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POLITICAL ACTIVISM: NEW CHALLENGES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

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RESEARCH on political activism compares the ways that citizens participate, the processes that lead them to do so, and the consequences of these acts. The standard paradigm was established in earlier decades by the seminal works in the social psychological tradition: Almond and Verba (1963)[1], Verba and Nie (1972)[2], Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978), and Barnes and Kaase (1979).[3]

Much empirical work comparing patterns of political participation during the 1980s tended to reflect the basic theoretical framework and predominant survey-based approach developed in earlier decades; for example, Parry, Moyser, and Day replicated their approach and core findings in Britain (1992). During the 1990s, however, several major areas can be identified where scholars have made significant advances. In the process, some of the core assumptions about the importance of individual resources and cultural attitudes made by the standard social psychological model have been subject to major refinement, or even wholesale revision. It is impossible to provide a comprehensive review of the rapidly expanding literature in the space of a short chapter, and others provide overviews of the American

[1] See also Almond and Verba 1980.
[2] See also Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001.
[3] See also Marsh 1977; Jennings and van Deth 1989; Adrian and Apter 1995.

literature, but here we can highlight selected developments in comparative politics and consider their implications.[4] This overview highlights four key themes which have emerged during the last decade, including (i) growing recognition of the importance of the institutional context of formal rules for electoral turnout; (ii) the widespread erosion of party membership in established democracies and questions about its consequences; (iii) the substantial revival of interest in voluntary associations and social trust spurred by theories of social capital; and lastly (iv) the expansion of diverse forms of cause-oriented types of activism, including the spread of demonstrations and protests, consumer politics, professional interest groups, and more diffuse new social movements and transnational advocacy networks. After briefly illustrating some of the literature which has developed around these themes, the chapter concludes by considering the challenges for the future research agenda in comparative politics.

1. The Standard Social Psychological Model of Participation

The body of work which developed following the seminal work by Almond and Verba documented levels of participation within and across nations, and distinguished modes of political action. Empirical research draws upon multiple methods, including case studies, focus groups, experiments, and formal models, although during the last half-century the study of participation has been dominated by analysis of the sample survey. The literature established a series of well-known findings about the distribution and causes of mass activism. (i) In most democracies, voting turnout was the only mode of political participation involving a majority of citizens. (ii) Beyond this, the more demanding forms of conventional participation engaged only a small minority, including campaigning and party work, contacting representatives, and community organizing. (iii) Protest politics exemplified by demonstrations, petitions, and political strikes, regarded as a distinct form of activism, was similarly confined to a small elite. (iv) In explaining who became active, the "baseline model" developed by Verba and Nie suggested that structural resources played a significant role, notably the distribution of educational qualifications, income, and occupational status, along with the related factors of sex, age, and ethnicity. (v) Cultural attitudes, closely related to socioeconomic status and education, were also important for motivating engagement; people are more likely to participate if they feel informed, interested, and efficacious, if they care strongly about the outcome, and if they think that they can make a difference. (vi) To a lesser extent, activism was also acknowledged to be affected by institutional and social contexts, for example, Verba and Nie

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[4] For a recent review of the extensive literature on the United States, see Schlozman 2002.

noted that levels of voter turnout were influenced by registration procedures and by affiliation with mobilizing agencies, such as labor unions and parties. But the predominance of individual-level survey analysis, based on samples representative of the general adult population within each nation, meant that the analysis of contextual effects remained underdeveloped (Books and Prysby 1988; Huckfield and Sprague 1995). These core claims became the standard textbook view from the 1960s until at least the late 1980s, with the importance of structural resources and cultural attitudes replicated and confirmed in many survey-based studies of specific nations and types of participation.[5]

Of course even during this era there was far from complete agreement within the profession about these claims; for example many of the core assumptions in social psychology about habitual forms of participation were rejected by rational choice theorists, emphasizing the conscious calculation of "costs" and "benefits," represented best by Downs (1957) and by Olson (1965).

Normative theorists were also sharply divided about the importance of civic engagement for democracy, and whether the widespread lack of public involvement documented by surveys should be accepted as a practical benchmark or whether it should be berated for undermining participatory ideals.[6] The school led by Joseph Schumpeter (1952) suggests that limited public involvement was sufficient to ensure stable and accountable government, so long as governments in representative democracies were legitimized by free and fair elections contested by rival parties and politicians at regular intervals. For proponents of this view, citizens play a critical role by having the right and opportunity to "throw the rascals out" at election, should they so desire, but not by becoming involved in day-to-day processes of public policy making. The most recent version of this thesis is developed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2003) who argue that Americans do not want to be more involved in most political decisions; instead most share a widespread aversion to the messy business of political debate, compromise, and conflict resolution. The Schumpeterian perspective emphasizes that democracy is based on the values of competition and accountability as much as participation, and that the persistent social inequalities in citizen engagement generate serious flaws for direct decision making. The major policy challenge, from this perspective, is developing effective political institutions promoting party competition and leadership accountability, especially in transitional and consolidating democracies.

By contrast, those following in the footsteps of Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and G. D. H. Cole, such as Barber (1984), advocate "participatory" or "strong" democracy. This view, which is particularly popular in the United States, regards more extensive public engagement as essential for democracy, including widespread involvement in deliberative debate, community groups, and decentralized decision making (Gutmann and Thomson 2004). Activism is thought to have multiple virtues, proponents argue, making better people, by strengthening citizen awareness, interest in public affairs, social tolerance, generalized reciprocity, and interpersonal trust, as well as fostering more responsive

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[5] See, for example, Milbrath and Goel 1977; Bennett 1986; Conway 2000; Teixeira 1992.

[6] For a summary discussion, see Held 1996.

and effective government, by generating better decisions and more legitimate outcomes. The major policy challenge, from this perspective, lies in developing new opportunities for public deliberation and community decision making, for example through strengthening local NGOs in civil society, through the use of referenda and initiatives, as well as via other forms of community decision making involving interactive government consultation processes, neighborhood councils, and local town hall meetings.

2. Electoral Turnout and the Importance of the Rules

The standard socioeconomic model of voting participation developed by Verba and Nie acknowledged the role of the broader institutional context set by electoral systems and administrative procedures, but this was never given center stage. By contrast, during recent decades a growing body of comparative literature seeking to explain variations in electoral turnout, and to improve participation, has given greater emphasis to the importance of the institutional rules and legal arrangements for registration and voting, which affect both the "costs" and "benefits" of electoral activism. Comparative research on turnout has been strengthened by release of the electronic database assembled by International IDEA monitoring voter participation worldwide in national parliamentary and presidential elections since 1945 (Lopez Pintor and Gratschew n.d.). Related research collected from national electoral commissions and other official bodies has also established far more accurate information about the administrative and legal procedures involved in elections in many countries around the world, including processes of voter registration, citizenship requirements to qualify for the franchise, the use of compulsory voting, and multi-day voting, as well as public funding for campaigns and parties (Massicotte, Blais, and Yoshinaka 2004). Considerable interest has also been shown in monitoring the impact of new information and communication technologies on electoral administration, balloting, and voting, for example the use of electronic voting in Switzerland, Estonia, Austria, and the UK (Kersting and Baldersheim 2004).

Much of the more recent work on voter turnout has been concerned with estimating institutional effects, drawing comparisons across places and time, for example the impact of compulsory voting in the countries where this has been employed, and the effect of reforms to voting facilities, such as the introduction of all-mail ballots. By now a large body of literature has accumulated which confirms the importance of institutional contexts on aggregate levels of registration and voting turnout. For example Powell compared turnout in twenty-nine democracies, including the effects of the socioeconomic environment, the constitutional setting, and the party system. The study established that compulsory voting laws, automatic registration procedures, and the strength of party–group alignments boosted turnout, while participation was depressed

in cases of one-party predominant systems allowing no rotation of the parties in government (Powell 1980, 1982, 1986). Jackman and Miller (1995) also examined electoral participation in twenty-two industrialized democracies during the 1980s, and confirmed that political institutions and electoral laws provided the most plausible explanation for cross-national variations in voter turnout, including levels of electoral proportionality, multipartyism, and compulsory voting.[7] Building upon this foundation, Blais and Dobrynska conducted a broader comparison by analyzing the number of votes cast as a proportion of the registered electorate in parliamentary elections in ninety-one electoral democracies from 1972 to 1995. They reported that multiple structural factors influenced turnout, including the use of compulsory voting, the voting age, the electoral system, the closeness of the electoral outcome, and the number of parties, as well as levels of socioeconomic development and the size of the country (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Blais 2000). Similarly Franklin, van der Eijk, and Oppenhuis (1996) compared turnout for direct elections to the European parliament and found that variations in participation among the fifteen EU member states could be attributed in large part to systemic institutional differences, notably the use of compulsory voting, the proportionality of the electoral system, and the closeness of European to national elections. Using the International IDEA database, Rose (2004) established that variations in voter turnout in post-war European national elections could be explained by the length of time in which free elections have been held, proportional representation electoral systems, the use of compulsory voting, elections held on a rest day, and the mean size of electoral districts.[8] The most recent study by Mark Franklin (2004) also emphasizes the importance of the institutional context for explaining variations in turnout among established democracies, in particular patterns of electoral competition, as well as the effects of lowering the age of the franchise.

In the United States, as well, the frequency of elections and complicated voter registration procedures have long been believed to depress American turnout, and recent research has used states as laboratories to focus attention on the impact of administrative reforms in electoral processes, including the introduction of motor vehicle license voter registration, the use of different registration closing dates, innovations in ballot design, the employment of election day or "same-day" registration, and the use of early in-person voting (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Martinez and Hill 1999; Knack 1995; Crigler, Just, and McCaffery 2004). More substantial reforms under debate in the United States include amendments to the Electoral College and to the single-member simple plurality electoral system (Hill 2002). One related controversy in this area concerns the appropriate denominator used for monitoring trends in American turnout. Many previous studies have conventionally relied upon the number of valid votes cast as a proportion of the voting age population; for example on this basis Patterson (2001) claims that, despite some fluctuations, there has been a substantial erosion of voting participation in national elections during the last three decades. Yet McDonald and Popkin (2001) suggest that any apparent erosion of voter turnout in

[7] See also Katz 1997.   [8] See also Norris 2004.

American presidential and congressional elections in this period is due to the growth of the ineligible population, including non-citizens and felons who are legally unable to cast a ballot, not a growth in the proportion of non-voters.[9] This reinforces the importance of drawing future cross-national comparisons where turnout is estimated based on the number of valid votes cast as a proportion of the voting age population (Vote/VAP), rather than the eligible electorate (Vote/EE). This is critical for nations where large swaths of the resident adult population are excluded from voting, whether due to limited citizenship for immigrants, partial universal suffrage (for example, excluding women), or other restrictions on voting rights for major groups (Paxton et al. 2003). At minimum, studies measuring turnout as Vote/EE need to double-check their analysis against the Vote/VAP measures to see if their main findings remain robust. It is also worth noting that the selection of starting and ending points for any analysis of time series trends is also important. We should be highly suspicious of any comparisons of electoral turnout which start the series, arbitrarily, on a particularly high point (such as the 1960 US presidential election), or which fail to acknowledge and explain significant fluctuations in the trend line which can again be best accounted for by contextual factors such as the perceived closeness of the race (including American contests, such as the 1992 and 2004 presidential elections, where turnout rises).

The flowering of new scholarship on the institutional context, much derived from aggregate statistics on voting turnout, has established that individual-level survey analysis, focused exclusively on inequalities in socioeconomic status and the distribution of cultural attitudes, is inadequate by itself. The rules of the game adopted by different countries, states, or regions can shape whether voting participation is relatively widespread across the electorate or whether it is strongly skewed towards affluent and well-educated sectors. Similarly cultural attitudes could plausibly vary systematically in different contexts, for example a sense of external efficacy could be related to actual experience of the responsiveness and performance of the political system in meeting citizens' policy concerns. The main challenge which remains, and it is a difficult challenge, is to link these approaches, so that individual-level behavior is understood within its broader institutional context. Commonly the impact of the formal rules is assumed to be relatively straightforward by generating mechanical effects, for example that compulsory voting will automatically boost turnout. Yet there remain important variations even within countries using similar electoral rules, for example among nations with proportional or majoritarian electoral systems, or among those employing compulsory voting. Some of this can be attributed to specific institutional details, for example the mean size of the district magnitude used in PR systems or the penalties attached to non-compliance. But the challenge is also to link the institutional context with individual behavior, so that we can understand what Duverger termed the "psychological" effects generated by formal rules.[10]

Further research into institutional effects on voting participation and civic engagement is also needed because this is one of the main policy challenges facing

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[9] See also Miles 2004.

[10] The original distinction between the "mechanical" and "psychological" effects of electoral systems was made by Duverger 1954.

political science. The international community has become deeply engaged in attempts to generate free and fair elections in dozens of nations around the globe, exemplified by the transitions following the collapse of the authoritarian regime in Bosnia and Herzegovina, decolonization in East Timor, and the end of civil war in Cambodia, as well as developments in Afghanistan and Iraq (Carothers 1999). In established democracies, as well, beyond the basic electoral formula, debates have also been common about the best way to overhaul electoral procedures. This includes reforms to the legal statutes and party rules governing party eligibility and candidate nomination, the administrative process of electoral registration and voting facilities, the regulation of campaign finance and political broadcasting, and the process of election management. Established democracies have introduced a range of reforms, whether switching between d'Hondt and LR-Hare formula, adjusting the effective voting threshold for minor parties to qualify for parliamentary representation, expanding the conditions of electoral suffrage, or altering the size of their legislative assemblies (see Lijphart 1994; International IDEA 2005). In all these cases, it is assumed that electoral reform has the capacity to overcome certain problems, including issues of civic disengagement. Institutional effects are therefore worth investigating because they are theoretically important in the literature, but also because they are policy relevant for real-world problems.

3. Political Parties as Shrinking Membership Organization

Established democracies simultaneously face serious challenges where many observers believe that people have grown increasingly disenchanted with political parties, indicated by rising anti-party sentiment and falling party membership. The conventional narrative of party change suggests a period of steady decline since the "golden age" of the mass party flowered in the late 1950s, a matter of considerable concern, especially in Western Europe where parties continue to be the most important intermediary institution linking citizens and the state. Work assembled by an international team led by Katz and Mair has focused new light on the internal organization of parties (Katz and Mair 1992, 1995), while Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) have recently collected the most systematic evidence about partisan trends in post-industrial societies. Following the convention established by V. O. Key (1964), the literature on parties can be divided into three hierarchical components: parties-in-elected-office, parties-as-organizations, and parties-in-the-electorate. Evidence strongly suggests that parties continue as vital sinews connecting the organs of government, and they have lost none of their function in binding together the executive and legislature for the policy-making process.[11] Yet

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[11] See the conclusions to Dalton and Wattenberg 2001. See also Mair 1997.

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many studies suggest that accumulating indications of partisan decay are becoming clear at the organizational and electoral levels (Lawson and Merkl 1988). Throughout established democracies, there is now substantial evidence from national election surveys that a glacial erosion has occurred in the strength of partisan identification in the electorate, shrinking the proportion of habitual loyalists who support their party come rain or shine.[12] Moreover, studies by Mair and van Biezen, and by Scarrow, document evidence from official records that many parties in established democracies have experienced contracting membership rolls since the 1950s, although there remain substantial variations in the levels of party membership, even within relatively similar West European democracies.[13]

Given this trend, the typical mass-branch party organization in established democracies appears to be contracting at middle level, potentially thereby limiting opportunities for political participation, weakening civil society, and lessening the accountability of party leaders to followers. Most studies assume that the shrinkage in party memberships and the erosion of party loyalties indicate problems for the health of democracy, for example that this suggests widespread public rejection of parties caused by disaffection with their performance. Yet the consequences of these developments remain unclear. As Scarrow suggests, the aggregate figures remain silent about their meaning. Parties may have been losing support and membership fees from more passive members at the periphery, but they may retain the active support of the core activists who run local branches, raise funds, deliver leaflets, select candidates and leaders, attend conventions, debate policies, and otherwise man the volunteer grass-roots base in mass-branch parties.[14] Moreover the mass party is not an essential feature of all representative democracies; many countries such as France have always been characterized by elite-led party organizations run by elected officials in the legislature and in government, with minimal membership. To explore the reasons for the membership decline, surveys of members have been conducted in the major British parties, and similar initiatives have now been launched elsewhere (Seyd and Whiteley 2004). The British studies have concluded that the pressure on people's time has made party activism less desirable while, on the demand side, the major parties have less need for volunteers as fund-raisers and campaigners, reducing the incentives they offer to join (Whiteley and Seyd 2002). Public subsidies and mediated channels of campaign communication have supplemented many of the essential functions of party volunteers. In the absence of integrated cross-national surveys of party members it remains to be seen whether similar patterns are evident elsewhere. The consequence of the shrinkage in party membership for representative democracy therefore remains under debate, if parties can continue to fulfill their primary functions by competing in regular elections by offering voters a bundled choice of policies and a team of politicians, even without an intermediate layer of volunteers and activists, as a professionally managed campaign and advocacy organization.

[12] The most comprehensive reviews of the European evidence are available in Schmitt and Holmberg 1995; Dalton and Wattenberg 2001.

[13] See in particular Mair and van Biezen 2001; Scarrow 2001.

[14] For evidence of this trend in Denmark, see also Andersen and Hoff 2001.

4. Social Capital, Voluntary Associations, and Social Trust

The decline of party organizations can be understood as part of a broader development affecting many of the traditional agencies used for political action. As well as parties, traditional agencies, which conventionally provided the most important social institutions for civic mobilization during the post-war era in Western Europe, included churches affiliated to Christian Democratic parties, trade unions and cooperative associations which mobilized the working class on the left, in addition to diverse interest groups and voluntary associations in civic society, exemplified by community social clubs, professional and business organizations, agricultural co-operatives, and philanthropic groups.[15] Interest in the role of voluntary organizations has been renewed by the burgeoning literature on social capital, a contemporary growth industry in political science.

Theories of social capital originated in the ideas by Pierre Bourdieu (1970) and James Coleman (1988, 1990), emphasizing the importance of social ties and shared norms to societal well-being and economic efficiency.[16] The most influential account in political science, developed by Robert Putnam, expanded this notion in *Making Democracies Work* (1993) and in *Bowling Alone* (2000) by linking ideas of social capital to the importance of civic associations and voluntary organizations for political participation and effective governance.[17] For Putnam, social capital is defined as "*connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them*" (2000, 19). Most importantly, this is therefore understood as both a *structural* phenomenon (social networks) and a *cultural* phenomenon (social norms). This dual nature often creates problems associated with attempts to measure social capital that commonly focus on one or the other dimension, but not both. Putnam claims that horizontal networks embodied in civic society, and the norms and values related to these ties, have important consequences, both for the people in them and for society at large, producing both private goods and public goods. Moreover Putnam goes further than other contemporary theorists in arguing that social capital has significant political consequences. The theory can be understood as a two-step model of how civic society directly promotes social capital, and how, in turn, social capital (the social networks and cultural norms that arise from civic society) is believed to facilitate political participation and good governance. In particular, based on his analysis of Italian regional government, he claims that abundant and dense skeins of associational connections and rich civic societies encourage effective governance. Lastly, in *Bowling Alone* Putnam presents the most extensive battery of evidence that civic society in general, and social capital in

[15] For a discussion of the conceptual distinctions and theoretical frameworks in the literature, see Berry 1984. For comparative trends in membership in unions, churches, and parties see Norris 2002.

[16] For a discussion of the history of the concept, see also the introduction in Baron, Field, and Schuller 2000.

[17] The seminal works are Putnam 1993, 1996, 2000; Putnam and Feldstein 2003.

particular, has suffered substantial erosion in the post-war years in America. Putnam considers multiple causes that may have contributed towards this development, such as the pressures of time and money. But it is changes in technology and the media, particularly the rise of television entertainment as America's main source of leisure activity, that Putnam fingers as the major culprit responsible for the erosion of social connectedness and civic disengagement in the United States, with the most profound effects upon the post-war generation (Putnam 2000, 246; 1995; Norris 1996).

Putnam's work has most clearly documented the decay of traditional civic organizations and social trust in America, although dispute continues to surround the interpretation of these trends.[18] But, as Putnam acknowledges, it remains unclear whether parallel developments are evident in an erosion of traditional associational membership and social trust in similar post-industrial societies, such as Germany, Sweden, and Britain.[19] Studies in Western Europe, in post-communist societies, and in Latin America have also explored complex patterns of social trust and associational activism, along with the factors associated with strengthening social capital and civil society (Kornai, Rothstein, and Rose-Ackerman 2004; Svendsen and Svendsen 2004; Hooghe and Stolle 2003).

The cross-national evidence which is emerging remains difficult to interpret for a number of reasons. One of the limitations of comparative research on voluntary organizations is the common bias towards monitoring activism and membership in traditional voluntary associations, while failing to take account of engagement in more diffuse new social movements. Traditional voluntary associations with large memberships were usually characterized by regularized, institutionalized, structured, and measurable activities: people signed up and paid up to become card-carrying members of the Norwegian trade unions, the German Social Democratic Party, and the British Women's Institute. Traditional agencies, as well as mass-branch political parties, were characterized by Weberian bureaucratic organizations, with formal rules and regulations, full-time paid officials, hierarchical mass-branch structures, and clear boundaries demarcating who did, and did not, belong (Clarke and Rempel 1997). Active members served many functions as the voluntary life-blood of associations, such as serving on a local governing board or contributing financially to community associations, holding fund-raisers, publishing newsletters, manning publicity stalls, chairing meetings, and attending socials for groups such as the Red Cross, the Parent-Teacher Association, and the Rotary Club. Some of these large-scale umbrella organizations articulated and aggregated diverse interests on behalf of their members, particularly mainstream political parties, while other public interest groups focused their energies upon narrower policy concerns and niche sectors. The immense flowering of literature on social capital has renewed attention in these organizations, for example by monitoring trends over time in the official membership rolls, as well as through cross-national surveys, notably successive waves of the World Values Survey and the 2002 European Social Survey.

By contrast, modern agencies which have evolved since the early 1960s are typified by the women's movement, the anti-globalization movement, anti-war coalitions, and the

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[18] For critiques, see Edwards and Foley 1998; Ladd 1996; Skopol 1996; Schudson 1996; Rotolo 1999.

[19] Pharr and Putnam 2000; Putnam 2002. For other comparative work, see van Deth 1997; van Deth and Kreuter 1998; van Deth 1999, 2000.

environmental movement, as well as by diverse non-governmental organizations and multinational policy advocacy networks. These are usually characterized by more fluid boundaries, looser networked coalitions, and decentralized organizational structures. The primary goals of new social movements often focus upon achieving social change through direct action strategies and community building, as well as by altering lifestyles and social identities, as much as through shaping formal policy-making processes and laws in government (Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Dalton and Kuechler 1990). Observers suggest that the capacity for modern agencies to cross national borders signals the emergence of a global civic society mobilizing around issues such as globalization, human rights, debt relief, and world trade (Rosenau 1990; Lipschutz 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997; Kriesi, Porta, and Riucht 1998). These agencies are characterized by decentralized networked communications among loose coalitions, relatively flat "horizontal" rather than "vertical" organizational structures, and more informal modes of belonging, including shared concern about diverse issues and identity politics (Zald and McCarthy 1987; Oberschall 1993; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Larana, Johnston, and Gudfield 1994; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). People can see themselves as belonging simply by "turning up" or sharing political sympathies with an easy-entrance, easy-exit permeability of organizational boundaries, rather than "formally" joining through paying dues.

If new social movements have now become an important alternative avenue for informal political mobilization, protest, and expression among the younger generation, as many suggest, then this development has important implications for how we interpret and measure trends in associational life. In particular, if studies are limited to comparing membership in the traditional agencies of political participation—typified by patterns of party membership, union density, and church-going—then they will present only a partial perspective which underestimates engagement through modern agencies characterized by fuzzier boundaries and more informal forms of belonging.

5. THE RISE OF CAUSE-ORIENTED ACTIVISM

The rise of alternative organizational forms of activism is related to the growth of cause-oriented politics and the way that this has now become mainstream. Much of the traditional literature on political participation focused extensively upon forms of civic engagement which emphasize the role of citizens within representative democracy in each nation-state, including the channels influencing elections, governments, and parties. Verba and his colleagues established this framework when they drew attention to the multiple "modes" of political participation which were thought to differ systematically in their costs and benefits (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1971; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). *Voting*, for

example, can be described as one of the most ubiquitous political activities through regular elections, yet one that exerts diffuse pressure over elected representatives and parties, with a broad outcome affecting all citizens. *Campaign work* for parties or candidates such as leafleting, attending local party meetings, and get-out-to-vote drives, also typically generates collective benefits, but requires greater initiative, time, and effort than casting a ballot. By contrast, particularized *contacting*, such as when a constituent gets in touch with an elected representative or government official about a specific problem, requires higher levels of information and initiative, generating particular benefits for the individual but with little need for cooperation with other citizens. *Community* organizing involved local initiatives and philanthropic associations. What these traditional repertoires share is that they are focused primarily upon how citizens can influence representative democracy, either directly (through voting) or indirectly (through parties and elected officials). Verba, Nie, and Kim recognized this assumption when they defined political participation as "those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (1978, 46). Citizen-oriented activities, exemplified by voting participation and party membership, obviously remain important for democracy, but today this represents an excessively narrow conceptualization of activism that excludes some of the most common targets of civic engagement which have become conventional and mainstream.

The early literature also drew a clear distinction between "conventional" and "protest" politics, and this terminology often continues to be used today in research. The classic study of political action in the early 1970s by Barnes and Kasse (1979) conceptualized "protest" as the willingness of citizens to engage in dissent, including unofficial strikes, boycotts, petitions, the occupation of buildings, mass demonstrations, and even acts of political violence.[20] Yet this way of thinking about activism seems dated today, since it no longer captures the essential features of the modern repertoires where many of these modes have become mainstream. In particular, during the height of the 1960s counter-culture, demonstrations were often regarded as radical acts confined to a mélange of a small minority of students in alliance with workers, with peaceful mobilization over civil rights, anti-nuclear, or anti-war protests shading into civil disobedience, street theater, "sit-ins," and even violent acts. Yet today demonstrations have become mainstream and widespread; for example the 1999–2001 World Values Survey indicates that about 40 percent of the public have participated in a demonstration in countries such as Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands (van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Norris, Walgrave, and van Aelst 2004). The proportion of those who have engaged in demonstrations has more than doubled since the mid-1970s. Similar observations can be made about the widespread practice of consumer politics, while petitioning has also become far more common (Norris 2003).

As a result of these changing repertoires, it seems clearer today to distinguish between *citizen-oriented* actions, relating mainly to elections and parties, and *cause-oriented* repertoires, which focus attention upon specific issues and policy concerns, exemplified

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[20] See also Marsh 1977; Adrian and Apter 1995.

by consumer politics (buying or boycotting certain products for political or ethical reasons), petitioning, demonstrations, and protests.[21] The distinction is not watertight; for example political parties organize mass demonstrations, and elected representatives are lobbied by constituents about specific policy issues and community concerns, as much as for individual constituency service. New social movements often adopt mixed action strategies which combine traditional repertoires, including lobbying elected representatives and contacting the news media, with a variety of alternative forms of political expression, including online networking, street protests, and consumer boycotts. Compared with citizen-oriented actions, the distinctive aspect of cause-oriented repertoires is that these are most commonly used to pursue specific issues and policy concerns among diverse targets, both within and also well beyond the electoral arena.

Of course historically many techniques used by cause-oriented activists are not particularly novel; indeed petitions to parliament are one of the earliest forms of representative democracy, and, as previous chapters in this *Handbook* discuss, periodic waves of contentious politics, radical protest, and vigorous political dissent can be identified throughout Western democracies (Tilly et al. 1975). The mid-1950s saw passive resistance techniques used by the civil rights movement in the USA and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Western Europe. Building upon this, the 1960s experienced the resurgence of direct action with the anti-Vietnam demonstrations, the student protest movements, and social upheaval that swept the streets of Paris, Tokyo, and London. New social movements expanded, particularly those concerned about women's equality, nuclear power, anti-war, and the environment. The early 1970s saw the use of economic boycotts directed against apartheid in South Africa, and the adoption of more aggressive industrial action by trade unions, including strikes, occupations, and blockades, occasionally accompanied by arson, damage, and violence, directed against Western governments (Epstein 1991). Today, collective action through demonstrations has become a generally accepted way to express political grievances, voice opposition, and challenge authorities (van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Norris, Walgrave, and van Aelst 2005).

An important characteristic of cause-oriented repertoires is that these have broadened towards engaging in "consumer" and "lifestyle" politics, where the precise dividing line between the "social" and "political" breaks down even further. These activities are exemplified by volunteer work at recycling cooperatives, helping at battered women's shelters, or fund-raising for a local school, as well as protesting at sites for timber logging, boycotting goods made by companies using sweatshop labor, and purchasing cosmetic products which avoid the use of animal testing. It could be argued that these types of activities, while having important social and economic consequences, fall outside of the sphere of the strictly "political" per se. Yet the precise dividing line between the "public" and the "private" spheres remains controversial, as the feminist literature has long emphasized (see Pateman 1988; Phillips 1991). Cause-oriented repertoires aim to reform

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[21] Pattie, Whiteley, and Seyd have drawn a similar distinction but they conceptualize the dividing line to lie between "collective" and "individualized" forms of activism. This seems less satisfactory as a conceptual framework, however; protests and demonstrations remain collective acts, as are new social movements, even if they bring together participants on a more ad hoc and transient basis than regular membership within parties or community associations. See Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004.

the law or to influence the policy process, as well as to alter systematic patterns of social behavior, for example by establishing bottle bank recycling facilities, battered women's shelters, and heightening awareness of energy efficiency. For Inglehart, the process of cultural change lies at the heart of this development, where the core issues motivating activists have shifted from materialist concerns, focused on bread-and-butter concerns of jobs, wages, and pensions, to greater concern about postmaterialist values, including issues such as globalization, environmentalism, multiculturalism, and gender equality.[22] In many developing societies, loose and amorphous networks of community groups and grassroots voluntary associations often seek direct action within local communities over basic issues of livelihood, such as access to clean water, the distribution of agricultural aid, or health care and schools (see Baker 1999). Issues of identity politics around ethnicity and sexuality also commonly blur the "social" and the "political". Therefore in general the older focus on citizenship activities designed to influence elections, government, and public policy-making process within the nation-state seems unduly limited today, by excluding too much that is commonly understood as broadly "political".

Another defining characteristic of cause-oriented activities is that these are directed towards parliament and government, but also towards diverse actors in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. A substantial and growing literature has compared case studies of activism within international human rights organizations, women's NGOs, transnational environmental organizations, the anti-sweatshop and anti-land mines networks, the peace movement, and anti-globalization and anti-capitalism forces (Sassen 1999; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Edwards and Gaventa 2001; Evans 2000). The targets are often major multinational corporations, including consumer boycotts of Nike running shoes, McDonald's hamburgers, and Californian grapes, as well as protest demonstrations directed against international agencies and intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the World Economic Forum in Davos, and the European Commission (Keck and Sikkink 1998). This literature suggests that changes in the targets of participation reflect the process of globalization and the declining autonomy of the nation-state, including the core executive, as power has shifted simultaneously towards intergovernmental organizations like the UN and WTO, and down towards regional and local assemblies.[23] Moreover the "shrinkage of the state" through initiatives such as privatization, marketization and deregulation means that decision making has flowed away from public bodies and official government agencies that were directly accountable to elected representatives, dispersing to a complex variety of non-profit and private agencies operating at local, national, and international levels (Feigenbaum, Henig, and Hamnett 1998). Due to these developments, it has become more difficult for citizens to use national elections, national political parties, and national legislatures as a way of challenging public policies, reinforcing the need for alternative repertoires for political expression and mobilization.

[22] For details see Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2004.
[23] For a discussion see Held 1999; Nye and Donahue 2001; Archibugi, Held, and Kohler 1998.

6. CONCLUSIONS: THE FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

The literature has been growing and diversifying during the last decade yet there are still many areas which require considerable attention. We can conclude by identifying some of the most promising directions for the future research agenda. As noted earlier, the standard view in social psychology which developed during the 1960s and the 1970s emphasized several interrelated sets of factors to explain why individual citizens participate in different modes of politics. The early work of Verba and his colleagues emphasized the influence of prior *structural resources* which people bring to politics, notably their educational qualifications, occupational status, and income, which are closely related to their ethnicity and sex, all of which facilitate participation. Education, for example, furnishes analytical skills which are useful for making sense of political issues and policy-making processes, while household income is directly relevant for the capacity to make political donations. The "baseline" resource model added *cultural attitudes,* exemplified by a sense of internal efficacy (confidence in the ability to influence public affairs), external efficacy (a sense of the system's responsiveness), civic knowledge, and political interest (such as following events in the news), which are commonly closely related to the propensity to become active. These factors remain important; indeed they continue to be included in standard accounts of participation.

Nevertheless they have been supplemented during the last decade by far greater attention to the context within which individuals act, and this approach seems likely to continue to expand. The emphasis has become less the psychological capacities and qualities inherent in individual citizens, derived from socialization processes in early childhood, than the contextual factors found within particular communities, states, elections, or countries which trigger or depress these propensities. Verba and Nie also acknowledged the broader *social context* within which individuals become active, such as the impact of trade unions and churches in mobilizing working-class communities. More recently Rosenstone and Hanson (1993) revived attention in the role of mobilizing agencies such as parties and interest groups, and there has been renewed appreciation of the way that party workers play an important role in activating voters through local campaigns. In the field of political communications, Milner (2002) and Norris (2000) have debated the role of the mass media, whether newspapers, television, and the internet are seen as encouraging or discouraging civic engagement and awareness. Huckfeldt and his colleagues have long emphasized the importance of informal social networks of personal communication which draw people into public affairs (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004). Recent studies have also focused greater attention on the institutional context of the political system, notably the role of the legal rules, the electoral system, and administrative processes in determining opportunities for voting participation, and the way that patterns of party competition and the closeness of the outcome in elections stimulate turnout (Franklin 2004).

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During the last decade there has been a shift in emphasis in the general body of literature comparing patterns of political participation which has given increased attention to the social processes by which organizations such as parties, associations, and community groups mobilize citizens, as well as to the broader context of the institutional rules governing forms of participation. Institutional factors have most often been studied in terms of their impact on voting turnout, where comparison of the legal context and the broader role of electoral systems has long been regarded as important, but there is a large research agenda where we need to examine how institutions also shape other dimensions of participation; for example, campaign finance laws and public funding subsidies may reduce the incentives for parties to maintain mass memberships, while laws controlling taxation and non-profit status may influence the structure of voluntary organizations and the density of associational membership in the non-profit sector.

Much work on political participation remains single nation in focus, particularly the extensive range of studies of the United States, in many ways an atypical democracy, as Lipset (1996) noted, whether in its exceptionally low level of voter turnout, the absence of mass-branch party membership, or its relatively rich patterns of voluntary activism. Comparisons within each country are typically made between groups (for example, turnout among African-Americans versus Hispanics), over time (for example, trends in electoral turnout since 1960), and occasionally across regions or states (such as the effects of registration requirements). Until recently, however, systematic multinational surveys have tended to lag behind, especially outside of Western Europe, including studies of the role of citizens in newer democracies and in authoritarian states. The development of new large-scale cross-national surveys of the electorate which have become available in recent decades, such as the Globalbarometers, are facilitating comparison of certain common forms of mass political participation, notably of voting turnout. Nevertheless few cross-national surveys exist to allow systematic analysis of the more demanding forms of participation which engage only a minority of the population, including party membership, campaign work, and associational activism. Pooling the samples contained in each of the large-scale cross-national surveys, such as the series of Eurobarometers, the International Social Survey Program, the World Values Study, and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, produces large enough samples to overcome some of these problems, but at the expense of thereby losing some of the ability to analyze cross-national variations in contextual effects. Moreover to establish the direction of causality suggested by analytical models there is an urgent need for longitudinal multi-wave panel surveys, although there are substantial difficulties in conducting such surveys both over time and among countries.

Another limitation is that comparative research also continues to focus primarily upon "traditional," "conventional," or "civic" forms of activism, understood as those acts where citizens are primarily seeking to influence elected officials and the policy-making process in representative democracies within each nation-state. By contrast, far less comparative research has examined alternative channels of political engagement, mobilization, and expression that are rapidly emerging in modern societies, including the widespread rise of demonstrations and protest politics, the growing popularity of consumer politics, and the proliferation of interest groups, more diffuse social

movements, online political communities, and transnational policy networks. There remains considerable debate about the exact contours and importance of these developments, and whether these should be regarded as genuinely "new" forms of participation or reflections of older traditions. There is a broad consensus, however, that the scope of organizational agencies and the repertoire of activities under comparison has expanded and diversified over the years, and the research agenda has often failed to innovate sufficiently to capture the broader range of activities which have now become more common.

Lastly, the contemporary body of scholarship has generally proved stronger at analyzing the causes than the consequences of participation. In particular, any significant changes in the nature and level of political activism raise three important issues where we currently have few definitive answers: what is the impact of these developments for social inequality in the public sphere, if the newer forms of participation make greater demands of civic awareness and skills? What do these changes imply for the development of individual capacities, for strengthening communities, and for the quality of mass participation, for example if there has been a shift from giving volunteer time in voluntary organizations to expressing support for interest groups through financial donations? And, lastly, what do they mean at systematic level for processes of governance, the public policy agenda, and the consolidation of democracy? The difficulties of tracing the links from various specific participatory acts to the outcome in government decisions, for example how legislatures respond to expressions of public concern about patterns of public spending on welfare benefits or shifts in foreign policy, remain a classic challenge in political science. A growing body of empirical literature has been examining some of the core claims made in the normative democratic theory, notably the impact of deliberation on citizens and on decision making (Hibbing and Theiss–Morse 2003, ch. 7). Yet the broader consequences of many of the developments illustrated here remain unclear. How far newer modes of activism are either supplementing or replacing older ones, and what consequences follow for representative democracy, remains one of the central challenges facing future comparative research.

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