

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

¹⁹The 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.

²⁰The 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".

²¹Individuals 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.

²²Members 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.

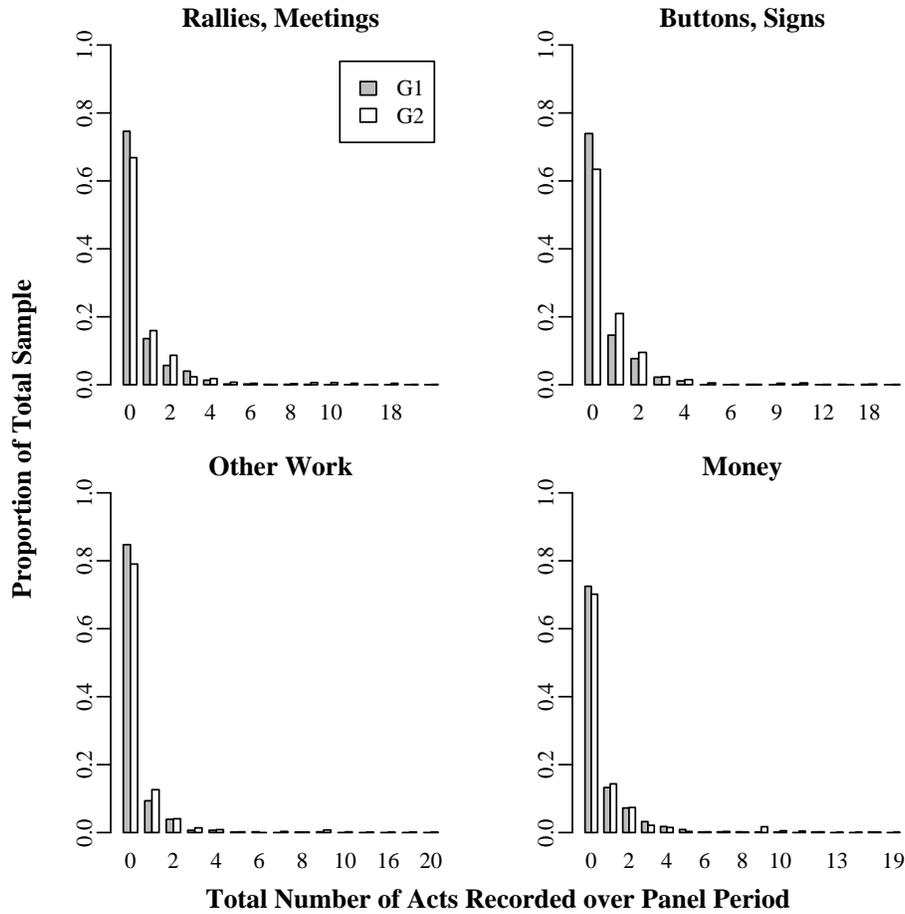


Figure B1: Cumulative Acts of Electoral Activity

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.

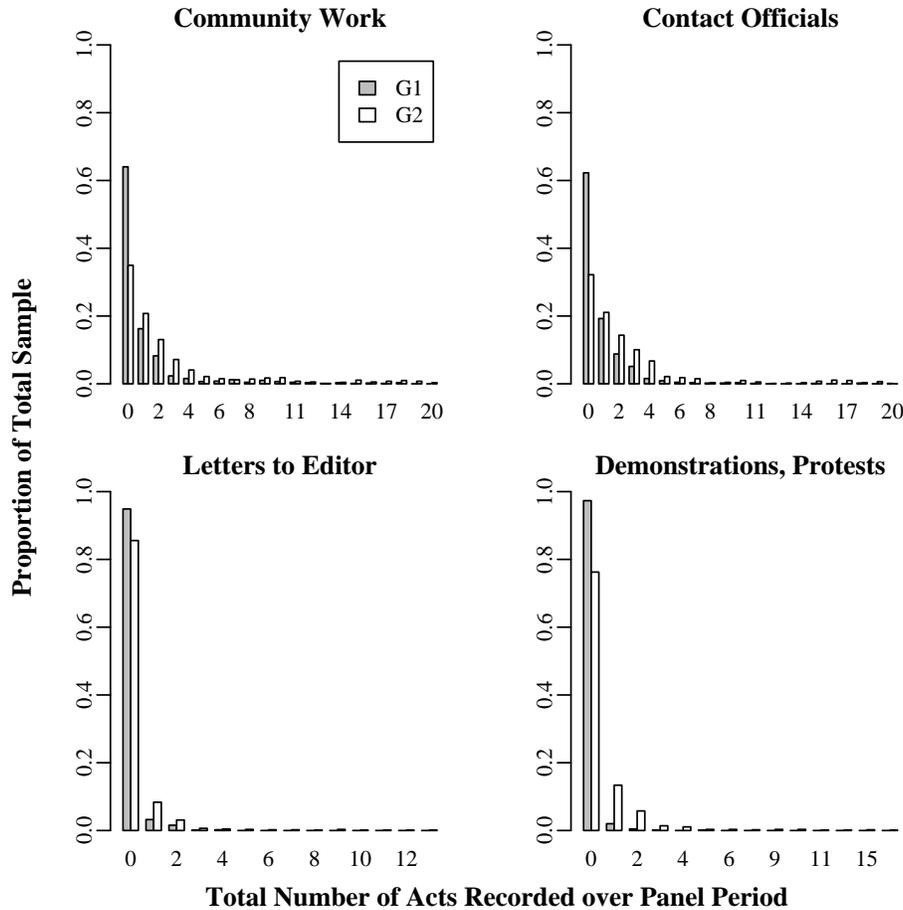


Figure B2: Cumulative Acts of Non-Electoral Activity

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 participants. 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

²³Without 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)).

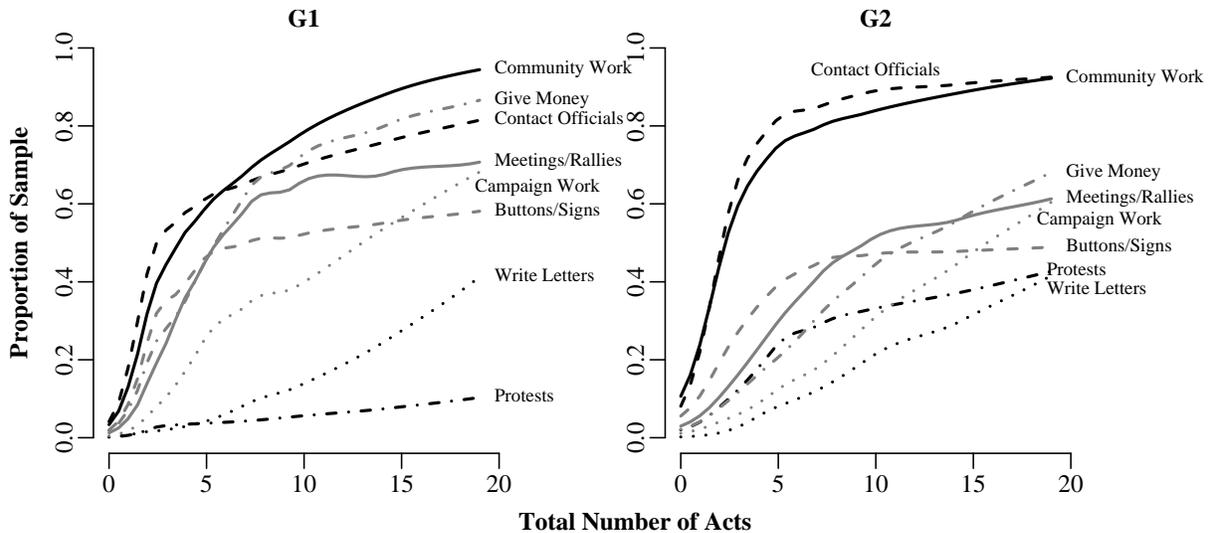


Figure B3: Frequency of “Lifetime” participation in certain actions

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.