

where $E(P)$ = the individual's expected utility of participating,
 p = the probability the individual's action is decisive for the
outcome,
 B = the individual's evaluation of the proposed alternative versus
the status quo, and
 c = the individual's costs of participating.

The limitation of such an instrumental explanation of participation is well known from the notorious "paradox of not voting."⁵⁷ In many settings the probability that an individual's participation makes a difference is objectively so small that an instrumental explanation of participation is incredible. Why should a rational individual vote in a national election, join tens of thousands of other people in a pro-choice or pro-life demonstration, or give \$20 to a million-dollar campaign? In cases like these the marginal impact of an average individual is objectively too small to explain his or her participation.⁵⁸

Thus, a second type of explanation sometimes is brought to bear: actions may have intrinsic value—rather than means to other ends, actions may be ends in themselves. A philistine may pay \$1 million for a painting because he believes it will be worth \$2 million next year, at which time he will sell it, but an art lover may pay \$1 million for a painting for the simple joy of owning it. Naturally enough, economists refer to the latter sort of behavior as "consumption" behavior, as distinct from the former, "investment" behavior. Political scientists find the term "expressive" behavior more descriptive than consumption behavior, since in the political context individuals are often expressing a preference for some political outcome rather than a desire to consume some product.

Of course, one can trivially explain any action by saying that the individual likes doing it. Thus, claims that citizens vote in national elections in order to express their sense of citizen duty may well be true, but that hardly supports an instrumentalist conception of participation.⁵⁹ Still, it is not true that adding expressive benefits to the basic calculus of participation necessarily results in degenerate explanations. Such exercises

57. Ferejohn and Fiorina (1974).

58. Any self-respecting rational-choice scholar would reject the argument that people systematically overestimate how much their actions matter. Such an argument is tantamount to destroying the theory in order to save it.

59. Barry (1970, pp. 15–18).