Spring 2019

Start Where You Are: How American Youth Are Finding Fulfillment Through Nontraditional Forms of Political Involvement

Johnathan Alfonzo Coleman
Bucknell University, jac066@bucknell.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/honors_theses

Part of the Americas Politics Commons, and the Social Policy Commons

Start Where You Are: How American Youth Are Finding

Fulfillment Through Nontraditional Forms of Political Involvement

by:

Johnathan 'Chief' Coleman

A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in Political Science

Professor Chris Ellis, Thesis Advisor

Professor Scott Meinke, Political Science Department Chair

Acknowledgements

The work accomplished in this Honors Thesis would not have been feasible without the guidance of my advisor Chris Ellis. Thank you for your constant support and calmness in the week-by-week writing process. You made this process seamless and instilled the belief in me that I would be able to accomplish this behemoth.

To my mother and god-mom, you strong belief in me when I sometimes doubt myself is felt. Thank you for reading over my thesis and pointing out the typos that my eyes no longer could detect after months of looking at the same document. Mommie-O, without your strength there is no way the boy you raised could have attended a could such as Bucknell. Thank you for the confidence you instilled in me.

To Professor Meinke and Professor Stanciu, thank you for being the additional readers and providing suggested edits for the final copy of my honors thesis.

A huge posthumous thank you should go to both my Great-Grandma and Papa, who instilled the values and strength to finish what I start without these core values the longevity of this project would have caused me to give up. I love you both.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is little room for addressing how to adequately activate young persons in civic participation without first addressing the decline in voting levels among younger citizens. History suggests that post 1972, there has been an increasing decline in the percentage of young voters in presidential election years, and an even more dismal rate of young voters in "off" election cycles. In the last four elections cycles, the voting rates of young voters have been 21%, 41%, 17%, & around 43% respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2016). Below half of the eligible voters in the 18-25 demographic does not bode well for either the elected politicians who would best serve their needs to become elected, or for the long-term health of American democracy generally. There is hope, as young people currently outnumber the baby boomer generation and when they choose to engage can uplift politicians they support into being elected (see the 2008 election, which bolstered a 48.5% voting rate among young people and ushered in the election of a young Barack Obama as President of the United States).

Yet, while many political scientists have studied how youth have turned away from more traditional modes of political participation such as voting, few have entered the realm of beginning to understand the nontraditional modes that many young persons seek to engage with. Historically, civic engagement has been routinely about voting in elections. The prominence of this action stems from, what I will argue, an active civic education that stressed love of one's country and the "duty" to vote previous generations have long since held that participating in elections is one of the key aspects of being an American (Green and Gerber, 2010).

However, there are other routes people may take to get involved. These methods can be separated into "spectator" and "activist" activities. Spectator politics often uses traditional means, which relies of the use of local leaders to help the spectator participants obtain their political desires. Activist politics relies on the participants to themselves fight for their political wants through their own active engagement within the political system. Spectator activities may include contacting local council representatives or congresspersons to voice concerns, or wearing of a campaign button. Actions such donating one's time, or money, to work on the elections of officials (or party) to which a person feels connected, attending political party meetings, running for office, protesting, and use of social media for political are methods of activist activities. Today, methods of engaging voters in campaign activities still contain elements of this past of the past. These methods reach mainly to the elder generations who are more likely to head to the polls. Parties often voice frustration over their young members not choosing to participate, most often blaming them for their lack of action.

In this thesis, I will explore a contrary argument: that the "traditional" method of attempting to engage youth in politics is misguided and outdated. Pushing youth to engage in a system that they do not yet wish to engage serves only to intensify and perpetuate the very conditions that leads youth away from participation on a whole.

The thesis of this paper, then, is an investigation into the public participatory rates among American youth, defined as persons 18-24. I will explore two central questions. Firstly, how do American youth view their civic engagement levels? Secondly, for those

who do consider themselves involved, what avenues do they choose to engage within the system?

This not an indictment on previous researchers, instead this is a realization that times are changing, technology is increasing at a record pace, and many young people feel disinterested with the old modes of civic engagement. Due to this, political scientists must look at how youth choose to diversify their methods of engagement when attempting to explain how young voters interact with the political system. By taking into consideration other activities such as protesting or club involvement both on campus and in communities, we will develop a better understanding of how young people become civically involved.

In addition, we might also explore the influx of social media in shaping political engagement. Recent studies have shown that 41% of youth have engaged in participatory politics through social media (Cohen & Kahne, 2013: 2). A mounting body of evidence suggests that those who participate in politics, in any form, at younger ages will be more likely to become habitual voters in the future (e.g., Plutzer 2002; Utter 2011). Therefore, political scientists should not just be focusing on one area of involvement as the quintessential data point to understand levels of civic participation. Instead, we should start encouraging young persons to get involved in the political landscape through methods they best seem fit.

Through the use of three separate chapters, I will show that the previous way of expecting young people to engage within the political system is flawed. Chapter Two will be a deep dive into what the previous literature has stated on the current state of young

peoples' engagement with the political system. This will be established through a discussion of the role education plays in the political involvement of young people, the motivations of the youth to get involved in different modes of participation, and finally will turn to address the difference between traditional and political participation.

Chapter Three will be centered around the qualitative data present and will primarily focus on what the numbers have to say about how youth view democracy, traditional modes of participation, nontraditional methods of engagement, diversity and inclusion, as well as the view of themselves. The data chapter is important to back up the claims of the literature review, while also serving as a guide for the reasons why the participants in my own study may answer in the ways that they do.

Chapter Four will be the qualitative section, which will explain the data collected from the interviews. The main point is to try and identify why it is that young people are participating in great quantities within the nontraditional modes of politics. This section will display that it is not that young people are attempting to actively remove themselves from the traditional structures of the political system, rather it will work to show that nontraditional modes work better at making young people feel both heard and validated. There is a sense for a return to normalcy, which will result in a higher amount of people engaging within the political process, if the traditional modes work better to secure the wants of young citizens.

Finally, all of the sections will be wrapped up in a conclusion where I will discuss what the thesis taught me in regard to the political system. I will also include a section

where I give some possible solutions for the future of traditional modes of political

participation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Section 2.1: Introduction

This chapter will sketch what researchers have gathered about the current narrative surrounding youth participatory rates through three distinct sections. First, by sketching a historical perspective of youth political involvement this section will display why political scientists are concerned about the current lack of traditional engagement from young persons. Additionally, it will work to explain the role education and marginalization has in the current engagement levels of young people. The second section will be an understanding of the motivations young people hold for engaging in political participation. Finally, the third section will address the distinction between traditional and nontraditional modes of political participation.

A core distinction that needs to be explained before going any further is the divide between nontraditional and traditional types of political participation.

	Traditional Participation	**Nontraditional Participation**
Definitions	The main way people in democratic republics look to participate in the political process to make their voices heard.	The mode of participation people subscribe to when they feel the usual means of participation are not adequate in making their voice heard.

Examples	- Voting - Contacting representatives to voice concerns - Wearing of a campaign button/general campaigning - Donating to a political party/official	- Protests, Demonstrations, and Rallies - Social Media Posts - Boycotts - Civil Disobedience

As the chart above displays the variance between the two methodologies of participation both serve as a way for those in the electorate to make their voice present in the political system. While both have their positives and negatives, the literature review will work as a guide to understand why it is that young persons may subscribe to either.

Section 2.2. History of Youth Participation: The Role of Education and Marginalization

Researchers are concerned of the growing trend is the lack of young people participating in American political and social life. Electoral data reflects that since 1972 there has been a stark decline in the number of young voters engaging with the political system. This section of the paper seeks to understand from where this lack of engagement stems. By defining and outlining the traditional modes of political participation, there can be an understanding of how to accurately understand participatory rates in today's politics.

Youth are Disengaged from Political Participation

While in the past public participation has been widely seen as a defining foundation of American, today this participation seems to be in question (Dalton, 2014). This often results in the concern that that the basic foundation of democratic processes is crumbling due to the lack of engagement of the upcoming generation. This is, at first glance, has some merit: many young people have become detached from each other and seemingly the world around them (Henn et al., 2005).

Many have pointed to this sort of youth alienation as a function of the declining quality of civic engagement in the United States (e.g., Rogers, 2015). Researchers have seemed to point towards the growing levels of individualization of Generation Z and Millennials as causing a lack of citizenship norms (Dalton, 2014). The thought process is that before the Baby Boomer generation there was a sense of duty to one's country (Dalton, 2014 39). This sense of duty led citizens to actively engage in the electoral process. The data clearly displays that those who became eighteen by the end of World War II and Baby Boomers were the generation who most actively believed in duty-based politics (Dalton, 2014 41). This puts on full display the fact that they were not as motivated by specific policy or charismatic leaders, but more so driven by the nationalistic goal of everyone having a duty to participate in the electoral process.

However, as a result of what Dalton labels a "traumatic social change" this duty was slowly shifted to a greater individualization of the current youth experience (Dalton, 2014, see also Leccardi and Ruspini 2014). Due to this shifting from a greater picture of citizenry to a more micro-concern of securing rights and privileges for the individual, there has also been a drop off in the duty aspect of the electorate. While the goal of this

paper is not to comment on the negative or positive aspects of this shift, it must be noted that this has led to more youth feeling that since the government is not implementing policies that they wish to see, or viewing this traditional form of participation as satisfying.

The Historic Role of Education within Political Engagement

Nevertheless, to say that a changing in American systems has led to all negative consequences would be mistaken. As Dalton notes, education levels have continually increased in the United States, and higher levels of education generally lead to "a more expansive and engaged image of citizenship" (Dalton, 2014, 12). Additionally, compared to the 1950s, there is a more diverse electorate, as well. This comes from the fact that voting laws and norms have been changed, which allowed previously excluded persons to begin to involve themselves in the political process. This deepened and diverse way of imaging citizenship also influences how one chooses to participate in politics. The greater array of choices allows for the empowerment of the public influences in ways unable to be garnered from traditional electoral processes (Anduiza et al., 2009).

Traditional process, as previously mentioned, included voting, being active in political organizations, and donating to political campaigns (Dalton, 2014). For older generations, the emphasis on voting seems to be stronger than it is today (Wattenberg, 2012). For these citizens, voting is seen as a moral obligation for American citizens. Some in this older generation have reported that to not vote would be similar as being caught sinning (Wattenberg, 2012). The difference is often seen as the difference between a duty and a responsibility. Young people still see voting as something that they are

responsible for; however, they no longer believe that there is an obligation to vote in the same way (Wattenberg, 2012).

Instead of a duty-based politics, there is now a sense of an engaged citizenry who not only participates within the political system, but also seeks to involve themselves in areas of what might now be called "social justice." Social justice initiatives involve caring for the less fortunate, marginalized individuals, and reflecting on the view of others, those engaged with these measures are looking to live in a world where people are able to lead happy and successful lives regardless of their background. Groups who have previously been left out of the system are finding ways to mark their voice heard and their mark felt. These are often done through nontraditional means. The higher the education of a person the more likely they are to believe in being an engaged citizen through social justice measures versus purely the duty motivated activity (Dalton, 2014). Therefore, the growing educational levels of persons can help explain why there is less of a duty-based motivation among this generation.

Education should not be seen as a negative when discussing participatory politics. Educated persons are "more likely to vote, more knowledgeable about politics… and more politically tolerant" (Dalton, 2014, 44). To build and maintain a stronger electorate then it would be wise to have a stronger educational system. Since this generation is the most educated, it is likely to follow persons 18-26 have the most potential to politically engaged. Yet education is not merely what occurs in the classroom. Political education has historically come from school coupled with what parents, church leaders,

community-based groups, and the campaigns themselves had to say about politics (CIRCLE, 2013). Therefore, education can be amassed in a variety of ways.

It follows then that historically students who were less educated were more likely to blindly follow what they were told what the correct way of participating looked like. By challenging this narrative, the current generation of young voters are not only changing how political engagement occurs, they are also changing who is able to participate in the political sphere. Increased and non-traditional methods of engagement allow those who do not normally choose to be an active member of traditional means to have their voice heard.

Additionally, education may be able to be seen in the form of increased political outreach as it currently seems clear that there is not as much effort to reach out to young Americans during campaigns. The 2008 election reached out to these younger voters and greatly improved the turnout rate (Jacobsen, 2012). Therefore, it seems clear that some of the responsibility for the lack of young persons engaging in the political system is on those in who are in charge of campaigns. Times are changing, and those who wish to be elected by young voters cannot haphazardly go out on the campaign trails, instead they must rally the youth around issues that are of importance to them. This is not to say they have not already started to implement changes that work toward making more people feel heard through, however just employing more inclusive talking points does not help the people who do not feel heard. Therefore, it is important that these officials take action once they are elected. Like most other demographics, millennials wish to know their vote is going towards issues they care about, and wish to hear from elected officials who

understand their frustrations and concerns. Yet, it must be recognized that of the three million young persons who voted in the 2008 election, 2.4 million (79%) had at least some college education (Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009). This shows that most opportunities for civic engagement are available mostly to students enrolled in school or college. There also seems to be evidence that youth turnout is remaining a higher levels with the 2016 levels hovering around 50% (CIRCLE, 2016).

Historical Role of Racial Disparities within Politics

To understand changing youth participation levels, we must also understand the changing nature of political marginalization. For some time, many marginalized groups were discouraged and sometimes barred from participating in national elections. From this historical context, these groups were also vastly undereducated about the political system. This has led to a systemic lack of education that had caused disadvantaged young people to be "far less likely to be informed or vote" (CIRCLE, 2013). Often these underserved young persons are the most disengaged with the political system as they feel politicians are not serving them and their needs. This, often warranted, feeling of disenfranchisement as often lead these groups away from the voting booth (Jacobsen, 2012). Therefore, to understand young voter turnout there must be an understanding that frequently these groups felt no particular ties to political process, which added to the relatively low voter turnout rate.

This absence of understanding the needs of young persons of color does not bode well for the politicians of today wishing to get elected as more young persons of color are involving themselves in the political landscape than ever before and these voters have a

different set of needs than the traditional voter. There seems to be a need for a transition to start being enacted, for in the future as it is projected that by 2045 minorities will make up more than half of the population of the United States (Frey, 2018). With that being said, young persons of color are no longer satiated with being on the fray. After the 2016 election, more young people from disenfranchised areas are stepping up to talk about issues of disproportional jailing of minorities through the war on drugs, police violence, and more. Therefore, the historic ability to have a platform that covers only issues of the majority seems to be waning. Traditionally underserved communities may need to begin to obtain a larger voice in the political process to get them back to the voter booth. This is not to say that young citizens from diverse background are not voting. In fact, racially and ethnic diversity of voters has steadily increased since the 2004 election (CIRCLE, 2016).

More generally, compared to traditional levels of engagement there is less of young persons who get politics from trusted news sources. Traditionally, newspapers and mainstream television programs were the main way of obtaining information. Today, social media and the growing diversity of the news media makes it easier than ever to have access to politics, (Stroud 2011). The newspaper has slowly been washed away, and now online news sources are always searching for catchy headlines that provide more entertainment rather than providing information (e.g., Glynn et al., 2012. Nevertheless, it is the case that, in general, there has been an increase in information levels due to online media source, which should be noted, even if youth themselves feel like all they are receiving is flashy headlines (CIRCLE, 2013).

Yet, there is hope. This generation of young persons are volunteering at significantly higher rates, and voter turnout appears to be on the rise among young persons (Fisher, 2012). This has remained true in the 2016 election cycles as well (CIRCLE, 2016).

This section has displayed how the historical ways of engagement has slowly eroded, while offering hints of where this traditional engagement has given way to more nontraditional forms of civic action. The subsequent sections will focus on how these nontraditional modes of political involvement are currently working in our system. This offer the idea that although unique, these nontraditional methods are both engaging young persons and allowing them outlets traditional modes have often smothered.

Section 2.3: Understanding Motivations for Political Participation

The preceding section was largely a discussion centered around the historical narrative of the political participation of persons eighteen to twenty-five in America. The goal of this section is to discover possibilities for corralling American youth back into participating in the political processes. By reflecting upon past and modern methods of enhancing engagement this section will allow for an introspective search on whether these methods have proved successful. Furthermore, by looking at current trends there can begin to be an understanding of how, if at all, technology has changed civic engagement levels. Through these means, a suggestion from the pertinent literature will be made to show how to enhance civic engagement at younger ages.

Though discussed at length in the previous section, it is important to reiterate the fact that levels of voting have been steadily decreasing from 1972-2008. Although, there

were small upticks in young voter rates, occurring in the early 1990s and again in 2004, the general trend had been downward as 49.5 percent of young voters (18-24) voted in 1972. The rate of young people participating in general elections has since decreased to a dismal 38.0 percent as of 2012 (Data Bank, 2015). Lately, there has been an increase in voter turnout, the reasons why will be explained in subsequent chapters, however this section's main focus will be on how we can account for this lack of engagement in the political system.

Furthermore, this section will focus on the ever-increasing number of young persons who are finding themselves participating more with media in order to feel adequately engaged within the political process. Often, they find media to have relatively low entry costs associated with participation and feel they can be heard, as well as validated across large populations online. Media also allows for the racial disparities often felt within the political system to wane as there is more freedom for various racial groups to voice their concerns without have institutionalize structures presents to repress their political desires. Through a look at both of these factors this section will look to describe what young people motivations are for further involvement within the political system.

Costs and Benefits of Voting

Often getting young persons to participate is not as easy as notifying them of the importance of their participation. There are many 'costs' associated with participatory acts. However, if the costs of actions such as voting can either be reduced or shown to be worth the investment a renewed sense of duty may occur.

As noted in the earlier sections, education plays a valuable role in enhancing the engagement levels of young persons. There have been surveys that have reported a forty-point turnout gap between those who completed less than ninth grade and those with an advanced degree (Plutzer, 2002). Additionally, civic education can be dependent on the household. A child born to educated parents has a higher propensity to have access and exemplify a higher degree of knowledge surrounding the political process (Plutzer, 2002). These children thus are more likely to engage. It is easy to see that those who have university or college experience have a higher propensity to engage in political processes (Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009).

Nevertheless, there cannot be solely a reliance on the education system if the goal is to create a more active electorate. Compile that with the fact that there is a lack of engagement in present tense, there must be innovative ways to enhance the current lack of engagement. The goal is get people out into the polls, because voting is seen as a habitual act: people tend to always go to the polls, or always abstain (Fowler, 2006). By getting them to vote early and often may begin a cycle of positive habitual voting need to better obtain a high turnout propensity. To better understand the lacking of voting, there must be a development of thoughtful consideration around the topic of why people vote.

The first and most important pillar of getting people out to vote is motivation (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). Common motivations for voting could involve instances of an unpopular administration or peer pressure from friends and family. On their own, though, neither of these instances provide sustainable methodology for implementing a higher voter turnout. Given that voter turnout is strongly associated with levels of trust

and engagement in the political system (Lewis Beck et al., 2002) it follows to enhancing voter turnout might necessarily involve creating closer bonds with or senses of efficacy in the political system.

Furthermore, the 'costs' associated with voting often inhibits persons likelihood of voting (Plutzer, 2002): the higher the cost the more plausible it is that a person would choose not to vote (Fowler, 2006). The costs can be any subsequent time, energy, and perhaps actual monetary funds spent on becoming an active political participant. A main cost is time spent on voter registration. A higher number of registration drives, which "wherein nonpartisan and partisan groups encourage people to register, attempting to reduce the difficulty of the registration process" mediates these costs somewhat, (Harder, and Krosnick, 2008). But citizens (particularly those with lower incomes) also impact whether a person can spend time educating one's self about the upcoming election, as well as take the time off from work to go vote (Harder, and Krosnick, 2008).

The Role of Media

In today's technological age, the role of media is vastly important to the overall participation of young people within the political system. By acting as low-cost way of entering the system media may act as an entry point for many young people to increased their involvement.

Though new media sources may contribute to polarization and perhaps some of the alienating atmosphere current felt within the political system (Prior, 2012), the role new media can play in enhancing voter turnout should not be disregarded. Modern or new media can be defined as all social media platforms, blogs, YouTube, and the

existence of smart phones in general (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014). It is not new for politicians and campaign advisors to try to take advantage of newly-created methods of communication. A past example is Franklin Roosevelt's "fire-side chats" that used the newly invented radio to galvanize a country in economic turmoil. Another example of how new media can change politics involves the shifting of the tide in the Nixon-Kennedy presidential race after the first televised presidential debate that showed a younger more handsome JFK going against a sickly-looking Richard Nixon (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014). Today, it seems to that there is a new period of transformative media use. By having alternate methods of participation young persons are able to engage in the system through means that are of more comfort to them.

The use of social media has seen real increases in the raising of funds for campaigns, united people from across the nation for political protests, and mobilized many young persons to vote (Louder, 2007). Additionally, though interaction, with one another in a peer to peer manner young persons are able to facilitate participatory politics while at the same time adding to the over discourse on policies. Social media action also allows for young people of diverse backgrounds to have an opportunity to learn about policies and initiatives that are important to their communities that otherwise would not have been learned of (CIRCLE, 2013). Use of social media sites may break down traditional 'gatekeepers', by reducing the costs of reaching out to people in person and maintaining a constant connection that allows for more productive outcomes with finite resources that often plague young people (Soep, 2014). This can be especially attractive

for youth who wish to engage in politics without having to invest a signification portion of their life to politics.

Social media involvement makes young people feel as though their opinions on policies matter. Furthermore, due to the number of persons seeing, commenting, and agreeing on what issues are of importance to them those in public office are able to take these concerns and turn them into campaign platforms and policy. This directly affects the number of young voters who show on election day. The 2008 election is a great example of the impact that discussing topics that resonant with young voters can have on the overall turnout (Dalton, 2014).

However, if the goal is to enact true rising of engagement levels we must discuss potential pitfalls of new media. A source of the lack of engagement, particularly by American youth, is a matter of people regarding the system as dysfunctional and polarizing (CIRCLE, 2013). Citizens, particularly young ones, who see the system as ineffective or corrupt simply do not engage with it at high rates (Delli Carpini, 2000). With the government being polarized and the news not being trusted during the formative years of a young persons voter development, it becomes difficult to begin the habitual voter process (CIRCLE, 2013). The media environment can also be another source of political alienation: overly cynical or polarizing media can also have an alienating effect (Baum and Groeling, 2008).

Additionally, there must be a focus on who is using these new media outlets, as conservative or Republican youth have been noted to be much less likely to display their political ideology on social platforms (CIRCLE, 2013). If members of certain groups are

being left out an unequal distribution of political voice will be created causing disbelief in system caring about their views. Additionally, there have been some difficulties in translating "online" political discussion to actual participation in the public sphere, and some evidence that, without digital education, citizens might be unable to critically evaluate all of the information available to them on new media platforms (DiMitrova et al, 2014).

Racial Inequalities Within Participation

It is easy to see how these new forms of media provide a growing range of opportunities for diverse voices and deepened discussions (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2015). This is very important as historically political participation has been driven by institutions and traditional modes of thinking. This bred the idea that there were certain fixed ways of adding to political discourse. Nontraditional forms of this such as the Black Panther's threat of violence to pursue equality or Martin Luther King, Jr. call for a bus boycott has been met with voices that argue that those methods of political engagement are wrong. From this, some racial tensions have created a distrust in the government and results in a lesser likelihood of voting (Plutzer, 2002).

Yet, this distrust may be more inflated than what they narrative states. When accounting for education and income levels black persons vote at equal rates as white persons, while Asian and Latino Americans both have lower levels of voting associated with the lower likelihood of registering to vote (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). Overall, to enhance participation especially in the more diverse future the registering of Hispanic and Asian voters must increase (Data Bank, 2015). Civic classes are also more uncommon in

working-class school districts making their exposure to political education weaker comparatively (CIRCLE, 2013). In order to increase engagement of this diverse groups social media may not be enough. It will take poignant efforts aimed at specially these diverse populations to allow for them to feel as though their voice matters. Real freedom is not possible without equity, to truly begin to live in an era where the ability to speak one's truth is readily available.

If the desire is to create even larger levels of participatory politics there has to be a more in-depth process of creating spaces that allow for young persons to actively engage with the political process in a myriad of ways. While the next section will touch more on the nontraditional modes of participation, it should be acknowledged in this section how to make those modes productive. There are five activities that are the main characteristics of participatory politics: circulation, dialogue and feedback, production, investigation and mobilization (Soep, 2014). Circulation is reliant on the sharing of information created by the larger community rather than a few members of the elite. Dialogue and feedback is the conversation amongst community members to understand the concerns of the polis or to provide feedback to leaders. Production relies on the circulation of information. Investigation is when the community members research issues of public concern to combat how the elites have described the situation. Mobilization is the last step, which focuses on rallying community members to take action. While it may be true that young people have more access to the types of media platforms that should make it easy to achieve all five characteristics community action has severely declined over the course of the years. Therefore, if there is to be a shift in how young people

participate in politics there has to be a focus on the collective in order to achieve results (Soep, 2014).

Section 2.4: Distinguishing Between Traditional and Nontraditional Civic Engagement

The aim of this section is closely look at what the key differences are between traditional and nontraditional modes of participation. Through an understanding of the differences, this section will determine why it is young persons are seemingly more likely to care about and get involved with nontraditional modes of participatory politics.

Reduction in Traditional Levels of Civic Engagement

Reflecting back upon the idea of traditional levels of civic engagement encapsulated in section two of this paper, researchers are currently faced with the challenge of understanding differing types of civic engagement; traditional and non-traditional. Traditional participation refers to electoral activities such as voting in elections, campaign work, corresponding with elected officials, and participating in neighborhood associations (Zukin et al., 2006). Historically, these activities have been labeled traditional, because most individuals will see these activities as the basic means of being involved in politics: getting involved within the political system itself. It must be noted that traditional methods do engage certain populations of youth who feel it is their civic duty to vote and believe voting for the person who policies most align to their will ultimately help them achieve their political desires. The 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign put on full display how, when motivated by the right politician, youth will choose to

donate and work on a campaign. Thus, in a new age of participatory politics there must be new strategy that can allow young people to shape public spheres (Soep, 2014).

Nevertheless, young persons in America have slowly started to decrease their involvement with traditional modes of civic participation as they have lost interest in the political system due to a myriad of reasons previously discussed in this paper. Rising levels of individualism and growing levels of political alienation for example, have led to significant declines in the sorts of neighborhood civic organizations that help lead to traditional political participation (Dalton, 2014; Carney; 2018). Therefore, traditional norms of what it means to be an active citizen have changed, as well. In the right contexts, non-traditional models of participation can act as a mechanism to bring people back into a system that they have previously rejected. This is important, because "active citizenship demands far more than spending a few minutes in a voting booth each November. To ensure the health of our democracy, we need to ask more of our young people" (McConnell, 2008).

Nontraditional Modes Explained

How then do we maximize "the pleasures of participation, the fellowship of civic association, and the autonomy, self-governance, and enlarging mutuality of continuous political activity" so that young persons feel connected to politics again (Barber, 1984)? It seems that the answer would be by expanding what is considering political engagement and encourage young people to participate in a widened variety of activities. Through a civic education that tells young people that there is more than just one way of participating there can become an expanding of young people engaging in a wider variety

of activities. For this transition to occur there must be a deepening of respect for nontraditional modes of civic engagement.

Nontraditional modes of political participation may include activism (protest, boycotting, and petitions), civic activities (charity or community service), and lifestyle politics (vegetarianism, awareness raising, and boycotting) as a methodology of trying to enact change (Zukin et al. 2006). The Birmingham Bus Boycott is an example of how nontraditional modes of civic engagement has been long used in an effort to motivation political capitulation. More modern examples are workers in a factory coordinating their actions on the shop floor to slow down production, thereby resisting a speed-up by management. This example of a localized act of resistance is meant to challenge corporate power. While not a formal political or civic act, it has political implications in terms of the balance of power (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014).

While this participatory culture has predated the internet, new media has allowed this culture to become more prominent and common due to the ease at which it may be used. There has been a reassurance of young people turning to protests as a means of securing and voicing their political wants (Fisher, 2012). Moreover, the use of consumer power to influence political activities is a growing trend among youth who feel as though capitalistic structures make economic protests an effective form of engagement in achieving particular types of goals (Nielson, 2010).

Nontraditional forms of engagement also allow for more diverse groups to make their voice heard and add to overall narrative of the political sphere. While schools and neighborhood become more socioeconomically segregated, online presence and protests

bring together groups that otherwise would have never interacted. This also empowers diverse and underprivileged communities. For instance, participation in social media has empowered LatinX youth to take charge in the debate around immigrant communities, allowing them to tell their own narrative (CIRCLE, 2013).

Production of Change by Nontraditional Modes of Participation

That is just one example of how nontraditional forms of participation can be effective at producing political chance. They also work well at taking the "politics" out of being political. Conventional measures such as voting rates, social studies test results, and number of young participations at rallies still matter, but it is time for a new strategy to understand participatory politics especially in relation to how young people are engaging with the public sphere (Soep, 2014). By allowing young persons to engage with the system and find issues of importance to them outside of the confines of formal political structures, youth may better acquaint themselves with the political system and allow them to find their areas of passion. Thusly, unconventional politics promotes young people to engage with the system further by voting for officials that will promote their thinking. This unconventional course of thinking may allow more people to get involved as they no longer feel as if there is no change in 'politics as usual' encouraging previously discourage people who felt as though there was no sound way for them to get involved in a meaningful manner (Dalton, 2014).

Furthermore, nontraditional means create with low barriers of entry into interacting with the political system. While American ideals are meant to place equal representation for all citizens, equality is often lacking in the political system. Certain

groups of people have more financial, social, and cultural capital and subsequently have a greater influence on the political process (Jacobsen & Linkow, 2012). By allowing activities such as boycotts, social media, and other nontraditional methods to be viewed as a positive influence on the political processes, there may be an encouraging of the equaling of the political playing field when it comes to influence. With low barriers of entry young people may also hurdle over the traditional gatekeepers who maintain the hierarchical politics that soils the American fiber (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014). Additionally, new media can exert a type of positive peer pressure which allows for interaction between young persons to create a higher level of participation may occur. There is also easier access to inform a mass quantity of individuals of outrages. Some include the prevalence of petitions that are easily circulated and signed due to internet access (Fisher, 2012).

Nontraditional Engagement Through Media

Media allows for any and every person to have a voice. No longer is being over the age of 18 require to have a real voice. As already asserted there is a lower fiscal need (only enough to purchase a phone or laptop which may post a view). There is also a wide reach for who is able to view these posts, as friends can repost allowing for an even wider viewing of the conversation one person started. There is also an increased enabling of building a political identity, as persons are able to find policy and positions to hold, rather than just remaining loyal to officials and party lines. Schools, like most establishments, have been slow to recognize this shift, this causes a lack of critical thinking associated with newer forms of participation (Jenkins, 2009). But after-school programs, school

clubs, and the schools themselves have the ability to protect this new form of

participation. With this new literacy education youth may be able to circulate,

collaborate, create, and connect asserting a prevalence use of these actions, which would

allow for a higher success rate of the usage of these means (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen,

2014). In fact, by doing so they may add to the overall value, which would promote a

larger number of students to engage. It follows then, that it is critical that these sorts of

outlets remain to counterbalance governmental, corporate, and financial power.

   In short, community engagement looks totally different than it did even 10 years

ago. There are less bowling leagues, neighborhood association numbers are dwindling,

and it is more common for people to feel less connected to their particular local

communities (Putnam, 2016). In today's segmented environment, use of social media

may be able to foster social skills and cultural competencies are basically garnered

through interactions with new media, which would act toward strengthening democracy

as a whole (Jenkins, 2009). Social media also allows for looser ties institutionally as the

internet allows for less geographically condensed communities. By allowing for easier

methods of investigation, new media allows for access to education which provides more

information for better decision-making processes, and dialogue is also created around

nontraditional methods. While traditional methods of political engagement such as voting

or donating money are often one-sided, these sorts of non-traditional methods may be

more appealing to young people because they have the abilities to create interactive

discussion (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014).

Non-traditional movements such as the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and campaigns against Joseph Kony have demonstrated varying levels of success. Some were successful in creating social change; others showed the difficulty of translating non-traditional participation to changes in political institutions. Nevertheless, they show how young people can quickly mobilize through a strong online presence. Success of each movement aside, what is able to be seen here is the growing way young people are attempting to shape the world around them. Through mass movements or even small stories being shared on the web others are more prone to act based off a sense of online comradery (Soep, 2014). Often, it is not about the outcome, instead it is the aim of the young people that should be touted as even failure can teach a considerable amount about how to enact political change.

Participation in political life has long been defined as participating in activities that have "the intent or effect of influencing government action — either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (Jacobsen & Lindow, 2012). Therefore, recognizing that nontraditional actions have these intended consequences and thus should be regarded as an important step in building a more engaged citizenry. Participatory politics greatly is reliant on peer-based, interactive, nonhierarchical, and social capital (Jenkins, 2009). No democracy can continue to exist without the private, voluntary, and nonprofit associations, which helps to run the democracy in more of a smooth sense (Jacobsen & Lindow, 2012). Too much privation of politics creates distrust by the polis as major interest groups engage in "pay for play" politics that belittle the average citizens

voice. Nontraditional sources of participation provide an expand audience, as well as a

way to talk directly to their elected officials (or at least speak to them though protests and

other action). Data shows that the overall civic health of young people is increasing,

which suggests that new methods of engagement (along with increasing levels of

education) is working at getting youth to be active in the community (National

Conference on Citizenship, 2006).

Risks Associated with Nontraditional Participation

There are risks. Young persons may become so enamored with this system that

they stop engaging with the political process as they may begin to see a lack of value in

traditional processes such as voting, corresponding directly with their congressperson,

etc., perhaps leading to a conflation between influence and voice (Cohen et al, 2012).

Working-class individuals may be left out of the system as they might not be as

connected with who to follow for political information as someone who has been college

educated. They may work long hours, and due to the changing social climate may lack

strong connections to learn how to practice citizenship. Therefore, underserved

communities may be most affected by a decrease in traditional modes.

Online and non-traditional politics may also develop high pomposity of

slacktivism, where people "like" a tweet but may not take any further action, causing a

lack of real civic engagement. This simple "liking' or reposting may increase a need for

short, powerful, spreadable messaging that lacks the complexation and nuance that many

political issues possess (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014). Accompany that issue may

be the problem of a lack of investigation that is very common among young people today

who seldom read beyond the headlines, which is meant to be provocative. There is also little room for constructive dialogue as it is easy to place oneself in an echo chamber only focusing on those who reinforce the positions one may already hold (Colleoni et al. 2014). This may be the reason it is common for fewer conservatives to be found having an online presence, as since there is only loosely formed groups online it is easier to feel little shame in offending others (Kahne, Middaugh, & Allen, 2014).

Also, the deepening divide within ideological conflict makes for bitter banter online and in person. Polarization and the holding of strong views is the main cause for rallies, protests, and demonstrations, with many people attending due to some personal outrage that they feel. However, rallies only add to the deepening divide, causing a cycle of widening political ideologies with few remaining in the middle (Hare and Poole, 2014).

Another risk is that these online and protest communities are not sustainable. Institutions promote civic participation, by developing bonds through groups such as a NAACP chapter or Elks Club, members are able to come together and hold each other accountable (Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009). Young people, especially those who do not attend college, are not connected to many of these sorts of institutions. By being tied to networks who are organization for one specific goal makes it easier for sustained activism (Fisher, 2012). Being connected to others in a variety of institutions is important as it allows individuals of different backgrounds to confer with each other. This helps a realization grow that there can be a diversity in opinion without that making someone a bad person. Now with more limited in-person connections and an easier ability to only

seek out points of view similar to one's own, the echo chamber mindset is strengthened, not allowing for friendly and constructive debate. A growing frustration surrounding this polarization is growing, as noted by young peoples' decisions to not align towards parties. It increasingly the case that people are deciding to register as an independent rather than to conform to the polarization of party lines (CIRCLE, 2016).

Section 2.5: Conclusion

In conclusion, the two forms of participation need each other. There is a growing understanding that traditional methods matter and young people may not be shying away from them as much as previously understood. Perhaps it may be true that nontraditional forms of participation may serve as an entry point for the political process, but what does that mean for traditional forms of political engagement. Are there really becoming increasing shifts in power?

Regardless, the power of this (truly any) generation's new forms of engagement is outstanding and must be taken into consideration when addressing nontraditional methods. There is a need for the voices of the young when sustaining a deliberate democracy, through a combination of traditional and nontraditional methods of engaging there may be produced a new type of young engaged citizen.

Chapter 3: Data Analysis

The focus of the previous chapter was to study what the previous literature had to say about youth participation. This chapter will look at secondary quantitative data to see what young people themselves have to say about rates of involvement. While there are considerable amounts of data on the subject, I will primarily focus on what the numbers have to say about how youth view democracy, traditional modes of participation, nontraditional methods of engagement, diversity and inclusion, as well as the view of themselves. After presenting each groupings of data, I will work to analyze what these number mean in terms of my research. This will act as a catalyst of understanding the differences between what my research will show and what work has already been done around the subject.

The main point of this chapter is to conceptualize the general point of this thesis, which is that nontraditional means of participatory politics is an important aspect of attempting to get young people engaged in the political system. Some young people feel as though non-traditional participatory politics is pointless and a distraction away from the existing structures that some believe are more important (i.e. voting). An abundant amount of this generation does see how modes that go against the status quo gives them a greater freedom of expression and often allows them to feel that their voice is being heard by not only officials, but also their peers who might join them in a more social form of political participation.

Nowhere is the belief that these alternate measures of engagement fulfilling for those who feel estranged from the current more prevalent than when discussing the role

race plays in the political system. As this chapter will show, minorities are increasingly finding it to be the case that using alternate means can be help them find a voice in a system that they do not allows believes listens to them. By being able to participate in nontraditional means, they can engage with peers, and feel more able to unite and force institutions to listen to their desires. Evidence of this includes the fact that certain minority groups like persons of Asian Pacific Islanders (API) and Hispanic descent often find themselves voting at lesser rates than they may engage in other participatory politics. Furthermore, while white young people are more likely to vote than engage in alternate modes, black young persons are equally likely to vote showing that they find real merit and satisfaction from engaging in the system in nontraditional ways.

The first data set used was the 2017 Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, which surveyed young American's attitudes towards politics and public service. This particular survey included a nationally representative sample of young people from 18-29. The study was comprised of 8% high school students, 2% trade school youth, 11% persons in community college, 21% of college students, 3% of graduate students. The remainder were either employed or out of school entirely. College students made up 21%, those in graduate school 3%, professional school 1%, and had 56% of people not involved in any of the following. The education level of the responders had a 12% who held less than a high school diploma, 27% who graduated high school, 38% were college educated, and 23% had a bachelor or higher. The respondents were 49% male and 51% female. In regards to ethnicity, white persons made up 57%, black 13%, Hispanic 22%, other was 7%, and biracial was 2%.

The second data set was collected by a joint effort between the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) and Music Television (MTV). The report is based on a large nationally representative survey of young people (2,023) age 15-24 and a series of eight focus groups conducted among black, white, and Hispanic young people. Since the age range is varied from the previous data set, the numbers are slightly different. The Youth Participatory Political sample was comprised of 15-25 year olds. The study oversampled African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic populations. The sample size was 2,920. The survey was comprised of 30% white, 23% black, 19.6% Asian American, and 27.1% Hispanic respondents..

Section 3.1- The Role of Education

Civic education was a major focus of the literature review. Therefore, to gather a full understanding of the role youth believed education played in their political experience we must look at data surrounding whether young people felt that they needed more practical information on politics. Out of those surveyed in the Harvard Study, 41% believed that they needed more knowledge before getting involved (12% strong agreed and 29% somewhat agree), 36% were neutral, and only 20% disagreed (13% somewhat disagreed, 7% strongly disagreed) (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Subsequent research from the PRRI study reveals similar data as nearly half (48%) of young people cite not having sufficient information about the issues as a reason they choose not to get involved (Jones et al., 2018). This portrays a young populace who feels as though they are missing important information needed to make practical decisions in the political process. As previously shown in this paper, this may lead some young people on the fence about

going away from participating in the system as they feel that they would not have enough

information on the matter. The relevance of this particular data point is relevant to the

overall theme of the paper, as it works to strengthen the argument that nontraditional

modes of participatory politics can act as an educating system for young people working

to help them receive the information which they desire.

Yet, not all nontraditional education act as a positive force in the effort to educate

young citizens. The sources from which young people are obtaining their news are not

reliable as much of their news consummation is derived from participatory channels. 45%

of youth report that that they get news at least once a week from friends and family via

Twitter and Facebook (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). Why this news is a bit disturbing is that

only 49% received their news from newspaper or magazines displaying a growing trend

towards media (whose main goal is often to provide entertainment) rather than a trusted

news source (whose main goal is supposed to be to provide the polis with relevant

information) (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). If people are turning to entertainment sources for

their news, it turns into "gotcha" journalism more focused on a flashy headline that

provokes outrage rather than solid journalism that shines light on an otherwise hidden

event. This is the type of journalism that makes for a more polarized political climate,

which often dissuades young persons from participating in the larger political system.

While nontraditional education is important the balancing of more reliable sources and

the sources that more easily accessible is very important. Later in this chapter, I will

discuss how youth feel much of the news of social media accounts are "fake news" so

their news is derived from unsourced media could make youth feel disengaged from the

political system and is something that needs to be corralled.

Section 3.2- Traditional Modes of Participation

Traditional modes of political engagement tend to dominate conversation around how an engaged citizen appears. This section of the chapter will center around data accumulated around traditional modes of participation.

View of Democracy

To begin to understand institutionalized participation modes, we should develop an understanding of how youth understands the current state of American democracy. The current narrative centers around the polarization in this country reaching irreparable levels. Yet, when taking into consideration how young people identify along party lines, this messaging seems far from true. Of those surveyed, 39% reported to be Democrat, 22% Republican, and 37% were Independent (of which 9% leans democrat, 6% leans Republican, 22% does not lean either way) (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This makes young people slightly more Democratic, and slightly more likely to not even "lean" in a partisan direction, than the country at large. This displays the spectrum along which young people define themselves. Many people reside in the middle of the distinction between Democrat and Republican suggesting that, at least among party lines, this generation could be less polarized than previous generations. How young people in general identity also is less polarized than Twitter politics would lead people to believe. Out of those surveyed, 38% identified with the term Liberal, 26% Moderate, and 33% Conservative (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This once again depicts a society of young people who do not adhere to the polarization that national dialogue would lead

many to believe is occurring among young persons in this nation. Since young people are not as divided as perceived stronger efforts to bring the middle into the political system could aid is raising the rates of people participation in the system.

Yet, while the youth themselves are not as partisan as the national media may portray, these headlines may have had an effect on how the youth view the polarization of the nation. When asked if they felt about if they felt politics had become too partisan, 48% agreed (27% strongly agreed, 22% somewhat agreed), 37% were neutral on the matter, only 10% disagreed (7% somewhat agreed, 4% strongly disagreed) (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This may lead to many young people choosing to not engage in the political process as they may feel officials are not listening to them or that those with the largest platforms are voicing opinions that do not align with their opinions. This disengagement may not only lead young people away from traditional politics, but also from nontraditional modes of political activity. There may also be a subconscious feeling of polarization that is developed among youth that this country is split, without hope for a re-unionization. If the effort is to bring people back into the political fold real work must be done to address this feeling of polarization.

Furthermore, the direction of the nation is an important aspect when understanding how the youth view America's democracy. The Harvard Institute showed that only 15% believe that America is headed in the right direction compared to the 51% who believe the nation is off on the wrong track, 33% were not sure, and 1% declined to answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This reflects a more pessimistic view than the country at large. This may indicate conflicting trends in the traditional participation of

youth in civic society. On one hand this may encourage youth to vote and campaign for parties as outrage promotes outreach. There could also be a flood of nontraditional participation as outraged young citizens feel as traditional means are not producing the desired change. However, if there is a feeling of prolonged discouragement there may become an irreparable and epistemic problem of this generation opting out of the voting process, further damaging the democracy of the nation.

Another potential damage to the democracy of the nation may lie in how youth view the structures of federal government, especially in regards to the people who make the country's decisions. For instance, young people believe the President tries to do the right thing 24% of the time, 72% believes the President never tries to do the right thing (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Congress' numbers even worse are worse. Only 20% believe Congress tries to right all to most of the time, while 77% believes they sometimes or never try do the correct policy (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). These numbers insinuate that people are currently not comfortable with those in power. Could this possible raise the amount of young people who vote? Perhaps, however in line with the numbers that show the feelings of disparity over the direction of the country are high, this may lead to a drifting away from civic participation.

Voting Levels

As discussed prior, pre-2008 it was the case that many young people did not vote or were not registered, however what is the current state of young people partaking in voting? As reference in the literature review, a large cost of voting was going to get registered before election day. Of those surveyed, the responses to if they were registered

41

to vote is as follows: 75% Yes, 21% No, 3% Don't know, and 1% Refused to answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This suggests that a large majority are overcoming the largest barrier to voting. It is certainly the case that some could be lying (Brenner, 2012), yet these figures seem to show many are beginning to participate or at least are making their participation more feasible. This could be due to easier access to registration and registration drives that is allowing young people ample opportunities to register.

When asked if and how they voted in the last presidential election the numbers are promising. 39% voted at a polling place, 14% voted early, 12% voted by absentee ballot, 4% planned on voting but did not, 29% did not vote in the election, 1% went to the polling place but was not allowed to vote, and 1% declined to answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This 65% is higher than the previously dismal rates of under 50%. Youth are feeling involved and going out to vote. Therefore, political scientists and campaigners should capitalize on this resurgence promoting even higher amounts of young people to come out and vote. As noted in the literature review, outrage sparks a higher propensity to vote and the 2016 election produced high amounts of outrage which could explain the higher voter turnout. Additionally, the current approval rates of President Trump should be noted to understand future levels of outrage, 32% of the youth population approve of the President, 66% disapprove of the President, and 2% declined (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Thusly, the 2020 election could see an outpouring of young voters as many may head to the polls to express their outrage.

The data represented here displays voting as a fundamental part of young peoples' engagement within the political system and data showing otherwise may be a misleading

knock on a generation that is improving in their relation towards traditional structures of involvement. Young American's engagement levels are improving perhaps due to changes in voter registration laws, increased involvement in nontraditional forms of participatory politics, levels of outrage, or a mixture of all of the above. The conversation around the youth's apathy must adjust to show that there is progress being made.

Other Traditional Modes

The literature review noted how other activities like participating in community service, participating in political organizations, donating money to campaigns, writing/emailing politicians regarding issue areas, and volunteering for a campaign can also be impactful in determining how people are engaging with the political system around them.

Youth are volunteering in community service, but not at a highly active rate with only 33% participating (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Of those who did participate only 19% participate in community service weekly, 20% did so a few times a month, 21% was about a month, 39% did so less than once a month, and 1% declined to answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017).

Only 10% of those surveyed participated in a government, political, or issue-related organization and of those participating only 16% participated in these organizations weekly, 14% a month, 24% was about once a month, and 46% did so less than once a month (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Additionally, only 11% of the youth donated to a political campaign, 13% had written an email or letter advocating for a political position, and a dismal 8% had participated in a political campaign (Harvard

Kennedy School, 2017).

This is indicative of the literature review as the main form of participating in voting, however still some young people understand the need for participating in various other ways. If it is possible to increase these numbers then perhaps we could make a more involved electorate. This more involved electorate may help increase the democracy levels. Compare these numbers with the level of interaction that nontraditional modes are able to obtain, as I will do in the next section, and one would see that the two modes are comparable insinuating the two may be more intertwined allowing persons not comfortable with one form to participate in the other. Overlapping is feasible as well, causing one to believe that nontraditional methods have brought more people into the political arena in recent times.

Section 3.3- Nontraditional Modes of Participation

As expressed in the literature review, nontraditional modes of participation currently seem to be an important matter for young persons' participation in government. This section will aim at understanding the current understanding of how the youth participate in these structures.

We must first discover if young people feel as though they have enough time to be involved in these activities. The study shows that 51% of the participants reported to have enough time, 47% said they did not, 2% did not answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). The split displays that perhaps some young people are not engaged in the political process, because they do not feel as though they have adequate time to engage in the system. This has been seen before in this paper. Many choose not to vote or participate

because they are not adequately educated often due to a lack of time to process what is going on in an election cycle. For those who do feel as if they have enough time this paper must understand how they choose to engage in nontraditional modes of government. Of those surveyed, 13% had attended a political rally or demonstration, 38% had signed an online petition, and 13% had written to an official in regards to a political position (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). While these numbers may seem low, they are on par with some of the more traditional activities. This displays a viability of the nontraditional modes of participation as it may serve as an outlet for those who do not see themselves participating in community service, participating in political organizations, donating money to campaigns, writing/emailing politicians regarding issue areas, and volunteering for a campaign.

The PRRI study shows that the youngest category of citizens are actually more interested in nontraditional than their elder counterparts. More than four in ten young people have engaged in the following activities in the last 12 months: Liking or following a campaign or organization online whose cause you support (44%), signing an online petition (43%), or posting on social media about an issue (43%) (Jones et. al, 2018). Fewer of the younger cohort report volunteering for a group or a cause they care about (34%), donating money to a campaign or cause (22%), contacting an elected official (19%), or attending a public rally or demonstration (19%) (Jones et. al, 2018). If this continues to be the case those current in the 15-24 age range may increasingly look towards nontraditional modes of action as their political outlet, furthering strengthening the point that nontraditional modes of government must be considered legitimate forms of

political interaction. However, it may also be the case that as these young adults get older they distance themselves away from the political process and further involve themselves in traditional modes of participation.

Nevertheless, it must be noted not all of young people enjoy these alternative forms of engagement. In fact, a majority of young people describe recent protests and marches negatively, as "pointless" (16%), "counterproductive" (16%), "divisive" (12%), or "violent" (11%) (Jones et al., 2018). Only about one-third ascribe positive value to them, saying they are "inspiring" (16%), "powerful (16%)", or "effective" (4%) (Jones et al., 2018). Often it was young women who saw these tactics as empowering and sought to further use protests as 44% had a favorable view while on 27% of men held protests and demonstrations in a positive light (Jones et. al, 2018). Nontraditional modes of participation, in other words, are not always appreciated or sought out by young people themselves.

Yet, participation in these nontraditional or participatory politics is correlated with the amount of young people engaged in institutional politics: 90% who participated in nontraditional have also engaged in voting or other traditional political structures (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). If anything, we should see nontraditional participation as a corralling of youth in the political realm that exposes them to more opportunities to get involved.

New Media

Understanding how young people are using new media structures may lead to a better targeting of young people into participating in the political system. When

addressing the question of how prolific new media is, we have to look no further than the sort of social media accounts that young persons are creating and actively using. The survey shows that 81% of youth have a Facebook account, 56% have an Instagram, 53% have a Snapchat, 42% have a twitter account (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This shows that a high number of young people truly do have a large internet footprint. Learning how to access these communities may create a larger propensity of participation. Additionally, on these social media sites, 58% of youth will share links or forward information (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). 1/3 of youth will use social media for interest-driven activities on a weekly basis (Cohen and Kahne, 2012).

This displays the power and commonality of these sites that youth at high rates are already habitually engaging in these types of initiatives. Especially due to the fact that through these social media sites, youth are further involving themselves in the political sphere. 40% of those surveyed in the Harvard study said they have "liked" a politically-related topic on Facebook. Of those surveyed, 34% have liked a political candidate on Facebook. Some young people (24%) go as far as using their Facebook status to advocate for a political position, while others use Twitter (22%) (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Thus, what many have dubbed slacktivism may well be working towards expanded levels of engagement.

This need for person-to-person activity in on full display when discussing the skepticism of young people in regards to the role new media is playing in the Trump Administration. Only 10% of youth would give an A grade to the mainstream media for their Trump coverage, 22% would give them a B, 26% would say C, 14% would give

them a D, and 26% of youth would give the mainstream media an F (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). They also believe that social media is wrought with fake news. In a survey estimating how many people felt they receiving "fake news" on their Facebook feed only 10% said the amount was below 10%, 13% said between 11-25% of news of their feed was fake, 27% of those surveyed said 26-50% of the news was fake, 13% said 51-75% of the news was false, 6% said 76-90% was fake, 8% said 91-100% was fake (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This is a growing problem. If 81% of young people have a Facebook account that has political information, but is believed to have expanded amounts of "fake news" those expressing real information may be viewed unfavorably as they could be mistaken for false narratives. Furthermore, this disbelief in news may the make creditable news sources lose their merit, as young people begin to not know what to believe.

Youth's View of Themselves

As previously noted, many political scientists and elder generations feel as though the youth are not actively involved in the American political system. Perhaps this has percolated to the youth themselves, because 72% of the surveyed youth do not feel as they are politically active (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). When asked about whether they believed if their friends are active, the numbers are similar as 73% say their friends are not politically engaged (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This displays that what qualifies as political engagement is not completely clear. Even actions such as voting, campaigning for officials, and community service seems to have been left out as the number of youth participating in those actions are higher than what could be expected.

Thus, some of the problem in the narrative around young Americans is from the young people themselves. By having clearer definitions of what is considered a political act, they may be better equipped to understand their levels of engagement and feel firm in their ability to participate.

Even though they do not feel involved personally, young people are aware of what they believe to be the most effective ways of positively changing American society. The Harvard study asked young people to choose from a list the top three things that they thought were most effective in producing social change. 74% believe that voting is very effective in enacting change, 53% believe society must talk about the issues, 41% volunteer for community service to bring about change, 39% will call their representative, 31% believe one has to run for office to bring change, 16% believe attending a protest does the work needed, while 20% believe in an indeterminate "something else" (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Therefore, it is clear that young people are aware of the areas they could be making a bigger splash in. Their lack of involvement must stem from other areas of systemic repression of youth in the political system.

Lack of involvement does not come from the fact that youth feel as though politics is not relevant to their life. 47% believes that politics is relevant to their everyday life, 33% were neutral, and only 16% felt as though politics did not matter to their life (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Although young people believe politics matters, it seems that many are bothered by the lack of voice they are given in the political system creating deep questions of whether they truly have a voice in the government. There is a

deep divide on this subject as 33% believe that they do not have a say in what the government does, 32% are neutral, 31% disagrees, with 4% declining to answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Nor do young voters know whether they truly believe their vote makes a difference. 28% agree that their vote makes a real difference, 30% are neutral, and 38% disagree that their vote matters (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). The PRRI data confirms these numbers as about four in ten young people (38%) say they don't participate because they do not believe their actions would make a difference (Jones et al., 2018). Fewer young people say fear of being criticized (22%) or that there are not any issues they care about (20%) are reasons for abstaining from political involvement (Jones et al., 2018). This may lead many to decide to stay away from politics all together as their voice gets diminished in the shuffle. The media's critical review of young people's engagement in politics has caused many to remove themselves from the process altogether. A return will include a shift in this narrative, as well as elected officials hearing the desires of the younger population. Currently, youth feel as though their elected officials do not represent their interests, as 53% believe that elected officials do not seem to have the same priorities, 33% were neutral, and only 10% were under the impression that official do represent their interests (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017).

If young people are under the impression that their officials do not care and the media portrays them as undemocratic what would be their incentive to continue to participate in a system that is not built for them? Youth currently feel on the fray, by including the unique ways of participating in the larger conversation of politics, as well as including their policy needs into official's platforms there may be a corralling of

young people into the political process.

Section 3.4- Diversity and Inclusion

While the numbers of those who participate in participatory politics does vary along racial lines the numbers are not too disappointing as 43% of white, 41% of black, 38% Latino, and 36% Asian American have reported to participate in at least one act of participatory politics a year (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). Yet, there are distinct differences that occur along racial lines when speaking of the political desires, voting rates, and the general trust in the political system by minorities in America. Therefore, it tends to be the case that minorities may feel more heard by going against the grain and engaging in more nontraditional participatory politics.

When looking at politics, racial pressures exist and the data backs up this claim. In fact, minorities often have different political desires than that of white persons. For Instance, eight in ten (80%) black young people and a majority of API (55%) and Hispanic (52%) young people say race relations are a critical issue to them personally, while only 37% of white young people agree (Jones et. al, 2018). Nearly half (46%) of white young women say race relations are a critical concern to them personally, compared to only 29% of white young men (Jones et. al, 2018). Furthermore, white young people are also less likely to prioritize the issue of immigration. Roughly half of Hispanic (52%), black (49%), and API young people (47%) say immigration is critically important to them, while only 35% of white young people say the same (Jones et. al, 2018). While the point of this essay is not to speak on specific issues, the difference in opinion on what differ races would like to see from their politicians is vastly important.

Especially in the case of marginalized communities who often feel as though they are not heard, as this may lead to an even more intense withdrawal from participatory politics.

There may also be a need to understand how views on nontraditional methods of participation became highly stratified by race and ethnicity. About six in ten white young people express negative views of recent protests and marches, describing them as counterproductive (20%), pointless (17%), divisive (13%), or violent (11%) (Jones et. al, 2018). Black young people look more favorably on these events, with nearly half reporting to find protests and marches a combination of inspiring (23%), powerful (20%), or effective (6%) (Jones et. al, 2018). API young people are similarly divided, with half saying they are powerful (22%), inspiring (17%), or effective (11%). Fewer Hispanic young people describe recent marches, protests, and demonstrations as inspiring (21%), powerful (19%), or effective (3%) (Jones et. al, 2018). This data is an example of how young members of minority communities can find solace in nontraditional means of participation. When these means are belittled and discouraged there is a decrease in the space and opportunity for these communities to feel that they have the ability to influence the political system.

The last note on data surrounding race and inclusion is how people view current discrimination. For example, the Harvard Institute study asked respondents how strongly they believed that their racial background was "under attack." 28% of responders said a lot, 26% said a little, 24% said not much, 18% said not at all, and 3% declined to answer (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). This is interesting because of the responders to the Harvard study only 42% were minorities, so it would be fair to access that not all

minorities feel as though their race is under attack. Therefore at least a part of the "a lot-a little" range of responders had to be white. This is consistent with data from the PRRI study which asserted that about one-third (36%) of white young people say discrimination against white people is as serious as that experienced by minority groups (Jones et. al, 2018). Only 16% of black, 19% of API, and 28% of Hispanic young people agreed with the previous statement (Jones et. al, 2018). In fact, a majority (55%) of white Americans overall—including roughly equal numbers of white men (55%) and white women (53%)—agree that discrimination against white people has become as big a problem as discrimination against black people and other minority groups (Jones et. al, 2018). What this may represent is that a lot of the frustrating surround racial issues in this country made add to the overall polarization of American politics by understanding this, there may be a building of community that allows for unity to occur.

Nevertheless, through this disparity nontraditional modes of participation show that minority youth will engage in higher rates. In fact, the difference in percentage points between racial groups who participate in one act of nontraditional politics is 7% (difference between 43% of whites who engage and 36% of Asian Americans), significantly smaller than the 25% difference between the racial group who votes at the highest rate (black youth 52%) and the group with the lowest turnout rate (Latino youth 27%) (Cohen and Kahne, 2018). This is further proof that increasingly nontraditional modes of participation allow underrepresented groups to feel more heard in the political process.

Section 3.5- Conclusion

What the data shows more than anything is that institutional and participatory politics go hand in hand, as 37% of youth have reported engaging in both in some capacity (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). Overall youth do want to help unite America (59%) (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). Some even feel as though their involvement truly produces tangible results (33%). Those youth who did engage in some sort of participatory politics were almost twice as likely to vote as those who did not (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). This displays the importance of getting people to participate in politics through any means necessary, as any way of getting young people involved in the political system truly helps with their ability to engage long term and in meaningful ways. Using this newfound understanding my own research will build upon these ideas and make connections for how we may further involve youth in the political structure, while at the same attempting to dispel the myth of the uninvolved young person.

Chapter 4- Qualitative Research

Introduction

Chapter Four is the crux of my thesis. Through interviews with Bucknell students I searched to find the current state of youth participatory politics in America. Thus far, this paper has been focused around the idea that understanding and accepting nontraditional modes of participatory politics into the nomenclature of the political process would increase the overall amount of young people involving themselves in the system. This line of reasoning stems from the idea that youth themselves are engaging with these alternative methods extensively. Therefore, young people would aspire to see a further acceptance of their means of participation in the public sphere. What I discovered through interviews was far from what I expected. Yes, nontraditional means of participation are quite prominent. Nevertheless, young people have high concerns about the merit of these modes of engagement. Furthermore, the participants of my study wished for the traditional institutional structures to become stronger means of promoting change. There is a sense for a return to normalcy.

The participants were recruited from both Professor Ellis' sections of "Introduction to American Politics", and fellow POSSE scholars, a scholarship program of which I am a part. Professor Ellis offered extra credit to students who participated in the interviews and I sent out e-mails to my fellow POSSE Scholars to ask for assistance in getting more participation of diverse backgrounds. I received 26 participants from Professor Ellis' class and garnered another 8 from the POSSE scholars that I reached out to.

The interviews were conducted in both the Academic West and Dana Engineering university buildings on Bucknell University's campus, in enclosed rooms. I had each participant sign a waiver to participate and was able to record the conversations. Each interview took anywhere from seven to fifteen minutes depending on the depth of the answers and the speed of which the participants spoke. I also took notes and would type them into my computer as soon as the participants would leave. Later in the privacy of my room, I would listen to the recordings and fill in the gaps of the notes I had taken earlier in the day. In the body of this chapter quotes are taken as accurately as possible, with some inserts to clarify the meaning of certain short-hand phrases that the participants may have used.

I am distinctly aware that the students of Bucknell are not indicative of the overall demographics of the typical American youth. For one, they are all obviously college educated and there are many young people who do not attend four-year universities. Secondly, Bucknell is an expensive institution meaning that it is often the case that students who attend the university are from privileged background, which may have allowed for a better primary education where they were privy to better civics courses. Thirdly, Bucknell is not a very diverse campus, though the POSSE scholars were all of diverse background the participants were often not as diverse in both racial, religious, geographical, or socio-economic senses of the word. These shortcomings of my data may have led to skewed results that were not indicative of the overall population of American youth.

Through a discussion of the questions I asked participants, a conversation centering around how young people view the political system, the ways young people involve themselves, and how the view the notion of political and social change.

Ultimately, it may seem that my original hypothesis was a bit idealistic. However, the general ideas that motivated this project remain intact. The new generation is unsatisfied with the status quo. We, as a generation, are all too aware about the issues of climate change, high levels of debt this nation faces, and the growing drug addiction problems, among other things. We seek leaders who listen to our concerns and do not merely pander the "young people are the future" line to make us feel as though they care. Traditional politics works when there are officials and people in positions of power who listen to a wide-array of interests and diligently implement policy that is beneficial to a high number of Americans. Due to the current lacking of these sorts of officials, youth have moved to nontraditional means more so to get their voice heard than to try to fight against the establishment.

Section 4.1- Questions Asked

During the course of the interviews I posed questions to the participants in an effort to understand their views on youth participation, as well as how they understood nontraditional efforts.

The first grouping of questions centered around my subjects' view of politics and the overall engagement of persons in this country. I first asked participants what they thought of when hearing the word "politics." The thinking behind this first question was to determine what young people deem politics to consist of. As I'll show in section 3.2,

politics was often deemed to only deal with the governmental day to day operations

without much considerations for the role it has on the everyday life of American citizens.

I also asked what they envisioned when thinking of an active political participant, to see

what kind of modes of involvement most readily came to the interviewees minds. Follow

up questions included whether these methods had changed after the 2016 election and if

they themselves felt as though they were engaged. The reasoning was to understand if

young people viewed the 2016 election as a turning point in the participation levels of

this generation. I then wanted to see if this possible spark drove engagement within those

interviewed to search for answers for why there was an uptick in both voting rates and the

number of young people engaging in nontraditional politics. I then questioned whether

they voted and why, to consider different reasons people would have for engaging within

the political system.

I then transitioned to questions specifically centered around the involvement

levels of my participants and specifically what forms of involvement interested them.

This was asked to see if more traditional or alternate forms of participatory politics were

of interest to them for a better understanding of the participatory climate that young

persons are involved in today. I then questioned how the participants felt people their age

decided to engage in politics. Once again, this was done in an effort to not just understand

how they themselves participated, but on a larger scale the current trends youth witness

around participatory politics. Finally, I asked if they believed the way young people

currently got involved is different than previous generations. By asking them to compare

and contrast the new ways versus the previous methods of civic engagement, I could develop a view of how the youth viewed their themselves.

The last set of questions that I posed dealt with how the participants personally felt within the political system. The first question centered around weather they believed that the political system listened to people like them, to get a sense if they felt as though their individual voice mattered. I then asked what identities were of most importance to each participant and followed up by questioning how they believed people who shared those identities with them made their voices heard. This question was two-fold. Since I was able to question a decently diverse group of people (at least by Bucknell standards), I wanted to understand if people with different conceptions of themselves participated any differently. Secondly, I wanted to understand what similarities the groups had in their political desires. My final two questions dealt with how to enact change and what that change looked like for them. This question was designed to understand what youth wished to see the political system look like in the future.

There were times that I had to improvise on the script. This was done in an effort not to lead an answer, but rather to understand in more detail the point the participant was attempting to make. Most of the improvising came on the question of what modes of nontraditional engagement the participants involved themselves in, as well as the question of the students using groups to identify themselves. For the first question, many people held such a narrow conception of politics that I would have to ask what sort of policy they were passionate about and how they would go about enacting that policy, which was often through nontraditional participation. In regards to the second question,

many individuals had trouble identifying groups they saw themselves in, many would claim just their gender so I had to pry a bit more to get them to think deeply.

Section 4.2- Politics in a Box

Only the Government

As mentioned previously in this chapter, my study reflected the idea that politics was often deemed to only deal with the governmental day to day operations without much consideration for the role it has on the everyday life of American citizens. This line of thinking creates a constrained view of what politics deals with. When asking participants to define politics, many had short answers. One person simply stated, "President Trump" before moving onto the next question. Others had more elaborate answers such as, "Voting in primary races for President, for Congress. Local elections. Really making your voice heard through voting." Some referred to the political system's structure, whiles others pointed to it being "the people in charge making decisions for those who elect them, though this often doesn't work out." The general trend was easy to see. Many felt that politics only referred to the governmental structures and systems, without a recognition of politics truly playing a role in almost every facet of the daily experience. The expenses of going to college, the fight for legalized marijuana, LGBT+ advocacy, as well as support for the victims of sexual assault are all political in nature. Routinely, these issues and others are brought up on college campuses across America, yet when a question surrounding the conception of politics is posed, many young people resort back to the typical notions that one may receive in an American History class in high school.

In the literature review (and a bit in the data analysis), the idea that young people have not yet had enough life experience to know what policies they are passionate came into play. Many young people may go out to support issues that they have some interest in, but are dismayed when they find themselves in the voter booth lacking knowledge about other policies. One participant who identified as liberal reportedly, "went to go vote for [marijuana legalization], but there were so many other issues on the sheet that I had no idea about. It left me discouraged, like I didn't know what was going on in my town or state." On one hand, this is a perfect example of how an area of interest may drive young people to the booth. Often, there are no interest areas for young people on the ballot, and though these measures will have influence on their lives, often we are unable to conceptualize or make an educated reasoning on the ways that they will affect our way of life for years to come. The people in my sample are aware of their lack of knowledge around issues and thus choose to disengage themselves from the political system due to a lack of education. This lacking cannot all be placed on the feet of the new generation. Officials are not considering what young people may want to see on the ballot, and often purposely place confusing language in bills to confuse voters on what they are voting for. By not placing youth driven initiatives on the ballot, elected officials are not allowing for young people to come out and express the direction that we would like to see the country head.

The consequence of the lack of thought given to what youth want to see on the ballot is twofold. Firstly, there is a severe deficiency in the ability of young people to shape the narrative of the country. Secondly, because the new generation does not see

policy changes that they wish to change, politics becomes boxed in. This means that most young people only recognize certain aspects of governmental involvement to be political in nature, while severely discounting many others aspects of their life choices that are directly related to policy views that they may hold dear to them. Due to this constrained view of what is included under the umbrella of politics, young persons will ultimately not consider the measures they do choose to engage in to be political. A person who chooses to go vegan for environmental reasons (as several participants reportedly had done) may see this move as one participant did, "Me going vegan was an act of defiance against big farms, as well as proving to myself that I had the willpower to try and do my part to make a better environment for the future." At no point in that interview did that particular participant see her going vegan as a political one, but it might be reasonably seen as one This view leads to an untrue belief within themselves that young people are not involved in politics.

Thinking Outside the Box

Though it was rare, it was not always the case that participants held such rigid views of what could be included in the terms politics and what laid outside of the political sphere. Several participants viewed politics though a wider lens, allowing for a larger conception of what could be included in the term. A white underclass female participant said, "Getting angry is political. Once you're angry, you're motivated to go out and do something. Content people don't care. Spending time and money is getting active. Just having motivation. It's all political." This point is one of important distinction. As noted in the literature review, outrage is a large motivator in getting people out to vote.

Outrage, as articulated by the participant, is political. To use outrage in a manner that facilitates discussion is a valid way to manifest change in the political spheres. Often outrage leads to innovative movements (think of the #MeToo movement that is currently dominating headlines), higher voter turnout, and more diverse participants involving in the system as they feel particularly affected by politics at that time. Outrage does a great job of pulling people from the periphery into the actionable core.

Though social media's positive aspects and shortcomings will be discussed further later in this chapter, it is important to note that a few participants viewed engaging in social media as political. One claimed that he "think(s) of Twitter" when discussing politics, due to the prevalence that political information is shared on his feed. This may certainly create a conception that slacktivism plays a major role in young people beliefs that they are engaged while simply posting about their beliefs haphazardly. The sharing of information is vastly important for the overall health of American democracy, however echo chambers and flashy headlines without substantial information is a growing problem on social media as most of the information can be referred to as clickbait. Though the specific participant referred to here did not use his social media to spread information or bring together a group of people for a protest, some social media users do. Therefore, it should be understood that for some members of the new generation social media is a prevailing way that they stay involved. As a white, female participant put it, "Social media is my go-to for bringing together friends to go attend a rally or protest. I wrote a Facebook status asking for a ride to the Women's March [in D.C.] and within an hour not only did I have a ride, but a big group of girls who all wanted to stand up to the

[expletive] in the White House." Colorful language aside, this is an example of the digital being able to create real life political involvement. Alternatives modes of civic engagement, for some, are entry points to the political system and can help validate their concerns while also serving as a point of connection that allows for even more meaningful ways of involvement.

Section 4.3- How Young People Are Involving Themselves

Based on the last paragraph, it may be inferred that young people are choosing to not involve themselves with nontraditional means of engagement. If this is true, the basis of my entire argument is weak. Through a depiction of why youth vote, a discussion of the increasing use of nontraditional means of engagement, a subsection of social media, and finally a look at how youth view themselves, this section will argue that young people are blending alternate forms with some of the institutionalized approaches of traditional engagement. Many of my subjects saw nontraditional means of participation are extremely valuable to the political process for young people, but not as an escape from traditional politics. Instead, these alternate forms of participation work as a bridge that allows young people to fill in the gaps that traditional methods leave.

Why Do We Vote?

In order to understand how nontraditional participation bridges the gap effectively, there must be an explanation of why youth find partaking in traditional means worthwhile at all. Especially if young people are not currently content with the direction of democracy why then do they continue to vote? In fact, what is additionally perplexing is that voter turnout rates are actually increasing. The participants had many differing

views on why they continued to vote even though a majority of those interviewed felt their vote did not matter in the long run. The first and probably most widely shared belief was that voting was a part of their civic duty. The simplest way this was articulated during the interviews was, "I mean we all have a right to vote, it's in the Constitution. We should at least give it a shot." He was right, often people do feel as though they should "give voting a shot" as it is a core part of our democratic structure. This sense of duty leads some young people to partake in the system regardless of education or beliefs. These people are the example of what a good civic ethics course in high school may do for long-term growth of an active electorate.

The second main reason behind the act of voting was the family ties to the institution. As a black underclassman participant put it, "My grandmother took me to vote for the first time. Then my mom called later to ask if I wanted to go with her. My family wouldn't just let me not vote." Her point is one that I heard many times over the course of the interviews. Parents, grandparents, or otherwise would instill the value of voting in the family and the children simply followed the lead. This makes the point that the education of youth within in the household is very important. In families with the parents do not vote it is highly likely the child will not as well. To create active political participants, education cannot solely occur in the classroom, there must be a sustained push for young people to learn about civics in the home, as well. A combination of the two types discussed in this section may come in play as one participant stated: "My family invested the power of voting in me, but it's also important to vote because it helps shape the values of this country." A belief that both the family structure, as well as the

power given to all citizens by the United States Constitution, have made a difference in their decisions to participate. The importance of these reasons for voting originate in the idea that the younger one is oriented to voting the higher the likelihood that they will routinely find themselves engaging in the political process. The creation of a habitual voter is key in long-term success of traditional modes of participation.

Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the role anger is playing in the current increase in youth voting rates. One participant flatly said, "I'm voting to get Trump out of office. After that, I hope to [stay further involved], but I don't know." The outrage some feel about the current administration may be an important contributor to young people registering to vote and participating as a first-time voter. The question becomes is this sort of engagement sustainable in the long-term? Research shows that voting is a habitual act. But if young people are voting for just one specific reason, does it prove to be a sustainable model for getting future generations into the voter booth?

Changing Tides

As this paper has argued time and time again, traditional means of participation are not enough for the new generation. Many are seeking alternate means of participation and are finding rallies and protest the most affect measures of influencing change. This participation comes from many differing directions. Some youth feel as though traditional means are no longer enough to satisfy their political desires and wish to see more change within the system. A white underclass female participant embodied this when she stated, "The days of putting up a sign and calling it due diligence is long behind us, we need to go to rallies and protests, donate to campaigns, whatever we can really to show our

support for those we want in office." There is a growing number of outraged youth who believe that the only way of making an America that they may be proud of is by participating in alternate means in an effort to challenge the system as it is currently constructed. Those people, of which there were only a handful who participated in my interviews, truly believe that the traditional means of participation are outdated and get very little accomplished. These people felt that voting had to be done, but were not encouraged by the method. Instead, they were prone to want to create a new system and bring new institutions to American politics.

Another rare type of interviewee was one that points to rallies as being what helped point them down the path to their major, "Had I not had gone to the women's march, I probably wouldn't be doing the work that I am." That same participant discussed the feeling of inclusion that she needed to discover her area of passion. This is an example of the fulfillment that can be felt as one navigates nontraditional means of participation. While rare in the interviews I conducted, this type of response shows that some people really do derive meaningful life direction from participating in alternate forms of politics.

The majority of those surveyed who had participated in protests and rallies talked about how they often left these events feeling as though they had been effective agents of change. One participant said quite simply that he felt that "protests are the most effective" of the options available to young people. For many, rallies allowed them an opportunity for their voices to be heard in a system where often they do not believe that anyone is listening to their concerns. Frequently, frustration leads to the organization of

the demonstrations. A biracial underclass female participant lamented that institutional organizations were not talking about the issues of most passion to her, "Rallies get stuff done. They aren't listening and the news isn't reporting it, then people get together and it's all over CNN, NBC, I see it on my Snapchat news feed. It works." For her, after attending the rally she felt her issue was able to be discussed at a higher rate through the media. This is an example of how this specific participant was about to use an alternate form of participation to bring about tangible change that she wished to see in the world. For young people, who live in a digital age, often we want to see quick, tangible change. The current system is slow and does not satisfy the needs for everyday Americans. By participating in these nontraditional modes, there is not only a sense of self-actualization derived by the participants, but there is also a heightened awareness that elected officials demonstrate as they make these issues key parts of their campaigns. This is the change that youth wish to see.

Still others just viewed protest as either a fun way to become active. Often these participants had friends who were getting involved and saw it as a way of being social more than being active agents of change. A white female participant stated, "I like going to the marches, it's fun and makes me feel a part of something larger." For these types of young people marches gave them a feeling similar to voting, that they were fulfilling some civic duty. At the same time, these participants are providing evidence that engagement is largely social. By participating in social politics more people can be included in feelings of engagement and may feel as though they should participate in

other ways. Holding others accountable can be a great way of creating a more engaged electorate.

Social Media as an Influence

While protests, demonstrations, and rallies were viewed favorably by the participants, many held mixed reviews over the influence that social media played in their political life. Some felt that social media was good as it served as an educational help, playing the role of showing young people headlines. This instant and continuous newsfeed gave them at least the ability to keep up in some sense with what was going on in the country. Others felt that social media acted as a force that allowed for platforms to be created. As one participant stated, "Social media brings attention." This attention allows social media to act against barriers of entry that often only allows a select few to influence America politics. The ability to repost, retweet, and share allows many users, from all over the country, to all see the same posts. This widespread attention permits unity over policy positions and for an effortless transfer of knowledge.

Yet, though social media can be a great distributor of knowledge, not many held it in a positive light. At best, social media has mixed reviews with some stating "Social media is a good and bad. You may be forced to take an opinion which kind of divides us, but it's also the best way to make your voice heard." This quotation depicts a crucial divide that is also reflected in the empirical research on this subject. Social media allows for an ultra-accessible way of participation, while at the same time allowing for disconnectedness. Division is easily created between groups on social media. This division leads many to believe social media to be both "…positive and negative. Like it

can help get the word out, but it's very one sided. I think that alienates people." That alienation is important. If only one side is participating in social media it can disenfranchise those left out of the conversation. If the goal to increase the amount of young people who participate in the system as a whole, there cannot be a massive number of participants left out. The right deserves to have their voice heard, but often it is the young people on the right who feel as though they are not permitted to participate in the conversation, as one male participant who identified as conservative noted "You comment on something and there's no dialogue they're either calling me stupid or wishing death on my family and I. I'm not even commenting mean things, just how I honestly felt". For true increasing of participation all who wish to get involved must feel as though they will not be ostracized for voicing their opinion.

Additionally, most of the interviewees found social media did not assist them in their overall civic participation. A white college junior female participant felt that social media could "…be annoying. I know I should be interested, but sometimes I just want to know who the bachelor gave his rose to and don't wanna hear about Trump." Not all people want to be constantly told about the administration's scandals or the current state of Congress. This should be considered when posts occur. Yet, for some the division went further than party lines. Some felt that social media in general did not help to create a more educated electorate, instead some people felt that "Social media makes people not learn for themselves." This meant that there were people who believed that social media dulled the political education level of young people as they did not go further than what was posted and instead learned to just agree with whatever they saw. Critical thinking is

an important aspect in a good voter and with a lack of ability to think for oneself self

serves as a major threat to American democracy.

Some went even further, believing that while it was good that celebrities were

using their status to influence young people to vote, this encapsulates how social media

driven young people's actions are. One participant stated that he thought it was "pathetic

that we idolize celebrities to the point that we'll only vote if so and so tells us to. It really

embarrassing." This participant was embarrassed that so much of the motivation behind

the voting experience dealt with famous people fighting for those that they support. This

associates with the lack of thinking for themselves that others believed they were

supporting. Lastly, young people are worried about slacktivism as they believe that

"Social media creates this large group of people who feel like they're doing something

because they'll retweet a post or something like that. They're not actually doing anything,

but they feel like it. I think this causes us to get less involved because this creates people

who feel involved but don't actually do anything." This reiterates an important notion

that nontraditional participation is not enough. The point is that alternate means add to

the overall productivity of intuitionalist participatory politics such as voting. If these

alternative means start to damage American democracy then there should be a change to

how young people continue to engage in the system.

View of Themselves

In the broader context of traditional and nontraditional means of participating how

do young people view their participation in politics? In general, the responses, though

mixed, were positive. Some of the participants felt the way that many political scientists

felt, that as a white male sophomore participant stated, "Most of us don't care." The view is valid in some sense. There are many issues that are just not prevalent in the lives of young people and we truly do not yet know which way we should feel about certain issues. The lacking of knowledge causes youth to not engage on certain topics that older generations believe should be front and center. This does not mean that young people are not trying as one participant said, "We may not be that involved, but that doesn't mean we aren't engaged. Sometimes it's just really difficult to know how to get involved." The difficulties of the barriers of entry into the political system is still a major problem that many young people have to figure out how to navigate around. These barriers create a lack of knowledge that often creates "a stigma that we don't what we're talking about." Once again, life and experience may explain the reasoning behind how previous generations have acted in the manner in which they did. For now, young people can only interact with the system in the ways they best know best.

Acknowledgement of this lacking of knowledge helps youth find the areas that this generation is improving in. Whether one enjoys the disruption from learning the results of The Bachelor or not, social media does play a major role in the basic education of young people about current events. One participant saw the growing rate of activity in politics as due to the amount of information available as she believed that, "We're more active now. Social media forces you to at least know a little about what's going on." Her words to a real extent are true. There is more information available at the touch of a screen than ever before in the course of human history. What we choose to do with that

information is up to us. Yet, there are few who can say that have not at least saw or heard someone talking about a post regarding political news.

Still, many participants held negative views on whether this high rate of participation would last. A black college senior female participant noted, "It's easier to get us going when people are angry, but really difficult when things are just okay." As discussed throughout this paper, outrage is a major driver of participation. To make a sustainable level of participation there must be a sense that it is important to participate both when anger is felt and when one finds contentment in the direction of the country. Involvement in good times and bad, will further allow for youth to feel both engaged in the system and able to steer the nation toward building America into what this generation wants it to be.

Finally, many felt division within the current generation. One participant was very emphatic when saying that "People like to say it's different since 2016, but it's not. I mean other than us being more polarized, we're not." The polarization of politics is very well felt. Discussion between sides or reaching across the aisle was seen by many participants as "working with the enemy." The lack of a middle ground makes it truly difficult for any meaningful legislation to get passed. This absence of a true ability to accomplish goals and promote meaningful resistance left one participant to feel a need for unity stating, "If we come together as a group, it works. If not, then we're doomed to fail." One voice does not really have all that much power.

Section 4.4- What Does Change Look Like?

Youth have shown that there is often a deep desire for change. How to create this change is the difficult aspect that many members of the new generation are not yet fully equipped to answer. While many know that they have a want for, as one participant stated, "new policies and new politicians." How to go about enacting this change of newness is the difficult part. There is a growing rift between young people who argue that staying in the current institutions but adjusting them to fit the needs of the current generation is the best course of action, while others fight with the believe that under the current constraints meaningful change will not be available.

In staying with the current institutions some believe that in order to create change there is a need to "Get those people in charge on board." This points to the fact that there is a well-established social and political hierarchy. Due to these structures, many young people feel as though they cannot produce meaningful change unless they connect with these few influential people in control. This point further illustrates the need for nontraditional pathways which allow for more easy access for young people to feel a part of the system in general. With more access to discuss and see change take place there may be a slow ease away from political systems that rest of hierarchical structures. To wish for these structures to completely dissipate would be childish as they exist in almost every society in almost every time frame. Yet, when the structures are to the point that people as though their voice does not matter is when it is time to corral the hierarchal system.

This point is further made as many participants from the interviews said some version of the idea that politics should have "More equal respect for everyone." As

currently constructed, many feel as though they do not have enough power to garner the respect that they feel they deserve from their elected officials. Young people are currently desiring the respect they feel they need from the system in order to feel empowered enough to participant within the structure. Surprisingly, this participation does not look like a greater reliance on nontraditional structures, instead for many of these participants change was designed as a revitalization of traditional modes. Youth trust the American system of politics; however, they do not trust the officials. The participants often discussed wishing that the officials in place would do a better job of following what the system had intended. This trust depicts that there is still a way to pull young people back into engaging within the political system. Before this occurs at the rates needed, aspects of the system must change. Until these aspects change, youth will continue to participate in the nontraditional modes of participatory politics. Where they most feel heard.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Possible Solutions

As I wrote this thesis, I began to see gaps in why youth felt left out of the political realm. To address this faltering there are certain policy recommendations that I have considered as I began writing this thesis. In the conversation around how to engage youth more successfully, the fact of the role of parental figures is often disregarded. In order to truly fix this broken system, there must be a recognition of the systemic factors which limit the availability of proper means to fix the lack of enhancement of political participation. While we cannot go into homes and force parents to teach their children about politics we can focus on more feasible corrections. One such correction could involve increasing civic education in elementary, middle, and high school allowing for a stable foundation of political literacy that will make young people more knowledgeable and active in the political process. I am not talking about bumping up the AP History courses, instead a sincere focus on bringing back civics courses that bring back the importance of participating in local elections. This newfound literacy will allow for more active civic participates and a more intelligent electorate that feels adequately prepared to go to the polls. By creating a more knowledgeable and engaged electorate, there may be positive results in the future. Such as, parents who are more politically knowledgeable and may be able to better teach their children about the process. This will result in young persons of the future who then will have a higher propensity of engaging in the political system.

In general, those interested in increasing youth participation should just learn the facts. As a person gets older he/she is more likely to vote, in fact so much so that there is a 46-point disparity of voting rates between those who are 18-24 and those who are above 65 years old (Plutzer, 2002). While this disparity can be explained in a number of ways, it must be noted that perhaps the only true solution to getting young people out to vote is simply to allow them age. As persons age the connection to the issues at hand increases. One reason for this may be due to the fact that young persons may not know what matters are of importance to them yet (CIRCLE, 2013). Without an attachment to particular issue areas, the youth may not find an adequate reason or feel compelled to head to the polls. If that is the case there will may not be much to the adjustment, but what can be done is to create habitual voters at younger ages. Whether by enhancing civic education in the classroom, making election day a national holiday which will allow persons who otherwise could not take the day off from work to go to the voting booth, or assisting first time voters in locating their voter location and register. Another reason that young people may not be having the opportunity to create as baseline for which participation may expand as there is lessened opportunities for life experiences that foster attention to government and policy (Fisher, 2012). Voting is gaining issues that are important usually comes with the purchasing of a house, having children, and getting married (Dalton, 2014). With the current job market and other social factors American youth are waiting longer to engage in the long-term social factors that some suggest is needed to develop strong interest in policy (Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009).

As Harder and Krosnick make readily available, if the aim is to increase voter turnout three mechanisms (ability, motivation, and task difficult) must be readily addressed (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). By giving people the tools needed to succeed in campaigns, universities, and home life can drastically dictate how comfortable young people feel in their ability to vote adequately. Canvasing, attack ads, and putting on the ballot major policy shifts that cause people to feel the necessity of going to polls may add to the motivation. Finally, by addressing the difficulties associated with voting, what has been referred to as the 'costs', such as, registering and having the time off from work, there may be some solid places for those interested to increase voter rates.

That being said, for these new methods to be effective there must be a broadening of understanding as to what a political act is defined by. Young people are likely to see having a television show, podcast, or posting their opinions on political matters as a political act (Kane, Middaugh, and Allen, 2014). Yet, often the older establishment has dubbed this slacktivism and condemned this as not truly being engaged in the political process. Yet, by engaging in the system whatsoever they are adding to the general conversation and allowing their views to be heard. Therefore, there must be an understanding that to further engage young persons there must be a broadening understanding of a political act.

Additionally, election day should be made a national holiday where people do not have to attend work. A person who knows they will have the time off of work to vote may then find it valuable to become knowledgeable about the issues, as they know they will have the ability to make their voice heard. Also, those same voters may become

more apt to listen to those who go to canvass, as this may give those who feel uneducated about the policies and persons running for office, the belief that they are better positioned to make educated decisions when stepping into the polls. These types of strategies (voter registration and canvassing) have already proved to be substantially effective in raising turnout numbers (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). Another example of how to get more people involved in voting is allowing people to register and vote on the same day (same day registration) has had success overall that is not enough to drastically improve the health of our democracy (CIRCLE, 2013). Another idea is to increase state standards for civics so that there may be an advancing of civic skills, increasing the political education level of the average citizen. Lastly, perhaps the best way to go about making people more involved would be simplifying the ballot. Some countries have made simple ballots without so many measures to make the process more seamless. They have seen increases in their turnout. It follows, by limiting the amount of information the voter has to learn they can feel more educated and confident in their ability.

Furthermore, by displaying on a broader scale that basic amenities of the everyday life of the average American citizen is steeped in politics. The example of Flint, Michigan has shown that having access to clean drinking water has roots in politics. The quality of the air that is breathed has much to do with regulations or the lack thereof. The roads that are driven on and sidewalks on which we walk are funded and maintained by the government. There are truly few aspects of the day that are not, in some form, political. However, many young Americans have not yet grasped this concept. While, age and experience may help them find their policy areas of passion, the present life of

American youth leaves them without the basis needed for forming strong bonds relating to politics that is necessary to cause people to head to the polls.

In general, there is a problem of both age and experience that limits the interactions of young people in the political system. Lack of experience with the political system causes a lack of discovery around areas of passion. The solution is not to just wait for these persons to grow up. Instead, politicians should do a better job of including measures that speak to young people on the ballot. Additionally, accepting and furthering alternate methods of participatory politics can bring together diverse people in support of similar goals. The boxing in of politics as merely what happens in the government works to alienate people of all ages, but especially young people from the process. Understanding this, there must be strengthening measures to protect nontraditional method of engagement as a positive influencer of change.

In Closing

Overall, this thesis has shown that while nontraditional modes of participation are not the only way young people are choosing to participate, these modes are important at creating spaces for young people to feel heard. Young people in general are frustrated with the political system. Most feel as though there are an extraordinary number of barriers to entry to having real political influence. Most youth do not have the money or social capital needed to feel as though they can really change anything on an individual level. However, nontraditional means often allow groups to converge and feel connected. This connection works to build social capital as a group of people wishing to achieve the

same goals is stronger than one individual wishing for their desires. These larger groups make the voices of young people not only feel heard, but validated.

Not all young people desire the same outcomes. Therefore, it is often the case that how a person identifies politically often determines the source of their discontent with the traditional modes of participation. Young people who identity with the term "liberal" are discontent with the direction of the country. They feel as though their politicians are not serious about climate change, are discouraged around issues of immigration, and do not trust that the system has enough safety nets for those who may fall through the cracks. Liberal identifying young people use nontraditional means to garner effectively ways of being heard. Those who identity more with conservative leanings feel disconnected from the political system, at least the way it is shaped by many of their peers. Some feel this way due to the fact that though they do identify as conservative, they do not agree with the current administration but are often thought to support the administration's policies. Others feel as though in this generation it is not socially acceptable to consider oneself a conservative, causing for animosity in social situations for those who do identify as conservative. Often conservative youth discuss not being able to engage on social media with harsh language filling their direct messages and the comments under their posts. One participant who considered herself socially liberal, but fiscally conservative noted how when she simply posted "How are we going to pay for these programs" she was met wave of backlash attacking her in ways she said "were completely incorrect." Conservative youth look to nontraditional means of participation as a way of finding like-minded people to connect with and help validate their own thoughts. It is those in the

middle who are they most interesting. Moderates are already less likely to participate in the political system, as they are not necessarily as outraged as those on the poles. It is often the case, that those in the middle are disinterested by how polarized the system currently seems which further isolates them and causes for lower participation rates.

A main proponent of this polarization may be social media. Though nontraditional means such as protests and filling out online petitions are viewed favorability among youth, it is increasingly the case that social media is viewed with hostility. Social media has been found to increase feelings of isolation (Hampton et. al, 2009). This is done in two major ways. First, social media produces a feeling of anonymity (Barlett, 2015). While it may feel good to know your neighbor down the street, classmate, etc. agrees with your political leanings (which may even cause they two of you to go attend a rally or campaign for a politician together), it is devastating to have someone that you do not know type obscenities in your direction or claim that you have no idea what you are talking about. The second reason for isolation is that social media is constant. We live in a time where most people are addicted to both their phones and social media. Constantly checking what people are commenting under a post or what they are posting. Though constant, there are no real airways for constructive communication. The feeling one derives from a "like" or half-heartedly positive comment is small compared to the negativity that is constantly spewed. Social media also creates pathways for the loudest voice to be the one that people feel is the most right. This alienates those in the middle who believe the loud people are not representing them. Additionally, this polarization makes moderates feel as though politics is spinning out of control and that there is no real

place for them within the political system. To bring moderates back into the political

landscape there must be a reigning in of these polarizing tendencies.

Where then do youth begin to make true change? One participant stated it the best

when she retorted that young people just need to "start where we are." This quotation best

enumerates the main point of the argument. Young people are all over the place when it

comes to their engagement within participatory politics. Some vote, others work on

campaigns, many use social media to spread information as well as learn about the

happenings of politics, while a select few view protests as their main source of

participation. Regardless, of how they feel they are best able to be involved in the system

most choose to start where they are. Yet, when they start where they are some forms of

participation do not allow them to feel heard. Youth see officials become elected who

seem to disregard what is best for the younger generation. Moreover, policy and the

overall direction of the country seem to be heading in the opposite direction of what a

majority of young people wish to see. Somewhere a disconnect has occurred. In an effort

to remain involved, while at the same time see their concerns be listened to, young people

have headed toward nontraditional means of participatory politics. Yet, as noted before in

this paper, this is not meant to completely disengaged with the more institutional system

of political involvement. Instead, this alternative means sense of involvement is more so

meant to make these young people feel validated in their efforts.

Overall, young people will continue to "start where they are" until their

participation efforts lead to results they desire. Perhaps it will be the case that experience

and age will result in this current generation to engage more with traditional processes as

they find what political policies are of great importance to them. In fact, due to sense for a return to normalcy it seems as though this generation is actively looking to find more traditional ways to participate, while at the same time find sources of validation. Yet, in an effort to make this current increase in youth participation long-term and not just a simple Trump-era phenomenon, true acceptance of nontraditional means by the political community must be given. I believe once nontraditional methods of participation, for all political participants that being on the left or right, is more widely accepted there will be a more sustained involvement in the system. To any current or future young people who may pick up this thesis, I suggest that regardless of what the political community is telling you continue to engage, act, and start where you are.

Bibliography

Anduiza, Eva, Marta Cantijoch, and Aina Gallego. "Political participation and the

Internet: A field essay." *Information, Communication & Society* 12.6 (2009): 860-

878.

Barber, B. 1984. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age.* Berkeley:

University

of California Press.

Barlett, Christopher P. "Anonymously hurting others online: The effect of anonymity on

cyberbullying frequency." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 4, no. 2 (2015):

70.

Baum, Matthew A., and Tim Groeling. "New media and the polarization of American

political discourse." *Political Communication* 25.4 (2008): 345-365.

Brenner, P.S., 2012. Overreporting of voting participation as a function of identity. *The

Social Science Journal*, *49*(4), pp.421-429.

Carney, Timothy. *Alienated America: Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse.*

New York: Harper-Collins.

CIRCLE Staff, *(2013). All Together Now: Collaboration* and Innovation for Youth

Engagement: The Report of the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic

Knowledge (Medford, MA: Center for Information and Research on Civic

Learning and Engagement, 2013).

CIRCLE Staff, *(2016). Young Voters in the 2016 General Election.* . (Medford, MA:

Center for

Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2013).

CIRCLE Staff, *(2018). Millennials' Diverse Political Views: A typology of the Rising*

   Genertaion. (Medford, MA: Center for Information and Research on Civic

   Learning and Engagement, 2013).

Cohen, C., J. Kahne, B. Bowyer, E. Middaugh, and J. Rogowski. 2012. *Participatory*

politics:

   New media and youth political action (YPPSP Research Report). Retrieved from

   http://ypp.dmlcentral.net/content/participatory- politics-new-media-and-youth-

   political-action-ypp-survey-report contexts on high schools students' beliefs about

   civic engagement." In Bixby, J. & Pace, J. Eds. *Educating democratic citizens in*

   troubled times: qualitative studies of current efforts. Albany, New York: State

   University of New York Press.

Colleoni, Elanor, Alessandro Rozza, and Adam Arvidsson. "Echo chamber or public

   sphere? Predicting political orientation and measuring political homophily in

   Twitter using big data." *Journal of communication* 64.2 (2014): 317-332.

Dalton, R. (2014). *The good citizen: How a younger generation is reshaping American*

Data Bank Staff, (2015). Youth Voting: Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being.

Delli Carpini, M.X., 2000. Gen. com: Youth, civic engagement, and the new information

   environment. *Political communication*, *17*(4), pp.341-349.

Dimitrova, Daniela V., Adam Shehata, Jesper Strömbäck, and Lars W. Nord. "The effects

of digital media on political knowledge and participation in election campaigns:

Evidence from panel data." *Communication Research* 41, no. 1 (2014): 95-118.

Fisher, D. (2012). Youth Political Participation: Bridging Activism and Electoral Politics.
The

Annual Review of Sociology Vol. 38. Pp 119-137.

Flanagan, C. Levine, P. & Settersten, R. (2009). Civic Engagement and the Changing
Transition

to Adulthood. (Medford, MA: Center for Information and Research on Civic

Learning and Engagement, 2013).

Fowler, J. (2005). Habitual Voting and Behavioral Turnout. Davis, CA: University of

California, Davis.

Frey, W. (2018). The US will become 'minority white' in 2045, Census projects:
Youthful

minorities are the engine of future growth. The Avenue.

https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-

minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/

Glynn, C.J., Huge, M.E. and Hoffman, L.H., 2012. All the news that's fit to post: A

profile of news use on social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*,

28(1), pp.113-119.

Green, D.P. and Gerber, A.S., 2010. Introduction to social pressure and voting: New

experimental evidence. *Political Behavior*, *32*(3), pp.331-336.

Hampton, Keith N., Lauren F. Sessions, Eun Ja Her, and Lee Rainie. "Social isolation

and new technology." *Pew Internet & American Life Project* 4 (2009).

Harder, J. & Krosnick, J. (2008). Why Do People Vote? A Psychological Analysis of the

Cause

of Voter Turnout. Jorunal of Social Issues, Vol. 64, No 3. Pp 525-549.

Hare, C. and Poole, K.T., 2014. The polarization of contemporary American politics.

Polity, *46*(3), pp.411-429.

Henn, Matt, Mark Weinstein, and Sarah Forrest. "Uninterested youth? Young people's

attitudes towards party politics in Britain." *Political studies* 53, no. 3 (2005): 556-

578.

Jacobsen, R. & Linkow, T. (2012).The Engaged Citizen Index: Examining the Racial and

Ethnic

Civic and Political Engagement Gaps of Young Adults. CIRCLE Working Paper

74.

Jenkins, H., R. Purushotma, K. Clinton, M. Weigel, and A. J. Robison. 2009.

"Confronting the

Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century."

Occasional

paper on digital media and learning. Chicago: John D. and Catherine T.

MacArthur

Foundation.

Jones, R., Cox, D., Frisch-Friedman, M., Vandermass-Peeler, A. (2018). Diversity,

      Division,

Kahne, J. Middaugh, E. & Allen D. (2015). Youth, new media, and the rise of

participatory

      politics. In D. Allen and J.S. Light (Eds.), *From voice to influence: Understanding*

      digital citizenship in a digital age (pp. 35-55). Chicago, IL: The University of

      Chicago Press.

Kahne, J., & Sporte, S. E. (2008). Developing Citizens: The Impact of Civic

Learning

Leccardi, Carmen, and Elisabetta Ruspini. "A new youth." *Young People, Generations*

      and Family Life. Surrey, UK: Ashgate (2005).

Levine, P. (2007). *The future of democracy: Developing the next generation of*

American citizens. Medford, Massachusetts: Tufts University Press.

Lewis-Beck, M.S. and Stegmaier, M., 2007. Economic models of voting. In *The Oxford*

      handbook of political behavior.

Loader, B.D. ed., 2007. *Young citizens in the digital age: Political engagement, young*

      people and new media. Routledge.

Middaugh, E. & Kahne, J. (2008). "Civic development in context: The influence of local

      Engagement. Retrieved September 10, 2011, from http://www.ncoc.net/100.

National Conference on Citizenship. (2006). *America's Civic Health Index: Broken*

Engagement.

Retrieved September 10, 2018, from http://www.ncoc.net/100.

Neilson, Lisa A. "Boycott or buycott? Understanding political consumerism." *Journal of*

Consumer Behaviour 9.3 (2010): 214-227.

Rogers, M.T., 2015. A Meta-history of Formal Civic Education. *Civic Education in the*

Twenty-First Century: A Multidimensional Inquiry, p.3.

Rosenstone, Steven J., John Mark Hansen, and Keith Reeves. "Mobilization,

participation, and democracy in America." (1993).

Opportunities on Students' Commitment to Civic Participation. *American Educational*

Research

Journal, 45(3), 738.

Plutzer, E. (2002). Becoming a Habitual Voter, Inertia,Resources, and Growth in Young

Adulthood. The American Political Science Review, Vol. 96, No 1. Pp 41-56.

Plutzer, E. & Wiefek, N. (2006). Family Transitions, Economic Status, and Voter

Turnout

Among African-American Inner-City Women. Social Science Quarterly, Volume

87, Number 3.

Sinclair, Betsy. *The social citizen: Peer networks and political behavior*. University of

Chicago Press, 2012.

Stroud, Natalie Jomini (2011). *Niche News.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Soep, E. (2014). *Next Generation Youth Participation in the Public Sphere*. Cambridge,

MA

MIT Press.

Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., & Delli Carpini, M. (2006). *A*

   new engagement? Political participation, civic life and the
changing

   American citizen. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix-

Questions Asked—

1. When you hear the word "politics" what comes to mind?
2. When you think of active political participants what do you envision?

a.   Has this changed since the 2016 election?

b.   Do you feel engaged in politics and why?

3. What led you to vote if you do voting?
4. Are you otherwise engaged other than voting? Why?

   .   a. What caused you to become involved

5. What forms of involvement interests you?
    a) Where does this stem from?
6. How do persons your age engage?
    a) Do you think this is different from previous generations?
7. Do you believe the political system listens to people like you?

a.   In what ways?

b.   How do you define yourself within particular groups?

c.   How do you define these groups?

d.   How do people like you make their voices heard?

e.   Are these methods of making their voice heard effective?

8. How would you go about enacting change?
    a) What does change look like for you?

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me for my research. As Professor Ellis mentioned to you in class, I am writing my thesis on young adults' engagement with politics and civic affairs. For this study, I am attempting to understand how young people view the government. I will also ask you a few questions about your own political preferences.

This interview should take approximately fifteen minutes. Your participation in this research will be completely confidential. With your permission, I will record your responses, but will transcribe them to a Word Document without any information that could be used to identify you. I will then delete the recording. Your answers will not be linked to your name in any part of the project.

If at any point during our conversation you decide you would like to stop participating in this study, or not answer a particular question, you may certainly do so without penalty.

If you have any questions about the experiment or your possible participation, you may contact me at jac066@bucknell.edu. If you have any questions regarding the rights of human participants in research you may contact Professor Slater, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, at matthew.slater@bucknell.edu or (570) 577 2767.

If you consent to participate in this study, please print and sign your name below. By signing your name below, you are also confirming that you are at least 18 years of age.

_____   _____
Name   Signature