

expressing disagreement than someone not so upset. If so, the intrinsic value of an action—its “expressive” value—is directly related to the distance of the actor from the status quo or another contending alternative.

In short, what needs to be added to (2) is an assumption that expressive benefits vary directly with instrumental benefits. Formally, $E = f(B)$, where $f' > 0$. This is a powerful assumption that is sufficient to produce a relationship between extremism and participation for both instrumental and expressive reasons. I believe the assumption is empirically correct, but within my own tradition I am not aware of any deep theoretical justification for it, although there is a social-psychological literature on the empirical relationship between intensity of preferences and extremism of preferences that may be relevant.⁶¹

Selection or Polarization?

When do extremists select into politics, as presumed in the preceding discussion, and when does politics transform ordinarily uninvolved citizens into activist extremists, as the older community-conflict literature suggests was often the case?⁶² My observations of contemporary American politics lead me to believe that selection is the dominant process, but I know of no work aimed squarely at the question.

If political processes seem to become more polarized, even when they do not begin that way, there are at least two explanations. One is another selection process, although one of selecting out rather than selecting in. Johnson has proposed a model of “unraveling” in voluntary groups.⁶³ Assume that the members of a group can be arrayed along some policy dimension. Then a standard median voter model identifies the most preferred position of the median member as the outcome of a majority vote in the group. But any dissatisfied member who considers the median position unsatisfactory has the option of quitting the group. In particular, if moderates find the group median too extreme and resign, then the new median will be even more extreme, and more relative mod-

61. Early discussions can be found in Allport and Hartman (1925) and Cantril (1946). Rational-choice scholars have sought to represent intensity of preferences mathematically (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972, pp. 43–53), but I am not aware of any effort to derive a relationship between extremism and intensity.

62. For a discussion, see Coleman (1957).

63. Johnson (1990).