Political participation across the life cycle an analysis of Canadian aging patterns.

Helen C. Leduc
University of Windsor

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ACROSS THE LIFE CYCLE:
AN ANALYSIS OF CANADIAN AGING PATTERNS

by

Helen C. LeDuc

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1984
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VITA AUCTORIS
ABSTRACT

Gerontology, as a field of research, is becoming increasingly important in Canada. Palmore's (1974) conclusion that organizational and community activity is one of the criteria for successful aging provides the theme for this study. The investigation measured change in activity levels as Canadians aged across a five-year time period. Political participation, which is one dimension of social activity, served as the dependent measure. A panel of respondents allowed for the tracking of individuals from 1974 to 1979. In addition to political participation, political interest was examined in order to assess whether any increase in activity was related to interest or was purely social in nature.

Data for the study were drawn from the post-election national surveys conducted by Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc and Pampnett in 1974 and 1979. Both the cross-sectional respondents as well as a panel of 1295 Canadians were used in the analysis. The measure of activity employed was a scale first developed by Burke (1976). The population was divided into two age classifications: a life cycle group and an over 55 group. Differences between men and women as well as high and low socio-economic status were examined.
Results showed that when both cross-sectional data and the panel were used, the typical curvilinear pattern of political participation (Milbrath, 1965) was present for the life cycle age groups. However, when the over 55 were analysed, the pattern of decline did not hold for all age groups. An increase in activity level was seen for the over 70 panel respondents from 1974 to 1979. While women begin to show an increase in activity around age 65, men increase only after age 70. Also, women show a decreasing interest in politics despite an increase in activity levels. Those in the upper strata of society participate more across the life cycle than those in the lower strata but this difference is negligible after age 65. Higher status Canadians who are over 55 decrease substantially until age 70 when a reversal of activity levels occurs and high and low status groups equalize.

The study provides preliminary evidence that activity does not necessarily decline in a sample of healthy older Canadians. Further research using other measures of social activity and focusing specifically on the elderly will benefit the growing knowledge of the 'elder Canadian'.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express sincere thanks to my advisor, Dr. Ann McCabe, whose continuous encouragement and supervision provided the necessary stimulus to finish this project. To Dr. I. Hirta, whose attention to detail and meticulous comments on the final draft, I offer my sincere appreciation. I would also like to thank Dr. M. Starr for his special interest in methodology and Dr. J. Duthie for his enthusiasm for the study of gerontology. A word of personal thanks to Larry LeDuc who originally planted the idea for such a study and, as a primary investigator, prodded the secondary investigator along the path to completion. Last, but very importantly, I wish to thank my three sons, Brian, A.J., and Jason, who, in their formative years, came to realize that education is an ongoing process and in order to remain active, a mother must continue to learn well into "old age".
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present study was undertaken to examine patterns of political participation across the life cycle with particular emphasis on the older participant. A national Canadian sample provides the data for this examination of Canadian life cycle trends. Previous life cycle participation studies have been carried out on samples from other countries, e.g. United States, and these studies provide the basis for a comparison with Canadian data.

The historical focus of research in the area of developmental psychology has been on the growing and maturing individual from birth through adolescence. For example, the developmental theories of both Piaget and Freud were limited to the early periods of life and thus growth and development beyond the adolescent years was of limited interest. Prior to 1946 when the gerontological unit of the National Institute of Health was organized, there was little recognition of development continuing beyond adolescence (Birren and Schaie, 1977). The first conference held by the American Psychological Association which focused on the developmental aspects of aging beyond adolescence was in 1955. However, in the past 25 years, with an increase in life expectancy and the consequent increasing number of older adults in the population, interest in growth and
development across the entire life cycle has generated a whole new area for research.

One of the first developmental theories that included the whole life span was the 'stage' theory of Erikson (1963). Included in his 'eight stages of man' were three stages covering periods beyond adolescence and reflecting the notion that development results from the interaction of inner and outer forces producing a psychosocial conflict. Erikson (1963) states that this dualistic force in development results from

"(1) the human personality in principle developing in steps predetermined in the growing person's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with, a widening social radius; and (2) that society, in principle, tends to be constituted as to meet and invite this succession of potentialities for interaction and attempts to safeguard and to encourage the proper rate and the proper sequence of their enrolling" (p.270).

According to Birren (1964) there are two criteria for successful research on aging. One is an inner or psychological criterion and the other is an outer or social criterion. This psychosocial interaction provides the web from which studies on aging must be disentangled in order to investigate individual or group behaviour. Consequently,
any study of the life cycle must consider variables that originate in biological and inherited factors, historical events, psychological and sociological interactions, and demography. By recognizing the possibility for multiple interactions between the individual and the environment the researcher can approach the study of aging more realistically.

According to Baltes, Reese and Wesselrode, (1977) the developmental psychologist, who is interested in the whole life span, is concerned with phenomena similar to those that occur in research on childhood, namely, behavioural changes and the processes leading to these changes. Consequently, the tasks of the developmentalist centre around two specific issues: intraindividual change (i.e. changes within an individual over time) and interindividual differences (i.e. differences between two individuals at the same time).

Baltes et al. (1977) also suggested three components of developmental research necessary for the study of life cycle processes: description, explanation, and modification or optimization. Description centres around delineating what changes are occurring and when these changes occur. Traditionally, development was viewed as unidirectional, irreversible, goal directed, and universal, that is, similar to biological development and saturation. Within the adult years there are subtle phases that serve to locate and describe an individual over the course of the life cycle.
Unlike infancy and childhood, where children in certain age divisions exhibit common patterns and stages of development, adult life phases are not so easily delineated.

Current gerontological research studies have not generally found, with any certainty, any specific ages at which a person will exhibit a definite behaviour or level of performance characteristic of all persons in that same age group. The difficulty in explaining adult development by assigning specific behaviours to certain age groups is the confounding of multifaceted individual life experiences that compound over the life span. For instance, parenthood may occur at an early age before establishing a career or at a later age when career goals have been met. Similarly, retirement may be compulsory at age 65 for some people but neither mandatory nor possible for others (housewives, farmers). Change across the life span may be multidirectional and there may be increases or decreases in measures of behaviour. Horn and Cattell (1967) state that intelligence can reflect different processes of acquisition influenced by different antecedents and patterns of change over the life cycle. Individual intelligence is both 'fluid', characterized by a fast increase in performance, an early peak, and a rapid decline during adulthood and aging and 'crystallized', characterized by a slow increase in performance, a late peak and a high stability or slow decline.
With a few exceptions, such as disengagement and activity theories discussed below, attempts at explanations of aging behaviour have generally not been broadly based. These attempts have been directed to specific areas of behaviour (e.g., Eis dorfer, 1968; memory and arousal; McFarland, 1968; perception).

The final question for the gerontologist in developmental study is how to change, modify or optimize the processes associated with aging. Through the application of research results to policy decisions, the quality of life for adults and more specifically the elderly can be improved. For example, information about the impact of environment has been used extensively for improvement in institutional care (Pincus, 1968; Kahana and Kahana, 1970).

In reality, old age is the last phase of the human life cycle. The notion of growing old is bound up with that of change and like that of the child is a continuous process. Despite some research evidence of declining physiological functions, change must be considered in the context of the whole individual with attention to psychological, social and cultural influences. Individual as well as group change must be considered in the study of the changes associated with growing old. Any unavailing image or misconceptions of behaviour within the age group considered 'elderly' might be investigated if researchers could measure both intraindividual change and interindividual differences.
Developmental research that, until recently, had stressed youth, is now becoming more concerned with the needs and behaviours of the elderly and gerontological research has come to recognize demographic trends as well as both the within person and between person source of variation (Palmore, 1974).

Based on recent census data both in the United States and Canada, demographers have documented an increase in life expectancy as well a proportional increase in the numbers of elderly in the population. There are more elderly and they are living longer. In the United States in 1870 the older population, as defined as those over 65, made up only 2.9% of the total census. This percentage increased to 4.1% in 1900, 6.3% in 1940 and 9.9% in the 1970 census (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1977). In actual numbers the percentage represents 1.4 million in 1870 and 20 million in 1970 or a seventeen fold increase. The United States, which is representative of an advanced technological nation, can account for the proportional increase in the numbers of aged in the population by such factors as an improvement in medical care, lower birth rates, better nutrition and a generalized advanced standard of living.

Similarly, in Canada, census figures show that from 1901 to 1970 the proportion of those over 65 in the population increased from 5.1% to 8.7% (Marshall, 1980). According to Denton, (1980) the projected elderly
population growth from 1976 to 2051 will show a doubling in percentage from 8.7% to 17.7%. The potential impact of this rapid growth rate of older people is just beginning to be felt in the increasing demands by the older population for medical care, housing, transportation, and basic economic relief. During this extended life time, the participation in, and the variety of daily activities experienced by, the elderly have become a rich source of interest to the developmental researcher. Marshall (1980) discusses the lack of large scale survey data in Canadian social gerontology. Within a society that will experience a different age structure in the future, a lack of knowledge about aging may hinder a nation in providing adequately for the older segment of the population (Marshall, 1980).

In order to define aging for the purpose of the present study it is necessary to discriminate between 'age' per se and the 'process of aging'. Age refers to the person's chronological age i.e. the number of years from birth to time of measurement of a particular variable. Human aging can refer to a great number of different and imperfectly correlated dimensions. These important dimensions are physiological, psychological and sociological aging (Levin and Levin, 1980). Physiological aging can refer to the biological changes that take place over time with regard to the various bodily systems. The heart 'ages' in that its capacity for work decreases as time passes (Murray and Zeltner, 1979). This decrease represents a unidirectional
process considered as a declining function. All individuals undergo these biological changes which are quite predictable. The only variant is the rate at which the changes occur from one individual to the next. The rate of social aging, which involves adjusting to changes in roles, relationships and interactions with other persons, varies with individuals and the sequence varies among different cultures and subcultures. After retiring, a person may increase or decrease personal social interactions many times. There is also a form of psychological aging involving many changes in personality revolving around attitudes, values and behavioural tendencies and a decline in sensory and psychomotor processes. For this aspect of aging there is variation both in the rate and sequence of change. In the case of physiological aging the individual exerts little control over the aging process whereas in the realm of social aging the individual can freely choose to be involved or not be involved depending on the circumstances at a particular moment in time.

The question of why some people live longer than others and are more successful at aging has challenged ancient philosophers as well as modern day gerontologists. Palmore and Luexert (1972) concluded that the three strongest variables related to successful aging were: life satisfaction, organizational activity (involving religious services and other meetings) and internal control orientation. The second factor, activity, is the focus of
this study.

One of the most controversial aging theories proposed by social gerontological researchers was the disengagement theory of Cumming and Henry (1961). This theory posits an inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement, resulting in decreased interaction between the aging person and others in the social system. The process may be initiated by the individual or by others in the situation. The aging person may withdraw more markedly from some classes of people while remaining relatively close to others. A withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by a preoccupation with oneself; certain institutions in society may make this withdrawal easy. When the disengagement is complete, the equilibrium which existed in middle life between the individual and society has given way to a new equilibrium characterized by a greater distance and an altered type of relationship.

According to the disengagement theorists, as people grow older and experience a narrowing of their social circle, their activity levels decrease as well.

Contrary to the disengagement theory is the activity theory. The activity theory is the oldest and probably most widely accepted of social aging theories. This theory states that in order to offset role loss, and to preserve high morale and self-esteem, people in the older age group must remain socially and psychologically active. Despite physical disability which might inhibit certain activities,
keeping active must be sustained by assuming optional roles since social activity is the essence of life (Decker, 1980). By continuing a moderately active lifestyle, a sense of well being and self esteem are preserved over the years preceding death. Thus older people try to deny the existence of old age as long as possible and successful aging consists in being as much like the middle aged person as possible. If older people relinquish one role then they assume another useful role to take its place.

Another social gerontological theory, developed from the work of Riley et al., (1972) and supplementing activity and disengagement theories is the age stratification theory. People belong to a particular age group because they happen to have been born around the same time and consequently have lived through a common historical period with its unique characteristics. These people are called cohorts which are ‘generations of individuals born at the same time’ (Riley and Foner, 1972). Every individual is a member of a cohort and is distinguished from other cohorts in identifiable ways. This theory views society as composed of different age classes or age groups based on two distinct dimensions, a life course dimension and an historical dimension. The life course dimension is similar to stages of the life cycle in that individuals are members of different age groups depending on how long they have lived. Members of same age groups share general biological history, have performed similar roles, and are likely to have similar experiences in
the future. The other dimension, historical, refers to the age group as a distinct generation or cohort. The assumption is that people have something in common because they have experienced certain events at a similar point in their life course (Binstock and Shanar, 1976). Large scale events, such as the Depression or World War II, had obvious effects on the people who lived through them as well as different meanings for different age groups (Decker, 1980). By applying the age stratification theory, researchers can study the relationships between age groups and among members of the same age group. The advantages of this method are that each age can be studied in terms of its distinctive characteristics and history and that any particular age group can be viewed within the context of a set of age groups. Thus long range change can be studied by following cohorts whether they are passive members of society or active participants in a social world.

One particular area of interest for the gerontologists and the focus for this study, is active participation in the democratic process. In a democratically-structured society such as the United States or Canada, there are no legal upper limitations to participation or involvement in politics and there are results that can and do influence the livelihood of all elderly persons. Political activity can and could wield sufficient political power by influencing policy decisions which might directly affect the livelihood of the older citizen (Vinyard, 1983). The participation in
activities such as those that place no restrictions on memberships, roles, demographic variables or chronological age can be used as a barometer of activity levels within different age groups. The many activities surrounding the involvement in the political process are open to all citizens within a country with the only restriction for participation being a minimum age.

Larson and Wasburn (1969) stated that persons who were active in community affairs were much more likely to be involved in political activities than those who were not active in the community. In a five nation study (Japan, Nigeria, India, Austria and the United States), Almond and Verba (1963) found that persons who participated in decisions in non-political organizations were likely to participate in many organizations and participation became cumulative. Larson and Wasburn (1969) also suggested that the evidence from non-political as well as political activity was sufficient to say that political participation can be thought of as a general case of social and community activity. Not everyone who was active socially was active politically but those who were active politically were much more likely to be active in social and community affairs.

If the decision to actively participate is positive, the number of political activities that one might choose is large. The amount of involvement is equally varied. Various definitions of political participation have been
proposed by researchers interested in the activities that are engaged in by citizens in the exercise of their democratic right. For example, participation can include such activities as the manner in which a citizen may relate to the government; taking part in the formulation, passage and implementation of public policy; or trying to influence the selection of public officials or the decisions they make (Mishler, 1979). Political participation can be an individual as well as a group activity (Larsen and Wasburn, 1969). Nie, Verba and Kim (1974) conducted a thorough investigation of age and political participation. By constructing an 'index of participation' based on participatory behaviors, other activities besides voting could be included. The index included attending rallies, working for a political candidate or party, persuading others, joining community organizations and writing letters to public officials. By using five countries in the analysis, Nie et al. (1974) sought to isolate a common life cycle pattern that would hold across nations with dissimilar cultures, histories and stages of political development. Findings revealed that the patterns in the various countries were remarkably similar. Both the oldest and youngest age groups participated less than the middle age groups for both sexes. Overall participation rates were lower for women than for men throughout the life cycle.

The activities included in participation provide for various degrees of involvement in the political process.
Thus behavioural acts within the political system can include both active/passive and individual/group elements. Passive activity is composed of such behaviours as obeying laws and experiencing order whereas active activity includes holding public office, contributing time in a campaign, wearing a button, or initiating a political discussion (Larson and Wasburn, 1969).

Van Loon (1970) argues that it is possible to construct a hierarchy of political participation in Canada by arranging activities along a single dimension based on the intensity of involvement by the participant. Along this continuum three categories of participants can be identified based on the degree of involvement. An individual who has devoted an entire adult life as an elected official would be seen to have a high rate of political participation whereas an individual who has voted only sporadically throughout the eligible years would have a low rate of participation. Between these two extremes are various rates and levels of participation. According to Mishler (1979), from the evidence on citizen participation involving both electoral and non-electoral activities, an estimated 90% of eligible Canadians participate in the lowest intensity of spectator activities. A low-intensity activity would be voting periodically in an election. In the middle of the scale are transitional activities which involve about 40% to 50% of those participating. Transitional activities include attending rallies and participating in party activities.
The remaining 10% - 15% of the eligible citizens are found at the high intensity end of the participation dimension. The activities, in which they are engaged, called gladiator activities, are time consuming and very demanding. Examples are running for office and working on a campaign. For gladiators, advanced age has not precluded them from activity. Examination of the range of ages in the Canadian Parliament and the United States Congress, demonstrates that many of these high ranking officials are well past society's normal retirement ages. These politicians do not 'retire' in the normal sense of the word but continue political activity on an 'elected' or 'elder statesman' level.

For the average citizen, for whom politics has not been a career choice, the opportunity to be politically active is always present. Political activities, by their nature, are social activities. Social activities whether recreation or leisure serve to satisfy certain needs of the individual. These needs might be tension management, enhancement of self esteem and identity (Atchley, 1972). A pattern of aging can be traced from a study of leisure time activities. As age increases people generally have more time to spend pursuing leisure activities due to retirement and reduced family responsibilities. On an individual level the older age group may have their own particular hobbies but all individuals do not share the same interests. While not everyone is able and willing to garden, do woodworking, collect stamps or travel, in the political arena there are fewer
restrictions and limitations to participation and citizens have a more equal opportunity for involvement.

In Canada the three levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal, provide the forum for active political participation. Citizens have the opportunity to be involved in any one, any two, or all three levels. Some Canadian studies have focused on one specific level of government or region of the country (Curtis and Lambert, 1976; Anderson, 1966; Courtney and Smith, 1966; Laskin and Baird, 1970). For the purposes of this study, the level or levels of government at which involvement occurs is immaterial. What is important to the study is the actual degree of participation. The investigation will focus on whether the person is active politically and continues to be so until well into the years commonly designated as 'old age'.

For the purposes of this study, individuals in the same age group are examined according to the amount of political activity they engage in at two different time periods. For example, the post-war baby boom provided the political activists of the 1960's but as this cohort ages into the 1970's the question of continued activism will need to be assessed based on their level of participation at an earlier life cycle stage. Similarly individuals who were in their 50's in the 1960's will have aged into their 60's during the 1970's and activity levels may have been altered.
Political participation is often spoken of as cumulative in that persons who engage in one activity are likely to engage in other activities also. This hierarchical ranking of behaviours begins with those acts least often engaged in and proceeds upwards to include those behaviours most often engaged in. These behaviours are considered cumulative since persons who engage in those higher-level behaviours are very likely to perform the lower-level activities as well (Welch, 1975; Burke, 1970). For example, one who is very actively working on a specific campaign is very likely to have contributed money and followed the campaign in the newspapers.

In most democratic countries, voting is the most visible and most easily measured form of political participation. However, voting is an electoral activity and occurs at four-year intervals in the United States and at irregular intervals in Canada. Measures of voting turnout can be obtained very readily and are public knowledge almost as soon as the polls close on an election day. In Canada, an average of 75% of the enumerated population voted in federal elections over the past 30 years (Mishler, 1979).

In the United States and other democratic countries, several researchers, using cross-sectional studies, analysed the relationship between political activity and age (Lipset, 1960). With respect to age, in the United States, Milbrath (1963) identified a distinctive curve associated
with age or position in the life cycle. The curvilinear pattern found by Milrath (1965) and replicated by others (Nie et al., 1974; Glenn and Grimes, 1968; Mishler, 1979) is one in which the younger age group were least likely to vote and be interested in politics, the middle age group were most likely to vote and show interest, and the older age group were slightly more likely than than the younger age but less likely than the middle age to show political involvement. Persons in their fifties were found to have the highest participation levels when control variables were not imposed. This zero order analysis demonstrated the curvilinear pattern both with the specific activity of voting as well as with political interest and other forms of participation. The characteristic curvilinear pattern of life cycle relationships has been interpreted as support for an increase in activity from young adulthood to middle age and then a decline from middle age to old age. Verba and Nie (1972) have explained the curve by the problems of 'start up' and 'slow down'. The 'start up' of the younger was attributed to residency and career instability whereas the 'slow down' in the elderly was accounted for by decreased health and retirement.

Glenn and Grimes (1968) argue that the curvilinear pattern of activity with voting, political interest and overall participation is not conclusive evidence that this age trend indicates changes with aging per se or is able to predict changes that will occur. Only after such factors as
sex, education, health, social and financial resources have been taken into account can chronological age be said to have an impact on participation.

The present generation of the elderly differ in many ways, other than in chronological age, from the present generation of younger voters. Educational level, historical events and occupational background all contribute to a unique history of life experiences. In order to demonstrate a pattern or trend in the life cycle many interrelationships between socio-economic, demographic, and psychological variables need to be controlled. The participation of the younger age group on voting day may be considerably different from the participation pattern of the elderly who voted when they were at this same younger age. Similarly the participation pattern of the elderly today may not accurately predict how the young today will participate in the future.

In order to improve the explanation of particular patterns of participation found in many studies, controls for such variables as sex, income, occupation and educational level are needed since these characteristics have been shown to affect the data on political participation. Using both cross-sectional and longitudinal data, Glenn and Grimes (1968) provided more conclusive evidence on life cycle changes in political interest and participation. Evidence from their study shows significant
differences in patterns of voting turnout when controls for sex and education were used. Education controls either reverse or eliminate the differences between respondents in their fifties and over. The data also showed, that for certain cohorts, there was no decline in voting as people aged into their sixties and seventies.

Glenn and Grimes (1968) were concerned with whether or not the elderly withdrew from political participation and lost interest in politics. By looking at only the upper half of the socio-economic scale, the data diverged from the traditional curvilinear pattern (Verba and Nie, 1972). If the lower level of participation found among older people derived from the fact that they were of a generation that has always had, on the average, sociological characteristics that would put them lower on the status scale, then the data do not necessarily imply a decline in participation and there would be no need for a 'slow down' explanation. The lower rate of participation among older people would be what one would expect at any stage of the life cycle from a group with that distribution of status characteristics and one could assume that older citizens participated at lower levels throughout their lives. On the other hand, if the lower participation rate derived directly from a drop in these status characteristics that come with aging, and not with age itself, then a decline in participation with aging would, in fact, be observed. The depressed rates of political activity among the oldest segment of the
electorate appeared to be a product of age related life cycle and generational effects.

But voting is not the only measure of political activity. Interest and overall participation imply an involvement called non-electoral activity and is continuous as opposed to electoral activity which is centred around specific election times.

Most life cycle studies in political participation have been based on data from countries other than Canada. Prior to 1965 there was no Canadian national sample available to researchers to replicate and/or compare patterns with those from other countries. In Canada, the first cross-sectional election study was carried out in 1965 by Meisel and provided data for national research. According to Van Loon (1970), who was one of the first to use the national data, Canadians have been ranked among the most politically active in the Anglo-American tradition. Subsequently, voting turnout has ranged from 76% in 1968 to 77% in 1972 to 72% in 1974 (Mishler, 1979). Such a high participation rate across the life cycle warrants further investigation since more up to date, large scale, national data are now available. Analyses are needed to clarify the age patterns of voter activity and election interest of Canadians (Curtis and Lambert, 1976). Glenn and Grimes (1968) suggested that the changes they found in aging may not necessarily occur in other countries.
Using a cross-sectional survey from the 1968 Canadian national election, Curtis and Lambert (1976) investigated participation among male/female English and French Canadians. They found no decline in participation except with female French Canadians. Because of the availability of higher-order analysis with these data, Curtis and Lambert (1976) identified a subculture of Canadians where the typical pattern of participation deviated from normal.

Both cross-sectional and longitudinal data have been used in order to study the impact of aging on political activity. Cross-sectional studies demonstrate patterns or trends in participation at only one point in time. For example, whether the younger or older members in the population have higher participation scores for a particular election may be determined. Thus the cross-sectional method studies differences at one period in time but is not able to identify changes across time. As people age and new members enter an age group the differences that were present during one cross-sectional analysis may not hold for measurement of new members of that age group at a future time period. This limitation may be avoided with the longitudinal study which offers an opportunity to study intraindividual changes as well as interindivdual differences.

Two methods of analysis can be used with repeated survey data to study aging patterns. One method that is often used in the study of aging is cohort analysis
(Glenn, 1977). Cohort analysis can be utilized with both cross-sectional and longitudinal data but is more often used with the longitudinal study. Operationally, cohorts are

"those people with a geographically or otherwise delineated population who experienced the same significant life event within a given period of time and may begin at any arbitrarily selected point in time" (Glenn, 1977, p. 8).

Cohort boundaries are arbitrarily defined since the "given period of time" may be of any length from a day or less to 20 years or more and may begin at any selected point in time. Birth cohorts or those people who were born around the same point in time and thus experienced the same historical events are also called generations. The 'depression' generation are those who were born during the 1930's. The post-war generation are those who were born after 1945.

In a study in which there are measures of some characteristics of one or more cohorts (birth or otherwise) at two or more points in time, cohort analysis provides for an intracohort trend study. Such a study measures a behaviour at several points in time and compares the behaviour of given cohorts at these different times. For example, with voting used as a 'behaviour, participation could be measured for each of the last Canadian federal
elections where national data are available. If one selects out all those who fall within the age grouping of say 50-60 in 1974 it is possible to measure any change in voting pattern that might have occurred with this same group as they age to 55-65 in 1979 or 56-66 in 1980. These measures would show trends within the same age cohorts during a five year interval.

Table 1 represents a standard cohort table in which sets of cross-sectional data for the different dates are juxtaposed and in which the intervals between the points in time for which there are data correspond in years with the intervals used to delineate the birth cohorts.

Within the standard cohort table there are available intercohort comparisons or cross-sectional comparisons if one looks at the numbers down the columns. Diagonally numbers to the right show intracohort comparisons and numbers across the rows show trends at each age level (i.e. longitudinal comparisons). Variations in percentages in the table can be due to three types of effects depending on the kind of influence. Age effects are due to the process of aging. Cohort effects are due to birth cohort membership and thus different times in which people grew up and received their early socialization. Period effects are associated with each historical period of time. Regardless of how a cohort table is examined, two of the basic effects (age, cohort, period) are confounded with one another.
TABLE 1

Hypothetical Data on Percentage of Persons Conservative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) age and cohort effects in cross-sectional data in each column
b) age and period effects in each cohort diagonal
c) cohort and period effects in each row

Other than studies of fertility, the most common purpose of cohort analysis has been to investigate the effects of human aging. Specifically, a number of studies have attempted to estimate the effects of aging on political attitudes and behavior (Crittenden, 1963; Cutler, 1970; Glenn and Zody, 1970; Knoke and Hout, 1974; Cutler and Bengston, 1974). Data for these studies have been obtained from that collected by Gallup polls and from the American national election surveys. Gallup polls are done about once a month whereas election studies in the United States are done once every four years. With cross-sectional studies persons can be compared at different stages of aging but only at one particular period of time. These data are relevant to the study of the aging process only if the assumption holds that people in a particular age stratum were like the younger age stratum at an earlier period and will be like the older age stratum as time passes. From national survey data, measures of biological, psychological and sociological age may be used in order to assess the different dimensions of aging. For instance, one could compare retired vs. non-retired persons, parents vs.
non-parents and healthy vs. handicapped persons. An advantage over the cross-sectional method for purposes of examining directly the effects of aging is the longitudinal method where cohort differences within the same sample can be examined across certain time periods.

The general purpose for using cohort analysis is to determine to what extent observed trends and patterns reflect influences of aging rather than period influences. The passage of time is the only dimension of aging with which cohort analysis can directly deal (Glenn, 1977). Behavioural influences, though rarely attributed to chronological aging, can indirectly be correlated with dimensions of biological, psychological or sociological aging. Since cohort analysis alone does not separate the effects or the different dimensions of aging it is often necessary to supplement cohort analysis with other techniques. One such technique and a second method used to analyse aging patterns is the panel study. Panel data are thought of as information obtained by interviewing the same sample of respondents - a panel - at two or more successive points in time (Marcus, 1979). An advantage to using panel studies is the opportunity to study trends either behavioural or attitudinal with outcome measurements more precise than a series of independent samples. With this technique the researcher is able to measure net change as well as identify the 'changers'. Moser (1973) demonstrates the accuracy of this method by a turnover table where the
panel method allows for gross as well as net change. One example of a panel study begun in 1946 in Great Britain was the Population Investigation Committee's longitudinal study. All confinements during the first week of March were identified and a sample of the children born was drawn. These particular children were followed up over the years and measurements on the same subjects were collected at many different points in time. Such aspects of maturation as physical growth, intelligence, achievement and illnesses could be monitored and results attributed to intraindividual change for that particular cohort of children born in 1946. In Canada, the Manitoba Longitudinal Study on aging is another example of an aging panel study. Participants in the sample provide a longitudinal record of health and behaviors exhibited in their use of health care facilities (Mossey, Havens, Roos and Shapiro, 1981). Thus the panel method can provide an intraindividual analysis whereas the cross-sectional method provides for interindividual differences.

In summary, the present study will focus on political participation as a specific activity within the conglomerate of social activities available to all individuals. Political interest will also be examined as a possible correlate of participation. The Canadian data that will be used for the present study will provide the basis for the comparison of the curvilinear pattern found in other countries. The participation score is based on several
different dimensions of how an individual might participate in the political process.

In order to accommodate the methodological problems inherent in the study of aging, both cross-sectional and longitudinal data will be used. Cross-sectional data will provide between group comparisons at two time points, 1974 and 1979. Longitudinal data, utilizing a panel of respondents, will provide a within group comparison between the two time periods.

The demographic variables of sex and socioeconomic status serve as controls to delineate the population into similar cohorts with similar backgrounds. Respondents are classified according to two age categories and these two groups serve as the independent variables for the investigation. One group consists of the total population divided into life cycle phases and the second group involves only those in the sample who are over 55 years of age. For the purpose of this study the following questions will be asked of the data:

1) Is the curvilinear trend present in the Canadian population in 1974 and 1979?
2) With the older Canadian is there a specific age at which participation begins to decline?
3) If so, is the decline related to sex or socioeconomic status?
4) Is there any decline in the correlation between political
participation and political interest throughout the life cycle?
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Study description

For the purposes of the present study, data from the Canadian election studies of 1974 and 1979 will be used in order to answer the questions proposed in the introduction. These studies consisted of extensive personal interviews with a national sample of eligible voters in Canada. The first of the two studies to be used was conducted after the federal election of July 8, 1974. The study consisted of personal interviews with a national sample of Canadians 18 years of age and older. There were a total of 2562 persons interviewed which represents the sample size for the first study. The sample design was a multi-stage, stratified, cluster sample with systematic oversampling of smaller provinces to produce a weighted sample of 2445 respondents (Leduc, Clarke, Jensen and Pammett, 1974). Following the federal election of May 22, 1979, 1295 of the original respondents were successfully contacted and re-interviewed.

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1. These data are available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan, the Data Bank, Carleton University, or the Data Library, University of British Columbia. The studies were conducted by Harold Clarke, Jane Jensen, Lawrence Leduc, and Jon Pammett, and the field work was carried out by Canadian Facts, Ltd. (Toronto). Neither the principal investigators, nor the archives are responsible for the analyses or interpretations of the data contained herein.
These respondents therefore constitute a five year panel study. The effective size of the 1974-1979 panel component of the study when appropriate weights are applied becomes 1353. In addition to the panel respondents, a new national sample was drawn in 1979 and personal interviews utilizing the same questionnaires were conducted. The panel sample, plus the new sample, with appropriate weights, produced a 1979 cross-section sample of 2762 cases.

A number of questions in each of the two main national waves of the study were asked of one of the two random half samples. These items are identified in Appendix A.

Coding

Age variables

Since the purpose of this study is to look at aging trends, the age variable has been recoded into the following age groups: 18-24 = young adult, 25-44 = adult, 45-64 = middle age, and over 65 = old age or post-retirement. For cohort analysis of these four phases the 1979 data will be coded into age groups of 23-30, 31-50, 51-69 and 70+. This five year increase in age is due to the five year interval between the 1974 and 1979 elections. In order to delineate the elderly into specific age groups an 'old-age' variable will be constructed to produce five year age groups beginning with the 55 year olds in 1974 who will then be 60 in 1979. This will recode into groups as follows: 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70+ for 1974 and 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, and 75+
for 1979.

Demographic variables

The studies provide for a summary socio-economic status variable through the use of a Blischen score (Blischen and McRoberts, 1976). A four digit detailed occupation code was used to construct the Blischen measure of socio-economic status. This measure is composed of the following items: income, education, and occupation prestige. The Blischen index ranges from 14.41 to 75.32, and is based on the 1971 census data. For tabular analysis, the following categorization was employed, derived from cutting points within one standard deviation (14.60) of the mean score (42.41) for the entire sample. This yields four socio-economic status categories as follows: 1) 14.41 to 27.80, 2) 27.81 to 42.40, 3) 42.41 to 57.00, 4) 57.01 to 75.32 (Clarke et al., 1979). In order to maintain adequate sample sizes for analysis the Blischen scores will be combined using the two lowest score ranges and the two highest score ranges to produce a dichotomous socio-economic variable. This variable will represent a low or high socio-economic status. A second variable, sex, will be used in order to look at a second order of analysis according to gender.

Participation scales

The dependent variable, a summary political participation scale, developed by Burke (1976), is a
composite of items that are cumulative, unidimensional and satisfy the requirements for rank in a Guttman scale (Burke, Clarke and LeDuc, 1977). The participation questions were asked for all three levels of government after the 1974 election but after the 1979 election these questions were dropped for the municipal level and retained for only the provincial and federal levels (Appendix A). Burke's scale includes only participation questions for these latter two levels of government. The items from the studies that are included in the overall participation score include: vote, discuss politics, convince friends or attend meetings and campaign activities. Since Burke (1976) was interested in the differences between federal and provincial participation, two separate scales were used. One scale was for provincial and the other was for federal involvement but both scales were composed of the same items. The original answers were recoded to form a dichotomous variable. A score of "1" denoted an 'often' or 'sometimes' response whereas a score of "0" was assigned to a 'seldom' or 'never' response. For the purposes of this study the two participation scales were combined to produce one overall participation score. This means that the respondent received a score of "1" if he/she participated in a given activity either on the provincial level, the federal level or both levels and a score of "0" if he/she did not participate at either level. In the hierarchy of activities a score of "1" represents 'vote' only "2" represents 'vote'
* 'discuss politics': "3" represents 'vote' + 'discuss politics' + 'attend meetings/convince friends'; "4" represents participation in all 4 of the scale items: vote, discuss politics, attend meetings/convince friends, campaign activity. Thus the total score for each individual is based on a composite of positive responses to each cumulative item with a total possible score of 4. A respondent who receives a score of '4' is classified as having a high participation level whereas a score of '1' is a low participation level. Intermediate to the high and low dimension are two, moderately active participant scores represented by scores of 2 and 3. A score of '0' is obtained by those respondents who are totally inactive.

**Vote variables**

Vote—will also be used as a dependent variable and is measured by either a 'yes' or 'no' represented by codes 1 and 0 respectively. The vote measurement will be used both for cross-sectional analysis and for the panel respondents. Vote in these analysis will be defined as a single activity in contrast to overall participation. The question "In federal elections since you have been old enough to vote in Canada, including the one held this July, would you say that you have voted in all of them, most of them, some of them or none of them" (Appendix 5, V156, V1229)? There are four possible answers and the first two "all of them or most of them" will be combined to form one positive response and the last two "some of them or none of them" will be combined to
form a negative response. The resulting variable is dichotomous having a vote/nc vote dimension. For the other vote variables which refer to a vote in a specific election the code will remain as in the original data set, i.e. voted/did not vote.

**Interest variables**

Two separate questions regarding the amount of interest in politics and elections will be used to form one interest scale (Appendix B). The 'slightly interested' and 'not at all interested' categories of the general interest measure (V11,V1022) were combined so that a three point index (high, medium and low) was obtained for each item. A composite measure was then constructed to yield categories of high (+), moderate (0), and low (-) interest (Clarke et al., 1979).

**Change scores**

In order to measure change in participation or interest across the two time periods, a mean change score will be calculated. A change score represents the difference between the score obtained in 1974 and the score for the same individual in 1979. By subtracting the score in 1974 from the score in 1979 and then averaging across individuals in the panel, a mean change score for each age group will be obtained. For both dependent measures, participation and political interest, a mean change score will be calculated. A positive change score will represent an increase in
participation or interest whereas a negative change score will represent a decrease in these measures.

**Data analysis**

Secondary analysis using the 1974 and 1979 studies will be carried out in order to propose answers to the questions in the introduction. This method of analysis (Hyman, 1972) will utilize only selected variables from the total data set that are appropriate for the present study (Appendix B). Computer analysis will be conducted using the SPSS package (Nie, Hull, Jenkins and Steinbrenner, 1977). Of the variables selected for use some will be retained in their original coded form and some will be recoded in order to suit the present research purposes.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

For the purposes of answering the questions posed in this study both the cross-sectional sample and the panel sample of respondents from the 1974 and the 1979 Canadian national election studies were used. Respondents were classified into two sets of age categories. One set was an across the life cycle categorization producing four age groups: 18-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+. A second set further subdivided the over 55 respondents into four age groups of five year intervals: 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70+ (see Table A-1 for resulting sample N's).

Mean participation scores for life-cycle and over 55 age groups

For both the cross-sectional and panel samples in 1974 and 1979, mean participation scores were calculated (Tables A-2,3). Figure 1 shows the mean participation scores for cross-sectional data in 1974 and 1979 for those respondents categorized into life cycle age groups. For these age groups in 1974, the mean participation scores demonstrate the typical curvilinear pattern of political participation. Figure 1 also shows the same curvilinear pattern present when the mean participation scores for the 1974 cohorts are calculated five years later in 1979. Participation across
Figure 1. Mean participation scores for life cycle using cross-sectional data.
the life cycle, even though following the typical curvilinear trend in both 1974 and 1979, did not show any significant difference in participation scores between the four age groups in 1974 $F(3, 1119) = 1.09, p > .05$. In 1974, the level of participation for those in the youngest category, the young adult years, middle age and over 65 appears to increase and then decrease across the life cycle. However when these same cohorts were examined cross-sectionally in 1979 there was a significant difference in participation $F(3, 1173) = 3.57, p < .01$. Those cohorts who were 30-49 in 1979 had the highest mean scores of all age groups and a Tukey post hoc test reveals that the mean score for the 30-49 age group (1.94) was significantly higher ($p < .05$) than the over 70 age group (1.02) but there were no significant differences between any of the other three age groups.

When the data were examined longitudinally using only the life cycle panel respondents instead of the total cross-sectional sample, the curvilinear pattern was again present both in 1974 and 1979 (Figure 2). Contrary to the cross-sectional data, this longitudinal data showed a significant difference in participation between the four age groups in 1974, $F(3, 642) = 2.85, p < .05$, as well as in 1979, $F(3, 639) = 5.61, p < .001$. An Tukey post hoc test revealed that the mean participation score for the youngest age group in 1979 (1.43) differed significantly from the 30-49 (1.97) and the 50-69 (1.91) age groups ($p < .05$). The youngest age group did not differ from the oldest age group and the two
Figure 2. Mean participation scores for life cycle panel respondents.
middle age groups did not differ from each other or the over 65 age group (p > .05). The cross-sectional data show that the mean participation scores for the four age groups in 1979 are consistently higher than the 1974 mean participation scores. But when the longitudinal data are used the 1979 mean participation scores are higher than the 1974 scores only for the two oldest age groups.

Figures 3 and 4 represent the mean participation scores for the second age categorization, that is, those over 55 years. The cross-sectional data (Figure 3) show a non significant decline in the 1974 mean participation scores from age 55 through to the oldest respondents, \( F(3,291) = .64, p > .05 \). However, in 1979, the pattern is more erratic. The 65-69 age group show a comparatively higher level of participation relative to the other three age groups which are approximately at the same level of participation. However, there are no significant differences between any of the age groups, \( F(3,340) = .35, p > .05 \).

An examination of Figure 4, which is the longitudinal data for the over 55 group, shows that the decline at the end of the life cycle in the typical curvilinear pattern is present for those over 55 in 1974, \( F(3,163) = 1.46, p > .05 \). There is a progressively lower participation score from age 60 onward. For the same respondents in 1979, mean participation scores decline, from age 60-64 through 70-74 with an increase after age 75 although differences are not
Figure 3. Mean participation scores for over 55 cross-sectional respondents.
Figure 4. Mean participation scores for over 55 panel respondents.
significant, \(F(3,150) = .35, p>.05\). A decline in participation scores is seen with the older age groups in both 1974 and 1979 with the exception of those who were over 75 in 1979. This latter group showed a higher score than the other older respondents.

**Change scores for life cycle and over 55 age groups**

In order to measure the amount of change in the panel sample, the respondents score in 1974 was subtracted from the score in 1979. The result is a mean change score and represents the average amount of increase or decrease in participation during the five year interval from 1974 to 1979 (Table 2). Even though mean participation scores are lower for a certain age group compared to another age group, a positive change score for any age group would indicate an increase in activity for that specific age group from 1974 to 1979.

The participation mean change scores for the panel respondents across the life cycle (Table 2) show that there is a change of \(-.19\) in political activity as the youngest group aged to 23-29 in 1979. The young adults, 25-44, showed a positive change score of \(+.08\). The middle age group changed negatively \((-0.07\)) whereas the older adult showed a positive change of \(+.04\). The amount of difference between the age groups across the life cycle in mean change scores is not significant, \(F(3,635) = 1.67, p>.05\).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Low SES</th>
<th>High SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Cycle</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>+.07</td>
<td>+.10</td>
<td>+.01</td>
<td>+.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
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<td>+.003</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
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<td>Old Age</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.09</td>
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<td>-.19</td>
<td>+.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
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<td>-.70</td>
<td>+.19^b</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.43</td>
</tr>
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<td>70+</td>
<td>+.26</td>
<td>+.31</td>
<td>+.22</td>
<td>+.21</td>
<td>+.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ^a Significant difference between amount of change for high and low SES groups p < .05.

^b Significant difference between amount of change for males and females p < .001.
An examination of change within the over 55 age categories (Table 2) shows a non significant difference between the four age groups, $F(3,340) = 3.12$, $p > .05$. For the 55-59 and 60-64 age groups the changes were slightly negative ($-.08$ and $-.15$, respectively). The 65-69 age group also showed a negative change ($-23$) in participation but the over 70 showed a positive change ($+.20$). These mean change scores show a pattern of decrease in activity as one ages from 55 years onward until age 70. At age 70 there is an increase in activity as demonstrated by the positive change score.

Mean participation scores for males and females

The longitudinal data were further analysed according to sex differences in participation scores in 1974 and 1979 (Table A-4). Mean participation scores for both male and female panel respondents across the life cycle age groups show a curvilinear pattern similar for 1974 and 1979 except for the males in the oldest age group in 1974 (Figure 5). For these males in 1974 participation did not show a decline between the 45-64 age group and the over 65 age group. Instead, males over 65 in 1974 showed a higher mean participation score than males in the younger age groups or any females. This score for the 65+ males was not, however, significantly different from the other three age groups, $F(3,302) = 1.08$, $p > .05$. However, in 1979, there was a significant difference across the life cycle for males,
Figure 5. Mean participation scores for life cycle panel respondents according to gender.
\( F(3, 299) = 6.61, p < .001 \). The 23-29 year old male participation scores were significantly lower than those in the 30-49 and 50-69 age groups (\( p < .05 \)). No other group differences were significant. Thus the young adults and the middle age males had higher scores than the youngest males. The over 65 males showed a decline in participation but the decline was not significantly different from any of the other three life cycle age groups.

An examination of female participation scores (Figure 5) shows a decline in scores at the end of the life cycle in keeping with the curvilinear pattern. In 1974 there is a significant difference for participation for the females across the life cycle, \( F(3, 335) = 3.75, p < .01 \). The differences in age groups are seen between the 45-64 and over 65 in 1974 where the score is significantly lower for the over 65 age group (\( p < .05 \)) compared to the 45-64 age group. The over 65 group does not differ from either of the two younger groups (\( p > .05 \)). In 1974 middle aged females showed a higher level of participation than females who were over 65. Participation scores are not significantly different, \( F(3, 336) = 1.5, p > .05 \), among the female groups in 1979 and the pattern of participation is typically curvilinear.

For male and female panel respondents over 55, Figure 6 shows an absence of any continuous decline in the curvilinear pattern. Males in 1974 show that the age group
Figure 6. Mean participation scores for over 55 panel respondents according to gender.
65-69 have a higher score than both the 60-64 and over 70 age groups. These differences in participation mean scores between the age groups are not significant, $F(3,75) = 2.09$, $p>0.05$. Males in 1979 show the opposite pattern from 1974. For those in the 65-69 age groups, the participation mean score is lower than the 60-64 and over 70 age groups. There is also no significant difference between these age group means in 1979, $F(3,73) = .17$, $p>0.05$. Although there is no significant difference between any of the male age groups in either 1974 or 1979, Figure 6 shows that the males who were 65-69 in 1974 and over 70 in 1979 had higher scores than any of the other age groups. The mean participation scores for the 65-69 age group were higher in 1974 than in 1979 which would indicate a decrease in activity during the five years between elections.

The overall pattern for females both in 1974 and 1979 is highly similar. For females over 55, mean participation scores in 1974 (Figure 6) are significantly different, $F(3,87) = 3.47$, $p<0.01$. A Tukey post hoc test reveals that the only significant difference is between the 60-64 and the 65-69 age groups ($p<0.05$) with no other age groups showing any significant difference. In this instance, the 65-69 age group show a much lower (1.14) mean participation score than the 60-64 age group (2.18). The 65-69 age group who are significantly different have a lower participation score than any of the other three age groups. In 1979, females do not show any significant difference in participation from
age 55 onward, $t(3,81) = 1.16, p > .05$. The lowest mean scores for the female respondents occurred with the group who were 65-69 in 1974 and 70+ in 1979. A higher mean score is seen with the oldest age group compared to the preceding age group both in 1974 and 1979.

**Change scores for males and females**

The longitudinal data, which do not show the typical curvilinear pattern of decline after age 55 with males and females, are further examined using the mean change scores (Table 2). Across the life cycle males did not show any significant difference in the amount of change in participation scores, $t(3,299) = 2.00, p > .05$. The mean change score for males as they aged from 65+ to 70+ was $-.15$. Although non significant, the change score represents a decrease in the amount of participation for males in the over 65 age group from 1974 to 1979. The only specific age group showing a significant difference in change from 1974 to 1979 was the youngest group (18-24) who decreased in participation. Thus the youngest males showed more of a decline from previous levels of participation than any of other three age groups. For males categorized across the life cycle only the group 25-44 who age to 30-49 showed any increase.

The mean change scores for the life cycle female age groups are non significant, $t(3,332) = 1.41, p > .05$. The pattern for females is represented by a negative change in
the 45-64 age group as they aged to 50-69 in 1979. In 1974, the over 65 age group showed a positive mean change score as these female respondents aged to 70+ in 1979.

Table 2 shows that for the population who are over 55, the greatest amount of negative change occurs in the age groups who age from 65-69 in 1974 to 70+ in 1979. However, in this age group, participation scores change negatively for males and positively for females. Using the life cycle classifications the difference between the amount of change for males and females was not significant. When the over 55 respondents are examined, significant sex differences in change occur with the 65-69 age groups only. Males show a negative change (-.7) and females show a positive change (.19) \( F(1,27) = 10.26, p < .003 \). For no other age groups is there a significant difference between the amount of change for males and females. Males who are 75+ in 1979 reverse this negative change by showing a positive mean change score (.31) from 1974 to 1979.

Mean participation scores for high and low socio-economic groups

The socio-economic status of the panel respondents was controlled for using Blisken scores and the scores were dichotomized into two categories. One category was low socio-economic class and the other category was high socio-economic class. The low category includes those panel respondents in the lower and lower middle class and the high
category includes those in the upper middle and upper class. The two socio-economic levels were used to examine the panel respondents across the life cycle as well as more specifically with those over 55 (Table A-4).

Mean participation scores across the life span when Blishen scores were examined in 1974 and 1979 show that the curvilinear pattern of participation was present in both years for the low and high status age groups (Figure 7). The low status group showed a significant difference in participation across the life cycle in 1974, $F(3,330) = 2.65$, $p < .05$. A post hoc test revealed that, in 1974, the 18-24 age group were significantly lower than the 45-64 age group ($p < .05$). A similar difference between the life cycle age groups in the low status category was seen in 1979, $F(3,329) = 2.58$, $p < .05$.

For those in the high status groups across the life span there was no significant difference in 1974, $F(3,304) = 1.86$, $p > .05$. However there was a significant difference in 1979, $F(3,303) = 5.1$, $p < .001$. A post hoc test revealed that the youngest and the oldest had significantly lower scores than the 25-44 age group ($p < .05$). Across the life span the high status group has consistently higher scores than the low status group until the respondents reach 65. At this age the participation scores for the low status groups both in 1974 and 1979 are higher than the scores for the high status group in same year.
Figure 7. Mean participation scores for life cycle panel respondents according to socio-economic status.
Change scores for high and low socio-economic status groups

When the change scores for both the low and high status groups are examined across the life cycle (Table 2) some differences in direction of change can be observed. For the low status age groups there is minimal change among the three youngest age groups. However, although there is no significant difference among the age groups, for the over 65 age group there is a positive change score which represents an increase in activity for this age group from 1974 to 1979.

There is a significant difference in the amount of change across age for the high SES groups $F(3, 300) = 2.8$, $p < .05$. A Tukey post hoc test reveals that the age groups that differ are the youngest (18-24) and the young adult (25-44) $p < .05$. The only age group with a high status that shows a positive change from 1974 to 1979 is the age group 25-44. For the over 65 in the high status classification there is a minimal negative change ($-.01$).

Figure 8 examines the over 55 mean participation scores for both levels of socio-economic status. The patterns for the low socio-economic levels both in 1974 and 1979 show a minimal decline from age 55 onward. However the scores for these low SES panel respondents are consistently higher in 1979 than in 1974. There is no significant difference between over 55 age groups in participation scores for the low status age groups either in 1974 or in 1979. The high
Figure 8. Mean participation scores for over 55 panel respondents according to socio-economic status.
status group in 1974 show a decline in participation scores among the age groups from age 60 onward. In 1979 the high status group also declines from age 60 to age 74 but the oldest age group has a higher score than the 65-69 and 70-74 age groups.

The pattern of participation for both the 1974 and 1979 low SES groups is one of decline similar to the decline in the curvilinear pattern. The decline in participation is also seen within the high SES categories for 1974 but is not present for the high SES categories in 1979. Thus for the over 55 SES age groups, the participation pattern is similar to the decline with the curvilinear pattern of the life cycle groups except for the high status group who are over 75 in 1979. The high SES over 75 age group show a higher mean score for participation than the preceding age group (70-74). For this over 75 group in 1974, the participation scores were the lowest of any of the other three over 55 age categories (Figure 8).

Table 2 shows the amount of change in participation for the over 55 SES groups compared to the overall panel population. There is no significant difference in amount of change between older age low SES groups but there is a significant difference between the high SES groups F(3,71) = 2.96, p<.05. In addition, the greatest difference in the amount of change between high and low SES among the four age groups occurs with the 60-64 group. The change for the low
status group (+.13) is significantly different from the change score (-.55) for the high status group. \( F(1,45) = 4.73, p<.05 \). Thus, as the 60-64 age group aged to 65-69 the low status Canadians increased in activity and the high status Canadians decreased from their former levels of participation. For the high status respondents in the 65-69 age group there was a similar negative change (-.43) although of not quite as great a magnitude as the 60-64 age group. The next age group in this sample, the 70+ who aged to 75+ in 1979 showed a positive change of +.34. This indicates that two age groups within the high status category, 60-64 and 65-69 both declined in the amount of political participation as they aged from 1974 to 1979. For those in the high status group who reached the age of 75+ in 1979, the amount of participation increased most dramatically (+.34).

The lower socio-economic group did not show as great a difference in change scores across the older age groups as those in the higher socio-economic level. The change scores for the low SES group were positive for two of the age groups. From 1974 to 1979 the 60-64 and the 70+ age groups both showed an increase in mean change scores (+.13 and +.21 respectively). For this same sample, the 65-69 age group showed a negative change but the change was minimal (-.04).

Relationships between participation and interest

The second dependent variable used in the study,
interest, which has been shown to be strongly correlated with participation, was examined across the life span as well as with the over 55 age groups. Correlations between political participation and interest were calculated for the panel respondents in the overall population and for the subpopulations of sex and socio-economic status (Table 3).

As can be seen in Figure 9, the pattern of correlations across the life cycle both in 1974 and 1979, declines slightly between age groups except for the oldest age group who have the highest correlation ($r = -0.54$ in 1974 and $r = -0.53$ in 1979). This might suggest that for the population as a whole, at the end of the life span an increase or decrease in participation is indicative of a correspondingly increase or decrease in interest.

For those older age groups already at the end of the life cycle, Figure 10 shows a pattern of increasing strength in the correlations from age 60 onward. The pattern is similar for both 1974 and 1979. Table 3 shows that the correlations for each age group increase rather than decrease from 1974 to 1979.

Table 3 also shows the correlations when the subpopulations of sex and SES are examined. The increasing strength of the correlations that is seen with the overall population after age 65 is consistent with all four over 55 groups: males, females, low SES, high SES. Of the 40 possible comparisons among the over 55 age groups (Table 3),
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<th>High SES</th>
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Figure 9. Correlations between political participation and interest for life cycle panel respondents.
Figure 10. Correlations between political participation and interest for over 55 panel respondents.
the pattern of increasing strength in relationship between participation and interest, there are only 8 comparisons that do not show an increase. Three of these exceptions are with the male subpopulation. In 1979 there is a decrease in the relationship for those who age from 60-64 and 65-69 in 1974 to 65-69 and 70-74 in 1979. The 60-64 decrease from \( r = -2 \) to \( r = -0.07 \) as they age to 65-69 and the 65-69 group decrease from \( r = -5 \) to \( r = -0.27 \) as they age to 70-74. Contrary to the decrease for these two age groups the 70+ group increase from \( r = -60 \) to \( r = -65 \) as they age to 75+ in 1979.

The pattern of relationships for males was increasingly stronger across age groups in 1974. However, in 1979 among the four age groups, the 65-69 group show no relationship \( (r = -0.07) \) compared to the 60-64 age group \( (r = -0.35) \). The relationship was slightly stronger \( (r = -0.27) \) for the 70-74 age group in 1979 but was very strong \( (r = -0.66) \) for the over 75 age group.

Table 3 shows that the pattern of correlations for females in 1974 and 1979 was different from the males. In 1974 there was a decrease in relationship across the female age groups until 65+ when a stronger relationship \( (r = -0.49) \) was seen. However in 1979 there was a increasingly stronger relationship between age groups with the over 65 showing the strongest \( (r = -0.57) \). During the five year interval between elections each female age group increased in the strength between participation and interest. Thus the females may have differed in relationship at the two time periods.
because of different age groups to which they belonged but as individuals across time each age group increased in strength of relationship.

For over 55 females the age groups showed increasing stronger relationships between participation and interest from age 55 onward in both 1974 and 1979. As each age group aged from 1974 to 1979 there was an increase in the relationship between the two variables (Table 3). The strongest relationships were with the over 70 in 1974 (r=.56) and over 75 in 1979 (r=.64). The correlation for each age group increased from 1974 to 1979.

Correlations between participation and interest for the SES groups across the life span indicate a weaker relationship during the middle years for both the low and high SES groups. This is true both in 1974 and 1979. The only age group among both SES categories that showed a negative change in correlation from 1974 to 1979 was the high SES group who aged from 65+ (r=.64) to 70+ (r=.44). The relationships are strongest in the over 65 age category.

For the over 55 panel respondents, the low SES group shows an increasingly stronger relationship from age 55-59 (r=.03) to age 70+ (r=.5) in 1974. In 1979 the relationship is lower, for the two younger age groups with the strongest relationship showing up with the 70-74 group (r=.67). The oldest age group in 1979 (75+) show a lower relationship (r=.44) than the 70-74 age group. With the high SES groups
the four relationships for the four age categories in 1974 increase in strength whereas in 1979 there is a weaker relationship between succeeding age groups until the oldest group which shows a very strong relationship \((r = .74)\).

In order to determine whether the stronger correlations reflect an increase or decrease in participation and/or interest the percentage of respondents whose scores increased or decreased was calculated (Table A-5). As well as showing an increase or decrease in scores for interest and/or participation some of the panel respondents also showed no change. No change is related to a stable involvement, in that, one maintains the same level of activity from one time period to the next. The study is primarily concerned with change and only the percentages of respondents who changed either positively or negatively was examined.

For the life cycle age groups, Figure 11 shows the percentages of panel respondents who increased in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979. For all life cycle age groups, more respondents increased in participation than in interest but, overall, there was little difference between the percentages. When the percentages of those respondents who decreased in participation are examined (Figure 12) the age group 18-24 had the largest percentage of respondents who decreased (43.1\%) compared to the other three age groups across the
Figure 11. Percent of life cycle panel respondents showing an increase in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979.
Figure 12. Percent of life cycle panel respondents showing a decrease in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979.
life cycle. The age groups showing the smallest percentages of respondents decreasing in participation are the 25-44 (28.1%) and 65+ (26.2%). There was a smaller percentage of respondents decreasing in interest than in participation with the highest percentage for interest decreasing being the 65+ age group (24%). From these percentages for the life cycle age groups, there appears to be more fluctuation in the numbers of respondents who increase or decrease in activity than in interest.

Among panel respondents who are over 55, the percentages of increase or decrease in participation and interest were examined (Figures 13 & 14). Figure 13 shows the percentages of those respondents in the over 55 age groups who increased in participation and interest. The two age groups that showed the highest percentage of respondents whose participation scores increased from 1974 to 1979 were the 60-64 (34.2%) and 70+ (34.1%). Both these age groups showed more percentage of respondents increasing in participation than in interest. Conversely the 65-69 age group has the lowest percentage of respondents who increased (23.7%) in participation among the other three older age groups.

Figure 14 shows that more respondents decreased in participation than in interest in all age groups except the oldest group. For this group (70+) there was a minimal number of respondents decreasing in participation (11.9%)
Figure 13. Percent of over 55 panel respondents showing an increase in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979.
Figure 14. Percent of over 55 panel respondents showing a decrease in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979.
compared to the other three groups. Also with this older group, more respondents declined in interest (16.9%) than in participation. Thus as one examines increasingly older age groups, there are more respondents decreasing in participation until the 70+ age group. With the over 70 age group there is a greater number of respondents increasing than decreasing in activity. With other respondents there are more decreasing than increasing in activity.

When sex differences were examined in relation to change in participation, there was a significant difference between the mean change scores for the 65-69 male/female age groups (Table 3). Figures 15 and 16 show the percentages of male and female respondents who increased or decreased in participation and interest among the four older age groups. In Figure 15, for both males and females, there were more respondents who increased in participation than in interest for all age groups except for males in the 65-69 category. For the males in the 65-69 age group, there was a dramatically greater percentage of respondents who increased in interest compared to participation. For females in each of the four older age groups there was a consistently greater percentage of respondents who increased in participation compared with interest.

Table 4 shows the mean change scores in interest for the older age groups. There were no significant differences in the amount of change for any of the four age groups when
Figure 15. Percent of over 55 male/female panel respondents showing an increase in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979.
Figure 16. Percent of over 55 male/female panel respondents showing a decrease in participation and interest from 1974 to 1979.
**TABLE 4**

*Mean Change Scores in Interest for Over 55 Panel and According to Gender*

<table>
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<td>-.20³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01

*Note. A Post Hoc Tukey Test was carried out for all groups. 
³Females (60-64) differed significantly from females (65-69) p < .05.*
the total sample of over 55's were examined. However, there was a difference when males and females were examined separately. Males did not differ in the amount of change in interest but females did show a statistically significant difference between the four age groups $F(3, 174) = 3.43, p < .01$. A Tukey post hoc test revealed that, for females, there was a difference between the age group, 60-64, and the age group, 65-69 ($p < .05$). The age group who were 60-64 in 1974 showed an increase in interest in 1979 whereas the 65-69 age group showed a decrease in interest (Table 4). Thus, after age 70, females have less interest in politics but participate at a higher level than they did during their 60's.

When the percentage of males and females who decreased in participation and interest (Figure 16) was examined, there was a greater percentage of males who decreased in participation in the 65-69 age group than for any of the other three age over 55 groups. For males in the four age groups there were always more respondents decreasing in participation than in interest.

For females, the age group with the greatest numbers of respondents decreasing in participation was 60-64. There was not as great a corresponding decrease in interest for this age group. However, in the last two female age groups, there were more respondents who decreased in interest than in participation. From Figure 15 and 16 it appears that men
retain their interest longer than women despite the evidence that a greater percentage of women increase in participation levels than men. Thus, for females, there are more respondents who increase in participation than decrease but there is no corresponding increase in interest for these older women.

In summary, the curvilinear pattern was found when the age groups were examined across the life cycle. However when the over 55 age groups were further divided into five year age groups the decline was not continuous for the total population nor for some of the second order categories of sex and socio-economic status. The pattern for males was decline until age 70 whereas females declined only until 65. Both sexes then increased in activity from age 70+. The low SES group showed minimal decline whereas the high SES group declined until age 70+. The correlation between political participation and political interest was strongest for the older age groups both across the life cycle and for the over 55. Men showed an increase in interest in the older age groups despite a decrease in participation. The pattern for women was a decrease in interest despite an increase in participation.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

When Canadian election studies are used to examine the amount of political activity among the general Canadian population, the pattern of participation found is similar to that of other nations (Campbell et al., 1960; Almond and Verba, 1963; Milbrath and Goel, 1977). Using the participation scale developed by Burke (1976) and composed of such acts as voting, discussing politics, attending meetings and working for a political party, mean scores show the typical curvilinear pattern for Canadian respondents cross-sectionally as well as for a panel of respondents. The data indicate a similar pattern for the electorate both in 1974 and 1979.

Both the cross-sectional data for the total population and the panel data show the curvilinear pattern for the two time periods, 1974 and 1979. From these data it appears that the pattern for political participation in Canada is no different than the pattern in other countries. Participation scores for all age groups, except the youngest, are lower in 1974 than in 1979 but the curvilinear pattern is the same for both years. In relation to the other three age groups across the life cycle, the over 65 group show lower scores than the young adult and middle age groups at both time periods. Both cross-sectional and panel
results suggest that the over 65 participate less than these two age groups but about the same as the youngest participants.

The Canadian pattern represents participation rising gradually with age, reaching a peak and levelling off in the forties and fifties and gradually declining in the sixties (Milbrath, 1965). The curvilinear pattern present when mean participation scores are plotted fit the "start up" and 'slow down' explanation given by Nie et al., (1974). The youngest and the oldest age groups participate less than the middle age groups. Those at the youngest stages of the life cycle are just getting established in careers and have no stable basis for political involvement. Those at the oldest stages in the life cycle are subject to poorer health, increased physical infirmities and less motivation to participate in the democratic process. Perhaps the over 65 decline is also due to gradual or forced withdrawal from society. The 'slow down' which is used by researchers to explain the decline in participation after age 60 is also consistent with disengagement theory. If the over 60 do decline in activity as the data show, then political participation is one of the social activities from which the elderly are likely to withdraw.

Further examination of the decline in the over 65 is possible by the ability to eliminate cohort effects through the use of panel data. The amount of change in each
individual was measured across time since the same
respondents were interviewed in 1974 and 1979.
Intraindividual change from 1974 to 1979, which is provided
by the change scores in the panel data, is represented by
either an increase or decrease in activity for each age
group. The younger age group declined in participation from
1974 to 1979. This decline is not consistent with the
'start up' explanation of Nie et al. (1974). One would
expect at least a moderate positive score for this group
rather than the negative score that was present in the
results. For those at the end of the life span, one would
expect a negative change if those over 65 decline in
activity as they continue to age and from the evidence of
previous studies. This pattern was not present in the
results. Even though the positive change score for the over
65 does not suggest a large increase in activity, the change
score does not indicate any decline. At best the score
could be said to be relatively neutral from one time period
to another. Thus the over 65 do not decrease in activity
despite the evidence from the curvilinear pattern that says
the over 65 have lower scores than the middle age groups.
Instead, activity remains at a stable or slightly higher
level.

Because the overall participation scores were higher
for all but the youngest age groups in 1979, there may be an
historical effect present in the data. The period between
1974 and 1979 may have generated more interest in politics
or there may have been more issues that were salient enough to mobilize the entire Canadian population. The change scores might suggest that the younger age group were not motivated to increase their level of participation or they did not have the time or the opportunity to participate to the same level as the older groups. The increased level of activity seen with the older groups might be due to the input this group felt they could have on the policymaking of the government. Also, during this period, the historical events of a change in government from Liberal to Conservative might be related to the increased levels of participation for certain age groups.

When the older segment of the population are categorized into age groups of five year intervals, the decline that was seen at the end of the life cycle in the total population was not consistently seen across the older age groups. One would expect from examining the life cycle groups, that, for the older age groups from age 55 onward, there would be a steady decline in activity. The lowest scores for the older age groups should be seen with the oldest age group, that is, those over 70. The data did not show a decline but rather an increase in activity for the over 70 age group.

The two elections, which represent a five year interval between scores, provide evidence both cross-sectionally and longitudinally that the curvilinear pattern was present in
1974 and 1979 for age groups across the life cycle but a steady decline in participation scores is not consistently evident for the over 55 respondents who are examined at the two time periods. The decline is present in 1974 but not in 1979. Among the older respondents in 1979, the 75+ showed higher participation scores than those in any of the other older categories. Why was there a lower score for the 70+ in 1974 but not in 1979? One explanation might be that in 1974 the over 70 group which aged to over 75 in 1979 included in the sample many respondents who indeed might have been over 75 rather than just 70-74. However, an examination of the change scores of the over 70 who aged to 75+ in 1979 shows that there was indeed an increase in the amount of participation for the over 70 from 1974 to 1979. One might then conclude that the 'slow down' is in fact present until age 70 at which time there is a resurgence of activity and a period of 'start up' returns. The evidence of the change scores support this conclusion in that there is a negative change from age 55 through age 65 indicating a decrease in activity. However for those who age from 70 to 75+, the change score is positive and would indicate an increase in activity. This increase in activity is again supported by the evidence of the percentage of respondents who increase and decrease in participation. Thus for those in the 70+ category approximately 12% of the respondents decrease in activity whereas 34% of the respondents increase in activity. For every three respondents over 70 who
increase in activity only one respondent decreases.

Since the retirement age is 65 for most working citizens, there is a period of five years in which participation levels decline before increasing after age 70. The period of life between 65 and 70 for all of the population whether one has retired officially or just reached 'the golden age' could be classified as an 'unstable period' in which lifestyles must be reestablished. A 'start-up' explanation for the 70+ age group is consistent with the results. For those individuals reaching 70+, there appears to have been a period of readjustment into leisure time activities including political participation.

This period of history may be somewhat unlike that of the 60's and early 70's when there was a decline seen in participation throughout the American studies as well as the cross-sectional studies in Canada (Mishler, 1979). It is also true that studies only looked at those over 65 as a single age group. A different pattern emerges when those over 65 are further subdivided into smaller age groups. Throughout the 70's much attention has been paid to the elderly by the media. Through newspapers, books and television, there is a focus on the need for the elderly to remain active. Remaining active has been impressed upon the elderly through public education to keep healthy and fit. The media has also suggested various opportunities and activities that the elderly can engage in both on a
individual and community level. Political opportunities for the elderly have been engaged in as one form of social activity and have received publicity and reinforcement from the media. Earlier gerontological research had suggested many policies for governments as well as private institutions that, if implemented, would enhance the lives of many of the older citizens (Vinyard, 1983). The increased activity seen in this study for those over 70 might suggest that this group of elders has settled into a new, meaningful lifestyle based on increased social interactions and a renewed interest in keeping active.

Modes of political participation used in the scale for this study serve as activities both of a political as well as a social nature.

Gender and socio-economic status do have some effect on participation but the patterns are somewhat different among some of the age groups used in the study. The data suggest that, for certain age groups across the life cycle, there is a difference in participation when the panel respondents are divided into male/female and high/low SES groups. When the whole life cycle is examined separately in 1974 and 1979 the typical curvilinear pattern is present, with a few specific deviations, for each separate category of male, female, high or low SES. Some exceptional sex differences such as the over 65 females in 1974, show up as a lower score than any of the other male-female age groups except males in the youngest age group in 1979. In almost all age groups across
the life cycle except the youngest males in 1979, the men had higher scores than the women. This finding is similar to previous findings (Verta and Almond, 1964; Mishler, 1979). Even though the males have consistently higher scores than the women, the change scores reveal that from 1974 to 1979 men decreased more in political participation levels than women. The amount of participation may be lower for women in 1974 than men but over the five year period the women become more active and do not decline or withdraw from this mode of social activity as much as the men. The over 65 women may not participate to the same level as women in other age groups but for this sample of Canadian women there is an increase in participation. For this five year time period females become more active than men except for the 45-64 age group when females decreased slightly more than males. During this 45-64 period of the life cycle females might be experiencing the 'empty nest' syndrome and consequently may not have either the motivation or opportunity to involve themselves in activities outside the home (Riley and Foner, 1972). Also during this age period, females are trying to reestablish identities based on decreased child-rearing activities, a reentry into the labor force, or an effort to accommodate themselves to new parameters in a marriage (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1981).

The data suggest no change in activity for the over 65 in the total population. When men and women are examined separately there is an increase in activity for females and
a decrease in activity for males. Women are seen to increase their activity levels after age 65 whereas men show a decrease. When looking at specific five year age groups within the older population, the greatest difference in change scores between men and women occurs within the 65-69 age group. During this period in the life cycle the activity levels for the men drop off dramatically whereas the level for women increases. This age group, 65-69, is the post retirement phase where men have returned to the home and have to reestablish goals based on a surplus of leisure time. They have left the work force and have not yet reentered into social functions outside the work place. On the other hand, women, who increase in activity, could also be newly retired but do not have the same problems maintaining social contacts or developing new ones as the men do. Retirement is not as dramatic for women as for men (Harris and Cole, 1980). Women who have been housewives as well as having a career have already partially retired but never fully retire since homemaking is an ongoing activity (Decker, 1980). The woman is not interested in politics per se but the opportunities afforded her by participatory activities, not just voting, provide a legitimate social activity. By age 70 men and women have reached an activity level that is essentially the same. The men, by the time of their early 70's, have adjusted to their retirement and reestablished old or 'started up' new social contacts.

The data indicate that differences in socio-economic
status do not have the same impact on participation as gender. The curvilinear pattern is again present for both SES groups in 1974 and 1979. Across the whole life cycle Canadians with higher status are more active than those with lower status except for the over 65 age groups. For the over 65 age groups both in 1974 and 1979 those with lower status had a higher though not substantially higher score than the upper status groups. The over 65 age groups did not show as great a difference in scores between status groups as those 18-24 year old upper status Canadians who were substantially more active especially in 1974. The interesting finding with this variable is, that over the five year period, there is a consistency in the level of activity for the low socio-economic group except for those who age from 65+ to 70+. Thus, those with a low socio-economic status maintain a consistent level of participation from 18 through 65 years of age when activity begins to increase.

For those in the high status group the amount of change across the life span is most significant for the 18-24 year olds. This group decreases in activity perhaps because of rethinking about politics based on previous socialization or because career goals take precedence. The lower status group shows minor change and this might suggest that they have not begun the 'start up' commonly ascribed to this age group. An increase in activity for the low SES group is not seen until age 65+. At this point in the life cycle one
might suggest that the increase in activity could be due to
a change in characteristics upon which the SES status was
based. By retiring from a low SES job, a respondent is now
classed as 'retired' rather than, say, a 'factory worker' or
'clerk'. This general category 'retired' enables the low
SES to have something in common with a high SES. Both are
just 'retired' and both eligible for the 'old age pension'.
Retirement activities are not as status orientated as
careers within younger age groups and although activities
for seniors vary from community to community there is more
social interaction among all status groups. Death among
peers also necessitates the making of new friends as numbers
dwindle within organizations to which one has previously
been associated.

For the over 55 age group the data suggest that there
is some difference in amount of participation among both
status groups. In previous research much attention was
given to controlling for SES characteristics. These earlier
studies (Almond and Verba, 1963; Glenn and Grimes, 1968)
attempted to show that education and income accounted for
the decrease or reversal in the decline in the curvilinear
pattern seen after 65. Those respondents in their studies
with upper class characteristics were not as likely to
decline in participation as those with lower class
characteristics. The results of this study do not support
previous findings since there was little difference in the
amount of change for either status group after age 65.
When the over 55 are examined more specifically the greatest difference in change for these two status groups appears at the 60-64 age level. From 1974 to 1979 this age group goes through retirement where there is a change in income and occupation although not in education. Perhaps at this level, with the high SES now taking a cut in salary, and withdrawing from a high pressure and challenging occupation, the period of readjustment is more severe and difficult than for the lower status groups. Lower status Canadians upon retirement might benefit economically from pensions and be relieved to leave less challenging jobs. Upon reaching age 70 there is an increase in activity for both groups and the status distinction might not be as divisive as with younger age groups.

Those in the elderly category for the 1974 and 1979 data were primarily educated in the 20th century. Previous studies in which the old were examined stated that lower education levels were related to lower activity scores since these older cohorts were less educated than the younger generation. These studies which were carried out primarily in the 50's and 60's would have dealt with an older generation that had been educated in the 19th century and might not have received as much education as those in the 20th century. By studying the elderly in the 70's, the data are beginning to show that the decline due to lower education levels is being eroded as the respondents are becoming more educated.
The last question addressed in the study, regarding the decline in the correlation between political participation and interest across the life cycle, results in an inverse curvilinear pattern. Among the age groups across the life cycle there is a lower correlation from the youngest through middle age. After 65 the correlation pattern reverses and this age group shows a stronger correlation between participation and interest than any of the three younger age groups. Among the three youngest age groups the 18-24 year olds have the strongest correlation and this might be due to the novelty of becoming "of age" and the resulting responsibility and motivation to vote for the first time as well as to become involved in some of the higher levels of political activity. This novelty soon wears off as is evidenced by the decrease in activity for the 18-24 year olds from 1974 to 1979. The pattern of decline continues until age 65. The stronger relationship after age 65, when the relationship reflects an increase in both measures, could be related to the fact that Canadians have more time to pursue participatory activities or that the issues and policies that affect their current life style can be influenced by involvement in the political process.

From age 55 onward the five year age groups show an increasingly stronger relationship. Thus these age groups either become increasingly more interested and do something about it or they become very disinterested and withdraw from any participatory activity. Because the participation
scores are higher for the over 70 and there is more positive change among this age group, the data suggest that the older do become more interested and thus do participate more. This could be due to the amount of leisure time available to pursue political activities as well as 'senior peer pressure'. According to Mishler (1979) motivation rather than opportunity appears to be the more important explanation of political participation in Canada. Once new social contacts have been established there is an increasing awareness of the world outside the home which previously had been confined to the work place.

Politics becomes a common ground for discussion since so many of the governmental policies whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level, affect the general welfare and happiness of the older citizen. Many seniors are primarily dependent on the government for their monthly incomes and since many of the incomes are not geared to inflation the erosion of this income is seen as threatening to current lifestyles. Seniors might be interested in how government policies affect their lifestyles particularly in the areas of pensions and inflation (Vinyard, 1983). Thus they become interested and involved in the process that might influence some policy in their favour.

Among seniors, the data indicate that males increased in interest from 1974 to 1979 whereas the females in the corresponding age categories decreased in interest. Males
showed a positive increase from age 55 onward but females showed a positive increase only from 55 through 64. Although the relationship is stable, the number of women increasing in participation exceeds the number of men. For these women, then, one might conclude that politics is just a source of social activity and their involvement is not related to the fact that they might have some impact on the government.

In conclusion, the study has examined activity patterns among age groups within the Canadian population. Although political activity is only one of the many social activities in which people engage, it served as a useful measure for the study of a large sample of Canadians. The ability to look at change across time is beneficial to developmental research and panel data have provided this opportunity for examining aging behaviors in this study. Large scale studies of this nature are important and necessary for the study of aging. All social behaviors should be measured in order that patterns within the population can be assessed. Further studies, perhaps targeting the elderly population and which take into account the many other social behaviors engaged in by the elderly, would enhance the results and clarify the various dimensions of activity among the population.

It should be remembered that both cross sectional and longitudinal analyses contribute to an understanding of the
behaviours of the elderly as does examination of specific age groups among those over 65. With the increase in the total population of the elderly, future policies might be less successful if the unique behaviours of those in their 70's or 80's are not evaluated independently.
APPENDIX A

A number of questions in each of the two main national waves of the study were asked of only one of the two random half samples. These items are identified throughout the codebook by a statement following the variable description. A set of questions which was begun in one of the half samples was continued throughout the panel in the same half sample. For all half sample questions, the appropriate filters must be used in addition to the study filter or weight. It may also be noted that certain questions were asked of only panel or cross-section respondents respectively in certain waves.

Variable numbering

The variables used for the present study were obtained from the original data set where they were numbered as follows:

V1 TO V480: QUESTIONS ASKED IN 1974 (PANEL ONLY)
V1001 TO V1538: QUESTIONS ASKED IN 1979
V4001 TO V4333: WEIGHTS AND FILTERS
Cross reference list

Comparable questions in the panel waves.

NOTE: '*' means the question was only asked in half sample 2

<table>
<thead>
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<th>VARIABLE NAME</th>
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<th>1979</th>
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<td>V1</td>
<td>V1005</td>
</tr>
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<td>1974 RESP ID-NUM (PGH A MATCHUP)</td>
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<td>V1021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEREST IN POLITICS</td>
<td>V11</td>
<td>V1022</td>
</tr>
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<td>V34+</td>
<td>V1053+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVINCE FRIENDS FEDERAL</td>
<td>V35+</td>
<td>V1054+</td>
</tr>
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<td>ATTEND MEETING FEDERAL</td>
<td>V37+</td>
<td>V1055+</td>
</tr>
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<td>CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY FEDERAL</td>
<td>V39+</td>
<td>V1057+</td>
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<td>RESPONDENT SEX</td>
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### TABLE A-1

**Number of Panel Respondents (Unweighted) by Age Groups**

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<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Low SES</th>
<th>High SES</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>265</td>
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<td>244</td>
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<td>45-64</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td><strong>Old Age</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
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*Note. If subpopulation does not equal total population then missing data.*
TABLE A-2

Mean Participation Scores for Life Cycle and Old Age Respondents Using Cross Sectional Data

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<th>Mean Participation Scores</th>
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<td>60-64</td>
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<td>65-69</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>1.60</td>
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</table>

*p < .01
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mean Participation Score 1974*</th>
<th>Mean Participation Score 1979**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Cycle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Age</td>
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<td>55-59</td>
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<td>70+</td>
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*P < .05
**P < .001
TABLE A-4
Mean Participation Scores for Life Cycle and Old Age Panel Respondents According to Sex and SES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Category of Subpopulation</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Males</th>
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<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.63</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.95</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.62</td>
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<td>1.72</td>
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TABLE A-5

Percentage of Life Cycle and Old Age Panel Respondents who Increased and Decreased in Participation and Interest from 1974 to 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage of Panel Respondents</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Interest</th>
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<td>18-24</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note. The difference between 100% and total % of respondents increasing and decreasing = % showing stability (i.e., no change in participation or interest score from 1974 to 1979.)
APPENDIX B

Questions as worded in the original data set.

V10, V1021: We have found that people sometimes don't pay too much attention to elections. How about yourself? Would you say that you are very interested in the recent federal election, fairly interested, slightly interested, or not at all interested in it?

V11, V1022: We would also like to know whether you pay much attention to politics generally. I mean from day to day, when there isn't a big election campaign going on. Would you say that you follow politics very closely, fairly closely, or not much at all.

V34(V42), V1053(V1060): In federal (provincial) politics how often do you discuss politics with other people? (Half sample 2 only)

V35(V43), V1054(V10b1): In federal (provincial) politics how often do you try to convince friends to vote the same as you? Often, sometimes, seldom, never. (Half sample 2 only)
V37(V45), V1055(V1062): In federal (provincial) politics how often do you attend a political meeting or rally? Often, sometimes, seldom, never. (Half sample 2 only)

V39(V47), V1057(V1064): In federal (provincial) politics how often do you spend time working for a political party or a candidate? Often, sometimes, seldom, never. (Half sample 2 only)

V156, V1229: In federal elections since you have been old enough to vote in Canada, including the one held this July, would you say that you have voted in all of them, most of them, some of them, or none of them?


V477, V1535: What was your exact age on your last birthday?

V479, V1537: Sex of respondent
REFERENCES


VITA-AUCTORIS

Helen Catherine (McGlade) LeDuc, born Oct. 26, 1940, received elementary education at St. John's School, Gananoque, Ontario. Senior matriculation was obtained at Gananoque High School in 1958. Graduated from St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, Ontario (1961) with R.N. Winner of women's auxiliary scholarship for post-graduate study. Obtained B.Sc.N from University of Windsor, 1963. Married to Lawrence LeDuc (1964) and has three sons, Brian (18), Aaron (14), and Jason (13). Currently employed as a sessional instructor in the School of Nursing, University of Windsor.