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What Happened to the "Long Civic Generation"? Explaining Cohort Differences in Volunteerism*

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Abstract

In Bowling Alone *Robert Putnam argues that the passing of the "long civic generation," whose values were molded by the Depression and the Second World War, has resulted in a decline in civic engagement. In this analysis we test the generation hypothesis by comparing the volunteer behavior of two successive generations of women at the same age. No support for Putnam's thesis is found. Once appropriate controls for sociodemographic trends are imposed, generation differences disappear. However, there are cohort differences in the type of volunteer work performed.*

Each year, volunteer workers contribute billions of dollars in value to the U.S. economy (Boris 1999). Even so, there are rarely enough volunteers to meet the demand, as a glance at any local newspaper will reveal. In light of this shortage of volunteers, any social change that discourages volunteering is worrisome. Two recent changes suggest that balancing supply and demand in the market for volunteers will become more difficult in the future. The first is the Reagan administration's cut in government spending initiated in the 1980s. A deliberate policy of shifting social welfare from public to private agencies meant that nonprofit agencies were expected to assume an even greater burden in the provision of human services. Alongside increasing demand, the supply of volunteers is threatened. Americans simply have less free time today. But lack of time is not the primary reason that a decline in volunteering is expected. In a recent publication, Putnam (2000) has suggested that younger generations

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of Americans are simply not as civic-minded as those who experienced the Great Depression and the Second World War. Unlike this older generation, younger Americans have not acquired a sense of civic duty. They have not been taught that the nation has to pull together in order to survive. As the older generation departs the scene, volunteerism will fall out of favor.

Trends in Volunteering

A glance at the data on volunteering seems to contradict Putnam's generational theory. The rate of volunteering "for charitable causes" actually rose from 26% in 1977 to 46% in 1991 (Ladd 1999). While the proportion of the population volunteering at least once a year remained flat between 1975 and 1997, the average number of times people volunteered rose from 6.3 times a year in the mid-1970s to 7.6 times a year in the mid-1990s (Goss 1999). And yet these trend data do not necessarily disprove the thesis that Americans are becoming less disposed to volunteer, because the increase in volunteering is found mainly among Americans sixty years or older (Putnam 2000). Goss (1999) examines the frequency of volunteering per year among four cohorts of Americans: a cohort born before 1930, a cohort born between 1930 and 1945, a cohort born between 1946 and 1960 ("baby boomers"), and a cohort born after 1960. She finds that the increase in the number of times people volunteered between 1975 and 1997 is almost entirely attributable to those who grew up during the Depression and the Second World War. Succeeding generations show no increase in volunteering.

Of course, these results alone are not enough to validate the generation hypothesis. Older people might be volunteering more often because of changes in the resources available to them or because more volunteers are needed. Goss attempts to rule out these other explanations by controlling for changes in the various social factors that influence the supply of volunteers and by including a dummy variable for year of survey to control for period effects. She does find a period effect and speculates that it might have something to do with an increase in the demand for seniors' services fueled by an explosion in the number of organizations catering to age-related concerns (Goss 1999). Nevertheless, she also finds a positive effect for the 1910-30 cohort.

Thus we have an intriguing hypothesis with some empirical support for it. And yet there is widespread skepticism among social scientists about the validity of generation theory (Jennings 1987; Ladd 1999; Schuman & Scott 1989). In the view of these skeptics, age differences in volunteering, even if they can be demonstrated, are more likely to be the result of improvements in education and health among the old, favorable shifts in public attitudes toward aging, and expanded opportunities for older volunteers in the public and private sectors (Chambre 1993).

In this article we take up the challenge of testing the generation hypothesis, using a different data set and a different method of analysis to that employed by Putnam and Goss. We believe our approach is a more rigorous test of generation theory. Under this test the theory fails. We then go on to examine a subsidiary hypothesis that the change is more a matter of the type of volunteering taking place than the amount. Some have argued that the more traditional forms of civic engagement, such as the PTA, the League of Women Voters, the Kiwanis, or the American Legion, are waning in popularity in favor of "looser connections" to groups of various kinds that demand less of their members and permit more episodic forms of volunteer work (Skocpol 2003; Wuthnow 1999). In the second part of the article we test for cohort differences in types of volunteering. We expect to see a decline in popularity of the old-style service organizations and a rise in popularity of work-oriented and political groups.

Generation Theory

The theory of generations has a venerable history in sociology. It originated as part of Karl Mannheim's ([1928] 1952) search for an existential basis of social knowledge independent of social class. Just as shared class location limits individuals to particular ranges of experiences and predisposes them to a characteristic mode of thought, so too does generational location. "Thus, those born at the same time may share similar formative experiences that coalesce into a 'natural' view of the world. . . . People are thus fixed in qualitatively different eras" (Scott 2000:356).

Generation theory is an alternative way of accounting for age differences in behavior and attitudes when using cross-sectional data. Rather than attributing age differences to maturation and life-course events and assuming that the young will one day behave and think like the old, the differences are assumed to be permanent. It is further assumed that period effects, which influence all age groups in the population alike, will leave these generational differences intact. Generation theory informs Glen Elder's (1974) classic work, *Children of the Great Depression*, in which he argues that being raised during the Depression engendered "a psychic framework of self-sacrifice and earned success in the nation's causes which still finds expression in views of contemporary events and developments" (295). Generation theory has also been used to explain why people born and raised during the Depression did not become more conservative as they aged but remained loyal to the Democratic Party (Braungart & Braungart 1989), why voter turnout has declined since the Second World War (Miller & Shanks 1996), and why Americans are becoming less trusting (Robinson & Jackson 2001).

Generation theory is a cultural theory. It attributes cohort differences in behavior to values and attitudes. Mannheim ([1928] 1952) uses the term "generational location" to refer to what demographers today would call a birth cohort. He uses the term "generation of actuality" to describe a birth cohort among whom a "concrete bond" has been forged by virtue of the cohort's common exposure to "social and intellectual" conditions. Unfortunately, this crucial distinction is not always observed and the terms are used interchangeably (Marshall 1983). But cohort — or "generational" — location, while necessary, is not a sufficient condition for a generation to exist (Pilcher 1994). Only "when events occur in such a manner as to demarcate a cohort in terms of its 'historical-social' consciousness should we speak of true generation" (Scott 2000:356). A birth cohort is thus similar to a class *in itself*. It is distinguished from other birth cohorts by structural characteristics, such as size and racial composition, of common conditions of existence, such as educational opportunities, family size, an economic boom or depression (Easterlin 1987; Ryder 1965). A generation is similar to a class *for itself*. It is a birth cohort that has become aware of itself as different from other birth cohorts because of some set of events that occurred during its formative period (Marshall 1983). Not every birth cohort becomes a generation. For example, the birth cohort succeeding the baby boomers has been labeled "Generation X" precisely because it lacks a generational consciousness. "Few, if any galvanizing events or movements occurred around which a special identity could be formed" (Jennings & Stoker 2001:4).

Structural Contingencies

Putnam unequivocally rejects the view that the differences in civic engagement he observes are merely the result of changes in structural conditions. The older generation of the 1970-90 period is more civic-minded "*despite* the fact that it received substantially less formal education than its children and grandchildren" (Putnam 2000:254; our emphasis). This point is crucial, because it is possible to agree that succeeding birth cohorts exhibit different volunteer behaviors in the same historical period and at the same age without accepting the cultural argument. One could simply attribute these differences to structural changes. If younger birth cohorts simply have less (or more) of what it takes to volunteer, then controlling for this explains away any apparent "generational effects."

In order to understand how cohorts might vary in their proclivity for volunteer work, it is necessary to turn to the existing research on who volunteers. For reasons given below, we focus on women in this study. Volunteer work has traditionally been thought of as a female activity, especially for mothers (Daniels 1988). Women are more likely than men to be allocated the

kinds of chores that are an extension of housework and childcare, such as attending PTA meetings or organizing a bake sale for the local library. Mothers act as "keepers of friends, neighbors, and even those strangers served by local volunteer groups" (Gerstel 2002:258). Bianchi (2000), using a soccer metaphor, describes the role of mothers as the "sweeper": "Their job is to be ever attentive to what needs to be done to assist in covering the goal — to what they must do to ensure their well-being and that of their family" (412). Lareau (2002) observes, "Even when fathers were coaches or had other prominent roles in organizations . . . mothers provided 'hidden' assistance (e.g., calling team members to reschedule rained-out practices), a pattern that was not generally reciprocated when women had leadership roles" (41).

Recent research has demonstrated that the following factors are associated with volunteering.

Education

Education "is the major predictor of hands-on volunteer time" (Rossi 2001c:452). This is highly significant because of the increased educational opportunities enjoyed by women in the U.S. (Blau, Ferber & Winkler 1998; McLaughlin et al. 1988). Putnam and Goss are well aware of the positive effects of the upward trend in education and control for this throughout their analyses. In their opinion, however, the upward trend in education has not been enough to outweigh the fact that young women today are less civic-minded than their mothers. It is a little understood implication of Putnam's thesis that, were it not for the improvement in educational opportunities they have enjoyed, the younger generations would be volunteering even less than they are and the cohort difference would be even greater (Jackman & Miller 1998).

Work Time

Another factor associated with volunteering is paid work time. If paid employment imposes opportunity costs on volunteering, any increase in the labor force participation of women should limit how much volunteering they do. This is a matter of common speculation in the social sciences (Blau, Ferber & Winkler 1998; Hamilton 2001; Handy et al. 2000; Schor 1992). And data analysis seems to substantiate it. "Comparing two women of the same age, education, financial security and marital and parental status, full-time employment appears to cut . . . volunteering by more than 50 percent" (Putnam 2000:195). Tiehen (2000), analyzing time diary data from 1965, 1975, 1985, and 1993 recorded by married women, observes a decline in volunteering across this time period. Although women were more highly educated in each successive study, which should have increased the rate of volunteering, the increase in education was counterbalanced by an increase in the overall rate

of employment and especially an increase in the rate of employment of married women with children, the result being a decline in volunteering across the two decades. Tiehen (2000) estimates that "given the other characteristics of married women in 1993, if married women's employment rate had maintained its 1965 level, their volunteer rate would have been almost 30% higher in 1993" (521). It seems likely that the movement of women into the paid labor force would bring about a decline in volunteering, especially since working women continue to do most of the childcare and housework.

The percentage of women working full time, year-round, increased from 37% in 1963 to 54% in 1995 (Blau, Ferber & Winkler 1998). "Between 1970 and 1980, 14 million women joined the work force, the most rapid increase in any single decade in this century" (Moen, Downey & Bolger 1990:232). Not only are more women working, women with young children are entering the labor force in unprecedented numbers, thus intensifying the "time squeeze" on women, who must become "supermoms" to be able to perform the combination of roles that used to be performed sequentially. The proportion of women with children younger than six years in the household who were working for pay rose from 43.3% in 1970 to 57.5% in 1990 (Blau, Ferber & Winkler 1998). We should therefore expect to see that later generations of women work more hours for pay outside the home and therefore volunteer less than their predecessors.

Occupations

People who have professional or managerial occupations are more likely to volunteer than those who work in clerical, sales, or blue-collar occupations (Wilson & Musick 1997; Wuthnow 1998). Community service is expected of people in professional and managerial occupations, and many such workers belong to associations that actively promote volunteer work. Professional and managerial workers also tend to have more flexible work schedules, and "women who feel they have control over their daily schedule at work are almost twice as likely to volunteer as those who do not control their schedules" (Wuthnow 1998:76). Professional and managerial workers are also more likely to be asked to volunteer. Favorable changes in the occupational status of women should encourage more of them to volunteer. Between 1972 and 1995, roughly the period covered by the time series used in this study, the proportion of women in managerial positions rose from 4.6% to 12.8%, and the proportion of women in professional positions rose from 12.4% to 16.7% (Blau, Ferber & Winkler 1998).

Family Roles

Women's family roles are linked to volunteer work in a number of ways. Much of the time they devote to volunteer work can be seen as an extension of those roles, or as being limited by those roles. Any change in household composition should therefore have an impact on volunteering.

Married people are more likely to volunteer than single people (Hodgkinson & Weitzman 1996), regardless of whether or not they have children (Sundeen 1990). Rossi (2001a) sees this as a sign of the greater "social embeddedness" of married couples. However, there is also likely to be some measure of "mutual support" for volunteering in marriages (Freeman 1997). The falling marriage rate should bring about a decline in volunteering.

Parental status is also related to volunteering. Children can either function as connections to others or serve to isolate parents socially (Gallagher & Gerstel 2001). The difference is the age of the child. Infant children notoriously limit their mothers' social activities (Knoke & Thompson 1977). Parents of preschool children have about four hours less free time per week than those with older children and about nine hours less than married couples without children (Robinson & Godbey 1997). Once children enter school, they not only provide mothers more free time but their extracurricular activities draw mothers into community activities. In short, the impact of children on their mothers' volunteer work is moderated by the children's age. This finding is robust (Clain & Zech 1999; Garcia & Marcuello 2002; Hayghe 1991; Vaillancourt 1994). As a working hypothesis for this study, we will assume that the more infant children a mother has, the fewer hours she will volunteer. The more school-age children she has, the more hours she will volunteer.

In summary, generation theory predicts that a "civic generation" of Americans is largely responsible for most of the recent increase in volunteering in the U.S. This generation of Americans is continuing a practice of high-level involvement in civic life, inspired by values of social responsibility and mutual sacrifice learned during the Depression and the Second World War. The effects of this learning are independent of any structural differences that might exist between the birth cohorts and of any period effects that might have influenced the volunteer rate. This hypothesis is substantiated if, with sociodemographic conditions and period held constant, the rate of volunteering for older generations is higher than for younger generations.

Analytical Design

Putnam is well aware of the methodological problems of teasing out the differences between age, cohort, and period effects. As already noted, he observes a more rapid decline in social participation among the younger than the older

birth cohorts (Putnam 2000) and concludes that "about half the overall decline in social capital and civic engagement can be traced to generational change" (266). Putnam is aware that this method of detecting "generation" effects compounds birth cohort and period effects because each successive birth cohort reaches a given age in a different year, often decades apart. He cannot rule out the possibility that any differences in volunteering might be due to changes in social context that occur in the time that elapses between the different birth cohorts reaching a given age. As far as separating generation and period effects is concerned, Putnam (2000) finds that "if both year of birth and year of survey are included in the same regression, year of survey becomes virtually insignificant in these measures" (485). Unfortunately, he is unable to control for age in these analyses because it overlaps with cohort (year of birth). He cannot rule out the possibility that the generation effect is actually the result of a change in the composition of the sample due to age-related factors, such as retirement or lower morbidity.

The analytical dilemma posed by age, period, and cohort effects is simply stated: "In the cross-sectional design, life course and cohort effects are confounded; in the longitudinal design, life-course and period effects are interrelated; and in the time-series design, cohort and period effects cannot be separated" (Braungart & Braungart 1989:314). Our strategy for solving this problem is to compare how much volunteer work two succeeding generations of women performed at the same stage of their life. This controls for age while testing for generation. However, it measures volunteering in two different periods. To rule out the possibility that there are period effects on volunteering that could be mistaken for generation effects, we conduct a pooled time-series analysis to see if either of the two periods we select for comparison are unusual in their rate of volunteering (see our description of the sample). We then enter sociodemographic variables into the model to see if generation differences remain.

Data

We test the generation hypothesis by comparing the volunteer behavior of two succeeding cohorts of women studied in the National Longitudinal Survey (NLS) of Labor Market Experience. The survey, which began in the 1960s, follows four population cohorts: men 45-59 years of age, women 30-44 years of age, young men 14-24 years of age, and young women 14-24 years of age. We use data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women and the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women because only women were asked questions on volunteering in their preretirement years. The mature sample was first surveyed in 1967, when it consisted of 5,083 women, ages 30-44; the young

sample was first surveyed in 1968, when it consisted of 5,159 women, ages 14–24.

Questions on volunteering were included in only some of the NLS panels. The mature women were asked about their volunteer work in 1974, 1976, 1979, 1981, and 1984; the young women were asked in 1973, 1978, 1988, and 1991. The exclusion of men from our study is regrettable and unavoidable. However, the focus on women is appropriate in light of the concern that "as more and more women enter the labor market and have less time to spend on unpaid work, their contributions to worthy causes will be greatly missed" (Blau, Ferber & Winkler 1998:58).

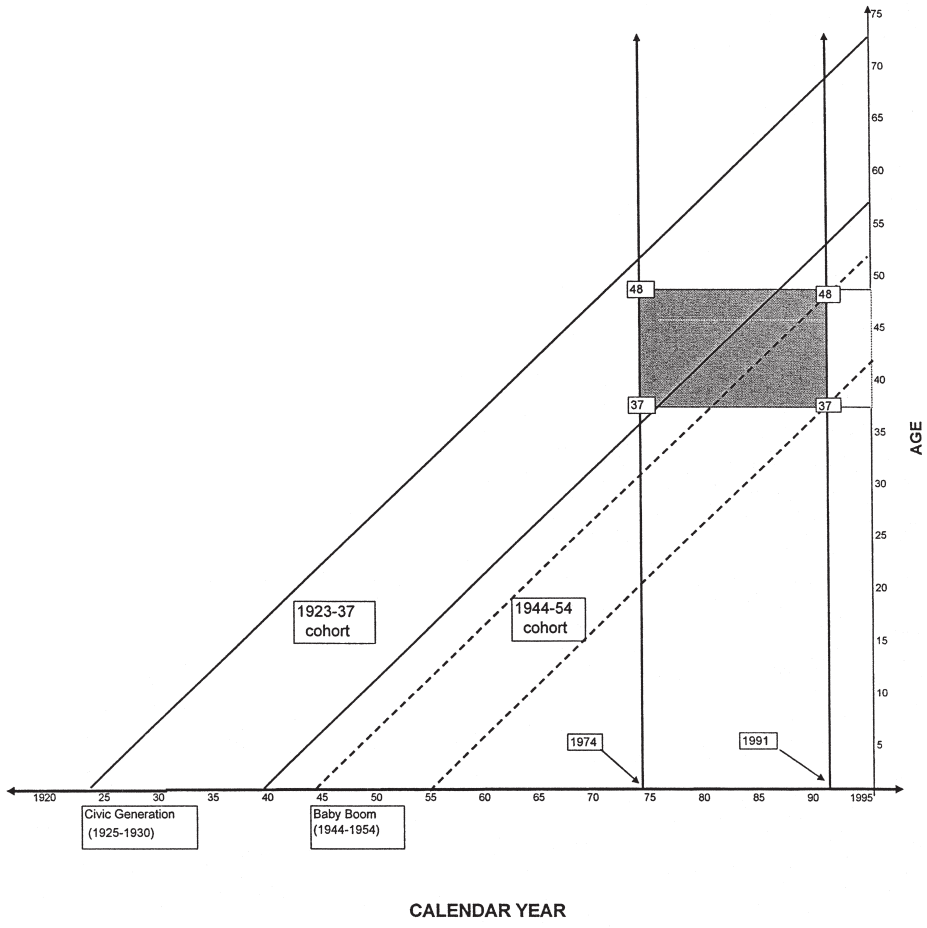
Besides offering us good longitudinal data on two cohorts of women, the NLS data is valuable in that, by coincidence, the two cohorts of women closely match the two generations compared by Putnam. The mature women in the NLS were born between 1923 and 1937. For Putnam (2000), the "core of the civic generation is the cohort born in 1925–1930" (254). The young women in the NLS were born between 1944 and 1954. Putnam identifies people born between 1944 and 1954 as members of the "baby boom generation." It is members of this generation, he believes, who have disengaged from community life.

Figure 1 presents a Lexis diagram illustrating the aging of the two cohorts we consider in this research. The horizontal axis represents the calendar year (allowing us to classify a group of individuals born in the same series of years as a cohort), and the vertical axis is the age of the individuals. Thus, the diagonal lines we have drawn in the two-dimensional system allow us to calculate the age of individuals in a cohort in any given calendar year succeeding birth. Along the horizontal axis, we have identified the NLS survey years we use in our analysis (1974 and 1991), and the shaded section of the diagram illustrates how our choice of these years allows us to analyze a sample of women from the two cohorts that overlap in age, between 37 and 48 years. Below, we discuss our rationale for this age restriction.

Sample

Our design calls for us to pool age-selected data from the two NLS modules and use a cohort variable to identify the generation effect. However, we cannot pool the data from *all* the women. The brief period of time during which the women were asked about their volunteer work constrains us to limit our attention to women between ages 37 and 48. Recall that the earliest measure of volunteering for the mature women occurred in 1974, when the youngest of them was 37. The latest measure of volunteering for the young women was taken in 1991, when the oldest of them was 48. We therefore pool the mature

FIGURE 1: Lexis Diagram of NLS Mature and Young Cohorts of Women Matched with Putnam's "Civic" and "Baby Boom" Generations



women who were between 37 and 48 in 1974 with the young women who were between 37 and 48 in 1991. This results in a total sample size of 6,337, with 3,196 observations from the young cohort and 3,141 observations from the mature sample.

By limiting our study to women from two cohorts with overlapping ages, we avoid confusing cohort and age effects. However, we are pooling women from two different cohorts and therefore two different periods, 1974 and 1991. We cannot rule out that period effects might be determining any difference we find between the 1974 women and the 1991 women. Our method of dealing

with the period effects problem is as follows. We have volunteer data on young women extending from 1973 to 1991 and on mature women extending from 1974 to 1984. We are thus able to see if, within each cohort, year of survey makes a difference to the volunteer rate of women in that cohort, net of other variables. Preliminary paired t-tests, by cohort, suggested that only the young women 1988 panel stood out in this regard: for some reason the volunteer rate among these women was unusually high that year. To rule out the possibility of period effects biasing our results more definitively, we conducted a pooled time-series analysis of the separate cohorts of women. By including a dummy variable for year in these analyses, we can see if any particular panel was exceptional in its level of volunteering. Net of control variables, the pooled time-series analysis confirmed our preliminary findings. For the mature women, there were no "year effects" on volunteering. The rate of volunteering remained the same over time. For the young women, however, the 1988 panel recorded a much higher rate of volunteering, net of the other variables in the model, than all the other panels. The volunteering rate among young women in the other years showed no significant variation. To ensure that we conduct the most conservative test of the generational hypothesis, we therefore select for the overlap analysis young women from the 1991 wave. We are reasonably confident that any cohort differences we find are not the result of period effects.

Dependent Variables

The NLS contains two measures of volunteering. The first is weeks volunteered, a measure of the number of weeks of unpaid volunteer work reported by respondents in the past year. This variable ranges between 0 and 52 weeks. The second is hours volunteered. This variable indicates the average number of hours per week spent on unpaid volunteer work in the past year. The range is 0-120 hours, including six respondents in the analysis who volunteer 80 or more hours. We analyze both measures of time spent volunteering because they are only moderately correlated ($r = .31$). The wording of the question is simple: "In the past twelve months did you do any unpaid volunteer work?" Unlike specialized surveys on volunteering, the respondent is given no prompts, nor is she asked about specific types of volunteer work, although those who indicate some volunteer work are subsequently asked for which type of organization they volunteered the most hours.

Independent Variables

Age

For each respondent, we use the most recently reported birth date in our calculation of respondents' ages. Using this birth date, and the date of survey administration, we calculate the age of each respondent at the time of the survey.

Cohort

Cohort is measured using a dummy variable (0 = young, 1 = mature).

Education

Education is measured as the highest grade attained by the respondent, ranging from 1 (first grade) to 18 (6 or more years of college).

Paid Employment

For the analysis of number of weeks volunteered, we include a control variable for the number of weeks worked for pay in the last 12 months. This variable ranges from 0 to 52. For the analysis of number of hours volunteered, the employment variable represents the number of hours worked in the survey week. This variable is coded into a set of dummy categories: no hours worked, between 1 and 39 hours worked (part-time), 40 hours worked (full-time), and over 40 hours worked.

Occupation

We use two dummy variables to represent occupation, created from the three-digit occupation census codes. A respondent can report work in a professional occupation (1 = yes, 0 = no), a managerial occupation (1 = yes, 0 = no), or one of the other occupations (omitted category). We include those not in the labor force in the omitted category because previous research has shown that their volunteer behavior resembles that of blue- and white-collar workers more than that of professional and managerial workers once work hours and education are controlled (Wilson & Musick 1997).

Marital Status

A dummy variable is used to measure marital status (1 = married, 0 = unmarried).

Parental Status

The NLS asked respondents to list all persons related to the respondent who are living in the household and identifies the age of each. Using this information, we identify children of the respondent and construct four different measures of parental status, each indicating the number of children within a certain age range living with the respondent at the time of the survey. Specifically, we calculate the following: number of children 4 years of age or under, number of children between 5 and 12, number of children between 13 and 17, and number of children 18 or older.

Statistical Model

We estimate Tobit regression models (Tobin 1958), a statistical procedure designed for censored dependent variables that is appropriate when a significant proportion of the observations take on a value of zero for the dependent variable (Roncek 1992). In our case, the measures of volunteering are censored at a lower limit of zero because respondents cannot report less than zero for either indicator. Further, approximately 72% of the respondents report no volunteering — an indication that we might find important differences between those who report no volunteer activity and those reporting at least some level of volunteering.

A Tobit model specifies two equations, each corresponding to the different classes of effect described above (McDonald & Moffitt 1980). The first equation, for those cases where the dependent variable is greater than zero, is

$$y_t = X_t\beta + u_t, \tag{1}$$

where y_t is a measure of volunteering; X_t is a vector of independent variables, including our measure of cohort; β is a vector of coefficients; and u_t is a normal, independently distributed error term. The second equation, for cases where the dependent variable is equal to zero, is

$$y_t = 0. \tag{2}$$

Although Tobit regression output from software programs typically resembles ordinary least squares regression results, the results of the Tobit coefficients are not readily interpretable. Through the use of the normal distribution, Tobit coefficients can be transformed to several readily interpretable forms. Space limitations prevent us from discussing the mathematical procedures by which Tobit coefficients can be decomposed; interested readers are encouraged to refer to Roncek (1992) for a lucid discussion of how to interpret Tobit effects. With this in mind, we now turn to a general discussion of how volunteering can be understood from the results of our Tobit models.

For all respondents, the Tobit model coefficients can be used to estimate how the independent variables affect the probability of volunteering. Given that a respondent reports some volunteering, the Tobit coefficients can be decomposed to represent variation in the level of volunteering. Further, the Tobit model allows us to determine "the fraction of the total effect of an independent variable that is attributable to the effect of being above the limit" (Roncek 1992:505). That is, we assess whether the change in volunteering resulting from a change in the independent variables is generated primarily by marginal changes in the level of volunteering (i.e., volunteering > 0) or due more to changes in the probability of volunteering at all (McDonald & Moffitt 1980).

In our presentation of the models below, while paying special attention to cohort differences, we discuss the effects of independent variables on the probability of volunteering for those respondents not volunteering and the effects of independent variables on levels of volunteering for those reporting some volunteer activity.

Results

Table 1 compares the two cohorts of women. Asterisks indicate that the mean difference is significant. The young women are more educated, are more likely to be in the labor force, and work more weeks. The mature women are more likely to be married and have more children over age four. They are slightly more likely to have professional and managerial jobs. There are no cohort differences in the number of weeks volunteered, nor are there differences in the number of hours volunteered.

Hours Volunteered Per Week

Table 2 shows the results of the Tobit analysis, where hours volunteered per week is the dependent variable. The first Tobit regression model includes only cohort and age. The young women volunteer more hours than the mature women. Our initial model thus produces a result opposite to that predicted by the generation hypothesis.

The remaining models in Table 2 are intended to show whether the significant cohort effect observed survives the introduction of controls for sociodemographic characteristics. In model 2, we see that, as expected, more highly educated women volunteer more hours. The coefficient for cohort has reversed its sign. Now mature women volunteer more than young women. The higher rates of volunteering for young women shown in model 1 are a function of their higher education. In model 3, we introduce a set of dummy variables representing hours worked in paid employment (with no hours worked as the

TABLE 1: Comparison of Means, by Cohort, National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women (1974) and Young Women (1991), Ages 37-48

	Young Cohort	Mature Cohort
Weeks volunteered (last year)	6.77 (15.13)	6.18 (14.73)
Hours volunteered (per week)	1.81 (1.60)	1.53 (1.36)
Age	42.13** (3.05)	42.68 (3.47)
Education	13.18** (2.61)	11.18 (2.76)
Weeks worked (past 12 months)	39.19** (20.03)	28.78 (23.33)
Paid employment		
None (omitted category)	.33** (.47)	.43 (.49)
Part-time (0–39 hrs./week)	.27 (.44)	.24 (.43)
Full-time (40 hrs./week)	.23 (.42)	.23 (.42)
Over 40 hrs./week	.17** (.38)	.09 (.28)
Parental status		
Number of children age 4 or younger	.08 (.33)	.09 (.34)
Number of children age 5–12	.45** (.75)	.77 (1.04)
Number of children age 13–17	.49** (.70)	.96 (1.01)
Number of children age 18 or older	.45** (.70)	.53 (.76)
Marital status (0 = unmarried, 1 = married)	.66** (.47)	.79 (.43)
Occupation		
Professional (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.14** (.35)	.09 (.29)
Managerial (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.09** (.29)	.03 (.17)
N	3,196	3,141

Note: Asterisks indicate a significant difference between cohort means. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

** $p < .01$

TABLE 2: Tobit Model Regressions of Number of Hours Volunteered per Week during Past Year on Cohort and Selected Controls, National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women (1974) and Young Women (1991), Ages 37-48

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	.20	–24.04**	–22.06**	–24.36**	–28.77**
	(.27)	(3.01)	(3.05)	(3.08)	(3.31)
Cohort	–.85**	2.21**	1.98**	1.58**	.85
(0 = young, 1 = mature)	(.42)	(.45)	(.45)	(.45)	(.47)
Age	–.19**	–.13**	–.12	–.11	–.03
	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.06)	(.07)
Education	—	1.60**	1.55**	1.51**	1.52**
		(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)
Paid employment[a]					
Part-time	—	—	–1.45**	–1.45**	–1.51**
(1–39 hrs./week)			(.55)	(.55)	(.55)
Full-time	—	—	–5.01**	–4.58**	–4.43**
(40 hrs./week)			(.61)	(.61)	(.62)
Over 40 hrs./week	—	—	–3.30**	–2.69**	–2.44**
			(.72)	(.72)	(.73)
Occupation					
Professional			1.07	1.28	1.32
			(.70)	(.70)	(.70)
Managerial			1.50	1.47	1.64
			(.91)	(.90)	(.90)
Marital status	—	—	—	3.37**	2.97**
(0 = unmarried, 1 = married)				(.50)	(.51)
Parental status					
Number of children age 4 or younger	—	—	—	—	–2.33**
					(.66)
Number of children age 5–12	—	—	—	—	1.11**
					(.24)
Number of children age 13–17	—	—	—	—	.99**
					(.25)
Number of children age 18 or older			—	—	–.04
					(.30)
Scale	13.07	12.74	12.64	12.60	12.57
	(.25)	(.24)	(.24)	(.24)	(.23)
Likelihood ratio χ^2	13.76	407.69	483.94	530.39	582.11
(N = 6,337)					

Note: The number of censored observations (hours volunteered = 0) is 4,579.

[a] No paid employment is the omitted category.

omitted category) and two dummy variables for occupation (professional and managerial). We observe a curvilinear relationship between hours worked and hours volunteered: respondents not working or working part-time volunteer the most; those working 40 hours volunteer the least; and those working over 40 hours report higher levels of volunteering than those working the "standard" week. The size of the cohort coefficient in model 3 is reduced. Young women volunteer less than mature women because they work longer hours. Model 4 adds a dummy variable for marital status to the model. Marriage is positively related to volunteering. Table 2 shows that young women are less likely to be married than mature women. The introduction of this control reduces the size of the cohort coefficient. Mature women volunteer more than young women because they are more likely to be married. Finally, in model 5, parental status is entered into the equation. As expected, infant children have a negative effect on volunteering. Elementary and high school children have a positive effect. We see from the comparison of means that mature women in their middle-age years have more children in the household than do the younger women. The cohort effect disappears in this model, suggesting that mature women volunteer more than young women because they have more school-age children in the household in midlife.

Decomposition of the Tobit estimates shows that most of the change in hours volunteered per week takes the form of changes in the probability of volunteering in the first place. Three-quarters of the effects of our independent variables are associated with changing the probability of volunteering from no hours to some hours per week. The structure of the Tobit decomposition implies that this percentage is the same for all estimated models predicting number of hours volunteered (the actual percentage depends only on the number of censored cases relative to the total sample size, and these values remain constant across our models [see McDonald & Moffitt 1980:319-20; Roncek 1990:505-6]). This result suggests that the prevalence of respondents reporting zero hours volunteered has an important impact on our results. Sociodemographic changes have not made much difference in how *much* volunteering women do. Their impact has chiefly been on whether women volunteer at all. Some of these changes have increased the likelihood of volunteering, whereas others have diminished it.

Weeks Volunteered Per Year

Table 3 shows the results of the Tobit analysis where the number of weeks volunteered in the previous twelve months is the dependent variable. Recall that the correlation between the two dependent variables is modest. Again, most of the total change in volunteering takes the form of changes in the probability of doing at least some volunteer work; about 75% of the effects of our

TABLE 3: Tobit Model Regressions of Number of Weeks Volunteered during Past Year on Cohort and Selected Controls, National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women (1974) and Young Women (1991), Ages 37-48

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	5.19	–73.11**	–67.53**	–75.34**	–93.04**
	(7.96)	(8.53)	(8.59)	(8.65)	(9.26)
Cohort	–2.02	8.16**	6.30**	5.04**	2.36
(0 = young, 1 = mature)	(1.23)	(1.27)	(1.28)	(1.29)	(1.32)
Age	–.64**	–.45**	–.41**	–.38**	–.06
	(.19)	(.18)	(.18)	(.18)	(.09)
Education	—	5.30**	5.33**	5.15**	5.22**
		(.25)	(.26)	(.26)	(.26)
Weeks worked	—	—	–.21**	–.18**	–.16**
(past 12 months)			(.03)	(.03)	(.03)
Occupation					
Professional			2.00	2.84	2.95
			(1.88)	(1.87)	(1.86)
Managerial			4.22	4.53	5.36
			(2.46)	(2.45)	(2.43)
Marital status	—	—	—	11.66**	9.88**
(0 = unmarried, 1 = married)				(1.41)	(1.41)
Parental status					
Number of children age 4 or younger	—	—	—	—	–6.31**
					(1.85)
Number of children age 5–12	—	—	—	—	4.50**
					(.68)
Number of children age 13–17	—	—	—	—	3.41**
					(.69)
Number of children age 18 or older			—	—	1.20
					(.85)
Scale	38.57	36.36	36.12	35.83	35.45
	(.76)	(.71)	(.70)	(.69)	(.68)
Likelihood ratio χ^2	543.99	543.99	597.48	668.65	756.37
(N = 6,337)					

Note: The number of censored observations (hours volunteered = 0) is 4,579.

independent variables are associated with changing the probability of volunteering.

Model 1 in Table 3 shows the estimate for cohort effects on weeks volunteered, controlling for age. There is no cohort effect. Recall from Table 1 that there are no mean differences in weeks volunteered between mature and young women. In model 2, education is seen to be positively related to weeks volunteered. However, with this variable in the model the cohort coefficient shows that mature women are more likely to volunteer than young women. The better education of young women is suppressing the effect of cohort on volunteering. In model 3, we introduce controls for paid labor. The occupation variables are not significantly related to volunteering; however, the number of weeks worked for pay is negatively related to volunteering. The cohort coefficient is reduced, suggesting that young women volunteer fewer weeks because they are working more weeks for pay. The control for marital status further attenuates the cohort effect. Mature women volunteer more weeks because they are more likely to be married. The pattern of effects of parental status conforms to that found in Table 2. Once again, the result of introducing this control is to render the cohort coefficient insignificant. Mature women volunteer more than young women of a comparable age because they have more school-age children (there are no cohort differences in number of preschool children).

In summary, education, work hours, weeks worked, occupational status, marital status, and parental status are all linked to volunteering in the expected way. Controlling for these variables eliminates any generation effect. The findings confirm what sociologists have long known: women's social situation provides them with opportunities (or responsibilities) and constraints, as far as volunteering is concerned. Women acquire the resources for volunteer work through higher education and better jobs. However, married women with school-age children in the house take on more volunteer work, regardless of their work status. The higher fertility of the mature women means more volunteer work for them.

Types of Volunteering

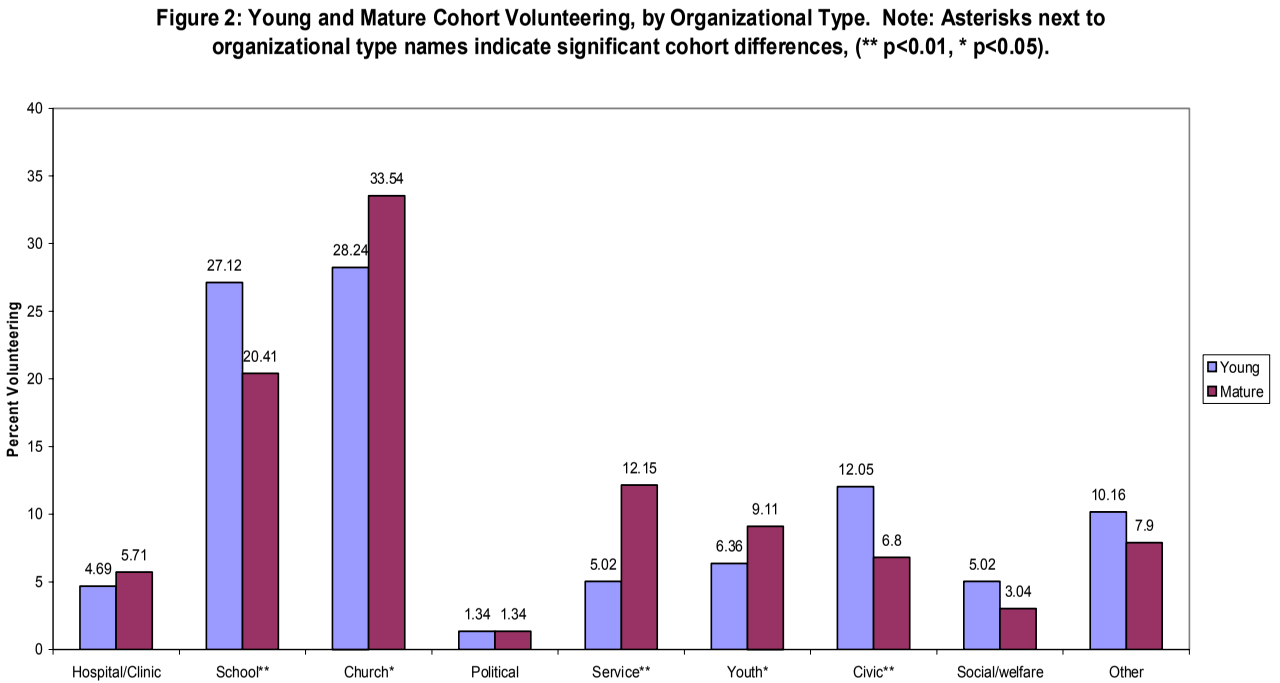
We find no generational differences in how much women volunteer. But this does not rule out the possibility of changes in the type of volunteer work women do. The young women in our sample are members of the baby boom generation. They were raised in the prosperous 1950s and reached early adulthood in the late 1960s, at the height of the civil rights and peace movements of that era. They acquired "an abiding confidence about the future" and were "prime candidates for collective political action" (Goldstone & McAdam 2001:211). They developed a taste for political activism in their youth, and they have remained politically active into middle age, when civic

engagement would normally be expected to decline (Jennings 1989). Perhaps the generations are different, then, not in how much they volunteer, but in where their volunteer work is directed. The younger generation favors political activism and community action, whereas the older generation favors more traditional forms of civic engagement, through churches, service clubs, and ancillaries to hospitals and schools. Of course, these changing priorities — if they exist — might not be due to a change in consciousness at all, but to the changing social circumstances of women. Perhaps they are switching from volunteering to cook meals for the male-dominated service club to volunteering to help organize a neighborhood environmental watch group because they are better educated, have better-paying jobs, and have a mortgage written in their own name.

Survey respondents who reported volunteering in the past twelve months were asked a follow-up question: "What organization did you volunteer for?" This provides us with the opportunity to examine cohort differences in volunteer choices. Unfortunately, respondents were given only one opportunity to answer this question, and it is common for people to volunteer for more than one activity at a time. (In 2002, 68.1% of women volunteers gave time to one organization, 19.8% to two, and the remainder to three or more [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002].) Because NLS respondents were asked to identify the organization to which they contributed most hours, their responses should thus be treated as a measure of their volunteer *priorities*. The options were (1) hospital or clinic, (2) school, (3) church, (4) political organization, (5) groups such as community chest, United Fund, Heart Fund, (6) Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Little League, (7) civic or community action, (8) social and welfare, and (9) other. These categories are far from optimal: the descriptions are rather vague, and the list is short. However, the types provide us with an opportunity to see if the two cohorts of women made different choices about where to give their time.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of volunteers from each of the two cohorts selecting each of the options provided. In line with the results of other studies of types of volunteering (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002), church-related work was the most likely to be mentioned, followed by assistance to schools. These are the priorities we would expect of all middle-aged women. Mature women were more likely than young women to select church-related volunteering, whereas more young women selected school-related volunteering. The question is whether these differences are due to the changing sociodemographic composition of the two cohorts, or whether there is a residual generation effect. Undoubtedly, sociodemographic characteristics make a difference to choice of volunteer activity. For example, 22.6% of high school dropouts choose school-related volunteering as their main activity, compared to 28% of college graduates. Conversely, 45.8% of high school dropouts choose

FIGURE 2: Young and Mature Cohort Volunteering, by Organizational Type



Note: Asterisks next to organizational type names indicate significant cohort differences.

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

church-related volunteering, compared to 31.5% among college graduates (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002). What happens once we control for these factors?

In order to answer this question, we first created a set of dummy variables for each type of activity. We then estimated a series of logistic regression models, one for each of the dummy variables, including cohort as one of the independent variables. For example, in the hospital/clinic model, the cohort coefficient would report the difference in the (log) odds of volunteering for that activity versus all other activities attributable to cohort after controls are imposed.

In reporting the results of these analyses, we do not present nine separate models but indicate which of the cohort differences in type of volunteer activity are significant by placing asterisks by the name of the activity in Figure 2. Five of the differences are significant. Young women are more likely than mature women to volunteer in school-related and civic work. Mature women are more likely than young women to perform church-related, service, and youth-related volunteer work.

When interpreting these differences, it is important to remember that each type represents a wide variety of organizations. Nevertheless, some pattern is visible. Controlling for parental status, women of the younger cohort do more volunteer work in connection with schools than do mature women. Ladd (1999) reports a similar finding: "all the surveys show the proportions of parents saying they have recently attended meetings dealing with local school needs and programs up over the last two or three decades" (36). Unfortunately, Ladd does not report whether this trend is net of rising educational status. The NLS data suggest that the focus on schools is not merely the result of women being better educated. This leaves the door open for a generational interpretation. Possibly the young women, schooled in the late 1960s, acquired a stronger interest in educational issues from the many social movements aimed at educational reform that occurred at the time. However, it is not possible to rule out a period effect either. Perhaps the 1990s saw more demand for school volunteers because of cutbacks in educational budgets. It is difficult to explain why young women are more likely than mature women to choose school-related volunteering but less likely to choose youth-related volunteering. Both sets of activities would appear to be related to having school-age children in the household, for which we have controlled. Possibly the category "youth related" contained more responses indicating activities such as Boy Scouts and other more traditional activities that have declined in recent years.

Young women are more likely than mature women to spend time working on behalf of a civic group or an organization engaged in community action. To some degree, changes such as this could be attributed to the rising occupational status of women, but, since we control for occupational status, a

generational impact of the 1960s cannot be ruled out. As we noted earlier, the young women were 14-24 in 1968 and thus came of age during a time of considerable social and political turmoil. This experience stayed with them into midlife and now informs their volunteer choices. Yet the difference could be due to period effects. The mature women were surveyed in 1974, too early to benefit from the explosion of advocacy groups and grassroots associations that occurred between the 1970s and the 1990s (Skocpol 2003).

Figure 2 shows that, although church-related activities remain the most popular choice across the generations, young women are less likely to choose them than the mature women. It is tempting to attribute this result to secularization. The young women are less religious than the generation preceding it. Putnam (2000) describes a "slump" in church attendance during the mid-1980s. But other authorities question whether church attendance varied much at all in the 1974-91 period (Wuthnow 1999). In an analysis of General Social Survey data on voluntary association memberships covering the same period as our comparison of the two women's cohorts (1974-94), Rotolo (1999) found that rates of participation in church-related activities were lower in 1994 than they were in 1974 — although not as low as they were in the 1980s. It is unfortunate that the NLS does not gather information on religion.

A final difference shown in Figure 2 concerns the category we have called "service." Mature women are much more likely to report this activity than young women. Assuming our identification of the category is correct, this trend makes sense in light of the reported decline in membership in service and fraternal associations (many of which are sex-segregated). Women have moved away from traditional clubs and federations toward the other kinds of activity shown in the figure. The explanation given for this trend usually invokes other social changes, such as increased labor force participation, for which we have controlled. This leaves the door open for an interpretation based on the overall decline in voluntary associations that assume the segregation of the sexes.

Discussion

In this article we have argued against the idea that older generations of women are more disposed to volunteer than younger generations. At the same time, however, we have acknowledged that two cohorts of women can vary in their volunteer behavior because of the circumstances of their birth. The solution to this seeming puzzle is that cohort is not the same as generation. The term "cohort" applies to clusters of single-year birth cohorts defined by some social reality, such as draft laws. However, a cohort is not necessarily a social generation. It merely describes quantitative or incremental differences in life chances, whereas "generations describe qualitative differences and also social units capable of relating to each other" (Marshall 1983:53).

Scholars agree that the two groups of women compared in this study "represent two of the most demographically important cohorts of women in recent United States history" (McLaughlin et al. 1988:162; see also Moen, Downey & Bolger 1990). The mature women were forming their families in the 1950s:

> During the 1950s and the early 1960s the traditional family was king. Young men and women married early and had rather large families relatively quickly. Divorce was rare and unmarried childbearing unheard of. Young women worked before they were married and some continued working until their first child was born, but almost all mothers of infants left the labor force for an extended period and many did not return. Women earned much less than men because they had less education and training, because they almost all worked in "women's jobs," and because they either had just started working or would soon leave. (Waite & Nielson 2001:23)

The young women were forming their families in the late 1960s and 1970s. Their cohort was the first to enter the labor force in the era of modern feminism. Goldin (1997) characterizes these women as having desired "career more than family" because they delayed marriage and children while pursuing a career. The young women married later, divorced more frequently, and had fewer children. They were also more highly educated (Goldin 1997).

Some of these changes increased the likelihood of women volunteering, while others diminished it. The net result, in the short term, is hardly any change at all. When we compare the proportions of middle-aged women volunteering in 1974 and 1991, we see they are virtually the same. Minor differences can be accounted for by changes in the sociodemographic composition of the female population. There is no residual effect that could be attributed to cultural factors. Indeed, it could be argued that mature women ought to have volunteered more than they did, given some of the sociodemographic advantages they had over younger women. They had more free time and more family ties to connect them to the volunteer world. How is it, then, that the younger women maintain the volunteer rates of the older women despite the greater demands on their time? First, they are better educated and have better jobs. To take advantage of these superior resources, they might well have taken time away from other unpaid work, such as household chores. Additionally, women have proven adept at getting around busier work schedules: "while working long hours may make coordinated activities within couples more difficult . . . it does not necessarily reduce individual spouse's commitments outside the home" (Becker & Hofmeister 1999:24). In addition, the structure of opportunities to volunteer has changed in response to changing social conditions. Nonprofit organizations are being forced to offer people more "episodic" forms of volunteering that do not require fixed commitments of time (Wuthnow 1999).

Although the overall rate of volunteering and, more specifically, the amount of women's volunteering have not changed much, it was almost inevitable that changes would occur in what type of volunteer work people perform. Our analysis of types of volunteering shows this to be the case: the more recent cohort has turned away from church-related volunteering (although it is still the most popular) and turned toward civic and school-related activities. We found these changes difficult to interpret given the broad categories used in the survey. This is certainly an area of potentially fruitful research.

Conclusion

Alwin (1998) has noted the tendency for "'generational myths' to become infused into our consciousness and become part of the fabric of social knowledge and beliefs" (54). In this study we have tried to separate the effects of structural changes on the disposition to volunteer from residual effects that might be attributable to historical events that occurred during the early adulthood of successive generations of Americans. In conclusion we first consider whether our argument is generalizable to other forms of civic participation. We then consider some of the limitations of our study and make some suggestions about future research in this area.

Volunteer work is one way of providing help to others and is thus part of the "care work" people do. It is also one way of being engaged in the civic life of one's community. Is there any evidence that care work in general or forms of civic engagement other than volunteering are susceptible to the generational explanation? As far as we are aware, there are no trend data on subjects such as informal helping and caregiving. However, Robison et al. (1995) examine cohort differences in caregiving using a panel data set consisting of two surveys, one conducted in 1956 and the other in 1986. They distinguish two cohorts, one born between 1905 and 1917 and the other born between 1927 and 1934. The first generation reached adulthood during the Great Depression, and the latter reached adulthood in the 1950s. They speculate that the more recent cohort would be more liberated from traditional norms involving caregiving obligations. However, they find that women born in more recent cohorts are *more* likely than those born in earlier cohorts to serve as caregivers. The explanation is found in period effects. Lengthening life spans mean that women in the younger cohort are more likely to have elderly parents to care for, in any given age bracket, than women in the older cohort. If there are any "generational" differences between the cohorts, they are not sufficient to overcome this structural change.

A recent study (Jennings & Stoker 2001) uses data from a three-panel longitudinal survey to examine the impact of "generation" on voluntary association memberships. The first generation was born between 1910 and 1940,

half of them between 1917 and 1924. This generation "easily falls within Putnam's high praised 'long civic generation'" (Jennings & Stoker 2001:3). They were the parents of the respondents comprising the second panel, who were high school seniors when they were surveyed in 1965. The high school students were early members of the baby boom generation. The age-standardized voluntary association memberships of the first generation in 1965 can be compared with those of the second generation in 1997. This is a similar technique to the one used in this article. The data show that members of the second generation were *more* civically engaged than their parents in midlife, regardless of current income, education, workforce participation, and home ownership. Much of this was due to an increase in membership in professional or business groups and neighborhood associations.

In summary, there is little reason to think that the results we arrived at are unique to volunteering. Any "generational" differences in behaviors directed at helping others or working for the common good either are more common in recent birth cohorts or are explicable in terms of structural changes.

Finally, we turn to the limitations of our study. First, it could be argued that the mature and young women in the NLS do not correspond to the generations identified by Putnam and Goss. Our "civic generation" is composed of women born between 1923 and 1937, a fourteen-year span. Putnam's "core" civic generation was born between 1925 and 1930. Goss's "civic" generation was born between 1910 and 1930. She defines the generation born between 1930 and 1945 as the "silent" generation. Some of our mature women would be members of this inactive generation. In contrast, the young women in the NLS seem to overlap more closely with previous definitions of a recognizable cohort. Putnam targets the baby boomers as being inactive socially, and according to his definition they were born between 1945 and 1955. Goss defines the baby boomers as individuals born between 1945 and 1960. The young women in the NLS were born between 1944 and 1954. When we repeated our analysis confining the mature women to those born between 1925 and 1930, the results were essentially the same.

Second, it could be argued that the age range we were forced to choose because of the structure of the data set and the timing of the questions on volunteering in the NLS biases the test for cohort effects. The mature women were first interviewed in 1967, when the youngest of them was 30. They were not asked about their volunteer work until 1974, when the youngest was 37. We are unable to compare the volunteer behavior of the two cohorts in their twenties or, for that matter, in their fifties. Perhaps generational effects exist in these other age ranges. We cannot simply assume that age effects are the same for each cohort or that cohort effects do not change as a result of aging. Researchers should conduct tests to verify that our results generalize to other women outside the age range we have compared.

Third, it could be argued that we have not eliminated the possibility of period effects. We compare the volunteer behavior of mature women in 1974 with the volunteer behavior of young women in 1991. As we note, some surveys show an increase in the rate of volunteering in the general population between these dates. This would give the young women an advantage over the mature women and help explain why we find no generation effect: it is being suppressed by period. In conducting our pooled time-series analysis, we attempted to exclude this possibility, but period effects, especially if they interact with generational effects, can be difficult to dismiss without comprehensive longitudinal data on individuals with widely varying ages.

Fourth, the data we use pertain to women only. We have no idea whether the same results would occur were men included in our analyses. Perhaps men's volunteering remains less affected by family statuses than women's because of the household division of labor. Perhaps they favor different kinds of activities. If there was a generation difference, controlling for the marriage rate or fertility might leave the cohort coefficient significant. Again, in order to test such ideas, future research would need to consider more comprehensive data sources.

Fifth, we cannot test for interaction effects with our data. Our analysis assumes that the difference between generations is constant across ages and across periods. As Marshall (1983) points out, generational consciousness can be modified by historical events. For example, the object of attention — volunteering — could change in significance or value over time. If volunteer work increases in social value as one generation succeeds another (e.g., as a result of presidential endorsements, or an increase in government funding to nonprofit organizations), the weaker civic education of the younger generation might be masked by increased opportunities. Another reason not to rule out interaction effects is that the age curve of volunteering in the two generations might be a different shape. This is one implication of Goss's argument. In the 1990s, the elderly were volunteering at higher rates than the elderly in the 1970s. Some of this increase was due to the sociodemographic characteristics of the later generation; but some of it was due to the period in which it occurred. The elderly of the 1990s enjoyed a standard of living different from that of the elderly of the 1970s, a period of sharp inflation.

Finally, we have no data on values held by the individuals. The generation theory relies heavily on the idea that birth cohorts think differently about issues such as civic engagement. We have shown that there are no residual effects of cohort once structural changes have been taken into account. No doubt some of these structural changes themselves reflect the influence of values. For example, younger women place less value on having children and more value on paid employment, which in turn affects their propensity to volunteer. Members of the 1960s movements had lower rates of marriage and fertility (Whittier 1997). While these trends reflect the counterculture ideas of the

time, the chances are that they, rather than "civic obligation," helped sustain political engagement into middle age. In short, the same structural changes we have used to wipe away the generation effects might themselves be an indication of changed social attitudes and values. Without independent data on values we cannot fully adjudicate between the two meanings of cohort, the one referring to generations in the sense of a group consciousness and the other referring to age cohorts whose structural location is different.

In sum, we have recognized a number of limitations faced in our research. Despite these limitations, our findings shed light on the debate over the social participation of two generations in the U.S. — an issue that has received widespread attention in both academic and policy circles. We do not wish to diminish the contributions to volunteerism of those born around the Great Depression and the Second World War (i.e., the long civic generation). However, careful consideration of the structural contingencies that underlie any observed generational differences in social participation allows us to paint a more complete picture of the volunteer activity of the long civic generation as well as of succeeding ones. The gradual passing of the long civic generation will no doubt impact the supply of volunteers; we, nevertheless, urge researchers to explore the conditions that engender future generations to fill adequately any volunteering void.

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