Family Ties:
Understanding the Intergenerational Transmission of Participation

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The family is, perhaps, the universal social institution -- present throughout recorded history in widely ranging cultural settings. Although often difficult to specify, its influence is indisputable. Thus, any enterprise that seeks to understand the place of primary institutions in political life must inevitably come to terms with the family. In general, the understanding of how families shape future members of the political community has drawn from a learning model: in the family children absorb explicit and implicit lessons about politics and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. In this chapter, we consider the impact of the families in which we are reared on our political activity as adults and seek to clarify how family operates to influence future political participation. We argue that, when it comes to political participation, as important as the political learning that takes place in families is the set of opportunities bequeathed by the socio-economic status of the family of origin, in particular, the opportunity for educational attainment. Those whose parents are advantaged in SES terms are not only likely to come of age in a politically rich environment, and thus to learn lessons germane to future political activity, but are likely themselves to attain high levels of education which, in turn, enhances the likelihood of acquiring many other attributes that foster political participation.

Taking Family Seriously: The Literature on Political Socialization

Although observers of public life since the Greeks have considered the role of the family in creating future citizens, the family does not figure especially importantly in contemporary political science. Nonetheless, it once had greater prominence among the concerns of empirical political scientists. During the 1960s and 1970s, students of political socialization focused on the family as part of a broader concern with the institutions that

shape the political orientations, attitudes, and behaviors of the young.[1] While studies of the agents of political socialization inevitably dealt with the family, there was no consensus as to the bottom line. On one hand, Stanley Renshon (1973, p. 31) referred to the family as "the most important agent in the socialization process," and James C. Davies (1970, p. 108) maintained that "most of the individual's political personality -- his tendencies to think and act politically in particular ways -- have [sic] been determined at home." On the other, Robert Hess and Judith Torney (1968, p. 120) maintained that "the public school appears to be the most important and effective instrument of political socialization in the United States." Taking a position between these two, M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi (1981, p. 76) concluded that "although our research left the role of the family quite strong relative to the other agents examined, both the direct and indirect effects of the family appeared to be markedly lower and more variable than had been assumed."

Whether or not family has the primacy among the agents of socialization that is sometimes taken as axiomatic, there is no doubt that various family characteristics have consequences for the political development of the young. Perhaps most important among these family characteristics is social class. Children and adolescents who come from higher SES backgrounds, or whose parents had high levels of formal education, were found to have higher levels

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[1] On political socialization in general -- and the role of the family in particular -- see, among others, Davies (1970); Greenstein (1965, especially, chap. 5); Hess and Torney (1967, especially, chaps. 5 and 7); Easton and Dennis (1969); Dawson and Prewitt (1969, especially, chap. VII); Jaros (1973, especially chap 4); Jennings and Niemi (1974, especially, Parts I, II, and V); Jennings and Niemi (1981); Beck and Jennings (1991); Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (1999); and Jennings and Stoker (2001). For reviews of the literature, see Dennis (1968); Beck (1979); and Cook (1985) as well as Jennings's (2000) thoughtful assessment of the long series of political socialization studies that he and his associates have conducted.

of political information and understanding (Greenstein, 1965, p.100; Jennings and Niemi, 1974, pp. 109-110) and to be more politically interested and efficacious (Hess and Torney, 1968, pp. 168-179); more tolerant (Jennings and Niemi, 1974, p. 69); and more politically active (Hess and Torney, 1968, pp. 189-190; Sigel and Hosken, 1981, pp. 141-151).

With respect to the <u>way</u> that family matters -- and, therefore, the way that the SES of the family matters -- for future political life, the dominant understanding in the socialization literature is a learning model. Hess and Torney (1968, pp. 110-111) specified three different learning mechanisms by which the young absorb political lessons. First, according to the Accumulation Model, is the kind of explicit learning that takes place when "parents transmit attitudes which they consider valuable for their child to hold." Second, the Identification Model posits that "the family also presents examples that children may emulate." Third, the Interpersonal Transfer Model specifies a much more implicit learning process in which "expectations formed from experience in family relationships are later generalized to political objects."[2] In general, the socialization literature emphasizes correspondence between the generations with respect to the content of political attitudes and commitments -- in particular, partisanship -- rather than the transmission of the orientations and skills that encourage later political activity.[3]

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[2] The assumption behind the Interpersonal Transfer Model is that such aspects of family dynamics as the autonomy permitted to children, the relative emphasis placed on obedience, and the encouragement of discussion of controversial matters have implications for the political life of future citizens. While this assumption is surely plausible, it has received very little in the way of direct empirical confirmation. For a rare test, see Chaffee, McLeod, and Wackman (1973).

[3] In his literature review, Beck (1977, pp. 122-127) concludes that, except in the case of partisan identification, parents' ability to influence the content of their children's political choices is notably weak.

Nevertheless, the learning model helps us to understand the empirical findings in the socialization literature about the association between parental SES and the participatory orientations and behaviors of their offspring. Adults who are advantaged in terms of SES are known to be more likely to have high levels of political knowledge, interest, efficacy, and tolerance, to engage in political discussion, to be politically active, and to encourage their children to become independent and to express themselves fully in family discussions. What such parents teach out loud, and teach by example, helps us to understand the political differences among SES groups within the next generation.

The socialization literature contains hints of an alternative to the learning model, a different mechanism for the translation of SES advantage into participatory advantage across generations. Jennings and Niemi (1974, p. 22) argue that the "social stratification system [that] operates in the nation . . . bequeaths to people of different strata differential access to resources most useful in the political process." They point out that "the middle class child goes to 'better' schools, interacts with children with greater social competence, has access to more varied learning encounters" and the like. In a similar vein, Renshon (1975, p. 48) notes that SES is "a shorthand for a whole range of life and developmental experiences, attitudes, and life-styles" and that a child who is born into a high SES family has the advantage of an "expanding choice system."[4] Neither Jennings and Neimi nor Renshon pursue this fruitful lead. One reason that Jennings and Niemi (1974, p. 22) do not focus more centrally on SES is that, as they point out, "the major difficulty

[4] Greenstein's (1965, pp. 89-94) emphasis upon the advantage enjoyed by upper-SES children with respect to IQ, intellectual skills, and academic achievement is related to these themes. However, Greenstein compares children stratified by SES, not by IQ or academic accomplishment.

with the social stratification approach is that it deals with causes at a second or third remove." That is, because SES groups differ in so many ways, SES functions as a surrogate for a variety of attributes and practices with potential consequences for political socialization. It is, therefore, difficult to isolate the mechanisms through which the SES of the family of origin shapes later political life.

In this chapter, we take up the challenge. Although we are unable to take into account all possible aspects of SES that might influence political socialization, we do specify two different paths that link parents' SES to the adult political participation of their offspring. We demonstrate that, as expected, upper-SES parents are more likely to participate in politics themselves and to create households in which there is political discussion, both of which contribute to the political learning of their children. In addition, the resource advantages conferred by growing up in a family that enjoys a favorable position in the SES hierarchy -- in particular, the opportunity to achieve high levels of education -- are crucial for the cultivation of future citizens.[5] Indeed, when it comes to political participation such resource advantages outweigh the advantages that accrue to those who learn about politics by virtue of coming of age in a household in which parents who are politically active and engaged function as role models.

Linking Parents' SES to Political Participation: An Overview

Why are some people more active in politics than others? Systematic research has demonstrated over and over the strong links between socio-

[5] On the intergenerational transmission of SES, see, for example, Blau and Duncan (1967); Hauser and Featherman (1977); Hout, (1988); Ganzeboom, Treiman, and Ultee (1991); Solon (1992); Corcoran (1995); McMurrer and Sawhill (1998); and Smelser, Wilson, and Mitchell (1999). Nevertheless, as demonstrated by SES differences between adult siblings, the transmission of socio-economic status from parent to child is far from perfect.

economic status -- occupation, income and, especially, education -- and citizen political participation.[6] The Civic Voluntarism Model points to three sets of factors that foster participation: resources, motivations, and location in recruitment networks.[7] In other words, those who are able to take part, who want to take part, and who are asked to take part are more likely to do so. Of the components of SES, educational attainment has a particular primacy. Not only does education have a direct impact on political activity but level of education affects the acquisition of each of the sets of factors that facilitate participation: the well-educated are more likely to earn high incomes on the job; to develop civic skills at work, in non-political organizations and, to a lesser extent, in church; to be in social networks through which requests for political activity are mediated; and to be politically interested and knowledgeable. Furthermore, we shall see that each of these sets of factors is affected by the legacy of the families in which we are raised. Those whose parents were advantaged in SES terms are more likely, as adults, to have the resources to be active, to be in networks through which requests for activity are mediated, and to be motivated to take part in political life.

The socialization literature demonstrates a political connection between

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[6] Among the analyses of political activity that demonstrate the connection between SES and political activity are Verba and Nie (1972); Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980); and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993). In spite of its unambiguous empirical power, it is common to deride the “SES Model of Participation,” as simplistic, apolitical, and atheoretical. See Leighley (1995, pp. 183-188) for a trenchant summary of the criticisms of the SES model. For a more theoretical presentation that explains the linkage between socio-economic status and activity and an empirical specification of the participatory consequences of education, see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, Part III).

[7] On the Civic Voluntarism Model, see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995); and Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001).

parents' social status and future political activity. High-SES parents are more likely to create a politically rich home environment -- in which there are frequent political discussions and politically active parents serve as role models -- and children who grow up in such an environment are distinctive in their political orientations. Presumably, the lessons that are absorbed in a politically stimulating home would carry on into adulthood creating citizens who are motivated to take part -- who are politically interested, informed, and efficacious. Adults who are psychologically engaged with politics are more likely to take part.

However, being raised in a high-SES home is politically enabling in another way, one that is less explicitly political and that is given much less attention in the literature on political socialization. Parents' SES affects the ultimate socio-economic position of their children -- including the education they receive, the jobs they get as adults, and the incomes they earn. Position in the socio-economic hierarchy, in turn, affects the acquisition of such participatory resources as civic skills developed in school and in adult institutional settings as well as the location in networks through which recruitment to political activity takes place. Because of the multiplicity and power of its direct and indirect effects upon participation, we focus, in particular, on education as the engine for the socio-economic transmission of political activity from generation to generation, drawing out the consequences of the link between parents' education and the education of their offspring.[8] Well-educated parents produce well-educated children, who enjoy opportunities that permit them to enhance their stockpile of virtually

[8] An additional reason for paying special attention to education is that we have better measures of parental education than of the other socio-economic characteristics of the family of origin.

all the factors that facilitate political activity.

Figure 1 illustrates two different paths by which parental SES influences political activity. One path operates through the education of the child, which then affects all three of the participatory factors: resources, recruitment, and motivation. That is, parental education channels the members of the next generation into life circumstances -- including, most prominently, educational attainment -- that are conducive to the accumulation of political resources and placement into social networks from which they may be recruited to politics and that shape psychological orientations to politics. Another path operates through the political stimulation provided at home, which then influences motivation. That is, beginning at the same place, the educational level of parents influences the political richness of the home environment which in turn affects political activity through increased psychological engagement with politics. Though these paths intertwine, they will be shown to have differing consequences on cross-generational political inequality.

We hasten to add two qualifications to the two paths laid out schematically in Figure 1. First, we make no claim that these are the sole mechanisms by which parents' SES has an impact on their offspring's future political participation. We expect that the legacy of parents' education operates in other ways about which, because we use recall data collected from adults, we were unable to ask. For example, all things equal, having parents who were politically and socially well connected or who filled the house with books, newspapers, and periodicals would, presumably, have consequences for future activity. Moreover, unmeasured aspects of child-rearing that are discussed in the literature on socialization -- for example, emphasis on obedience or encouragement of autonomy and independence -- might influence future political activity. Second, the links between parents' education and

the amount of education or political stimulation received by their children are anything but iron-clad. Many people who do not enjoy socio-economic advantage as children go on -- by dint of luck, pluck, or scholarship aid -- to enjoy high levels of education, income, and occupational prestige. Indeed, the ideology of the American Dream posits that it must be thus. Moreover, family SES does not determine the extent to which a home is a politically stimulating one; in fact, political stimulation can derive from other sources -- including, most importantly, politics itself. Later on, we show an example in which the political climate in which the individual comes of age can modify the relationship between parental SES and the political participation of their children.

From Generation to Generation: Some Preliminary Data

We begin our analysis with basic descriptive data.[9] Figure 2A demonstrates the intergenerational transmission of education. The higher the educational attainment of their parents, the more likely that respondents are

[9] We use data from the Citizen Participation Study, which was conducted in 1990. For wording of all questions and information about the survey, the oversamples of Latinos, African Americans, and those who are active in politics, and the characteristics that allow it to be treated as a national random sample, see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, Appendixes A and B). These data turn upside-down the usual problem with socialization studies. Ordinarily, compelling information about youthful experiences cannot be linked to adult politics. We have rich information about the lives, especially the political lives, of our respondents but are forced to rely on weaker, retrospective data about their pre-adult experiences. Because it would be preferable to have longitudinal panel data following individuals over the life cycle, we considered using the Jennings, Niemi, and Stoker data, which have the unambiguous advantage of multiple studies of the same individuals over time. However, the oversamples of Latinos and African Americans in the Citizen Participation sample and the measures of civic skills and recruitment in the questionnaire make these data more appropriate for the questions we ask here. See Appendix A for an explanation of why we believe that the retrospective descriptions of family patterns have a good deal of verisimilitude.

high school graduates.[10] Eighty percent of those whose parents were in the top quartile in education, compared to only 28 percent whose parents were in the lowest quartile in education, finished high school. Data not given on the figure show that those whose parents were in the top quartile when it comes to educational attainment are five times more likely to have graduated from college than those whose parents were in the lowest quartile on education. Not only do well-educated parents have well-educated children, they create homes that are politically stimulating. Figure 2B presents data about parents' education and respondents' reports about the political environment at home when they were adolescents -- whether their mothers and fathers were politically active and whether there was political discussion at home. Forty-five percent of the respondents whose parents were in the highest quartile on education, compared to only 18 percent of respondents whose parents were in the lowest quartile on education, grew up in the most politically stimulating homes.

Figure 2C shows that respondents who benefitted from growing up in a politically stimulating home are more likely to be politically active.[11] When

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[10] The division into quartiles is based on the average of both parents' educational attainment as reported by respondents. Because aggregate educational levels have risen dramatically in recent generations, education attainment is deeply influenced by birth cohort. Therefore, here and elsewhere, we have corrected the measure of parents' actual education for age by calculating the average parental education for each age group in our sample and, then, dividing actual parental education (as reported by the individual respondent) by the average parental education for respondents of the same age. The resultant variable measures the relationship of the respondents' parents' education to the average educational level at the time. Thus, the assignment into quartiles reflects both the average of mother's and father's education and the educational distribution in the parental age cohort.

[11] The activity scale for respondents is an eight-point summary measure including the following political acts: voting; working in a campaign; contributing to a campaign; contacting a public official; taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration; being affiliated with an organization that takes stands in politics; being active in the local community; and serving as

respondents are stratified on the basis of the political richness of the home environment, we find that 43 percent of respondents in the bottom quartile on the home political environment scale undertake some political activity other than voting in contrast to 69 percent of the respondents in the top quartile of the scale. The association between the political richness of the home environment and the later political activity of the respondent becomes even more dramatic when we consider the volume of activity rather than the proportion of respondents who undertook some activity other than voting. The vote is unique among political acts in that there is mandated equality in political input: we each get only one. In contrast, for other kinds of activity, those who have the will and the wherewithal can multiply their political input. Using dollars and hours as the metric, we found that the 28 percent of respondents in the lowest category in terms of home political environment produce only 10 percent of total hours given to politics and 5 percent of the total dollars contributed to political campaigns and causes. In contrast, the 22 percent of respondents in the top category in terms of home political environment produce 40 percent of total hours and 55 percent of the total dollars. Figure 2 thus provides tantalizing clues about the nature of the connection between parental characteristics and the political activity of their offspring. However, it is essential to model how the parental legacy maps onto a process of accumulation of participatory factors.

Family Background and the Factors That Foster Participation

Earlier we asserted that individuals are more likely to take part politically if they command the necessary resources, in particular money and civic skills; if they are in networks from which they can be recruited to

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a volunteer on a local board or attending meetings of such a board on a regular basis.

politics; and if they are psychologically engaged with politics by virtue of being politically interested, informed, and efficacious. We would expect that education would be key to the acquisition of the first two sets of participatory factors but that political stimulation at home would play only a limited role when it comes to resources and recruitment. In contrast, with respect to psychological involvement with politics, both education and home environment should be important.

Table 1 presents the results of several regression analyses that examine the effect of respondent's education and reported stimulation at home on the socio-economic status of the offspring and the accumulation of resources and recruitment opportunities.[12] For each of these participatory factors whose origins in the family we seek to understand, we present, first, the effect of parental education and, then, a regression that also includes the two family-based characteristics, respondent's education and exposure to political stimulation in the home while growing up.[13] The specific dependent variables[14] include:

A. Job level. The five-point, job-level scale measures the amount of formal education and on-the-job training the respondent thinks are necessary to handle a job like the one he or she holds. Job level affects the individual's earnings, the individual's opportunities to develop civic skills, and the likelihood that the individual will be located in recruitment networks.

B. Family income. Income is an important political resource,

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[12] Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, chap. 15) contains an analysis that has affinities to the data presented in Tables 1-3. However, those data were presented in the service of a quite different set of intellectual questions and were placed in a quite different context.

[13] In the regressions in Table 1, and in all analogous data analyses, the variables have been rescaled to vary from 0 to 1. In addition, all regressions contain controls for the respondent's race or ethnicity, gender, and age.

[14] Definitions of these variables can be found in Appendix B.

especially when it comes to making political contributions.

C. Civic skills. The measure of the civic skills is an enumeration of the number of communications and organizational skills the individual exercises on the job, in non-political organizations, and in church.

D. Recruitment. The recruitment measure counts the number of requests for political activity received on the job, in non-political organizations, and in church.

As shown in the first-step regressions, parental education is related to each of these participatory factors, in particular to the respondent's job level and civic skills. More important from our perspective are results of the regressions when the respondent's education and the measure of political stimulation at home are added in step 2. The respondent's education plays a major role in the acquisition of all four of these participatory factors. In contrast, with both parents' and respondent's education taken into account, political stimulation at home plays, at most, a statistically significant but weak role in the acquisition of these factors. In addition, it is interesting to note that the effect of parental education diminishes -- in two cases to the point of statistical insignificance -- when the respondent's education is added to the equation, indicating that parental education works indirectly through the child's education.

Table 2, which presents an analogous analysis for several measures of political motivation that can stimulate political activity, offers a contrast. Both respondent's education and political stimulation at home are significantly related to each of the measures of psychological involvement in politics: political interest, political efficacy, and political information. It is interesting to compare the patterns for political interest, which would seem to be a clear measure of motivation not dependent on resources, and political efficacy, which would seem, in part, to be a reflection of the availability of resources. In fact, for political interest, education and

stimulation are equally influential, but education is a better predictor of political efficacy than is stimulation at home. As expected, education is also the most potent predictor when it comes to political information, but political stimulation at home, which presumably functions to focus attention on politics, has a positive effect as well. When we decompose the overall measure of political information, shown in Table 2C, into two components, we note that political stimulation at home is less strongly associated with civic information -- that is, textbook knowledge of constitutional principles and government institutions and processes -- shown in Table 2D than with knowledge of the names of elected political figures, shown in Table 2E. The former represents knowledge cultivated in school, while the latter is presumably acquired by paying attention to politics. Thus, this pattern is also consistent with the distinction we make between the impact of education and the impact of political stimulation.

In sum, the data in Tables 1 and 2 tell a coherent story and reinforce the notion that there is more than one path from parental SES to political activity. Education is crucial for the stockpiling of all participatory factors. In contrast, exposure to a rich political environment at home enhances the reservoir of participatory factors that are connected to politics but not to socio-economic position.

From Participatory Factors to Political Activity

Having established alternative paths connecting parental education to participatory factors, we can now extend the analysis to consider the full set of links between parental education and political activity. In Table 3, we consider the paths to two kinds of political activity that depend on political resources: the measure of overall political activity introduced earlier and a

measure of the amount of the respondent's political contributions.[15] This analysis consists of the four steps originally outlined schematically in Figure 1. The first two steps include regressions analogous to those in Tables 1 and 2: first, a reduced model including the effect of parental education, then a slightly more expanded model to which the respondent's education and political stimulation at home have been added. The third step adds measures of two resources, family income and civic skills, and a measure of political recruitment. The final step is the full model including a measure of psychological engagement with politics, a summary scale that includes political interest, efficacy, and information.

Let us summarize the results briefly. Not unexpectedly, as more variables are added to the analysis, the coefficient on parents' education diminishes progressively until, once all the participatory factors have been included, it becomes insignificant for both overall participation and the size of financial donations. Correspondingly, the coefficients on respondent's education and political stimulation at home also decrease. Still, across the entire table, no matter what other variables are included in the analysis, respondent's education and exposure to politics at home are significantly related to both overall political activity and political contributions. However, in each case, education is a more powerful predictor than is political stimulation at home.[16]

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[15] As we have elsewhere, we standardize the measure of overall participation to vary between 0 to 1. However, political contributions are measured in the number of dollars given.

[16] We also replicated this analysis including a variable measuring participation in high school activities (high school government and other clubs and activities, but not high school sports). Not surprisingly, it is related to SES and to future educational attainment. Taking part in high school activities is a significant predictor of both overall political activity and contributions when added at Step 2, though the magnitude of the

The patterns by which the coefficients change as more variables are added to the analysis bear closer scrutiny. When measures of participatory resources and recruitment are added in Step 3, the coefficient for respondent's education is diminished substantially, while the effect of stimulation falls only marginally. This result does not indicate that education is unimportant. On the contrary, it shows that respondent's education works through political resources and recruitment, while the effect of stimulation is not mediated by these intervening variables. When a measure of motivation is included in the analysis in Step 4, the coefficients on both education and stimulation are both reduced, indicating that part of their effect on activity is through their impact on psychological orientations to politics. The last point to note is the significant role played by the measures of resources and recruitment at the last stage, especially in predicting contributions. At Step 2, respondent's education is almost three times as potent as stimulation as a predictor of contributions. When the intervening effects of the other participatory factors are taken into account -- in particular, the effect of family income -- the impact of the respondent's education is reduced to a third of its original size. The interpretation is clear: education leads to higher income which, in turn, leads to higher contributions. The impact of exposure to politics at home, in contrast, is direct and does not depend on the intervening effect of family income. Education provides the resources, stimulation adds the relevant

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coefficient is smaller than for the respondent's education. With all the variables in the full model in Step 4, high school activity remains significant for overall activity; however, it is positive, but insignificant, for contributions. All other relationships shown in Table 3 are undisturbed. Because we are unsure of whether high school activity is a measure of some underlying predisposition to volunteer or an alternate measure of civic skills developed in non-political activity, we have not included it in our analysis.

political concern.

To recapitulate, education influences participation in a variety of ways including through its impact on all three sets of participatory factors: resources, recruitment and motivation. Growing up in a rich political environment -- which operates most clearly through its impact on motivation -- has less powerful consequences for adult political activity than does education.

Education, Home Politics, and Less Active Forms of Political Involvement

We can highlight the contrasting roles of education and political stimulation at home by comparing the paths to the resource-based political activity reported in Table 3 with the paths to less active forms of political involvement: frequency of political discussion; exposure to political news -- reading newspapers, watching television news broadcasts, and watching other public affairs programming on television; and strength of partisan attachment.[17] We would expect that these modes of political involvement would be less dependent on resources and recruitment and, therefore, that respondent's education would not so dominate stimulation as an explanatory factor. The relevant regressions, which use the four-step mode of analysis introduced earlier, are contained in Table 4. The overall pattern in the data is quite different from what we saw for overall political participation and political contributions. The measures of participatory resources are less potent as predictors of these forms of involvement, and once the scale measuring psychological engagement with politics has been incorporated, most of them are reduced to statistical insignificance.

The relative strength of the effects of respondent's education and the

[17] In measuring strength of partisanship, a strong Republican and a strong Democrat have the same score and the direction of partisanship is lost.

home political environment is also quite different from what we saw in Table 3. In all three of the full Step-4 models that include the summary measure of psychological engagement with politics, having grown up in a politically stimulating home is more powerful than education as a predictor. In fact, while stimulation at home retains its statistical significance in the full models for all three variables, the coefficient on respondent's education is insignificant for frequency of political discussion and strength of partisanship and barely significant for exposure to news in the media. The pattern for strength of partisan affiliation is particularly striking. Partisanship is sometimes construed as a way for citizens to cut information costs in making vote choices: that is, knowing a candidate's party affiliation reduces the need for detailed information when voting. If this conceptualization is correct, then education should be less powerful than political stimulation at home in predicting strength of party affiliation. In fact, even in Step 2, respondent's education is barely significant while stimulation at home is a much more powerful predictor.

These data reinforce the interpretation that the legacy of parental social class operates in at least two ways, one of which is much more explicitly political than the other. Parents' SES is associated both with the extent to which the home environment is a politically stimulating one and, especially, with the educational attainment of their offspring. Both of these have consequences for adult political life. Educational attainment is an especially powerful predictor of overall political participation and making political contributions, but it takes a back seat to the effects of political stimulation at home when it comes to forms of political involvement -- for example, taking part in political discussions -- that are less active and less resource-dependent.

Choosing the Political

Given the importance of the role of education in the accumulation of participatory resources and the importance of coming of age in a politically rich environment in orienting an individual to politics, these two could work together -- with education providing the wherewithal for voluntary participation, whether political or nonpolitical, and political stimulation at home channeling that participation into politics rather than into some other sphere of voluntary activity. We can consider this conjecture in relation to the most resource-dependent form of voluntary activity, making financial contributions. Table 3 made clear that the single factor of overwhelming importance in predicting the amount of political contributions is family income, and Table 1 demonstrated that education is much more strongly related family income than is political stimulation at home. Table 5, in which we consider instead the decision to direct financial contributions to political causes, rather than to secular charities or religious institutions, allows us to assess the role of education and political stimulation at home in choosing politics over other forms of voluntary activity. The dependent variable is the proportion of the respondent's total voluntary contributions -- to charity, religious institutions, and politics -- that is directed to politics. Education has a substantial role as does family income. The effect of politics at home is more direct and, once other variables are included in the analysis, is of the same magnitude as the effect of education. Thus, even for an activity, making financial contributions, that is substantially constrained by the need for resources and is, therefore, heavily dependent on socio-economic status, growing up in a politically stimulating home can play a role in

channeling those resources to politics rather than to some other cause.[18]

Breaking the Cycle of Political Inequality

This analysis makes clear that political inequality is passed on from generation to generation. Both because they are more likely to grow up in a politically engaged home and, especially, because they are more likely to become well educated, those who hail from socially advantaged families are more likely to be politically active than those who do not. Thus, political inequalities are perpetuated across generations. This process of intergenerational transmission implies that democratic politics in America is not a level playing field. The disparities in political participation that are carried from one generation to the next involve disparities not only among individuals but also between politically relevant groups: most obviously, between social class groups, but also between groups defined along other dimensions -- for example, race or ethnicity -- that differ as well in SES background.

In other democracies, where there are strong labor unions or electorally competitive labor or social democratic parties, the links between social class and political participation are weaker than they are in the United States.[19] In the American context, the traditional answer to breaking

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[18] We conducted a parallel analysis of the impact of parental religiosity on the respondent's financial contributions to religious institutions with results that mirror those for political contributions. Once again, the single most powerful predictor of the amount contributed to religious institutions is family income. When it comes to the proportion of all contributions that is targeted at religious institutions -- a measure that is, by definition, inversely related to the proportion to politics -- parental religious attendance is a significant predictor that retains its significance even when the analysis includes a measure of how important religion is to the respondent. The importance of religion to the respondent is, not surprisingly, the single strongest predictor of the percentage of total contributions that flow to religious institutions.

[19] On this theme, see Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978).

the cycle of political inequality that is rooted in social class differences has been mobilization through social movements. Although the power of labor unions has become attenuated in recent decades, the past half century has witnessed a variety of social movements in America. Some of these -- for example, the environmental movement -- are firmly anchored in the middle class. Others -- for example, the pro-life movement -- focus on social issues rather than the needs of the economically disadvantaged.

There was, of course, one movement that mobilized a socio-economically disadvantaged group, the civil rights movement. We were curious to learn whether African Americans who were adolescents at the time of the civil rights movement were more likely to report having grown up in a politically rich home environment than would be expected on the basis of their parents SES and, if so, whether there were corresponding gains in political participation during adulthood.[20] Figure 3 divides respondents into four cohort groupings and shows -- for Anglo Whites, African Americans, and Latinos -- the likelihood of having experienced a politically stimulating home environment at age sixteen. With one exception, in each of the age cohorts, Anglo Whites are the most likely of the three groups to report political stimulation at home. That exception is the generation that came of age during the civil rights era, for which African Americans were the most likely to report a politically engaged home.[21] It is interesting to consider the oldest cohort -- most of whom came

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[20] For the groundbreaking statement of generational theory, see Karl Mannheim's essay "The Problem of Generations," in Mannheim (1952).

[21] In Figure 3, we define the civil rights generation as African Americans who were 16 during the Kennedy, Johnson, or Nixon administrations (1961-1974). We experimented with alternative definitions -- beginning as early as the Brown decision (1954) and ending as early as the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968) -- with minor variations, but no real change, in the result report in Figure 3.

of age during the Depression or World War II -- a group whose level of civic engagement was noted by Robert Putnam (2000). Among Anglo Whites and Latinos, the members of this cohort were more likely than their younger counterparts to report a politically stimulating home. In contrast, among African Americans, the members of the civil rights generation were not only more likely than African Americans in other cohorts but also more likely than Anglo Whites or Latinos of their generation to report a politically stimulating home.[22]

We conclude this discussion by asking whether the Blacks who came of age during the civil rights era translate the political stimulation they experienced at home into political activity. Table 6 contains an OLS regression predicting political activity.[23] Along with other demographics including education and income, it contains a dummy variable for being a Black adolescent during the civil rights era. Table 6 confirms that being a Black teenager during the civil rights era is related significantly to political activity.[24]

The data make clear that the pattern of perpetuation of political

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[22] Even within this group, however, the stratifying impact of education is manifest. Among African-Americans who were adolescents during the civil rights era, those whose parents were more highly educated were more likely to report having been brought up in a politically stimulating home than those whose parents were less well educated. For the two groups, the scores on the political stimulation scale are .31 and .24 respectively. However, for both groups, these score are higher than the scores for their counterparts in other cohorts.

[23] In order to have enough cases of African Americans from the civil rights generation for analysis, we use the Screener data from the Citizen Participation Study, which had a truncated questionnaire. Therefore, we do not have access to the range of participatory factors used in earlier models predicting participation. We replicated the data analysis using separate equations for Anglo White and African American respondents with the same results.

[24] Our findings are supported by Jennings and Niemi (1981, pp. 316-318) who found extraordinarily high rates of political activity for nonwhite college students during the 1965-1973 period.

inequalities across generations can be modified by politics itself. Significant political events are brought home to create a stimulating political environment, which leads to political activity later in life. However, as we saw in Figure 3, the spike in political stimulation at home that occurred during the civil rights movement was a temporary one. Blacks in the post-civil rights generation were less likely than either their Anglo-White or their Latino age-mates to report having grown up in a politically stimulating home. Nevertheless, in the case of the civil rights movement, there is a more lasting legacy that speaks fundamentally to the other path from parents' SES to adult political participation. Over the past several decades the educational gap between African Americans and Anglo Whites has narrowed considerably. In 1960, 43 percent of Whites, but only 20 percent of Blacks, had finished high school. By 1995, the figures were 83 percent for Whites and 74 percent for Blacks (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996, p. 159). While it would be an oversimplification to ascribe the expanded educational opportunities for African Americans solely to the impact of the civil rights movement and the policy changes it spawned, it is unambiguous that the diminution of the racial disparity in education that occurred in the wake of the civil rights movement will have long-term consequences for group differences in political participation.

Summary

It is well known that, in spite of the promise of equality of opportunity contained in the ideology of the American Dream, parents are able to pass social class advantage along to their offspring. The analogous process with respect to the transmission across generations of political advantage among citizens has received considerably less attention. In this chapter, we have considered not only whether politically active parents have

politically active children but how that outcome is produced. What we found that is not simply analogous to, but intertwined with, the process by which SES advantage is handed down from one generation to the next. Although in both cases the ability of parents to reproduce their advantage is imperfect, current inequalities with respect to both SES and political participation have their roots, at least in part, in the patterns of past. Where the processes are connected, however, is that the key to the intergenerational transmission of political activity is parental SES, in particular, parents' education.

There are at least two mechanisms by which well-educated parents produce politically active children. The first is a pattern consistent with the learning model in the political socialization literature. Well-educated parents are likely to take part in politics themselves and to create homes in which there is political discussion. Those who come of age in such a politically rich environment are likely to absorb explicit and implicit lessons and, as adults, to have psychological orientations to politics -- to be more politically interested, informed, and efficacious -- that predispose them to take part. Growing up in a politically stimulating home is an especially powerful predictor of less active forms of political involvement -- for example, engaging in political discussion or identifying strongly with one of the parties -- that do not require substantial resources.

A second path from parental SES to political activity has been explored less fully by students of political socialization. Well-educated parents are likely to have well-educated children, a relationship that is stronger than the relationship between parental education and the political environment at home. Educational attainment is, in fact, the single most potent predictor of an adult's political activity. Not only does education have a direct impact on political activity, but it enhances the stockpile of the various factors

that facilitate participation: the well-educated are likely to be well endowed with participatory resources -- to command both a high family income and civic skills; to be located in networks through which activists are recruited; and to be motivated to take part.

We noted in concluding that one way to break the cycle of self-perpetuating political inequality is through politics itself. In a brief example, we discussed how the legacy of the civil rights movement had the potential to narrow the gap in political participation between African Americans and Anglo Whites. In a striking analogy to the processes by which parents' SES is linked to political activity, the impact is felt both through political stimulation at home and through education. Blacks who came of age during the civil rights movement are more likely than older and younger Blacks -- and more likely than Anglo Whites or Latinos of the same age -- to report having grown up in a politically stimulating home, an experience that had a lasting impact on their interest in politics and their propensity to be politically active. In addition, public policy can have an impact on participatory inequalities. The narrowing of the education gap between African Americans and Anglo Whites that ensued in the aftermath of the civil rights movement has unambiguous consequences for disparities in participation between the groups. In short, our dual lessons: family matters, but so does politics.[25]

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25. In other work on this subject we look more directly at intergenerational group transmission of political activity: whether those social groups more active in one generation are more active in the next, and what process connects the activity of a group in one generation to that of its offspring in the next. We show that the ses process plays a major role. It is the lower level of education in minority groups in one generation that leads to the replication of lower activity in the next.

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Figure 1: The Four Steps to Political Activity

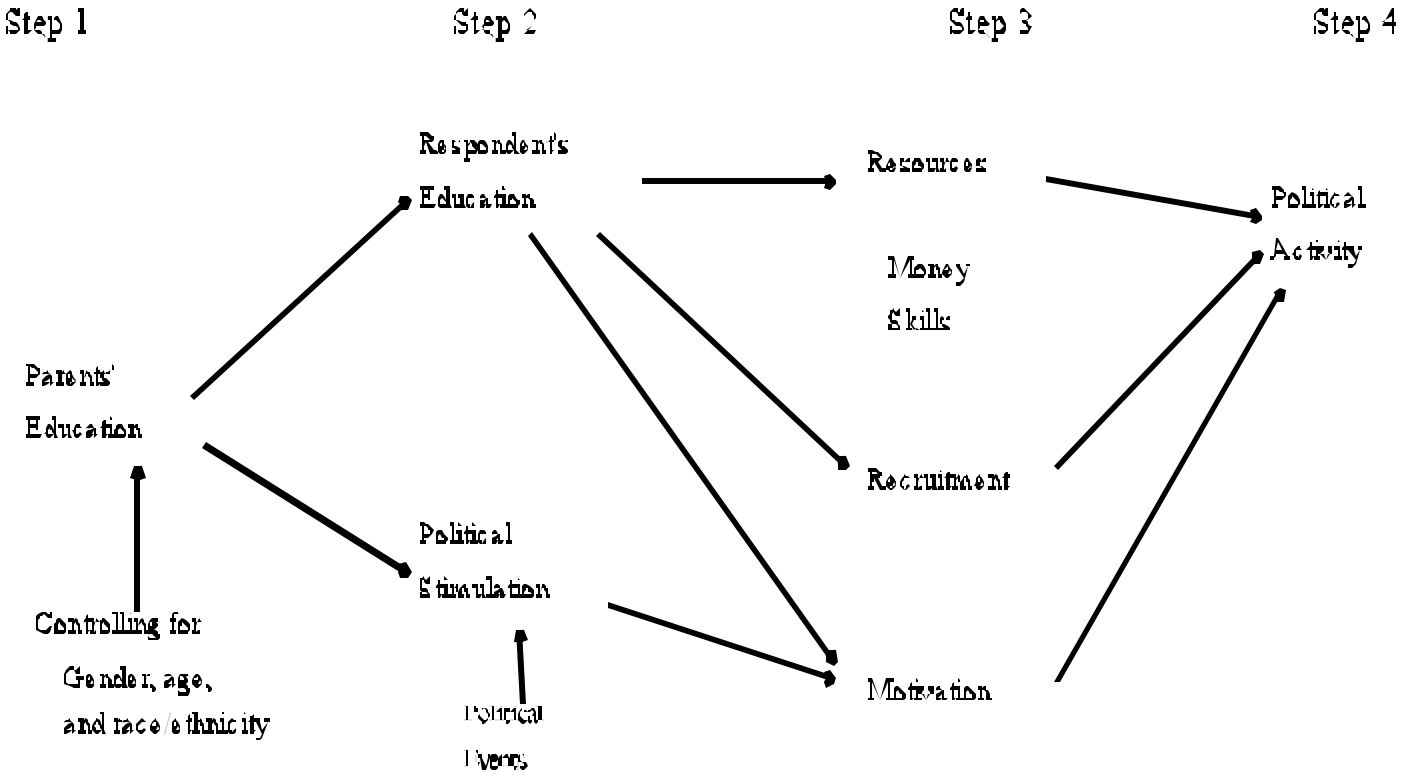

Figure 2: Parental and Respondent Characteristics

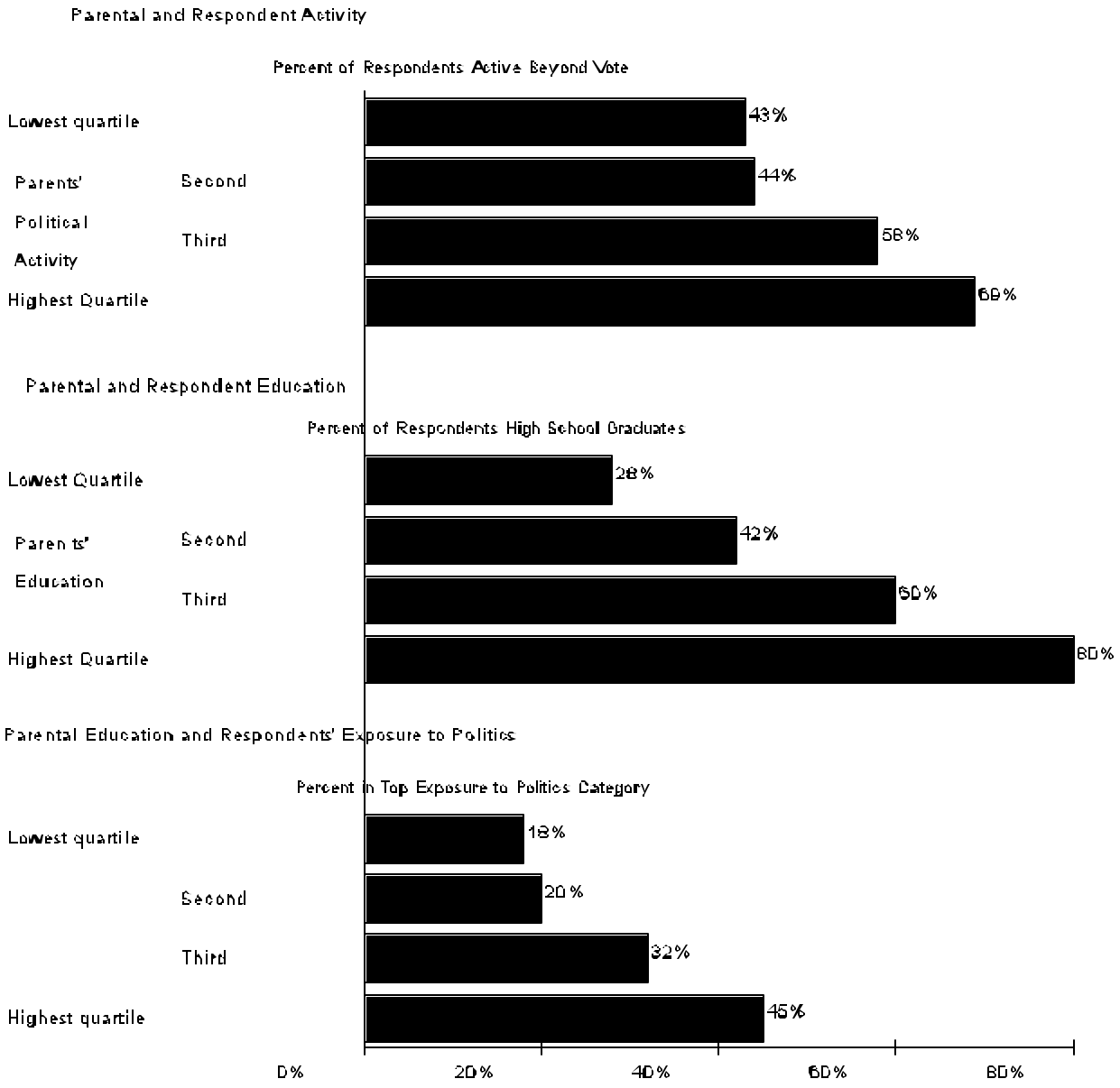

Figure 2

Figure 3: Stimulation at Home by Generation and Race/Ethnicity

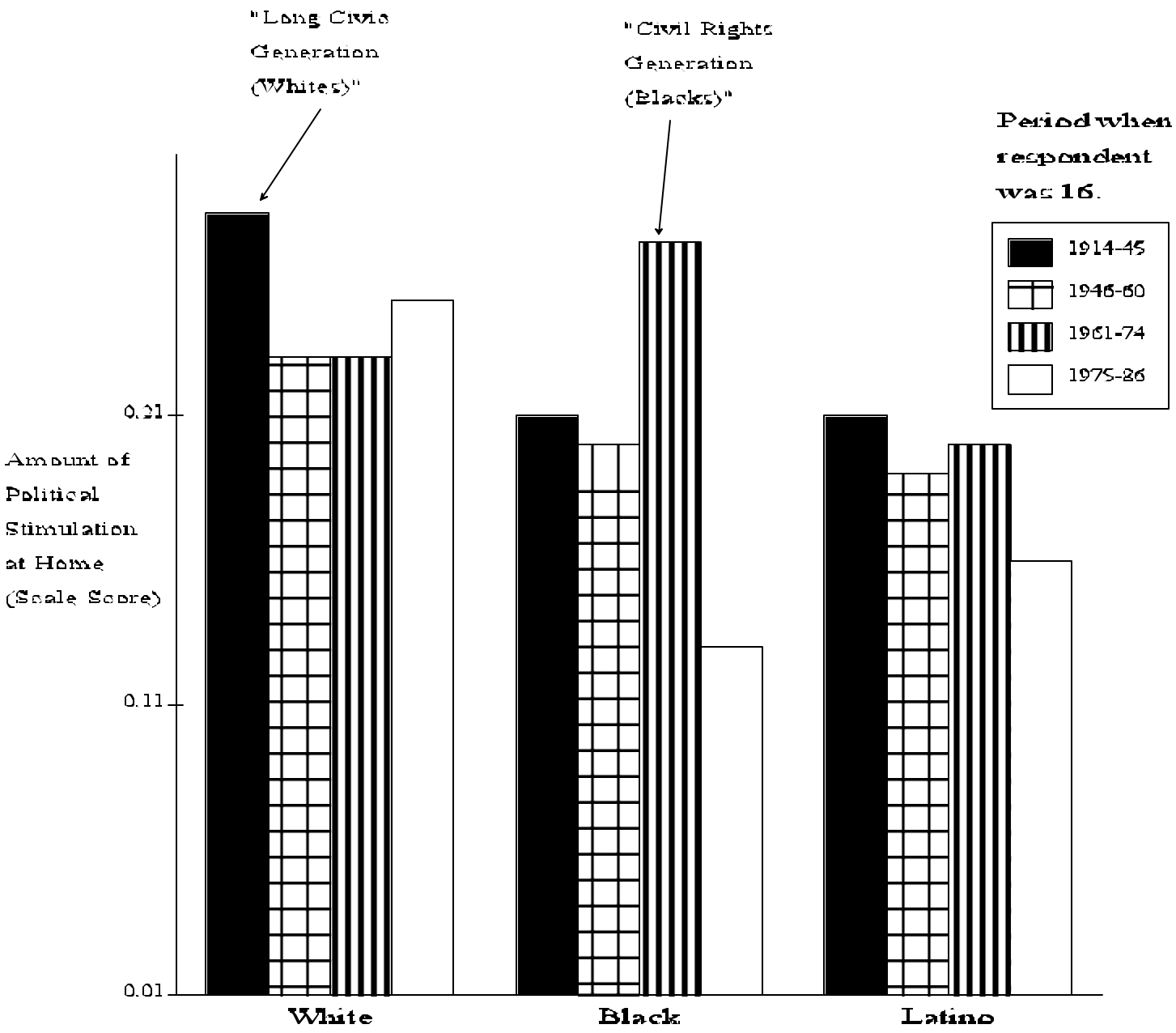

TABLE 1: EFFECT OF EDUCATION AND STIMULATION ON RESOURCES AND MOBILIZATION
(Race/ethnicity, gender, and age in equations).

	Step 1	Step 2
Effect on:		
A. Job level	B	B
Parents' educ.	.42**	-.01
Home politics		.00
Resp. Educ.		.77**
B. Family Income		
	B	B
Parents' educ.	.12**	.05**
Home politics		.02*
Resp. Educ.		.13**
C. Civic Skills		
	B	B
Parents' educ.	.29**	.06*
Home politics		.05*
Resp. Educ.		.38**
D. Political Recruitment		
	B	B
Parents' educ	.08**	-.02
Home politics		.03
Resp. Educ.		.17**

TABLE 2. EFFECT OF EDUCATION AND STIMULATION ON Political Engagement
(Race/ethnicity, gender, and age in equations).

Effect on:

A. Pol. Interest	B	B
Parents' educ.	.36**	.01**
Home politics		.27**
Resp. Educ.		.28**

B. Pol. Efficacy	B	B
Parents' educ.	.26**	.08*
Home politics		.13**
Resp. Educ.		.25**

C. Pol. Information (Composite Measure)	B	B
Parents' educ.	.29**	.10**
Home politics		.09**
Resp. Educ.		.19**

D. Pol. Information (Civics Info.)	B	B
Parents' educ	.28**	.05
Home politics		.05*
Resp. Educ.		.37**

E. Pol. Information (Name Info.)	B	B
Parents' educ	.42**	.17**
Home politics		.13**
Resp. Educ.		.38**

Table 3 Predicting Political Activity (Resource based):

A. Predicting Overall Political Activity

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Parents' Ed.	38**	.10**	.08**	.05
Home Politics		.14**	.12**	.05*
Resp. Educ.		.41**	.24**	.14**
Family Inc.			.29**	.23**
Skills			.20**	.14**
Mobilization			.30**	.23**
Political Engagement				.48**

C. Predicting Political Contributions ($'s Given)

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Parents' Ed.	168**	39	5	-3
Home Politics		59**	50**	48*
Resp. Educ.		198**	74**	66**
Family Inc.			533**	550**
Skills			51*	49*
Mobilization			52*	34
Political Engagement				69**

Table 4 Predicting Political Involvement (Non-resource based)

A. Predicting Political Discussion

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Parents' Ed.	27**	.08**	.07*	.02
Home Politics		.24**	.22**	.12**
Resp. Educ.		.19**	.10**	-.03
Family Inc.			.18**	-.10*
Skills			.10**	.01
Mobilization			.16**	.06*
Political Engagement				.67**

B. Predicting Exposure to News

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Parents' Ed. .	17**	.02**	.01	-.03
Home Politics		.14**	.14**	.07**
Resp. Educ.		.18**	.13**	.06*
Family Inc.			.13**	.07
Skills			.02	-.03
Mobilization			.13**	.06*
Political Engagement				.46**

C. Predicting Partisan Affiliation

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Parents' Ed.	13**	.03**	.03	.00
Home Politics		.18**	.17**	.11**
Resp. Educ.		.07*	.03	.00
Family Inc.			.11	.09

Skills	.04	.01
Mobilization	.10*	.06
Political Engagement		.21

Table 5:Focusing Activity

Preedicting the Proportion of Voluntary Contributions Going to Politics
(Among those contributing)

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Parents' Ed.	.14**	.01	-.02	-.03
Home Politics		.12**	.14**	.11**
Resp. Educ.		.18**	.14**	.13**
Family Inc.			.25**	.24**
Skills			.00	-.01
Mobilization			.00	.01**
Political Engagement				.08**

TABLE 6: PREDICTING ACTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT BY COHORT AND COHORT/BLACK INTERACTION.

	PREDICTING ACTIVITY	PREDICTING ENGAGEMENT (DISCUSSION PLUS INTEREST)
	B	B
Civil Rights Generation	.11**	-.00
Civ. Rights Gen * Black	.19*	.06**
Age group	.00	.00
Education	.42**	.06**
Gender	-.10**	-.09**
Income	.00**	.00
(Constant)	.60	.16

Appendix A

Retrospective Data: Are They Trustworthy?

For our analysis, the data we really need are longitudinal in which the same respondents are traced from their early years until they are mature adults active or inactive in politics. Our data are from a single point in time. In one sense, they represent longitudinal data. We ask them to report about earlier times and we relate that to their report of contemporaneous activity. If memory were perfect, such data would be longitudinal. Of course, memory may not be accurate. If we compare our major retrospective measures, we believe that memories of parents' education ought to be fairly accurate. Memories of political stimulation, however, could be less precise and, most significantly, more easily colored by the respondent's current situation. Currently politically involved respondents might remember more politics in the family than was the case. One must therefore be cautious.

We have some evidence to suggest that memories of parental education or of political stimulation are relatively undistorted. Data in Table A 1 support our belief that there is little backward distortion of memory in the light of current circumstances. Table A 1 shows the respondents' reports of their own political activity by education, race/ethnicity, and gender, as well as their own education by race/ethnicity and gender. It also shows parallel data for reports on one's family. As one can see from Table A 1, there are variations among our respondents in their current education and current involvement in politics. As one can see, minorities, people with less education, and women are less active in politics. And minorities and women have less education.

Table A 1 also shows respondent reports about parental education and political stimulation at home stimulation at the time they were adolescents. The remembered circumstances for the several race/ethnic groups and the several educational groups show lower political stimulation for the less advantaged categories. And for race/ethnicity, the reports of parental education show lower levels among the disadvantaged groups. This is consistent with a causal connection between earlier patterns and current situation (since minorities and lower educated respondents are likely to have been raised in families with less education and less political involvement) but could also be consistent with memories distorted by current circumstances. For our purposes, the contrast with the gender data is crucial. The women in our sample are somewhat less educated than men and somewhat less active. Women and men, however, are however, born randomly into families of varying education or political involvement . If memories are accurate, they should report similar levels to men in terms of parental education or political stimulation despite their current differences. If memories are distorted by current circumstances, they should report lower levels of parental education and stimulation. As one can see on Table A 1, the former situation holds.

Table A 1

	Contemporary Reports (Respondent Characteristics)	Memories (Parental Characteristics)
Political Activity (in top third activists or top third parental activity)		
No HS Degree	8%	20%
HS Grad	28%	25%
Some College	45%	37%
College Grad	61%**	46%**
White	40%	34%
Af.-American	33%	27%
Latino	16%**	23%**
Male	43%	33%
Femaile	33%**	32%
Educational Level (No. of Grades)		
White	13.3	11.1
Af.-American	12.4	9.9
Latino	11.4**	8.8**
Male	13.4	11.0
Fema le	12.9**	10.8

** Sig. at .01

Appendix B

Data and Measures

Data

We use data from the Citizen Participation Study, which was conducted in 1990. For wording of all questions and for additional information about the survey, its oversamples of Latinos and African-Americans, its oversamples of those who are active in politics, and the characteristics that allow it to be treated as a national random sample, see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995, Appendixes A and B).

Measures

Activity. Throughout the paper we measure political activity by an eight-point summary scale that includes the following political acts: voting; working in a campaign; contributing to a campaign; contacting an official; taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration; being affiliated with an organization that takes stands in politics; being active in the local community; and serving as a volunteer on a local board.

The scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.60. The individual items in the scale are weakly correlated: the average correlation between the items is .17. Thus, while the realized distribution does not appear to be perfectly normally distributed, the realized distribution and the pattern of correlations reassure us that an ordinary least squares regression is the appropriate technique to use. This technique is, of course, especially useful because of its robustness. Small changes in data and specification do not yield different results as they might with less robust methods. For a sense of the consequences of these small correlations for the distribution of the data, we used three variables that were more strongly correlated than others in the scale: informal local activity, organizational involvement, and contributing money to campaigns. We calculated what percentage of our respondents would have done two or more of these three acts had these acts been completely independent of one another. If these acts had been independent of one another, 25% of the sample would have engaged in two or more of these three acts. In our data, with the small correlations between acts, 26% of our sample participated in two or more of these acts. The full distribution of the variable in our data is

Number of Acts	Percentage of Respondents
0	17 %
1	26
2	20
3	17
4	11
5	6
6	2
7	1
8	0.1

These are not, then, especially rare or especially correlated events;

therefore, a Poisson or Negative Binomial specification would be inappropriate here.

Other forms of involvement. The scale measuring political discussion includes the frequency of discussion of local politics and national politics as well as a measure of how much the respondent reports enjoying political discussion.

The scale measuring media exposure to news includes frequency of reading newspapers, watching news on television, and watching public affairs programs on television.

We measure of partisan affiliation in terms of the strength of partisanship without regard to direction. Thus, a strong Republican and a strong Democrat have the same score, and the direction of partisanship is lost.

The proportion of voluntary contributions devoted to politics is the percentage of the sum of the respondent's total contributions to charity, religious institutions, political campaigns, and political causes that goes to the latter two.

Explanatory variables. In order to facilitate comparisons across different independent variables that are measured in different metrics and that have different ranges, in Table 1 and other multivariate analyses we have transformed the independent variables to have a range from 0 to 1.

Politics at Home. We measure exposure to politics at home as the sum of the respondent’s mother’s political activity, the respondent’s father’s political activity, and the level of political discussion at home when the respondent was 16 years old (all as reported by the respondent).

Parents’ Education. We measure parents’ education as the average of the respondent’s report of mother’s education and father’s education. There are missing data on parents’ education and on the variables that compose politics at home. We worked extensively with these measures to ensure that using the average value to fill the missing values does not change the results in any way. This is the appropriate place to fill these missing data. In addition, one might think that we should use the highest educated parent’s education as our measure of parents’ education. We think not. First, the results using both measures are identical. Second, standard measurement theory suggests that two measures deal with measurement error better than one, and so we rely on the average here.

For our comparisons to be informative, we need to take account of the fact that older parental generations have, on average, lower levels of education than younger ones do. To address that complication, throughout our analysis, we use an age-adjusted measure of parental education that measures the respondent’s parents’ education relative to the average educational level at the time. Thus, the variable measuring parents’ education reflects both mother’s and father’s education and the educational distribution in the parental age cohort.

Civic Skills. We measured civic skills by asking whether, in the past six months, the respondent wrote a letter, went to a meeting where he or she took part in making decisions, planned or chaired a meeting, or gave a presentation or speech in three separate adult institutions: the workplace, religious

institutions, and non-political organizations. We asked these questions separately for each institution. The variable we use is the sum of the number of skills practiced in all three institutions.

Institutional Recruitment. Similarly, our measure of requests for political activity is about requests originating in each of these three non-political institutions. We asked whether, in the last five years, the respondent was asked by the organization or its leaders, by the religious institution or its leaders, the workplace or the respondent's superiors to vote for or against certain candidates in an election for public office or take some other action on a local or national political issue -- sign a petition, write a letter, go to a meeting, attend a protest or march, or get in touch with a public official. The measure of recruitment sums these requests across these three institutions.

Age. We have included two variables measuring age -- the age in decades and whether the respondent is older than 65 -- as controls. This accounts for the curvilinear relationship of age to participation in a way that's easier on the reader than the squared terms that generate a parabolic specification.