THE EFFECTS OF AGE-GRADED ASSOCIATIONS ON THE POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF THE ELDERLY

THESIS

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Although the graying of the American society has been well documented, the question as to whether the elderly populace will indeed become a political factor has yet to be determined. Some studies indicate that the elderly will soon develop the consensus needed for political action; other studies counter that the elderly will never be a viable political factor.

Among the determinants listed as influencing the political participation equation are standard socioeconomic variables (e.g., race, social status, education, and income). These factors have been studied extensively (Campbell 1960; Key 1950; Milbrath 1965; Nagel 1987; Rose 1965). Trela recently added an item that could possibly influence the political activism of the elderly: membership in age-graded associations.

This study addresses the questions raised by Trela (1971), namely, whether age-graded associations influence the political activity of senior citizens, and if so, in what direction elderly participation is swayed. Unlike previous reports, the preliminary data gathered for this
study suggest that the age-graded associations of the elderly cannot accurately predict their political activism.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Issues of the elderly have recently entered the arena of public concern and discussion. For instance, health care has been a focal point of discussion. Just as important is the question of whether the aged will become a viable political factor. This point is not meant to detract from such issues as health care. Nonetheless, elderly citizens must participate in the political process if their positions on various policy issues are to be known.

It is important for public administrators to understand some of the forces that influence the political activism of citizens. Researchers have stated that political activism is negatively influenced by age. The elderly have been portrayed in the literature as participating less frequently than most age categories of American citizens (Atchley 1977; Campbell 1971; Nagel 1987; Niemi 1986; Wilson 1984). However, this could change as the numbers of elderly in American society rise.

The increasing size of the elderly population has been well documented by the Bureau of the Census. Whereas citizens over the age of 60 totaled 13.8 million in 1940,
that number increased dramatically to 35.8 million by the 1980 census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1981). The Bureau of the Census estimated that in 1988 the elderly accounted for 12.4 percent of the United States population (1989). This trend was not short-lived; further estimations yield figures of 39.4 million in 2010 and 65.5 million in 2030 (Census 1989, 5).

Because of the reduction in the numbers of births after the post-World War II "baby boom," "the percentage of the population that is elderly would change from 12.4 percent in 1988 to 13.9 in 2010. Between 1995 and 2005, the proportion of the population that is elderly would remain virtually unchanged, rising from 13.1 to 13.2 percent" (Census 1989, 4). Thus, there is a slowdown in the growth rate of the elderly population.

The increasing numbers of the elderly in America population have vast implications for future social and political policies. As the percentage of elderly in the total population increases, there will be a need to increase the programs that target that segment. Health care issues, already a concern for the aged, will grow in importance, especially as medical costs rise. Given the importance that the graying of America can potentially have, it is desirable to attempt predictions concerning the political activism of the elderly in America.
Some of the literature suggests that the elderly are too diverse a group to organize (Atchley 1977, 252; Campbell 1971, 117; Ragan and Dowd 1974, 138). Other studies suggest, as does the seminal work done by James Trela (1971; 1973; 1977), that there are other factors that affect the political activism of the aged. Potentially, the elderly could form a strong coalition; because of their increasing numbers, they also could significantly influence public policy decisions. Again, it is easy to see the importance of senior political participation.

The purpose of this study is to review data gathered concerning the political activism of the aging community, specifically those gathered in Denton, Texas. Previous information has indicated that as senior citizens age, they become less politically active (Campbell 1960, 1971; Key 1950). This decline has been cited as one of the major reasons the elderly population will not become a political force in the future. The literature further states that men remain more politically active than women (Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980, 691). Data presented in the current analysis seems, in some instances, to refute the earlier findings in this area.

A number of researchers have studied political participation (Almond and Verba 1963; Barber 1980; Beam 1984; Campbell [1960] 1981; Milbrath 1965; Nagel 1987; Verba
and Nie 1972); nonetheless, the focus of this study will be
data collected in a 1989 survey of senior citizens in
Denton, Texas (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey). As
the survey shows, a number of variables were considered.

For the purpose of this investigation, emphasis will be
placed on determining whether age graded associations
significantly influence the political activism of the
elderly, and in which direction any resultant influence is
exerted. Trela defined age graded associations as
interactions with organizations that use age as a criterion
for membership (1977, 200). An example could be a senior
center in which a member must reach a certain age (ranging
from 50-65) in order to participate in the various
activities.

While there is a plethora of information concerning
political activism, data are lacking on the relationship
between age graded associations and the influence they exert
on elderly participation in politics. By collecting
original data through the use of a survey, further
information concerning this topic may be ascertained.

Attention has been given to some factors believed to
affect mass political participation. The influence of
concepts such as societal disengagement theory, group
consciousness, group identification, Marxian conflict
theory, and age-graded associations on political
participation is reviewed. Most notably, the work of Trela (1971; 1973) is discussed.

Verba and Nie discuss the process of politicization (1972, 174); their work outlines a model of political participation that is employed in this inquiry. Trela, although never openly describing his analytical framework, seems to have adopted Verba and Nie's Standard Socioeconomic Model (SSM). In the interest of better understanding Trela's analysis, a brief discussion of Verba and Nie's SSM follows the review of the literature.

Politics of the Aging

As previously mentioned, the graying of American politics has been well identified by a number of authors (Califano 1978; Glenn 1974; Anderson and Anderson 1978). These studies make clear three main reasons for the aging of the political climate in America. First, the increase in life expectancy by almost ten years since 1940 has been cited by almost all studies as a factor increasing the age of the American voter. The increase in life expectancy has had the immediate result of increasing the number of the elderly population. The significance is multiplied when considered with the second reason normally cited. Secondly, the post-World War II baby boom has added to the dimension of aging; the graying of this group impacts the size of the elderly population as well. Estimates state that after the
year 2010, the elderly will comprise 14 percent of the populace, whereas they now constitute approximately 12 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1989, 4). Thus, in addition to living longer, there are more elderly people living at a given time. Third, the older population has been retiring earlier.

According to a number of authors, various factors affect political activism; the literature cites basic socioeconomic variables, such as race, income, and education. For instance, minorities tend to be less politically active than their counterparts (Campbell [1960] 1981). As for the influencing factor of income, those with higher levels of income usually are more politically active because they have more to protect and more to lose. Education also has a positive influence in the political activism of an individual (Nagel 1987); those with higher levels of education exhibit higher degrees of political activism (Atchley 1977).

Other studies indicate that gender influences political participation among the elderly (Hagen 1987, 314). Women are said to be less interested in politics and are less likely to take political actions than are men of the same age (Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980, 698). Most authors agree that political activism is heavily influenced by gender, income, and education (Miller, Gurin, and Gurin
However, James Trela (1971; 1977) applied another factor worthy of consideration.

In his article entitled, "Social Class and Political Involvement in Age Graded and Non-Age Graded Associations," Trela argued that the elderly involved in age specific socialization groups (e.g., groups having an age requirement) tend to be more politically active and age conscious than older persons who were involved in non-age graded groups (19777). He surmised that by increasing the opportunities for age graded elderly to discuss common concerns, consciousness of elderly issues would rise. This increased identification with the elderly group would result in a greater likelihood that aged citizens would act to influence the political process in their favor (Trela 1971).

Trela surveyed two groups of elderly citizens to gauge their political activism. He had hypothesized that those with multigenerational associations would demonstrate less political activism than would those with age specific associations (1977; 1989). Trela raises an important issue with respect to the possibility of increased political activism on the part of the elderly in America.

The literature on the politics of aging in the United States confirms the increasing possibility of the impact on policies and their direction due to "age-based voluntary
organizations" (Binstock 1976). As previously stated, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of people over the age of 60 in the foreseeable future. It would logically follow that they would influence the policies to be formulated. However, the literature is divided as to whether this influence will be imparted through the development of active senior organizations and their mass political action.

Will the elderly population in the United States become a viable political factor in the future? A number of studies have been written which present conflicting views of this question. Some have stated that, because of the diversity of the aging population, the elderly would not become a political factor; others have determined that, as a result of their increasing numbers, the elderly population cannot help but become a political force.

In a 1965 study, Rose foresaw the emergence of the aged as a cohesive political force due to the concept of aging group consciousness. According to Rose, there were two conditions necessary for the development of this consciousness: A positive affinity of members for each other and exclusion from interaction with others in the total population. Rose determined that these two conditions were being met.
In contrast to Rose's findings, Streib (1965) concluded that the aging were only a "statistical aggregate" with "little feeling of solidarity, consciousness of kind, or group spirit" (36). Similarly, Pratt (1976) emphasized his belief that "there can be no reasonable expectation that the elderly will become autonomous, or independent in elective politics" because of the group's diversity (219). Echoing the thoughts of Pratt, Binstock sees no increase in the political strength of the elderly populace (1976, 397), and he further states that in order to benefit from improved conditions, the elderly will have to align themselves with other non-aged segments of the American population (1972, 279). Additionally, Campbell notes:

Age cannot be said to be a very strong force in American politics at the present time and it is not likely to become such in the near future. Age groups will continue to remain as heterogeneous in economic, social, and geographical characteristics as they are now, and this heterogeneity will frustrate attempts to make common cause among people who resemble each other only in their age. (1971, 117)

The literature is inundated with analysis of the same view. Thus, it would appear that the elderly will in no way form an effective and cohesive political identity, much less any political organization capable of substantial influence. This lack of cohesion among the aged is the result of a variety of reasons. One popular explanation is provided by disengagement theory (Atchley 1977, 227).
Disengagement of the Elderly

A basic definition of disengagement theory is as follows: "The process whereby society withdraws from or no longer seeks the individual's efforts" (Atchley 1977, 227). Among the reasons covered by the disengagement theory are (1) the lack of placement of the elderly in the productive economy, and (2) the negative stereotyping of aging in modern society (228). Also mentioned is the fact that there are realistically two types of disengagement. The first type, societal disengagement, is characterized as "a decrease in the number of active roles played and in the density of interaction" (227). As a result, the opportunities offered to the elderly are limited; thus their opportunities to participate are thwarted. The second type, individual disengagement, occurs with the loss of personal interaction with family and/or friends as a result of mortality or loss of faculties (232). The literature indicates that disengagement is not a result of aging but of the stresses brought about by illness and other factors.

Atchley explains:

There appears to be substantial evidence . . . that disengagement among the aged can be predicted to occur as a concomitant of physical or social stresses which profoundly affect the manner in which the life pattern of the person is redirected. . . . It is not age which produces disengagement . . . but the impact of physical and social stresses which may be expected to increase with age (Tallmer and Kutner 1969, 74).
According to a study conducted by Atchley, when offered the opportunity to continue their interactions, the elderly choose to do so (1977, 232). The importance of disengagement, Atchley notes, is that it acts to reduce the amount and number of interactions that the elderly have with society in general (232). Loss of prestige and efficacy results from disengagement and breaking established ties to the community. This lack of interaction could result in further withdrawal by the elderly, thus beginning a worsening spiral where all concerned are losers.

By instigating a further withdrawal of the elderly, the obvious result is that a reduced number of elderly who would participate in political activities. Consequently, the question becomes, in lieu of the effects of disengagement, whether the elderly can become a viable political force. Disengagement has some negative effects on the political activism of the aged. However, the influence exerted by other factors, specifically group consciousness and age graded associations, must be examined as well.

Group Consciousness of the Elderly

Another process affecting the elderly and their political activism is group consciousness. Accordingly, there are factors that affect the willingness or ability of a group of people to identify with a specific group. As stated by Ragan and Dowd, "It appears that an aged social
movement will not develop unless age-group political consciousness among the elderly is manifest" (1974, 137). Also, these authors suggest that older people who identify with their age group are more likely than non-identifiers to be active in a broad range of social and political activities.

Although commonly used with racial or ethnic minority groups and their group consciousness, valid arguments are made as to why the elderly should be considered a minority group. The concept is that of viewing society, or parts of it, with an ingroup versus outgroup mentality, preferring one's own ingroup and disliking the outgroups (Miller et al. 1981, 496). In other words, this promotes an "us" versus "them" relationship. However, the ingroup/outgroup concept is an inherently bad one.

As defined by Miller et al., group consciousness involves identification with a group and a political awareness or ideology regarding the group's relative position in society along with a commitment to collective action aimed at realizing the group's interests (1981, 495). There are four basic components of group consciousness: group identification, or a feeling of belonging to a specific social stratum; polar effect, which refers to the ingroup/outgroup concept; polar power, representing the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the group's current
status, power, or material resources; and individual versus system blame, or the belief that society or the individual is responsible for the low status of the group or individual due to shortcomings in the society or the individual (496).

Group identification in the case of the elderly includes age identification, as this is the primary, some would say the only, link among the elderly population. However, there are opposing views as to whether group identification should be used in discussions of the elderly because this concept was originally used to discuss the mobilization of ethnic groups (Ragan and Dowd 1974, 140). Some argue, as does Atchley, that the elderly will not identify with their group because they are too widely dispersed and because they also have retained the identification they held as middle-aged citizens (1972, 254). Atchley further asserts that the elderly were confined to participate predominantly in local politics unless they had been active in politics throughout their life (254). Rose (1965) on the other hand has determined that there is a developing age-group consciousness among the elderly as a result of the two conditions listed earlier and that it will result in their exerting influence on the political scene much like a pressure group. Thus, it would appear that the literature is undecided with regard to the influence group identification has on the political activism
of the aged.

With respect to the ingroup/outgroup notion, a number of authors review the component of group consciousness (Miller et al. 1981, 496; Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980; Rose 1965). This concept rests on the premise that there is a noted discrepancy between the ingroup and outgroup in the view of the participants. Disengagement seems to be a viable reason for this occurrence. As the roles that the elderly hold in society diminish, the opportunity to be included in future activities also diminishes due to the declining amount of social contact. The idea of polar affect appears to be rooted in Marx's conflict theory whereby there is constant conflict between the social classes within society (Tucker 1978). On further consideration, it becomes apparent that the final three aspects of group consciousness identified by Miller et al. (1981, 496) can be considered parts of Marx's conflict theory, or at least related items.

With polar power, the comparison with Marxian conflict theory is facilitated when viewing polar affect and individual versus system blame. According to Marx's explanation of conflict theory, friction between the social classes is inevitable. This is a result of the oppression of the masses by the bourgeoisie. When considering the application to the elderly, disengagement has to some extent
created a group that appears to be displeased with the withdrawal of opportunities (Atchley 1977, 232), resulting in a loss of their interactions with the rest of society. While Marx meant more of an economic and political oppression, the fact remains that the elderly population, because of the reduction in societal contact, could view themselves as part of the "oppressed mass" that Marx wrote about (Tucker 1978).

In addition to the perception, real or otherwise, of polar affect, the concept of polar power comes into account. The idea, again, is that the group becomes dissatisfied with the amount of power that the group—in this case, the aged—has in regard to the rest of the society. In addition to the loss of power, there is a loss of status and resources. These losses are concomitant effects of the disengagement of the elderly by society (Atchley 1977, 227). The Marxian perspective dictates that the oppression experienced by the elderly is the fault of societal trends; a number of authors appear to agree with this assertion (Miller et al. 1981; Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980; Trela 1977; Ragan and Dowd 1974). Therefore, the concept of individual-versus-system blame raised by Miller et al. needs to be addressed (1981, 496).

Individual-versus-system blame can also be discussed within the context of conflict theory. Marx argued that the
bourgeois was the oppressor and the working class citizens were the oppressed (Tucker 1978, 474). The Marxian perspective, therefore, determines that the blame for the shortcomings of the society rests on the societal structure, and blame for inequalities is not to be fixed on the individual within the society. The elderly could easily be equated with the "downtrodden" Marx wrote about; disengagement theory would buttress this argument. So what is the relevance of these various aspects of group consciousness?

The importance comes into focus when viewing the argument asserted by some authors (Ragan and Dowd 1974; Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980), the argument being that "class conflict can follow only from a widely developed class consciousness; an emergence of a stratum consciousness [or group consciousness] is also a necessary predevelopment to the mobilization of a social movement and of itself acquires additional significance as a prerequired component in the mobilization of an age-based social movement" (Ragan and Dowd 1974, 142). Obviously, there is an increase in the population of elderly in America. This has been thoroughly documented. And, as previously mentioned, the societal trend in the treatment of the aged population is to participate in societal disengagement of the elderly. This is evident in the glamorization of youth by contemporary
America; for instance, how many beer commercials use elderly women in swimsuits to sell the beverages? Why does Oil of Olay claim to counter the effects of aging if youth is not preferred?

Whereas the literature would appear to conflict as to whether the aged identify with the age-specific group, according to conflict theory there will be a point at which the elderly will achieve that consciousness. Having done so, they should become a viable influence in the political scene. Trela (1971) posits yet another factor that could possibly increase the political activism among the elderly. Trela's argument is that membership in age-specific, or age-graded associations can affect the political activism of the elderly (1971).

Age Graded Associations and Activism

Trela commented in his seminal study that age-graded socialization could influence the political activism of the elderly; and he hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship (1989). Trela believed that there was a direct link between the associations of the elderly, with respect to age as a determining characteristic, and the political activism of the individuals.

Trela's argument for the direct influence of age-graded association membership is based on the premise that with participation in age-specific organizations the elderly will
develop group consciousness and their awareness of elderly issues will increase. According to Trela, their interactions with other elderly will increase in age-specific associations. As a result, there is ample opportunity to discuss issues that are specific to the elderly population. The influence, according to Trela, cannot take place without three factors being present: the presence of age as a unifying factor for the elderly, or the creation of a tie that binds; the presence of an ideology behind which the elderly can unite; and the means of political organization (Trela 1973).

The observance of senior centers was the basis of Trela's work. The senior centers represented the targeted age specification, as all members must have reached a certain age. Senior centers also offered opportunities for the elderly to share ideas, possibly creating a unifying ideology (Trela 1989). Trela argues convincingly that membership in age-graded associations could heighten political consciousness (1971, 118). Of importance is the fact that when studying those who did not hold membership in age graded associations, Trela found that "those aged who were not members of any voluntary association were most likely to have engaged in no political activity" (1971, 120).
In addition, Trela observed that "the more an individual meets with his age peers in such associations, the more frequently he is likely to engage in discussions" (1971, 123), therefore possibly increasing his political activism. Consequently, the age graded associations seem to increase the awareness of the elderly in terms of political group consciousness. Another important factor is involved. As the elderly experience heightened awareness, the fact that they are involved in an age-specific organization must be remembered. These factors combined would, as Trela surmised, influence the perspective of the elderly, as "individuals participating exclusively in old age groups are partially removed from the perspectives of the other generations. It is not surprising, then, that age tends to become a significant reference point from which older people can define political problems confronting them and more clearly identify their interests" (1971, 123).

It would appear that membership in senior centers and other age-graded associations would provide the catalyst needed to form the elderly population into a viable political force in the future. The rest of this study is aimed at reviewing the factors of disengagement theory, group consciousness, and age-graded associations as factors affecting the political activism of the elderly. The basis of the study is original collected data. The findings are
discussed and compared to the literature available; in some instances, the findings confirm earlier studies, and, in other cases, refute previous studies.

The methodology used for this project is developed more fully within the body of the investigation. The study is based on a senior citizen survey conducted in the city of Denton, Texas, during 1989. The study was conducted as part of a course of study, The Politics of Aging (Valerie Martinez, instructor). In reviewing the literature concerning aging, the class decided to gain firsthand knowledge concerning the subject matter. The resultant effect was to instigate a study of the aging community in Denton. This study is rooted in that cursory analysis.

After a description of the methodology, the remainder of the discussion revolves around the findings of the study. In addition to analyzing the data, the report includes comparisons to the relevant literature. Similarities and discrepancies with the body of literature reviewed are discussed. Just as importantly, in the concluding section of the study, research recommendations are made. Perhaps this one study is too ambitious at the current time, and yet, by adding even a small portion to the understanding of how age graded associations interact in the process of politicization, the effort was well spent.
This chapter has introduced the argument that age graded associations influence the political activism of the elderly. While the elderly are seen as politically inactive, age specific affiliations could serve to increase aged political activism. The effects of disengagement theory and group consciousness have been outlined as well. The following chapter discusses, at length, the analytical framework utilized in the current study.
CHAPTER II

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Standard Socioeconomic Model

The relationship between elderly involvement in age graded associations and their political activism seems to be remote. Some would argue that the relationship is nonexistent; however, a review of the works of Trela (age graded associations) and Verba and Nie (political participation) reveals how the two are interrelated. The framework for this study is based on the Standard Socioeconomic Model of Political Participation, as developed by Verba and Nie (1972, 13).

In trying to explain the process of politicization, Verba and Nie construct a model that seeks to describe the influencing factors concerning political participation. The authors begin with a simple definition of political participation: "participation is a means to an end, an activity whereby citizens attempt to affect governmental activities in ways that will benefit them" (Verba and Nie 1972, 11). From this working definition, Verba and Nie describe the workings of the model (see Figure 1).
Figure 1
Standard Socioeconomic Model (SSM)

According to Verba and Nie, high political participation comes from the higher social strata, "upper-status individuals choose to participate more" as a result of influences exerted by the politicization process; minority groups comprise a small portion of this group (1972, 19). Their model seeks to describe this presentation of the information. Therefore, following the model, the "social status of an individual--his job, education, and income--determines to a large extent how much he participates [see Figure 2]. It does so through the intervening effects of a variety of 'civic attitudes' conducive to participation" (1972, 13). Verba and Nie describe these civic attitudes as being "attitudes such as a sense of efficacy, of psychological involvement in politics, and a feeling of obligation to participate" (13) (see Figure 3). As Verba and Nie state,

The standard socioeconomic model gives us a base line from which we look for deviations due to these other forces [intervening effects of particular social circumstances and particular institutions]. These other forces lead some individuals to participate more than one would expect, given their socioeconomic characteristics, and others to participate less. This approach allows us to consider the impact of a variety of characteristics on the likelihood that an individual will participate; his position in the life cycle, his race, the organizations with which he is affiliated, his party affiliation, the nature of the community in which he lives, and his political beliefs. (1972, 14)

In addition to socioeconomic factors, the model
Figure 3
SSM Attitudes

considers social circumstances and institutions. Although socioeconomic status is an important aspect of the social circumstances of the model, there are other characteristics that are equally as important, according to Verba and Nie (1972). As mentioned, life cycle position is seen as a social circumstance affecting political activism; Atchley (1977) and others have written in greater detail on the subject (Almond and Verba 1963; Campbell 1971; Milbrath 1965; Nagel 1987). Some authors assert that there is a "slowdown" of political activity as citizens age (Lipset [1960] 1981; Milbrath 1965, 134); others argue that the perceived inactivity of the elderly is due, in part, to societal disengagement and not due to the slowdown identified by others (Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980; Ragan and Dowd 1974). Obviously the literature is still divided regarding the effects of position in the life cycle. Although this issue is not the focus of the current study, it is important to note that this subject warrants further attention.

Race is another important factor to be considered within the Verba and Nie model. Campbell (1960; 1971) notes the fact that race influences the political participation of all citizens. Due to the number of authors who agree with his assertion, the issue appears to be a moot one (Almond and Verba 1963; Atchley 1977; Barber 1980; Burkhart et al.)
Blacks and Hispanics demonstrate the lowest political participation rates, with whites demonstrating a greater willingness to vote (Campbell 1960; Milbrath 1965, 116).

Social circumstances, as identified above, influence the civic attitudes held by the citizen. Again, this means that political efficacy, psychological involvement, and a sense of obligation to participate are impacted by social circumstances. This is important in itself in describing the politicization of citizens. However, another attitude is influenced by social circumstances: group consciousness. Although Verba and Nie discuss group consciousness within the context of race, a number of authors have been able to relate the concept to the political activism of the elderly (Miller et al. 1981; Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980; Ragan and Dowd 1974; Rose 1965). Suffice it to say that the notion of group consciousness, as defined earlier, is important to the Standard Socioeconomic Model. This follows the rationale that in order for a group to participate in the political process as a group, individuals must first identify themselves as belonging to that particular group (Miller et al. 1981; Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1980; Ragan and Dowd 1974).
As a result of the influence of these determining factors, the individual develops specific attitudes. Consequently, these attitudes influence the next part of the socioeconomic model, namely the individual decision to participate, "The individual's decision to participate and how to participate depends on his social circumstances—the set of social characteristics that defines his 'life space,' where he lives, what he does for a living, his education, his race, and so forth" (Verba and Nie 1972, 19). These social circumstances generate sets of attitudes conducive to or inhibitory of political participation; further, "the individual decisions to participate that derive from these forces present us with the participation input" (19), or the resultant information gained by the participation or nonparticipation of the individual in the political system.

The participation input as described by Verba and Nie is comprised of three components: "How much participation is there, what kind is there, and from what segments of the society does it come" (9). The model, based on the influences of the social characteristics on the attitudes citizens develop and subsequent actions taken or not, results in upper-strata citizens participating in greater numbers and frequency than do others. Verba and Nie note the following:

Some citizens have the resources needed for participation (skills, time, and money); others do not. Some have attitudes conducive to
participation; they believe it is effective, that politics is important, and that participation is a civic duty. Other citizens do not have these attitudes; they believe that participation is useless, that politics is unimportant, and that one ought to keep out of such affairs. Some citizens are in social circumstances where those around them expect them to participate; others are not. Some citizens live in circumstances where participation is made easy by institutional structures, others live in circumstances where they are surrounded by institutions that inhibit participation. All these forces working together lead some individuals to participate and others to stay home. (13)

It follows that it is not enough to know how many participated in the process, but that it is also important to know who participated and in what manner they participated. Knowledge of these factors will influence the development of ensuing public policies.

A review of the graphic representation of Verba and Nie's model makes it obvious that one aspect of the process has not yet been discussed: the influence of institutions on the individual's decision to participate (see Figure 4). Verba and Nie refer to institutions as the various and sundry organizations that an individual may belong to; these include labor unions, political parties, and all other "voluntary associations" (1972, 174). This description is meant to encompass political as well as nonpolitical organizations. Verba and Nie argue that organizations "can themselves, through the activities of their officers or other paid officials, participate in the political process,
Figure 4
SSM Institutions

INSTITUTIONS

VOLUNTARY INSTITUTIONS

MANDATORY INSTITUTIONS

POLITICAL PARTIES

TRADE UNIONS

in this way the organization participates for its members" (175). In addition, the individual can participate "through the organization as well as because of their association with the organization" (175). The implications are that "a rich political participant life may be dependent on a rich organizational life" (175).

How does this model relate to Trela's work, and more importantly, to the study at hand? Trela (1971, 1973, 1977), in studying the possible influence of age graded associations on the political activism of the elderly, implicitly adopted the analytical framework presented by Verba and Nie. Trela hypothesized that as voluntary associations can influence the decision to participate, age specific associations might impact to a greater extent the participation rates of the elderly as opposed to multigenerational associations (1972; 1989). In accordance with the relationship suggested by Verba and Nie, Trela expected to find that those with a greater number of associations would demonstrate a larger participation rate than those with few ties to organizations.

Trela took the argument further by asserting that the type of association (e.g., age specific organizations or multigenerational organizations) would also serve to predict the political activism of the elderly (1972). Additionally, Trela postulated that the age specific associations would
increase the political activism because of the increased opportunities to discuss issues relevant to the elderly. Whereas Campbell (1971) has argued that the elderly have yet to identify as a group (a prerequisite for group consciousness), Trela anticipated that by increasing the contact with other elderly through age specific organizations an increase in participation would result.

There is a noticeable absence of additional studies related to the possible relationship identified by Trela between the type of organization (with respect to age) and political participation. The issue raised by Trela is a salient one; if the type of organization can influence the political activism of the elderly, perhaps there is a way to capitalize on that fact. With the rising numbers of elderly, their political activism needs to be developed. Organizations such as Grey Panthers and the Association for the Advancement of Retired Persons, although providing a strong lobby, would welcome additional participants, especially in view of the fact that the ranks they are representing are swelling.

Because of the increasing numbers of elderly citizens in America, policies need to be aimed at issues of interest to the elderly; Atchley (1977) mentions a paternalistic motivation as an underlying reason that the elderly have been identified as a group needing additional care from
society. This issue is an indication that we as a society are interested in providing for our older citizens. Nagel observed that members of society, by participating politically, seek to serve their own self-interests by influencing policy decisions (1987, 11). Consequently, it is interesting that the elderly have not impacted policy decisions to the extent that some had envisioned (Rose 1965).

Therefore, additional studies are needed to probe the political activism of the elderly for the purpose of developing a cogent rationale as to what influences the elderly to participate or refrain from participating. A number of studies have examined obvious determinants such as socioeconomic status (Verba and Nie 1973; Campbell [1960] 1981). Others have reviewed the influence of life cycle position, a more oblique consideration (Atchley 1977; see especially Campbell 1971). Whereas findings in these areas have conflicted at times, there have been additional reviews of the proposed relationships (Barber 1980; Beam and Simpson 1984; Milbrath 1965; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; Niemi 1986; Weisberg 1986).

Although the percentage of elderly citizens in America is on the rise, as of 1991, the elderly have not had a consistent influence on policy issues. While modest inroads have been made, the strength of the elderly population has
not yet manifested itself in terms of the political process. Consequently, this study is an attempt to delve further into the relationship outlined by Trela. As outlined above, other studies have emphasized other aspects of elderly political activism (e.g., life-cycle position, group identification, group consciousness, socioeconomic factors); and yet, with the exception of Trela, none have reviewed the possible relationship between age graded associations and the political activity of the elderly. By replicating the study conducted by Trela, I hope to add to an understanding of that relationship. Whether age-specific organizations influence the political activism of the elderly, as Trela asserted, has yet to be determined. This question will be addressed in this study. Using Verba and Nie's Standard Socioeconomic Model, I anticipate that the information gathered will confirm Trela's earlier findings.

Trela neglected to discuss the significance of racial differences in determining who joins age specific or multigenerational associations? Trela implicitly used Verba and Nie's Socioeconomic Model of Politicization (SSM) (see Figures 1, 2, and 4): however, Trela did not discuss the possibility that social circumstances might dictate the voluntary associations that the citizens join. According to Campbell, the social characteristics of race, income, educational level, and social status affect political
participation ([1960] 1980). Because these factors influence the individual decision to vote, it would seem to follow that they also influence the types of associations the elderly have. Whereas Trela left this point untouched, the current inquiry attempts to confront it. Considering the literature and the effects of social circumstances, I expect to find that minority groups hold membership in voluntary institutions with less frequency than does the majority group.

Methodology

As with Trela's analysis, the unit of measurement for this study will be individuals who are 60 years of age and older. The choice of chronological versus psychological age has been outlined in a number of works (Binstock and Shanas 1976; Wilson 1984). Although imprecise, chronological age does provide a uniform starting point.

While other studies utilize the target age of 55 to 65 years as a definition for old age, 60 was chosen for two reasons. First, in an effort to replicate Trela's earlier study, it was determined that as many factors as possible needed to be identical. Since Trela had used 60 as the minimum age in his analysis, it was adopted for this study as well.

Second, and just as important, according to Wilson, "Although age 65 is widely used to define entry into old
age, there is no uniform standard among social service providers" (1984, 1). For the purposes of Social Security benefits, 65 is used for payment of full old age benefits (74). However, the Older Americans Act (OAA) uses the age of 60 to determine eligibility for the benefits available under its provisions (Wilson 1984, 2; Martinez 1990, 22). Given the fact that the literature has yet to develop a standard definition for entering into old age, this probe uses age 60.

While having the common denominator of age, the other characteristics of the sample appear to be as diverse as the population at large. Further discussion on the demographic makeup of the sample is discussed in a later section. It is important to note, however, that effort was made to assure that there was a fair representation of the various sectors in the sample.

A total of 203 responses was collected over a five-month period (November through March) in 1989, using a random sample drawn from members of senior centers, age-segregated housing units, and local churches. Also, interviews were conducted at area malls and in private homes. The interview locations were selected in the manner used by Trela, based on the types of associations that were dominant in each location (e.g., whether the citizens were most likely to have age-specific or multigenerational
associations).

Responses were collected by interview teams during personal interviews at the various locations. Additionally, some surveys were returned by mail. The instrument used in both types of interviews was identical; a coverletter was used to convey instructions for the completion of surveys that were to be returned by mail (see Appendix A).

As in Trela's analysis, there were two main groups of respondents: those anticipated to have age specific associations and those who most likely had multigenerational associations.

The age specific group was comprised of two subcategories: residents of local age segregated housing units (e.g., Good Samaritan Village), where residents must meet age requirements of 55 or older; and participants at local senior centers. Elderly citizens interviewed at local malls and churches comprised the multigenerational group. Of the 203 respondents, 48 percent came from age segregated housing. Senior centers contributed 18 percent of the respondents. In the multigenerational groups, the percentages were as follows: 11 percent from churches, and 23 percent from area malls and private homes (see Table 1).

Females constituted the majority of respondents; 61 percent of those surveyed were female whereas 37 percent were males. Over 50 percent of the respondents were age 75
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64 Years</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 and over</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 10000</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10000-20000</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21000-30000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30000</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
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<td>Employment Status</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulltime</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-Graded Associations</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multigenerational Associations</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and over; 11 percent were in the 60-64 category, 21 in the 65-69 group, with an additional 17 percent aged 70-74. Educational levels were high; approximately 44 percent of the respondents had at least a college education. Forty-nine percent professed to have completed high school. Another fact noted on Table 1 is the large percentage of elderly who indicated that they were retired (85 percent).

The survey was developed by a class of graduate students enrolled in a political science seminar entitled the Politics of Aging (see Appendix A). Part of the instrument was taken from the instrument developed by Trela (1971). However, this was not the only area being considered by the group; as such, there are additional questions in the instrument that Trela did not address.

A Guttman scale was included in the survey, in which respondents were asked to react to a series of ordered items (see Mokken 1971 for a thorough discussion of scaling techniques, particularly chap. 5). The following questions were used to construct the scale:

During the last national election in 1988, which of the following did you do? Did you:
Discuss politics with someone?
Argue about politics?
Try to influence someone on some political issue?
Contribute money to a political campaign?
Work for a political campaign?

The scale sought to gauge political activism by listing a number of political activities in which respondents could
participate. Because a majority of the respondents were age 75 or older, the age of the citizens was used as a control variable in the analysis.

After the survey responses were coded, the raw data were entered into a data file. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences computer program (SPSSpc) was employed to analyze the information collected. Descriptive statistics were used to conduct the initial investigation. Crosstabulation was also utilized in the analysis. Standard socioeconomic variables (race, education, and income) were used as control variables when reviewing the information pertaining to political activism and age-graded associations.

Conclusions based on this study are limited to the community of Denton, Texas, and the elderly in this community, as there are deficiencies in the sample. For instance, the minority groups are not well represented in the sample. Yet, even with limitations, this analysis is important as a tool for better understanding the relationship identified by Trela.

Further limitations of the study are due to the omission of a political activism component from the survey; respondents were not asked whether they had voted in the previous election. This error is partially due to Trela's omission of the same, as the scale was modeled after
questions Trela had asked (1989). This weakness is minimized, however, because the elderly were asked to respond to other "spectator activities" (Milbrath 1965, 18). Milbrath created a scale of political involvement; he explained that it was not imperative to question respondents about participation in every activity (16-28).

While this inquiry is far from perfect, it must be noted that one of the main aims of the study was to determine the effects of age graded associations on the political activism of the elderly. This investigation adds to the information available concerning this possible relationship. By adding to the body of literature, this study is important. The findings of the indepth probe follow.

This chapter has discussed the relationship between age graded association and the political activism of the elderly. According to Verba and Nie's Standard Socioeconomic Model, institutions influence the individual's decision to participate in the political process. Trela included age graded associations as a type of institution to be considered. The following chapter seeks to determine if Trela's assertion is valid, using data collected in Denton, Texas.
CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Preliminary Findings

Initial findings of this analysis yield interesting information about how age graded associations influence political activism among elderly citizens. Simple frequencies are used to present the preliminary findings. Further indepth analysis is reserved for the areas identified for review and discussion: political efficacy, group identification, and the influence of age graded associations on the political activism of the elderly.

As stated earlier, 34 percent of the respondents were from multigenerational associations. Sixty-six percent of the respondents indicated that they had age-specific associations. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents were males and 62 percent of the sample was female. Blacks comprised 8 percent of the sample. Hispanics made up 12 percent, and whites accounted for 78 percent. The majority of the elderly interviewed were over the age of 75 (50 percent). Almost one-half, or 49 percent, of the respondents had incomes below $20,000. Eighty-five percent of the respondents classified themselves as retired when asked to describe their occupation. Furthermore, 54 percent
indicated that they lived alone.

The subjects of greatest interest to the elderly were Social Security and Medicare. Medicare was the most important, with 36 percent selecting it as one of two most important topics to the elderly. Social Security was a strong second, with 35.5 percent noting its importance. The elderly were asked to indicate whether their current conditions were better than they had expected, as expected, or worse than expected. Seventy-eight percent of the elderly interviewed stated that their conditions were as expected or better than expected.

When asked to identify the preferred source for minimum elderly care needs, 59 percent of the elderly indicated that the government should provide for their minimum needs. Pensions as a source for paying for the basic needs of the elderly were selected by 57 percent and savings by 46 percent. Only 17 percent of the respondents indicated that families should bear the brunt of these costs. In regard to health care, 61 percent of the people interviewed indicated that governmental spending should increase (see Table 2).

As to whether the elderly identified as a group, the findings demonstrated that they identified best with others in their age group. When asked to indicate their preference for associations, the responses were as follows: 28 percent indicated that they preferred the company of younger
individuals; 60 indicated that they favor the presence of people their own age; and 8 percent stated that they cultivated the friendship of both.

TABLE 2
Respondents Feelings About Health Care Spending (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should spending:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain the same</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to indicate the party they most closely identified with, the selections were as follows: 39 percent identified with the Democratic party; 31 selected the Republican party; 15 claimed to be independents; those asserting no political party identification comprised 11 percent of the respondents; and 2 percent indicated that they held other party identification. This percentage included two communists and a socialist.

Aged respondents were asked to describe their current interest in politics. Those indicating that they were very interested or interested in politics accounted for approximately 50 percent of the responses collected. Thirty-six percent stated that they were moderately interested, whereas only 13 percent expressed that they were not very interested or not at all interested.

Through self-evaluation, the elderly were also asked to
describe their past political interest, with their views at the age of fifty as a reference point. There were three selections with respect to this question. Those expressing that they were more interested in politics at age 50 constituted 20 percent of the responses. Fifteen percent were less interested in politics than they were previously. Sixty-three percent maintained their interest level in politics.

Indicating whether elderly citizens should take an active interest in politics, a clear majority (77 percent) demonstrated approval of aged political activism. Nineteen percent were neutral in response, and an additional 3 percent thought that the elderly should not actively participate in politics. Supporting the concept that the elderly should take an active role in politics, 67 percent of the survey respondents said that they would join an organization that was trying to get the government to do more for older persons. Thirty-two stated that they would decline to join such an organization. Just as importantly, when asked about future political strength, 67 percent of the elderly surveyed indicated that they would wield more political power in the future. Approximately 16 percent remained neutral. Another 16 percent exhibited doubts about increasing political power for the elderly.
Discussion of political topics appealed to the elderly surveyed. Seventy-one percent reported that they had discussed politics during the last national election; 29 percent had not participated in this activity. A distinction was drawn between discussing and arguing politics. Accordingly, there was a difference in the percentages of those participating in this endeavor. Only 11 percent indicated that they had argued about politics during the last election. The remaining 88 percent did not argue about politics. Of the respondents interviewed, 18 percent admitted to trying to influence someone else's vote; 81 percent stated that they did not.

When questioned about attending a political rally or meeting, the response was similar to those outlined above. A total of 9 percent of respondents interviewed stated that they had attended a political rally during the last national election. The vast majority (91 percent) did not participate in this activity. An even smaller percentage worked for a political campaign (4 percent). However, concerning political activities, 22 percent of the respondents contributed money to a political campaign during the last national election.

The elderly surveyed also demonstrated a proclivity for avoiding conflict; that is, approximately 6 percent of the citizens questioned indicated that they argued about
politics while at social gatherings. An additional 8 percent stated that they had tried to influence someone about some political issue while in a social setting.

Most notably, while at social functions the elderly did spend a greater amount of time discussing other topics. Forty-two percent discussed problems of the elderly while in the social setting. Health care was a topic of discussion for forty-six percent of the elderly surveyed. Crime was also a frequently discussed topic, with 33 percent indicating so in their responses.

Political Efficacy

The elderly interviewed demonstrated an obligation to participate in the political process; this obligation is evident in the high percentage of those who stated that the elderly should participate in the political process. The question then becomes, "Why are the elderly not participating to a greater level, especially in light of their stated sense of obligation?" If the elderly think that they should participate, why are they not doing so? Part of the answer lies in whether the group thinks that it can influence the decision-making process.

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "People cannot do much to influence politicians" (N=203). This finding would appear to connote a high sense of political efficacy. How
age graded associations influence political efficacy is the topic of discussion in this section. Age and ethnic and racial background have been used as control variables to understand further the relationship between political efficacy and age graded associations.

The potential relationship of political efficacy and group membership was probed through crosstabulation. Table 3 indicates the response rates according to association group, race, and age categories. The following section discusses the findings of this study.

**TABLE 3**
Political Efficacy of Respondents, by Association Group (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Political Efficacy (N=201)</th>
<th>Age Specific</th>
<th>Multigenerational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significant at .05 level.

Seventy-four percent of age-graded individuals demonstrated high political efficacy (N=132). Fifty-four percent of the multigenerational elderly portrayed similar characteristics (N=69). Thus, political efficacy is higher in the age-specific group than in the multigenerational group. Respondents exhibiting low political efficacy did not differ as greatly between the two groups: 21 percent in age specific groups and 23 percent in multigenerational associations.
Age was used as a control variable due to the large percentage of respondents who were age 75 or older. Over fifty percent of the sample used for this analysis was comprised by elderly 75 or older. By introducing the control variable of age, any distinctions between the age groups should become apparent.

Controlling for the influence of age on the relationship, 17 percent of the respondents age 60-64 (N=21) indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that people could not influence politicians (see Table 4). With regard to age-graded associations, the individuals in age group 60-64 who expressed a lack of political efficacy comprised 27 percent of their category total. None in the age graded group stipulated that they were neutral on the subject. Forty percent of the multigenerational respondents indicated that they were neutral. The percentages of elderly exhibiting high political efficacy in each group were as follows: 83 percent of age specific elderly held high political efficacy; 33 percent of multigenerational aged stated that they could influence decision makers.

Responses for age group 64-69 (N=41) differed slightly from the previous group. Notqably absent was the large percentage of elderly in this category who were not neutral concerning the political activism of the elderly. Only 5 percent of the respondents in age group 65-69 selected the
neutral response, whereas 29 percent of the elderly in age group 60-64 were neutral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Age Specific</th>
<th>Multigenerational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-64 (N=21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69 (N=41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74 (N=33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 and over (N=101)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This percentage shift was found to have increased the number of individuals who exhibited high political efficacy. The percentages between age graded and multigenerational were only a few percentage points: 76 percent of age specific elderly demonstrated high political efficacy; 70 percent of multigenerational aged stated that they could influence the politicians. Further, when compared to percentages before controlling for age, the same held true. There was one exception to this statement. Those indicating disagreement or strong disagreement in the 65-69 group are
similar in percentage to the combined 67 percent for all groups. The total for the 60-64 group was significantly lower with regard to the multigenerational group (e.g., compare 70 percent for multigenerational individuals 65-69 to 33 percent for the same age group 60-64).

For those in the age range 70-74 (N=33), the percentages resembled the pattern established by the 60-64 group. That is, 24 percent either strongly agreed or agreed that the elderly could not influence politicians. By associations, 25 percent of multigenerational individuals and 23 percent of age specific elderly exhibited low political efficacy. As with the age 60-64 group, there was a small concentration of responses around neutrality; however, the concentration was not as deliberate for age group 70-74 as it was for those respondents in age category 60-64.

Age group 70-74 respondents were also below the combined average of 67 percent stating low political efficacy. Sixty percent of persons 70-74 thought that they could not influence politicians. Age graded associations yielded a higher percentage of political efficacy (76 percent) than did multigenerational associations (44 percent).

Elderly in the age 75 and older group (N=101) comprised a larger percentage of the sample, and as such were of
special interest. Fourteen percent of age 75 and older persons with multigenerational associations showed low political efficacy. Twenty-one percent of age specific elderly 75 and older also demonstrated low political efficacy. As Table 4 reveals, age specific associations appeared to decrease political efficacy. Conversely, 78 percent of multigenerational elderly showed high political activism, and 72 percent of age-specific elderly thought that they could influence the decisions of politicians.

By controlling for age, the relationship between political activism and age graded associations was isolated. Age group 75 and older constituted a large portion of the sample, as previously mentioned. With the introduction of the control variable, statistical significance in the relationship between activism and group membership was found only in the age 75 and older group. A negative relationship between graded associations and activism was found for this group (age 75 or older), controlling for age. As Table 4 indicates, some cells were empty; this could have influenced the results.

Ethnic and racial background was also used as a control variable. While the percentages of those across the age groups tended to be similar, when the racial control variable was introduced, the findings differed. Campbell's assertion that minority groups have lower political efficacy
holds true.

In regard to the respondents, there were three groups represented: whites, blacks, and Hispanics. Before further discussion it must be noted that the total numbers for each group differed greatly (N for whites=157, or 78 percent; N for blacks=17, or 8.5 percent; N for Hispanics=26, or 13 percent; total N for this section=200). Having stated this, it becomes obvious why ethnic background was utilized as a control variable. In controlling for this variable, group differences become more apparent (see Table 5).

The number of minorities who responded to the survey was small; this is evident in the frequency response for ethnic and racial background included in Table 1. When controlling for ethnic background, a number of cells were empty. Table 5 depicts the responses for political efficacy by group after controlling for race.

Twenty-one percent of white respondents showed low political efficacy, agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, "People cannot do much to influence politicians." The percentages for the two associational groups were as follows: 20 percent of the age specific group and 24 percent of the multigenerational group showed low political efficacy.

White respondents from age specific associations exhibited a higher degree of political efficacy (76
percent). Multigenerational elderly were also politically efficacious (60 percent), although less so than the age specific group. As the numbers of blacks and Hispanics were low, little usable information can be obtained from their percentages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Age Specific</th>
<th>Multigenerational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blacks (N=17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites (N=157)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics (N=26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Identification

Although the literature demonstrates that political efficacy affects political activism (Abrams 1973; Almond and Verba 1963; Barber 1980; Campbell [1960] 1981; Milbrath 1965; Weisberg 1986), it is not the only influencing factor. Another factor addressed within the context of this study is group identification, as outlined by Miller, Gurin, and Gurin (1980). According to the authors, a group of people seeking to influence the political process must first
identify as a group, or, in other words, develop group consciousness.

Group identification is a part of the group consciousness concept; the individuals must first identify themselves as belonging to that group. Only then can the group identify and act on common interests, or become conscious. Although the concept of group consciousness has been used primarily in studies of ethnic and racial minorities, the argument that the elderly constitute a minority group has been successfully advanced (Ragan and Dowd 1974; Rose 1965). Citizens who strongly identify with a group are more likely to be politically active (Ragan and Dowd 1974). The implications are that if the elderly identify themselves as a group, their political activism should increase.

Working from the assumption that the elderly do comprise a minority group, do they identify as a group? Also, do age-graded associations influence group identification? This section of the study seeks to address these questions.

A question in the survey instrument asked respondents whether they spent most of their time with individuals their own age or with younger individuals (see Appendix A, question 6). Further, respondents were allowed to indicate a preference for both groups, if appropriate (see Table 6).
The majority of seniors who held age-graded associations (68 percent) appeared to favor the presence of people their own age. Twenty-seven percent of seniors with age-specific associations indicated a preference for people younger than themselves. Additionally, 5 percent preferred both groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Identification (N=196)</th>
<th>Age Specific</th>
<th>Multigenerational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Age</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Statistically significant at .05 level

Elderly citizens with multigenerational affiliations were more evenly distributed across the response categories. Over 33 percent indicated that they enjoyed the presence of younger individuals. If given a choice, 15 percent preferred the company of mixed company, with regard to age. However, 51 percent of the multigenerational individuals who responded to the survey stated that they preferred the presence of people their own age.

Age-Graded Associations

Milbrath described a number of political actions that were prevalent and considered supportive of the government in power (1965). The actions were not subversive in nature; Milbrath described them as "common political activities that characterize the normal process of a democracy" (18).
Milbrath outlined, according to the level of involvement, three phases, or roles, of activism: spectator activities; transitional activities; and, gladiatorial activities (see Appendix B).

Spectator activities constitute the lowest levels of participation, except for nonparticipation. Among the activities listed by Milbrath under the spectator activities were the following: exposing oneself to political stimuli, voting, initiating a political discussion, and attempting to talk another into voting a certain way (18). Milbrath asserted that approximately 20 or 30 percent of American voters "try to proselyte [sic] others to vote a certain way" (19).

Contacting a public official or party leader was identified by Milbrath as a transitional activity of higher activism (18). Additionally, he stated that making a monetary contribution to a party or candidate and attending a political meeting or rally were actions of higher cost regarding the money and time invested. Because of their increasing costs, the activities were deemed as higher ranking actions than those described as spectator activities.

Gladiator activities were perceived by Milbrath to have the highest personal costs. These would correspond to the influence of civic attitudes on political activism, as
described by Verba and Nie (1972, 13; see Figure 2).

According to Milbrath:

Time and energy costs are least for the activities at the bottom of the hierarchy. Behaviors higher in the hierarchy obviously require a greater expenditure of energy and probably require a greater commitment. (19)

In his analysis, Milbrath surmised that "probably less than 1 percent of the American adult population engage in the top two or three behaviors" (19). The highest activity in the scale was that of holding a public and party office. This was followed, in order, by being a candidate for office; soliciting political funds; attending a caucus or strategy meeting; becoming an active member in a political party; and contributing time in a political campaign (18).

Borrowing from Milbrath, I created a Guttman scale from variables within the survey instrument (Appendix A, question 20). The questions were patterned after Trela's survey questions (1989). Respondents were asked to indicate which activities they had performed during the last election (the presidential election of 1988).

Seventy-one percent of the survey respondents indicated that they had discussed politics during the last national election. According to Milbrath's hierarchy, this constitutes a low level, or spectator activity (23). Another 29 percent stated that they had not discussed politics (see Table 7).
TABLE 7
Respondent Participation in Political Activities, by Association Group (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Age Specific (N=131)</th>
<th>Multigenerational (N=68)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did You:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to Influence Someone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute Money to a Campaign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a Political Rally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for a Campaign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When making the distinction between age-graded and nonage-graded associations, the percentages remain fairly constant. Of elderly in age-graded associations, 75 percent had discussed politics during the last national election. Sixty-five percent of multigenerational aged had discussed politics.

When moving up the hierarchy, an expected decline in activism takes place. While still classified as a spectator activity, arguing politics connotes a stronger effort than the mere discussion of politics (Trela 1989). It is not
surprising that the percentage of those arguing politics dwindled; activities higher on Milbrath's hierarchy have increasing personal costs and, consequently, a lower participation rate (see Appendix C).

Eleven percent of the respondents stated that they had argued politics during the last election; 89 percent indicated that they had not. When looking at the association types, one finds that the responses were similar. Multigenerational individuals arguing politics constituted 13 percent of those with similar associations (N=68). Seniors with age-specific connections accounted for 10 percent of their group total (N=131).

In further consideration of the political participation ladder, respondents indicated whether they had tried to influence anyone on any political issue. Eighty-two percent of the citizens said that they had not tried to do so (N=199); 18 percent recounted that they had. Again, by association type, 17 percent of seniors with age-graded affiliations affirmed their attempts to try to influence someone's decision (N=131); 21 percent of multigenerational individuals stated they had also tried to influence a decision (N=68). The remaining percentages indicated that they had not participated in this activity.

Milbrath included the contribution of campaign funds under the heading of transitional activities. Twenty-two
percent of all respondents indicated that they had contributed money to political campaigns (N=199). Ingroup percentages were fairly close. Twenty-four percent of age-specific individuals had contributed money (N=131). Multigenerational individuals who had contributed money were fewer in number (19 percent; N=68).

Attending a rally or political meeting is also a transitional activity, although a higher one than contributing money. Whereas there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of people giving money to political campaigns, attending a rally remained an activity rarely carried out by either the elderly of age-graded or nonage-graded associations. This finding is consistent with Milbrath's overall assessment of American political activism (1965, 19).

Nine percent of all respondents attended a political rally during the last national election. The percentages for the two groups being reviewed were as follows: 8 percent of age-specific individuals attended a rally; 10 percent of multigenerational individuals did so. The multigenerational individuals exhibited greater participation. While not statistically significant, the gamma score revealed the same negative relationship.

Moving up to Milbrath's highest level (gladiator activities), the next item asked respondents if they had
worked for a political campaign. Of the 199 individuals who responded to this question, 9 (or 4.5 percent) indicated that they had. The remaining 190 chose not to do so. Proportionally, the greater number of campaign workers came from the multigenerational individuals (7 percent of ingroup total versus 3 percent of age-graded individuals). Although the relationship was not statistically significant, the gamma score indicated that a negative relationship existed between political activism and group association.

The introduction of racial and ethnic background as a control variable also resulted in interesting information (see Table 8). For instance, blacks (N=17) tended to discuss politics less than did the other two groups. Approximately 76 percent of whites (N=155) discussed politics, followed by 54 percent of Hispanics. Fifty-two percent of blacks discussed politics.

Black multigenerational elderly participated in greater percentages than did age-graded individuals. Sixty-two percent of nonage-graded individuals stated that they had discussed politics during the last national election. Elderly who held age-specific affiliations and had talked about politics accounted for 44 percent of their group total.

White elderly individuals indicating that they had discussed politics comprised 76 percent of their racial
group. Further, the percentages across the affiliations remained fairly similar. Seventy-seven percent of the elderly in age-specific associations had discussed politics, corresponding to 75 percent of multigenerational individuals.

**TABLE 8**

Respondent Participation in Political Discussions, by Association Group and Race (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Age Specific</th>
<th>Multigenerational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Respondents (N=155)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Respondents (N=17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Respondents (N=26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hispanics were concentrated in multigenerational associations. Twenty-four of the 26 Hispanics who responded to this question were from a nonage-graded environment. These individuals were equally divided when asked whether they had discussed politics, with 50 percent indicating participation and 50 percent nonparticipation. The observation, however, did not yield a statistically significant relationship.

Even fewer blacks argued politics; only 18 percent indicated that they had done so (N=17). Twenty-five percent of blacks with multigenerational associations (N=8) stated
that they had argued politics, in comparison to 11 percent of age-specific individuals (N=9), who responded affirmatively.

The majority group demonstrated a lower percentage of people who argued politics. Only 10 percent stated that they had argued politics during the last national election. Seniors with age specific associations (10 percent; N=119) outnumbered the multigenerational elderly (8 percent; N=36) in this participation category. However, the percentage differences were not significant.

Hispanics who belonged to multigenerational associations argued politics in greater percentages than did the other groups. A total percentage of 15 argued politics. Sixteen percent of multigenerational individuals indicated that they had argued politics.

When asked if they had tried to influence someone's decision during the last national election, responses indicated a negative relationship. When controlling for racial background, the relationship changed. Seventeen percent of black respondents asserted that they had tried to exert influence over someone's decision. Blacks having age-graded associations demonstrated a greater proclivity for trying to influence someone's decision (22 percent versus 12 percent for multigenerational elderly). While statistically insignificant, the relationship appeared to be positively
linked with age-graded associations.

The majority group responses revealed a negative relationship, however. A total of 17 percent of white elderly indicated that they had tried to influence someone (N=155). While 16 percent of age-specific elderly participated in exerting influence, 22 percent of multigenerational aged did so.

Twenty-three percent of Hispanic respondents stated that they had tried to influence a decision. Within the groups, 50 percent of age-graded and 21 percent of multigenerational individuals had tried to influence someone's decision during the national election of 1988. While not statistically significant, the relationship appears to be in the opposite direction to the majority group.

A positive relationship was observed earlier between the contributing of money (a transitional activity) and group membership. Those in age-specific associations were more likely to contribute money to a political campaign. Nonetheless, ethnic and racial background was used as a control variable, as with the other activities.

Black elderly who contributed money comprised 18 percent of black respondents (N=17). Thirty-three percent of seniors with age-specific affiliations had contributed funds to a political campaign during the last national
Whites who contributed money made up 25 percent of the racial group. Age-graded associations appeared to suppress this activity, as 24 percent of the elderly with age-specific affiliations contributed money. While this percentage is higher than the total percentage of 23, multigenerational individuals were more likely to contribute money (28 percent). The difference in percentages was not large, but the effect was to demonstrate a negative relationship between age-graded associations and contribution of funds to a political campaign.

Hispanic respondents also exhibited a negative relationship between age-specific associations and activism (N=26). Eleven percent of Hispanics professed to have given money to a political campaign. Multigenerational individuals who claimed to have contributed money comprised 13 percent of the group. None of the Hispanics in age-graded associations indicated having done so.

Attendance at a political rally or meeting is, according to Milbrath, a transitional activity, although it is higher in the hierarchy of political activities. A total of 18 percent of black respondents stated that they had attended a political rally. Thirty-three percent of elderly blacks with age graded associations attended a political
rally or meeting. Multigenerational individuals of the same race did not participate in political rallies.

Hispanics with multigenerational associations who attended rallies constituted 12 percent of their racial group. Twelve percent of nonage-graded individuals indicated having done so. None of the age-graded elderly attended political meetings or rallies.

The majority group had 8 percent of its members participating in political rallies. Approximately 7 percent of age specific elderly attended a rally. However, 11 percent of multigenerational individuals also attended a political gathering.

With regard to the gladiator activity included in the scale, a total of 5 percent of respondents indicated that they had worked for a political campaign. Multigenerational associations enjoyed a higher proportional percentage of participation in this activity (7 percent versus 3 percent). The introduction of a control variable demonstrated the same finding.

Elderly black respondents who worked for a political campaign totalled 12 percent of their racial group. Multigenerational individuals who contributed time working for a campaign accounted for 13 percent of their group total. Age graded individuals comprised 11 percent of their group.
White respondents who worked for a campaign represented 3 percent of their racial group. Percentages for age graded associations were similar. While 2.5 percent of age-specific individuals participated in a campaign, 2.8 percent of multigenerational respondents claimed also to have done so. Thus, for white elderly, there was a negative relationship with regard to working for a campaign.

The group divisions also yielded information about the composition of the two groups. From a total of 17 respondents, 9 blacks belonged to age-graded associations, with the remaining 8 belonging to multigenerational associations (or 47 percent). The total numbers of whites belonging to age-graded and nonage-graded associations were 119 and 36, respectively. Two Hispanics (8 percent) belonged to age specific associations, whereas the vast majority (92 percent, N=24) belonged to multigenerational associations. This also points out one of the limitations of the study; the sample overrepresented white elderly citizens.

This chapter has reviewed data collected from the survey conducted during 1989. Discussion centered on three main concepts, as identified earlier in the literature: political efficacy; group identification; and political activism. Age-graded associations were examined for possible effects on these three items. The next chapter
uses the presented information to draw conclusions about the influence of age-graded associations on these concepts. Research recommendations are made for future studies. In addition, a brief discussion of the implications of this study for public administrators is included.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This analysis has concentrated on the relationship between age-graded associations and the political activism of the elderly. Trela (1971) ascertained that the relationship was a positive one; this study has sought to affirm or deny the assumption. The area has been left untouched by other researchers and, therefore, warrants further deliberation.

Additionally, the analysis was aimed at a better understanding of how social characteristics such as race impact the relationship. According to Verba and Nie (1972), social circumstances impact the types of voluntary associations individuals choose to join. Following Verba and Nie's Standard Socioeconomic Model (SSM), social circumstances influence the individual's decision to participate. It would appear that social circumstances also influence the types of associations the individuals keep. Therefore, the expected finding is that minority groups will be poorly represented in the age-specific associations group.
The concepts of political efficacy and group consciousness were identified as factors worthy of consideration within the context of age-graded affiliations. As explained in chapter 3, the political efficacy a group has directly influences the amount of participation exhibited (Milbrath 1965). Just as important is whether an individual actually identifies himself as part of a group.

Elderly political efficacy, as noted by this analysis, is higher in individuals who join age graded associations. The percentages demonstrate this relationship: 73.8 percent of age-graded individuals exhibit high political efficacy compared to 54 percent of multigenerational individuals. This relationship is statistically significant at the p>.05 level. The strength of the relationship is weak, with a gamma of .19. Nonetheless, it appears that age-graded associations positively affect the political efficacy of the elderly citizens surveyed.

For all but one group, the statistical significance of the relationship disappears when age is used as a control variable. While this could be a problem due to the relationship being observed, the disappearance of statistical significance can be attributed to the low numbers of those elderly between the age range of 60-74 present in the sample. Elderly citizens age 75 and older comprised a large percentage of the sample drawn.
All groups, however, demonstrate the same finding—that age-graded associations positively influence the political efficacy of their members. The one group that remained statistically significant at the .05 level was age group 75 and older. This is no surprise when one considers that the majority of respondents were in this age group (N=101). This group represents approximately 50 percent of the sample. The gamma score was .46, attesting to the strength of the relationship that exists between graded associations and political efficacy for elderly citizens age 75 and over.

Ethnic background was used as another control variable to analyze the relationship between group association and political efficacy. Due to the small number of respondents who were black or Hispanic, the relationship between political efficacy and group associations was difficult to gauge. Minorities tended to populate multigenerational associations more so than age-specific ones. Almost half of the blacks and 92 percent of the Hispanics were of multigenerational associations; this is compared to 13 percent of whites. Findings were statistically significant for the white group only. Gamma was a positive .11; again, a weak score, but indicating a relationship.

One effect of this procedure was to demonstrate that the majority group was more politically efficacious than the
two minority groups. Blacks demonstrated especially low efficacy, as outlined in chapter 3. Thus, as delineated by previous research (Campbell [1960] 1981; Key 1950; Nagel 1987; Weisberg 1986), race is directly tied to political efficacy.

Based on the observations in this area, age graded associations have been found to statistically influence the political efficacy of elderly persons. Further, the majority group demonstrated higher political efficacy than the minority groups, as the literature had previously indicated. These observations can be applied only to the elderly population of Denton, Texas. Nonetheless, the observed relationship between graded associations and political efficacy had not been probed before. Therefore, the findings concerning elderly political efficacy add to our understanding about the effects of age-specific associations.

Will the elderly become a viable political force in the future? This question is often raised by researchers and organizations. But, another question must be answered before the former can be addressed: Do the elderly identify themselves as part of a specific group? According to Miller, Gurin, and Gurin (1980) group consciousness must be present before political activism will result. Some 60 percent of all elderly indicated that they favored the
presence of people their own age. Twenty-eight percent stated that they enjoyed the company of younger individuals, while 8 preferred the company of both groups. It would therefore appear that the elderly do have feelings of group consciousness. By identifying with their age group they are increasing the opportunities to discuss topics of concern to their group (Trela 1971; 1989). The argument then states that a resultant reaction is for political activism to increase.

As a result, the importance of age-graded associations takes on added meaning. Elderly citizens who held age graded associations preferred people their own age (68 percent), people younger (27 percent), and individuals of both groups (5 percent). Although following the same distribution pattern, multigenerational elderly preferred the distribution in slightly differing percentages: 51 percent favored individuals their own age; 34 percent, younger; and 15 percent, both. Age-graded associations, therefore, increase group consciousness.

This conclusion is not based on the raw percentages alone. Pearson's chi square revealed a statistically significant relationship. Gamma indicated a positive relationship, albeit a weak one (.01). There is, nonetheless, a relationship that is observable. The weak gamma score could be a result of the lack of sample
diversity. Trela's age-graded associations have been determined to statistically influence the group consciousness of elderly citizens in the community of Denton, Texas.

The introduction of ethnic background as a control variable demonstrated little variation between these groups. Percentage distributions among the race groups were similar. Further, the findings for all groups were statistically insignificant. Pearson chi square scores ranged from .23 for blacks to .39 for Hispanics. According to the data, there was no observable difference between the race groups.

When one controlled for age, the percentages were distributed almost evenly. Approximately 60 percent of all age groups preferred the company of individuals their own age. Only one age group differed substantially--the 60-64 age group. However, the differences were not statistically significant.

According to the findings of this analysis, age-graded associations have affected the political efficacy and group consciousness of elderly in Denton, Texas. However, will the influence of graded associations be strong enough to sway the political activism of the elderly? Following the information obtained through this study, it appears that of the six political activities listed in the Guttman scale, age-graded associations increased the political activism of
the elderly in only two: discussing politics and contributing financially to a political campaign.

Discussing politics was the lowest level of political activity listed in the survey. Elderly with age graded associations demonstrated higher political activism regarding this action; 75 percent of these citizens stated that they had discussed politics during the last national election. Whereas a majority of multigenerational elderly stated that they had also discussed politics, the group percentage was lower (65 percent).

Financial contributions to a political campaign were another area in which age-graded associations had a greater percentage. Twenty-four percent of respondents with age-specific associations confirmed that they had contributed to a political campaign. Nineteen percent of multigenerational elderly indicated that they had done so. In both instances, however, the relationships were not statistically significant.

Further, had the findings been significant, gamma scores would have shown the relationships to be negative in nature. All other items in the scale indicated that age graded associations negatively affected the political activism of the elderly. This finding was in direct contradiction to the analysis conducted by Trela. Whereas he found a direct correlation between graded association and
political activism, this study refuted Trela's conclusions.

The introduction of ethnic background as a control variable did not negate the earlier findings that there was a negative relationship between political activism and age-graded associations. Differences were noted between the racial groups. As expected, the minority groups participated with less frequency than did the majority. Further, the hypothesis that minority groups participate less frequently in age-graded associations also held true.

Conclusions

In summation, although age-graded associations were found to positively influence political efficacy and group consciousness, they negatively influenced the political activism of the elderly interviewed. This was an unexpected finding. Some of the developments could have been attributed to a sample that was not diverse, given the high concentrations of whites and people with high educational levels.

Nonetheless, whereas some of the observed relationships were statistically insignificant, the percentages yielded did sufficiently demonstrate a trend. Clearly, there was no remarkable increase in political activism for those elderly citizens with age-graded associations. As a matter of fact, their participation was notably lower on a majority of the activities listed in the scale.
This is not to say that the age-graded associations will not positively affect political activism in the future. The argument proposed by Trela appears to make sense. And the case rested upon a model (SSM) that has been widely accepted in the field. Quite possibly, the elderly interviewed might have only recently started identifying as a group. Additional studies using a different sampling technique are necessary to determine if the political activism of the citizens interviewed will change with added exposure to their chosen groups.

This study was not meant to dispel doubts about the relationship being reviewed. Its purpose was to add to the understanding of a relationship largely ignored by the literature. As such, the study has carried out its task.

Although raising doubts about the influence of age-graded associations on political activism, the analysis demonstrated that other variables were being influenced by the types of affiliations the elderly held. Political efficacy and group consciousness were found to be positively influenced by age-graded associations. The observed relationship was an area previously untouched by Trela's investigation.

Also, minority groups were found to participate in age-graded associations less frequently than did the majority group. The finding that minorities do not participate as
frequently as majority members in age graded associations was expected. The finding adds to the understanding of the relationship by addressing the issue of who actually holds membership in age graded associations. This was a dimension not fully explored by Trela in his seminal study.

Implications for Future Research

As Nagel (1987) asserted, if democracy is to work, input is needed from all aspects of the society. The percentage of elderly in America is increasing dramatically. According to the findings of this study, two necessary conditions for political participation are present: group consciousness and political efficacy.

Thus, the potential for political action from the elderly population appears to be high. And, yet, the elderly apparently have not turned their stated "obligation to participate" into participation. Age-graded associations could serve as the catalyst needed for action. Although the associations are currently not serving in this capacity, the present study shows that they have already impacted the political efficacy of the elderly as well as their group consciousness. It could be only a matter of time before the aged make their preferences known in the political area. And age-graded associations could be the vehicle through which they develop their strategies.
This study has added to the research conducted on the subject of age-graded associations. With the addition of this study, the literature becomes mixed as to whether age-graded associations positively influence the political activism of participants. Additional studies are needed concerning age-specific affiliations and their influence on the political activism of the elderly.

Further analysis is warranted, not just to review the relationship between political activism and age-graded associations, but also to study the observed relationship between age-specific associations, political efficacy, and group consciousness. Inasmuch as the influence of age-specific associations on the political efficacy and group consciousness of the elderly has not before been reviewed, additional studies are needed to confirm or deny the positive relationship observed in this analysis.

Future studies should incorporate the study of a specific group of individuals over time. Study would begin before the citizens entered into old age, probably at age 40. The study would follow the elderly, trying to determine what factors influenced their decision to participate in the organizations they chose in addition to ascertaining what effect age-graded associations had on their political efficacy, group consciousness, and political activism.

Implications for Public Administrators
Public administrators are given the arduous task of implementing new programs and delivering services; therefore, the implications of this study are of special importance to public administrators. First of all, public managers will increasingly be serving an aging population, that is, the elderly will represent an increasingly larger portion of the total population. Public managers must therefore increase their awareness of issues relevant to their aging constituency.

Secondly, as the percentage of elderly citizens in American society increases, the demand for public services targeting the elderly will increase. The elderly in this study have already indicated their belief that government should increase spending on items such as Medicare. It follows that the aged citizens in American society will add to the competition for already limited resources.

In a recent personal interview, Edward Vela, Dallas Regional Director of the United States Office of Personnel Management, stated that "retrenchment will be the norm in federal public management for years to come." Because of limited resources, public administrators will need to consider the implementation of new programs since they will be attempting to deliver "more bang for the buck" (Vela 1991).
Finally, the elderly comprise a significant percentage of American society. Recalling Nagel (1987), democracy requires input from all levels of society if it is to work. Input from elderly citizens will be needed if they are to be fairly represented in the formulation of public policy. This study does not address policy preferences of the elderly; the analysis seeks to reveal some of the factors believed to influence political activism among the elderly. By understanding the factors that influence their political participation, perhaps methods can be developed to elicit a greater response from the elderly.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Resident of Good Samaritan Village:

I am a faculty member at the University of North Texas in the Department of Political Science. Currently, I am teaching a class on the Politics of Aging. As luck would have it, my class has some of the brightest and most hardworking students in the state of Texas. They are not satisfied with just reading about the political attitudes of older Americans; they want to conduct their own research. Consequently, they are attempting their own survey of local senior citizens to find out their political opinions and activities.

They spent many hours writing and typing the attached questionnaire. They hope you will take a few minutes to fill it out. After you finish completing the survey, simply leave it in the Good Samaritan Business Office.

Let me assure you that all of your answers will be confidential and completely anonymous. If you have any questions or want more information, do not hesitate to call me at 563-2276 or 387-7319.

I know that you have been asked to fill out many surveys in the past, but PLEASE take the time to complete one more. My students are anxiously waiting for your response.

Sincerely,

Valerie J. Martinez
Assistant Professor

P.S. I think you will find that most of the survey questions are interesting and different from any you have seen before.
SURVEY

PLEASE CHECK THE ANSWER WHICH BEST EXPRESSES YOUR FEELINGS.

1) FROM THE FOLLOWING ISSUES CONCERNING OLDER PEOPLE, WHICH TWO DO YOU FEEL SHOULD RECEIVE THE MOST GOVERNMENT ATTENTION?
   Social Security _____ Housing _____ Transportation
   Medical care _____ Crime _____ Retirement policy

2) OF THOSE TWO, WHICH DO YOU FEEL IS MORE IMPORTANT?
   WHY?

3) SHOULD MONEY TO PROVIDE FOR THE MINIMUM NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE COME FROM:
   The government _____ Private pension plans
   Family _____ Personal Savings

4) IN THE FOLLOWING POLICY AREAS, WOULD YOU PREFER THAT THE GOVERNMENT INCREASE SPENDING, DECREASE SPENDING, OR RETAIN THE PRESENT SPENDING LEVELS?
   Crime: _____ Increase, _____ Decrease, _____ Same
   Defense: _____ Increase, _____ Decrease, _____ Same
   Education: _____ Increase, _____ Decrease, _____ Same
   Health: _____ Increase, _____ Decrease, _____ Same
   Welfare: _____ Increase, _____ Decrease, _____ Same

5) ARE YOUR LIVING CONDITIONS TODAY BETTER THAN YOU EXPECTED, AS YOU EXPECTED, OR WORSE THAN YOU EXPECTED?
   WHY?

6) WOULD YOU RATHER SPEND MOST OF YOUR FREE TIME WITH YOUNGER PEOPLE OR PEOPLE YOUR OWN AGE?
   Younger people. _____ People own age _____

7) WHAT POLITICAL PARTY DO YOU BELONG TO?
   Democratic _____ Republican _____ Independent
   None _____ Other

8) HOW INTERESTED IN POLITICS ARE YOU? ARE YOU:
   Very interested. _____ Interested
   Moderately interested. _____ Not very interested
   Not at all interested
9) WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS BEING?:

[ ] Very liberal
[ ] Liberal
[ ] Middle of the road
[ ] Conservative
[ ] Very conservative
[ ] Not a political person

10) THINK BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE ABOUT 50 YEARS OLD; WERE YOU MORE, THE SAME, OR LESS INTERESTED IN POLITICS?

[ ] More
[ ] Same
[ ] Less

DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

11) OLDER PEOPLE SHOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN POLITICS. DO YOU:

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

12) IF PEOPLE HAVE MONEY PROBLEMS IN THEIR OLD AGE IT IS BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT SAVED DURING THEIR WORKING YEARS. DO YOU:

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

13) GOVERNMENT HAS ADEQUATELY MET THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE. DO YOU:

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

14) OLDER PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT MORE BENEFITS FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

15) IF OLDER PEOPLE WERE TO ORGANIZE THEY COULD GET ALMOST ANYTHING THEY WANT FROM GOVERNMENT.

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

16) OLDER PEOPLE NEED SPECIAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO LOOK OUT FOR THEIR NEEDS AND RIGHTS.

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree

17) PEOPLE CANNOT DO MUCH TO INFLUENCE POLITICIANS.

[ ] Strongly agree
[ ] Agree
[ ] Neither agree nor disagree
[ ] Disagree
[ ] Strongly disagree
18) LAST STATEMENT, IN THE FUTURE OLDER PEOPLE WILL HAVE MORE POLITICAL POWER THAN THEY DO NOW.

____ Strongly agree ______ Agree
____ Neither agree nor disagree ______ Disagree
____ Strongly disagree

19) WOULD YOU JOIN AN ORGANIZATION THAT WAS TRYING TO GET THE GOVERNMENT TO DO MORE FOR OLDER PERSONS?

____ Yes ______ No

20) DURING THE LAST NATIONAL ELECTION IN 1986, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DID YOU DO? DID YOU:

____ Discuss politics with someone
____ Argue about politics
____ Try to influence someone on some political issue
____ Attend a political gathering or rally
____ Work for a political campaign
____ Contribute money to a political cause
____ None of these

21) DURING THE PAST MONTH HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU ATTENDED CHURCH ACTIVITIES?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32
33 34 35 36 37 or more

22) WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE YOU DONE AT THESE ACTIVITIES. HAVE YOU:

____ Discussed politics
____ Argued about politics
____ Tried to influence someone on some political issue
____ Talked about the problems of older persons
____ Talked about taxes
____ Talked about health care
____ Talked about crime issues
____ Any thing else
____ None of these

23) WHAT IS YOUR AGE:

____ 20-64, ______ 65-69, ______ 70-74, ______ 75 or over

24) YOUR HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR LAST YEAR

____ Under $10,000 ______ $10,000-$20,000
____ $21,000-$30,000 ______ Over $30,000
____ No response

25) WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS

____ Full time ______ Part time ______ Retired
____ Homemaker ______ Student ______ Other
26) YOUR ETHNIC AND RACIAL BACKGROUND:
   _____Black   _____White
   _____Hispanic   _____Other
27) YOUR MARITAL STATUS:
   _____Married   _____Single   _____Widowed   _____Divorced
   _____Other
28) ARE YOU LIVING:
   _____alone   _____with spouse   _____with relatives
   _____with person(s) other than relatives
29) YOUR LEVEL OF EDUCATION: (highest grade completed)
   _____Elementary   _____High school   _____College
   _____Graduate level
30) HAVE YOU EVER CHANGED POLITICAL PARTIES DURING YOUR LIFETIME?
   _____Yes   _____No
31) IF YOU HAVE, WHAT EVENT(S) INFLUENCED YOUR CHANGE?

32) YOUR SEX:
   _____Male   _____Female
APPENDIX B

HIERARCHY OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM
FIGURE 3. Hierarchy of Political Involvement.

- Holding public and party office
- Being a candidate for office
- Soliciting political funds
- Attending a caucus or a strategy meeting
- Becoming an active member in a political party
- Contributing time in a political campaign

Gladiatorial Activities

- Attending a political meeting or rally
- Making a monetary contribution to a party or candidate
- Contacting a public official or a political leader

Transitional Activities

- Wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car
- Attempting to talk another into voting a certain way
- Initiating a political discussion

Spectator Activities

- Voting

Apathetics

- Exposing oneself to political stimuli

APPENDIX C

CENSUS BUREAU POPULATION PROJECTIONS
Figure 2. Age Distribution of the U.S. Population: 1987, 2000, 2010, and 2030

REFERENCES

Books


**Journal Articles**


Unpublished Works


Government Documents
