from the point of view of other theories.

Figure 6 depicts a very simple example of how event and resource assessment can work together to produce different outcomes. In this case, I have assumed the very simple case where the expected costs accruing from an event (i.e. "amount of threat") are compared one-to-one with the expected costs of ameliatory action. The area shaded in grey is the area in which the perceived costs of the event are more than the cost of acting — and thus is the area in which people are predicted to act. The letters represent two different individuals, and the subscripts represent two different situations. In the first situation (denoted by subscript "1"), both person A and person B perceive the same cost emanating from an event. Let us assume that both people would like to take the same kind of action to counter the threat. Person B knows the appropriate action is to attend a city council meeting. It is easy for her to attend such a meeting because she has done so before, and she went to college with the mayor of the town. That is, she does not have much uncertainty about a council meeting (either in terms of when and where they are held, how to get on the speakers list, how to dress and act, etc.), nor is she afraid to speak in front of the mayor, an old friend. Since person B has such low costs of action compared to the costs of the threat, the framework predicts that she would go to the meeting. Person A has only a high school education and does not know what to do in response. She works at night (when council meetings are held), and has never been to a council meeting in the past. Thus, in order to act, she must search for a variety of information, change her schedule, and also deal with the uncertainty of speaking in public in front of a bunch of strangers. Since the impact of the event on her is only about 1 unit of utility, but the cost of acting is about 6 units for her, she does not attend the meeting.

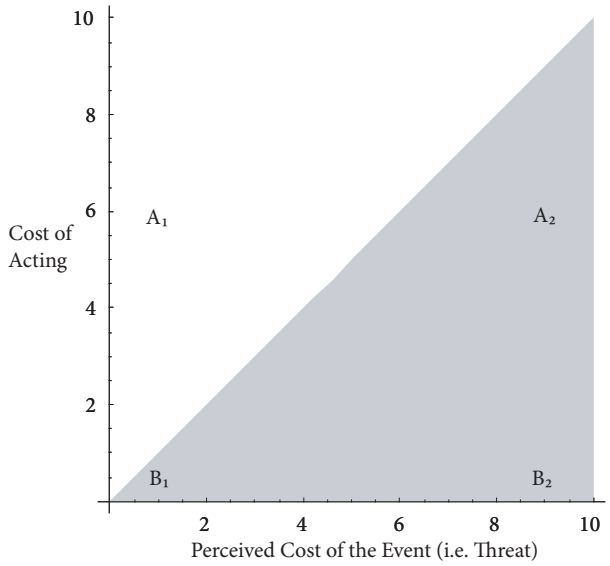

Figure 6: The Trade Off Between Threat and Resources Illustrated

The outcome of the first situation could be predicted easily from previous theory — the inequality in participation can be understood mainly as stemming from a disparity in resources. The second situation (shown by the subscripts of "2" for the two people in this example), however, shows how this new, dynamic approach helps us understand phenomena that are currently not covered by previous theories. In this situation, both person A and B perceive an event and assess the threat at the same level. This time the threat posed by the event is high (utility cost of 9). This event also requires attendance at a city council meeting, and the costs of acting remain the same for both people (easy for person B and hard for person A). However, the costs of the event are so high that it now becomes worthwhile for person A to find the required information about the city council meeting and to screw up her courage to speak in public. Of course, if this person were even more disadvantaged (say, the cost of acting was 10), then even a very costly event might not stimulate action from her. Thus, this approach does not take attention away from the problems of inequality that concern many students of political participation, but instead helps us understand more about how resource inequality comes to matter for political participation — and how, in some circumstances, it can be overcome.

Summary of the Framework

Figure 5 tells a story that makes sense of the sporadic patterns of participation shown in Figure 1. The sequence of steps that are part of the climb towards participation also includes pieces that rely directly on a half century of past findings about who participates. It shows that participation depends crucially on the provision of opportunities to do so, in the form of events occurring and being perceived by the individual. By adding a step that requires an individual to assess the costs and benefits expected from an event, it shows how people with relatively low resources can become involved in politics, and it also suggests how we can use the current set of cross-sectional findings as an important piece of the puzzle of participation dynamics. If an individual does not perceive any politically relevant events, if she does not know how to react toward such events once perceived, or if the cost of reacting is too high, then we should not expect that individual to participate.

If we assigned probabilities to each stage of the process, then we can see how it makes sense that participation ought to be rare in the lives of people. If we make the *strong* simplifying assumption that the outcome of each stage were independent of any other stage, then we could write the probability of a person i acting during a given moment t as the product of (1) the probability of an event occurring, (2) of the person perceiving the event, and (3) of the person deciding that the event posed greater costs than the costs of action:

$$p(\text{action}_{it}) = p(\text{event}_{it})p(\text{perception}_{it})p(\text{threat}_{it} \geqslant \text{action cost}_{it}) \tag{1}$$

For example, if a person lived in a place where politically relevant events were few (for simplicity, say, occurring at a constant rate of 1 out of every 10 days (that is, with $p(\text{event}_{it}) = .1$), if that person was only apt to perceive about 1 in 10 events ($p(\text{perception}_{it}) = .1$), and if that person had few resources (and thus, rarely finds the threat or opportunity posed by an event to exceed the costs of acting, such that ($p(\text{threat}_{it} \geqslant \text{action cost}_{it}) = .1$), then the probability of acting for that person, on any given day, would be calculated as $.1 \times .1 \times .1 = .001$. On one out of every 1000

days, the person would be expected to act, or about once every three years.[17] Unfortunately, we do not know what kind of values are reasonable for any of these terms. If we knew even ranges for these values, or could approximate them with well known probability distributions (or mixtures thereof), then we would begin to be able to refine, test, and use this theory to understand the dynamics of political participation. So far, however, to my knowledge there is no information that provides much reliable purchase on these values (or on the quite strong assumptions of constant probability of events, and independence across stages).

One of the strongest findings from cross-sectional research on political activity is that individuals who have more formal education are more likely to get involved in politics than those who have less. Unfortunately, the best available data on political participation over time show that political activity starts and stops in one year episodes within the lives of ordinary Americans. Since, formal education does not rise and fall from one year to the next, it cannot easily drive the sparse series of discrete events that depicts political participation over the lives of citizens. This project proposes an approach for studying political participation that can account for the irregular and episodic nature of the phenomenon, and thus adds a new perspective to the field. In addition, understanding the mechanism by which events spur or inhibit action can change how we understand past findings. For example, the framework I propose here explains how education may function within the mechanism by which events are turned into action; it both accounts for the persistent education-based inequalities in participation found in cross-sectional studies and also makes sense of the dynamic patterns of participation that I have observed in preliminary work.

The framework proposed here helps us situate past findings and understand why resources like education are so powerful at distinguishing among participators and non-participators: they

[17] I have written this as a joint probability rather than a longish string of conditional probabilities mainly for simplicity of exposition. But, also because I am not completely sure that each stage must occur conditional on preceding stages, with no interaction between stages. Of course, I also assumed independence, which doesn't make sense either. So, I wonder about whether to junk this short section, or to significantly expand on it, either via computer simulations or via some decision theoretic-looking bit of probability math.

act on nearly all stages of the process. People who have such resources are exposed to different kinds of events (and perhaps different numbers of events); they may be more apt to perceive them; they may have more sophisticated event assessment abilities, so they may be able to recognize threats and opportunities more quickly; they clearly have more skills and status and probably have larger repertoires; and they may even have more facility in doing the final "is it worth doing" calculation. Nevertheless, not all of these things would necessarily make a person with more resources more likely to participate — such a person may live in a very sedate neighborhood with few events, and such a person may not perceive many events to be very potentially harmful (which I think ought to be more stimulating of action than potentially beneficial events).

This perspective also helps us understand those moments unexplained by previous theories, such as when people with low resources do get involved.[18] A large enough threat or opportunity ought to allow low-resource individuals to surmount the many barriers that tend to block their participation in politics. These moments tend to be the ones that produce the most political change, and, although they may be rare in the United States, they have caused much dramatic political change around the world. Of course, many scholars of social movements are actively working to explain mass uprisings and revolutions, but to my knowledge this work has focused nearly entirely on aggregated units of analysis rather than the individual humans who are the component parts. And, the poor and disenfranchised are not restricted to massive rebellions and protests in their activity. Thus, I hope this approach helps us understand the many ways and moments in which those who "ought not to participate" from the perspective of previous theory actually do so.

This paper presents a new etiology, or causal story, of political participation. Adding an emphasis on precipitating factors to the voluminous literature already existing on potentiating factors

[18] As I noted in the literature review, there are previous theories about when social movements of the disadvantaged may occur. However, although the findings from that literature is useful to me here, they does not bear directly on the question of whether a given individual will act (whether in the context of a social movement, or not).

helps reorient the study of political participation from a focus on static inequalities (about which we know a great deal) to an emphasis on dynamics (about which we know very little).

Focusing on political participation as a dynamic process opens up an exciting research agenda, requiring new approaches to study the phenomenon. As we add moving pictures to our library of snapshots, we may gain new perspectives about what political participation is and how we should reinterpret past findings in light of our new observations and expectations. The question of "who participates" can be, and ought to be, expanded to address what stimulates, inhibits or sustains political participation over time within the lives of ordinary people.

Appendix A: Measures of Political Participation

The Study of Political Socialization includes a wide array of measures of political participation, based on closed- and open-ended questions.

Electoral Participation Questions about the occurrence, timing, and content of acts of this type were asked of the class of 1965 in 1973 and 1982. In 1997 detailed timing information was not asked for these items. The focus of the actions were collected as open-ended responses to the "what was it about" questions. These open-ended responses were then aggregated into very detailed numeric codes. I constructed the variables indicating school oriented participation using these codes. The questions were:

Campaign Influence First, did you talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote one way or the other? When was that? What issue/candidate was it about?

Campaign Rallies Have you gone to any political meetings, rallies, dinners, or other things like that since (1965/1973/1982)? When was that? What issue/candidate was it about?

Campaign Work Have you done any other work for a party, candidate or issue since (1965/1973/ 1982)? When was that? What issue/candidate was it about?

Campaign Button Have you worn a campaign button or put a campaign sticker on your car since (1965/1973/1982)? When was that? What issue/candidate was it about?

Campaign Donation Have you given money or bought any tickets to help a particular party, candidate, or group pay campaign expenses since (1965/1973/1982)? When was that? What issue/candidate was it about?

Non-electoral Participation Much political activity occurs outside the periodicity marking elections. These include contacting public officials, writing letters to the media, taking part in demonstrations, and working on local issues. The timing as well as the nature of these efforts are available.

The following questions were asked about such activities in the 1973, 1982, and 1997 waves of the Study of Political Socialization for the panel of respondents who were 18 years old in 1965:

"Aside from activities during election campaigns, there are other ways people can become involved in politics."

Contacting For example, since (1965/1973/1982) have you written a letter, sent a fax or e-mail message, or talked to any public officials, giving them your opinion about something? (IF YES) When was that and what was it about?

Letter to Editor Since (1965/1973/1982) , have you written a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine giving any political opinions? (IF YES) When was that and what was it about?

Demonstration Since (1965/1973/1982), have you taken part in a demonstration, protest march, or sit-in? (IF YES) When was that and what was it about?

Community Work Since (1965/1973/1982), have you worked with others to try to solve some community problems? (IF YES) When was that and what was it about?

Appendix B: Participation in the Political Socialization Study

This section provides a bit more information about the extent of participation over the lives of two generations of Americans. I don't plan to include it in the final version of this paper, but I thought it would be useful for the discussion.

How much do people tend to participate over their lives?

Figures B1 and B2 show the distribution of activity within people's lives for each of 8 types of political participation over 33 years for the non-campaign activities and 18 years for the campaign oriented activities of the Political Socialization data.[19] In each case, the height of the bars shows the proportions in the Youth and Parent samples reporting 0,1,2... acts of each type over the years.[20] The gray bars show the proportions for the Parent sample, and the white bars show depict the Youth sample. The x-axes for electoral and non-electoral activities run from 0 to 20 acts.[21]

Figure B1 shows that, for each act, over 60% of the respondents (in both groups) had not engaged in it. [22] Like the NES respondents, the types of electoral activities chosen by the Political Socialization respondents for their political activity were, in order of frequency, donating money (28% of G1 and 30% of G2 reported doing this at least one time), wearing buttons/displaying signs (26% of G1 and 37% of G2 reported doing this at least one time), attending rallies and meetings (25% of G1 and 33% of G2 reported attending at least one campaign related rally or meeting), and finally doing "other" campaign work (15% of G1 and 21% of G2 reported doing this at least once).

Figure B2 provides similar information about the Political Socialization respondents, this time for non-electoral activities. The NES did not ask questions about these kinds of activities more than 3 times over the 1952 to 2000 period. So I do not know if the amount of participation shown here over 33 year periods within people compares to the amount that would be expected

[19] The question wording for these questions is described in Appendix A. The Political Socialization study did not collect detailed timing information about electoral activities in 1997.

[20] The first generation, or Parent sample (born around 1920), is labeled "G1", and the second generation, or Youth sample (born in 1947 and 1948), is labeled, "G2".

[21] Individuals were allowed to report multiple acts of a given type in a year (up to three or four acts). For ease of presentation, I have limited the number of acts shown here to a maximum of 20. However, at least one person reported doing as many as 70 acts of *Community Work*, 49 acts of *Contacting Officials*, 47 acts of *Letter Writing*, 26 acts of *Demonstrations*, 28 acts of *Rallies/Meetings*, 29 acts of *Buttons/Signs*, 20 acts of *Other Work*, and 28 acts of *Donating Money*. So few people engaged in more than 20 acts (or even more than 1 or 2 acts as the graphs show), that allowing the axes to stretch to the limits of the data hindered comparison and interpretation.

[22] Members of the Parent generation were allowed to report activities from before 1965. The earliest reported activity among that group occurred in 1951. Members of the Youth generation were asked these questions first in 1973, and the question referred to activities done since 1965.

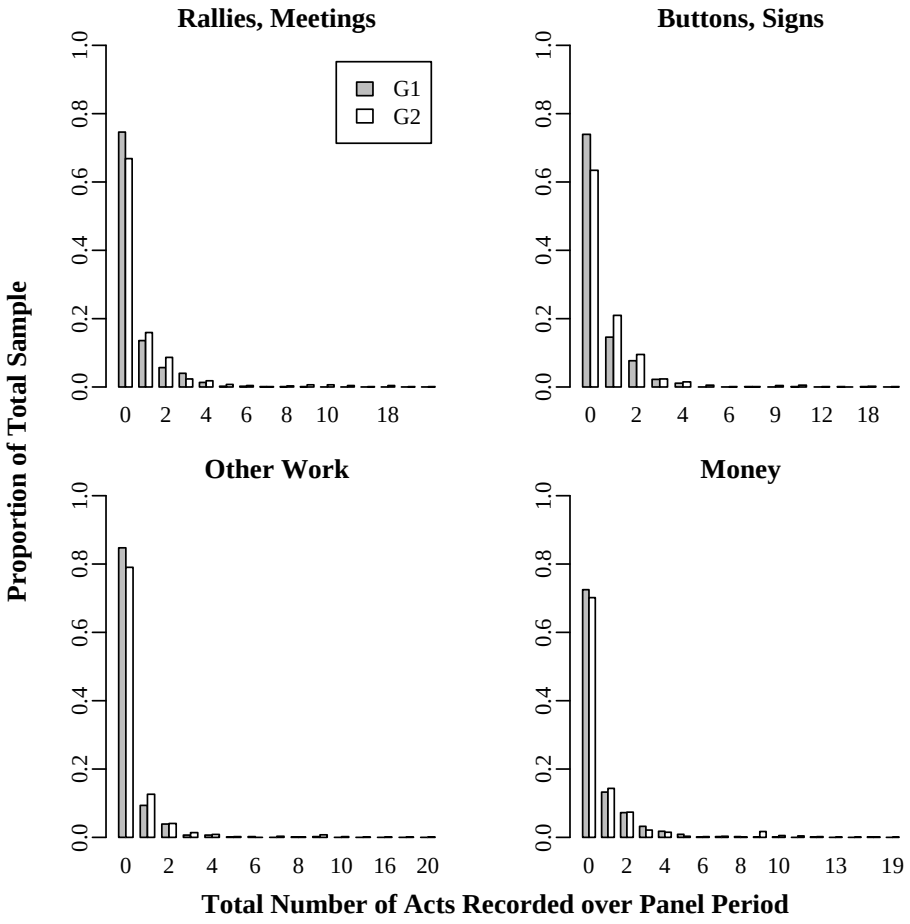

Figure B1: Cumulative Acts of Electoral Activity

from questions asked of a single cross-section. This set of activities includes two that are very rare compared to the electoral acts (at least among G1): only 5% of G1 and 14% of G2 wrote any letters to the editor and only 3% of G1 and 24% of G2 engaged in demonstrations or protests over this period. This set also includes two that are very common compared to the electoral activities: 36% of G1 and 65% of G2 did some work with others in their community and 38% of G1 and 68% of G2 contacted a public official in some way over this period. This shows that the two generations have very different repertoires of political behavior when it comes to demonstrations and protests and letters to the editor (probably accounted for by some of G2 attending college in the late 1960s and by the fact the G2 are better educated than their parents). It also shows that members of G2 tend to be more participatory than their parents in all other kinds of activities — electoral and non-electoral. In fact, majorities of G2 contacted officials and did some community work, and the figure shows that at least 1% of G2 did such activities more than 2 times — 1.5% reported doing 6 acts of community work and 7 acts of contacting as they aged from 18 to 50.

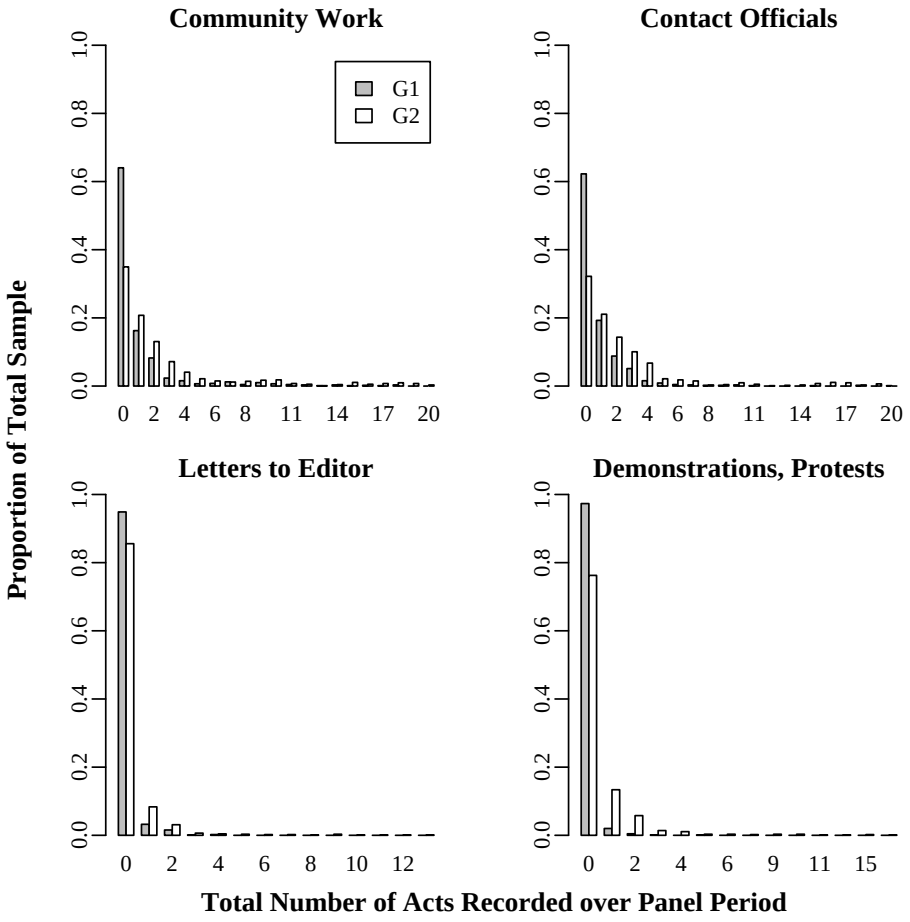

Figure B2: Cumulative Acts of Non-Electoral Activity

Once people get involved, what do they do?

This information about participation over the life-span leads to another question: "Among people who only do one act, which act is it? Among people who do many acts, which acts do they choose to do?" Perhaps the repertoires of activities chosen by those who participate infrequently are different from the repertoires chosen by those who participate frequently. The previous results suggested that participation may not be distributed as unequally across the population as previously thought (at least, when seen from the perspective of a life-time rather than a single year). That finding did not mean that participation was a frequent occurrence, however. In fact, even looked at over time, very few individuals turn out to be habitual participators. If these few highly active people tend to do different kinds of activities than the many people who participate once or twice in their lives, then concerns about inequality might not be diminished but just refocused on what in particular the highly active minority are doing.

Figure B3 shows the answer to these questions for both G1 and G2. Each line shows a smoothed version of what proportion of the sample reported doing a given act among those who reported doing 0,1,...20 acts over the study periods.[23] This tells us that, for G1, contacting officials was

[23]Without smoothing these graphs became unreadable in their complexity. The point of smoothing here was

the most common type of activity among those who did few acts (of those who only did one act over the period, around 30% chose contacting officials as that act, about 25% chose community work, around 10% of this single-act group wore buttons, displayed signs, or donated money). Among G2, both contacting officials and community were common types of acts among those who did few acts — and they continued to be most common by far, even among the frequent participators in that cohort. The black lines on each panel refer to the non-electoral activities, and the gray lines show the electoral activities. If the lines on these plots stacked up and did not cross, this would suggest that certain acts are always easier (or at least more common) than others — regardless of whether a person has been an active participator (engaging in many acts over time), or has only done one thing ever. This is not the case here. Certain acts seem to be chosen by individuals who participate rarely (namely contacting officials and community work among G2 and G1) and other acts are found only among those individuals who participate more often (namely donating money, attending meetings and rallies, and doing "other" campaign work (among both G1 and G2)).

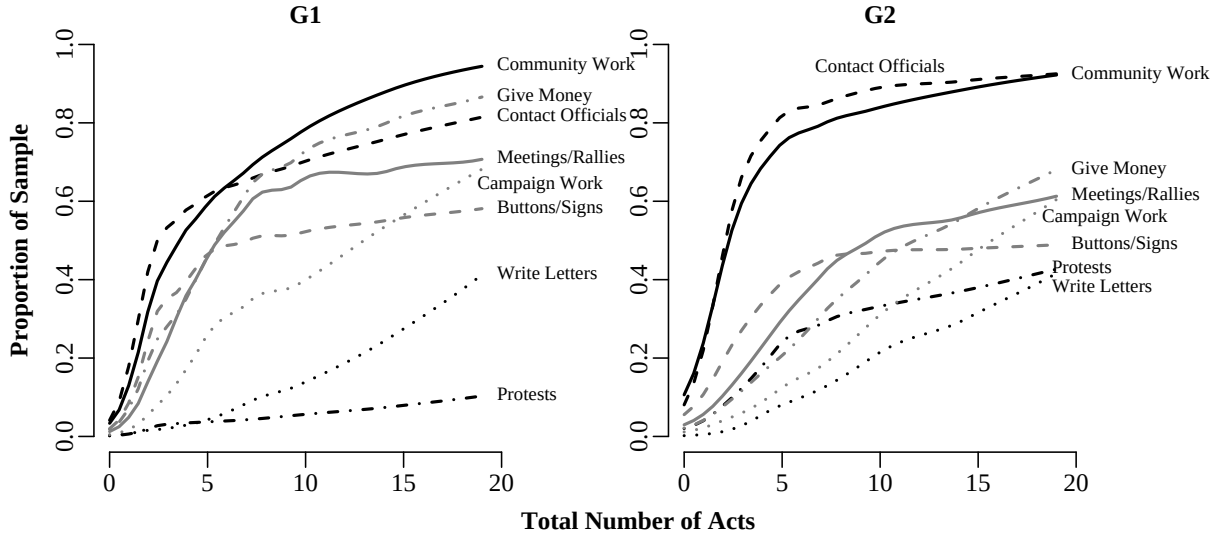

Figure B3: Frequency of "Lifetime" participation in certain actions

Note: The curves were generated with a local linear binomial scatterplot smoothing algorithm with a bandwidth of 70% of the nearest neighbors of each point included in the smoothed estimates.(see Loader, 1999, for more details about this smoothing method)

Although the two generations are not very different in terms of the rank of activities among the infrequent and frequent participators, there are large differences in the proportions involved in different activities. Among members of G2, there appears to be a clear distinction between two non-electoral activities (contacting officials and community work) and all the rest of the activities. Working with others in one's community appears to be nearly a ubiquitous ingredient of the participation bundle of both generations especially as the frequency of activity increases: nearly 90% of people in both generations who engage in over 15 acts have community work as one of

to look at the overall relationships without getting caught up in the details of each point. I choose 70% as the bandwidth after comparing plots of the raw data with a variety of other bandwidths (from 35% to 70%). No substantively important details are lost with the current choice of bandwidth.

the acts that they do. However, among the older generation, donating money surpasses contacting officials in frequency among the most participatory members of that generation and over 60% of high participators in G1 attend campaign meetings and rallies. The fact that the older people are more apt to donate money shouldn't be that surprising given that they have had more time to earn money over their lives — and probably earn more in general — than their children. The frequent participators among the younger generation are more apt to do campaign activities than the infrequent participators (with donating money and campaign meetings and rallies as the most common types of electoral activities). Protests and demonstrations are nearly never a part of even the mostly highly active member of G1's repertoire of activity, but around 30-40% of the highly active G2 reported attending such activities (slightly more than writing letters to the editor) — and protesting is on par with giving money among those who did fewer than 5 acts in this cohort. This is yet another indication of the effect of coming of age in the late 1960s and early 1970s for this group of people.

In general, even the most participatory members of G2 do not appear to engage in electoral activities as much as the frequent participators of G1. This could merely be a function of age — and could suggest that campaign activities, at least over the period 1965 to 1982 were largely dominated by people older than 40 years old. It could also suggest that the repertoires of young people of this cohort are predominantly focused on direct contact with officials and local level activities outside of the established structures of elections, rather showing partisan allegiance that may come with intensive activity in campaigns. This too, could be seen as a period effect if one believed that the alienation expressed by a vocal minority during protests of the 1960s and the Watergate scandals of the early 1970s was felt by other members of that age cohort, effectively pushing them out of partisan politics. However, there is no evidence that this cohort was or became any less partisan than their parents, and thus, perhaps the fact that the activists among G2 eschewed electoral politics has more to do with structures of mobilization and recruitment by the parties focusing on older people. In the end, these interpretations are merely speculation and deserve further investigation.

These descriptive analyses have shown that members of the Class of 1965 are, in some ways, more participatory than their parents: they are more likely to get involved at all, and are more likely to do more activities (from age 18 to 35 and from 18 to 50, for electoral and non-electoral activities respectively) than their parents (from age roughly 50 to roughly 70). However, their voting patterns appear more sporadic [not shown here]. And, the frequent participators among them appear to eschew electoral activities in favor of two activities not tied to campaign cycles — work with others in the community to solve local problems, and contacting elected officials — whereas the most participatory of their parents appear to have a more "balanced" bundle of activities, including community work and contacting (and donating money) as well as other activities tied to campaign cycles.

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