

Who Participates, Who Does Not, and Why? An Analysis of Voluntary Neighborhood Organizations in the United States and Israel

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Lack of participation in voluntary associations and the associated issues of why people do or do not participate are major areas of interest in the research literature concerning citizen participation. The present study used three types of variables (demographic, social psychological, and costs/benefits) to investigate the characteristics of participants and nonparticipants in neighborhood-type organizations in the United States and Israel. Findings from analysis of the demographic variables show some cross-cultural similarities (including a surprising lack of race/ethnic and education differences between participants and nonparticipants). There were striking cross-cultural similarities using the social psychological variables. The data from the Israel sample provide important information on the costs and benefits of participation. A discriminant analysis points to the predictive strength of social psychological and cost/benefit variables in comparison to demographic variables. Implications of these results for explanatory and predictive purposes are discussed.*

In a common ideological formulation, citizen participation is regarded as the essence of democracy. It is said to be a force for creating a sense of community and a sense of control over our lives and institutions. At a more concrete level, it may be represented as a way of reducing crime, obtaining a traffic light on the corner, or getting to know our neighbors.

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A major puzzle in the literature on citizen participation is, "If participation is such a good thing, why don't more people participate?" Despite the proposed desirable outcomes, relatively few people participate in government-initiated efforts or in grassroots groups (Langton, 1978; Verba and Nie, 1972; Warren, 1963). Public officials, community organizers, and citizens who look for help from their neighbors may be aided by knowing: Who are the people who participate? Why do they participate? Who does not participate? These are old questions in the voluntary association literature. But their persistence today revives two issues: what do we know about why people participate, and can what we do know be used to understand and affect participation.

Smith (1985) concludes that researchers know a fair amount about the relationship of social background factors to participation. Since this knowledge has limited utility, because most social background factors are hard to change, Smith suggests that we need to know more about psychological variables, which can be changed, and about generalizability of results in different contexts (rather than to assume generalizability).

Participation in voluntary associations such as neighborhood organizations and citizen advisory committees, by definition, results from causes other than physical needs, coercion, or direct pay (Smith, 1975). Participation is caused by goals or motivations. In certain psychological accounts, it is held that a person is motivated to participate in an organization on the basis of individual characteristics. A social psychological perspective (which investigates an individual's perceptions and attitudes) and a social exchange perspective (which investigates the costs and benefits of participation) should help us understand who participates and why. These perspectives are part of a comprehensive framework for analyzing participation in community organizations: the antecedents of participation, the characteristics of the participation itself, and the effects of participation (Wandersman, 1981). This article focuses on the relationship between individual characteristics and participation.

Conceptual Background

The literature dealing with individual characteristics and participation can be divided into research primarily oriented to demographic factors and that focused upon social psychological (attitudinal and personality) factors.

Demographic Variables. Many studies have related background demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, education, and occupational status to voluntary action participation (Smith, 1975). The relationships of socioeconomic characteristics and race to

participation seem particularly important in the context of the urban residential environment. Piven (1968) identified several characteristics of the urban lower class that make participation less likely, such as: being overwhelmed with concrete daily needs, having little belief in ability to affect their world, and having fewer leadership and other necessary skills. The work of a number of investigators suggests that middle class people, in general, are more likely to participate than lower class people (Alford and Scoble, 1968; Hyman and Wright, 1971; Milbrath, 1965). Controlling for socioeconomic status, the work of Orum (1966) and of Williams, Babchuk, and Johnson (1973) indicates that blacks are more likely to participate in voluntary associations than whites.

While demographic variables such as race and socioeconomic class have been related to participation, they may have limited explanatory and predictive power. Research indicates that social background loses much of its direct explanatory power in predicting participation when intervening attitudes, personality, and situational variables are controlled statistically (Smith, 1975). It is possible that people who avoid participation in the larger society because of their perceived inefficacy will respond with enthusiasm to an arena of concrete visible concerns such as activities that could affect their own block or neighborhood. Therefore, general demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status or racial group may be less relevant to participation in community organizations than specific relations to community, home ownership, length of residence in the community, or even marital status (Milbrath, 1965). Measures of investment in the locale, such as home ownership and length of residence, have been found to be positively related to participation (Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, 1979; Babchuk and Thompson, 1962; Cohen, 1976; Litwak, 1961).¹

Studies relating demographic variables to participation generally focus on only one or two variables. Studies that have correlated several demographic variables with measures of participation have generally found that they account for relatively little variance (e.g., Edwards and White, 1980; Vassar, 1978). Vassar (1978) investigated the relationship of gender, age, marital status, race, and socioeconomic status with block club membership and with community projects membership and found R^2 s of .05 and .09, respectively. Edwards and White (1980) considered eleven demographic variables (age, sex, education, marital status, nuclear family size, community size, years lived in neighborhood, subjective as-

essment of health, yearly family income, education of the head of household, occupation of the head of the household) as predictors of various types of participation. The eleven variables accounted for only 8 percent of the variance in participation in voluntary associations.

Williams and Ortega (1986) illustrate the important point that joining is multidimensional. In a study that correlates nine demographic variables with membership in five different types of voluntary organizations, only two variables (education and race) were related to all types. They conclude that we cannot know the reasons for belonging by observing the demographics of who joins. This leads to the search for other types of characteristics that may be related to participation (e.g., social psychological) and to understanding more specifically why people join a particular organization.

Social Psychological Characteristics. In comparison to the many studies that have investigated demographic correlates of participation, only a few studies have examined the relationship between participation and personality characteristics and attitudes (cf. Emmons, 1979; Parkum and Parkum, 1980; Smith, 1975; Tomeh, 1974). An individual's participation in the community is associated with greater verbal and relational capabilities (Bronfenbrenner, 1960; Gough, 1952). Locus of control (a person's feeling of control over what happens) has been shown to be positively related to political activity (Gurin et al., 1969) and to activity in the women's movement (Sanger and Alker, 1972). Membership in a neighborhood organization is accompanied by favorable attitudes toward the neighborhood (Carr, Dixon, and Ogles, 1976). However, knowing individuals' personality characteristics does not tell us why people join voluntary associations. People can hold similar attitudes and have similar personality characteristics and yet some may join and some may not.

Why Do People Participate?

Based on her extensive review of the literature, Widmer (1984) concludes that many of the studies on why citizens participate focus on the characteristics of *who* participates. These studies have little to say about the motives of participants and the benefits they receive. "We need to know more about why people join organizations and what encourages them to devote time and energy to those organization's aims" (Gittell, 1980:263).

The reasons for participation are usually inferred on the basis of who people are (e.g., middle class people participate for task reasons, lower class people participate for social reasons) or according to the assumptions of a theoretical framework. The direct question, why did—or didn't—you participate, is rarely asked in empirical studies. A study

¹ It should be noted that studies have been conducted on the characteristics of participants in single issue groups, such as community crime prevention programs (Lavrakas and Herz, 1982; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981) and community organizations responding to toxic waste hazards (Bachrach and Zautra, 1985; Cook, 1983; Stone and Levine, 1985). The results tend to be similar to the general voluntary association literature.

by Uzzell (1980) did ask members and nonmembers of an inner city residents' group why they joined or did not join. Members were found to have joined for "ideological" reasons (to work for improvements) and nonmembers did not join for individualistic reasons, such as "laziness" or time constraints.

Costs and Benefits. Another approach is represented by political economy theory (Moe, 1980; Olson, 1965; Rich, 1980). The theory suggests that a social exchange takes place in organizations such that participants will invest their energy in the organization only if they expect to receive some benefits (see Prestby, 1984, and Widmer, 1984, for a detailed review of costs, benefits, and incentives in voluntary organizations). Clark and Wilson's (1961) typology of material, solidary, and purposive incentives has been widely cited. Material incentives are tangible rewards that can be translated into monetary value such as wages, reduced taxes, and increased property values. Solidary incentives are derived from social interactions and include socializing, status, and group identification. Purposive incentives are derived from the suprapersonal goals of the organization and include bettering the community, doing one's duty, and feeling a sense of responsibility. The empirical literature on incentives in voluntary organizations is sparse. Knoke and Wood (1981) investigated incentives in voluntary organizations, based on Clark and Wilson's typology. Most studies investigating incentives have looked only at leaders (Rich, 1980). Few studies have looked empirically at the costs involved in participation, such as time or money. While Oliver (1984) did explore the issue of costs of participation, she used indirect measures of costs and did not directly ask respondents about the costs they experienced. In addition, there is little research on why citizens do not participate, although such studies are clearly needed (Widmer, 1984). In the present study we directly asked members about the costs and benefits of being a member and we asked nonmembers about their perceptions of the costs and benefits of being a member.

Based on rational-choice and "radical" conceptions of collective mobilization, Henig (1982) proposed a three-step model of mobilization wherein an individual perceives a condition, evaluates it as important to his or her well-being, and calculates the costs and benefits of action. This model combines aspects of the social psychological and cost/benefit literatures. Empirical evidence on the relationship of participation to social psychological variables and costs and benefits is crucial in evaluating the importance of these approaches. Therefore, this article investigates who participates, who does not participate, and why, using three different types of variables: *demographic*, *social psychological*, and *costs/benefits*. We will explore the strength of our results in a cross-cultural study in order to examine their robustness and generalizability (Triandis and Brislin, 1984). We will investigate participation in neigh-

borhood improvement associations in two cultural settings that have similarities and differences. In the United States, we will examine participation in block associations in a program facilitated by a local coalition of government, bankers, and residents. In Israel, we will examine participation in neighborhood improvement organizations mandated by the national government. The neighborhood councils consist of local government officials and residents. While both countries are democracies, citizen participation in neighborhood improvement in Israel is relatively new.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The Settings

The data for the portion of this study conducted in the United States were obtained as part of the Neighborhood Participation Project (Florin and Wandersman, 1983; Wandersman, 1978), which systematically studied participation in block organizations in the Waverly-Belmont neighborhood of Nashville, Tennessee. The Waverly-Belmont neighborhood is similar to many transitional urban neighborhoods in America that have experienced out-migration to the suburbs by the middle class, followed by a reverse migration in recent years. Although the neighborhood is racially integrated, individual blocks tend to be more homogeneous, having primarily either white residents or black residents of varying socioeconomic status. Houses are primarily one and two family dwellings with a few multiple (three or four family) units interspersed.

Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) developed a project to serve the neighborhood. NHS is a non-profit, cooperative organization of citizens, city officials, and local lending institutions designed to assist neighborhood residents in revitalizing their neighborhood. NHS is the single most widely employed model for neighborhood "upgrading" (Ahlbrandt and Brophy, 1975), and currently there are over 160 NHS programs operating in 140 cities across the United States. One of the ways in which NHS seeks to stimulate citizen action is to assist in the development of block organizations, by employing community organizers to work with people in the community, block by block. A "block" refers to both sides of a resident's street; cross streets serve as block boundaries. The block organization serves as a local forum for issues of common concern such as crime, street repairs, and street lighting.

Rapid urbanization and development in Israel left its mark on many neighborhoods, which deteriorated and turned into the focal points of poverty and crime. In 1978 a national urban renewal project known as Project Renewal (PR) emphasized the rehabilitation of both physical

and social aspects of needy neighborhoods. The project has several goals, which include improving the quality of the physical and social environment and increasing the opportunities for residents to improve the condition of the neighborhood. In each PR neighborhood, there is a steering committee that helps plan and decide what programs and projects will be conducted in the neighborhood. The committee consists of twenty-three members, at least eleven of whom are neighborhood residents. The other members are from relevant local and national government agencies.² In 1985, there were eighty-five Project Renewal neighborhoods in Israel. Because Project Renewal is the first program of widespread citizen participation instituted in Israel, courses were developed for teaching citizen participation skills and program planning. The Israeli National Council of Schools for Neighborhood Activists used local coordinators to interview candidates in participating communities, screening and then assigning approximately twenty candidates to each "school" or course. The selected participants attended one hundred hours of courses lasting about six months. For successful graduates, there were plans for more advanced training. By 1985 over one thousand had graduated from seventy such schools (in close to ninety neighborhoods) and thus were perceived to be committed to local citizen involvement and leadership. In both the United States and Israel, our samples come from blocks or neighborhoods that are affiliated with neighborhood rehabilitation programs that place a heavy emphasis on resident and local government input.

Samples and Procedures

The respondents in the American study were 418 adult residents (18 or older) on seventeen blocks with organizations in Nashville, Tennessee. Interviews were requested with all adults living in each household on each block and were conducted during the period May through September 1978 in the homes of respondents.

The blocks were predominantly blue-collar and lower-middle class. Ages of respondents ranged from 18 to 91 with an average of 43.9 years. The majority of the respondents were black (38.6 percent white); most were women (39 percent men). Marital status varied among the respondents; 46 percent were married; 54 percent were not. The 201 respondents who reported that they were members of a block organization and the 217 residents who reported that there was a block organization on the block but that they were not members (nonmembers) were used in the analyses in this article.

In Israel, interviewers performed in-person interviews with 112

course graduates and 117 nonmembers who lived in the same neighborhoods. Of the sample, 49 percent were men; 86 percent of the sample were married. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes and lasted approximately an hour. Neighborhoods in which there were established schools for neighborhood activists were divided into two districts, north and south. Out of the northern district, we selected every second neighborhood (or residential area) and then selected every second activist. Data collection was completed in March 1985.

Measurement of Variables

The dependent variable was member/nonmember in a block association (United States) or neighborhood association (Israel), operationalized by the degree of self-reported involvement.

To compare members and nonmembers, we looked at three types of independent variables:

1. Demographic: age, race (for the United States; country of origin for Israel), gender, education, occupational status, length of residence, intended length of residence, marital status, number of children under 17, number in household.
2. Social Psychological: (In the United States, questions were asked about the block because of the focus on block organizations; in Israel, questions were asked about the neighborhood because of the focus on neighborhood renewal.) Importance of the block/neighborhood, satisfaction with the block/neighborhood, participation in other voluntary associations, perceived personal influence in changing the block/neighborhood, sense of community on the block/neighborhood, importance of sense of community, sense of citizen duty (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954; items were modified slightly to refer to local rather than national concerns), self esteem (Coopersmith, 1967), political cynicism (Agger, Goldstein, and Pearl, 1961), political efficacy (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954), perception of specific problems on the block, power people on the block/neighborhood have to solve a problem, ratings of block/neighborhood one year ago . . . now . . . one year from now.
3. Costs and benefits of participation (Israel only): We developed eleven benefit items based on the Clark and Wilson (1961) typology of material, solidary, and purposive incentives, which were rated on a 1 (very much) to 5 (very little) scale; six cost items measuring time, effort, and frustration also were rated on a 1 to 5 scale. In addition, there was one item exploring the ratio between costs and benefits of activism ranging from 1 (much more benefits than costs) to 7 (much more costs than benefits). (See Appendix A for items used to measure costs and benefits.)

² The above information comes from the 1982 annual report of the International Committee for the Evaluation of Project Renewal.

RESULTS

Participation and Demographic Variables

The results for the United States show that females, married people, people who lived on the block longer, people who plan to live on the block longer, and people who are older were significantly more likely to be members of the organization (see Table 1). Thus, members appear to be more rooted to their block than nonmembers. However, race, occupation, education, presence of children under 17, and number of people in the household were *not* significantly related to participation.

According to Table 1, people in Israel who lived in the neighborhood longer, people who plan to live in the neighborhood longer, people who are older, and people with more children under 17 were significantly more likely to be members. Gender, marital status, education, occupation, ethnic status, and number of members in the household were not significantly related to participation. Thus, members appear to be more rooted to the neighborhood. As in the United States, ethnic status, occupation, and education *were not* related to participation. In general, the results in the United States and Israel are similar. However, one demographic variable was significant in Israel (number of children under 17) and not in the United States, while gender and marital status were significant in the United States but not in Israel, suggesting some cultural differences.

TABLE 1. Analysis of Participation based on Demographic Variables.

	United States	Israel
Age	5.49**	3.41**
Length of Residence	2.18*	2.86**
Residential Intention	2.44*	4.41**
Marital Status	22.54**	.64 ^b
Gender	5.70**	.51 ^b
Number of children (<17)	-1.43 ^a	3.74**
Education	-.22 ^a	-.41 ^a
Occupation	-1.50 ^a	.52 ^a
Race/Ethnic Origin	.27 ^b	.94 ^b
Number in Household	-1.83 ^a	1.86 ^a

^a *t*-test^b chi square* *p* < .05** *p* < .01

Participation and Social Psychological Variables

Social psychological variables (for example, attitudes, perceptions, personality) can suggest some of the psychological factors that influence whether people join or do not join an organization. In the United States, eight of the sixteen psychological items and variables were significantly related to participation (see Table 2). People who reported more of the following were more likely to be members: involvement in other community activities, personal influence in changing the block, sense of community on the block, importance of sense of community, citizen duty, political efficacy, importance of the block, self esteem, problems on the block.

TABLE 2. Analysis of Participation Based on Social Psychological Variables (*t*-test).

	United States	Israel
Participation in Other Voluntary Associations	4.46**	8.81**
Perceived Personal Influence in Changing the Block ^a	7.22**	8.88**
Sense of Community on Block	6.42**	5.92**
Importance of Sense of Community	5.32**	7.58**
Sense of Citizen Duty	2.96**	3.78**
Sense of Political Efficacy	3.24**	4.69**
Importance of the Block	2.99**	8.85**
Self Esteem	1.57	2.28*
Perception of Specific Problems on the Block	2.21*	3.38**
Power People on Block Have to Solve a Problem	1.56	1.07
Rating of Block:		
One Year Ago	-1.46	-.23
One Year From Now	-.69	1.17
At Present	-.46	.39
Satisfaction with Block	-.63	.07
Block Characteristics	-1.32	-.34
Political Cynicism	-.70	2.25*

^a As explained earlier, we used blocks as the local level of participation in the United States; neighborhoods were used in Israel. To simplify presentation in the tables, we use only block. For Israeli data, this should be interpreted as "neighborhood."

* *p* < .05** *p* < .01

The variables that were not significantly related to participation are also interesting. Ratings of block characteristics (for example, safety, attractiveness), satisfaction with the neighborhood, and ratings of the block's present, past, and future were not significantly different. This suggests an equal amount of satisfaction with the block and its future for members and nonmembers. (Generally, the mean ratings of the block and neighborhood were positive.) In addition, political cynicism and the power of people on the block to solve block problems were not significantly related to membership. It appears that members are more connected emotionally and behaviorally with their block and the community, see more problems, and are more optimistic; and that both members and nonmembers tend to evaluate the block and neighborhood similarly.

For Israel, ten of the sixteen psychological items and variables were significantly related to participation (Table 2). These items were the same as those used in the United States data, although some were changed to a neighborhood (rather than block) focus to reflect the interest in neighborhood renewal. People who reported more of the following were likely to participate: involvement in other community activities, political efficacy, citizen duty, problems on the block, sense of community in the neighborhood, importance of sense of community, personal influence in the neighborhood, self-esteem, importance of the neighborhood. Participants reported less political cynicism than nonmembers.

The variables that were not significantly related to participation are: ratings of neighborhood characteristics; satisfaction with the neighborhood; ratings of the neighborhood past, present, and future; and the power of people to solve problems in the neighborhood. The pattern is similar to the data for the United States in that participants were more actively involved in their block or neighborhood. In addition, participants perceive themselves as having more individual influence, but both participants and nonparticipants equally perceive that people in the neighborhood can influence neighborhood problems.³

A comparison of the data from the two countries shows that the pattern of results is remarkably similar. Of the sixteen variables on which we have similar data, significant and nonsignificant results match exactly (with the exception of two variables, political cynicism and self esteem).

³ A recent study of a national sample of activists and nonactivists in Project Renewal obtained similar results (Churchman, 1987). Activists were more likely to be involved in other community activities and to say that they had an opportunity to influence decisions in their building, street, and neighborhood, and they reported less political cynicism. No differences were found in the majority of attitudes toward the neighborhood—satisfaction with the neighborhood, continued wish to live in the neighborhood, and evaluation of the quality of schools and education.

Due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, we cannot rule out the possibility that the differences found are the results, rather than the antecedents, of participation. Also the results do not imply a particular temporal or logical ordering among these variables (for example, attaching more importance to the residential environment may causally precede perceiving more specific problems). Primarily, we are identifying relationships rather than arguing for causal inferences at this stage of the research.

Participation Benefits, Costs, and Barriers (Israel Only)

A factor analysis was performed on the benefit items using an orthogonal (varimax) rotation yielding two distinct factors (see Table 3). They accounted for 56.6 percent (30.7 and 25.9 percent, respectively) of the variance in the matrix. There was little overlap between the factors; all of the variables that loaded high on Factor 1 loaded low (<.30) on Factor 2 and vice versa. Factor 1 ("personal gains") included such variables as material benefits, solution of a specific problem of direct interest to the activist, increased political influence, and enhanced per-

TABLE 3. Benefits: Factor Analysis and *t*-tests

	Type ^a	Factor Loading	Member \bar{X}	Non-Member \bar{X}	<i>t</i>
Factor 1 (personal gains)					
Increased Status and					
Prestige	S	.72	3.62	2.70	5.68**
Enhanced Personal					
Professional Goals	M	.84	4.30	3.14	7.51**
Increased Political Influence	M	.68	4.33	3.48	5.52**
Solution of a Specific					
Problem of Direct					
Concern to You	M	.74	4.41	2.91	10.50**
Material Benefits	M	.71	4.64	3.83	5.88**
Factor 2 (helping others)					
Sense of Contribution and					
Helpfulness	P	.74	1.53	1.93	-3.56**
Increased Knowledge of the					
Community	M	.78	1.69	2.03	-3.04**
Providing a Useful Service					
to the Community	P	.75	1.69	2.05	-2.98**
Increased Sense of					
Responsibility	P	.74	1.95	2.23	-2.16*
Friendship with Other					
Members	S	.65	2.02	2.22	-1.63

Scale: 1 = very much; 5 = not at all. The larger the number, the smaller the perceived or reported benefit.

^a type is P = Purposive; M = Material, S = Solidary.

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

sonal and professional goals. Factor 2 ("helping others") included such variables as sense of contribution and helpfulness, providing useful service to the community, increased knowledge of the community, increased sense of responsibility, and friendship with other members or staff.

In Table 3 the results show the benefits that members receive and the benefits that nonmembers perceive that members receive. The members report that sense of contribution and helpfulness, increased knowledge of the community, providing a useful service to the community, increased sense of responsibility, and friendship with other members or staff are the greatest benefits they receive. Each is rated between "very much" and "much" of a benefit. The members report that the benefits in Factor 1 are of little or no benefit: material benefits, solution of a specific problem of direct interest to the member, increased political influence, enhanced personal and professional goals. Increased status and prestige was reported to be between "somewhat" and "little" benefit. In sum, members report that the greatest benefits they receive are helping others and the community and feeling good about it. They report little or no personal gains.

In general, nonmembers rated the benefits similarly to the members. They perceived the same five benefits in Factor 2 as the greatest benefits and the same five benefits in Factor 1 as the lowest benefits. Therefore, they agreed that the most benefits received are in helping others and making a contribution and that the personal gains (self-interest) are smaller benefits than helping others.

A direct comparison of members and nonmembers, however, does show some interesting differences. Of the five benefits in Factor 2, members rate four of them significantly higher than nonmembers. In contrast, nonmembers rate all five benefits in Factor 1 more highly than members do. Therefore, nonmembers perceive that members receive more benefits in personal gains and fewer benefits from helping others and making a contribution than members report actually receiving.

For the cost items, a factor analysis (varimax rotation) was performed and yielded two distinct factors accounting for 63 percent of the variance (see Table 4). There was little overlap between the factors; all of the variables that loaded high on Factor 1 loaded low (<.30) on Factor 2, and vice versa. Factor 1 suggests opportunity costs, that is, what people give up in other parts of their lives in order to participate. These costs are inherent to almost any participation. Factor 2 appears to be more closely related to participation costs arising from "organizational frustration" (for example, lack of progress and interpersonal conflict); such costs would be associated with participation in a particular setting.

TABLE 4. Costs: Factor Analysis and *t*-tests.

	Factor Loading	Member \bar{X}	Non-Member \bar{X}	<i>t</i>
Factor 1				
The Need to Give Up Personal and Family Matters	.76	2.49	2.32	1.06
The Need to Participate in Meetings	.80	2.66	2.29	2.47*
The Amount of Time It Takes The Effort of Being a Neighborhood Activist	.74	1.75	2.23	3.28**
	.79	2.99	2.39	3.74**
Factor 2				
Feelings of Frustration From Lack of Progress	.85	2.52	2.54	-.13
Interpersonal Conflict with Others	.70	3.93	3.03	5.72**

Scale: 1 = very much; 5 = not at all. The larger the number, the smaller the cost.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4 shows the results. Members report that all of the costs are between "much" and "somewhat" of a cost, except for interpersonal conflict, which is viewed as a "little" cost. The need to give up personal and family matters is the largest cost, closely followed by feeling frustration from lack of progress. In sum, there are moderate costs for members.

On an absolute level, the results for nonmembers resemble the results for members. The costs are rated between "much" and "somewhat" of a cost, and interpersonal conflict is rated as the smallest cost. However, direct comparisons between members and nonmembers show that overall, and on four of the six comparisons, nonmembers rate the costs of participation significantly higher than the members (the need to participate in meetings, the amount of time it takes, the effort of being a neighborhood member, and interpersonal conflict with others). The other two comparisons were not significantly different. Thus, nonmembers perceive moderate to much costs involved in neighborhood activism, and they perceive that the costs are greater than the costs members actually report experiencing.

Both members and nonmembers were asked to directly compare the costs and benefits of neighborhood activity on a 1 to 7 scale. Both members and nonmembers perceive that there is a little more benefit than cost, and there was no significant difference between them.

What Encourages and Discourages Participation

In Israel, members were asked "What would encourage you to continue being active?" and nonmembers were asked "What would encourage you to be a participant?" (see Table 5). The major differences are that members would be more encouraged by achieving results and by improving the neighborhood. The largest category for nonmembers was that there would be *nothing* that would encourage them to become a member.

Members were asked what *would* discourage them from participating? Nonmembers were asked what *does* discourage them? Members reported that lack of cooperation from authorities and residents and lack of time would discourage them from continuing to be a member. Nonmembers reported that time was the major factor discouraging them.

TABLE 5. Survey of Factors That Encourage and Discourage Participation.

	Member	Nonmember
Panel A. Israel		
What Would Encourage You to Continue Being or to Become Active?		
Achieving/Getting Results/Satisfaction	25%	17%
Improvement of Neighborhood (Including image and the hope to improve)	24	17
Contribute/Help People/Liking People	16	16
Caring/Interested in What's Happening	6	6
Cooperation with/from Authorities	6	6
Challenges/Persistence/Personal Development	2	2
Feel Needed	6	7
Nothing	9	29
What Would Discourage You from Continuing To Be or from Becoming Active?		
Lack of Cooperation from Authorities	16%	9%
Lack of Cooperation/Apathy of Residents	31	29
Lack of Time, Work Pressures	38	48
Lack of Resources, Personal Problems	5	9
Nothing	11	5
Panel B. United States		
Nonparticipants' Primary Reasons for Not Joining		
Time		48%
Physical Problems		8
Attitudes Toward Neighbors		16
Problems with Organization(s)		19
Vague or Miscellaneous		9

(The 48 percent figure citing time as a factor for nonmembers in Israel is the same percentage citing time as a factor for not joining in the United States.)

Discriminant Analyses for Israel Data

We were also interested in investigating the *relative strengths* of the three sets of variables taken as a whole (that is, which set was best able to distinguish between members and nonmembers), and which variables *within* each set were the strongest predictor variables. To answer these questions, we performed separate stepwise discriminant function analyses on each of the three sets of independent variables for the Israel data. The results ($N = 192$: 92 nonmembers, 100 members) showed that the demographic variables *as a set* accounted for much less variance in the dependent variable of membership (12 percent) than did either the set of social psychological variables (38 percent) or the cost/benefit variables (40 percent). In classification analyses, the discriminant function from a set of variables is used to statistically "predict" group membership. The results are then compared against known group membership. These analyses also pointed to the strength of the social psychological set and the cost/benefit set. The set of demographic variables correctly classified 62 percent of the cases, while the social psychological set correctly classified 82 percent and the cost/benefit set 75 percent of the cases.

Identifying which variables entered into the discriminant function equation provided a more direct assessment of the relative strength of the independent variables within each set. The strongest predictor variables, in the order of their relative contribution to the discriminant function equation, were as follows:

Demographic set:	intended length of residence and number of children under 17;
Social Psychological set:	importance of the neighborhood, personal influence in the neighborhood and sense of community;
Cost/Benefit set:	benefits factor #1, (personal gains) and benefits factor #2, (helping others.)

In all cases, members scored significantly higher on these variables than nonmembers. Other variables within each of these sets that were significant in bivariate analyses were presumably correlated with the variables from each set that entered the equation but did not supply any significant unique variance over and above the variables that did enter.

DISCUSSION

We have approached the puzzle of "If citizen participation is such a good thing, why don't more people participate?" by investigating who participates, who does not participate, and why, in specific organizations in which there is a specific opportunity to participate. The results of our analysis of the demographic variables (including the discriminant analysis) suggest that rootedness in the community is related to participation. Living in an area longer, intending to stay longer, and having more children can be seen as embedding an individual within a community, increasing both the opportunities and incentives to participate. Occupation, education, and race/ethnic status were *not* related to participation. This finding contrasts with much of the social science literature on participation that has suggested the importance of education, occupation, and race to participation (cf. Williams and Ortega, 1986). As we suggested in the introduction, this difference in results may be due to the importance of the residential environment to working class populations and the immediacy of the block/neighborhood organization. The similarity of the results in the United States and Israel on this important issue indicates that these findings deserve attention and have important implications for expectations about who will and who will not participate.

The striking aspect of the results from the social psychological set of variables was the overall consistency in the two different cultures. Results on fourteen out of sixteen social psychological variables were parallel across the samples, being either significant in both or nonsignificant in both. This suggests that the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs leading to participation are the same, and by implication, the psychological processes that influence an individual's decision to become active are similar across these two cultures.

The results of specific bivariate and discriminant function analyses also highlight the following points. First, members do *not* differ from nonmembers in terms of their overall ratings of satisfaction with their residential environment. Members *do*, however, see more specific problems in their residential environment than nonmembers. Members thus perceive more need, certainly a motivating condition. Second, members differ significantly from nonmembers in terms of the salience and importance they attach to the residential environment. Given the same perceived need, one person may become a participant because the block or neighborhood environment means more to him or her than it means to another person who does not participate. Such differences would influence individuals' evaluations of any conditions or events in their residential environment and affect motivation to participate. Finally, although members do not differ from nonmembers in terms of their

perceptions of the possibilities of collective action, they do significantly differ in terms of their perceptions of personal influence and general belief in political efficacy. Participants' calculations of their own ability to act successfully thus seems to be different.

Investigating the costs and benefits of participation is clearly important to scholars and citizens alike. If we know what the costs and benefits are, then we can better understand why people participate. In addition, if costs can be reduced and benefits increased, we may be able, if we wish, to increase participation. The factor analysis for benefits resulted in two factors (personal gains and helping others) rather than the three factors posited by Clark and Wilson (1961). Knoke and Wood (1981) found similar results in their factor analysis. This suggests that two types of benefits may be more appropriate than three types of benefits (perhaps material gains are less relevant in voluntary associations). In addition, the two cost factors warrant further study because there has been little research on costs and little conceptualization on types of costs. It is also interesting to note the similarities and differences between members and nonmembers in their perceptions of costs and benefits. The absolute ratings suggest that both members and nonmembers agree that the greatest benefits are in making a contribution and helping others rather than in self interest or personal gains. But the relative comparisons do show that nonmembers perceive somewhat more personal gain than members report receiving (perhaps they find it hard to believe that the members are *that* altruistic). In regard to costs, nonmembers perceive more costs than members report. The implication is that nonmembers do not participate because they think it is costly (more costly than members report). Possible reasons for the discrepancy between members and nonmembers is that nonmembers have an inaccurate perception of the costs or that their perception of members is based on the highly visible members (that is, leaders) who actually do work harder and bear more costs (see Friedmann, Florin, Wandersman, and Meier, 1987, for a study of leader-member differences). In fact, we have data that show that nonmembers perceive the costs of participation to be more similar to leaders' perceptions of costs than to members' perceptions of costs. It is also possible that it actually would be more costly for nonmembers to participate (for example, because of their family circumstances).

Taken as a whole, the analysis of social psychological and cost/benefit variables lends empirical support to Henig's (1982) three-step model of mobilization wherein an individual perceives a condition, evaluates it as important to his or her well-being, and calculates that something can be done about it. This points to the importance of understanding more fully the processes by which an individual decides whether to participate in a particular organization (see also Florin and Wan-

dersman, 1984, and Florin, Friedmann, Wandersman, and Meier, 1987, for a cognitive social learning variable framework that can be used to examine these processes).

CONCLUSION

Why don't more people participate? The traditional approach has looked at the demographic characteristics of the people who participate as if that answered the question of why people participate. Using this approach, previous research on participation in voluntary organizations found that race, education, and occupation were related to participation. We found, however, that demographic variables were *not* statistically related to membership in block organizations and neighborhood activism. This suggests that obstacles that keep poor and working class people from participating in a variety of voluntary organizations do not inhibit participation in block or neighborhood associations where issues are more immediate and perhaps more manageable. Therefore, we need to understand more than the "who" of participation; we also must understand the why, when, where, and how of participation. The social psychological and cost/benefit approaches can add to our understanding and help to illuminate the benefits that people find in participation. These two approaches represent important future directions for research and for applications in action.

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APPENDIX A.

The following items were used to measure the benefits, costs, and cost/benefit ratio of activism.

Do you think any of the following are personal benefits you receive from participating?

1. solution to specific problems of direct concern to you
2. increased knowledge of the community and how to improve it
3. sense of contribution and helpfulness
4. increased status or prestige
5. increased political influence
6. increased sense of responsibility
7. friendship with other members or staff
8. enhanced personal professional goals
9. provide a useful service to the community
10. increased sense of handling the matters of the neighborhood
11. provide material benefits

Sometimes there may be difficulties or costs involved in being a neighborhood activist. To what extent does neighborhood activism cause you the following costs?

1. the amount of time it takes
2. feeling of frustration from lack of making progress
3. the need to give up personal and family matters
4. interpersonal conflict with others
5. the need to participate in meetings
6. the effort pertaining to neighborhood activism

How would you compare benefit with cost regarding your neighborhood activity?