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THE BIOGRAPHICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ACTIVISM

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Using survey data collected in 1983-84 on 212 participants in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project and 118 individuals who applied, were accepted, but did not take part in the project, the author seeks to assess the short- and long-term political and personal consequences of high-risk activism. Using both descriptive and inferential statistics, the author demonstrates a strong effect of participation on the subsequent lives of the volunteers and "no-shows." The volunteers were more politically active throughout the sixties than the no-shows and remain so today. In addition, the volunteers are much less likely to be married and to have significantly lower incomes at present than are the no-shows. Besides reporting these basic findings, the author seeks through path analysis to explore the specific factors and processes that mediate the impact of participation in Freedom Summer on the later lives of the volunteers.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, two principal research questions have dominated the sociological study of social movements. The first concerns the origins of collective action and constitutes the longest and most coherent research tradition in the field (see, e.g., Gurr 1970; McAdam 1982; Skocpol 1979; Smelser 1962; Tilly 1978). Recently, however, the "micro question" of recruitment to activism has begun to command as much attention as the issue of movement emergence. The former question focuses on psychological, attitudinal, or social-structural factors that account for the entrance of the individual into activism (see, e.g., Klandermans 1984; McAdam 1986; Oliver 1984; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980).

Although different in emphasis, these two questions share a common focus on the earliest stages of collective action. Regrettably, scholars have paid much less attention to the later stages of a social movement at both

the macro- and microlevels of analysis. At the macrolevel we are only beginning to explore such topics as movement-counter movement interaction (see, e.g., McAdam 1983; Zald and Useem 1987), movement outcomes (see, e.g., Gamson 1975; Snyder and Kelly 1979), and state-movement relations (see, e.g., Burstein 1985; Gale 1986). At the microlevel we know a great deal about the factors that make for individual activism, but much less about how movement participation ebbs and flows over time or the political and personal consequences of movement participation. The latter is the subject of this paper. Using survey data collected in 1983-84 on 212 participants in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project and 118 individuals who applied, were accepted, but did not take part in the project ("no-shows"), I assess the short- and long-term political and personal consequences of high-risk activism (see McAdam 1986). Specifically, I examine the activist, occupational, and marital histories of both groups and seek to determine what effect, if any, participation in the summer project had on the subsequent lives of the volunteers and "no-shows." Before turning to these analyses, however, I address the theoretical issue of the biographical consequences of activism.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ACTIVISM: A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

Although only a few scholars' studies have focused on the biographical impact of activ-

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ism, the media have paid considerable attention to the contemporary lives of 60s activists. Based on countless newspaper, newsmagazine, and television news stories, many in the general public feel certain they "know" what happened to the 60s activists. And in knowing what happened to the 60s activists, they presume to know something more general about the consequences of movement participation. What they "know" can be gleaned from popular media portraits of former activists.

What emerges from these stories is the image of the former activist as opportunistic Yuppie. The contemporary lives of former activist "stars" such as Jerry Rubin and Eldridge Cleaver are routinely offered as "evidence" to support this view. Rubin, now a stockbroker, and Cleaver, the born-again clothier, represent reassuring symbols of a kind of moral and political maturation claimed to be typical of many 60s "radicals." So often have stories on these two appeared in the popular press that their lives now serve as a general account of the contemporary biographies of yesterday's activists. Thus the collapse of the Movement in the early 70s allegedly triggered a period of wholesale generational sellout that found the lion's share of former radicals embracing the politics and lifestyles of the "Me Decade."

Given that Rubin and Cleaver are virtually the only former activists that the popular press publicize, why do these images of generational sellout persist? The answer may lie in the larger depoliticizing function of the account. If most of the 60s radicals grew up to become Yuppies, then their earlier radicalism can be attributed to immaturity or faddishness. By growing up to espouse mainstream values and hold conventional jobs, figures like Rubin and Cleaver reassure the public that it need not take their earlier radical politics seriously. The "kids" were just sowing a few wild oats before they settled down. Properly chastened, the 60s radicals are now finding fulfillment in commodity futures and gentrified urban housing. From this perspective, the long-term biographical consequences of 60s activism appear to be modest.

Despite the popular appeal of the contemporary media account, there are several reasons for doubting its generalizability. First, after Rubin and Cleaver, it is hard to identify any other prominent 60s activists

who fit the account. Second, the account rests on a dubious interpretation of the shifting patterns of cultural and political allegiance within the baby boom generation. Probably no more than 2 to 4 percent of the generation took an *active* part in any of the movements of the mid-to-late 60s. It, therefore, seems likely that today's Yuppies are drawn, not from the activist subculture, but from the other 96-98 percent of the generation. Third, the popular account is inconsistent with the growing number of studies of former activists and the theoretical literature dealing with the processes of conversion and alteration.

Conversion, Alternation, and High-Risk Activism

Conversion is defined as a radical transformation of a person's life, including their self-conception, network of associations and larger worldview. The most common examples of conversion tend to focus on entrance into cults or insular religious groups (cf. Lofland and Stark 1965; Richardson and Stewart 1978; Seggar and Kunz 1972; Snow and Phillips 1980). These studies clearly highlight the potential for long-term biographical effects as a result of the conversion process. While some "converts" "lapse" or "stray from the flock," many others are permanently transformed.

Distinct from conversion are forms of personal change that Travisaro (1981) calls *alternation*. These are identity changes that are not as drastic as conversions, but "relatively easily accomplished changes of life . . . which are a part of or grow out of existing programs of behavior" (p. 243). Travisaro cites such examples as a high school student becoming a college student and a husband becoming a father. The crucial difference between conversion and alternation centers on the degree to which the change is continuous with the individual's previous life and conception of self. Unlike conversion, alternation does not entail a radical break with the past or the construction of an entirely new self. This does not suggest that alternation is an insignificant social process. On the contrary, it is associated with most of life's key turning points. While the transition from high school to college student may entail no radical break with the past, it has profound and enduring implications for the individual's future. All aspects of a person's life are

subject to significant change as a result of becoming a college student. Moreover, the effect of these changes is expected to persist throughout life. Though less dramatic than a true conversion experience, this example highlights the powerful and enduring changes that accompany alternation.

The relevance of this literature for the study of individual activism comes from recognizing certain similarities between conversion and alternation and the personal changes that often accompany activism. The degree to which activism is experienced either as conversion or alternation depends on the level and forms of activism in which the individual engages. For most movement participants, nothing in their experiences even hints of conversion or alternation. Quite simply, the fleeting low-cost, low-risk forms of activism (e.g., giving money, writing letters, signing petitions) in which most individuals engage do not require ongoing interaction with other activists. This requirement and the gradual immersion into a new subculture set the stage for either conversion or alternation. What distinguishes conversion from alternation is the degree to which the group or subculture in question is exclusive and organized in opposition to the rest of society. Conversion tends to occur in groups that demand the exclusive loyalties of its members and maintain a hostile stance toward mainstream society. Alternation generally takes place in the context of a group that is relatively more inclusive and tolerant of the other attachments of its members.

Virtually all forms of high-risk/cost activism are organized through and therefore involve the individual activist in one of these two types of groups. By necessity, revolutionary movements tend to create groups that are exclusive, highly insular, and hostile to the society they seek to change. Therefore, something akin to conversion would seem to be a likely outcome of entrance into and absorption into such groups. Reform movements, on the other hand, tend to spawn groups that are more inclusive and tolerant of mainstream society than revolutionary movements. Nonetheless, they can be very demanding of a person's time, energy, and loyalties.¹ Such groups, then, constitute an

ideal setting within which alternation can occur.

Thus, theoretically, we should expect that those involved in high-risk/cost activism will be very susceptible to either conversion or alternation and to the long-term behavioral and attitudinal effects that accompany these processes. Empirically, there is even an emerging literature that suggests as much.

Follow-Up Studies of Activists

Though far less developed than the literature on individual recruitment to activism, there does exist a small body of studies on the personal consequences of movement participation (see Table 1 for references). These studies are hampered by a host of methodological problems, which I examine later. Nonetheless, they have consistently yielded results strongly at odds with the popular account reviewed above. Taken together, these studies suggest a powerful and enduring effect of participation on the later lives of the activists. Unlike Rubin and Cleaver, the subjects in these studies display marked continuity in their values and politics over the past 10–20 years. Specifically, the former activists were found to have:

- continued to espouse leftists political attitudes (Demerath, Marwell, and Aiken 1971, p. 184; Fendrich and Tarleau 1973, p. 250; Marwell, Aiken, and Demerath 1987; Whalen and Flacks 1980, p. 222);
- remained active in contemporary movements or other forms of political activity (Fendrich and Krauss 1978; Fendrich and Lovoy 1988; Jennings and Niemi 1981);
- concentrated in the teaching or other “helping professions” (Fendrich 1974, p. 116; Maidenburg and Meyer 1970); and
- continued to define themselves as “liberal” or “radical” in political orientation (Fendrich and Tarleau 1973, p. 250).

Taken together, it is hard to reconcile these findings with the image of the activists as depicted in the contemporary media account. However, before we embrace these studies as the final word on the subject, it is necessary to amplify the note of caution touched on earlier. The works cited earlier are beset by a number of methodological shortcomings (see Table 1).

¹ In her autobiographical account of participation in a local chapter of the Congress of Racial

Equality (CORE), Inge Powell Bell (1968) provides a striking example of the potential for absorption within just such a group.

Table 1. Follow-Up Studies of Movement Participants^a

Investigator(s)	Year of Participation	Year of Follow-up	Activists in Sample (N)	Control Group?	Before and After Data?	Resulting Publications
Demerath, Marwell, and Aiken	1965	1969	40	No	Yes	Demerath et al. 1971.
Fendrich	1960-1963	1971	28 ^b	Yes	No	Fendrich 1974, 1977; Fendrich and Krauss 1978; Fendrich and Tarleau 1973.
Fendrich and Lovoy	1960-1963	1986	23	Yes	No	Fendrich and Lovoy 1988.
Jennings and Niemi	1964-1972	1973	216	Yes	Yes	Jennings and Niemi 1981; Jennings 1987.
Maidenberg and Meyer	1967	1969	230	No	No	Maidenberg and Meyer 1970.
Marwell, Aiken, and Demerath	1965	1984	145	No	Yes	Marwell et al. 1987.
Nassi and Abramowitz	1967	1977	15/30 ^c	No	No	Abramowitz and Nassi 1981; Nassi and Abramowitz 1979.
Whalen and Flacks	1970	1980	11	No	No	Whalen and Flacks 1980.

^a Table was adapted from Table 1 in DeMartini 1983, p. 198.

^b Fendrich's 1977 article is based on comparative data on 28 white and 72 black activists.

^c Nassi and Abramowitz relied on 15 subjects; Abramowitz and Nassi, on 30.

The first problem concerns the timing of the studies. Only four of the studies (Fendrich and Lovoy 1988; Marwell et al. 1987; Nassi and Abramowitz 1979; and Whalen and Flacks 1980) were conducted after the close of what is popularly conceived of as the recent activists era (see Table 1). For the other studies, it is hard to know whether the reported continuities in political thought and action were an effect of an era in which the follow-up studies were conducted or an enduring consequence of the subjects' earlier activism. For instance, Maidenberg and Meyer (1970) reported that a sample of former Free Speech Movement demonstrators living in the Bay Area in 1969 remained active in leftist politics. Given the high level of activism in the Bay Area in that era, the finding may be a simple function of time and place, rather than the impact of the Free Speech Movement.

A second timing issue centers on the basic question of whether sufficient time had elapsed to allow for an adequate assessment of the impact of movement participation. In half of the studies, no more than five years had passed between activism and follow-up investigation. Moreover, only a small number

of subjects are involved in these studies. Only the Jennings and Niemi (1981), Maidenberg and Meyer (1970), and Marwell et al. (1987), studies involved more than 40 subjects.² And the first two of these studies share the timing deficiencies touched on earlier. Both were conducted while popular protest was still widespread in the United States, no more than five years after the subjects' initial activism.

Third, most of the studies draw subjects from only a narrow geographic area, sometimes a single city (cf. Whalen and Flacks 1980). This makes it difficult to generalize the results especially when the geographic areas are as atypical as the Bay Area (cf. Maidenberg and Mayer 1970; Nassi and Abramowitz 1979) or Santa Barbara (cf. Whalen and Flacks 1980).

Another weakness of these studies is their failure to make use of nonactivist control groups. Without such groups, one cannot

² Most of James Fendrich's research has been based on data gathered on 28 white activists involved in civil rights activity while students at Florida State University. In his 1977 article, Fendrich employs comparative data on 100 activists, 72 of them black.

establish a behavioral or attitudinal baseline to judge the effects of activism. Four of the seven studies in Table 1 failed to employ a control group. Even when control groups were used, the characteristics on which activists and nonactivists were matched often left the issue of consequences unresolved. For example, Fendrich matched his subjects on the basis of college attendance at Florida State between 1960 and 1963. While clearly an advance over the other studies, even this research design fails to allow for a clear explication of the impact of activism. What is at issue is the salience of the characteristic on which the subjects were matched. Matching is done to hold constant variables that might otherwise confound the interpretation of causal effects. Fendrich held constant the effects of time and place but left unexamined the influence of prior attitudinal differences. It may be that these differences account for both the activists' involvement in the movement as well as the later differences between activists and nonactivists turned up by these studies.

Finally, the earlier studies also lack "before" and "after" data on the activists. The usual procedure has been to gather contemporary information on the former activists and to then infer the effects of participation from the data collected. But without prior information on the subject, it is hard to determine the extent and significance that changes in participation may have brought about.

Correcting all of the deficiencies noted above yields a prescription for a very different type of study than has been completed to date. It would be national in scope, involve a much larger sample of activists, employ "before" and "after" on activists and nonactivists alike, and be conducted well after the activists episode in question. The research reported here generally approximates this ideal.

THE STUDY

This paper reports the results of a follow-up study of 330 applicants to the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project. That project brought hundreds of primarily white, northern college students to Mississippi for all, or part of, the summer of 1964 to help staff freedom schools, register black voters and dramatize the continued denial of civil rights throughout the South. As instances of activism go, the

summer project was time-consuming, physically demanding, and highly newsworthy.

The project began in early June with the first contingent of volunteers arriving in Mississippi fresh from a week of training at Oxford, Ohio. Within ten days, three project members, Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman, had been kidnapped and beaten to death by a group of segregationists led by Mississippi law enforcement officers. That event set the tone for the summer as the remaining volunteers endured beatings, bombings, and arrests. Moreover, most did so while sharing the grinding poverty and unrelieved tension that was the daily lot of the black families that housed them.

Prior to their participation in the campaign, all prospective volunteers were asked to fill out detailed applications providing information on, among other topics, their organizational affiliations, college activities, reasons for volunteering, and record of previous arrests. On the basis of these applications (and, on occasion, subsequent interviews), the prospective volunteer was accepted or rejected. Acceptance did not necessarily mean participation in the campaign, however. In advance of the summer, many of the accepted applicants informed campaign staffers that they would not be taking part in the summer effort after all. Completed applications for all three groups—rejects, participants, and withdrawals—were copied from the originals, which are now housed in the archives of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for the Study of Nonviolence in Atlanta and the New Mississippi Foundation in Jackson, Mississippi.³ In all, 1068 applications were copied, with the breakdown as follows: 720 participants, 239 withdrawals, 55 rejections, and 54 applicants whose status in the summer project was unclear. The applications were then coded and the data used as the basis for an earlier study of recruitment to high-risk activism (see McAdam 1986).

The applications were also used as the

³ My deep appreciation goes to Louise Cook, the former head librarian and archivist at the King Center, and to Jan Hillegas—herself a Freedom Summer volunteer—of the New Mississippi Foundation for all their help in locating and copying the application materials used in this project. Without their help, this research would have been impossible.

methodological starting point for the present study. Specifically, several application items (alma mater, parents' address, major in school) functioned as crucial leads in my efforts to obtain current addresses for as many of the applicants as possible. The information on alma mater allowed me to contact alumni associations for help in tracking the applicants. Failing that, phone directories were searched to ascertain whether their parents were still living at the addresses listed on the applications. Their help was then enlisted in contacting the subject. Using the information on college major as a guide, academic directories were scanned for possible matches. Finally, once contacted, the applicants were often helpful in locating other subjects.

The result of these efforts yielded current addresses for 556 of the 959 participants and withdrawals for whom I had applications. Of these, 382 (of a total of 720) had been participants in the project, while another 174 (of 239) had withdrawn in advance of the summer. Separate questionnaires were then prepared and sent to the participants and to the "no-shows." Participants were questioned about their experiences during Freedom Summer, their activist histories, and the broad contours of their lives, personal as well as political, post-Freedom Summer. The questionnaire sent to the no-shows dealt with these latter two topics as well as the reasons why they withdrew from the project. In all, 212 (or 56 percent) of the participants and 118 (or 68 percent) of the no-shows returned completed questionnaires. In turn, the completed questionnaires yielded the data on which the findings reported here are based.

This study closely approximates the ideal research design described earlier. It involves a large number of subjects (330) drawn from all over the country. The research itself was conducted nearly 20 years after the instance of activism in question and employs data gathered *prior* to the summer project as a baseline against which to judge any subsequent changes in the subjects' lives. Perhaps, most importantly, subjects were drawn not only from a group of former activists, but from the perfect comparison group: other applicants to the same project. This feature of the study allows for an unambiguous resolution of the troublesome issue of prior values. The earlier study of recruitment showed clearly that the no-shows did not differ significantly from the participants in the

values they brought to the project (McAdam 1986, pp. 72-76). That analysis also indicated that "the volunteers and no-shows appear as essentially alike on a list of variables: race, social class, type of neighborhood (urban, suburban, rural), home region, type of school, and major in school" (McAdam 1988). Holding so many important variables constant increases confidence in attributing subsequent differences between the no-shows and participants to the effects of participation in the summer project. The subjects in both groups looked very similar going into the project. The key question is, to what extent do their biographies diverge after the summer? To what extent can we speak of Freedom Summer as having constituted an instance of alternation in the lives of the volunteers?

RESULTS

One of the most distinctive aspects of the 60s was the twin emphases on personal liberation and social action. While it remained for radical feminists to give explicit voice to the notion that "the personal is political," the idea had, in fact, informed New Left politics almost from the outset. Accordingly, any assessment of the consequences of participation in the summer project must focus not only on the applicants' later political activities but on their personal lives as well.

Political Consequences

The original project applications included several questions that provided information about prior political activities. Not surprisingly, both participants and no-shows appear to have been reasonably active politically before the summer. This was especially true in regard to the civil rights movement. Fifty percent of the participants and 40 percent of the no-shows were already members of civil rights organizations. Seventy-nine percent of the participants and 65 percent of the no-shows reported some form of prior civil rights involvement on their applications. Similar differences were also found in regard to other forms of political activity. Thus, while both groups were politically active before the summer, participants were slightly more so.

Did this pattern hold following Freedom Summer or did the summer mark a significant

divergence in the political lives of the two groups? In answering this question, we will want to distinguish the short- and long-term political consequences of participants in the summer project. *Short-term* refers to the subject's political involvements between the fall of 1964 and the National Guard shootings at Kent State University in May of 1970. These dates were selected because they define the peak years of New Left activism in the United States. The *long-term* consequences of involvement in Freedom Summer refers to the contemporary political attitudes and activities of the participants and no-shows.

Short-term political consequences. The evidence from the follow-up questionnaires would appear to support two conclusions. First, the Freedom Summer volunteers were far more politically active than the no-shows between 1964 and 1970. More importantly, the differences in the activity levels between the two groups appear to be directly related to the participants' involvement in the summer project. Evidence for the first conclusion is summarized in Table 2.

By a margin of 90 to 74 percent, the volunteers were significantly more likely to have remained active in the civil rights movement following the summer. Just as important, the forms of civil rights activism the participants engaged in tended to be much more intensive than those of the no-shows. Thus the ratio of participants to no-shows

involved in southern voter registration activities was eight to one. Three times as many participants as nonparticipants helped organize civil right-related boycotts of northern schools. Twice as many returned to the South in connection with later civil rights campaigns. In contrast, the proportion of no-shows listing "on campus civil rights activities" as their principal form of activism was triple the comparable figure for participants.

With the rise of "black power," the role of whites in the movement grew ever more problematic. Consequently, the focus of activism for the white New Left shifted to other targets. The three movements to benefit most from this displacement of activist energies were the student, antiwar, and women's liberation movements. Not surprisingly, both groups of applicants report high levels of involvement in all three movements. As shown in Table 2, however, the volunteers were more active in each than were the no-shows.

This characterization holds for one final comparison between the two groups. The follow-up questionnaire asked all subjects to provide a detailed employment history since Freedom Summer. What was surprising was the number of subjects who had worked as full-time paid activists at some point during the 60s. Thirty-six percent of the volunteers included such a job on their questionnaires as compared to 24 percent of the no-shows.

Altogether, these findings support two conclusions. First, the volunteers were significantly more active throughout the 60s than were the no-shows. Second, the gap in the activity levels of the two groups was more pronounced than before the summer. This suggests that the participants' higher post-summer activity levels were a function of their experiences in Mississippi. Fortunately, more systematic data are available to test this implicit proposition.

Using information from the follow-up questionnaire, a measure of the applicant's level of movement activism between 1964 and 1970 was constructed.⁴ The continuous

Table 2. Percent Differences in Political Activism 1964-1970, by Status on the Summer Project (Percents)

Type of Activism	Volunteers (n = 212)	No-Shows (n = 118)
Active in the civil rights movement following Freedom Summer	90**	74
"Very" active in the antiwar movement	46**	28
Returning students who report being "very" active in the student movement	40*	28
Females who report being "very" active in the women's movement	66**	45
Full-time paid activist employment	36*	24
Mean number of memberships in political organizations, 1964-1970 ^a	3.1**	1.5

^a Mean rather than percent.

* = $p < .05$.

** = $p < .01$.

⁴ The activism scale was constructed using three questionnaire items. The first asked respondents to report the forms of civil rights activism, if any, they were involved in *following* the summer. A numeric value was then assigned to each of these forms of activity based on its intensity relative to all others. For example, joining the staff of one of

variable ranges from zero to 59. Not surprisingly, the volunteers' mean score (21.3) was significantly higher than that of the no-shows (13.6).⁵ The real interest here, however, is in identifying those independent variables that best predict variation in 60s activism. A simple ordinary least squares regression was performed regressing 15 independent variables on the dependent variable of 60s activism (see Table 3). The resulting equation produced a multiple r of .64 and an r^2 of .35.

As shown in Table 3, only five of the variables in the model were significantly related to the dependent variable. Three of these support the causal importance implied by the simple bivariate relationships reviewed earlier. However, the single strongest predictor of high levels of subsequent activism was participation in the summer project. What makes this finding all the more important theoretically is the presence in the model of four variables (age, gender, level of activism prior to the summer, and number of organization affiliations prior to the summer) which were earlier shown to bear a strong relationship to participation in the summer project (McAdam 1986, p. 88). However, with one exception, the significance of these variables disappeared when entered into the present equation. Clearly, the subjects' later activism cannot be attributed to the same mix of background factors that led to their participation in the summer project. The suggestion is that the summer served as an instance of alternation in the lives of the volunteers and was largely responsible for the shape of their subsequent activist histories.

What was it about Freedom Summer that encouraged the subjects' later movement

the major civil rights organizations was assigned a numeric value of 5. Participating in civil rights fund-raising was accorded a value of 1. Second, all subjects were asked to indicate their level of involvement in the major movements of the period: the antiwar, student, and women's liberation movements, among others. Defining oneself as "very involved" in any of these movements was assigned a point value of 3; "moderately" or "somewhat involved," 2 and 1 point, respectively. Finally, all instances of full-time paid activist employment were assigned a value of 5. The individual's activism score was the sum of the points on these three items.

⁵ Using a standard F -test, the difference of means is significant at the .01 level.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis Assessing the Effect of Various Independent Variables on Level of Activism 1964-1970

Independent variable	<i>b</i>	SE(<i>b</i>)
Ties to other volunteers		
in 1966	.201	.212
in 1970	1.476**	.632
Political orientation prior to Freedom Summer	-.935	.683
Change in orientation pre- and post-Freedom Summer	.534*	.223
Participation in Freedom Summer?		
(yes/no)	5.008**	1.848
Gender	1.787	1.885
Age	.139	.238
Family income prior to Freedom Summer	.0002	.0003
Level of activism prior to Freedom Summer	.213	.136
Organizational affiliations prior to Freedom Summer (<i>N</i>)	1.306*	.575
Years married during the 60s	-.106	.403
Years as parent during the 60s	-.326**	.606
Years employed full-time during the 60s	-1.136**	.440
Years in college during the 60s	-.708	.448
Attend college post-Freedom Summer?		
(yes/no)	2.452	1.965
Constant	10.263	8.431

$N = 189.$

* $p < .05.$

** $p < .01.$

involvements? Two variables in Table 3 suggest some answers to this question. One is the subject's own estimate of the change in his or her "political stance" pre- and post-Freedom Summer. Political stance was measured by means of a ten-point scale ranging from "1" for radical left to "10" for radical right. Table 3 indicates that a sharp leftward shift in the subject's political orientation following Freedom Summer is significantly related to levels of 60s activism. This suggests that participation in the summer project radicalized the volunteers and encouraged higher levels of activism.

A second independent variable that bears a strong relationship to the activism measure is the subject's estimate of the number of Freedom Summer volunteers he or she remained in contact with in 1970. The greater the number of ties, the higher the level of activism in the postproject period. This finding adds a structural component to the attitudinal interpretation advanced above. Freedom Summer did more than radicalize

the volunteers. It also put them in contact with like-minded people. Thus the volunteers left Mississippi not only more attitudinally disposed toward activism, but embedded in a set of relationships and an emerging activist subculture ideally suited to reinforce the process of personal change begun in Mississippi.

Long-term political consequences: the volunteers today. Have the volunteers remained politically active? How do the no-shows and volunteers compare on various measures of contemporary activism? Have the volunteers remained significantly more active or has the gap between the two groups narrowed? Let me take up the first of these questions.

One item on the follow-up questionnaire asked the volunteers whether they were "currently active in any social movements." Nearly half of the volunteers reported they were, while a quarter said they remained "very active" in at least one current social movement.

How do the volunteers' current rates of activism and political attitudes compare to those of the no-shows? The data in Table 4 show that the volunteers remain significantly more active and more leftist in political orientation than the no-shows.

Table 4. Percent Differences in Rates of Contemporary Activism and Current Political Attitudes by Status on the Summer Project

	Volunteers (n = 212)	No-Shows (n = 118)
Currently active in any social movement	48**	33
"Very" involved in anti-nuclear movement	11	6
"Very" involved in the nuclear freeze movement	10	5
"Very" involved in the environmental movement	11*	3
Mean number of memberships in political organizations	2.1**	1.4
"Leftist" in current political stance ^a	60**	41
Agreeing that "tax structure should be modified to reduce the income disparity between the rich and the poor"	56**	40

^a The designation "leftist" was reserved for those subjects who used the numbers 1, 2, or 3 to designate their current "political stance" on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 for "radical left" to 10 for "radical right."

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

What are the causal dynamics that may account for the differences between activists and no-shows. To get at these dynamics, a summary measure of contemporary activism was constructed combining three items from the follow-up questionnaire.⁶ Comparable to the summary measure of 60s activism, the contemporary activism variable is continuous and ranges from zero to 37. The volunteers also tend to score higher on the variable just as they did on the measure of 60s activism.⁷ The ultimate value of the measure, however, stems from its role as the dependent variable in a path analysis (see Figure 1) designed to shed light on the causal dynamics that shape contemporary activism. The model consists of variables drawn from four time periods. Time I represents the period immediately preceding Freedom Summer; Time II, the summer itself; Time III, 1964-1970; and Time IV, 1983-1984.

The goal of the analysis is to assess the strength of the relationships between the variables at these four points in time. A detailed analysis of the relationship of the variables at Time I and participation in Freedom Summer has been reported elsewhere (McAdam 1986, p. 88). Three of the four Time I variables (gender, # of orgs. presummer, and level of activism presummer) were among the strongest predictors of participation in that earlier analysis.

The four presummer variables were included in the model to assess the strength of association between them and level of activism, the principal dependent variable at Time III. If participation in Freedom Summer was as personally transforming, then the subjects' level of 60s activism should be more a

⁶ The applicants' current level of political activism was measured by a scale constructed from their responses to three items on the follow-up questionnaire. First, they received one point for answering "yes" to a question asking them whether they were currently involved in any social movement. For all those movements they reported being "actively involved in," in response to a second question, they received three additional points. Finally, if they were currently employed full-time in an activist capacity, they received five more points. The person's score on the contemporary activism scale was the sum of these point totals.

⁷ The mean scores on the contemporary activism measure are 7.4 for the no-shows and 9.5 for the volunteers.

function of their summer status than of their characteristics prior to the summer. Specifically, I anticipate a significant direct effect of participation on the subject's level of 60s activism, as well as indirect effects mediated through the other Time III variables: political stance postsummer, # of orgs. 1964-1970, and ties in 1966. I hypothesize that participation in Freedom Summer encouraged later 60s activism both by radicalizing the volunteers (political stance postsummer) and by increasing their integration into political organizations (# of orgs. 1964-1970) and activist networks (ties in 1966) that supported their latter involvements.

A similar set of dynamics is expected to link variables at Times III and IV. In particular, the level of the subjects' activism during the 60s is expected to bear a strong direct relationship to their level of contemporary activism. We should also see indirect effects of level of 60s activism on current activism as mediated through the other Time IV variables. That is, a high level of activism during the 60s is expected to have laid a strong foundation for activism today, both by cementing the subject's links to other activists (current ties) and movement organizations (# of current orgs.) and by reinforcing a set of

leftist political values that have persisted into the present (current political stance).

For the most part, the findings reported in Figure 1 are consistent with these hypotheses. Taken together, they provide strong evidence of an enduring political impact of participation in the Freedom Summer project. For many volunteers, the project seems to have initiated an important process of personal change and political resocialization and the beginnings of a kind of activist career. The importance of Freedom Summer to this alter career is reflected in the strength of the paths leading to level of 60s activism. While participation in Freedom Summer does not bear a significant direct relationship to level of 60s activism, it is linked indirectly to the latter variable by several intervening variables. Participation in the summer project is positively related to both the number of political organizations and ties to other volunteers the subject was involved in during the period 1964-1970. In turn, these variables were significant predictors of the subject's level of activism during these same years. In addition, a strong association exists between the subject's participation in Freedom Summer and his or her political orientation at the close of the project. That orientation, in turn,

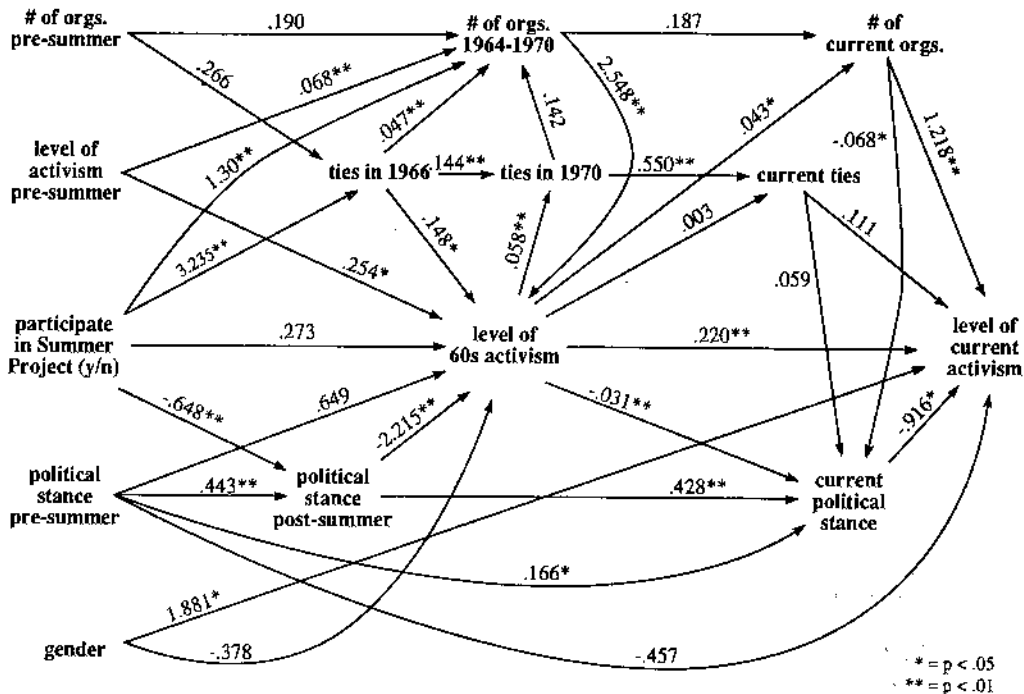


Fig. 1. Results of Path Analysis of Long-Term Political Consequences of Participation in Freedom Summer

is a strong predictor of the subject's activism between 1964 and 1970.

The level of a subject's activism during the 60s stands in a similar relationship to current activism as participation in the summer project did to it. The one difference is that the level of a subject's activism during the 60s seems to have exerted direct as well as several indirect effects on level of current activism. The direct path between 60s and current activism constitutes the single best predictor of variation in the dependent variable. But in addition, the two intervening variables, number of current organizations and current political stance, provide strong indirect links between the two variables. This suggests that activism during the 60s is related to present organizational affiliations and current political orientation and that, in turn, these variables bear a significant relationship to level of current activism.⁸

The picture that emerges is one of persistent differences in level of activism between the volunteers and no-shows. These differences are evident prior to Freedom Summer (McAdam 1986) and continue to exercise some independent influence over the volunteers' later activist careers. At the same time, it is clear that participation in Freedom Summer plays a particularly decisive role in shaping the applicants' later political values and involvements. In addition, these data confirm a certain self-perpetuating quality to individual activism. Activism, by its very nature, broadens the base of the activists' links to movement organizations and other activists. In turn, these links make it more likely that the activist will be drawn into subsequent activist episodes, thereby deepening his or her commitment to activist values and perpetuating the process of personal change that initial forays into activism have set in motion.

⁸ The only remaining variable that is significantly related to level of current activism is gender, with female applicants more likely to be active. I have refrained from discussing this relationship or the general issue of gender because the topic merits systematic attention in its own right. I am currently at work on an empirical paper focusing exclusively on "Gender Differences in the Causes and Consequences of Activism" using the data set employed in this paper.

Table 5. Short-Term Differences in Occupational History by Staus on the Summer Project

	Volunteers	No-Shows
Working full-time before age 25 (%)	39%**	59%
Mean number of full-time jobs held 1964-1970 (means)	3.9**	2.0
Mean years of full-time employment 1964-1970 (means)	2.2*	3.0
Employed as full-time paid activists sometime between 1964-1970 (%)	33%**	19%
"Strong agreement" with statement: "My participation in social movements strongly affected my choices about work" (%)	46%**	34%

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Personal Consequences

The ideological imperative of the 60s called for activists to recognize the political significance of their personal lives and to make choices about work, family, and relationships that reflected their politics. Any complete accounting of the impact of participation in Freedom Summer, then, must examine these ostensibly nonpolitical aspects of a person's life.

Short-term personal consequences. In assessing the effects of activist participation, I will again distinguish short- from long-term consequences. The period 1964-1970 seems especially appropriate for examining short-term differences in work and marital histories because it demarcates the span of years within which most applicants would have been expected to begin careers and/or marriages.⁹ Did they fulfill these traditional expectations and, if not, can we see the imprint of Freedom Summer on their personal and professional lives?

Work histories. Based on the data presented in Table 5, it seems clear that the volunteers and no-shows were as different in their work as their activist histories during the late 60s. The volunteers entered full-time employment later, changed jobs more fre-

⁹ The mean age of the two groups on the eve of the summer project was 23.6 years for the volunteers and 21.8 for the no-shows. By 1970 the average volunteer was in his late 20s or early 30s with the no-shows only slightly younger.

quently, and worked fewer years during the later 60s than the no-shows. The only work-related measure on which the volunteers scored higher than the no-shows is percent engaged in full-time activist employment. This finding suggests that the roots of the occupational differences between volunteers and no-shows lie in the different political values and commitments motivating each group. On the questionnaires, all subjects were asked to respond to the following statement: "My participation in social movements affected my choices about work." Nearly half of the volunteers (46 percent) expressed "strong" agreement with the statement as compared to 34 percent of those who withdrew from the project. A chi-square test shows this percentage difference to be significant at the .05 level.

Marital histories. Between 1964 and 1970 the volunteers were just as likely to wed, were married just as long, and got married at almost the same age as the no-shows.¹⁰ But it is possible that the volunteers' criteria for selecting a mate were more often influenced by their politics than was true for the no-shows? On the questionnaires, the applicants were asked to express their level of agreement with the following statement: "My participation in social movements affected my choice of mate(s)." Nearly two-thirds of the volunteers but not quite half of the no-shows agreed with the statement. This percentage difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. It must be remembered that the volunteers averaged nearly 24 years of age at the beginning of the summer. That meant that the majority of them had grown up in the 1950s and early 1960s, during one of the more romanticized and conservative eras of domestic life in this country's history. Even as they were challenging much of this socialization, the volunteers couldn't help but be affected by it as well. They were no less interested in getting married than their peers, but their vision of the ideal mate appears to have been politicized by their experiences in

Mississippi. They were now looking for a partner who shared their commitment to the struggle.

Current occupation/income. One of the most consistent findings from the previous follow-up studies is the concentration of former activists in the teaching or other "helping professions" (cf. Fendrich 1974, p. 116; Maidenburg and Meyer 1970). Data in Table 6 confirm the applicability of this occupational profile to the volunteers. However, the table also shows that, relative to the comparison group, there are few significant differences between the volunteers and no-shows in terms of their distribution into broad occupational categories, suggesting that participation in the summer project had little impact on the fields in which the volunteers have chosen to work.

However, one work-related difference between the volunteers and no-shows appears to bear the imprint of Freedom Summer. The no-shows have significantly higher incomes than the volunteers. The modal income category for the no-shows is \$40,000, while it is \$20-29,999 for the volunteers. At the other end of the income scale, nearly 50 percent more volunteers than no-shows earn under \$10,000. This disparity would appear to derive from the different political histories of the two groups. Perhaps the income gap has its roots in the volunteer's later entrance into full-time employment, a difference that previously has been linked to their greater willingness to subordinate work to politics. Excluding those who were employed prior to Freedom Summer, the modal years of entrance into full-time employment was 1969 for the no-shows and 1972 for the volunteers. In effect, the volunteers postponed the start of their careers, thereby sacrificing the market advantage they could have enjoyed as babies born during World War II or the early postwar years. Had the volunteers entered the work force on schedule in the mid-to-late 60s, they would have benefited not only from a boom economy, but from the relative paucity of competitors for an expanding number of jobs. Instead, by waiting until the early 70s, they confronted the same stagnant, competitive job market as their younger brothers and sisters.

But this remains mere speculation. While the different work histories of the volunteers and no-shows may explain the disparity in their incomes, it remains for me to link those

¹⁰ The proportion of each group to marry between 1964 and 1970 was 59 percent for the volunteers and 56 percent for the no-shows. During these years, the volunteers averaged 2.3 years of marriage, and the no-shows, 2.1. Mean age at first marriage was 26.9 for the volunteers and 25.9 for the no-shows. None of these differences was statistically significant.

Table 6. Volunteers, No-Shows, and Comparison Group^a in Selected Occupational Groups (percents)

	Volunteers		Comparison Group		No-Shows	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Selected professional occs.						
College professors	17	(34)	18	(18)	3	(108)
Lawyers or judges	8	(16)	12	(12)	2	(83)
Teachers (except college)	7	(15)	5	(5)	11	(465)
Health practitioners	3	(6)	0	(0)	0	(4)
Social workers	2	(5)	4	(4)	1	(40)
Clergy	2	(4)	2	(2)	1	(29)
Physicians and dentists	2	(4)	1	(1)	2	(91)
Nurses	1	(3)	2	(2)	2	(64)
Psychologists	1	(2)	4	(4)	0	(13)
Engineers	0	(0)	0	(0)	3	(115)
Accountants	0	(0)	0	(0)	2	(78)
Writers, artists, entertainers, athletes	11	(22)	7	(7)	2	(106)
Other professionals (including technicians)	10	(21)	5	(5)	7	(316)
Executive, managerial and administrative occs.	15	(30)	21	(21)	17	(723)
Sales occupations	2	(4)	3	(3)	9	(395)
Adminis. support occs., including clerical	1	(2)	4	(4)	7	(283)
Service occupations	1	(3)	0	(0)	5	(229)
Farming, forestry and fishing occupations	0	(0)	1	(1)	2	(90)
Precision production, craft and repair occs.	1	(3)	3	(3)	4	(178)
Operators, applicators, and laborers	1	(3)	1	(1)	8	(320)
Unemployed or not employed	12	(25)	8	(8)	13	(534)
	97	(202)	101	(101)	101	(4264)

^a The comparison group is composed of all subjects from the Census Bureau's 1984 Current Population Survey Annual Demographic File who share the same age and general educational level as the volunteers.

different histories to their earlier patterns of activism. I attempt to do this in a path analysis which features current income as the principal dependent variable (see Figure 2). Of particular interest is the series of paths linking participation in Freedom Summer to current income. I expect that participation will bear a strong indirect relationship to income as mediated by the subjects' later activism and work history.

The results provide strong support for a link between participation in Freedom Summer and current income. Specifically, the analysis documents two dynamics linking these variables. The first centers on the familiar positive relationships between the activism variables and the significant negative relationship between current activism and income. Participation in the summer project clearly encouraged many of the volunteers to

pursue "activist careers." In turn, the negative relationship between income and current activism suggests that the pursuit of such a "career" encouraged the subordination of work to politics, resulting in significantly lower incomes for the volunteers.

Participation is also linked to lower incomes through the mediating effect of the various work variables. Data in Table 5 show that the project veterans started to work at a larger age, worked less during the 60s, and were enrolled in college fewer years after the project than were the no-shows. In turn, all of these variables were significantly related to the total number of years the applicants have been employed. Finally, the more years the subject has worked, the higher his or her income. These results, then, clearly confirm the political or activist roots of the disparity in

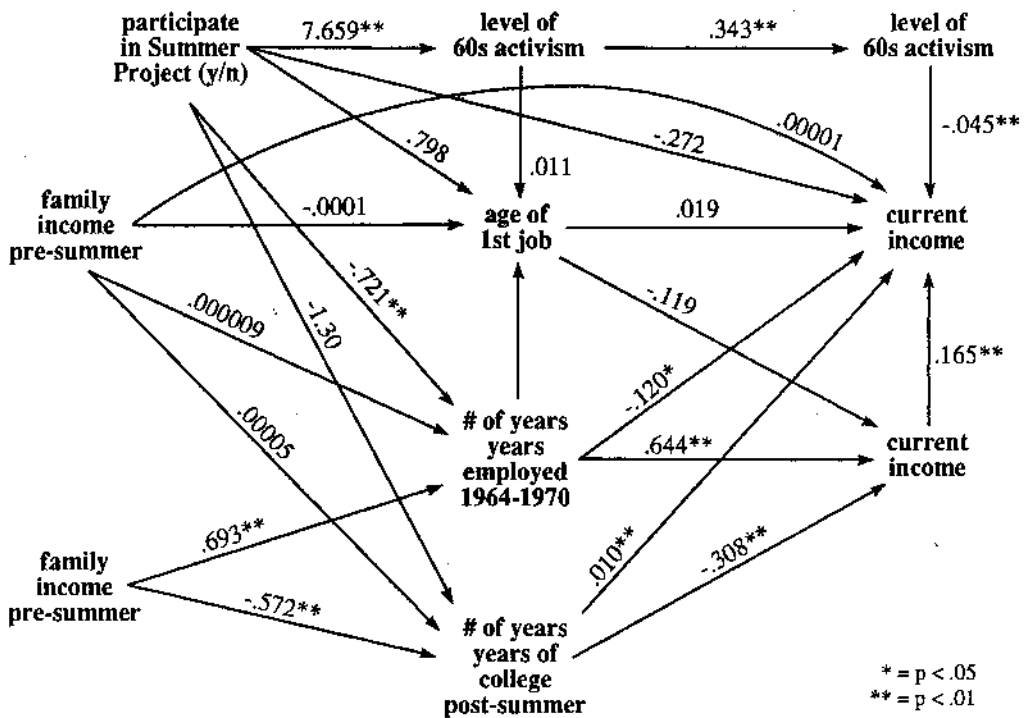


Fig. 2. Results of Path Analysis of Effect of Participation in Freedom Summer on Current Income

current income between the volunteers and no-shows.

Current marital status. Earlier I reported that the marital histories of the volunteers were not appreciably different during the late 60s from those of the no-shows. Yet, only half of the project veterans were married as of 1984. This compared to 72 percent of the no-shows, and 79 percent of the matched comparison group. What accounts for this striking difference? Table 7 reports the results of a logistic regression analysis that bears on this question. The analysis reported in Table 7 was designed to measure the degree of association between 15 independent variables and the applicants' current marital status (0 = not married; 1 = married). Significantly, participation in Freedom Summer is clearly the best predictor of the subject's current marital status. Indeed, it overwhelms all the other variables in the model. Without being able to assess the strength of the various causal paths linking participation to current marital status, one cannot know what it was about Freedom Summer or the biographical path it set the volunteers on that has made them so much less likely to be married. One can speculate, however. Marriages fail for a

variety of reasons. One of the chief culprits is change (cf. Houseknecht, Vaughan, and Macke 1974; Scanzoni 1978). Marriages are partnerships founded on certain assumptions about the world and the partners themselves. Should these assumptions be rendered obsolete, the likely result is a marital crisis and quite often divorce. Given the importance accorded politics by the volunteers and the rapid pace of change within the New Left in the late 60s and early 70s, it is likely that their marriages foundered on the political instability characteristic of the era.

CONCLUSIONS

It would be hard to imagine a set of findings that would contradict the popular image of the 60s activists more than the one presented here. Unlike the personalities profiled in the popular press, the summer volunteers have evidenced a remarkable continuity in their lives over the past 25 years. They have continued not only to voice the political values they espoused during the 60s, but to act on those values as well. They have remained active in movement politics. Moreover, in a variety of ways they appear to have

Table 7. Logit Regression Predicting Current Marital Status (Married/Unmarried) of the Freedom Summer Applicants

Independent variable	b	SE(b)
Gender	.241	.340
Age	-.031	.038
Political stance prior to Freedom Summer	-.177	.132
Choice of mate(s) affected by movement involvement? (yes/no)	-.114	.097
Currently employed? (yes/no)	.033	.581
Income	.130	.127
Participate in Freedom Summer? (yes/no)	-1.254**	.328
Years of full-time employment	-.032	.038
Current political stance	-.071	.207
Level of current activism	-.015	.027
# of current political affiliations	.143	.096
# of years college attendance post-Freedom Summer	.022	.061
Level of activism, 1964-70	-.016	.017
Family income prior to Freedom Summer	-.00001	.00005
Scale of current political attitudes	.042	.097
Constant	2.055	1.410

N = 217.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01.

remained faithful to that New Left imperative to treat the personal as political. Indeed, both their work and marital histories appear to have been shaped, to a remarkable degree, by their politics.

The findings reported here confirm the results of the earlier follow-up studies of the 60s activists. What makes the consistency of these findings all the more significant is the size of the sample involved and the span of years that have elapsed since the subject's initial activism. National in scope and conducted 20 years after the instance of activism in question, this study provides strong and consistent evidence of the enduring impact of participation in activism.

Theoretically, the results reported here provide a firm basis for two principal conclusions. Activism, at least of the duration and intensity of Freedom Summer, does indeed have the potential to trigger a process of alternation that can affect many aspects of the participants' lives. Secondly, the consequences of this process may be lifelong or at

least long-term. The results also shed light on the specific social processes that appear to account for the transformative potential of high-risk activism. One effect is attitudinal, the other structural. Attitudinally, high-risk activism is likely, as a consequence of the events participants are exposed to and their immersion into an activist subculture, to result in a radical resocialization of those involved. Participants are likely to emerge from the experience more committed to activism than ever before, thus laying the attitudinal foundation for ongoing involvement. The significant positive effect of the "political stance" variable on the various measures of subsequent activism attests to the credibility of this interpretation.

But the effects of high-risk activism are not merely attitudinal. The activist "careers" of the Freedom Summer volunteers also attest to the mediating effects of certain structural consequences of the Summer Project. That project left many of the volunteers tied to networks of organizational and personal relationships that helped sustain their activism. The series of positive relationships linking organizational or personal ties to subsequent activism suggests the critical role of structural embeddedness in sustaining activist careers.

Future research might explore in more detail the mediating effects of attitudinal change and subcultural integration on sustained activism. For now it is enough to alert researchers to these processes and to document the role they appear to have played in accounting for the activist "careers" of many of the Freedom Summer veterans. For these volunteers, the summer marked a watershed in their lives, a point in time around which their biographies can be seen in "before" and "after" terms. The summer left them attitudinally more disposed and structurally more available for subsequent activism. For many, New Left politics became the organizing principle of their lives, personal as well as political. In effect, the summer set them on course for a kind of activist career that has continued to shape all aspects of their lives down to the present. Far from being the fleeting, faddish activity often depicted in the popular press, activism—at least of the high-risk variety—would indeed seem to highlight the potential for personal transformation embodied in intense and sustained social action mediated through integration

into organizational and personal networks of individuals.

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