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SHIFTING THE ULTIMATUM: POLITICAL ALIENATION AND PARTICIPATION

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences at the University of
Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Thomas Janoski, Professor of Sociology
Lexington, Kentucky
2014

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

SHIFTING THE ULTIMATUM: POLITICAL ALIENATION AND PARTICIPATION

Common knowledge dictates that cynicism and mistrust of politics is rampant among US citizens, wreaking havoc on participation in the American political process. Social Capital theories are commonly used to effectively explain US political behavior, but fail to account for alienation from the political process or the influence of peers. I argue that models of political participation would be improved by the inclusion of political alienation variables, which have fallen into disuse in recent decades. Using data from the US Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy Survey (2006), this paper relies upon negative binomial regression with nested models to compare the explanatory power of social capital variables with models including political alienation and peer influence variables to assess the value of such concepts. Results indicate that while the parent variables of political alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, and mistrust of political institutions) improve model accuracy and influence political participation, the latent variable remains ambiguously useful. Powerlessness and mistrust revealed significant effects, but mistrust failed to fit into the latent concept of political alienation, and meaninglessness did not produce significant results. Peer influence only significantly affected political participation when participants specifically discussed political matters with peers. Implications and concepts for future research follow.

Key Words: alienation, mistrust, social capital, political participation, peer influence
Multimedia Elements Used: JPEG (.jpg)

Grace Cale
05 June 2014

SHIFTING THE ULTIMATUM: POLITICAL ALIENATION AND PARTICIPATION

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I. Research Questions

It is enough that the people know there was an election. The people who cast the votes decide nothing. The people who count the votes decide everything. - Joseph Stalin

Politics is not like an ocean voyage or a military campaign... something which leaves off as soon as reached. It is not a public chore to be gotten over with. It is a way of life. - Plutarch

The quotes above demonstrate two ideas which, on the surface, appear to conflict. The first, the hopelessness of the political process. The other speaks of the deep importance of a lifelong connection to the political process. In the habit of famous quotations, both are attributed to key historical figures, but despite their historical context, these two attributions also point to a very real divide in public discourse and perspectives of politics. In the United States, citizens are frequently faced with conflicting accounts of the state of US politics, which at any given time appear to be simultaneously ripe for activism, hopeless, corrupt, and most recently, experiencing a crisis of legitimacy and engagement.¹

News articles indicate a youth culture which, paradoxically, is both disconnected from politics and more active than ever, painting confusing images of a future rife with autocracy or democratic overload and indecision. Public information polls indicate tumultuous rates of political participation across every demographic category, contradicted by government data indicating downward long-term trends (US Census 2006). What these accounts tell us is that the current state of political participation is difficult for an average consumer to evaluate definitively. With a majority of public accounts focusing on simple voting rates (among the least demanding political acts),

¹ Krippner, Greta R. *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011. Print.

long-term data regarding more complicated modes of participation are detrimentally sparse.

The research problem, then, can be summarized by the following statements: first, that popular discourse about political participation is highly conflicting, and often biased. Second, there appears to be a trend indicating that the United States is suffering a deficit in democratic activity. Finally, there is evidence that the United States is currently facing a crisis of legitimacy which has been increasing in the face of the 2008 Great Recession, with clear intra- and inter-party divisions inhibiting government function. This is problematic because it indicates that the state of politics is broadly interpreted in a negative light, raising important questions about the genuine rate at which Americans are giving up on the political system. Unfortunately, properly functioning democratic systems of government rely on engaged citizens.

Nina Eliasoph summarized the logical concerns best when she noted that:

“... In many polls, the winner is ‘don’t know,’ ‘no response,’ or opinions based on incorrect information. This endless abyss of political ignorance has long plagued democratic theory: if people don’t know anything, surely they cannot be responsible citizens. And if one really believes that the majority of people are too dumb and uncaring to participate in politics, the bottom falls out of the whole idea of democracy.”(1998)

Based on this idea, the first inclination may be to look to democratic theory for answers.

However, the nature of this theory does not account for the influences on behavior that are the hallmark of sociological works. Analyses often work on the state or institutional level, which, while legitimate, is beyond the scope of this project (Janoski et al. 2005).

Those ideas that are applied at the individual level are based more in psychological work and reasoning, which does not generally take the external-influence approach assumed by sociologists (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980).

The purpose of this study is to use the 2006 United States Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy Survey to assess whether the underlying concepts of political alienation have a *uniformly* negative effect on political activity. More specifically, the question this research intends to address is as follows:

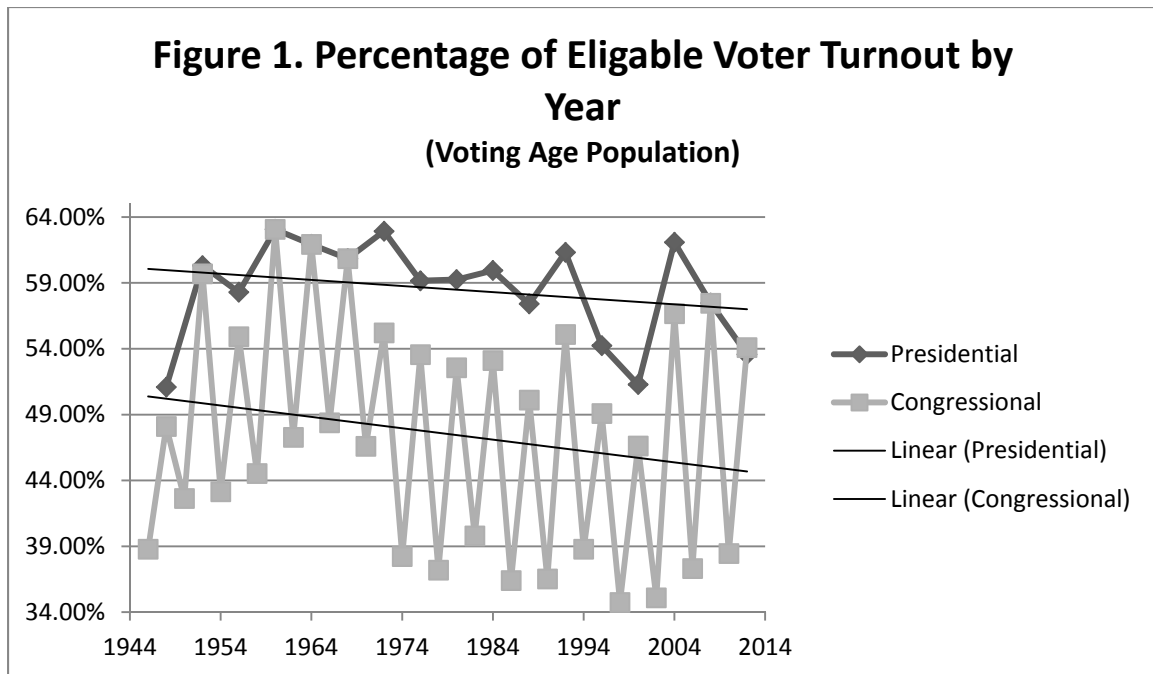
To what extent does political alienation affect one's amount of political participation, and is this effect moderated by peer influence?

Thus, the goal of this study is not necessarily to predict or explain political behavior broadly. Such has been attempted by countless other researchers, and I do not presume to be able to provide better explanation than their collective voices. Instead, I intend to provide an image of the *extent* to which Political Alienation, as compared to other common explanatory factors, can significantly influence behavioral outcomes. A key component of this study will also consider the effects of peer influence. Peer influence is well understood to affect political behavior among political scientists, but sociologists devote surprisingly little time directly examining this element (though this is changing as social network research is growing in sociology). Examining both of these features of socio-political life will allow us to better predict the extent to which political alienation may be influencing political behavior, which can be useful in efforts to mobilize citizens.

II. Historical Context

Though concerns about political participation are not often (in popular media) discussed in terms of alienation, I find that we hear of this issue more commonly through “mistrust of” and “cynicism” regarding the government (concepts which are empirically similar to components of political alienation). While cynicism and mistrust began to float into the minds of young Americans during the Vietnam War, it made its home in the collective conscience of the American public with the Watergate scandal and President Richard Nixon's subsequent impeachment. These two series of events demonstrated clearly that elected representatives may act on personal agendas, rather than on behalf of their constituencies. Since then, dissatisfaction with and mistrust of the government has risen slowly but fairly steadily reaching a peak across 2012 and 2013, when partisanship and ideology crippled Congress to the point of gridlock. Given that these ideas may be connected with a sense of political alienation, my study will take a snapshot of this political climate, from 2005, and use a cross-sectional analysis to demonstrate the extent to which alienation may influence political participation.

These historical developments have correlated with concerns about a general lack of faith in politics, with the media often citing declining election participation rates as an example (Figure 1). And certainly voter turnout has dwindled, though the higher rates seen in the last three presidential elections raise some questions regarding how ‘long term’ the statistical descent is. While the drop in Congressional election voter turnout is somewhat masked by the large spikes that accompany Presidential election years, the downward trend is still noticeable and thus worthy of the examination and concern it has drawn.



***Linear indicators used solely to illustrate downward long-term trend, and do not represent a regression analysis.**

Source: International IDEA

However, this is also relevant to the context of the data for this project. The Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy Survey collected data during 2005, shortly after the 2004 re-election of Republican President George W. Bush, during a war initially meant to be a short-term operation. The 2004 election was somewhat close, but hardly a nail-biter. Bush won the election with 50.73% of the popular vote, which put him nearly 2.5 percentage points ahead of John Kerry, who pulled in 48.27% of the popular vote (FEC.gov, 2004). This time, there was no need for ballot recounts or court decisions – the results were clear. Yet as the Iraq War dragged on, concerns about its effects increased. From 2004 to 2006, feelings that sending troops to Iraq was a mistake increased from 42% of respondents agreeing to 53% of respondents (Iraq: Gallup, Inc.). Along with growing concerns about other policy issues, President Bush’s approval ratings dramatically declined, reaching their lowest levels in the mid-30 percent area (Gallup, Inc.). Though not indicated in this survey data, Bush’s approval would continue to drop

to its lowest (around 25%) until the end of his second term (Gallup, Inc.). Meanwhile, this same time period also saw notably low Congressional approval ratings (dropping 20 points to about 24% approval from 2004 to 2006), as voters became disillusioned in the wake of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, and the failure to address domestic policy issues (Gallup, Inc.). This was part of the cause of the Democratic Party ‘takeover’ of Congress in the 2006 election, when Democrats gained a majority in the House of Representatives (controlling 233 of the 435 seats), the Senate, and a number of other elected bodies (FEC.gov, 2006). All of these factors would influence the political climate in which this survey was gathered, and may subsequently influence the respondents’ responses. Such tumultuous times could also directly affect whether a respondent may experience short-term alienation from their government, and thus potentially their political participation. Such short-term shifts may fluctuate with the administration in power (if the respondent supported or opposed an administration), though there is evidence for some long-term stability in types of alienation.

III. Literature Review

In order to fully understand the concepts I intend to analyze, it is important to examine the research preceding my own. In particular, this can provide conceptual clarity, or at least outline the lack of consensus that may exist on a topic. In this spirit, the following chapter will do four things. First, it will provide us with an outline of the concept of political participation, addressing the questions of who participates, why they do so, and what political participation actually refers to. The second section will examine my primary independent variable: political alienation. It will cover some of the history of this concept's use, and how it tends to be treated in empirical works. The third will focus on Social Capital, its theoretical origins, and relationship with political activity. The last section will consider empirical findings regarding political participation, and some of the many ways that one's social context can affect their political engagement.

Political Participation - What, Who, Why

While explaining political participation is not the goal of this study, per se (the goal in this case being to see whether Alienation can improve attempts to explain this series of acts), it is important to have an understanding of what does influence this variable. Given that political participation is arguably one of the most studied topics in social science, there is a great deal of information on this topic, and it is not confined to the works of political scientists (Kourvetaris & Dobratz 1982). Sociologists, too, have weighed in on political participation, and for the purpose of this section I will focus on three simple questions: 1) What constitutes participation, 2) who participates in politics, and 3) why?

First is the issue of what constitutes participation. This is important not only for the purpose of focusing this commonly-used term, but also so that I can better operationalize the concept for use in my analysis. Most often, political participation includes the basic act of voting, and this remains a heavily-used measure. Bolzendahl and Coffe (2013) also divide participation between formal and informal acts, which range from voting and party membership to “political activism”, all of which includes whether a respondent had signed a petition; taken part in a demonstration; attended a political meeting or rally; contacted a politician; donated money or raised funds; bought or boycotted goods for political/ethical/environmental reasons; contacted media; joined an internet political forum.

While some may argue that activism or social movements may not constitute political engagement, many aspects of activism (sharing information, protesting/demonstrating, boycotting) are included in measure of political participation.² This expanded view of political participation illustrates an issue observed by Walder (2009), that social movements and political sociological literatures may converge at certain points as “For [activists], protest was a political activity that was as rational and goal directed as routine politics.” This echoes Fisher who noted that political activism and electoral politics constitute “conceptually distinct [but] empirically connected aspects of contemporary American politics” (2012). There are just a few studies using similar measure of political participation or engagement, but they serve to demonstrate that participation often goes beyond voting or formal (institutionalized) channels. This serves as the basis for my measure of political participation, which contains commonly used

² See above, as well as Ikeda, Kobayashi and Richey (2012) and Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995).

binary measures (including those used by Bolzendahl & Coffe) as well as variables capturing some elements of online political engagement, a rising field.

Regarding who participates, the literature shows us that there are some very consistent indicators. For example, though the specifics and strength of the effect varies widely with political and situational context, social class and socioeconomic status have consistently significantly influenced participation (Kourvetaris & Dobratz 1982).³ In particular, Knoke and others found in the late 1970s that

“...the higher the SES the greater is the tendency to vote for the more conservative Party.... [T]hat education, occupation, and age are the main influences on social-problem liberalism. Income and race have the main effects on economic conservatism. Race, age and education are the main influences on racial policy preferences. Higher income leads to greater economic conservatism while higher education fosters liberalism in social issues.(Knoke 1979 and Weiner & Eckland 1979 in: Kourvetaris & Dobratz 1982)”

While Kourvetaris and Dobratz had found a number of articles suggesting a decline in class-based politics, a decade later a review by Manza, Hout, and Brooks concluded that there is no consensus in the field on the topic, and that there is no support for theories of a process of “class dealignment [with political engagement].”They go on to state more clearly that “At this juncture only one conclusion is firm: In no democratic capitalist country has vote been entirely independent of class in a national election.(Manza, Hout, & Brooks 1995)”

Coffe and Bolzendahl’s 2010 study also indicates the importance of demographic characteristics for political participation. Their study of gender differences in American political behavior found that while women were more likely to “... sign petitions, boycott/buy products for political reasons, and donate to or raise money for social and

³ This citation references a review article. Examine Pages 304-306 for additional details on the number of studies that confirm this effect.

political groups” and (all else equal) would vote more than men if equally interested, men were more likely to be involved in political parties, collective activism, and political contact. This study also indicated that regardless of gender, time availability would be a key variable influencing involvement in a variety of political activities, a variable that may have more class-based implications than for other variables (Coffe & Bolzendahl 2010).

More sociological work has focused on contextual models of participation, looking at the social and political situations in which voters find themselves. For example, Rolfe notes that institutions can affect voter turnout simply through creating or removing barriers (literacy tests, ID laws, etc.) or by virtue of the electoral system employed (2012). Other influential factors involve the efforts by strategic politicians and political campaigns (who have an interest in increasing turnout if they believe they can win), while perhaps the most significant factor Rolfe argues for is a person’s social context, which includes the context and influence of their social network (2012).

It is important to keep in mind, though, that political participation extends beyond voting, as citizens may clearly exercise the power to influence governments past threatening incumbents with an ousting. For example, though much prior research has focused on institutional forms of political participation such as working on a campaign, joining a party, and similar work (in addition to, of course, voting), prior work indicates that these types of engagement “...are declining or holding steady at lower levels”(Coffe & Bolzendahl 2010). Instead, in many Western states, participation in the form of activism is growing, demonstrating an increasing salience in alternative forms of political engagement (Coffe & Bolzendahl 2010).

However, interest in politics has been shown to be insufficient for explaining political engagement, nor is socioeconomic status. Others have noted that focusing on access to resources not only allows researchers to account for SES, but to also gain a more nuanced view of disparities in activity among relevant groups. For example, it has been noted that while interest in politics is important for voter turnout, diverse civic skills are more relevant to those issues that require a time investment (Brady et al 1995). Somewhat unsurprisingly, access to money as a resource was most valuable in those efforts that required financial investment, a point that shines on the dramatic results of the increased role of money in politics in the last fifteen years (Brady et al 1995).

This brings us to consider how people participate. Once people become active, interesting patterns emerge regarding the issues they voice and the methods selected to convey their concerns. As some were surprised to observe, “Activity aimed at influencing policy ... is much less likely to convey a message about basic human needs. ... Although it is purportedly the mode of participation available to those with few resources ... issues of basic human need were mentioned infrequently in connection with protests. (Schlozman et al 1995)” Similarly, voters seemed to be the only group most motivated by economic growth, but most activists (in some form or another) were deeply concerned with issues such as education, taxes, and abortion (Schlozman et al 1995). Education is an interesting focus, as several studies found that education into pro-social attitudes has a highly significant effect on activities such as volunteering as an adult (Janoski et al 1998). Given some of this diversity of thought in who is politically active and how, we can move into the interesting question of *why*.

When considering the reasons that people become politically active, a first finding is the obvious argument that a person may see some sort of social problem that they feel can be addressed via political channels. This suggestion can be rooted quite well in citizenship ideals, or perceptions of what it means to be a good citizen, and the related rights, responsibilities, and obligations that come with those perceptions. Macpherson notes the importance of these ideals, commenting that “Those beliefs... determine the limits and possible development of the system: they determine what people will put up with, and what they will demand.(Macpherson 1977)” Theiss-Morse argues for the existence of a variety of citizenship beliefs, but notes that all fundamentally affect whether and how citizens choose to participate in political action. For example, in 1993 she found that:

“For example, the Representative Democracy perspective promotes the belief that good citizens must vote to make government officials responsive, but the Political Enthusiast perspective suggests that voting may be an ineffective way to be heard, and the Indifferent perspective does not see the need for voting since citizens have little influence over government decisions anyway.(Theiss-Morse)”

This suggests that people’s different orientations toward what it means to be a good citizen and perceived responsiveness of the government to various political acts will both affect *whether* they engage, and how they elect to do so.

Other studies argue the case that political information or online social networking can lead people to better engage with politics. Indeed, in political studies circles, it is fairly common knowledge that as people gain better political information, they become more active. While this effect is consistent, its strength is questionable. Levendusky found that a great majority of studies confirming this effect relied on cross-sectional data that may have exaggerated the strength of the effect of information on political behavior (2011). Using panel data, he found that while information does have a significant effect

on participation, it may not be a very strong effect, and efforts to increase participation should likely focus on other factors along with providing information. Thus, while we can likely hold on to the belief that information availability will help drive people to participate, we must continue to devote attention to other factors such as social status or citizenship ideals.

Online social networking, meanwhile, is shown to encourage political participation via political exchanges. However, Gainous, Marlowe and Wagner find that this effect is still influenced strongly by social status. Their data indicated that low-status individuals were less likely to run into political exchanges in their online social networks than those with more resources (2013). Thus, while this medium does help drive people to engage, it also tends to maintain existing patterns of inequality.

Finally, one reason behind political engagement can be found among those least likely to participate - low-status or low-income people. A 2001 study found that among the urban poor, those who had positive interactions with social workers but negative engagements with law enforcement may be more likely to participate in politics (Lawless & Fox). While this would not be a good policy model to replicate, it does indicate that some adverse conditions may foster political involvement (Lawless & Fox 2001).

From this examination, I can arrive at a few conclusions. First, the concept of “political participation” can include a diverse array of political behaviors, which tend to range from formal, institutionalized acts (voting, campaigning, writing a representative) to more “activist” behaviors, such as boycotting, buycotting, and protesting. A diverse group of people tend to engage politically, but those with high socioeconomic status and access to resources tend to be most active, and most effective in reaching their goals.

However, the poor are not completely disengaged, and there are observable gender and racial differences among how participates, and how. With this in mind, I can move on to the next topics. Particularly, we can consider which other factors affect political participation: Political Alienation, Social Capital, and Peer Influence.

Characteristics of Political Alienation

Alienation is among the oldest concepts used in sociology, and its use predates the discipline by a generation. Because of this, alienation has been used heavily, its meaning and interpretations fogging and solidifying to the point that its use began to spark some critical arguments by the mid- 1970s and 1980s, after a few decades of disciplinary popularity. The history of the concept is far too extensive to cover here, but there are key points worth discussing that clarify my own use of the concept.

In sociological circles, mentioning alienation most often calls the works of Karl Marx to mind, and he has played an instrumental role in bringing the concept to our discipline. Marx's version of alienation is generally described by the sense of estrangement one feels from themselves and others as an objectified person whose labor has been commodified (and the products of their labor owned and managed by another) as a part of a capitalist system (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 2006). However, some scholars skeptical of the concept have observed that Marx himself moved away from its use in his later works (Lee 1972). Because of heavy use in the mid-20th century, alienation has undergone some substantial transformation, with Seeman observing that alienation has come to include six 'varieties':

1. **Powerlessness:** The sense of low control vs mastery over events;
2. **Meaninglessness:** The sense of incomprehensibility vs understanding of personal and social affairs;

3. **Normlessness:** High expectancies for/commitment to socially unapproved means vs conventional means for the achievement of given goals;
4. **Cultural estrangement/value isolation:** Individual's rejection of commonly held values in the society (or subsector) vs commitment to the going group standards;
5. **Self-estrangement:** The individual's engagement in activities that are not intrinsically rewarding vs involvement in a task or activity for its own sake; and
6. **Social isolation:** The sense of exclusion or rejection vs social acceptance. (Seeman 1975)

In particular, the first two items are of interest, because they have often been applied in this form to political questions.

Taking the concepts of powerlessness and meaninglessness to develop a concept of political alienation is a viable attitudinal measure if we choose to regard alienation as a multifaceted concept. There is certainly precedent for this treatment, as Gamson argues for a strong distinction between meaninglessness and powerlessness (as elements of political alienation), and Seeman elaborates that “One hypothesis derived from this view holds that political mobilization should be greatest where the two alienations are not unitary but discrepant - where powerlessness is low, but distrust is high.(Gamson, Seeman in: Seeman 1975)” While the empirical results of such an argument are inconclusive, I find this distinction to be practical because it allows for multidimensional considerations of how alienation can affect dependent variables in different ways.

Seeman concludes that regardless, this hypothesis “...suggests that at this juncture it may be more productive to think in terms of the disunities rather than the unity of alienation, the strong distinction between trust and efficacy⁴ being quite common and fruitful in the politically oriented literature.(Seeman 1975)” Zeller, Neal, and Groat also found time-series support for the multidimensionality of alienation concepts, noting that

⁴ Efficacy, in this case, referring to a person’s perceived ability to influence political events. More detail on this topic will appear in the discussion below.

controlling for events such as wars or inflation continues to support long-term accuracy and salience of sub-variables of alienation including powerlessness and meaninglessness (1980). As such, I intend to further explore this issue by including three facets of alienation in my study: powerlessness, meaninglessness (both of which can be understood in terms of efficacy), and mistrust.⁵

We can understand these three concepts to match the following definitions for this study. Powerlessness is represented by the respondent's perceived lack of ability to shape political events through their own efforts (Seeman 1966).⁶ Seeman clearly defines meaninglessness when he states "We may speak of high alienation, in the meaninglessness usage, when the individual is unclear as to what he ought to believe- *when the individual's minimal standards for clarity in decision-making are not met.*(1959)" This can also be understood as a situation in which the respondent finds politics or political events incomprehensible, or too complicated for them to identify and act upon means of influencing political events.⁷ Finally, mistrust will be understood as a lack of trust in federal political officials or political institutions.

Having defined and operationalized the concept of alienation, it is important to devote some space to the actual results of studies exploring the relationship between alienation and political behavior. Given the lack of consensus on whether alienation

⁵ An argument can possibly be made that the alienation concepts of powerlessness and meaninglessness have not fallen into disuse, but have actually been replaced by the terms *internal* and *external self-efficacy*, both of which are often measured using the same survey questions as for powerlessness and meaninglessness.

⁶ Similar to external self-efficacy: "...is the belief that the authorities or regime are responsive to influence attempts." Balch, George. "Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept "Sense of Political Efficacy."" *Political Methodology* 1.2 (1974): 1-43. JSTOR. Web. 05 Feb. 2012.

⁷ Similar to internal self-efficacy: "...is the individual's belief that means of influence are available to him." Balch, George. "Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept "Sense of Political Efficacy."" *Political Methodology* 1.2 (1974): 1-43. JSTOR. Web. 05 Feb. 2012.

should encourage or depress political participation, the angle taken by the literature is also somewhat varied. For example, Adams, Dow, and Merrill focused on the possible negative effects of alienation. In their 2006 study on voter abstention, results indicated that alienation is useful when distinguished from indifference, and that abstention based on each concept increases or decreases based on changes in messaging and policy goals espoused during election campaigns (Adams, Dow & Merrill).

A 1960 study found an inverse relationship between socioeconomic status and political alienation. However, it indicated that this type of alienation may lead toward political acts that serve to “protest against the existing power structure in the community”, these acts may include institutionalized and uninstitutionalized forms of political behavior (Thompson & Horton 1960). It, too, supported the multidimensional treatment of alienation espoused by Zeller, Neal, and Groat, though unlike them, this measure included some forms of mistrust. Zeller and company found support for their multidimensional treatment via factor analysis, but their measures did not include trust/mistrust, raising some questions about its use in alienation (Zeller, Neal & Groat 1980). Interestingly, Denters and Geurt found that the “meaninglessness” form of alienation generally depressed voter turnout, but the effects of powerlessness varied by each measure. Generally the effects were negative, but the effects were not always direct.

Interestingly, while early studies of alienation actually found little significant connection between alienation and political apathy, others have found that alienated voters will be found at the ends of a (hypothetically normally distributed) spectrum, where their preferences may be far from candidates in an election (and are differentiated from indifferent voters, who would lay between the platforms of the candidates) (Dean

1960; Anderson & Glomm 1992). An alternative interpretation of alienation is developed from the basis of Meade's 'I, Me, and Generalized Other', though some have argued that in enacting the 'I', a person's various personal facets may include resilience and adaptability which, when one hinders the other, produces feelings of alienation. What follows, instead, is that "...the individual's feelings of alienation tend to provide the clearest indications that the individual is not living as her performatively constructed and therefore particularized and shifting 'nature' (her 'I's) 'dictate[s]'(Tyler 2011)."⁸

In a more recent discussion of alienation, Southwell argues that commonly used measures of trust and internal/external efficacy⁹ are better explored as three separate dimensions in her concept of political alienation, defined as "...a set of attitudes or opinions that reflect a negative view of the political system. ... [It] represents a less-than-positive view of the political world; it indicates displeasure with political leaders and institutions"(2012). She also aptly quotes Franz Neuman's well-put definition that claims alienation to be a "conscious rejection of the whole political system which expresses itself in apathy"(Neuman in: Southwell 2012). This demonstrates that while deeply important, this concept is not always unified or clear, and must be used with caution when extrapolating results to broader populations or themes.

However, if we were to follow Dean, Seeman and Southwell's perception of alienation, then we can further divide our analysis to include Meaninglessness, Trust/Mistrust, and Powerlessness. Since the 1960s, researchers have observed a broad

⁸ Tyler goes on to clarify, "the agent's feelings of alienation arise from her sense of distance from her own projected and inchoate ideal of herself as a person, with this 'person' being internally differentiated as a complex series of (congruent even if not actually mutually supporting) 'I's, each of which brings definition and order to some part of the otherwise ill-defined and fluid substratum of meanings and values that make up the individual's 'self'."

⁹ Subsequent content will clarify the relationship between internal/external self-efficacy, and the concepts of powerlessness and meaninglessness.

decline in trust in politics. This mistrust has been argued to range from distrust of individual politicians, to governmental and political institutions and the world of politics in general. It has been previously observed that political efficacy (one's belief in their ability to make a difference) or powerlessness is strongly connected to political trust (Cole 1973; Csajko & Lindaman 2011; Southwell 2012). Yet contrary to this image, a fairly large portion of Americans believe that they are able to influence political affairs, compared to large populations in other countries, raising the question of why Americans aren't a more trusting populace than current statistics demonstrate (Abravanel & Busch 1975; Austin 2008; Southwell 2012).

There has been some debate on the real effects of trust (or lack thereof) on political activity. Rosenstone and Hanson (1993) find no connection between likelihood of voting and political interest among more or less trusting people, a conclusion introduced by Miller in 1974. However, Hetherington (2005) suggests that trust or mistrust may have a great effect when it comes to policies that may involve risk or personal sacrifice on the part of the voter, such as redistributive policies (welfare, Social Security, etc.). This view is also supported by the finding that politically distrustful individuals are more involved in policy-related politics than highly trusting people (Shingles 2001). Yet there is some work questioning what some reported low levels of trust actually mean. Cook and Gronke ask whether today's low level of trust reveals a profound disaffection, or instead amore superficial dissatisfaction with *current* politics, suggesting that "low trust in government and low confidence in institutions reflects *skepticism*, an unwillingness to presume that political authorities should be given the

benefit of the doubt. (2005)” They reinforce this point by citing Citrin’s concerns about popular measures (often used by the National Election Studies data sets), where he notes,

“...the cynical responses to the CPS political trust items are hardly extreme. To believe that the government wastes “a lot” of money, can be trusted to “do what is right only some of the time,” and includes “quite a few” people who are “crooked” or “don’t know what they’re doing” need not bespeak a deep-seated hostility toward the political system. (Citrin in: Cook & Gronke 2005)”

Such may be true, but it can also be argued that less-extreme positions of mistrust may still bear meaningful implications for political involvement. For those concerned about the preservation of democratic institutions, apathy (or broad disengagement) could be as dangerous in the long run as those who are hostile (and active) toward the current system. As it stands, these authors are highly critical of NES¹⁰ measures, and raise some points worth bearing in mind when generalizing from NES or similar survey data.

One clear message I found in this literature was that the empirical treatment of Alienation has never quite reached a state of consensus, though common themes tend to emerge. Powerlessness and meaninglessness appear to be common parent variables for the larger, latent concept. Concepts such as mistrust and normlessness, while not very commonly used measures, also make an occasional appearance, but need more empirical validation. But while the direction of the effect tends to also be contested, the Alienation literature does broadly agree that it does tend to significantly influence political participation, and I can thus continue to include it in this study. Having arrived at this conclusion, we can proceed to the second major concept under analysis: Social Capital.

¹⁰ National Election Studies

Social Capital - Origins and Its Present Day

In order to assess the explanatory capabilities of political alienation, it would be best to compare it to another commonly used explanatory tool for political participation. Social capital immediately comes to mind, as it is a fairly well-vetted concept found to influence a wide variety of outcomes over the life course. It has been observed that life in communities rich in social capital tends to be easier, particularly in the context of civic engagement (Putnam, "Bowling Alone" 1995). Putnam notes that "In the first place, networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved." ("Bowling Alone" 1995) However, in order to understand how this concept will be operationalized, it is important to establish social capital within its academic context.

The concept of sociological social capital can be said to have three founders, each with their own specifications for the use of the concept. Though he had been building up to its introduction for several years, James Coleman produced an article 1988 in which he defined his version of the concept, noting that as:

"...physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the *relations* among persons. ...For example, a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust. The value of the concept of social capital lies first in the fact that it identifies certain aspects of social structure by their functions...The function identified by the concept of "social capital" is the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests.(Coleman 1988)"

In this case, Coleman was operating within the *Rational Choice* theoretical tradition, and so the concepts he examined focused on rational use of resources in social situations to achieve desired outcomes. As such, he considered social capital to be among those resources, differentiated from physical tools (physical capital) or acquired skills (human capital)(1988). More specifically, he identified *social* capital as those means social interactional resources that allow people to achieve their goals. He uses trust between people as an example of social capital, where in this case, the capital *is* trust, which can be used, “saved up”, or depleted by misuse. Yet proper use of trust in social relations can lead to a desired result, such as a promotion or being given more prestigious responsibilities in the work place. So in this case, social capital is a resource that operates on the social relational level, in the relationships and interactions that occur between individuals.

Perhaps better known for his work to advance social capital is Robert Putnam, a Harvard political scientist who adopted Coleman’s concept and carried it to a wider market, devoting much of his career to the application of the theory. Putnam maintains Coleman’s definition, but puts it into more accessible language, translating it for an audience that may not have spent as much time embroiled in social theory. He adds clarity to Coleman’s initial explanation by commenting that social capital is those “features of social life-networks, norms, and trust-that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. ... Social capital, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust.(Putnam 1995)” In this context, it is still clear that Social Capital continued its compatibility with microsociological topics, though Putnam also applied this concept at the community level and Coleman noted that this idea

could be applied to organizations, institutions, and corporations (though his empirical work did not reach this stage)(Coleman 1988).

Pierre Bourdieu also developed a notion of social capital, one which was focused much more closely on power dynamics and economy (Siisiäinen 2000). Adopting far more technical language, Bourdieu focuses on the vital connection to social networks that a person must possess in order to build a valuable bank of social capital. While Putnam and Coleman do not require that social capital correlate with possession of other types of capital, Bourdieu argues that to some extent, the three must be connected. Noting that a person's social capital is dependent on social networks in relation to group membership and social relationships (institutional or not), Bourdieu adds that

“...Although it is relatively irreducible to the economic and cultural capital possessed by a given agent, ...social capital is never completely independent of [these factors] because the exchanges instituting mutual acknowledgment presuppose the re-acknowledgment of a minimum of [common objectives].(Bourdieu in Biggart 2002) ”

As such, he argues that social capital cannot be fully separated from other types of capital because of the nature of mutual social agreements that occur with the use and acquisition of social capital. Given the commonalities between these interpretations, it is interesting to note that the empirical context in which this concept is used substantially affects the perception of its meaning.

One interesting series of studies on social capital and political behavior serves to illustrate the relationship more clearly. Nielson and Paxton (2010) sought to assess how social capital affects political consumerism, specifically boycotting or boycotting items based on political or ethical criteria (two measures used in my own index of political participation). They found that each of their measures of social capital had significant effects on political consumerism: in their conclusion, Nielson and Paxton noted that

“...At the individual level, generalized trust, trust in institutions, association involvement, and frequency of social meetings all have significant effects on political consumerism: positive in the case of generalized trust, association memberships and social meetings, and negative for trust in institutions.(2010)”

Associational involvement is frequently a key variable in the measurement of Social Capital, and is featured prominently in a number of studies. Quintelier found that youth involvement in voluntary associations broadly encouraged political participation in adulthood (2008). Contrary to Janoski’s findings (1998), however, Quintelier found that the specific type of voluntary association made a difference (as opposed to volunteering in general), commenting that “Cultural, deliberative and help organizations are more successful than expressive, religious-ethnic and youth groups in socializing young people into politics. ...this might be explained by the organizations' aims: organizations of the first type aim to aid society, ...while expressive organizations are more entertainment-oriented.(2008)” These results replicated in part earlier findings by McFarland and Thomas who similarly found that selective participation in extracurricular organizations (that were “politically salient”) encouraged long-term political activity a decade later (2006).

Peer Influence- How it May Develop, Selected Findings

Given its importance to the concept of social capital, and to this study, it is worth emphasizing here the role of peer influence to my argument. Though Alienation is the primary independent variable, the effect of this factor will likely be heavily moderated by social relations with others. It is well known that the people we are around have an influence on our behavior – as social beings, we do not operate within a vacuum. There is

no reason this shouldn't be the case with political behavior.

In fact, Anthony Orum argued that Americans are coming to identify less with political parties and organizations, but are instead connecting to political participation through a *political arena*, in which "...Social proximity to the center of the political arena, where the battles of politics are fought and where power is exercised, then, is what we might call the cornerstone of this conception.(1979)" Yet another common connection between peer influence and political behavior can be found in the studies of religion and politics. Aside from the obvious role of churches in civil rights movements (and others), but some have noted "...both the role of churches and religion in training members in the art of citizenry and providing them with the orientation to politics and instigation necessary to take their civic resources into the political sphere.(Djupe & Grant 2001)" Given that the study cited limited their sample to regular churchgoers, the likelihood of peer influence is clear. Others have found highly significant support for the effect of peer influence on political participation, discussion of politics with parents and friends had positive effects on political participation, political consumerism, and civic participation (Quintelier 2008).

This effect, often criticized for the number of studies that rely on simple correlation as evidence, has been confirmed in panel studies by Casey A. Klofstad and others (2010). In fact, Klofstad's findings are interesting because of how they relate directly to my own measures of peer influence. Klofstad's 2010 article focused on the relationship between peer networks, civic talk ("talking about politics and current events with our peers"), and civic participation. His results indicated that participants were more likely to participate in civic organizations years after engaging in political talk, and

“...Further analysis shows that the initial boost in civic participation caused by civic talk is the mechanism by which the effect of civic talk lasts into the future.(Klofstad 2010)” This supports the importance of including variables measuring political discussion in a study such as mine, even in such a basic capacity.

An important caveat, however, was observed by researchers a few years previously, where some found that exposure to disagreement in discussion yields reduced odds of political participation (Pattie & Johnston 2008). Yet Pattie and Johnston found that such is not necessarily the case. Their study found that in some circumstances, “...for some forms of activism, exposure to countervailing views may actually motivate participation.(2008)” Lim supports this argument, commenting that their work on network ties and political participation indicates that the contexts in which social ties are formed influence the type and level of political, civic, and community activism engaged in by citizens (Lim 2008).

Though she limits her work to issues affecting voter turnout, Meredith Rolfe focuses quite closely on the role of context in social networks and voting behavior, noting that certain types or configurations of social networks can encourage or discourage participation (Rolfe 2012). Arguably, this theory could easily be expanded to include other types of political behavior. She describes this effect as resulting in a state of conditional choice between others’ actions and the respondent (Rolfe 2012). In this case, the respondent makes a choice to engage or disengage (to vote or not to vote) conditionally, with consideration for the behaviors or perceived social response from the person’s network, thus providing an argument that examining such network variables and controlling for social location can explain variances in voting behavior (Rolfe 2012).

The conceptually related role of opinion leaders is also one to consider in political behavior. Research on the idea and role of opinion leaders (and the related two-step flow concept) appeared to be taking off in the 1950s, with the findings that information from the media frequently isn't absorbed directly by consumers, but is often filtered and relayed by opinion leaders, people who are considered influential within their social groups. Opinion leaders are found to exist in nearly every type of social group (regardless of class) and often fit the same demographics as their peers, but are simply more in-tune with the outside world and share that knowledge with interested associates (Katz 1957). Based on this concept, the argument goes that opinion leaders share their views (respected by those they influence) with others in their network, where those views affect people's own political decisions, opinions, or behavior. Such may even affect what issues they feel are salient, valuable, or worth addressing.

This is worth mentioning here because it outlines another element demonstrating the importance of considering peer influences. Though my study cannot assess who the respondent's opinion leaders are (or if they have any), it indicates why variables capturing the possibility of peer influence are highly salient to my study's goals while supporting a theoretical precedent for the consideration of peer influence. In particular, it is important because the effects of factors like social capital or alienation may be moderated (and directly affected) by the attitudes, support, or mutual engagement (or apathy) of friends. Thus, though it is not a direct component of my key variables, the concept of peer influence is an important element of my study.

IV. Theoretical Background

Political participation is a fairly popular topic, and theories seeking to explain the variation in participation are widely available. Fewer recent studies focus on alienation as a major independent variable. Broadly speaking, it appears that theories seeking to clarify political participation can be categorized into descriptive groups. Specifically, explanations seem to include (from macro- to micro-level): the state-centric, institutionalist, demographic, network, and personal/psychological. Theories on the broader, aggregate level bear some interesting explanatory potential, especially in exploring the effects of state model or institutional forms on individual perceptions and political behavior. Given the analytical bounds of this study, such is not the focus here, except to acknowledge that such things do likely have an effect. However, other theoretical categories lend themselves better to analysis via CID data, and it is upon those that we will focus.

In particular, the two segments below focus on various interpretations of Social Capital theory to explain political behavior. I discuss these works so that they may exemplify how Social Capital may be counted in my model as a concept whose effects can be compared to those of political alienation. Social capital theory can be regarded as having two key sources in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Robert Putnam, and James Coleman. While the concept is actually one of three dimensions of capital, Bourdieu's interpretation focuses on social capital as a symbolic resource that emphasizes conflict and power. In this case, social capital is useful in struggles for other resources or social positions (Siisiainen 2000). Putnam and Coleman's usage can be more clearly simplified in the form of three primary components: "moral obligations and norms, social values

(especially trust) and social networks (especially voluntary associations).(Siisiainen 2000)” With these understandings in mind, we can move to examine the points below.

Theory of Social Capital through Interaction

Building on Putnam’s work in Social Capital theory, Ikeda, Kobayashi and Richey sought to put Social Capital to their own test, to empirically confirm its more interactionist elements (2012). The core of their claim is that Social Capital theory can be used to predict political participation, but that this *must* include informal social interaction. Though the authors do not identify any competing theories, they argue that through their model they have proven the power of Social Capital theory, and that it remains appropriate to explain political participation. Though rather simplistic, their theoretical model conceptualizes social networking as leading directly to political participation. The authors argue that this occurs through three pathways of interactions: those with Nonpolitical Social Associations, Overtly Political Organizational Associations, and through Informal Interactions (such as soccer clubs or bowling leagues).

These three factors have a positive correlation with engaging in a variety of political behaviors, from voting and campaigning to letter-writing and protesting. In essence, they argue for a rather Interactionist approach to studying the role of social capital in influencing behavior, asserting that the most informal acts can lead to higher political participation. Taking this step further from simple, small acts, they claim that diverse forms of social integration can combine to dramatically increase political participation. Through their analysis, they find that informal recreation, and social and political associations all have a positive, significant effect.

However, their results leave me unconvinced that Ikeda and company have found a one-shot solution to explaining political participation. They find good support for the value of Social Capital theory, but their failure to consider (or even mention) any conflicting theories makes me wonder where the critical value of this project lies. Further, this method of theoretical support implies that the Interactional variables *must* explain political behaviors to the exclusion of all others, yet their own regression results indicate other meaningful factors beyond common demographics (in their model, political/civil rights and political connections yielded significant results).

Despite these issues, the *Interactionist Theory of Social Capital* (a title I assign it; they give it no name) is worth discussing because it seems to support a well-known theory and some of its concepts are useful to my own proposed study. Specifically, though I would discourage attempting to explain a broad set of behaviors with a single category of variables, I find Ikeda and company's measures of social interaction and networking valuable. Social influences are a vital component of my study, not only because of their direct effects (as these authors suggest) but because of how they can moderate the effects of other variables, including my measures of Alienation. As such, some of these types of measures will be useful in constructing my own model.

Resource Mobilization in Civil Society Model

In a second vein of the Social Capital literature, I have examined one of the many collaborations of Brady, Verba and Schlozman, who worked to develop a more specific concept of the role of resources in politics. Instead of settling for the explanatory power of Socioeconomic Status, they argue for a Resource model, in which they claim that access to resources beyond those measured by SES are a vital predictor of engagement in

political activity.

In particular, they develop this model because the authors feel that psychological explanations and those based on SES or rational-choice models are insufficient to capture the full scope of political activity. Instead, they contend that a model resembling the Resource Mobilization concept (potentially borrowed from social movements literature) may be more effective, as it allows them to distinguish between those who abstain from political behavior by choice and those who do so because of a lack of those resources needed in order to be politically active (Brady et al. 1995). This allows the authors to create more reliable, material measures of constraints on political activity, instead of depending solely on motivational concepts. Their concerns about simple SES models are actually based more on such models' lack of a causal mechanism linking status to behavior, (they acknowledge its respectable predictive power)(Brady et al 1995). Thus, Brady and company argue that a hybrid theory of SES and Resource Mobilization will be better able to predict and explain political behavior. Substantively, this results in a theoretical argument that possibly bears a more striking resemblance to Social Capital theory than the authors may have intended.

Brady and associates spend time assessing the role of learning civic skills in political activity, focusing on those gained from extrapolitical institutional settings (somewhat mirroring Ikeda, Kobayashi, and Richey's concept of Nonpolitical Social Associational skills). They then move to the heart of their argument, in which they seek to show that access to resources explains political participation and that different resources will influence the political activities engaged respondents choose. This trio has constructed a fairly useful figure depicting their model (Brady et al., p 277). However,

their model can be condensed, in terms of institutional involvement causing pre-political skills, which then in turn causes political participation. Socio-economic status uses these mechanisms to create political involvement, so this model clarifies what SES does (Brady et al. 1995). These sets of skills or attributes are meant to coalesce into the resources of Time, Civic Skills, or Money, which combine well to match the concept of social capital. These are then argued to translate directly to a range of political acts, which are shown to be marginally influenced by political interest and citizenship.

Generally speaking, the theory is well constructed and seems to be fairly comprehensive. However, I find myself looking for the role of networks or peer influences in this study, and only find implied relationships. The authors' consideration of the relationship between job opportunities, organizational opportunities, church opportunities, and the possession of relevant skills at least implies the social mechanism of voluntary involvement and religious affiliations serving as learning grounds for political behavior. Yet this connection is left largely to the reader's assumptions, and its lack of specificity makes institutions appear to be magic black boxes that skills come out of. Indeed, the key weakness of this theory is that, despite the innately social nature of its subject, the role of people is curiously absent, often implied but seldom explored beyond their ability to be the subjects of social forces, rather than active participants in social processes. Though I also think this theoretical model would do well to try to consider subjective or affective states in influencing political behavior, the authors make a fair point about the difficulties in reliably measuring such attitudinal concepts. This theory is, however, useful to me because of its focus on the value of institutional involvements, and how they (as an element of social capital theory) can dispose one toward political

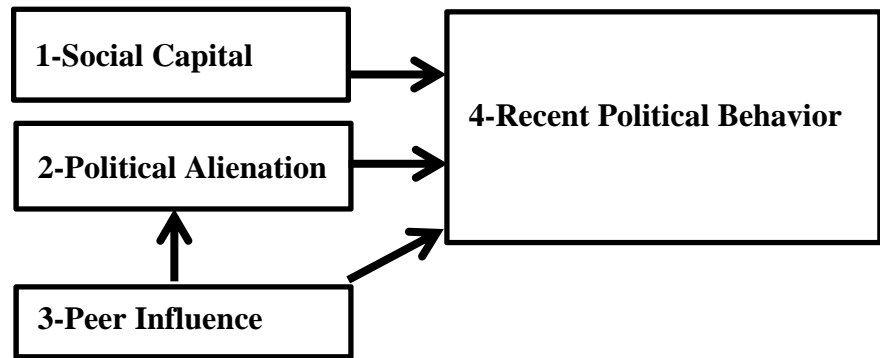
participation. Their operationalization of this concept is fairly clear, and its connection to participation reinforces the need to include associational involvement in my own models. However, it also suffers from the tendency to produce one theoretical framework as the solution to a complex array of political behavioral patterns, an issue I intend to address in my own work.

Theory of Participatory Alienation

This brings us to the key concepts, political alienation and political behavior. The two social capital-based theories discussed have been considered because they are recognized to have a significant effect upon political activity, but fail to provide complete explanations, lacking the additional explanatory abilities of political alienation. In particular, political alienation can affect political behavior in ways that vary beyond the simplistic measures of voting or donating for an election or cause. Instead, given the mixed literature on the effect of alienation, I am given to ask whether (and how) political alienation significantly affects political participation, and if the effect is universally negative. Given that many studies focus on alienation primarily, without many options for comparison, I wish to see if any observed effects will hold up under comparison to the effects of social capital.

This brings us to my theoretical argument. As can be seen in Figure 2, my expectations in this area are fairly simple. In reference to the theories I selected for comparison, it is safe to assume that social capital (with its connections to cultural, social, and economic resources) has a direct effect on political behavior (Items 1 and 4). This makes intuitive and theoretical sense, as the large amount of social integration that tends to come with social capital can combine well with financial and educational resources to make comprehension of and engagement in politics easier. The benefits of participation may be more salient to engaged citizens. My consideration of resources such as social capital or socioeconomic status also carries the merit in that it can allow me to examine the effect of alienation beyond the limitations of one's resources.

Figure 2: Theoretical Representation of Alienation Model



This brings me to Item 2 in our figure, the core concept of Political alienation (and the key to my research question). I expect that alienation in the form of meaninglessness and powerlessness will negatively affect political participation, but can be softened by controlling for social capital. A person with high social capital, who may already be inclined toward participation may be more likely to gain the skills or social connections to overcome feelings of powerlessness, but may engage in fewer forms of participation. However, I suspect that mistrust may have a positive effect on participation, as the respondent may feel that change in the political system is necessary. Peer influence (Item 3) will, I suspect, moderate the effect of each form of alienation on participation, where those who maintain active social relationships with friends will be more likely to engage in political activities. I expect that when it comes to alienated citizens, active relationships with friends or peers can make the difference between an apathetic response and the decision to become involved in some sort of group political activity. To this effect, I present the following three hypotheses:

Hypotheses

Alienation Hypotheses:

H₁: If the respondent experiences high powerlessness or meaninglessness, they will engage in fewer political activities.

H₂: If the respondent is mistrustful of political institutions, they will engage in a greater number of political activities.

Here we see the core of my expectations, and the fundamental concepts I will test.

I expect that feelings of alienation from the government or party in power will affect the way individuals interact with the political system. These can occur in the form of feelings of powerlessness, or inability to find meaning in political narratives. In general, alienation will reduce odds of participating in political activities because the respondent may perceive the official system as something corrupt or insensitive to the needs of everyday citizens. At this point, some may tend toward apathy (especially if they lack the resources for any engagement or lack the political socialization needed to be able to make sense of political information) or reduced engagement.

Regarding hypothesis 2, we find a potential contradiction in that mistrust is expected to lead to increased engagement, as the respondent may be inclined to change a system they do not trust.

Social Capital Hypothesis:

H₃: If a respondent has high social capital, then they will engage in more political activities.

The logic behind this prediction is that a person with high social capital will be more likely to be plugged into local issues and leaders, and will thus have the resources, knowledge, and social connections that may make participation possible. Since they would have greater social connections to their community, they may perceive a higher stake in its wellbeing. I expect this outcome because my measures of social capital focus

on membership in a variety of community and civic organizations. The potential long-term nature of these connections also represents opportunities to develop the types of capital that allow for political participation and the investment in community that increases the respondent's stake in political events (providing the inclination to engage). Further, given the respondent's hypothetical connections and education, they may also experience higher self-efficacy and ability to understand the dynamics that drive politics, allowing them confidence in their ability to comprehend and participate in political activities.

Peer Influence Hypotheses:

H₄: If a respondent frequently communicates with close friends, then they will engage in more political activities.

H₅: If a respondent frequently visits close friends, then they will engage in more political activities.

H₆: If a respondent frequently discusses politics with close friends, then they will engage in more political activities.

These expectations are based on the empirical findings in the literature of the importance of peer networks in encouraging political participation. The logic guiding the first two hypotheses is very similar. In line with Ikeda, Kobayashi, and Richey's theory, any sort of social activity should be positively related with political behavior. More specifically, according to their argument, as respondents spend more time with or talking to friends, they should engage in a higher number of political acts than those who do not. Similarly, several studies have found that discussing politics with others has a positive effect for increasing people's interest and participation in a number of political acts (Quintelier 2008; Klofstad 2010; Lazarsfeld 1939). Thus, my related hypothesis expects to replicate this result.

V. Methods and Analysis

The goal of this analysis is to explain to what extent (if at all) political alienation affects one's amount of political participation, and whether this effect is moderated by peer influence. The variables selected for the analysis are based largely on previous research in this topic and for comparison to popular means of explaining political behavior. More specifically, this analysis will compare the explanatory power of alienation to that of social capital, a concept that, while not limited to explaining political behavior, has been extensively used for the purpose. Properly completed, this analysis will provide us with a better understanding methodological merit of assessing alienation as a significant variable in predicting political behaviors, and whether social interaction of any sort can significantly outweigh the effects of political alienation (if they are found). Given the contested and largely diminished study of alienation (in its general form, and as applied to politics) in current research, this analysis may help to lend clarity to the current state of the concept, and illustrate how it may be used more meaningfully in future research.

Data Set & Sample

The data I will be using for this analysis comes from the 2006 United States Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy (CID) survey. This data set was compiled in summer 2005 (released in 2006) at the request of Georgetown University's Center for Democracy and Civil Society, and led by Drs. Marc M. Howard, James L. Gibson, and Dietland Stolle (USCID 2008). The purpose of this data set's development was twofold: to permit an in-depth study of a variety of themes related to US civic engagement, and to allow for comparative studies with 22 countries included in the European Social Survey.

The former purpose is more relevant to this study. In particular, this set is more useful than the commonly-used American National Election Studies (ANES) data because the CID survey provides a greater variety of variables relating to political and civic engagement, and networks or peer influence. These variables also provide greater specificity than those currently available in many of the ANES sets.

Featuring 1,001 cases, the survey was heavily based on the European Social Survey, with the intention of providing a data set for the US that could be used comparatively with data on European countries (USCID 2008). It gathered political involvement data at a household level using stratified cluster sampling, with weights to improve its national generalizability. In some ways, this data set is a significant improvement over the ANES data because it contains the greater variety of network and social interactional variables that are vital to exploring the role of alienation in political participation. However, the nature of the CID sampling and its 41.47% response rate places it at an above-average quality level, though it is below the rate required for the highest-quality academic surveys, such as the General Social Survey (USCID: Methodology 2008).

Analysis

Missing data somewhat impeded this analysis, as (despite the 1001 sample size) some constructed variables had too few observations to allow for a stable model (See the following section for specific variable measures). Such variables had to be omitted from analysis, including types of voluntary associations the respondent had friends in. After removing potential outliers (identified via Cooks D), the resulting sample size of 721 was sufficient to continue with analysis.

All four regression models were performed using the Negative Binomial method. This choice was initially made because the dependent variable was a count measure, and its strong leftward skew was most compatible with this type of analysis. Tests indicated that the dependent variable (political participation) was not zero-inflated, but the presence of overdispersion revealed that a negative binomial model would be more accurate than Poisson for my purposes (Long & Freese 2006). Results will be analyzed by converting coefficients into incidence rate ratios for interpretation. Each model is nested within the previous model, as each new model builds upon the original model for comparison of model quality. I decided to use nested models for a few reasons, the first being that given the type of regression used (Negative Binomial) does not permit comparisons of model quality via methods such as F-Tests or comparing R^2 scores. However, using the AIC' and BIC' indicators in nested models allows me to compare how model quality improves when alienation and peer influence variables are included (as opposed to relying solely on social capital). Finding positive changes in model quality and significant effects could then lend empirical support for the theory of Participatory Alienation. Thus, though the nature of negative binomial regression does not allow for quality testing using indicators such as the R-squared, AIC and BIC tests proved sufficient for model comparison.

The analysis includes a fourth model to check for moderation between alienation and peer influence variables. For regression diagnostics of all models, Cook's D, AIC, and BIC tests were used and considered together to eliminate influential cases, and compare and evaluate model fit. Comparisons between models using AIC and BIC tests all revealed strong support for each successive model, with the greatest improvement being between models 1 and 2.

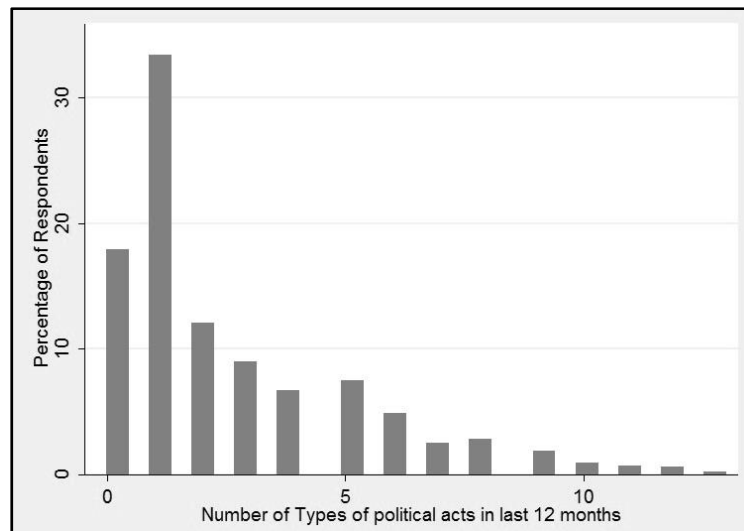
Measures

For this study, the dependent variable is an indexed measure of political participation. The variable (titled POLACT) is a simple index, which is the sum of 13 types of binary political participation variables. As such, the dependent variable is a 13-point measure, where one point is assigned to each type of activity the respondent had participated in within the last twelve months. Though the data set contains a wide variety of behavioral variables, other elements of civic engagement were omitted from analysis because they were not specifically *political*, though they may be relevant to other methods of social change-making, including community service or development. Table 5.1 indicates the variables included, and the percentage of respondents who had engaged in each activity. This measure is based on a variety of common measures of participation discussed in the literature section. As discussed in the literature review, my measures largely align with those used by Bolzendahl and Coffe (2010), with the inclusion of

Table 5.1: Frequencies of Variables Composing “Political Activity”

| Variables - In last 12 Months, Respondent has: | N | % Participated |
|---|----------|-----------------------|
| Voted in Presidential Election | 985 | 71.74 |
| Signed petition for a cause | 1000 | 34.30 |
| Bought product specifically for political/ethical reasons | 995 | 23.41 |
| Worn political button/badge | 999 | 22.40 |
| Contacted a politician | 1000 | 20.90 |
| Donated money to political organization or group | 999 | 20.30 |
| Boycotted goods/services for political/ethical reasons | 995 | 18.41 |
| Forwarded electronic message with political content | 985 | 13.80 |
| Worked for a political campaign | 998 | 8.21 |
| Worked for political action group or party | 1001 | 7.99 |
| Participated in political activity online | 985 | 7.71 |
| Participated in legal public demonstration | 997 | 4.81 |
| Participated in illegal form of protest | 994 | 1.30 |

Figure 3: Distribution of Number of Political Acts by Respondent in Past 12 Months. (N=956)



variables oriented more toward activism as supported by Walder (2009), Fisher (2012), and others. As could be expected, the most frequently occurring act was voting.

This survey oversampled voters (in 2004, the voter participation rate was 63.8% of eligible citizens 18 years of age or older), but the other activities cannot be confirmed (US Census 2006). Between 20-35% of respondents had signed petitions, worn buttons, contacted politicians, donated money, or bought products for political or ethical reasons. Beyond these activities, participation declined sharply.

When indexed (see Figure 3), the measure of political activity is skewed heavily to the left, indicating that a majority of respondents had engaged in fewer than five types of political acts in the past year. Considering again that the past twelve months included a Presidential election and the preceding months (often containing a flurry of pre-election political activity for those who are inclined to do so), this should be a fairly accurate estimate of the patterns of political behavior that respondents tend to follow during election years. However, it is important to keep in mind that presidential election years are known for featuring higher voter participation rates than in other years, and such may

also be the case for other types of political activity such as campaigning or donating money.

Independent Variables

In order to analyze this variable *Political Participation*, I composed four nested models using negative binomial regression. The first regression was computed to predict political participation using measures of Social Capital. Social capital measures included religious service attendance, voluntary association membership (measured by number of types of organizations the respondent has joined), whether or not the respondent was a member of a neighborhood association, and whether they had ever been unemployed¹¹ for three months or longer. Descriptive statistics for each can be seen in Table 5.2. Zero-Order correlations can be found in Appendix 1. These measures are based upon the many

Table 5.2. Descriptive Statistics of Social Capital (Independent) Variables

| Variable | Proportion | Mean | Range | SD |
|---|------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Religious Attendance | | | | |
| R attends church daily* | 0.005 | - | - | - |
| R attends church once weekly or more | 0.342 | - | - | - |
| R attends church once monthly or less | 0.506 | - | - | - |
| R Never attends church | 0.146 | - | - | - |
| R has ever been unemployed & seeking work for 3 mo.+ | 0.354 | - | - | - |
| Voluntary Association Membership (# of types of orgs.) | - | 0.5025 | 0-5 | 0.8101 |
| Neighborhood/Homeowners/Condo. association or block club Member | 0.079 | - | - | - |
| R's placement on Liberal-Conservative scale (0=Liberal) | - | 5.4894 | 0-10 | 2.2655 |

*Omitted reference category for Religious dummy variables.

¹¹ Unemployment in this sense refers to the definition used by the US Census Bureau, emphasizing the requirement that the respondent had been seeking work during their time of unemployment.

studies of social capital that emphasize participatory association membership. In particular, I seek to compose a set similar to that used by Nielson and Paxton (2010), Quintelier (2008) and others. Despite Quintelier's misgivings, I also include a measure of religious attendance, given the inclusion of religion both as a control commonly used in studies and as a type of voluntary association considered by others (McFarland & Thomas 2006; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson 1998; Wilson & Janoski 1005)

The majority of respondents seldom or never attend religious services. In the regression analysis, the reference group consists of respondents who never attend church or religious services. About a third of respondents had experienced unemployment for three months or longer, and the majority of respondents are center-left to center-right on the political ideology spectrum, though the sample skews very slightly toward conservative. Over 80% of respondents were involved in one or no voluntary associations, a number that was somewhat lower than expected given the diverse range included in the measure. Similarly, fewer than ten percent of respondents were members of neighborhood associations. While social capital very often includes a respondent's income and education level, these variables were used as controls. This was because the significance of education and income in both social capital and in affecting political behavior are so empirically verified that they do not need further empirical justification within the scope of this paper.¹²

¹² For more information (to name a few) about the effects of income and education on political behavior, see:
Dodson, Kyle. "The Return of the American Voter? Party Polarization and Voting Behavior, 1988 to 2004." *Sociological Perspectives* 53.3 (2010): 443-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Apr. 2014.
Hillygus, D. Sunshine. "The Missing Link: Exploring the Relationship Between Higher Education and Political participation." *Political Behavior* 27.1 (2005): 25-47. *JSTOR*. Web. 03 Apr. 2014.

Table 5.3. Descriptive Statistics of Alienation (Independent) Variables

| Variable | Mean | Range | SD |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Powerlessness | 3.464 | 1-5 | 1.009 |
| Meaninglessness | 3.060 | 1-5 | 1.078 |
| Mistrust | 26.98 | 1-51 | 10.051 |

| Zero-Order Correlations for Alienation Variables | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| | Powerlessness | Meaninglessness | Mistrust |
| Powerlessness | 1 | - | - |
| Meaninglessness | 0.1541 | 1 | - |
| Mistrust | 0.4547 | 0.1233 | 1 |

The second model introduces independent variables representing the multidimensional nature of political alienation (as seen in Table 5.3). As previously discussed (see page 17), common measures of political alienation include the concepts of feelings of powerlessness to affect politics and meaninglessness of politics. Some measures include trust or mistrust of political institutions (Dean 1960; Southwell 2012). This was an intriguing concept as it makes intuitive sense, yet is not strongly supported by the literature. As such, I also determined that exploring the role (if any) of mistrust in political alienation could help to clarify the results of Dean and Southwell, and permit empirical findings to weigh in on this point. Regardless of this result, given that a more generalized form of trust is occasionally included in measures of social capital, this variable may still have something notable to tell us in this model (Nielson & Paxton 2010; Quintelier 2008; Klofstad 2010). Mistrust¹³ is a fifty-point scaled variable representing the sum of a respondent's score on five 10-point measures of trust in

aenger, Gerhart H. "Social Status and Political Behavior." *American Journal of Sociology* 51.2 (1945): 103-13. *JSTOR*. Web. 03 Apr. 2014.

¹³ In this case, *mistrust* must be distinguished from *distrust*. *Mistrust* is defined as the *lack* of trust in the specified institutions or groups, while *distrust* refers to active suspicion or doubt toward a group/person. Distinction is based on basic dictionary definitions.

political institutions and groups which include: Congress, the Legal System, Politicians, the Supreme Court, and Political Parties. For this variable, a higher number indicates deeper mistrust, where a score of 1 indicates complete trust in all groups listed above. This index was composed based on theoretical relationships between each parent variable, and confirmed via exploratory factor analysis, which indicated that each parent variable for mistrust did unite under a single latent variable, which I term Mistrust.

Powerlessness is measured by the respondent's assessment that politicians are not concerned by the thoughts of people like the respondent. Meaninglessness was constructed to represent the respondent's understanding of their own internal ability to comprehend, and thus influence political events or discourse. For this analysis, the variable was constructed based on the respondent's assessment of how often politics is too complicated to understand what is occurring. Regarding the alienation measures, each variable is fairly normally distributed. The mean score for meaninglessness is a3.06, while powerlessness has a very slight skew toward feeling more powerless, with a mean score of 3.46. Mistrust also has a faint lean in favor of less trust in political institutions (with a mean score of 26.98).

The third model included variables measuring the possibility that peers influence the respondent's political participation (Table 5.4). In keeping with Ikeda, Kobayashi & Richey's theory, I included a basic ordinal measure of the respondent's number of close friends (ranging from none to more than ten), frequency of telephone communication (ranging from "Every Day" to less than "Once per month"), and frequency of political conversation with close friends (a four-point measure ranging from 1, "Usually", to 4, "Never"). Frequency of in-person contact with close friends is also included in the model,

and is measured with identical categories as frequency of political discussion. These measures were converted into binary dummy variables.¹⁴

A second version of the third model was run to test for moderation between political alienation variables and peer influence variables. However, due to dataset limitations, this model ran into some difficulties; most permutations either failed to yield significant results, or could not be parsimoniously created due to multicollinearity issues.¹⁵ Given the lack of significant results, the findings for the final analysis are not included in the main text of this thesis.

Finally, there are several considerations to keep in mind in understanding the results of these analyses. First, behavioral variables are estimated by the respondent *post hoc*, possibly by several months, and thus may be prone to a certain level of memory

Table 5.4. Zero-Order Correlations Between Peer-Influence (Independent) Variables* and Descriptive Statistics

| Variables | Number of close friends (Ordinal) | Frequency of phone commun. w/ close fri. | Frequency of in-person meeting w/ close fri. | Frequency of political disc.. w/ close fri. | Mean | Range | SD |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|------|-------|------|
| Number of close friends (Ordinal) | 1 | | | | 3.63 | 1-6 | 1.18 |
| Frequency of phone comm. w/ close fri. | -0.1695 | 1 | | | 2.06 | 1-5 | 1.03 |
| Frequency of in-person meet w/ close fri. | -0.1851 | 0.4569** | 1 | | 2.43 | 1-5 | 1.06 |
| Frequency of pol. disc. w/ close fri. | -0.0902 | 0.043 | 0.1049 | 1 | 2.76 | 1-4 | 0.91 |

*Full table of correlations (including dummy variables used in analysis can be found in Appendix 2.

**Some correlations were higher than preferred, but because the correlation between these important variables was not extremely high, the variables remained in the model, and robust standard errors were used to reduce the effects of collinearity.

¹⁴ Reference categories /variables are: “Respondent has 11 or more close friends”, “Respondent never talks on the phone with close friends”, “Respondent meets with close friends daily”, “Respondent rarely discusses politics with close friends”.

¹⁵ I would strongly recommend future researchers to take time to address this issue, and consider employing some of the solutions recommended by York (2012).

error. Similarly, scalar variables (which may serve as the basis for indexes) such as levels of trust are also estimated by respondents, and may be prone to bias toward quintiles, ends, and so on. While the distribution of most of these measures is fairly normal, this possibility must be kept in mind. Sampling limitations have also introduced a certain level of error for generalizability of results. However, in order to improve the statistical validity of results, population weights were used in analysis.

VI. Results

From examining the design of the three models of this study, we can immediately proceed to analysis of the results. Model 1 focused on predicting political participation based on social capital variables. These include frequency of attendance at religious services, experiences of lengthy unemployment, voluntary and neighborhood association membership, and the respondent's placement on a liberal-conservative scale (to account for their ideological placement relative to the political administration in national office).

Model 1 revealed a surprising lack of significance, given the weight the literature placed on social capital measures (Table 6.1). While religious service attendance weekly or less lacked significant effects, respondents who attended a service daily participated in 60.4% fewer political acts than those who never attend religious services ($p < 0.001$), all else constant. Political ideology had no significant effect, along with neighborhood association membership and experiences of long-term unemployment, when controlling for other factors. Yet voluntary association membership had a strongly significant effect ($p < .001$); with each increase in type of association in which the respondent held membership, they also participated in about 37% more political acts, all else equal.

The subsequent model (referred to as Model 2) was nested within the first, and added the three political alienation variables (see Table 6.1). To begin with, mistrust in political institutions was a fifty-point measure. The remaining two were five-point measures of respondent perceptions of political meaninglessness and powerlessness. Model two shows few changes in social capital variables. However, the effect of daily religious service attendance became more significant, indicating that daily churchgoers'

number of political activities decreased by about half (54.5%), compared to those who never attend church, all else constant ($p < 0.001$). Further, the effect of voluntary association activity decreased slightly. This time, all else equal, as the average respondent's membership in types of voluntary associations increases, the number of

Table 6.1: Summary of Nested Models of Political Participation as affected by Social Capital, Political Alienation and Peer Influence

| Dependent Variable: Number of Types of Political Acts. | Model 1: Social Capital | Model 2: Alienation | Model 3: Peer Influence |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Social Capital Variables: | | | |
| R Attends Relig. Service: Every Day | 0.396*** (0.231 - 0.679) | 0.455*** (0.291 - 0.714) | 0.532*** (0.372 - 0.762) |
| R Attends Relig. Service: Weekly or More | 1.002 (0.801 - 1.253) | 1.072 (0.859 - 1.339) | 1.091 (0.882 - 1.349) |
| R Attends Relig. Service: Monthly or Less | 1.042 (0.842 - 1.289) | 1.100 (0.893 - 1.355) | 1.107 (0.912 - 1.344) |
| Voluntary Assoc. Member. (# of types of orgs.) | 1.369*** (1.278 - 1.466) | 1.353*** (1.263 - 1.449) | 1.287*** (1.204 - 1.376) |
| Alienation Variables: | | | |
| Powerlessness | | 0.893** (0.831 - 0.959) | 0.912** (0.851 - 0.977) |
| Meaninglessness | | 0.943 (0.882 - 1.008) | 0.956 (0.900 - 1.015) |
| Mistrust of political inst. (High # = Less Trust) | | 1.015*** (1.007 - 1.023) | 1.014*** (1.006 - 1.022) |
| Peer Influence Variables: | | | |
| R meets w/ friends few times Weekly | | | 1.238* (1.027 - 1.491) |
| R meets w/ friends few times per Month | | | 1.129 (0.912 - 1.398) |
| R meets w/ friends once per month or less | | | 0.885 (0.669 - 1.170) |
| R Usually talks politics w/ Friends | | | 1.622*** (1.299 - 2.025) |
| R Sometimes talks politics w/ Friends | | | 1.362*** (1.185 - 1.565) |
| R Never talks politics w/ Friends | | | 0.792* (0.639 - 0.982) |
| Constant | 1.19 | 1.33 | 1.10 |
| N | 721 | 721 | 721 |
| AIC | 4.016 | 3.992 | 3.929 |
| BIC' | -51.841 | -54.864 | -41.321 |

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Difference of 3.037 in BIC' between model 1 and model 2 provides strong support for Model 2.

Difference of 13.544 in BIC' between model 2 and model 3 provides very strong support for Model 3.

Unstandardized Incidence-Rate Ratios presented with Confidence Intervals provided in parentheses.

political activities they participate in increases by 35% ($p < .001$), 1.6% lower than model 1. This could make sense, as over-investment in religious practice may leave little room for political activity.

The alienation variables also offer interesting results, given the literature. While meaningfulness has no significant effect on political participation, as powerlessness increases, respondents participate in a lower number of political acts by a highly significant factor of about 11%, all else equal ($p < .01$). But even more interesting is that as mistrust grows, political participation also grows. Specifically, for every unit increase in mistrust, the number of political acts the respondent participates in increases by 1.5%, controlling for other factors ($p < .001$). Though this is a small percentage change, the large scalar nature of the mistrust variable indicates that this significant change can yield substantial results in respondents who occupy either extreme of the variable. Further, a test comparing the quality of these models yields strong support for model two, citing a BIC' difference of over three points in favor of model 2. In summary, introducing the political alienation variables slightly increases the effect of daily religious attendance (though the relationship remains negative), and slightly decreases the effect of voluntary association membership (though the relationship remains positive).

Considering the quality difference between these two models, we can then examine what kind of meaningful difference occurs when we introduce peer influence variables, which create our third model, also nested within the previous model, as seen in Table 6.1. While the respondent's approximate number of close friends and frequency of telephone communication had no significant effect¹⁶, frequency of in-person meetings and political discussions did. Though meeting with friends a few times a month or less

¹⁶ See Appendix 1 for a table of full regression results.

had no significant effect, respondents who meet with their close friends a few times per week participated in a 23.8% greater number of political acts than those who met with friends every day, all else equal ($p < .05$). Given these results, we see that the effect of simple in-person contact with friends is limited.

Focusing on the effects of political discussion with friends as represented in model 3, however, makes a significant difference in participation. Respondents who usually discussed politics with friends participated in 62.2% more political acts than those who rarely partake in such discussions ($p < .001$), and even those who only sometimes discussed politics participated in a 32% greater number of political activities than those who rarely discuss such topics, all else equal ($p < .001$). The value of political discussion in any amount is further supported by the finding that respondents who never discuss politics with friends engaged in 20.8% fewer political activities than those who rarely (but still do) talk about political topics with friends. Given these findings, then, we can see that social activity in general among friends does not necessarily lead to higher political participation, in contrast to Ikeda, Kobayashi and Richey's argument.

Also in this model, we again see the effect of social capital variables change. When controlling for the additional peer influence variables (see Table 6.1), respondents who attend religious services every day participate in 53% as many political acts ($p < .001$) as someone who never attends religious services, though this effect is 7.2% as many political acts higher than in model two. Further, we see that the effect of voluntary association membership diminishes further (though it remains positive): as the respondent becomes a member of more types of voluntary associations, the number of types of political acts they engage in increases by 28.7% ($p < .001$), all else constant.

However, we also see the effect of powerlessness change when controlling for peer influence. Controlling for all other factors, for every unit increase in powerlessness, the respondents' participation in the number of political acts only decreases by 8.8% ($p < .01$). There is no substantive change in the effects of mistrust. Further, comparing the quality of model 3 to model 2 indicates that while model 3 is somewhat better, the BIC provides only weak support for model 3. This may be because many of the peer influence variables had no significant effect on political participation. But this may be something to keep in mind for the future.

This brings us to our final model, termed Model 3.1 (omitted from table of results due to lack of significance - See Appendix for full results) because the only change introduced is the possibility of interaction effects between the peer influence variables and the political alienation variables. However, this model found no significant interaction between alienation variables and frequency of political discussion, a somewhat surprising result given the highly significant nature of each parent variable (with the exception of internal self-efficacy). Another interesting characteristic of this model is that nearly every previously significant variable (including peer influence and alienation variables) lost their significance, with the exception of daily religious attendance, number of voluntary association memberships, and weekly meetings with friends, and mistrust of political institutions. None of these variables reveal substantive shifts from their strength in the previous models.

VII. Discussion

This analysis revealed findings that both support and conflict with the works of others. Yet these results provide an opening for a meaningful theoretical discussion of alienation and social capital. A majority of social capital variables had no significant effects on political participation, including neighborhood association membership (surprising, given the well-established effects of volunteerism).¹⁷ The significant effect of voluntary associations, observed by others, is also supported by my voluntary association membership variable, which managed to maintain a strong effect across all models. Future models may do well to include measures of civic engagement in analyses separate from political participation. Such may provide more telling results.

Yet the negative (or insignificant) effects of religious attendance were also a surprise, as one might expect high religious attendance to lead to increased opportunity to become engaged through exposure to congregation members, or political calls-to-action made during sermons. Instead, I found that very high religious attendance was strongly negatively related to political participation. This could be due to over-investment of time in religious activity leading to a lack of time for political activity – such a relationship may turn out to be curvilinear. A potential alternative explanation for this observation could be that high religious involvement could relate to higher volunteerism of types that may not be captured in my measure, such as community service, fundraisers for at-risk congregation members, or community building projects. However, a more likely explanation could be that this finding is confirming that of Quintelier, who argued that certain types of voluntary associations (including church activities) may depress turnout

¹⁷ Janoski, T., Musick, M., & Wilson, J. (September 01, 1998). Being Volunteered? The Impact of Social Participation and Pro-Social Attitudes on Volunteering. *Sociological Forum*, 13, 3.)

because they have a goal set that is often more “entertainment-oriented”(2008). Given how high church involvement can foster civic skills, and that many churches emphasize service, this could indicate the need for a more specific variable set for religion and religious associations.

If we were to follow Ikeda, Kobayashi and Richey’s theory, then peer influence played a substantially lower role in political participation than expected. But it shouldn’t be overshadowed, for the effect is still positive and significant. Simple, general engagement with friends (frequency of visits or communication) played little or no significant role in political behavior. Those who met with friends a couple times weekly did have a significant, positive effect on the model. Though this provides weak evidence for Ikeda, Kobayashi & Richey’s argument (as they claimed that any type of social engagement would encourage political activity through casual discussions), the significance of the political talk variable provides much stronger support for Quintelier (2008) and Klofstad (2010). Indeed, political discussions between friends appeared to have a strong effect on participation, while failure (on the respondent’s part) to do so had a distinctly negative effect on participation. This leads me to conclude that the presence of simple social engagements is of extremely limited value: not all social engagements are equal in the arena of political participation. Instead, a more specific focus on the types of voluntary associations a person is involved with, and the level of political salience of their relationships would provide better predictive power. This certainly makes some intuitive sense, as many people do not consider politics a central part of their lives- even if they are politically active, this may not serve as a basis for the majority of their relationships. Regarding the model testing for interactions, there was no sign of

significant moderation between peer influence variables and alienation variables, and though the model fared much better from BIC' testing, nearly all previously significant variables lost their significance.

The results regarding alienation are the most interesting, and perhaps the most promising. This study included measures of three facets of alienation: powerlessness, meaningfulness, and to test its connection, mistrust. Meaninglessness failed to significantly influence political participation in this model, but powerlessness and mistrust maintained significant effects through all models. Interestingly, while high powerlessness related to reduced political participation, high mistrust appears to correlate with higher political participation. This raises interesting questions regarding whether mistrust should be regarded as a subtype of alienation. Contrary to Southwell's claims, mistrust behaved quite differently from my other political alienation variables. A follow-up exploratory factor analysis helped to illuminate this issue: while powerlessness and meaningfulness loaded onto the same factor, mistrust placed a higher loading on a second factor, indicating that a different latent variable was connected to mistrust of political institutions. Mistrust in this case appeared to encourage participation, an effect that supported the findings of Bowler and Karp (2004): where increased mistrust led to higher political participation, respondents felt compelled to change a system they felt was untrustworthy.¹⁸

This is a fascinating finding, and it raises interesting questions about the role of this type of mistrust in studies of political behavior. While the literature indicated that generalized trust was more valuable for social capital measures, we can ask whether this

¹⁸ Bowler, Shaun, and Jeffrey A. Karp. "Politicians, Scandals, and Trust in Government." *Political Behavior* 26.3 (2004): 271-87. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Apr. 2014.

subtype of mistrust might be useful as a control for studies of alienation or social capital's relationship to political participation. An excellent follow-up to better understand the connections between all of these variables could be a structural equation model with latent variables. Using more refined measurements with this combination of concepts could reveal more telling results regarding the more negative elements of political participation.

Finally, there may have been some support for the effects of a multidimensional alienation on political participation, but this need not include mistrust as a subtype - it may be best to include and test other subtypes of alienation on participation. Given that Meaninglessness failed to produce any significant effect, researchers may find better luck considering powerlessness and mistrust in their models. This is better in keeping with Balch's findings regarding internal and external self-efficacy, a term that has enjoyed greater popularity in contemporary socio-political studies, and may better capture those facets of behavior which alienation was supposed to measure.

From this treatment of alienation, we can see why it should be valuable to differentiate between bases of a latent variable, as some of my facets of alienation did not fit with the latent concept and would have served better as an isolated variable. The positive effects of mistrust reminds us that some level of skepticism is likely healthy for a functioning democracy. Given that a slight majority of respondents are inclined toward mistrust, we can conservatively interpret a positive outcome for engagement from skeptical populations, a finding that also supports Bennet's (2013) conclusion that skepticism is healthy for democracy.

Table 7.1. Hypothesis Confirmation and Falsifications

| | Confirmed | Falsified |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Social Capital | H₃ : If a respondent has high social capital, then they will engage in more political activities. H₃ | x |
| Political Alienation | H₁ : If the respondent experiences high powerlessness or meaninglessness, they will engage in fewer political activities. H₂ : If the respondent is mistrustful of political institutions, they will engage in a greater number of political activities. H₁, H₂ | x |
| Peer Influence | H₄ : If a respondent frequently communicates with close friends, then they will engage in more political activities. H₅ : If a respondent frequently visits close friends, then they will engage in more political activities. H₆ : If a respondent frequently discusses politics with close friends, then they will engage in more political activities. H₅, H₆ | H₄ |
| Conclusions based on Table 6.1 | | |

Before approaching the conclusion, however, it is important to understand these interesting results in the context of the hypotheses as originally stated (see page 36). As seen in Table 7.1, Social capital variables revealed interesting findings. While not every variable was significant, it is worth noting that those variables that were significant were those most closely tied to the literature, particularly those involving voluntary associations and religious attendance. Religious service attendance displayed some significance, but in the opposite direction expected. However, voluntary association membership results were consistent with hypotheses and the literature. This indicates that the issue may be more a matter of measurement, as this data set initially appeared lacking in ideal Social Capital variables and some researchers have argued for more nuanced measures of religious factors in politics. Given this finding, it is fair to conclude that these results largely support the value of Social Capital as a significant factor influencing political participation. This puts us in a good place, as it indicates that this data does not substantially diverge from the larger academic consensus.

The first Alienation hypothesis, (H_1) was also largely confirmed as Powerlessness had a significant, consistent effect (though meaninglessness did not return a significant result). However, the second hypothesis was strongly supported, as mistrust returned significant results consistency. Given previous findings in the literature, Meaninglessness would likely become significant with improved measurement. Combined with this model's BIC' score, this finding indicates some positive support for including measures of these concepts in models of political behavior.

The Peer Influence hypotheses also were mostly supported, two of three hypotheses returned a significant result. Of particular interest is the strong significance of the "discusses politics" variable. This strongly supports the findings of Klorfstad (2010), Lazarsfeld (1939), and Quintelier (2008). While hypothesis four was not confirmed, the strong significance of the findings for hypotheses 5 and 6 (and the very strong BIC' score) shows that this concept strengthens explanations of political participation.

Unfortunately, given the cross-sectional nature of this data, I cannot positively establish the causal order of these findings. As always, this is an area where time-series data would be a deeply valuable resource. This data set is also limited in terms of variables available to assess social capital, while more comprehensive data sets such as the ANES lack the variety of political activity variables that makes my study possible. Such is a difficult conflict, but this issue could serve as an indicator of why the ANES data sets need to include more accurate political activity variables: to allow for optimum studies of participation, social capital, and alienation. Such would also (in subsequent years) aid in addressing the need for time-series data.

VIII. Conclusion

This study sought to explore the role that political alienation could play in improving explanations of political behavior, to what extent it may explain that behavior, and how this might be moderated by peer influence. I summarized the literature on these topics, as well as the information on social capital, a concept often used to explain political participation, and which I used as a comparison to alienation. I considered recent social capital and resource-based theories to explain political behavior, before positing my own theory of participatory alienation. I then conducted the analysis itself, finding that my multidimensional concept of alienation may be better understood in terms of its separate parts: powerlessness, meaninglessness, and mistrust of political institutions.

Studies of alienation gained significant popularity between the 1950s and early 1980s, where the theory developed along several disciplinary lines. While there was a vague consensus about what sub-concepts could be included as facets of alienation, empirical support widely failed to definitively support or falsify the use or validity of political alienation (Seeman 1975). While the use of the term (particularly "political alienation") has declined in more recent decades, it appears that rather than experience full-blown disappearance, political alienation's component parts have been found more useful individually than as a unified concept.

The results of this study go to support the separation of sub-concepts of alienation in attempting to explain political participation, which could work in tandem with social capital models. A key aspect of this is the finding that while some more recent literature makes an intriguing case for including mistrust as a parent variable for the latent concept of alienation, an exploratory factor analysis of my measures suggests that mistrust loads

onto a different latent variable, and its results in the regression analysis also indicate that mistrust behaves differently than powerlessness and meaninglessness. Yet its strong significance through both models and large swath of supporting literature indicates that trust/ mistrust remains a useful concept for the explanation of a number of social and political variables.

Powerlessness and meaninglessness also raised interesting questions from this analysis. An examination of the literature suggested to me that powerlessness and meaninglessness, having lost popularity with the use of alienation, may have received a "facelift" in more recent literature and are now being used as the concepts of internal and external self-efficacy (see Seeman 1975, Southwell 2012, and Balch 1974). This continued usefulness of the concepts is reinforced by my highly, consistently significant results for the use of powerlessness, which makes theoretical sense: one's perceived ability to influence political events or outcomes would intuitively have an effect on their inclination to engage in political acts. However, the lack of significance of my meaninglessness variable also indicates (in light of more supportive literature) that this model may need improved measures, particularly of this concept.

Fortunately, the results of this project do encourage future research. Given this thesis' reliance on latent measures, a more effective type of analysis may be found through structural equation modeling (SEM) with latent variables. Such may produce more nuanced, accurate results, and permit for more a more meaningful study, especially as there have been very few SEM studies of alienation (one example can be seen in Denters & Geurts 1993). In this follow-up, more refined measures of alienation and

social capital may also be possible, which may improve the validity of the social capital results in this study.

Alienation is a concept that has excited a large amount of multidisciplinary study, but has lately suffered from ambiguity, overuse, and since then, disuse. Yet if the latent concept is of questionable utility, its parent variables maintain widespread value and use, a dynamic that indicates the need for better theoretical and empirical understanding. This thesis yielded informative results and has provided great educational value for my understanding of these base concepts. Future research will hopefully clarify these concepts for other sociologists and serve to improve their use, or else better explain the reason for their disuse.

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X. Appendix

A1. Zero-Order Correlations Between Social Capital Variables

| | R attends church daily | R attends church once weekly or more | R attends church once monthly or less | R never attends church* | Voluntary Assoc. Memb. (# of types of orgs.) | R's Liberal/Conserv. Placement (0=Lib.) | Neighborhood Assoc. member | R has ever been Unempl. For 3 mo.+ |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| R attends church daily | 1 | | | | | | | |
| R attends church once/weekly+ | -0.0513 | 1 | | | | | | |
| R attends church once monthly or less | -0.0719 | -0.7303 | 1 | | | | | |
| R never attends church* | -0.0294 | -0.299 | -0.4195 | 1 | | | | |
| Voluntary Association Membership (# of types of orgs.) | 0.0434 | 0.2786 | -0.1945 | -0.1076 | 1 | | | |
| R's Liberal/Conserv. Placement (0=Lib.) | -0.0738 | 0.1814 | -0.1032 | -0.0834 | 0.0615 | 1 | | |
| Neighborhood Assoc. member | -0.0835 | -0.0186 | -0.0257 | 0.0446 | 0.1902 | 0.015 | 1 | |
| R has ever been Unempl. For 3mo. + | 0.0364 | -0.058 | -0.0268 | 0.0328 | -0.0859 | -0.0547 | -0.0258 | 1 |

*Reference category: the others are binary "Dummy Variables".

A3. Table of full regression results.

Nested Models of Political Participation as affected by Social Capital, Political Alienation and Peer Influence, and Peer Influence Moderation

| Dependent Variable: Number of Types of Political Acts. | Model 1: Social Capital | Model 2: Alienation | Model 3: Peer Influence | Model 3.1: Peer Influence Moderation |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Social Capital Variables: | | | | |
| R Attends Relig. Service: Every Day | 0.402** | 0.460*** | 0.532*** | 0.495** |
| | (0.234 - 0.692) | (0.292 - 0.724) | (0.372 - 0.762) | (0.322 - 0.759) |
| R Attends Relig. Service: Weekly or More | 1.003 | 1.090 | 1.091 | 1.093 |
| | (0.803 - 1.252) | (0.875 - 1.359) | (0.882 - 1.349) | (0.881 - 1.355) |
| R Attends Relig. Service: Monthly or Less | 1.045 | 1.109 | 1.107 | 1.118 |
| | (0.845 - 1.292) | (0.901 - 1.364) | (0.912 - 1.344) | (0.919 - 1.360) |
| Voluntary Assoc. Member. (# of types of orgs.) | 1.372*** | 1.350*** | 1.287*** | 1.294*** |
| | (1.281 - 1.470) | (1.261 - 1.445) | (1.204 - 1.376) | (1.210 - 1.383) |
| R's Liberal-Conserv. Ideology (0=Liberal) | 0.989 | 0.993 | 0.984 | 0.986 |
| | (0.957 - 1.022) | (0.962 - 1.026) | (0.954 - 1.015) | (0.956 - 1.018) |
| R is Neighborhood Assoc. Member | 1.045 | 1.064 | 1.008 | 1.011 |
| | (0.844 - 1.295) | (0.858 - 1.318) | (0.817 - 1.243) | (0.817 - 1.251) |
| R Ever Unemployed for 3 Months or More | 1.019 | 1.007 | 1.005 | 1.009 |
| | (0.880 - 1.180) | (0.871 - 1.164) | (0.875 - 1.154) | (0.879 - 1.158) |
| Alienation Variables: | | | | |
| Powerlessness | | 0.890** | 0.912** | 0.948 |
| | | (0.829 - 0.956) | (0.851 - 0.977) | (0.774 - 1.162) |
| Meaninglessness | | 0.940 | 0.956 | 1.001 |
| | | (0.879 - 1.005) | (0.900 - 1.015) | (0.831 - 1.206) |
| Mistrust of political inst. (High # = Less Trust) | | 1.015*** | 1.014*** | 1.028* |
| | | (1.007 - 1.023) | (1.006 - 1.022) | (1.003 - 1.053) |
| Peer Influence Variables: | | | | |
| R has no close friends | | | 1.865 | 1.727 |
| | | | (0.766 - 4.540) | (0.726 - 4.107) |
| R has 1 or 2 Close Friends | | | 1.048 | 1.039 |
| | | | (0.832 - 1.322) | (0.822 - 1.313) |
| R has 3 to 5 Close Friends | | | 1.017 | 1.019 |
| | | | (0.856 - 1.207) | (0.858 - 1.208) |
| R has 6 to 10 Close Fri. | | | 1.101 | 1.108 |
| | | | (0.919 - 1.319) | (0.925 - 1.326) |
| R talks w/ friends few times weekly | | | 0.961 | 0.977 |
| | | | (0.820 - 1.126) | (0.835 - 1.143) |

3. Table of Full Regression Results (continued)
Nested Models of Political Participation as affected by Social Capital, Political Alienation and Peer Influence, and Peer Influence Moderation

| Dependent Variable: | Model 1: | Model 2: | Model 3: | Model 3.1: |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Number of Types of Political Acts. | Social Capital | Alienation | Peer Influence | Peer Influence Moderation |
| R talks w/ friends few times per Month | | | 0.881 | 0.899 |
| | | | (0.719 - 1.081) | (0.733 - 1.102) |
| R talks w/ friends once per month or less | | | 1.068 | 1.074 |
| | | | (0.808 - 1.411) | (0.815 - 1.416) |
| R Usually talks politics w/ Friends | | | 1.622*** | 1.210 |
| | | | (1.299 - 2.025) | (0.524 - 2.793) |
| R Sometimes talks politics w/ Friends | | | 1.362*** | 1.179 |
| | | | (1.185 - 1.565) | (0.771 - 1.803) |
| R Never talks politics w/ Friends | | | 0.792* | 0.926 |
| | | | (0.639 - 0.982) | (0.603 - 1.422) |
| R meets w/ friends few times Weekly | | | 1.238* | 1.229* |
| | | | (1.027 - 1.491) | (1.020 - 1.481) |
| R meets w/ friends few times per Month | | | 1.129 | 1.133 |
| | | | (0.912 - 1.398) | (0.915 - 1.402) |
| R meets w/ friends once per month or less | | | 0.885 | 0.886 |
| | | | (0.669 - 1.170) | (0.673 - 1.167) |
| Moderation: | | | | |
| Moderation: Mistrust x Talks Politics | | | | 0.995 |
| | | | | (0.986 - 1.004) |
| Moderation: External Self Efficacy x Talks Politics | | | | 1.017 |
| | | | | (0.939 - 1.101) |
| Moderation: Internal Self Efficacy x Talks Politics | | | | 0.982 |
| | | | | (0.919 - 1.049) |
| Controls: | | | | |
| R's Political Party ID (1=Strong Rep.) | 1.003 | 1.008 | 0.993 | 0.994 |
| | (0.970 - 1.038) | (0.974 - 1.042) | (0.961 - 1.026) | (0.962 - 1.028) |
| R Income between \$15K and \$29,999.99 | 0.940 | 0.959 | 0.927 | 0.922 |
| | (0.727 - 1.216) | (0.747 - 1.232) | (0.717 - 1.199) | (0.712 - 1.194) |
| R Income between \$30K and \$49,999.99 | 1.049 | 1.063 | 1.059 | 1.039 |
| | (0.817 - 1.348) | (0.839 - 1.347) | (0.832 - 1.347) | (0.817 - 1.321) |
| R Income between \$50K and \$74,999.99 | 1.016 | 0.987 | 1.052 | 1.037 |
| | (0.783 - 1.317) | (0.768 - 1.269) | (0.814 - 1.359) | (0.800 - 1.345) |
| R Income between \$75K and \$99,999.99 | 1.053 | 1.069 | 1.023 | 1.010 |
| | (0.803 - 1.382) | (0.822 - 1.389) | (0.790 - 1.323) | (0.781 - 1.307) |

3. Table of Full Regression Results (continued)
Nested Models of Political Participation as affected by Social Capital, Political Alienation and Peer Influence, and Peer Influence Moderation

| Dependent Variable: Number of Types of Political Acts. | Model 1: Social Capital | Model 2: Alienation | Model 3: Peer Influence | Model 3.1: Peer Influence Moderation |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| R Income \$100K or more | 1.169 (0.847 - 1.614) | 1.219 (0.884 - 1.680) | 1.214 (0.886 - 1.664) | 1.179 (0.863 - 1.610) |
| R has Some College, or Bus., tech., or vocational school | 1.625*** (1.367 - 1.930) | 1.604*** (1.352 - 1.902) | 1.501*** (1.270 - 1.774) | 1.494*** (1.262 - 1.768) |
| R is College Graduate | 1.966*** (1.594 - 2.425) | 1.931*** (1.574 - 2.367) | 1.727*** (1.417 - 2.104) | 1.728*** (1.419 - 2.105) |
| R has Post-graduate training/Professional School | 1.926*** (1.508 - 2.459) | 1.826*** (1.440 - 2.316) | 1.766*** (1.401 - 2.226) | 1.714*** (1.356 - 2.167) |
| R's age as of 2005 | 1.001 (0.997 - 1.006) | 1.001 (0.996 - 1.005) | 1.002 (0.998 - 1.007) | 1.002 (0.998 - 1.006) |
| R is Male | 1.263*** (1.104 - 1.445) | 1.236** (1.083 - 1.412) | 1.165* (1.023 - 1.327) | 1.169* (1.027 - 1.330) |
| R Race is Asian | 0.678* (0.480 - 0.958) | 0.741 (0.527 - 1.042) | 0.773 (0.517 - 1.156) | 0.795 (0.549 - 1.152) |
| R Race is Black | 0.902 (0.721 - 1.129) | 0.844 (0.671 - 1.062) | 0.895 (0.715 - 1.121) | 0.892 (0.713 - 1.115) |
| R Race is Hispanic | 0.742 (0.548 - 1.003) | 0.726* (0.546 - 0.965) | 0.790 (0.604 - 1.034) | 0.790 (0.604 - 1.032) |
| R Race is Other Nonwhite | 0.640 (0.380 - 1.078) | 0.611 (0.372 - 1.004) | 0.673 (0.411 - 1.100) | 0.716 (0.425 - 1.205) |
| R lives in Urban Area | 1.120 (0.976 - 1.284) | 1.097 (0.958 - 1.258) | 1.108 (0.972 - 1.263) | 1.111 (0.974 - 1.267) |
| AIC | 4.016 | 3.992 | 3.929 | . |
| BIC' | -51.841 | -54.864 | -41.321 | . |
| Constant | 1.177 | 1.34 | 1.2 | 0.88 |
| N | 744 | 732 | 722 | 721 |

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Unstandardized Incidence-Rate Ratios presented with Confidence Intervals provided in parentheses.

XI. Curriculum Vitae
GRACE E. CALE

EDUCATION

Berea College, Berea, Kentucky May 2012
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology; Emphasis on Political Science

George Washington University, Washington, District of Columbia Summer 2011
Semester in Washington Politics

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky June 2009
Kentucky Institute of International Studies: Poland and Ukraine Study Abroad Program

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Chairman of the Scholarship Committee of the Alpha Sigma Xi Mortar Board Chapter, President of the Alpha Sigma Xi Mortar Board Chapter (Spring Semester), Award for Outstanding Service in Mortar Board, Dallas and Betty T. Johnson Sociology Award, Lyman T. Johnson Fellowship (2012-Present), American Sociological Association Honors Program (2012), Beers Summer Research Fellowship (2013)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Recitation Leader, Sociology Department, University of Kentucky Fall 2013-Spring 2014
Class Facilitator, Sociology Department, Berea College Spring 2009-Spring 2012
Facilitated 1-2 sessions for each of seven courses
Senior Consultant, Center for Transformative Learning, Berea College Fall 2010-Spring 2012

WORK EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant Spring 2013
University of Kentucky Sociology Department Lexington, Kentucky
Sociology of Gender

Teaching Assistant Fall 2012
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