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FIGHTING FOR POWER: CLASS CONFLICTS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

by

David Foley  
B.S. May 2018, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

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Approved by:

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## ABSTRACT

### FIGHTING FOR POWER: CLASS CONFLICTS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

David Foley  
Old Dominion University, May 2020  
Director: Dr. Randy Gainey

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect that socioeconomic status has on political participation in the United States. The elite of the United States have been able to amass incomprehensible amounts of power and wealth. From a C. Wright Mill's conflict theory perspective, those who are in power seek a continuation, and those not in power seek to flip the scales—or at least get even. Using socioeconomic status as focal point of conflict, this study completed varying models of binary logistic regression to unfold the relationship present between socioeconomic status—educational attainment, student status, and household income—with political participation. Political participation is measured through two dichotomous variables, voting and voluntary participation. In order to best predict the relationship, control variables have been utilized. Results show that being a student in the past year had the most significant effect on political participation in both measures. Educational attainment was significant for voting, but not for voluntarily participating. Income was not significant for any of the regressions completed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	3
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	5
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.....	8
SOCIAL CAPITAL.....	14
SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE OF THE LITERATURE.....	22
RESEARCH QUESTION.....	25
III. METHODOLOGY.....	26
DATA SOURCE.....	26
VARIABLES IN THE STUDY.....	27
DATA ANALYSIS.....	30
IV. RESULTS.....	31
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS.....	31
BIVARIATE STATISTICS.....	33
MULTIVARIATE STATISTICS.....	34
V. DISCUSSION.....	38
CONCLUSION.....	41
REFERENCES.....	42
APPENDIX.....	44
VITA.....	45

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Variables in the Study.....	28
2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables in Data Set.....	32
3. Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Voting.....	37
4. Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Voluntary Participation.....	37
5. Bivariate Correlations or Cramer's V for Voting and Voluntary Participation.....	44

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Politics in America have never been so divisive. Considering that there are only two realistic choices to make, a side must be chosen. Many are pushed or pulled to one side or another due to a multitude of unforeseen reasonings—be it parental, friends, social and traditional media, as well as other internet sources. Social institutions have a major influence as well, but as of now, voting independent in the presidential race is essentially removing a vote from one side or another. However, voting independent is still better for democracy, as participation is vital to the operations of a democratic government. Voting is the duty of citizens over the age of eighteen and should be practiced in every election available. Political affiliation aside, the question arises, what can explain variation across individuals in political participation?

Politicians across the country preach to the masses, using terms to describe their constituents based upon the area—the working class, and the middle class. These classes are based upon their economic status, but income alone cannot explain the relationship between class and participation, as even early research found that income had a low relative predictive power in voting and related behavior (Bennet and Klecka 1970). In rural coal mining towns, representatives are going to pander to the working class for support, and in suburban areas with higher-paying jobs, they are going to pander to the middle class. Politicians want to induce support and inspire participation from their target population. The goal is to describe their platform in a manner to which citizens will feel the need and desire to elect said politician. Voters wish to feel well-represented. As income class does not explain enough of political participation, socioeconomic status might be considered. Socioeconomic status generally entails

varying measures of education and income and has been shown to be linked with political participation (Blakely, Kennedy, and Kawachi, 2001; Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly, 2001; Lindquist, 1964; Persson, 2013). In a capitalist country, wealth is power, and those in power wish to keep it. A conflict is then created between those wealthy in power, democratically elected, and those who seek to replace them as leaders. Every presidential election, there is an uproar of interest and involvement in political participation (Bennet and Klecka 1970). This increase of political activity can be seen through every aspect of social life. When paired with the expanse of social media sites—like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit—avoiding politics is practically impossible without purposeful ignorance.

Much research on the sociology of political participation has been conducted outside of the United States (Cohen et al. 2001; Lorenzini and Giugni 2012; Persson 2014; Teney and Hanquinet 2012; Voorpostel and Coffé 2014), or fairly dated back to the 1960's (Bennet and Klecka 1970; Lindquist 1964; and Mc Dill and Ridley 1962). There were two studies from the United states, with one focused solely on the socioeconomic status of an ethnic group (Albarracin and Valeva 2011), and the other focusing on disparities in socioeconomic status and political participation affecting self-reported health status (Blakely, Kennedy, and Kawachi, 2001). A few of the studies also focus more so on social capital, an informal way to measure networks of relationships, juxtaposition to socioeconomic status (Albarracin and Valeva 2011; Bennet and Klecka 1970; Lorenzini and Guigni 2012; Mc Dill and Ridley 1962; Teney and Hanquinet 2012). Social capital, in the form of student status, pairs well to further explain and unpack the potential relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation. The youngest of voters are at the age where higher education is generally acquired, meaning that they are participating in one of the most diverse social institutions—college.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation. Three central research questions guide the current study.

1. Does the level of education influence political participation?
2. Does student status influence political participation?
3. Does household income influence political participation?

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The socioeconomic status of current and future voters is important to understand, as political conflict can be seen between the lower and upper strata. People with lower socioeconomic status do not have the same access to social and economic institutions as people of higher socioeconomic status. Thus, they will want to participate in politics to better their, and the future generations access to these institutions. On the other hand, those with higher socioeconomic statuses want to maintain the status quo in order to keep their elevated position. More specifically, those without the means to access a college degree might wish to lower the bars of entry (cost), whereas those who can afford the means have little interest in indirectly paying for others' college through taxation. With income, those who have amassed, or inherited wealth wish to seek out and support politicians who will keep their taxes lower. Those who are lower income wish to have the government increase the spending on social and welfare programs in order to make ends meet, allowing for more economical freedom and movement. With the inequality of voting affecting subsequent policies, participation through voting is the only way the average citizen is able to influence said policy (Blakely et al. 2001).

The conflicts present between variations in social classes can lead to differences in political participation. However, there are many ways to analyze political participation besides

through voting, for example: going to a political event, supporting through social media, wearing insignia, as well as working on a campaign. The next chapter will review research literature examining socioeconomic status, social capital, and their effect on political participation.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines previous research on the predictors of political participation. Two general themes are presented in the research pertaining to socioeconomic status and social capital, then breaks down the specific topics presented in the research as factors associated with political participation. After the theoretical framework spearheading the study is explained, the literature is reviewed. This chapter will close with a final summary, and provide a critique of the previous studies, as well as a preview of the research questions presented.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

##### *Conflict Theory*

Karl Marx's version of the conflict theory described a societal situation unique to a rapidly industrializing Germany in the 1800's and is still a focal theory in sociology through C. Wright Mills (1956) with a newer perspective. In the simplest of terms, groups and classes in society have differing wants and needs, causing conflict. For the purpose of this study, the conflict is between the elite in political and economic power—mostly consisting of those higher on the socioeconomic status scale, higher paying jobs or wealth, higher levels of education—and those in opposition, generally lower on the scale of socioeconomic status. Conflict can be viewed through their political participation, where their goal is to vote for, or be involved with candidates that will push for the legislation and policies that benefit their vested interests.

According to Marx, class conflicts were historically created through economic differences, the proletariat versus bourgeoisie in his time. The bourgeoisie owned the means of

production, the proletariat did not. Under Mills, the conflict theory transformed to differentiate the political elite who control the major institutions of the public and private, including companies as well as government. These are both controlled by the rich and or well-educated and are beacons of influence over the people. The conflict observed is based upon whether or not the person supports or opposes the influence exerted on them. The presidential office is a simple example—those who are in support of the sitting president are rallied behind him, willing to go out and vote in order to keep him in office, maintaining the status quo. However, there is also an opposite reaction—the influence received pushes opposition to participate in order to change the institution. Although most would see the opposing classes as Democrats and Republicans in the political strata, in today's world, a class of influence could be created from a single political issue, be it gun control, abortion, student loans and cost of universities, or taxes. Another institution of influence is Planned Parenthood: both sides of the issue of abortion have had social events in support and opposition for the institution that represents a woman's choice. For an issue like taxes, the wealthy will generally prefer to pay less taxes to keep their money, whereas the less fortunate would prefer to have social programs akin to aiding them, leading to a higher tax rate. Economics, and taxes specifically, have one of the largest effects on people because it is the mainstay of capitalism, and is most likely to affect one's day-to-day life.

Access to higher education has been a problem for minorities because of admissions and cost of attending higher education. A multitude of laws have been passed to reduce the racist exclusion of minorities to attend institutions of higher education. If a political party put forth legislation toward increasing financial access to be able to attend colleges and universities, they might be so inclined to vote for one who supported that. Not only are minorities affected by inability to access higher education, those coming from less affluent families might not be able to

afford it. A good example is Bernie Sanders' 2016 campaign, with a platform to allow for university and college tuition to be subsidized by the government. This would be extremely enticing if college is desired, but unobtainable because of the cost. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a wealthy, more educated family might not be as supportive of this, as they can already afford higher education for themselves or their children. They will be less likely to vote in support of things that would require increased taxing upon themselves. Their level of interest in certain politicians and legislation will be influenced by the personal value to them. Social capital can help shape one's opinions and ideals based upon social capital.

The amount of influence in political news has been proliferated through the advent of social media and been divided among political party lines. It is generally agreed that which side one identifies with based upon where and who they receive their news from. Fox News will skew their information towards the right, CNN to the left. The divisiveness present in the media has created one of the most powerful, serious, and apparent conflicts in recent times. These news sources radiate biased influence on those who watch, giving them information tweaked and filtered to support their political agenda and rhetoric.

The focus is on the young adults and future voters of the country. The influences they support, oppose, and identify with will shape the future, whether it is more of the same or major change, their political participation is shaped from their upbringing—their socioeconomic, and social capital. Their status and social capital will generally dictate the influences they buy into and what they oppose. Social capital can enhance and reverberate social spheres of influence, be it friends, social groups, and social media. The college campus is prime for interactions of all sorts, and as many are able to vote, political discussion is all but guaranteed. The question is then, not how they will participate in politics, but rather if and how they will participate in

politics. If they are informed and motivated from their discernible conflict, it seems more than likely they will.

Social capital differs from socioeconomic status through being less quantitatively measurable. As the name insinuates, social capital is a resource gained through participation in society. It can be gained through work, school, as well as friend groups, to a lesser extent. Schooling is the primary form of social capital available to children, and to young adults in college. The status of being a student at the age of 18 indicates that, more than likely, one is a college student. The status of being a college student lends itself to both socioeconomic status, as well as social capital.

## SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Research has linked political participation to socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status generally entails measures of education and income (Blakely, Kennedy, and Kawachi, 2001; Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly, 2001; Lindquist, 1964; Persson, 2013).

### *Politicians*

The 60's saw the proliferation of research pertaining to political participation and attempting to utilize socioeconomic status as a key explanatory variable. John Lindquist (1964), found that much of the population, even the population voting, are not neatly represented in the offices elected. Those lower on the socioeconomic scale are the majority of the people and therefore voters, yet the majority of offices of public officials are higher on the socioeconomic scale (Lindquist 1964). Those who controlled political offices were of higher socioeconomic status, and thus the resulting legislation would not represent their constituents. The datasets used in his analyses were both from Syracuse, New York. The first included general information

pertaining to the occupational class of the political participants—what class the politicians were in. From 1880-1950, almost 81% were in the upper-class, or what they called, business and professional. The clerical and sales, as well as the blue-collar split the remaining 19% practically right down the middle. The next variable they used was information of the residence, specifically the socioeconomic makeup within the city. The population in Syracuse was used in juxtaposition to those holding the various political offices.

The study saw that, between 1940-1960, no more than 15% of the population was in the higher socioeconomic status, yet they held the highest percentage in each type of political office shown, appointed and elected. Linquist's goal of the study was to compare the socioeconomic status, or class, of the politicians, with the voters. Further, he sought to analyze the trend of the status of those in power versus the people that vote them in, comparing the correlation as time passes. The researcher utilized five different measures for analysis: changes in population size, the occupational class, and three various types of politicians (based on their type of office held: elected, appointed, and party) all pertaining to their place in the socioeconomic status matrix. Further findings included, that the data was "indicating the lack of active participation classes in political office-holding" (Lindquist 1964:610). Further stating that:

As long as the political decision makers are drawn from one segment of society, the rest of society must depend upon the social conscience of the upper classes for the promotion of the interests of the whole period this social conscience has not always worked for the benefit of the majority of the population (Lindquist 1964:614).

Linquist saw that although there is a need of a majority in politics in order to sustain a well-running democratic society, the formation of a majority itself will not be able to address all

issues present in the society, specifically class orientation (Lindquist 1964). The lack of representation of the lower class in politics was apparent.

### *Education*

Current research delves more into participation being measured as voting, or participation and associating with politicians or in politics in some capacity. Persson (2013), for example, analyzed data gathered longitudinally. From 1970 to 2012, it followed all the 17,278 children born in a week in the United Kingdom. Some 34 years later, in 2004, their data for political participation was gathered, with the final survey being conducted in 2012. Instead of looking at all the factors of socioeconomic status, Persson sought to find out whether or not education had a direct causal effect on political participation. Education as a variable was analyzed as dichotomy in order to show whether or not one had a bachelor's degree or higher, or less than a bachelor's degree. Thus, this variable creates a dichotomy that indicates whether a person has a relatively higher level of education, or not. For their political participation questions used, there was voting in an election, participating in the demonstration, signing a petition, contact in a member of parliament (MP), or attending public meetings or rallies (Persson 2013).

Persson (2013:888) found: “that individuals who achieved a bachelor's degree or higher participate in politics to a higher extent than those with lower educational qualifications”. Further, he found that there was not a significant causal effect from education on their political participation variables. Education seemingly acted as a proxy to political participation, showing the need for other variables to best explain the relationship present (Persson 2013).

### *Health*

Blakely, Kennedy, and Kawachi (2001) examined the relation between socioeconomic inequality and political participation at the state level in the United States and the individual self-

rated health. States were selected as a relevant unit of analysis, because legislation, taxation policies, and welfare programs vary between states. This study tested the hypothesis that disparities in socioeconomic status and political participation affect self-reported health. Specifically, the association of voting any quality at the state level with individual self-rated health was examined. There were 279,066 respondents in total. About 52% female, 48% male, with age ranges that included children, all the way to 75+. Most of the surveyed were white (85%), about 10% black, and the remaining 5% were noted as other.

For their self-rated health variable, it was a dichotomy indicating poor health or not. To measure socioeconomic status, they used an adjusted household income rate, paired with familial educational attainment. Their findings suggested that “Both family income and education attainment were strongly associated with voting. The probability of voting among individuals with the highest education in the United States was 2.02 times greater than that for individuals with the lowest education” (Blakely et al. 2001:101). When looking at the self-reported health levels, the findings showed that blacks and others had lower notations of self-reported health, compared to whites. The findings also showed that socioeconomic inequality and political participation had a strong relationship with being of poor self-rated health. Furthermore, they did not find an association between socioeconomic inequality with voting inequality (Blakely et al. 2001). The researchers are operating under the assumption that the effect that political participation has on health is buffered overtime in this statement: “Inequality in political participation skews subsequent policy, and the association of political participation with health is a proxy for the more general association of social capital with health” (Blakely et al. 2001:103).

### *Personal-Psychological Factors*

Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly (2001) sought to add personal-psychological variables as mediators to better explain the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation. These variables included self-esteem, locus of control, and political efficacy. The purpose for the study was to further understand the determinants of political participation, in conjunction with socioeconomic status, as “those who do not participate generally don’t see the world as democratic as those who do participate” (Cohen et al. 2001:728). Their data came from two cities in Israel, compiling 434 total respondents to their survey, containing questions aimed at political participation socioeconomic status, in their own homes.

In order to best explain the relationship, they looked at several different statistical models between socioeconomic status, political participation, and the social-psychological variables. Political participation, their dependent variable, was split into two: psychological involvement and political participation. Active political involvement was operationalized as “activities directly aimed at influencing political officials and the political decision-making processes” (Cohen et al. 2001:738), and psychological involvement as “one’s level of personal involvement in social and political issues and knowledge of these issues, as distinguished from active change-oriented behavior aimed to influence political officials” (Cohen et al. 2001:737). The independent variables used were socioeconomic status, as well as the social psychological variables—self-esteem, locus of control, and political efficacy.

They found there was a strong correlation between the two participation variables and the social psychological ones. Furthermore, the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation was mediated by the social psychological variables. The findings showed that “In all the mediating models, the paths supported the notion that SES affected personal

characteristics, which in turn affected the individual's participation in politics” (Cohen et al. 2001:751). Further, they found that SES paired with personal factors have a significant effect on political participation. Finally, “Our research supports the notion that political participation can be better explained by theories and ideas from both sociology and psychology”—sociology alone cannot fully explain the relationship (Cohen et al. 2001:753).

### *Parental Separation*

The final topic of the research falling under socioeconomic status pertains to parental separation. Social capital and socioeconomic status both have effects on political participation, but Voorpostel and Coffé (2014) look into the effect of parents being separated against parents staying together, and the strength of this relationship in their work, and the resulting influence on political and civic engagement.

Voorpostel and Coffé start off by stating that previous literature has not examined the relationship between on parental separation and political or civic engagement. They sought to fulfill this void of research, and display the relationship parental separation has on a young adult's likelihood to vote and volunteer. The data comes from the Swiss household panel, a yearly study that follows the samples from random households in Switzerland. The residents were interviewed on topics like political and civic participation. The thoughts and attitudes present among the public were analyzed yearly, allowing for analyzation over time. Over 2,000 respondents (2,125), being 18-26 years old with a parent who also responded. They are interviewed, questions including topics like political and civic participation. For their political participation variable, they used a scale measuring the frequency of voting in referenda (Voorpostel and Coffé 2014).

When looking at levels of participation between separated and non-separated parents' children, part of the relationship is explained by the lower socioeconomic status of the separated parents. Furthermore, "this indicates that a significant part of the negative effect of parental separation can be explained by the parents' voting frequency" (Voorpostel and Coffé 2014:303). The socioeconomic status of the parents also has an effect on the children's voting frequency, the highest being parents with well-educated, high occupational status. Socioeconomic status of parents' has an effect that can be explained by their voting frequency. They conclude that: "Young adults with separated parents are substantially less likely to vote frequently and to engage as a volunteer compared with young adults whose parents are living together. This result confirms the major consequence separation has on young adults' lives as shown in previous research looking at various outcomes, including young adults' health and wellbeing, educational attainment and psychological adjustment" (Voorpostel and Coffé 2014:313).

## SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital has also been linked to political participation. The general definition used to operationalize social capital throughout the studies is malleable resources. However, unlike socioeconomic status' focus on monetary and educational, social capital is formal and informal relationships formed when participating in society (Albrarracin and Valeva 2011; Bennet and Klecka 1970; Lorenzini and Guigni 2012; Mc Dill and Ridley 1962; Teney and Hanquinet 2012).

### *General Social Capital*

Bennet and Klecka (1970) examined the relationship between social status and political participation. Their operationalization of social status in the research was more so know today as socioeconomic status, as the only mention of social status was in the title. They primarily utilized

income and education. They first noted that income and education would better explain political participation compared to occupational type. They also argued that previous research had not been able to properly analyze the relationship that socioeconomic status has had with political participation—the researchers wanted to know which socioeconomic status determinant had the most power towards influencing political participation. The data used for analysis comes from the 1964, 1966, and 1968 Survey Research Center's election studies—it had information about socioeconomic status as well as political participation.

They used formal schooling, the respondents' occupation, and income to measure socioeconomic status. As for political involvement, they were able to use political efficacy (trusting that the government works, and that an individual has an impact), political involvement, interest in public affairs, attempts to influence the votes of others, and voting in a national election. The researchers sought to separate the determinants of socioeconomic status (education, occupation, and income) to see which best explains political participation. The researchers then compared each one to each metric of political participation, in order to determine whether or not education was the largest predictor. For this prediction, they controlled for occupation and income through partitions. They used controls for the variables separately, in order to see the effects and analyze them individually.

The researchers found that formal schooling was in fact the largest predictor of political involvement—"Formal schooling is related to all aspects of political participation" (Bennet and Klecka 1970:367). Further findings included that educational background was a stronger predictor toward the congressional election in 1966 compared to the presidential elections in 1964 and 1968. The same year, 1966, showed that occupation and income were also found to be large predictors. Further, in a non-presidential election year, social status and socioeconomic

status are far more important in non-presidential year than during a presidential election. Educational background had the strongest influence on interest in public affairs in 1968.

Bennet and Klecka (1970:381) concluded that: “it has been possible to determine the relative predictive power of education, income, and occupation on each of the aspects of participation”. Furthermore, the power of statistical analysis used was weak enough to only display that a relationship was present between the various descriptors of social status, socioeconomic status, and political participation—and unable to explain the relationship.

### *Race*

As Latinos are now 16% of the country’s population, and with Mexicans being the majority of Hispanics, Albarracin and Valeva (2011) sought to identify how the social capital of Mexicans affects their political participation in one of the fastest growing Mexican populations in America. Albarracin and Valeva gathered their data in central Illinois, focusing around the Chicago area, in which the state has 15% Latinos, proportionate to the country.

By measuring the respondent’s social capital from self-reported surveys, the goal was to predict one’s political participation. They used the definition of social capital which includes trust, norms, and networks. The goal was to see how they interacted with those in their race, outside their race, and their perceived level of discrimination. Eventually, using these to make a connection to participating in politics.

The survey was delivered in Spanish or English and distributed in varying venues to best cater to their respondents. The respondents were asked about whether or not their lives were intertwined with races external to them, as well as their own race. To develop the variables for political participation, they were asked about contacting a public official, volunteering to work for one, and donating to a politician. The researchers made the dependent variables dichotomous

to enable ease of analysis. There were questions of their demographics, as well as general political ideology. The study used logistic regression to predict political participation. Three separate political participation variables were used for each of the three regressions as dependent variables: contacting a politician, working for a candidate, and attending a political event. These were used to identify which of the independent variables would best potentially describe why the participants would participate. These independent variables included demographics, as well as the primary concern of the study how much they paid attention to politics, their connection to their own race and those outside of their race, as well as trust.

The results provided a few significant findings. First, that linked communities, or being connected to white people, was most strongly related to contacting a public official. Another finding was that those who pay attention to politics also were more likely to contact a public official, and finally attending functions with white people was significantly related to higher rates of contacting a public official. For working with or contributing to a politician, the best predictor was trusting in the government in Washington, D.C. This was the largest predictor of the all the regressions. Attending a function with white people was also a high likelihood. Finally, for attending a public meeting or demonstration, the largest predictor was partisanship (Albarracin and Valeva 2011).

The study leads to a few conclusions supporting their hypothesis in the connection between social capital and political participation of Mexicans in Central Illinois. First, when they are closer to those outside of their race, the results indicate that this increases the likelihood that they will participate in politics. Furthermore, they found evidence to support their initial idea that when bonding within race, those who reported to have felt discrimination themselves or by someone close were increasingly more likely to participate politically. This is explained through

compensating their inability to be represented or accepted. Finally, trust did not directly predict political participation, but did predict higher levels of social capital, which indirectly affects political participation (Albarracin and Valeva 2011).

### *Voluntary Associations*

Lorenzini and Giugni (2012) set out to understand the political participation habits of youth in Geneva, Sweden. Their research gives insight into the interactions between social capital, employment, and socioeconomic status. The question they wanted to answer was: “To what extent does the social capital that can be drawn from membership in voluntary associations, from social contacts with friends and acquaintances, and from participation in social activities help youngsters who are excluded from the labor market becoming politically engaged?” (Lorenzini and Giugni 2012). In other words, can the social capital gained from being societally involved alleviate their absence from being employed in relation to the young adult’s political participation. Their data came from a survey in six European cities, where Geneva was to be the focus, as it is the largest unemployment of the cities in their focal point of Switzerland. They employed a randomly assigned survey based on employed and unemployed youth. Their data was comprised of questions to identify the respondent’s indications of participating in politics—contacting a politician, and protest activities. The questions further sought to identify social capital through their associational memberships, as well as social contacts and activities.

The researchers hypothesized that “the more the unemployed youth are socially integrated (in terms of associational involvement as well as in terms of social contacts and activities), the higher their social capital and the more likely their participation in political activities” (Lorenzini and Giugni 2012:333). The questions they seek to answer are whether or not employment has any effect on social capital and political participation, whether or not social

capital affects political participation based on employment, and finally whether or not social capital is more important based on employment.

Using regression analysis, they found that associational memberships had the strongest relationship on political participation. Associational memberships and involvement were the strongest predictors among both groups of employment, and finally that social capital did not matter for either group, employed or unemployed (Lorenzini and Giugni 2012).

### *Status, Anomia, and Political Alienation*

Being lower social status, feeling lost in society, and alienated from politics were related to a historical vote in the early 1960's to convert two counties in Tennessee into a metropolitan city—the combination of Nashville and Davidson (Mc Dill and Ridley 1962). They sought to test the relationship between status, sociopsychological factors, residents' attitudes and their voting behavior. It is the researchers' belief that being “low social status, anomia, and political alienation” all would have an additive effect on the participation of this local political issue. The data was collected in the latter half of 1959, in the suburban residency of Davidson County, Tennessee, and containing “268 suburban residents who were eligible to vote at the time of the referendum in June, 1958” (Mc Dill and Ridley 1962:206).

There were four hypotheses that the researchers used: low social status will be less likely to vote, the anomic will be less likely to vote, that the citizens will not have as much of an opinion formulated on the creation of the metropolitan city, and finally those who are alienated are less likely to have voted as well as less of an opinion formulated. The researchers were pinning education, anomia, and political alienation against voting on the creation of a metropolitan city, voting in favor of the metropolitan, expressing an attitude on metropolitan, and those expressing a positive attitude on the metropolitan. For the sake of the study, they analyzed

the perceptions and actions based upon whether or not people want a metropolitan government, or the combining the city with the surrounding suburban county. The various forms of political participation were found to be significant with political alienation as well as anomia, even when education is controlled for. All three—education, anomia, and political alienation—had an additive effect on political participation.

Finally, they found that those who were “‘low-status,’ ‘anomic,’ and ‘politically alienated’ respondents are less likely to have voted on Metro, but if voting they are less likely to have voted in favor than their ‘high-status,’ ‘ non-anomic,’ and ‘non-politically alienated’ counter- parts” (Mc Dill and Ridley 1962:209). All of their observed relationships found were significant, bar political alienation and expression of attitude towards the metropolitan government.

### *Youth*

The last study dealing with social capital was from Teney and Hanquinet (2012). They start off by identifying that allegations had been made that social capital has increased the capacity for political mobilization, but without empirical evidence. There is a lack of detail in the operationalization of social capital and political participation present in the literature. They sought to show that “social capital has to be considered as a multifaceted phenomenon whose different components are more or less associated to the dimensions of political participation” (Teney and Hanquinet 2012:1213). For their data, they utilized surveys to seven out of nineteen municipalities located in the Brussels region. This was due to the demographic diversity of “using a multidimensional and relational technique (multiple correspondence analysis) and a detailed youth survey data from Belgium, the article demonstrates that youth draw on diverse forms of social capital and that these forms vary along socio-economic status and ethnic origin”

(Teney and Hanquinet 2012:1213). Their research had a large sample size of 3121 respondents. The researchers identify that previous research lead to the conclusion that the new youth of America has more contemporary ways of being involved to gain social capital compared to Belgium.

Out of six formed classes established in the study, based upon social capital, two stood out—the committed and religious. These groups notated the types of social capital primarily attained, combined with their socioeconomic status. The committed were higher socioeconomic status that had higher formal social capital, as well as the religious who were generally lower socioeconomic status, but had higher informal social capital. These would be their primary test groups, as they differed in socioeconomic status, had high social capital, but ultimately differed in the type of social capital. For social capital, they used a plethora of variables to indicate being active socially, such as: attending a sport event, various social associations, as well as connecting with friends.

They found that the type of social capital tended to relate to various types of political participation— “the Religious Class is particularly involved in neighborhood action. They take especially part in political activities that have either a direct impact on the daily life or a concrete and visible dimension” (Teney and Hanquinet 2012:1223). Furthermore, the committed class showed more involvement with associational life. Finally, they concluded that “high political participation does not necessarily imply a diversified social capital” (Teney and Hanquinet 2012:1225).

## SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE OF THE LITERATURE

### *Summary*

Two general themes were found in the various literatures examined. The first theme was socioeconomic status as the independent variable. These studies looked at the status of politicians, how health was a factor, the various personal psychological factors, and education. The earliest study by Lindquist (1964), found that the socioeconomic status of the politicians was skewed toward the wealthier population in Syracuse, whereas most voters were the least wealthy, although the proportion of low-income voters was higher. His study also revealed that those appointed to their political office had a higher level of socioeconomic status as well (Lindquist 1964). When adding health into the equation of socioeconomic inequality and political participation, Blakely et al. (2001) found that “inequality in political participation skews subsequent policy, and the association of political participation with health is a proxy for the more general association of social capital with health” (Blakely et al 2001:103). Cohen et al. (2001) found that certain personal psychological variables—self-esteem, locus of control, political efficacy, psychological involvement—seemingly had an impact on political participation when paired with socioeconomic status. Using the personal psychological variables, they were able to mediate the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation. Their final conclusion was that it is important to have factors from both sociology and psychology to best understand the paradigm. The study from Persson (2013), looked into education as a predictor for political participation. His findings included that there was not a significant causal effect from education on their political participation variables. The final research on socioeconomic status present in the literature was that of parental separation, from Voorpostel and Coffé (2014). Their results supported social learning theory: “our analyses reveal

that having separated parents generally negatively affects young adults' political and civic engagement" (Voorpostel and Coffé 2014:303-307). Furthermore, younger adults with parents whom divorces will be less likely to volunteer. Separation has major negative impacts on their lives, not just lacking political and civic participation.

The next theme was social capital, very similar to, but clearly different to, socioeconomic status. Social capital is less formally measured than socioeconomic status, as education and income are concrete ideas, whereas relationships and participation in activities and organizations are not. The various types of studies done using social capital include: race, social status, employment, youths, age, anomia, and political alienation. From Albarracin and Valeva (2011) when looking at race, they found that those who interacted with those outside of their race had a higher likelihood of political participation. Bennet and Klecka (1970) found that socioeconomic status had a much larger influence in non-presidential election years than in prior years. They also saw that educational attainment was overall the strongest predictor (Bennet and Klecka 1970). When looking at the effect that employment had on social capital and political participation, Lorenzini and Giugni (2012) found that social capital does not make a significant difference in political participation between those employed versus those unemployed. When looking at the youth in Brussels, Tenney and Hanquinet (2012) observed that those with high formal social capital were generally high socioeconomic status, and those with high informal social capital were lower socioeconomic status. They found that social capital and political participation were not actually linearly related (Tenney and Hanquinet 2012). Finally, when looking at status, anomia, and political alienation, Mc Dill and Ridley (1962) saw that the 'low status', 'anomic', and 'politically alienated respondents' were more likely to vote in favor of the

union between counties, as opposed to their opposites. Using education as status, as well as anomia, and political alienation were all related to political participation.

### *Critique*

The older studies (Bennet and Klecka 1970; Lindquist 1964; and Mc Dill and Ridley 1962) did not have the level or tools of statistical analysis as readily available presently to fully interpret and explain the relationships between socioeconomic status or social status and political participation. Much of it was bivariate analysis, and none of them contained control variables. Their conclusions were made from weaker statistical analysis, leading to only displaying that relationships were present or not.

Several studies were conducted outside of the United States provided important insights, but all had their limitations, aside from being external to the United States. Cohen et al (2001), identified that there is a need for a comprehensive and integrative way of testing indirect relations to political participation, as well examining each aspect of socioeconomic status individually (Cohen et al. 2001). A major issue with Lorenzini and Giugni's (2012) study is that their research did not find that a few of the descriptors of social capital have an effect from unemployment vs. employment in the young. Their measures of social capital came from associational memberships, social contacts, and social activities. Persson (2014) was not confident that education has a causal effect on political participation. As this was essentially their entire point of the research, this finding at least points towards the potential for success by adding other variables to the mix (Persson 2014). From Teney and Hanquinet (2012), they only focused on two groups out of six to identify due to having either low or high socioeconomic status, as well as highly politically active. The final piece of literature done outside of the United States came from Voorpostel and Coffé (2014) who examined parental separation and political

participation. They identified themselves that the best way to analyze the effect of parental separation on someone would be to test them before their parents separate, as well as after.

The final two articles for critique were Albarracin and Valeva (2011) and Blakely et al (2001). Albarracin and Valeva (2011) were far too focused on the Mexican sample of their respondents' measurement of social capital and political participation, leading to a very low explanation of the greater population. Furthermore, they found that there is not much concrete information about social capital, and that there is not a standardized measure of it either. Lastly, Blakely et al (2001) lacked certain policy variables, like healthcare, that might link their analyzing of self-reported health with socioeconomic status and political participation.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

This section is meant to predict the research hypothesis guiding the current study to examine and explain the effects that socioeconomic status has on influencing one's participation into politics. Using C. Wright Mill's take on the conflict theory, this research will ask and answer the following questions:

1. Does educational attainment influence political participation?
2. Does student status influence political participation?
3. Does household income influence political participation?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide a summary to the quantitative methodology guiding the study. This study is an exploratory, cross-sectional research design examining the effects that socioeconomic status on young adults' political participation. The original sample contained 2,343 young adults who participated in the Youth Participatory Politics Survey Project in 2013. Just over 1,000 were excluded from the analysis due to being too young to be able to have voted in the previous election, leading to an analysis sample of around 1,320. Of the 1,320 analyzed in this study, their ages ranged from 18-27 and a median of 23. Just under 60 percent of the respondents were female, and 40.3 percent were male. The sample provided is purposefully diverse, with 29.0 white, 28.7 percent being Black (African American), 21.7 percent being Hispanic, and 17.3 percent of the respondents were Asian. Finally, "others" and "mixed" were the remaining 3.3 percent.

#### DATA SOURCE

The data for this research was collected in 2013 at the University of Chicago and University of Riverside by Dr. Cathy (Cohen and Kahne, 2013). They used a survey vendor that based their sampling on addresses. The collected data came from all 50 states, as well as Washington D.C., with California (17%), Texas (10%), Florida (7%), and New York (6%) containing the largest number of respondents. The mean household size was (3.56), (median=4 people). The majority of the sample was never married (79%), with 10 percent being married, 9

percent living with their partner, and the remaining 2 percent either widowed, divorced, or separated.

## VARIABLES IN THE STUDY

### *Dependent variables*

The dependent variable to be operationalized for the study is political participation. Two separate dichotomous variables are used to represent political participation—voting and voluntary. There are a multitude of participatory and voluntary questions included in the dataset. For the voting variable, it is a dichotomy of those who could vote and responded to the question of whether or not they voted in the last election.

There are four different questions that address voluntary participation: attending a rally, speech, meeting, or dinner; working on a campaign; expressing support through clothing, signs, or stickers; and expressing social media support in the last twelve months. All of these dichotomous questions will be used to create a dichotomy of voluntary political participation when combined—indicating if respondents had voluntarily participated in any one of the previous measures.

### *Independent variables*

Socioeconomic status (SES) will be used as the primary independent variable. SES will be measured with household income and education. Education will be measured with two questions: whether or not the respondent is currently a student, and the highest level of education.

Education ranged from having reached middle school or less, all the way to master's and other professional degrees, with the median being a GED or high school diploma. When asked

whether or not the respondent had gone to school or college the previous year, 65 percent had, and the remaining 35 percent had not. With such a small range of ages, education and age are significantly correlated ( $r=.290$ ,  $p=.01$ ). The second measurement of socioeconomic status is household income. With a range of less than \$5,000 all the way to \$175,000 or more. The median fell at \$40,000, with the interquartile range being \$20,000 to \$85,000 as a household. The stratifications operationalized in this study will be among these educational differences and income variations.

### *Control Variables*

The control variables to be used in the study are age, race/ethnicity, and sex. Age will be important to control for, with a range of 18-27. The differences present between the college-aged respondents will be important to control for to better understand the relationships.

The next control variable is race/ethnicity. Differences between races and ethnicities is important for the study, as it is an extremely diverse sample with an almost even percentage of the three largest racial/ethnic demographics in the United States. Sex will also be controlled for, as seeing the difference in responses will be useful for more analysis.

**TABLE 1. Variables in the Study**

<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>	<b>OPERATIONALIZATION</b>	<b>CODING</b>
<i>Voting</i>	Once I am 18, I expect to vote regularly.	0= No 1= Yes
	In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. How about you, did you vote in the election last November?	0= No 1= Yes
<i>Voluntary Participation</i>	Please tell us if you have supported a candidate, political party, or political issue during the past 12 months by: Attending a meeting, rally, speech or dinner	0= No 1= Yes

**TABLE 1. Continued**

<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>	<b>OPERATIONALIZATION</b>	<b>CODING</b>
	Working on an election campaign.	0= No 1= Yes
	Wearing a campaign button, putting a campaign sticker on your car, or placing a sign in your window or in front of your home.	0= No 1= Yes
	Expressing support through a social network site such as Facebook, IM or Twitter (for example by 'liking' or becoming a fan).	0= No 1= Yes
		0= No 1= Yes
<b>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>		
<i>SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS</i>		
<i>Education</i>	Education (Highest Degree Received)	1= Middle School or Less 2= Some Highschool 3= Highschool Diploma or GED 4= Associate's or Some College 5= Bachelor's Degree 6= Master's Degree or Higher
	Have you attended a school or college during the 2012-2013 school year?	0= No 1= Yes
<i>Household Income</i>	What is the household income?	Scale= \$0 to \$175,000
<b>CONTROL VARIABLES</b>		
<i>Age</i>	How old are you?	Scale
<i>Ethnicity</i>	What is your race/ethnicity?	1= White 2= Black 3= Asian 4= Hispanic 5= Other/2+ Races
<i>Sex</i>	What is your sex?	1= Male 2= Female

## DATA ANALYSIS

Multiple statistical tests and measurements will be used in this research in order to display the descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. To best describe the data, various measures of central tendency will be used depending on the type of variable (mean, median, standard deviation, and percentages).

For bivariate analysis, both  $\chi^2$  and Pearson's correlation coefficient,  $r$ , will be used. For the chi-squared test, the goal is to see whether or not the categorical and dichotomous relationships present are by chance or not. Pearson correlation coefficient,  $r$ , will be used to measure the linear correlation present between two interval or scale variables.

All of the multivariate analyses will be utilizing binary logistic regression, as it will predict the likelihood of voting or participation based upon the presented independent variables of socioeconomic status.

There will be four separate models utilized in this study. Both dependent variables will be tested twice—the first time just the independent variables, with the second time including the control variables to see if the relationships and outcomes as presented will hold up. A summation of four models of binary regression will be completed—two regressions including, and two regressions excluding the control variables for both voting and voluntary participation. The most commonly used level of significance will be utilized throughout this research, .05 (Knoke et al. 2002:90).

The chapter presents the research design of data analysis to be carried out, guided by the research questions with the variables as identified from the data set, mitigated only by the limitations of the study. The following chapter will display the findings of the data analysis used.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter examines the findings presented from statistical analysis between socioeconomic status, and political participation. To begin, the chapter opens with a discussion of the descriptive statistics, followed by bivariate analyses, and concluding with a discussion of the multivariate analyses.

#### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 2 examines the overview of variables to be used for statistical analysis. The independent variable, socioeconomic status, entails three separate measures. Approximately 1,000 respondents from the original sample were excluded because they were minors and not old enough to vote in the prior election. Educational attainment, has been transformed into five total categories. The original variable contained middle school or less, and well as a doctoral degree as the lowest and highest values for educational attainment. These have been combined with some high school or less, as well as master's degree or higher. Most of the sample had at least an associate's or some college, 46.4%. Those with a bachelor's degree were 23.9% of the sample. Just over 20% had attained just a high school diploma or GED, and finally, 4.7% had some high school education or less, as well as a master's degree or higher.

The second measure of education in socioeconomic status is whether or not one was a student in the previous year. With an even split, 655 were and 655 were not a student. The final measure of SES was household income. With a range of <\$5,000, all the way to \$175,000 or

more, the median income bracket was \$40,000-\$49,999. The inner quartile range lies between \$20,000-\$24,999, and \$75,000-\$84,999, and the mode household income was \$60,000-\$74,999.

**TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables in Data Set**

<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percentage or Measure of Central Tendency</b>	<b>SD or IQR*</b>
<i>Voluntary Participation</i>			
No Participation	805	63%	.48
1-4 Form(s) of Participation	473	37%	
<i>Voting</i>			
Did Not Vote	457	34.6%	.48
Did Vote	863	65.4%	
<b>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>			
<i>Educational Attainment</i>			
Some Highschool or Less	62	4.7%	.90
Highschool Diploma or GED	268	20.3%	
Associate degree or Some College	612	46.4%	
Bachelor's Degree	315	23.9%	
Master's Degree or Higher	62	4.7%	
<i>Student Status</i>			
Not a Student	655	50%	.5
Student	655	50%	
<i>Household Income</i>			
	1320	\$40,000 to \$49,999 (Median)	\$20,000- \$84,999*
<b>CONTROL VARIABLES</b>			
<i>Age</i>			
	1320	23.17 (Mean)	2.485
<i>Sex</i>			
Male	531	40.3%	.49
Female	787	59.7%	
<i>Race</i>			
White	383	29%	
Black	379	28.7%	
Asian	228	17.3%	
Hispanic	287	21.7%	
Other/2+ Races	43	3.3%	

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\*Indicates interquartile range.

## BIVARIATE STATISTICS

The full results of the bivariate statistics are located in Appendix 1. Most of the analysis was done through Pearson's  $r$ , but as race is a categorical variable,  $\chi^2$  is utilized. The crosstabulation between race and voting produced a  $\chi^2$  value of 46.781 with a p-value of .000 when voting, and a  $\chi^2$  of 32.444 with a p-value of .001 when voluntarily participating. These values suggest that there is in fact a relationship present between race and both measures political participation. A proportionately higher amount of Black and White people are voting—76.5% and 68.7% respectively. As for Asians, Hispanics, and Other/2 + races, they all fall between 53-57% who voted. When looking at voluntary participation, Black people were the highest, and by a large margin—almost 49% participated in some form. The next highest being Other/2 + races with 40%. White, Asian, and Hispanics all fell between 30%-34%, which is quite a differential.

The remaining variables were analyzed using Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient, as they are continuous variables. Educational attainment had the strongest correlation of any variable used in this analysis. When testing with voting, educational attainment had a correlation of .214, which is no strong, but with a significant at  $p < .001$ . However, educational attainment was not related to voluntary participation. Student status was found to be significant for both voting and voluntary participation, with very weak correlations (.71 and .055 respectively).

The final measure of socioeconomic status was household income. There is a very interesting relationship between income and political participation. For both measures, however, there was not significance found. The correlation coefficient for voting and income was .017, and for voluntary participation, a coefficient of -.024. This shows that there is almost no relationship between income and political participation present on the bivariate level. The levels

of participation were insignificant between the levels of income, indicating that income has practically no influence on participation.

The remaining control variables used in this study were age and gender. With age, there was a significant, very weak, correlation with voting— $r=.088$ . Voluntary participation and age were not found to be significant, and only had a correlation coefficient of  $.016$ . Finally, when looking at sex, the dichotomous variable was coded as male=0 and female=1. For both metrics of participation, neither were significant, and both correlation coefficients were less than or equal to  $.05$ , indicating a very weak relationship.

## MULTIVARIATE STATISTICS

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis for voting are shown in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 displays the effects of socioeconomic status, measured through household income, student status, and education attainment. Table 3 also contains the control variables—categorizations of people to test whether or not race, sex, and age have an effect or not on one's probability of political participation. Tables 4 follows suit, but instead of looking at voting, they test voluntary participation. Three dummy variables are included in order to represent Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians from Whites for the regression models. The coefficient in the two columns for both tables will be exponentiated to produce odds ratios—displaying the likelihood of an increase or decrease in either voting or voluntary participation.

### *Voting*

As shown below for the variable of voting, one either did vote or did not—a dichotomy. The regression model with just the three measures of socioeconomic status, educational attainment greatly increases the likelihood of one voting by 70% for each increased increment in

schooling ( $p < .000$ ). For example, one with a bachelor's degree would be 70% more likely to vote when looking at one with an associate degree. Student status in the previous year is significant as well—being a student increased the likelihood one would vote by 28%. Income was not found to be significant.

When controlling for race/ethnicity, age, and sex the regression results show that being a student still increases the odds of one voting by—47% ( $p = .005$ ). Educational attainment was even more important, as it had a 72.5% increased likelihood with each increment of attainment as well as being significant ( $p = .000$ ). All three dummy variables of race were significant, but with differing effects. For those who are Black, it increased their likelihood by 82.2%, the largest of odds increases for voting. However, for Hispanics and Asians, their likelihood of voting actually decreased quite a bit. For Asians, their likelihood decreased by 48%, and Hispanics a decreased likelihood by 28.8%. Age, gender, and household income were all not found significant.

### *Voluntary Participation*

The second measure of political participation to be analyzed, voluntarily participating in activities such as wearing insignia, working on a campaign, supporting through social media, and going to a political event; which were then combined to indicate whether or not respondents had participated in voluntary activities in the previous 12 months. Table 4 Presents the findings of the analysis without control variables operationalized. There was only one significant finding from the binary logistic regression, being a student increased the odds of voluntarily participating by 26.4 ( $p = .046$ ).

The rightmost column of Table 4 shows that only one additional variable is significant in predicting voluntarily participation—being Black. There was over double increased odds that a

black person would voluntarily participate in some manor ( $p=.000$ ). Again, as with all previous three models of binary logistic regression in this study, being a student had a significant effect of increasing the likelihood of political participation by 34.1% and a p-value equal to .024.

All four models of binary logistic regression suggest that income has no significant effect on political participation in anyway. The increasing or decreasing likelihood of participating is then seemingly linked towards educational attainment and student status, as well as being a part of a disenfranchised race. The social capital available to be acquired through gaining education, as well as recency of being a student, paired with the resources acquired through access to higher education seems to influence political participation. When controlling for race/ethnicity, age, and sex, the odds of voting rose for educational attainment and student status. The odds fell for educational attainment for voluntary participation when the control variables were operationalized in the regression

**TABLE 3. Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Voting**

	Without Control Variables B (Std. Error)	With Control Variables B (Std. Error)
<b>SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS</b>		
<i>Household Income</i>	-.210 (.013)	-.007 (.013)
<i>Educational Attainment</i>	.533 (.071) **	.545 (.079) ***
<i>Student Status</i>	.247 (.121) *	.386 (.136) **
<b>CONTROL VARIABLES</b>		
<i>Black</i>		.600 (.169) ***
<i>Hispanic</i>		-.339 (.167) *
<i>Asian</i>		-.655 (.179) ***
<i>Age</i>		.046 (.028)
<i>Female</i>		.002 (.125)
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.05	.089

Note: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<.001

**TABLE 4. Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Voluntary Participation**

	Without Control Variables B (Std. Error)	With Control Variables B (Std. Error)
<b>SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS</b>		
<i>Household Income</i>	-.170 (.012)	.001 (.013)
<i>Educational Attainment</i>	.105 (.067)	.097 (.075)
<i>Student Status</i>	.235 (.118) *	.294 (.13) *
<b>CONTROL VARIABLES</b>		
<i>Black</i>		.762 (.155) ***
<i>Hispanic</i>		.157 (.171)
<i>Asian</i>		-.024 (.183)
<i>Age</i>		.031 (.028)
<i>Female</i>		.151 (.123)
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.006	.033

Note: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<.001

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

There are definitely limitations with the current research project. A potential issue of the dataset being purposefully diverse could arise, as it is not representative of the total population. However, this can be a positive, as it equally represents three of the largest racial/ethnic groups in the country. The question used to identify gender or sex is split between male and female, and to the dismay of some, there are no other options for others to choose. However, this does make for simpler analysis. Another potential issue with demographics is the smaller age range, as it only includes those 15-27—the respondents unable to vote having been excluded from the analysis due to their inability to respond to the voting participatory question. The study used self-reported data through surveys, which leads to an issue of self-report bias. The data that was excluded due to the respondents being under 18 included their responses coming second-hand from their parental guardians, which could lead to inaccurate responses.

Future research should investigate the effects on social capital of the ‘college experience’ that many go through. College campuses can be some of the most diverse social institutions. Considering that Albarracin and Valeva (2011) found that interacting outside one’s race is more than likely going to increase political participation, and that, the potential social capital from attending college and thus potential increase in political participation should be researched further.

Political affiliation should be addressed as well. Knowing whether or not there is a significant difference between the big two political parties of Democratic and Republican toward both political participation measures could have interesting findings. The survey utilized for the

analysis in this research project used two separate scales for political affiliation towards the two primary parties present in America. Both were 0-100 scales, measuring how much the respondent is Republican, and how much they are democratic. Ideally, there would one question with multiple responses of the political parties in America (Democratic, Independent, and Republican), much more assumptions could be made from the respondents' affiliation.

The regression models provide evidence for two out of three of the measures of socioeconomic status set out in the research question. Educational attainment was significant in both models of regression for voting, showing that the level of education attained increases the likelihood one will vote—which is perhaps the most important indicator of political participation. The findings reflect the research from Blakely et al. (2001) as well as Bennet and Klecka (1970), who had found that educational attainment greatly increased the odds of political participation. Blakely et al. (2001) also saw that, for future research, the aspects that form socioeconomic status should be analyzed separately—this was completed with this study through household income as well as two measures of education, attainment and student status. These results differ from Persson (2013), as they had found that education was not influential on political participation. Persson (2013) states that education was seemingly a proxy for political participation and further, that future research should include more variables to explain the relationship. This research utilized more than simply educational attainment, and displayed that educational attainment only significantly increased the odds of voting, and not the voluntary participation of respondents.

When examining student status's effect on participation, it was the only tested variable significant in all four regression models, increasing the odds of participation in all aspects of political participation. While being a student in higher education, which as most of the tested

sample are of voting age and thus assumed to be in higher education, respondents have access to increased social capital due to the surroundings. Once they receive a degree, they are also able to receive higher paying jobs. Student status can then be used to predict both higher household income and on its own be a form of social capital. Rates of voting across all income levels was almost constant. Income alone is unable, in this research, to explain rates of voting and voluntarily participating in politics.

Being Asian or Hispanic saw a significant decrease in the odds of voting when compared to the other races and ethnicities. Black respondents were much more likely to participate in both voting and voluntary measures. Blakely et al. (2001), found that the policies passed were skewed from the inequality of participation. Through the conflict theory, Black respondents are participating to get the policies that they support to be passed. On the other hand, Asians and Hispanics do not care enough, or feel complacent enough with the status quo to not go out and vote.

The political climate as of late is led by increased access to information from the media. Practically every phone has access to the internet, with apps that feed the user information constantly—be it social media or more traditional news. Even back in the 70's, Bennet and Klecka (1970) found that during presidential elections, there is an increase in political participation. Their study, along with Lindquist (1964), Mc Dill and Ridley (1962), are unable to capture the essence of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology proliferating the instantaneous spread of information, as well as the divisive nature of American politics. While the world might have the same technologies available that kindle this spread of information, other countries lack the dichotomous battlefield that is Democrats versus Republicans. Therefore, studies done concerning political participation outside the United States (Cohen et al. 2001; Lorenzini and

Giugni 2012; Persson 2014; Teney and Hanquinet 2012; Voorpostel and Coffé 2014) might not be as valid as in America as they are their respective country of research.

## CONCLUSION

In accordance with Mill's version of the Conflict Theory, socioeconomic status, in part does influence political participation. Educational attainment and student status heavily increased the odds of participating in both voting and voluntary measures. Being Black was consistent as well in increasing the odds of participation greatly, supporting the notion that a disenfranchised group would seek to fight their way to institutional equality through political participation, thus displaying their fight in the conflict theory. As America is a Democratic Republic, voting for a candidate that represents one's own ideals is the only avenue for change or continuation of the same.

The social capital gained through participating in society through higher education or attaining the 'college experience' is apparent. Education, both the status as having been a student, as well as the attainment of degrees past high school, influence both political activism through voluntary participation, but as well as voting. While voluntary measures might increase the popularity or support for a candidate, going out to vote is what influences policy changes, or continues the status quo.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 5. Bivariate Correlations or Cramer's V for Voting and Voluntary Participation**

	Voting	Voluntary Participation
<b>SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS</b>		
<i>Household Income</i>	.017	-.024
<i>Educational Attainment</i>	.214***	.034
<i>Student Status</i>	.710**	.055*
<b>CONTROL VARIABLES</b>		
<i>Age</i>	.088**	.016
<i>Race</i>	.159***!	.188***!
<i>Female</i>	.032	.050

Note: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<.00; ! Indicates Cramer's V.

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