

PREDICTING THE ONSET, EVOLUTION, AND POSTGRADUATE IMPACT OF COLLEGE ACTIVISM*

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The topics of differential recruitment to activism and its longer-term impacts have generated substantial empirical research. Yet, the lack of longitudinal studies of movement participation have limited our understanding of individual activism's dynamics over time. Here, we use six years of longitudinal survey data and two waves of interview data from a class of college students before, throughout, and after college to examine predictors of variation in college activism, the ebb and flow of activism over the course of college, and the effect of college activism on activism two years post-graduation. Our findings dispute one consistent empirical claim in social movement studies and confirm another. Counter to the scholarly finding on the weak impact of predisposition on recruitment, we find that predisposition powerfully predicts variation in college activism. Consistent with the claim that significant early activism is linked with future activism, we find that students' activism at the end of college significantly predicts their engagement in activism after graduation.

One of the longest-standing topics within the field of social movements studies concerns the causes and consequences of social movement participation. Two research questions have dominated work in this area. The first is the question of differential recruitment or participation in activism: what factors predict variation in individual activism? The second is the question of activism's effects: what, if any, is the longer-term biographical impact of an individual's participation in activism? While these important questions have generated substantial bodies of empirical work, our collective understanding of the dynamics of individual activism remains fairly limited due to the static nature of much research in the area. We have relatively few time-sensitive, longitudinal studies of movement participation that seek to understand, not simply recruitment to activism, but its ebb and flow over time, as well as its longer-term impact. While studies of differential recruitment and the longer-term impact of activism abound, scholars have rarely sought to understand how the ongoing ebb and flow of an activist career mediates the relationship between recruitment and future activism.

This study advances our knowledge of these issues by examining an especially significant population, during an especially formative time in their lives. By collecting longitudinal survey and interview data on a class of college students before, throughout, and after their undergraduate career, we not only interrogate the over-time dynamics of activism, but also assess the impact of college on postgraduate activism, net of pre-college attitudes, identities, and experiences. College students represent a theoretically and practically important group to examine given their potential to bring about social change. While the prevailing scholarly consensus continues to stress the liberalizing/radicalizing effect of college, we offer—to our

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knowledge—the first systematic longitudinal dataset on college activism that can bear directly on these claims.

We take up three questions. First, what factors predict variation in freshmen year student activism? Here, we are especially interested in assessing the relative predictive importance of students' pre-college attitudes, identities, and experiences, versus the influences and experiences they encounter in their first year on campus. Second, in tracking levels of individual activism over the course of a college career, we ask: how is student activism shaped both by variable features of an individual undergraduate career (e.g., Greek life, study abroad, etc.) and changes in the broader sociopolitical context of college life? Finally, in measuring activism two years after graduation, we seek to shed light on the longer-term impact of a college activist career, net of pre-college attributes. We organize our review of the literature around these questions.

DIFFERENTIAL RECRUITMENT: INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITION VERSUS NETWORK-BASED RECRUITMENT

The factors shaping variation in individual activism have been researched and theorized since at least the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, to the extent that there was *any* scholarly interest in the study of social movements circa 1950, it centered on the question of “differential recruitment.” Studies of movements such as Nazism, Italian fascism, and Soviet communism shaped the scholarly consensus with respect to the questions of who participates and why well into the 1970s. The received wisdom was that answers to these questions were bound up with individual attributes—personality traits, psychological attributes, ideological commitments, etc.—that differentiated activists from nonactivists. While scholars disagreed on the specific attributes presumed to explain participation, movement participation was presumed to reflect the motivating force of some individual attribute or quality that either compelled participation or, at the very least, rendered the person highly susceptible to movement recruiting appeals. This was as true of the studies of student activism published in the 1960s and early 1970s (Block, 1972; Flacks, 1967; Keniston, 1968), as the older, more psychologically oriented theories of movement participation from the 1950s. This latter body of research harmonized well with the rich empirical work in political psychology that linked various forms of civic participation to values and practices acquired through a combination of family and educational socialization (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba, Scholzman and Burns, 1995).

All of this changed, however, in the 1970s and '80s as the more structural theories of resource mobilization and political process gradually replaced collective behavior and other psychologically oriented theories as dominant social movements perspectives. Both theories stressed the importance of organizations in the mobilization of movement activity. Together, these theories shifted analytic attention away from the individual attributes thought to compel participation to the collective recruitment efforts of SMOs and more informal movement groups. Instead of individual dispositions pushing people into movements, various kinds of mobilizing structures were now seen as pulling them in by means of network-based recruitment processes. Snow, Zurcher and Eklund-Olson (1980) signaled this shifting emphasis, inspiring research designed to interrogate the link between prior social ties and individual activism. Network studies of movement recruitment quickly proliferated (Anheier 2003; Baldassarri and Diani, 2007; Diani 1995, 2015; Diani and McAdam (eds.), 2003; Gould 1991, 1995; Marwell and Prahl. 1988; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Osa 2003; Passy 2001).

The idea that differential participation in movements is primarily driven by network-based influence processes supplanted the presumed power of individual dispositions. Beliefs and attitudes remained important to network-oriented scholars but only insofar as they helped to demarcate a pool of potential recruits whose values largely aligned with general movement aims. Broad attitudinal support for a movement was generally considered, at best, necessary but hardly sufficient to induce activism. This is why prior network ties were held to be so important:

if attitudes created a large pool of potential recruits, ties to others in the movement determine which subset of “conscience adherents” get “selected” for activism.

There are those who would deny even this minimal connection between attitudes and values and movement recruitment. In his important study of pro-life activism, Munson (2008) argues that movement participation is overwhelmingly born out of network-based socialization processes that transform individuals with highly variable views about abortion into dedicated pro-life activists. In short, prior attitudes and values tell us comparatively little about who participates and why. Munson offers compelling empirical evidence in support of his claim. Of the 82 activists interviewed for his study, 43 percent reported being either pro-choice sympathizers or having “mixed or indifferent beliefs” about abortion prior to their involvement in the movement. Munson argues that “real action often precedes meaningful beliefs about an issue,” with mobilization occurring “when people are drawn into activism through organizational and relational ties, not when they form strong beliefs about abortion (2008:20).” Munson’s and others’ research reinforce the prevailing view that network-based processes mediate movement recruitment, while casting doubt on even the marginal role assigned to prior attitudes and values in previous studies (Blee 2002; Galais 2014; Nepstad 2004).

Reconsidering the Interaction Between Individual Disposition and Network-Based Recruitment

In our view, however, there are compelling theoretical and methodological reasons for reconsidering the predictive significance of individual predispositions for movement participation. For the past thirty years, Bert Klandermans has argued as much, advancing a conceptual framework for studying differential participation that shifts away from a “movement centric” account to examine the *interaction* between individual predispositions and network-based movement recruitment efforts. For Klandermans, various predispositions—grievances, political efficacy, identities, and so on—shape the overall “demand” for movement activity among a given population, with the actual “supply” of participants powerfully shaped by movement groups’ network-based, recruitment efforts. Importantly, though, neither alone is sufficient to explain variation in individual activism.

Our theoretical perspective goes a step further to propose that the balance of explanatory power between individual dispositions and network-based, movement recruitment efforts is likely to be highly variable across different types of activism. Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, and Walgrave (2019) underscore this variability, showing how certain protests may have seemingly little, if anything to do with the mobilizing efforts of movement groups. Social media, “flash mob” style protests—like the 2013 June Days or Gezi Park protests in Brazil and Istanbul respectively—are becoming more and more common and would seem to require scant traditional organizational recruitment efforts.

Different forms of activism may also involve a different mix of causal factors and “the varying circumstances of the everyday lives and the structural locations of different populations are likely to affect the prospect of participation in different ways” (Corrigall-Brown, Snow, Quist and Smith, 2009: 329). Accordingly, we propose that predispositions are likely more central to the puzzle of differential recruitment than the current consensus suggests. Residential campus-based student activism is a prime example of a form of low-risk/cost movement activity that may bear a particularly strong causal imprint of predisposition. This institutional setting, with its dense, overlapping communication channels can facilitate the spread of information across the student body about instances of consequential activism scheduled to occur on campus (Zhao, 1998; McAdam, 1982: 125-40). The spatial density of college campuses, as well as students’ autonomy and scheduling flexibility, enable students to act rapidly on this information. In addition, college may afford students some protection from harsher forms of social control and repression.

This is not to say that formal organizations and informal networks play little or no role in facilitating campus activism. Rather, we propose that the spatial, temporal, and information barriers that complicate self-recruitment in normal, everyday life, may be reduced on residential

campuses. In practice, this means that the presumed relationship between potential activists and recruiting organizations may be reversed on campus. Instead of movement groups working hard to inform and persuade potential recruits to join their efforts, strong dispositions may motivate proactive students to search out, and affiliate with, activist groups that share their values or commitments. In these instances, the recruit may initiate the process rather than the recruiter.

Our argument has a methodological as well as a theoretical basis. In our view, that movement scholars rarely grant predispositions their theoretical due in the recruitment process owes, in large part, to longstanding methodological conventions in the study of activism. Taken together, two features of most studies of differential recruitment have made it difficult to accurately gauge the role of prior attitudes and values in the onset of individual activism.

First, virtually all studies of activism are retrospective. Born of the difficulty of studying recruitment in real time, most studies have sought, through surveys and interviews with former activists, to understand the factors shaping their entrance into activism (Snow et al. 1980; Munson 2008; Viterna 2013). This approach is limited for two reasons. The first is retrospective bias. Movement participation involves an intensive process of socialization into a distinctive movement subculture through which activists typically acquire a stylized, movement-centric account of how they came to be involved. These accounts offer insight into activists' meaning-making but preclude an accurate understanding of the factors originally responsible for their participation.

Second, studying activists following participation prevents understanding who they were on the eve of recruitment, and by extension, how their prior values, attitudes, identities or experiences may have mediated recruitment. With rare exceptions (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987; McAdam, 1986, 1988; McAdam and Paulsen, 1993),¹ most studies of differential recruitment, also lack a control group of nonactivists. Without such groups, researchers cannot know if and how activists' movement ties compare to those of nonactivists. With baseline data and a sample of both activists and nonactivists, our study is able to overcome both methodological limitations to better understand the dynamics of differential recruitment.

THE EBB AND FLOW OF ACTIVISM OVER TIME

While there is a sizeable body of work on the topic of differential recruitment to activism, the same cannot be said for the evolution of an individual activist career. Prior scholarship offers scant insight into the factors that shape the ebb and flow of activism over time. Indeed, it is telling that Julia Goldman-Hasbun and Catherine Corrigan-Brown (forthcoming) devote nearly their entire entry on "Participation in Social Movements" in the 2nd edition of the Wiley-Blackwell *Encyclopedia of Social Movements* to two topics, "Predicting Participation" and the "Consequences of Participation," and say nothing about variation in participation over time. Indeed, to our knowledge, Corrigan-Brown (2012) has carried out the only systematic empirical research on the topic. Using a nationally representative panel dataset that follows Americans from 1965 until 1997, she shows that almost half of participants either engage in "individual abeyance," moving in and out of engagement over time, or disengage. Corrigan-Brown also examines the role of sociopolitical orientations, resources, biography or life-course factors, and group affiliation in predicting patterns of participation over time. Interestingly, she shows that there are no significant differences in political orientations between those who remain active and those who do not. Instead, biographical changes and engagement in political groups are the most important factors predicting persistent participation over time.

By collecting data on our subjects over the course of their undergraduate careers we are able to systematically map and model variation in activism over those four years. This allows us to address three key questions. First, do first year activists stay consistently engaged throughout their college careers, or as Corrigan-Brown suggests, is it more common for activists to move in and out of periods of heightened activism over the course of four years? Second, how

often do early activists “burn out,” and cease participation altogether? Finally—and most importantly—can we identify specific factors that help us predict these variable trajectories?

The Impact of College Activism on Postgraduate Movement Participation

While nowhere near as extensive as the literature on differential recruitment, there is nonetheless a substantial body of research on the longer-term biographical impact of activism. Most of this research has sought to assess the enduring personal and political effects of New Left activism in the U.S. (DeMartini, 1983; Fendrich, 1977, 1993; Fendrich and Lovoy, 1988; Jennings, 2002; Marwell, Aiken, and Demerath, 1987; McAdam, 1988, 1989, 1999), though a more modest literature on the long term impact of activism by French “68ers” has emerged in recent years as well (Neveu and Fillieule, 2019; Pagis 2018). In their aforementioned entry on “Participation in Social Movements,” Goldman-Hasbun and Corrigan-Brown (forthcoming) highlight the consistent empirical results of these studies. They note that social movement participation appears to have long-term transformative effects for individuals and to help account for “[differences in] educational attainment, job choice, income, marriage age, divorce rate, and the number and timing of children. Similarly, individuals who join social movements are likely to continue to engage in political organizations and remain consistent in their ideology over time.”

For all of these studies’ impressive empirical consistency, however, most share a number of serious methodological lacunae. Giugni (2004) identifies a host of methodological problems that limit most of these studies’ contributions; many are the same ones that plague the differential recruitment literature. First, the retrospective nature of the data means that the effects of earlier activism are inferred from data on current attitudes and behavior. Second, very few of these studies feature control groups of nonactivists, to whom the current attitudes and behaviors of former activists can be compared (but see: McAdam 1988, 1989, 1999; Sherkat and Blocker, 1997). Third, the subjects in these studies have typically been drawn from among the most active of movement participants. McAdam (1988, 1989, 1999), for instance, conducted research on volunteers to the 1964 Freedom Summer project, one of the most demanding and dangerous campaigns in the civil rights movement. Whalen and Flacks (1989) drew their subjects from among those who took part in the burning of a bank in Isla Vista, California in the early 1970s. The extreme nature of these activist experiences raises questions about the representativeness of the subjects involved.

Examining College Student Activism

Beyond addressing shortcomings within social movement scholarship that limit our understanding of differential recruitment to activism and its trajectories and longer-term impacts, we focus on college student activism for an additional reason. One of the richest bodies of scholarship on the origins of adult political attitudes and behaviors attests to the powerful “civic returns” to higher education (Almond and Verba, 1963; Dalton, 2008; Dee, 2004; Hauser, 2000; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Putnam, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995). Verba, Scholzman and Burns (2003: 13; emphasis added) succinctly capture the scholarly consensus on the topic: “Educational attainment is, in fact, the single most potent *predictor* of an adult’s political activity.” We have emphasized the word “predictor” in the previous sentence to draw out the key implication for our own agenda. If, by whatever means or mechanisms, it is higher education that *predicts* adult political/civic activity, then, by implication, whatever level of predisposition characterizes a student when s/he arrives on campus should be less relevant to their longer-term activist trajectory. Consistent with the scholarly consensus on differential recruitment, the “civic effects” literature also stresses the “making” of civic actors through processes of resocialization that take place on college campuses. In both literatures, potential activists are more acted upon, rather than acting, with agency primarily vested in student groups and other campus actors.

In recent years, however, an important line of research has emerged that challenges the central claims of the “civic returns” literature (Brand 2010; Dodson 2013; Kam and Palmer 2008). The argument is that unmeasured, nonrandom, selection effects powerfully shape where students go to college, confounding the causal connections between higher education and subsequent civic participation. Kam and Palmer (2008: 612; emphasis in original) cut to the heart of the matter in questioning “the extent to which higher education is a *cause* of political participation as opposed to a *proxy* for other, often unobserved, preadult experiences and predispositions.” Needless to say, their stress on the predictive power of “unobserved . . . predispositions” resonates with the argument we have sketched to this point, as does their central methodological commitment to collecting “before” data on the “preadult experiences and influences in place during [their subjects] senior year of high school.”

METHODS

In 2012, we received permission from Stanford University to conduct a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of the undergraduate experience among members of the incoming Class of 2017. The study, which began in the summer of 2013, consisted of an extensive “before” baseline survey designed to yield a detailed profile of each incoming student prior to their arrival on campus, as well as six follow-up surveys over the next six years to track students’ trajectories.

Data Collection

Stanford University had much to recommend itself as a college campus on which to carry out this study. First, its size (average incoming class of 1,700 students) granted us a sample large enough to both confer sufficient statistical power and yet small enough to manage effectively. Second, the university had a very low attrition rate (between 6 and 12 percent), increasing the likelihood of retaining students in the dataset over four years. Third, all entering freshmen are guaranteed undergraduate campus housing for four years; approximately ninety-six percent of all undergraduates take advantage of that opportunity. This residential density granted us the kind of closed, insular community conducive to fostering student activism on a college campus. While our site and sample presented important limitations—which we discuss in-depth in the Discussion—overall, Stanford’s configuration of spatial and student characteristics made it a strategic access point for assessing student activism.

With institutional ethics approval and university assistance, formal data collection began in the summer of 2013, one month before first-year students arrived on campus. The online baseline survey took approximately twenty minutes to complete. Students answered questions that allowed us to construct a detailed profile of each student, including their predisposition to activism. The survey was designed to be a general study of the college experience; students were not told that a central focus of the research was on activism. To answer our specific research questions about activism, we gathered data on students’ sociodemographic characteristics, attitudes towards activism, prior activism and civic participation, salient issues and identities, and parents’ professions and levels of activism. Students provided additional information on their professional and personal aspirations, including their expectations about college, intentions to participate in different types of campus organizations or activities and intended course(s) of study.

After this initial assessment, five online follow-up surveys—which took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to complete—were administered to the same students in intervals over the next six years. Five of these surveys occurred during their undergraduate experience, including mid-way through freshman year (December 2013), end of freshman year (June 2014), end of sophomore year (June 2015), end of Junior year (June 2016), and end of senior year (June 2017). Students were additionally surveyed two years after graduation (June 2019).

All surveys were completed through Qualtrics; excluding the “before” survey, students received a \$20 Amazon gift card for completing each follow-up survey. Each survey was sent to their student email address, and five reminders were sent over the course of six weeks. Follow-up surveys assessed students’ changing attitudes, interests, experiences, extracurricular activities, organizational affiliations and informal network ties each year. Together, they generated an ongoing, time-sensitive, record of students’ activist commitments to allow us to simultaneously assess the predictive power of various independent variables—including prior dispositions, on-campus experiences, and sociodemographic factors—on students’ activism or lack thereof (see supplement for relevant survey questions).² Table 1 presents the response rates and analyzable sample sizes for all six survey waves.³

Table 1. Survey Waves and Sample Sizes

<i>Wave</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Students participated (N)</i>	<i>Usable sample for current analyses (N)</i>
Baseline	Pre-freshman year	828	743
1	Mid-freshman year	604	576
2	End of freshman year	626	574
3	End of sophomore year	594	593
4	End of junior year	542	541
5	End of senior year	541	518
6	Two years postgraduate	437	419

Note: 11,674 students were invited to participate in the baseline survey, yielding an initial response rate of 44%. Students who participated in the baseline survey were invited to participate in future surveys, unless they opted out by checking a box at the end of the baseline survey indicating they did not want to be contacted in the future. Only students who participated in wave 5 were invited to participate in wave 6.

We supplemented survey data with two waves of interviews conducted with twenty-eight students at the end of their sophomore and senior years. The stratified random sample of students was created by breaking the freshman year survey sample into subpopulations based on (1) gender and (2) level of involvement in activism. These two factors yielded six subgroups of subjects: women and men who were heavily involved, somewhat involved, and uninvolved in activism. After division into these six groups, participants were ordered using random number generation and the first six of each were invited to be interviewed. If a student was uninterested, a new student was randomly drawn. We aimed to interview thirty respondents, but response and scheduling restraints led to twenty-eight interviewees over both waves.

Three of the four co-authors conducted interviews, which generally lasted around an hour but ranged from forty-five minutes to two and a half hours. Most interviews were conducted in-person; three took place virtually for students studying abroad. Participants were asked about their experiences and activities during high school, expectations for college and Stanford, and whether these expectations had been fully or partially met. They were also asked about their notable experiences, commitments, and social ties at Stanford, as well as their expectations going forward (see supplement for full interview guide). Students were not compensated for interviews.

Measures

Sociodemographics. Sociodemographic data on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and political orientation were collected during all survey waves. Maternal highest level of education was additionally collected at baseline.

Predisposition. There is no agreed upon theoretical or operational definition of predisposition, or the specific values, beliefs, or experiences dispose someone toward or against activism (Munson 2008; Klandermans and Oegema 1987). We conceived of predisposition as having analytically distinct components, including: concern for one or more contemporary social/

political issues, strong “civic” values and beliefs, salience of civic engagement to identity, and intent to engage in activism at Stanford. Students reported these attitudes in the baseline survey through a dozen survey items. We then used an inductive approach to see how these twelve measures related to one another and whether they revealed underlying dimensions of predisposition to activism. The outcome of the exploratory factor analysis of these twelve items presented yielded three distinctive factors that we interpret as intention predisposition, civic predisposition and political predisposition. This analysis is in table S2, available from authors.⁴

First, *intention predisposition*—which reflected respondents’ intentions to engage in activist behaviors in college—loaded on the measures of how likely the respondent was to join a campus organization oriented around a social/political issue, get involved in on-campus activism, get involved in off-campus activism during college, and how important it was to the respondent to have a chance to engage in activism to address important social issues and to receive training to become an effective agent of political/social change. Second, *civic predisposition*—which reflected a respondent’s pre-college orientation towards social and civic participation—loaded on the measures of how important it was to the respondent to: make a difference in society, be engaged in one’s local community issues, create policy that benefits the public, and use skills to solve social problems. Finally, *political predisposition*—which reflected the importance of political engagement to respondents—loaded on the measures of how important it was to the respondent to: be politically informed, how important their political values are to their identity, and how important their commitment to civic or political life is to their identity. These three factors each had an Eigenvalue greater than one and explained 49%, 10%, and 10% of the variation respectively.

Disposition. We constructed index variables to measure disposition that were informed by the results of the factor analysis for the second and third factors. The civic disposition index measure is additive based on respondents’ answers to questions that loaded on the civic predisposition measure (table S1).⁴ The political disposition index is measured the same way, and based on respondents’ answers to the questions that loaded on the political predisposition measure (table S1).⁴ Developing index variables enabled us to examine change in responses over time and was easier to comprehend than the factor scores.

High school activism. A baseline dichotomous variable was created to assess whether students had participated in activism during high school. Participating included doing one of the following once a month or more during their final two years of high school: participating in a march or protest, working on a political campaign or party politics, or participating in social movement activities.

College influences. In the five follow-up surveys, we assessed particular identities and college experiences that may have increased or decreased a student’s likelihood of participating in activism. We hypothesized that majoring in particularly social justice-oriented subjects may help pull students into activism. Our dichotomous *social justice major* variable assessed whether students declared or intending to declare a major in one or more of the following areas of study: American Studies, Anthropology, African/African American Studies, Asian American Studies, CCSRE (Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity), Chicano Studies, Communication, Education, Ethics in Society, Feminist Studies, International Relations, Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies, Native American Studies, Political Science, Public Policy, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, or Urban Studies.

Students also reported whether they were a varsity athlete, and whether they were involved in Panhellenic Greek life. We used this information to create two dichotomous *varsity athlete* and *Greek life* variables, hypothesizing that these activities may pull students away from activism.

Campus ties. Respondents reported, for each of their activist commitments, influences that led them to join that commitment. Among those influences were three categories of campus-based social ties: ties to other students (*social*), teachers or classes (*academic*), or campus groups or organizations (*organizational*). We created dichotomous measures out of these to assess whether a particular tie was present in facilitating their recruitment to an activist commitment.

Full-time nonactivist job. We created a dummy variable where 1 indicated the respondent had been employed in a full-time job (not focused on political activism or advocacy) during their two years post-graduation.

Financial dissatisfaction. We created a dummy variable based on respondents' ratings of satisfaction with their current financial situation. Individuals were given a score of 1 if they chose "dissatisfied or very dissatisfied" and a score of 0 if they chose satisfied, very satisfied, or neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

Future housing uncertainty. We created a dummy variable in response to the question "In terms of your housing situation, do you know what you will be doing for the next couple of years?" Individuals were given a score of 1 if they indicated that they do not know what they will be doing for their living situation for the next couple of years.

Future job uncertainty. We created a dummy variable in response to the question "In terms of your professional, do you know what you will be doing for the next couple of years?" Individuals were given a score of 1 if they indicated that they do not know what they will be doing for their professional life for the next couple of years.

College and postgraduate activism. Most previous studies of individual activism have focused on participation in a single march, demonstration, or other instance of public protest. However, given our interest in tracking activism over time, such a focus on a single, temporally delimited event seemed a less appropriate unit of analysis. Instead, we opted for a more inclusive definition of activism, based directly on students' own understanding and categorization of their activities during and after college. While an inclusive respondent-based definition of activism is subject to limitations, our operationalization strove to come closer to peoples' highly subjective and behaviorally varied experience of activism in the real world than definitions of activism focusing on a single event or action. Moreover, the specific examples of activism described by our interview subjects reassured us that there was a healthy congruence between scholarly conceptions of, and our subjects' understandings of activism. In addition to instances of public protest—rallies, demonstrations, marches, a blockade of a major commuter bridge—these examples included: fundraising to support movement groups or campaigns, teach-ins or other public fora designed to increase awareness of an issue, leafletting of dorms, and advocacy of movement goals before various campus decision-making bodies (i.e., Board of Trustees, Associated Students of Stanford University, and so on).

To begin to assess students' engagement in activism, we asked each student to identify, from a list of twenty categories of activity, up to three activities or "commitments" they were involved in at Stanford. Only two of these categories, "campus or community advocacy" and "social and political awareness and action," were considered forms of activism (see Supplement for specific survey questions.) We used these questions to create an operational measure of activism. Our measure is a continuous variable, with values from 0-11 (with higher scores meaning higher levels of activism), assigned on the basis of the extent of their reported involvement in activism and the number of activist commitments they identified. The variable was constructed as such: first, students received one point for each activist commitment they listed (up to 3 points). Second, students received either 4 points each for reporting that they were "very involved" in either "campus or community advocacy" or "social or political awareness and action," or 2 points each if they reported being "somewhat involved" (up to 8 points). We used both students' reported levels of involvement (8 points) and their listed commitments (3 points) to construct the variable, but more heavily weighted the former because doing so better captured the extent of their involvement. To put this scoring into more concrete terms, a student who selected that they were very involved in campus or community advocacy and social or political action, and also listed three activist commitments, would receive the highest score of 11. A student who reported that they were somewhat involved in social or political action and listed one activist commitment would receive a score 3.

For the measure of postgraduate activism, a continuous variable measuring students' activism and midterm election participation was created. The variable ranged from 0-32 and was constructed from respondents' reports of their level of activism (and weekly hours spent

on activism) within different institutional contexts: paid employment, volunteering, organizational membership, clubs, and social media. We also included two measures from the 2018 midterm elections, including whether they participated in paid or volunteered work for the midterm elections (table S3 specifies variable construction).⁴ Like the college activism variable, we constructed the postgraduate activism variable to capture the full range and level of activist activities respondents might be involved with.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis. We used ordinary least squares (OLS) cross-sectional and random effects regressions to predict students' engagement in activism and activist dispositions over time. We conducted multivariate, split sample OLS analyses to show the predictors of activism at two key time periods: end of freshman year and two years postgraduate. To examine change within and between individuals during their college years, we used random effects models that combined some time-invariant variables (e.g., predisposition) as well as measures that could change over time (involvement in activism, disposition, other forms of involvement, political orientation, etc.) We ran random effects models to show the predictors of change in disposition as well as predictors of change in activism level during college.

Qualitative analysis. Interviews were anonymized, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were coded using thematic analysis, an inductive form of analysis oriented toward identifying patterns in qualitative data (Charmaz 2003; Gibbs 2007). Analysis assessed students' accounts of how they came, if they did, to be involved in any level of student activism. We developed a coding scheme to examine the complex mix of predisposition and campus influence that often informed these accounts. After a set of interviews were triple-coded for consistency, three authors coded and wrote analytical memos based on interviews they had not conducted. Biweekly meetings were held to align on coding practices, ensure cross-coder consistency, and discuss memos and emergent themes.

RESULTS

Student Activism on Campus

Table 2 presents our survey and interview sample characteristics. About half of our survey and interview respondents were women (52% and 50%, respectively). Roughly a third of survey respondents identified as white (34%), a quarter as Asian (27%), a quarter as multiracial/other (27%), and just over a tenth as Black (4%) or Hispanic (8%). Unsurprisingly, most students came from highly educated families; 84% of survey respondents had mothers with a college degree. About half identified as liberal (54%), and most graduated from a public high school (60%). Compared to the overall Stanford class (table S4),⁴ our survey sample included more women. Our proportion of white students matched the overall class, although we had more Asian and multiracial/other respondents, and fewer Hispanic respondents.

We begin our empirical exploration of the over-time dynamics of student activism by posing the logical first question: How much activism do we find at Stanford over the course of students' four years on campus? To answer the question, we provide a simple yearly comparison of the levels of student activism within the class. Table 3 reports the number of students, at the end of each of the class's four years, who engaged in any form of activism (that is, students who received a score of 1 or higher on the 11-point activism scale) versus those who did not (students who received a score of 0).

Not surprisingly, the distribution is skewed toward nonactivism throughout the four years. The percent of students who *never* participate in any form of activism averages 65 percent over all four years (see supplement for the exact distribution of activism across all four years). The more interesting and theoretically important question, however, is what accounts for the composition of these groups? What factors predict students' engagement in on-campus activism?

Table 2. Baseline Sample Characteristics

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Survey</i> <i>N = 743 (%)</i>	<i>Interview</i> <i>N = 28 (%)</i>
Gender		
Women	386 (52)	14 (50)
Men	357 (48)	14 (50)
Race		
Non-Hispanic white	257 (34)	13 (46)
Black	31 (4)	4 (14)
Hispanic	57 (8)	3 (11)
Asian	204 (27)	8 (29)
Multiracial/Other	207 (27)	0 (0)
Maternal education		
High school degree or less	91 (9)	4 (14)
Associates degree	47 (7)	4 (14)
College degree or more	678 (84)	20 (71)
Political Orientation		
Liberal	401 (54)	15 (54)
Moderate	180 (24)	7 (25)
Conservative	79 (11)	4 (14)
Apolitical/Unsure	80 (11)	2 (7)
High school		
Public	444 (60)	19 (68)
Private	253(34)	6 (21)
Other	44 (6)	3 (11)
Activist in high school	170 (23)	8 (29)

Table 3. Students Engaged in Activism over Four Years. N (%).

	<i>Freshman</i>	<i>Sophomore</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>Senior</i>
Not engaged in activism	369 (64)	388 (65)	350 (65)	330 (64)
Engaged in activism ^a	205 (46)	205 (45)	191 (45)	188 (46)
Total	574	593	541	518

Note: ^a Activism was measured on a scale of 0-11. Students were deemed as engaging in activism if they received a score of 1 or higher.

Movement Recruitment: The Relationship between Predisposition and Activism

We begin our exploration of the relationship between predisposition and activism by comparing in table 4 (see next page) the predisposition levels of students who engaged in activism and those who did not across all four years of college. The relationship is clear: however measured, students who engage in activism arrive on campus far more predisposed to activism than those who do not. It is interesting to compare these results to the figures provided by Munson (2008: 189) in his study of pro-life activists. While Munson lacked “before” data on his subjects, he drew on interviews to classify 57 percent of his subjects as highly predisposed toward pro-life activism in advance of their movement recruitment. He classified another 20 percent as moderately predisposed. The remaining 23 percent were deemed likely to be pro-choice sympathizers in advance of their recruitment and therefore not predisposed to pro-life activism. We likewise found that some, but certainly not all, students are highly predisposed to activism in advance of college. In particular, 68% of students said they were somewhat or very likely to engage in on-campus activism during college.

Table 4. Baseline Predispositions Levels by Yearly Engagement in Activism^a

Year	Intention Predisposition ^b		Civic Predisposition ^c		Political Predisposition ^d	
	Not engaged	Engaged ^l	Not engaged	Engaged	Not engaged	Engaged
Freshman	-.24	.41	-.09	.24	-.16	.14
Sophomore	-.20	.41	-.11	.26	-.13	.21
Junior	-.23	.40	-.03	.18	-.13	.26
Senior	-.19	.40	-.06	.16	-.09	.16

Notes: ^a Activism was measured on a scale of 0-11. Students were deemed as engaging in activism if they received a score of 1 or higher. ^b Intention predisposition values range from -2.371882 to 2.380547. ^c Civic predisposition values range from -4.004689 to 1.925659. ^d Political predisposition values range from -3.334069 to 2.410024.

How are we to understand these comparative findings? Munson interprets these data as strongly refuting the consensus that some level of prior disposition or sympathy for the aims of a movement is a prerequisite for successful recruitment, arguing instead that “mobilization occurs when people are drawn into activism through organizational and relational ties, not [because of] strong beliefs about abortion” (2008: 20). He adds that scholars “need to focus more on experiences and practices than on interests or preferences in understanding where and how participation occurs” (p. 195). But is Munson’s conclusion that prior beliefs and attitudes play little or no role in differential recruitment and movement participation warranted? At the very least, his findings do show that even a minimal congruence between individual predispositions and the aims of a movement is not a prerequisite for activism. That nearly a quarter of Munson’s subjects report holding pro-choice views prior to their involvement in the movement calls into question the “necessary, if not sufficient” view of the relationship between dispositions and activism and underscores instead, the agentic force of movement actors in socializing individuals into the cause. This would suggest, then, that prior beliefs and values are weak predictors of subsequent activism. But Munson wasn’t in a position to gather “before” data on predispositions and, as a consequence, to test the lack of predictive power of prior beliefs and attitudes. In contrast, our panel design and data on nonactivists and activists allow for this analysis.

Table 5 reports the results of regression models predicting level of activism for our two freshmen survey waves: the first administered at the end of fall quarter (about 10 weeks into students’ college experience) and the other at the end of freshmen year. Besides level of activist predisposition, the models include measures of the self-reported influence that ties to other students (social), teachers or classes (academic), or campus organizations (organizational) exercised over students’ choice of activist commitments. These three variables constitute the theoretically important measures of network-based influence so central in the literature. Our model also includes key sociodemographic measures of social class, race/ethnicity, and gender, as well as two variables indicating participation in Greek life and varsity athletics, two time-consuming activities that we hypothesize may reduce the likelihood of activism.⁵

At both points in time, our measures of predisposition are highly significant predictors of activism. What is more, the significance of predisposition does not decline over freshman year, as students become increasingly integrated into campus life and ever more subject to its influence. If anything, our three predisposition measures bear a stronger predictive relationship to level of activism at the end of the year than the end of the first quarter. The theoretical implication of these results is important: contrary to the general tendency of movement scholars to downplay predispositions as a predictor of activism, we show that prior values, identities, and behavioral intentions bear a consistently strong relationship to activism. These predispositions greatly aid us in understanding which members of the class do, and do not, get involved in campus activism; and not just initially, but well into their college career.

Also noteworthy is that, of our three measures of predisposition (civic, political, and intention), the latter bears the strongest predictive relationship to activism in both models. Nothing speaks more eloquently to the proactive role played by our subjects in “self-recruiting”

than this finding. As previously noted, to the extent that movement scholars have considered predispositions at all, they have been seen as synonymous with the prior beliefs and values of potential recruits. This is essentially what we are trying to measure with our two other predisposition variables. But if we are to believe our results, it is less the content of our subjects' values/attitudes, but rather the intent to act on those values, that is most predictive of their activism.

Predisposition and Campus Influence in Action

Consistent with the longstanding stress, by movement scholars, on the importance of social and organizational ties, our models also make it clear that campus-based influence and socialization processes matter to recruitment as well. Table 5 underscores the consistently strong relationship between activism and our three campus influence measures. The importance of ties to groups or other students in the recruitment process is reflected in data from another one of the survey items. For each activist "commitment" reported by students, we asked them to identify the factors that influenced their decision to get involved. In table 6, we report the number of students reporting each of these factors. The table clearly highlights the influence of both predisposition and campus-based influence processes.

At the end of freshman year, students reported a total of 78 activist commitments. The single most common factor motivating these commitments was a "prior identity," or a predisposition to activism rooted in pre-existing beliefs and interests. But many of the same students also noted the influence of another "student," or campus "organization." These results point to the complexity of movement recruitment and the role of both predisposition and campus-based influence processes in shaping student activism. It would be incorrect, however, to see these campus-based influence processes as somehow distinct, or independent from, our subjects' predispositions.

Table 5. OLS Regression Predicting Recruitment to Activism Freshman Year. β (SE).

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mid-Freshman Year</i> <i>N = 528</i>	<i>Freshman Year</i> <i>N = 527</i>
Intention predisposition	.436*** (.07)	.512*** (.09)
Civic predisposition	.177*** (.05)	.287*** (.06)
Political predisposition	.150* (.06)	.237** (.08)
High school activist (versus not)	.293 (.19)	.261 (.23)
Maternal education (college degree or higher vs. less than college degree)	.037 (.05)	-.032 (.06)
Female (versus other)	.225 (.12)	.232 (.15)
Black (versus other)	.895** (.29)	.647 (.38)
Liberal (versus other)	.014 (.12)	.181 (.16)
Involved in Greek life	.204 (.18)	.186 (.11)
Varsity athlete	.012 (.10)	.108 (.15)
Campus influence (social)	1.888** (.59)	2.618*** (.56)
Campus influence (organization)	2.273 *** (.64)	3.146*** (.59)
Campus influence (academic)	3.398*** (.55)	.591 (.91)
Constant	.090 (.31)	.519 (.37)
R ²	.421	.434
DF_R	514	513
BIC	1926.373	2181.248

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 6. Reasons Listed for Joining an Activist Commitment

	<i>End of Freshman Year</i> <i>N = 78 Activist Commitments</i>
Previous identity	53
Try something new	51
Stanford student	51
New identity	50
Organization	37
New student orientation	21
Dorm	21
Center for public service	10
Class	11
Faculty member	2

Note: Students could list activism as one, two or three commitments.

Our interviews with twenty-eight students make it clear that the mediating effect of ties to organizations and individual students is rarely independent of students' motivating predispositions. Rather, incoming students' activist predispositions often *motivate* them to search out campus organizations and/or individuals who they hope will facilitate their engagement with specific issues or causes. Of the ten activists interviewed, six offered accounts of their initial entrance into activism at Stanford that fit this general pattern. Consider the following three representative examples of Lakesha, Esther, and Fernanda. All three students came to Stanford intent on getting involved in activism—an interest that motivated them to seek out and join various activist groups on campus.

Lakesha was a leader of Black and queer organizations on campus. Lakesha reported that she actively searched for these organizations upon arriving on campus, explaining, "I was certainly lacking [groups like these] before I came to school, and so I definitely sought them out. . . . I definitely think it was more of my seeking them out than them having an effect or building identity." Similarly, Esther noted that her high school experiences shaped the interests she brought to college. Esther was involved in environmental activism after participating in an environmental stewardship program in high school, which "really shaped who I was [and] the issues I cared about." Esther was "determined to get involved with environmental groups on campus, thinking about doing urban agriculture. I really liked the idea of working on the farm here. I really liked that there was an international focus and I hoped to get involved with international social justice issues." When asked if Esther "saw groups and went for them," she responded, "Very definitely."

Finally, Fernanda was also involved in environmental activism, becoming a leader of key environmental groups on campus. She explained, "I knew I was going to join an environmental group, of course. I wanted to do that." But for one of these organizations, Fernanda joined because the group's president was a staff member in her dorm and suggested she join with him. Fernanda thought, "I was going to join an environmental group anyway, so I'll join." Her recruitment to this group was facilitated by her connection to the then president, who was also a staff member in her dorm. But this was not a case of the president "making" an activist of Fernanda. As she reports, she "knew" she was "going to join an environmental group" at Stanford; her connection to a current member merely facilitated the process.

There is another consequential dynamic: three of our interviewees arrived on campus highly predisposed to activism and yet were not involved in activism during either of the two interviews we conducted with them sophomore and senior years. In two cases, the student engaged in the same kind of motivated search to find the right movement group on campus with which to affiliate. In the end, though, these proved to be "failed" searches. In one case, the student didn't find any group to join; in the other, they were turned off by the group's approach and so declined to affiliate.

Our interviews also revealed cases of the kind of brokered recruitment that have featured prominently in the movement literature. Of the remaining four activists interviewed, three came to their principal movement commitments without the benefit of prior interest in the issue in

question. Instead, consistent with the dominant network account of movement recruitment, they got involved in serious sustained activism through the active intervention or outreach of roommates, resident advisers, or members of existing campus groups. Even as we highlight this second recruitment dynamic, it is important to underscore its relative rarity in relation to the predisposition/search pathway described above. Twice as many of our activist interviewees came to their movement commitments by the latter route than the former.

These results have important theoretical implications for how we think about and conceptualize movement recruitment. The current scholarly consensus tends to depict potential recruits as passive, at best—as eligible for recruitment on the basis of movement congruent values and identities. But all of the agency in the recruitment process is generally vested in movement groups, networks, or individual activists who broker the necessary ties and orchestrate the resocialization process that transforms “eligibles” into new recruits. This is not to deny the influence of other movement actors in the recruitment process, but simply to argue for a more balanced view that sees recruitment as a complex, interactive process involving motivated individuals both inside and outside the movement, all capable of exercising agency in relation to the recruitment process.

Predicting Variation in Undergraduate Activist Trajectories

Having sought to understand the factors that shape recruitment to college activism, we now turn our attention to the ebb and flow of participation over the course of an undergraduate career. As noted earlier, Corrigan-Brown found that over half of her subjects either disengaged or moved in and out of activism over a 32-year timespan. Given that the period of our study focuses primarily on just a four-year undergraduate career, we might expect to see little variation in level of activism from year to year, especially since our subjects—unlike Corrigan-Brown’s—were embedded in the same social environment for the length of the study period. On the other hand, college years are interrupted by three-month summer breaks that grant students an opportunity to reflect on the previous year and essentially “reset” their goals and priorities for the upcoming one. In addition, student housing—along with other aspects of campus life—tends to change yearly: students may decide to study abroad, or rush a sorority, or get involved in paid research on campus. In short, the episodic, interrupted nature of a four-year undergraduate career may encourage more variation in year-to-year activism than first suspected.

To better understand the factors shaping variation in yearly activism levels, we report two sets of random effects regression analyses in tables 7 and 8 (following page). The second of these analyses predicts change in students’ activism levels throughout college. But to fully understand those models, we report in table 7 the results of a set of analyses predicting change in subjects’ civic and political dispositions during college.

Our random effects models enable us to shed light on both between- and within-individual changes over time. Beginning with variation between students, intention predisposition is a significant predictor of a positive change in both political and civic dispositions—that is, students who entered college with a predisposition of intention to participate in activism were more likely to have a positive change in their political or civic disposition throughout college. We also see that individuals who had a higher political predisposition experienced greater increases in political disposition over time; the same holds true for civic predisposition and disposition.

Table 7 also highlights the impact that changes *within* students have for changes in disposition. A positive change in civic disposition is predictive of a positive change in political disposition and vice versa. Increased involvement in activism over time was also associated with positive change in both dispositions. Adopting a social justice major was associated with a positive change in civic, but not political disposition. Finally, there is a time effect; in junior and senior year, political disposition increased across the class. Interestingly, our socio-demographic control variables do not impact changes in disposition. Informed by these analyses we turn now to the models shown in table 8, which seek to predict changes in students’ activism throughout their college experience.

Table 7. Random Effects Models Predicting Students' Disposition at the End of College Years.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Civic Disposition β(SE)</i>	<i>Political Disposition β(SE)</i>
Baseline		
Intention predisposition	.458*** (.09)	.160*** (.06)
Civic predisposition	1.341*** (.09)	-.048 (.05)
Political predisposition	-.139 (.09)	.689*** (.05)
High school activist (versus not)	.337 (.20)	-.146 (.12)
Maternal education (college degree or higher)	-.018 (.06)	.043 (.03)
Female (versus other)	.277 (.16)	-.169 (.10)
Black (versus other)	.235 (.24)	-.075 (.16)
Longitudinal		
Engagement in activism	.144*** (.03)	.127*** (.02)
Civic disposition		.268*** (.01)
Political disposition	.730*** (.04)	
Liberal (versus other)	.134 (.13)	.380*** (.08)
Involved in Greek life	.061 (.09)	-.010 (.05)
Varsity athlete	-.004 (.11)	-.022 (.08)
Social justice major	.549*** (.14)	.136 (.09)
College year		
Sophomore year	-.170 (.11)	.098 (.07)
Junior year	-.092 (.12)	.196** (.07)
Senior year	-.195 (.13)	.546*** (.08)
Constant	6.492*** (.36)	.991*** (.23)

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 8. Random Effects Model Predicting Student Activism, Accounting for Prior Year Disposition

<i>Variables</i>	<i>β (SE)</i>
Baseline	
Intention predisposition	.410*** (.08)
Civic predisposition	.059 (.07)
Political predisposition	.135 (.08)
High school activist (versus not)	.464* (.20)
Maternal education (college degree or higher vs. less than college degree)	-.014 (.06)
Female (versus other)	.327* (.14)
Black (versus other)	.626* (.29)
Longitudinal	
Civic disposition	.092*** (.02)
Political disposition	.224*** (.03)
Liberal (versus other)	.154 (.09)
Involved in Greek life	-.024 (.08)
Varsity athlete	.190 (.14)
Social justice major	.198 (.15)
College year	
Sophomore year	.099 (.09)
Junior year	-.051 (.10)
Senior year	-.151 (.10)
Constant	-1.020** (.37)

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Our random effects models enable us to shed light on both between- and within-individual changes in activism over time, thereby introducing important temporal dynamism to our understanding of student activism. Including both predisposition and disposition in these models helps us understand the relative impact of each on student activism. Indeed, we see that change in disposition predicts more engagement in activism than a student's initial predisposition. It is, however, worth noting that while intention predisposition continues to be significant, this may be because we do not have an over-time, dynamic intention disposition measure; such a measure might reduce or eliminate the significance of intention predisposition. In addition, our models reveal that prior engagement in activism during high school, and being female and Black, are significant predictors of activism. Finally, unsurprisingly, we see that becoming more liberal over the college years is associated with becoming more involved in activism.

In additional year-by-year split sample analyses (available upon request), we also find that freshmen who were both highly predisposed *and* active during their first year on campus were very likely to end the year highly disposed to activism going forward. In the hot house environment of an insular, residential campus like Stanford, the process of social influence and resocialization is never ending. Constant, however, is the powerful imprint of one's activist disposition, at any point in time, on subsequent levels of movement participation. In short, our "punch line" remains the same: activist disposition matters—it's just that disposition changes over time, partly in response to one's experiences as an activist.

While the reciprocal relationship between activism and disposition is a key finding of these models, there are strong positive relationships between race and activism (with Black students being more likely to engage in activism over their college careers) as well as gender and activism (with female students being more likely to engage). While our data do not allow us to tease out the mechanisms driving the former relationship, it is worth noting the broad temporal context shaping these students' college careers. On August 9, 2014—on the eve of students' sophomore years—Michael Brown was shot to death by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, not only triggering violent protests in Ferguson, but also setting the larger Black Lives Matter movement in motion. It took just days after the mid-September opening of the new academic year for Stanford students to organize as part of the Black Lives Matter movement. Moreover, the movement dominated campus activism for most of the 2014-15 academic year, and despite the arrest of 68 students for blocking a major bridge in the Bay Area in January of 2015, the movement remained a vital force for activism during the 2015-16 academic year as well. Our interviews corroborate this finding, with three of the four Black students we interviewed speaking to their strong involvement in the on-campus Black Lives Matter movement sophomore and junior years. That is, the broader national and political context may have played an important role in shaping the strong predictive relationship between race and student activism on campus.

The Postgraduate Impact of Undergraduate Activism

Having examined recruitment to activism as well as activism's ebb and flow over college, we now turn our attention to the crucial question of the impact of college activism on postgraduate activism. Most scholarship proposes that there should be a strong predictive relationship between a student's level of activism in college and later in life. First, social movement scholarship on the "biographical consequences of activism" strongly supports the expectation of enduring personal and political effects of significant activism early in life. Second, literature on the subsequent political effects or "civic returns" to college life would seem to fully accord with the idea of enduring effects from early campus activism.

Two findings are worth highlighting. First, the findings reported in table 9 are generally consistent with prior results and these theoretical expectations. consistent with the results reported in the previous section, the relationship between political disposition and level of postgraduate activism remains positive. Interestingly, however, students' predispositions are not predictive of postgraduate activism. That is, a student's predisposition is no longer predictive of their level of activism six years later, net of the sum of their Stanford movement experiences.

Table 9. OLS Regression Predicting Postgraduate Activism. β (SE)

Variables	Postgraduate $N = 329$ β (SE)
Baseline	
Intention predisposition	.239 (.17)
Civic predisposition	.189 (.14)
Political predisposition	.360 (.19)
High school activist (versus not)	.023 (.48)
Maternal education (college degree or higher vs. less than college degree)	.117 (.13)
Female (versus other)	.137 (.29)
Black (versus other)	-1.407** (.50)
Senior year	
Civic disposition	.011 (.04)
Political disposition	.195* (.08)
Senior year activism	.304** (.11)
Postgraduate	
Full-time nonactivist job	-1.906*** (.53)
Liberal (versus other)	.573 (.30)
Financially dissatisfied	.015 (.34)
Future job uncertainty	.078 (.63)
Future housing uncertainty	.081 (.53)
<hr/>	
Constant	.102 (.83)
R ²	.218
<hr/>	
DF_R	364
BIC	2054.195
<hr/>	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

There also exists a strong relationship between senior year and postgraduate activism. This may in part due to the fact that our measure of postgraduate activism comes just two years following graduation; that is, our subjects are not far removed from college life and may still be invested in similar causes and activities as they were at the end of their college experience. We will only know if this is the case if we invest in more ambitious longitudinal research designs. Until then, however, our findings align with a substantial body of work produced by social movement and scholars of higher education finding a link between college and post-college activism.

What of Corrigan-Brown's stress on the importance of "biographical changes" in shaping the ebb and flow of activism over the life-course? The models reported in table 9 include four variables designed to assess the influence of postgraduate biographical changes on level of current activism. Three of these four variables are not significantly related to the dependent variable. Holding a *full-time nonactivist job*, on the other hand, appears to powerfully suppress postgraduate activism.⁶ Alongside the predictive power of senior year disposition and activism on individuals' current activism, this other aspect of their transition to adulthood also appears to exert a powerful effect on current movement participation.

We close with a surprise from table 9. While identifying as Black was predictive of activism in college, it is negatively associated with postgraduate activism. While our data cannot speak to the reasons behind this reversal, it may be that the powerful suppressive effect of full-time employment reported above is in play here. It may be that, lacking the financial safety net available to other Stanford graduates, Black students are compelled to support themselves, leaving less time and energy for activist pursuits.

DISCUSSION

Using a novel dataset consisting of six years of longitudinal survey and two waves of interview data on a college class, our study's findings help answer key theoretical and empirical questions related to the recruitment, ebb and flow, and impact of college activism. First, we found a strong, consistent predictive relationship between students' predispositions and their levels of freshmen year activism at Stanford. On the one hand, these findings challenge the prevailing network account of recruitment within social movement studies. On the other, they are fully consistent with a long line of research in political psychology attesting to the strong, predictive relationship between prior values and various forms of later civic participation.

Second, we found empirical support for the important role that movement groups (and to a lesser extent, individual activists) play in the recruitment process. Not discounting the powerful effect of predispositions on later activism, our measure of organizational influence vies with predisposition for pride of place in several models and is highly significant across all our models. Together the two variables account for most of the predictive power in shaping student activism.

Third, our qualitative data suggest a strong relationship between predispositions and organizations. These results strongly caution against treating the influence of predispositions and organizations as somehow independent of each other. Instead, in their accounts of movement recruitment, most activists described a process by which their predispositions motivated a search for organizations that allowed them to make good on the activist intentions they brought to campus. From this perspective, campus organizations are not so much the proactive brokers of recruitment as much as the vehicles that enable motivated students to realize their pre-existing activist intentions.

This finding has important theoretical implications. For decades, movement scholars have proffered an account of differential participation that has vested much of the agency in the recruitment process in movement groups or individual activists. By contrast, potential recruits, even those whose values and identities that were fully congruent with movement aims, were thought to exercise little influence over recruitment. Rather, the proactive recruitment efforts of movement groups determined which small subset of the disposed were ultimately pulled into the movement. Our findings support a different view of movement recruitment, one that grants at least as much agency to predisposed individuals as the groups with whom they come to affiliate. This is not to deny the influence of movement actors in recruitment, but simply to argue for a more balanced view of the recruitment process as a complex, interactive process involving motivated individuals both inside and outside the movement, all capable of exercising agency.

This theoretical implication also carries with it an important methodological injunction. To fully understand the dynamics of individual activism, we must move beyond retrospective research designs that preclude an assessment of predispositions' predictive influence. To accurately model the onset of activism requires systematic "before" and "after" data on those who do, and do not, become activists. Only by collecting this longitudinal data on activists and non-activists were we able to demonstrate the predictive force of predisposition on later activism.

We turn now to the other two topics motivating the research. By closely monitoring levels of activism over the course of a college career, we hoped to better understand the factors that shape the ebb and flow of activism over time. Our longitudinal results support two important conclusions. For all the predictive power that predispositions exert on freshmen year activism, their influence wanes over the course of a college career. Instead, what principally shapes the ebb and flow of activism over those four years is a significant reciprocal relationship between changing dispositions and shifting levels of activism. What is constant is the powerful imprint of one's activist disposition, at any point in time, on subsequent levels of movement participation. The point is that activist disposition matters—it's just that disposition changes over time, partly in response to one's experiences as an activist.

Our findings also hold important theoretical implications regarding the link between college and postgraduate activism. In framing this component of the study, we called attention to the stark disconnect between the voluminous literature attesting to the powerful civic effect of college on

subsequent political engagement and the emerging body of work challenging this perspective, suggesting that once pre-college attitudes and experiences are accounted for, the relationship between college and later civic engagement may be largely spurious. Importantly, our results accord more with the former rather than the latter perspective. Consistent with the emerging critique of the civic returns literature, we show that predispositions are indeed a powerful predictor of initial college activism. But, as noted above, college experiences also appear to independently shape the ebb and flow of activism over time. Most importantly, we find that senior year activism and our subjects' disposition to activism at the close of their college careers predict level of post-graduate activism. In short, both predisposition and the ongoing reciprocal relationship between activism and disposition play an important role in shaping the evolving college activist career.

This more nuanced understanding of the processual nature of college activism would not have been possible without our study's longitudinal approach. By taking into account our subjects' predisposition to activism and comparing levels of activism over six years for members of the class, our study was able to overcome some of the limits of the static, retrospective studies of movement participation and produce a more accurate, nuanced understanding of the origins and longer-term impact of student activism.

Even as we tout the methodological strengths of the study, however, we want to bring the article to a close by calling attention to two key limitations of its design, the first of which we briefly touched on above. Relying on a single measure of postgraduate activism drawn from a survey conducted just two years after graduation may distort the longer-term relationship between college and later periods of activism. Many, if not most, of our subjects may still be navigating the demanding transition from college to a rooted adult life, making this a unique and non-representative period of time in which to assess the longer-term impact of college activism.

The second important limitation concerns the generalizability of our findings beyond the unique undergraduate institution that is Stanford—and beyond undergraduate institutions in general. Relative to other colleges, Stanford is distinct in two key ways that may limit this study's generalizability. First, Stanford is an elite institution in its academic standing, social class composition, and selectivity; together, these features and the broader homogeneity of the student body mean that our sample represents a very particular group of college students who may differ in important ways from students who attend, for instance, larger public universities or community colleges. Most (though not all) Stanford students bring to the university experience particular social, cultural and political capital that have shaped aspects of their predispositions. It is possible, and worthy of further inquiry, whether the recruitment process may play a more important role of students, or individuals more generally, with fewer resources.

Second, Stanford is among the most intensively insular residential campuses in the U.S., with virtually all undergraduates living in the Stanford "bubble" all four years. Indeed, recruitment to activism as well as activism trajectories may differ among colleges with larger commuter populations or off-campus residences, where a lower density of students and fewer overlapping social challenges may make students less likely to be aware of instances of on-campus activism. At the same time that this feature leaves open key questions for future research, it yielded potential benefits for the present study, as a highly insular campus should magnify the kind of campus-based influence processes stressed by both social movement and civic returns to college scholars. The fact that our subjects' predispositions so powerfully shape their levels of activism, even at a highly insular residential campus such as Stanford, underscores the significance of pre-college attributes and experience.

That said, given the unique mix of features noted above, we advise caution in generalizing our findings to other colleges and institutional settings. We invite future researchers to investigate these processes more broadly. Indeed, we will only know if the strong imprint of predispositions on levels of college activism applies more widely when we have comparable data from a range of undergraduate institutions. Until then, our findings are empirically and theoretically suggestive of the power of predisposition, not only to predict activism, but to also motivate the search for groups and networks on campus that can serve as activist vehicles for proactive movement recruits.

NOTES

¹ This second methodological lacunae applies as well to the otherwise impressive and innovative wave of recent studies utilizing the new “protest survey method” (Boekkooi, et al., forthcoming; Klandermans et al., 2014; Walgrave and Verhulst, 2011; Walgrave and Wouters, 2014; This labor-intensive new method involves sending teams of researchers to street demonstrations to randomly select and survey large numbers of activists regarding their reasons for participating, prior experiences, connections to other protesters, among other topics. Even as we celebrate the many virtues of the protest survey method and the far richer portrait of contemporary activists it has given us, the lack of comparable data on nonparticipants remains a serious problem.

² Supplement available here: https://osf.io/gdfkq/?view_only=4f1c788381214ab7b5f0be0e73bc41bf

³ To examine attrition across survey waves, we ran an OLS regression to investigate whether any of the following variables were associated with sustained participation throughout the entire study: race/ethnicity, gender, high school type, mother's level of education, political orientation at wave one, high-school activism, and activism level at wave two. The results of this regression suggest that students who were female and politically liberal at wave one were more likely to participate in all survey waves ($p > .01$ and $p > .05$ respectively) and that students who attended private high schools were less likely to participate in all survey waves ($p > .05$). These data are available upon request.

⁴ Supplemental tables can be requested by email at priya.fielding-singh@fcs.utah.edu.

⁵ In discussing our results, we have chosen to focus most of our attention on the three variables—predisposition, organizational influence, and social influence—of greatest theoretical relevance. It is still worth calling attention to the gender and race effects in our models. The effects may appear to be small and, in the case of race, in some years negligible, but that largely owes to our small N and the overwhelming predictive power of the aforementioned three variables. In point of fact, the imprint of gender and race are clear in our data. Females are nearly twice as likely to be activists as males. And across all four years, nearly 20 percent of African-American respondents are activists, as compared to just over 10 percent for all other racial/ethnic groups.

⁶ It's worth noting, however, that our dependent variable (measure of postgraduate activism) includes a full-time career in an activist job, which is negatively associated with a full-time career in a nonactivist job.

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