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Generative Concern, Political Commitment, and Charitable Actions

Bill E. Peterson^{1,2} and Lauren E. Duncan¹

The implications of psychosocial generativity (Erikson, 1950) for understanding contemporary politics were explored. Study 1 replicated, in two samples, previous findings that generativity concerns are related to a variety of political activities, including the expenditure of time and money in support of political organizations. Using path analyses, Study 2 extended these findings and demonstrated how midlife generativity concerns interacted with political orientation and interest in politics to produce stronger relationships with giving. These findings suggest that people view the political arena as one important way to improve society and thereby manifest cultural generativity. Although focusing on the domain of politics, these studies highlight the complexity of generativity as a construct; broad concerns with generativity operate within the context of ideological commitments to produce greater levels of generative activity.

KEY WORDS: Conservative; Erik Erikson; generativity; liberal; political contributions.

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks on personality and adult development commonly introduce students to Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development. When first described by Erikson, the eight stages of humankind occupied only 28 pages of text in *Childhood and Society*, but subsequent writings elaborated on various components of the theory (e.g., identity in Erikson, 1968; generativity in Erikson, 1969). These elaborations by Erikson were derived from clinical case studies as well as through astute observations of how broad social forces interacted with individual psychology. Although his ideas concerning adult development provided fertile heuristic ground for students and researchers, only recently have psychologists begun to explore Erikson's ideas empirically. The seventh psychosocial stage—generativity versus

self-absorption—illustrates this point well. As conceived by Erikson (1950, 1980, 1983), generativity is a concern with establishing and guiding the next generation of human beings. It is a midlife preoccupation that arises when social and psychological forces command individuals to expand their radius of care to include younger generations and the cultural world that these younger individuals will inhabit.

A few early investigators were prescient and focused attention on generativity (e.g., Ryff & Heincke, 1983; Vaillant & Milofsky, 1980). Throughout the 1980s, other researchers took inspiration from these contributions and continued to work on generativity, albeit in relative isolation from one another and drawing from different theoretical and empirical approaches (e.g., the case studies by Kotre, 1984, and Stewart, Franz, & Layton, 1988; the motive approach favored by McAdams, 1985/1988, and McAdams, Ruetzel, & Foley, 1986; and the focus on parenting by Snarey, Kuehne, Son, Hauser, & Vaillant, 1987). Subsequently, in the 1990s, systematic work on generativity began to appear in journals regularly. Current examples include Bradley's extension of Mar-

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cia's (1980) groundbreaking work on identity to consider generativity statuses (Bradley, 1997; Bradley & Marcia, 1998), MacDermid and colleagues' investigations of generativity expression in multiple roles (MacDermid, de Haan, & Heilbrun, 1996; MacDermid, Heilbrun, & de Haan, 1997), and McAdams and colleagues' validation of a multifaceted model of generativity (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993). In our work with Stewart and others, we have been developing different approaches to the assessment of generativity (Peterson & Klohnen, 1995; Peterson & Stewart, 1990, 1993, 1996). Cross citations among these research camps (and others) indicate that work on generativity is thriving and investigators are building on the ideas of colleagues; indeed, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) organized a number of researchers to contribute to a 511-page book devoted to generativity, which provides an excellent reference point for investigators interested in the topic. In addition to covering the latest empirical work, this volume provides readers with philosophical perspectives (Wakefield, 1998) and historical accounts (Moran, 1998) of generativity.

As research on generativity continues, investigators are moving away from issues of assessment and convergent validity and beginning to expand the network of outcome variables related to the construct. One area ripe for investigation concerns the relationship between generativity and politics. In his 1984 book, Kotre introduced the concept of *cultural generativity*—a concern with passing on societal traditions, mores, and ideologies (as opposed to the practical skills passed on through technical generativity). Subsequently, Peterson and his colleagues (Peterson, Smirles, & Wentworth, 1997; Peterson & Stewart, 1996) argued that one precursor to cultural generativity is a demonstrated interest in contemporary politics. A person who keeps up to date with the activities of political leaders, legislation, movements, and crises has important background knowledge about societal trajectories; understanding the implications of various political trends represents an important form of cultural generativity that might be communicated to younger individuals, who are often less sophisticated about political machinations. Furthermore, in a democratic society, knowledge of contemporary politics allows a generative individual to campaign for social changes important to him or her. Indeed, Peterson et al. (1997) showed that generative people expressed greater interest in local and national-level politics than did nongenerative individuals and were more

likely to contribute personal time and resources to a variety of political causes. At the case level, Peterson and Stewart (1990) demonstrated how one woman (Vera Brittain, an early British feminist) expressed high levels of generativity through her intense involvement with pacifism.

Scattered findings by other investigators have also documented a tentative relationship between generativity and interest in politics. For example, research on men and women who came of age during the politically charged 1960s has demonstrated how political activism—or attempts to correct perceived social injustice—can be viewed as manifestations of generativity and altruism (Cole & Stewart, 1996; Franz & McClelland, 1994; Stewart & Goldstein, 1990). Using this earlier work as a base, one could argue that some adults manifest generativity by transforming their political interest into an active commitment to the advancement of important social causes or organizations. Presumably, these commitments are based on the belief that such support has the potential to enhance the well-being of people in U.S. society.

In the current investigation, the relationship between generativity and political activity was explored in two studies. In both studies, the political contributions of participants served as the criteria for generative behaviors. Analyses in Study 1 attempted to replicate (in two samples) the results of Peterson et al. (1997), who demonstrated that generativity and political activity are linked. More specifically, the premise of Study 1 was that students and midlife women scoring high on generativity should be more aware of and more interested in current social events than should their lower-scoring peers. Furthermore, high scorers should report greater levels of political contributions than those of low scorers.

In Study 2, data used by Peterson et al. (1997) are reanalyzed to show how midlife generativity concerns interact with political orientation and interest in politics to produce stronger relationships with contributing.

STUDY 1: A CONCEPTUAL REPLICATION

Method

Participants and the Generativity Scale

Two groups of participants were used to examine the relations between generativity and involvement

with politics. The first group consisted of 46 men and 45 women from the University of Michigan undergraduate subject pool.³ In the spring of 1992, students, in groups of 10 to 20, completed a 40-min questionnaire. The survey included the 20-item Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). In prior studies, the LGS demonstrated adequate convergent and discriminant validity (McAdams et al., 1993; McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). Participants answered each item on the 4-point scale suggested by McAdams and de St. Aubin (0 = *the statement never applies to me* to 3 = *the statement applies to me very often*). Examples of items from the LGS are as follows: "I have important skills that I try to teach others" and "I try to pass along the knowledge I have gained through my experiences." LGS item means exhibited no gender differences (male, $M = 1.78$, $SD = .37$; female, $M = 1.83$, $SD = .42$). Cronbach's alpha for the LGS was .83.

The second group of participants were graduates from an elite women's college. In 1995 and 1996, 142 alumnae from the Smith College graduating class of 1964 participated in a study of educated women at midlife (Duncan, in press). As part of the survey, the Smith women, who were between 50 and 54 years old ($M = 52.39$, $SD = .62$), were administered the LGS; however, to make responses comparable to other items on the survey, we asked the women to answer each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The item mean for the LGS was 3.88, $SD = .49$. Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Criterion Variables

Political Salience. Awareness and interest in politics was assessed by using a measure of political salience developed by Stewart and her colleagues. This measure assesses the personal meaningfulness of social and historical events and has been associated with higher levels of political activism in college students, activists, and midlife women (Duncan & Agronick, 1995, Duncan & Stewart, 1995, 1999; Stewart & Healy, 1989). Typically, participants are asked to use a 3-point scale to indicate the importance to them of a variety of social and historical events (1 = *not at all important or personally meaningful* to 3 = *very important or personally meaningful*). The mea-

sure usually consists of a list of right-leaning, left-leaning, and neutral events (e.g., Reagan presidency, women's movement, oil crisis). In studies that have used the measure, the exact item content has varied to reflect changing political landscapes, such as recent wars, the appearance of new world leaders, and other political upheavals. Despite the range of events typically included in the measure, factor analysis has confirmed the presence of a unitary factor (Duncan & Stewart, 1999). However, in Peterson et al. (1997), political salience was split into left-leaning, right-leaning, and neutral events to better understand the relationship among generativity, political orientation, and political contributions. Thus, for left-leaning events, Peterson et al.'s original study asked participants to indicate the importance and personal meaningfulness of the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, the women's movement, violence against abortion clinics, the AIDS epidemic, and the environmental movement. In the current student sample, left political salience consisted of the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the Vietnam War. In the midlife women sample, the events were the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, the women's movement, *Roe v. Wade*, the environmental movement, and the Vietnam War.⁴

In Peterson et al. (1997), events composing right political salience included the Ronald Reagan and George Bush years, the collapse of communism, the Persian Gulf War, U.S. intervention abroad, the war on drugs, and the Cold War. In the current student sample, the right-leaning events were the Persian Gulf War, the collapse of communism, and the Cold War, and in the midlife sample, the Reagan years, the collapse of communism, and the Cold War.

Finally, in Peterson et al. (1997), neutral political salience included ratings of John F. Kennedy's assassination, Watergate, universal health care, the national debt, the Los Angeles riots, and the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. In the current student sample, the events were the freeing of Nelson Mandela and Tiananmen Square. In the midlife sample, the events were the Kennedy presidency and African nationalism.

Political Contributions. In addition to assessing political salience, Peterson et al. (1997) examined

³These participants were also one of the groups used in a study of authoritarianism and attitudes toward gender roles (Duncan, Peterson, & Winter, 1997).

⁴These events are not meant to be a definitive representation of U.S. liberal politics. The items merely represent events that people with a left-leaning orientation might find more meaningful than would other people. The same logic applies to the right-leaning and neutral events described next.

levels of charitable giving (e.g., to the Republican Party). Participants were asked to indicate the various ways that they may have contributed, such as donating money, attending rallies, or writing letters. In the midlife women sample, the measure of political contributions was similar. Participants were given a list of organizations and causes and asked to indicate if they contributed in any one (or more) of the following six ways: by (1) donating money; (2) being an active member of the organization; (3) attending a rally or a demonstration; (4) writing, calling, or visiting a public official; (5) attending a meeting; and/or (6) signing a petition. The 12 causes examined were AIDS research and education, the peace movement, child care, civil rights, the environment, gay rights, elimination of homelessness, the Moral Majority, pro-choice, pro-life, troop support (e.g., support our soldiers), and the women's movement. Three of the 12 causes received support from less than 7% of the sample; therefore, pro-life, troop support, and the Moral Majority were excluded from analyses. By contrast, the most popular causes that women contributed to were environmental organizations (76% of the sample contributed in at least one of the six possible ways), peace organizations (61%), and women's organizations (57%).

Political contributions of this type were not assessed in the student sample. Instead, participants were asked if they had participated in any of the following events sponsored by groups on campus: pro-choice rally, support our soldiers rally (Persian Gulf War), women's issues meeting, and minority issues meeting. Forty percent of the students participated in one or more of these events ($M = .54$, $SD = .74$).

Results and Discussion

Table I provides descriptive information for all the political variables as well as their correlations with generativity. As shown in the top half of Table I, scores on generativity were positively correlated with all the political salience variables for both the student and the midlife women samples (however, the relationship between right-leaning events and generativity for the midlife women was only marginally significant, $p < .10$). These results provide further support for Peterson et al.'s (1997) argument that generative people are culturally savvy and express their interest in the well-being of society by following political trends. Furthermore, this heightened interest in politics does not seem consistently related to a

particular ideology; in other words, generative people showed interest in both right- and left-leaning events.

Generative people do not just monitor contemporary politics; but they also contribute directly to the shaping of political and ideological opinion. As shown in the bottom half of Table I, people who scored high on generativity were more likely to contribute to various political causes. The more politically active students scored higher on generativity, and, for the midlife women, total contributions to six of the nine organizations showed significant correlations with LGS scores. These results suggest that generative individuals express their interest in politics by donating time and resources in support of organizations important to them. The fact that generative concerns were related to political interest in both the student and the midlife women samples is not surprising. Although generativity is typically conceptualized as an important midlife variable, Stewart and Vandewater (1998) have argued that certain forms of generativity expression appear earlier, when youthful idealism is at its peak. In the United States, political participation among young adult college students seems to represent one such early form of generativity.

The bivariate correlates replicate the findings between generativity and politics reported by Peterson et al. (1997). In viewing these results, however, one might wonder if generativity is important for understanding political involvement above and beyond more logically related predictors. In path analytic terms, will generativity maintain its significant relationship to political contributions after logically related predictor variables such as political ideology are entered? Furthermore, might generativity interact with political ideology to produce greater levels of giving? For example, people who contribute the most to the Republican Party may be highly generative and very conservative. Similarly, those who are very generative and highly liberal may contribute the most to the Democratic Party. Using a third, politically moderate midlife sample, Study 2 expands on Study 1 by examining how generativity interacts with political ideology to produce a stronger relationship with giving.

STUDY 2: THE INTERACTION OF GENERATIVITY AND POLITICAL COMMITMENTS

The analyses planned for Study 2 were modeled implicitly on a theory of generativity introduced by

Table I. Correlation of Generativity with Political Variables: Student and Midlife Women Samples^a

Political salience ^b	Student sample ^c			Midlife women sample ^d		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>
Left-leaning	1.86	0.56	.28*	2.39	0.42	.24*
Right-leaning	2.13	0.48	.20*	1.85	0.54	.16 [†]
Neutral	1.68	0.51	.23*	1.94	0.53	.28*
Political contributions						
Student activism ^e	0.54	0.74	.26*			
Midlife women's contributions to ^f						
Elimination of homelessness				0.80	1.07	.42**
AIDS research and education				1.04	1.34	.34**
Child care				0.72	1.32	.29**
Women's rights				1.81	2.09	.23*
Gay rights				0.61	1.37	.21*
Civil rights				1.78	2.13	.20*
Peace movement				2.10	2.22	.10
Pro-choice				2.03	1.94	.09
Environment				2.41	2.08	.00

^aSample sizes may be smaller than those reported in the text because of missing data.

^bItem means are reported for political salience. Item content is described in the text.

^c*N* = 91. **p* < .05.

^d*N* = 126. **p* < 0.05. †*p* < .10. ***p* < .001.

^eThe mean indicates the number of events that participants attended from the following list: pro-choice rally, support our soldiers rally (during the Persian Gulf War), women's issues meeting, and minority issues meeting.

^fMeans reflect the total number of ways that participants contributed to each organization or political cause. The six ways to contribute are described in the text.

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992). According to these authors, generativity can be understood as a function of seven interrelated features. The motivational underpinnings of generativity spring from two sources: (1) *inner desires* for agency and communion and (2) *cultural demands* to champion and care for other people. These two wellsprings converge to produce a conscious *concern* for the well-being of the next generation. Ideally, this generativity concern is reinforced by a *belief* in the worthiness of the human species and becomes translated into a generative *commitment*. Generative commitments then become actualized through generative *activities*. Finally, all these components cohere into a generativity *narrative* that is unique for each person and incorporated into his or her identity. (See McAdams et al., 1998, for further elaboration of this model with a review of studies providing empirical support.)

Perhaps because of the complexity of this model, McAdams and his colleagues empirically examined only a few of these components at any one time. For example, de St. Aubin and McAdams (1995) focused attention on generative concern and actions. In later

publications, Mansfield and McAdams (1996) and McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, and Mansfield (1997) explored the life narratives of generative people. In general, these studies (and others) provide evidence that the seven components of generativity exist somewhat independently of one another and have predictable patterns of construct validity. But the empirical existence of these components does not necessarily confirm the internal logic of McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) theory, which proposes specific interrelationships between the variables. For example, as depicted by the arrows in their model (p. 1005), generative concerns lead directly to generative commitments, and commitments, in turn, lead to generative actions. This pathway from concern to commitment to action raises questions about the flow of generativity: Can generative concerns alone (without commitments) produce generative actions? Can generative concerns and commitments interact to produce higher levels of generative activity? Do commitments other than strictly generative ones (e.g., political commitments) contribute to generative actions? Study 2 provided answers to some of these questions.

Generative Concerns, Commitments, and Actions

Generative concern (as assessed by the LGS) is a broadly defined component of McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) theory. It involves global expressions of care toward the well-being of others, representing a basic understanding that humans are interdependent on one another for productivity and happiness and that members of the younger generation especially depend on older adults. For example, Peterson et al. (1997) found that parent scores on the LGS were related to offspring ratings of life satisfaction and reports of an authoritative style of parenting. Generative concerns of this sort are not always actualized into generative actions or commitments, but they are a necessary component of the model for promoting the well-being of society and future members of that society.

According to McAdams et al. (1993), *generative commitments* involve the conscious articulation of pro-social strivings and come in one of three types: the desire (1) to promote positive outcomes for another person's life, (2) to make a creative contribution to society, or (3) to include younger people in one's activities. It is possible, however, to broaden understanding of generative commitments. For example, generative individuals may see a steadfast commitment to a political orientation (e.g., liberal or conservative) as a way to promote positive outcomes for the lives of others. Politically committed individuals may also value knowledge about current events as a way to monitor the types of policies that promote societal well-being. Thus, understanding an individual's nongenerative commitments may shed light on how their generative concerns are channeled. In terms of the current study, we thought that forms of commitment that might influence generative political giving might include (a) a commitment to a liberal or conservative political orientation and (b) an interest in keeping abreast of contemporary politics.⁵

Finally, as argued by MacDermid et al. (1996,

⁵Some readers may wonder if political orientation may be a better example of a *belief* rather than a *commitment*. The generative belief component of McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) theory actually has a specific referent. It involves a belief in the worthwhileness of the human species. As discussed by Van De Water and McAdams (1989), generative belief involves hope, trust, and faith that prospects for the long-term survival of the human species are getting better rather than worse with each passing year. Generative commitment has no such specific referent and more easily accommodates alternative types of commitments that may not be directly related to generativity but may have an impact on generative actions nonetheless.

1997), generativity can be expressed in different ways and role situations (e.g., as a parent, an artist, a politician); for this reason, it is important for researchers to specify the kind of *generative activity* under investigation. In Study 2, political contributions were used as examples of generative activity.

Hypotheses

In specific terms, we hypothesized that *generative concern* (or LGS scores) should be related to *political commitment* (political orientation, political interest), which in turn should be related to *generative activity* in the form of political contributions. This pattern of results would confirm the basic relationships among three components of McAdams and de St. Aubin's theory. Furthermore, the interaction of generative concern with political commitment was analyzed. We expected that participants who were both concerned with generativity and politically committed would contribute time and resources to organizations that advance society. In addition, after entering the political commitment variables into a stepwise regression, we were able to examine the extent to which broad-based generativity concern independently predicts political contributions.

Method

Participants

Participants were part of a larger study of University of New Hampshire parents and students. In the fall of 1994, 200 first-year undergraduate students took part in a questionnaire study as part of their experiences in an introductory psychology course. They were given an opportunity to earn extra laboratory credit by recruiting one of their parents to complete a similar survey. One hundred sixty-five students gave us permission to contact either their mother or their father; of the 165 surveys we sent to parents, 159 completed surveys were returned (a response rate of 96%). Either the mother or the father of each student was randomly selected to participate, unless the student came from a nonintact home. In these cases, a survey was sent to the parent with whom the student had been living most currently, usually the mother. These 159 parents (59 men, 100 women) composed the sample for Study 2.

At the time the survey was completed, the aver-

age age of the parents was 46.7 years ($SD = 5.10$). On average, parents had 2.5 children ($SD = 1.01$). Twenty-nine percent of the participants had a high school degree only, 24% had some college, 33% had BAs, and 13% had postcollege degrees (mostly master's level degrees). This range of educational levels was reflected in participants' work situations. Occupations were coded on a 9-point scale in which 1 = *retired* (only one person), 5 = *skilled labor* (e.g., carpenter, technician, artisan), and 9 = *major professional*. On the basis of this scale, the average occupational level was 5.94 ($SD = 1.60$); 64% of participants were working at levels 5 (*skilled labor*) or 6 (*skilled technical worker*, such as a computer operator or a nurse technician).

Predictor Variables

Generativity Concern. The LGS (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) was used to assess generativity concern in the parents; participants answered on a 4-point scale (0–3). The LGS item mean was 1.93 ($SD = .44$) for men and 1.91 ($SD = .42$) for women. Cronbach's alpha for the LGS was .83.

Political Commitment. Two measures of political commitment were used. The first was intended to reflect a participant's interest in keeping up to date with political events. A single-item measure was used: "How much interest do you have in contemporary politics?" It was answered on a 4-point scale (1 = *almost no interest* to 4 = *a lot of interest*). Participants expressed a moderate amount of interest in contemporary politics ($M = 2.70$, $SD = .83$).

The second measure of commitment examined political orientation by using a bipolar measure of conservatism–liberalism. Participants read: "If you had to place yourself on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 indicating you are a strong liberal, 7 indicating you are a strong conservative, and 4 indicating you are a moderate, where would you place yourself?" For this study, responses were reverse keyed so that high scores represented commitment to a liberal orientation. On average, participants rated themselves as uncommitted to either a strong liberal or a strong conservative orientation ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.24$).

Criterion Variables

Charitable Political Activity. As already described by Peterson et al. (1997), participants were

presented with a checklist of organizations and causes that they might have supported with either time or money. The 11 causes or organizations examined in this study are listed in Table II. The 11 events are organized within five superordinate categories. The first two categories represent contributions to the two major political parties in the United States (Democratic and Republican). The third category represents liberal national events that dominated the news after President Clinton took office in 1993 (health care, environment, civil rights, and pro-choice concerning abortion). The fourth category represents issues that are typically handled locally (PTA, concern with taxes, professional contributions, and crime prevention). The final category is made up of contributions in support of a pro-life (antiabortion) stance. As reported in Peterson et al. (1997), the groupings for liberal national politics, local politics, and pro-life emerged through a principal components factor analysis of the items (with varimax rotation).

Participants indicated whether they contributed to each of the 11 causes in any of the following ways: (a) contributed money; (b) been an active member of an organization affiliated with the issue; (c) attended a rally on a demonstration; (d) wrote a letter, called a public official, or attended a meeting; and/or (e) signed a petition. To cut down on analyses, we summed all these ways of contributing to produce a total charitable activity score for each cause or organization. Mean contributions are presented in Table II. Topping the list are involvement in the PTA ($M = 1.43$ ways of contributing) and environmental issues ($M = 1.17$).

Planned Analyses

We anticipated the following: Generativity scores and political interest should be positively related to all types of political contributions. Furthermore, the interaction between generativity and political interest should produce stronger relationships with giving. On the other hand, a liberal political orientation should be associated with contributions to the Democratic Party and liberal national politics only (positive correlations), whereas a conservative political orientation should be related to contributions to the Republican Party and pro-life groups only (negative correlations). The interaction of generativity with political orientation should once again produce stronger relationships with contributing. Because the local political issues are nonpartisan, we

Table II. Correlations of Political Actions with Generativity, Interest, and Orientation^a

Political action	Mean ^b	SD	% ^c	Generativity ^d	Political interest ^d	Political orientation ^d
Democratic contributions	0.46	1.09	22	.19*	.23*	.34**
Republican contributions	0.38	0.78	27	.09	.24*	-.30**
Contributions to "liberal" national politics (circa 1993)						
Health care	0.68	0.95	46	.31**	.23*	.16*
Environment	1.17	1.18	69	.26**	.22*	.11
Civil rights	0.39	0.90	23	.20*	.26**	.17*
Pro-choice	<u>0.41</u>	<u>0.98</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>.28**</u>	<u>.21*</u>	<u>.42**</u>
Subtotal	2.66	3.05	79	.35**	.30**	.28**
Contributions to local politics						
PTA	1.43	1.26	78	.26**	.21*	.02
Tax concerns	0.68	0.84	50	.15*	.20*	-.05
Professional	0.96	1.25	53	.25*	.29**	-.01
Crime prevention	<u>0.44</u>	<u>0.76</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>.21*</u>	<u>.15</u>	<u>.06</u>
Subtotal	3.50	2.84	89	.33**	.33**	.01
Pro-life contributions	0.27	0.64	19	.02	-.01	-.18*

^aSample size is smaller than that reported in the text because of missing data: $N = 149$.

^bMeans reflect the total number of ways that participants contributed to an organization or a political cause. The five ways to contribute are described in the text.

^cPercentage of participants who contributed in at least one of the five ways.

^d* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

expected no correlations between the political orientation variable and local contributions.

Results

Bivariate Correlations

Table II shows the correlations for each of the political contribution variables. As predicted, generativity concern was correlated significantly with most forms of political activity; the only two types of contributions not related to generativity were activities in support of pro-life and the Republican Party. The correlates for interest in politics showed a similar pattern; people interested in politics were actively involved in each of the political causes and parties except pro-life and crime prevention. Finally, political orientation was related to political activity in predicted ways; those with a more liberal orientation actively supported the Democratic Party, health care, civil rights, and pro-choice, whereas those who were more conservative actively supported the Republican Party and pro-life. Political orientation was not related to participation in any of the local issues.

Path Analyses

The correlations of the three predictor variables were examined to rule out multicollinearity. Political orientation was uncorrelated with either generativity ($r = -.05$) or interest in politics ($r = -.01$). Generativity and interest in politics were significantly correlated, albeit not strongly ($r = .23$, $p < .05$). These results indicated that multicollinearity should not be a problem in the regression analyses.

To construct the path analyses, we separately regressed the five superordinate political activity criterion variables on three blocks of predictors. The first block consisted of the two political commitment variables (interest in politics, political orientation), the second block consisted of generativity concern (LGS), and the third block consisted of the interaction terms entered separately (generativity multiplied by interest in politics, generativity multiplied by political orientation; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Standardized beta coefficients for significant pathways are depicted in Figs. 1 through 5. Note that in all five figures, the paths from generativity concern (A) to the commitment variables (B and C) are identical. However, the direct path from generativity (A) to political contributions (D) changes with each figure, as do the

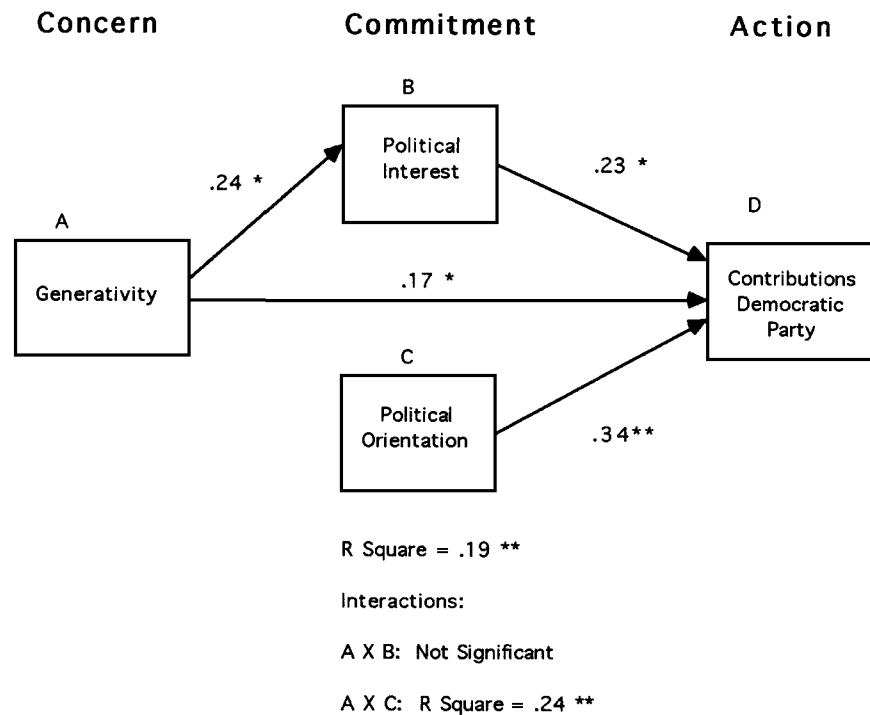


Fig. 1. Contributions to the Democratic Party, predicted by generativity concerns and political commitments. $N = 149$. Standardized beta coefficients are used to link the significant paths. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

paths from the commitment variables to political contributions.

As depicted in Fig. 1, political interest and political orientation were both positively related to participants' contributions to the Democratic Party. Despite the variance accounted for by these two variables, there was also a significant pathway from generativity to the criterion ($\beta = .17, p < .05$). The R^2 for all three predictors was .19, $F(3, 145) = 11.54, p < .001$. Furthermore, as predicted, generativity and political orientation interacted to predict giving. Persons scoring high on generativity and high on liberalism were more likely than low scorers to contribute ($F = 9.09, \Delta R^2 = .05, p < .05$). The interaction of generativity and political interest, however, did not significantly increase the percent variance explained.

Fig. 2 shows significant direct pathways between contributions to the Republican Party and political interest ($\beta = .24, p < .05$) and political orientation ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$). The R^2 for all three predictors was .15, $F(3, 145) = 8.49, p < .001$. Generativity was unrelated to Republican Party contributions; both the direct pathway and the interaction terms were not significant.

The results for contributions to liberal national politics mirror those for the Democratic Party contributions (see Fig. 3). Both interest in politics and political orientation were positively related to contributing; above and beyond these effects, a direct pathway existed for generativity as well ($\beta = .31, p < .001$). The R^2 for all three predictors was .26, $F(3, 145) = 17.15, p < .001$. Furthermore, generativity interacted with both political interest and political orientation. Participants who were generative and interested in politics were more likely than low scorers to contribute ($F = 5.64, \Delta R^2 = .03, p < .05$), as were participants who scored high on generativity and liberalism ($F = 5.80, \Delta R^2 = .03, p < .05$).

As shown in Fig. 4, political interest was positively related to contributing to local politics, as was generativity. The R^2 was .18, $F(3, 145) = 10.40, p < .001$. Furthermore, generativity interacted with political interest, such that highly generative people with an interest in politics were more likely to invest time and resources in local issues ($F = 3.92, \Delta R^2 = .02, p < .05$). Political orientation was unrelated to local political giving.

Fig. 5 depicts the results for pro-life giving. The only direct pathway that existed was for political ori-

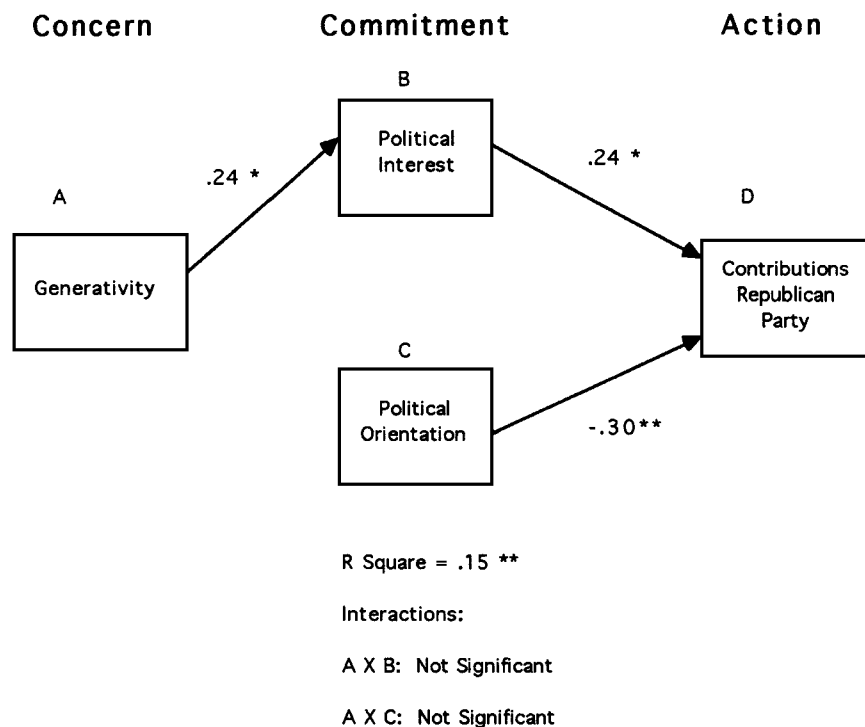


Fig. 2. Contributions to the Republican Party, predicted by generativity concerns and political commitments. $N = 149$. Standardized beta coefficients are used to link the significant paths. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

entation ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .05$). The resulting R^2 of .03 was insignificant, $F(3, 145) = 1.66$, ns . However, generativity did interact (marginally) with political orientation, but not in the way expected; people who contributed to pro-life causes were conservative but scored *low* on generativity ($F = 3.26$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .10$).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Generativity and Political Commitments

Similar to the results of Study 1, the results of Study 2 indicated that in a politically moderate mid-life sample, generativity was related to contributions to the Democratic Party, liberal national politics, and local politics. In addition, Study 2 demonstrated that generative concerns interact with two forms of political commitment to produce higher levels of giving than would be predicted by scores on generativity alone. Specifically, generative participants committed to a liberal political orientation were increasingly

likely to support the Democratic Party and liberal national politics.

These two findings were hypothesized; however, the complementary hypothesis that highly generative conservatives would be more likely to support the Republican Party and pro-life organizations was not confirmed. People who rated themselves as conservative were more likely to support both groups (direct paths), but conservatism did not *interact* with generativity. This does not mean that conservatives were less generative than liberals (i.e., the correlation between liberalism and generativity was $-.05$), but it does suggest that republicanism and pro-life organizations may not draw as clearly on generative concerns to marshal support. This finding was unexpected because the rhetoric of both the right and the left depend on generative imagery. Because generativity is such a fundamental aspect of social life, images of generativity brought forth to make an argument can be powerful. For example, on the issues of abortion and the environment, people who are more conservative may focus attention on the physical safety of an unborn fetus and the ability of a logger to feed his or her family. Conversely, people who are

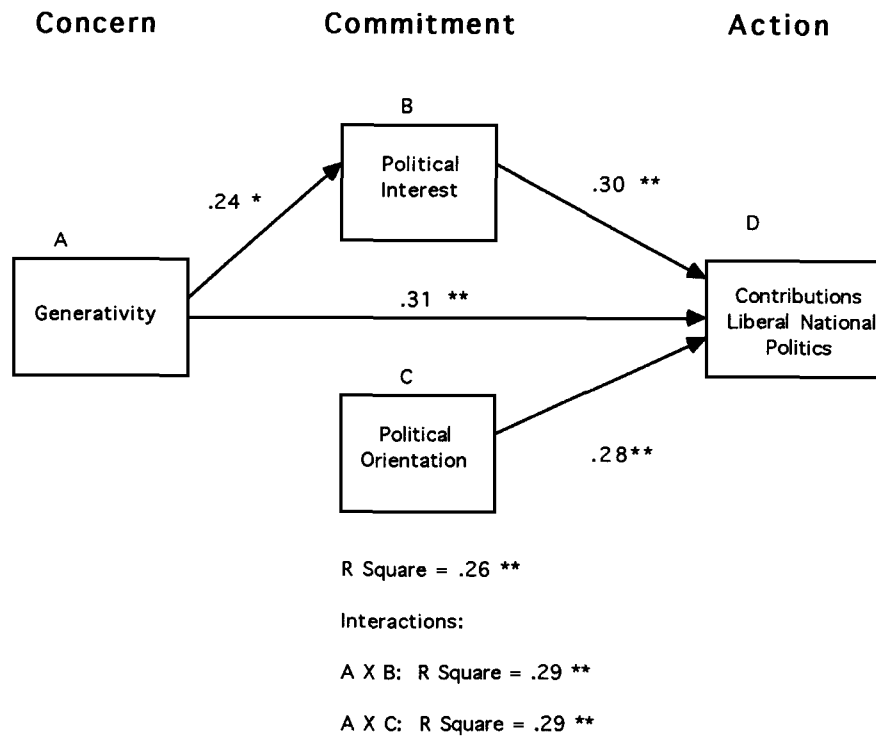


Fig. 3. Contributions to liberal national politics, predicted by generativity concerns and political commitments. $N = 149$. Standardized beta coefficients are used to link the significant paths. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

more liberal may focus attention on the physical well-being of a women with an unwanted pregnancy and the importance of maintaining the environment so that younger Americans have a sustainable future. The results of this study showed that generative people may be more responsive to the rhetoric of the left. But clearly a more complete analysis of a wider variety of conservative issues (e.g., privatization of schools, restructuring of welfare) seems warranted, especially given the trend relationship for ungenerative conservatives to support pro-life initiatives.

Generativity also interacted with general political interests. People who were generative and interested in keeping up to date with current politics were more likely to provide support for liberal national politics and local politics. These findings suggest that generative people put their money where their mouths are; they tend to transform their interest in politics into charitable giving.

These results suggest that generativity is a complex variable because political orientation and interest are not the only two forms of commitments that people make. Commitments to family, religion, and alma maters (to name a few) probably all interact

with broad generativity concerns to influence charitable giving. Accounting for individual commitments like these dramatically diversifies the applicability of generativity for predicting philanthropic actions.

Implications for Future Research

Although many political movements come and go, generative concerns are hypothesized to be endemic to the human species (Erikson, 1950). If generativity involves a desire to improve the world for oneself and other people, focusing on politics as a generative outlet is reasonable given that political legislation has an impact on the citizens of a country for good or ill. Not all generative individuals may want to run for political office, but they seem invested in monitoring the political process and working to ensure that legislation important to them is enacted. To the extent that generative individuals contribute time and resources to political favorites, generativity is a variable of interest to political psychologists as well as personality and life-span researchers. For example, political psychologists may want to consider

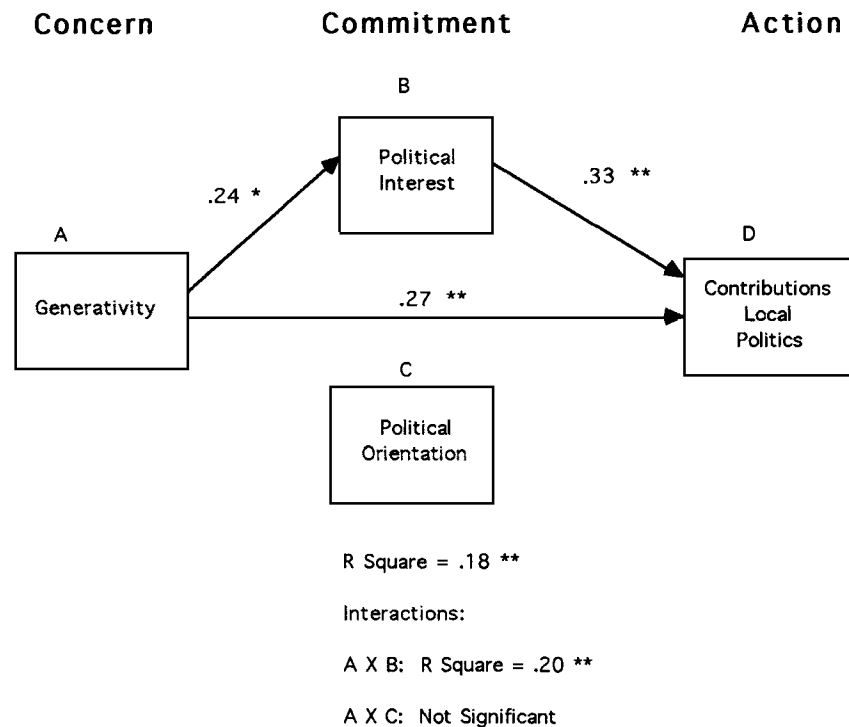


Fig 4. Contributions to local politics, predicted by generativity concerns and political commitments. $N = 149$. Standardized beta coefficients are used to link the significant paths. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

when generative appeals are used to support or condemn war, to demand the resignation of a leader, or to instigate an initially unpopular social movement. Answers to these kinds of questions may indicate that generativity is an important variable for understanding the dramatic political changes that occur in the life course of a nation.

As argued by Wakefield (1998), research on generativity suffers from “a surprising paucity of theoretical conflict” (p. 134). To the extent that polite conversations avoid discussions of family, religion, and politics, the current article might offer a point of conflict by considering the latter. In these politically contentious times, liberal and conservative pundits can both articulate how their viewpoints express true generativity; future studies should explore the relation of generativity to these different types of political discourse.

Furthermore, given the findings reported in Study 2, one might wonder how other components of McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) model interact. For example, in addition to direct effects, it seems likely that the two components of cultural demand

and inner desire would work in synergy to produce higher levels of generativity concern.

In addition to investigating the structure of generativity in this way, psychologists must focus on the diverse content areas of generativity such as artistry (e.g., Lee, 1998) and parenting (e.g., Snarey, 1993). Both these domains are classic areas for generativity expression (Erikson, 1950). MacDermid et al. (1997) have begun the task of analyzing how people express multiple forms of generativity, but other avenues to explore include the examination of how generative strivings might conflict within an individual. For example, Gandhi was politically very generative, but by many accounts, he was less generative as a parent (Erikson, 1969). Is generativity best understood in the context of specialized arenas (e.g., political, artistic, parental), and if so, are global measures like the LGS sufficient? Perhaps by identifying domain-specific commitments and actions, psychologists can best understand how broad generativity concerns are channeled in individual lives. As suggested by McAdams et al. (1998), knowledge of generativity is incomplete; the models and measurements thus far de-

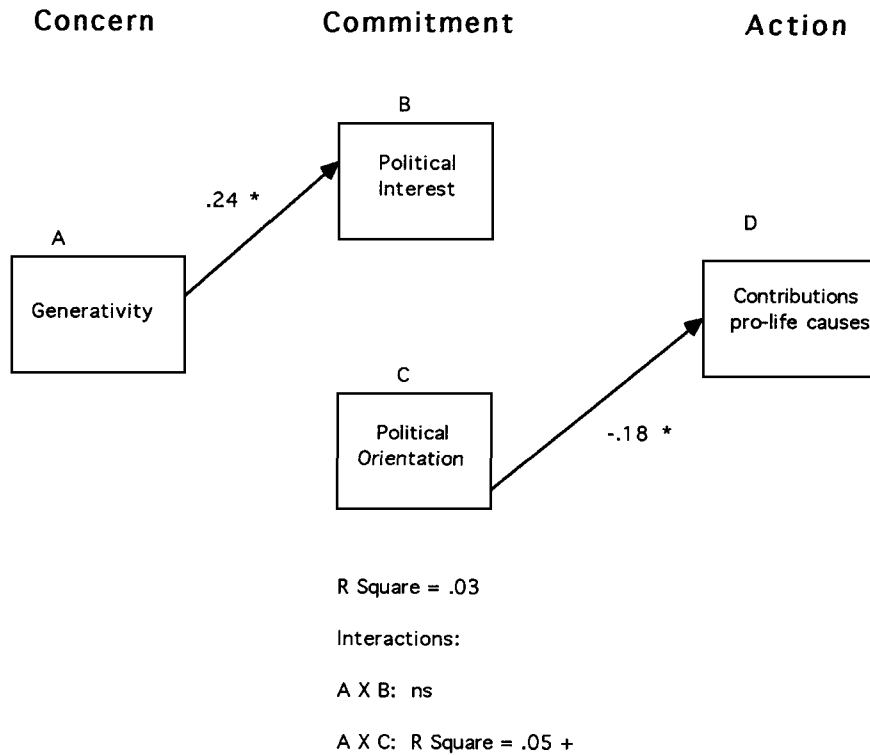


Fig. 5. Contributions to pro-life causes, predicted by generativity concerns and political commitments. $N = 149$. Standardized beta coefficients are used to link the significant paths. $\dagger p < .10$. $*p < .05$.

veloped provide a skeleton for understanding the variable, but much work remains to be done in order to flesh out the full anatomy of the construct.

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