

CLASS MATTERS: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND FAMILY POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT ACROSS SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
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BY

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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

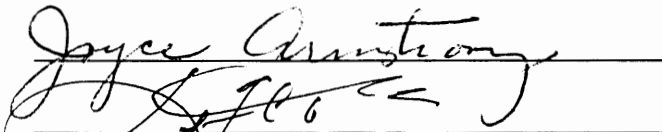
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Tricia Thomas entitled "Class Matters: Political participation and family policy development across socioeconomic status." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy with a major in Family Studies.



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Lillian Chenoweth, Ph. D., Major Professor

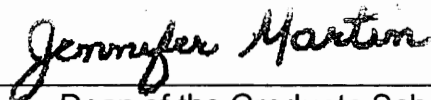
We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:



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Department Chair

Accepted:



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Dean of the Graduate School

## DEDICATION

To my heavenly father, God,  
thank you for your guidance and making all things possible.

To my immediate family, Mary, Naz, David, Livie, and Zeno,  
thank you for your unconditional love and support at all times.

To my lifelong family, TSFP,  
thank you for your continuous love and support through all the years.

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Last, but certainly not least, I would like to give special thanks to my family for their patience, understanding, time, and dedication to my goals as well as their inspiration at times when I became weary.

## ABSTRACT

TRICIA THOMAS

### CLASS MATTERS: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND FAMILY POLICY DEVELOPMENT ACROSS SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

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Research studies have indicated trends in political inequality, differing political participation levels across social classes, and consequently disparities in policy development. The purpose of this research study was to identify political participation levels of individuals across social classes and socioeconomic factors and to identify political attitudes about family policy and describe political participation related to issues across social classes. The researcher conducted a study using quantitative research methods to analyze data collected from a political participation survey instrument. The research sample included participants from the north and south Texas region as well as south Louisiana. The participants provided descriptive and socioeconomic data as well as information regarding their political attitude, views, and activities that influence their political participation level across social class. Using a one-way ANOVA to tests the hypotheses, the researcher finds no statistically significant difference in political participation across social class, particularly in a large popular election.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly (2001) supported a notion that political participation is a trend that is significantly higher among citizens with high socioeconomic statuses compared to those with low socioeconomic statuses. According to Cohen et al., individuals with higher educational attainment levels, higher incomes, and who were employed in higher status occupations, such as professional or white collar positions, comprised higher social class groups. The researchers suggested that individuals from high social class groups have a tendency to participate more often in politics than individuals from low socioeconomic status groups.

In regards to attitudes about political participation, Cohen et al. (2001) also suggested that individuals from high socioeconomic statuses also have an increased tendency to feel more social pressure or obligation to participate, recognizing the impact that political decisions, political leaders and policy-making may have on their lifestyle, society, and their families. According to Davis (1988), public policy development must rely on a clear understanding of the nature of man, and an understanding of to what extent that nature can be modified. In addition, it is important to note that over 50% of all civil law filings are related to families. For that reason, this study examined political participation

of individuals across social classes with diverse socioeconomic factors and the influence of the two on political participation and family policy development.

### Statement of the Problem

According to Verba et al. (2003), contrary to America's age-old claim of commitment to ensuring political equality there still exists a problem of political inequality among citizens of the United States. The researchers suggested that there is a significant difference in political participation level among individuals as well as social groups. Consequently, the outcome associated with citizen political participation levels and individuals from each socio-economic group increases disparities in recognition and support among relevant political groups.

According to Sacerdote (2002), the effectiveness of political leaders' support and development of public policies, such as anti-poverty or pro-education policies, depends largely on the degree to which these issues matter to individuals within the environment. Recognizing that political support will be expected to address the needs of different environments, different family structures, different educational institutions, different neighborhoods, and different social groups, a comparative analysis identifying social and political trends and attitudes associated with citizen political participation levels across socioeconomic statuses could promote further research and development of a more effective political process and policy making approach.

According to Wilson (2000), with limited knowledge of social issues impacting social groups, public policy makers encourage a fragmented process

policy development or adjustments that are able to reflect the diverse needs and interests of all citizens. Increased political participation across socioeconomic statuses and activities that foster an understanding by policy makers of which social trends and stressors that individuals regard as deserving political attention would encourage policy matters that are adequate to societal expectations.

### Hypotheses

The research focused on the following hypotheses:

1. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals across social classes.
2. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by income levels.
3. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by occupation types.
4. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by education.

Table 1 indicates the relationship between the purpose, research questions, hypotheses, and the statistical measures used during the study.

Table 1

*Relationship Between Purpose, Hypotheses, And Statistical Tests*

Research Purpose/Question	Hypothesis	Survey Item	Statistical Test
Identify political participation levels of individuals across social classes and socioeconomic factors.	1. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals across social class.	See Appendix A: Questions 3 – 7, 13.	1. ANOVA (F-test)
	2. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by income levels.		2. ANOVA (F-Test)
	3. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by occupation types.		3. ANOVA (F-Test)
	4. There will be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by education.		4. ANOVA (F-Test)

Table 1, Continued

*Relationship Between Purpose, Hypotheses, And Statistical Tests*

Research Purpose/Question	Survey Item
Identify political attitudes about family policy across social classes.	See Appendix A: Questions 15- 17, 20-24, 30-34.
Describe political participation related to issues across social classes.	See Appendix A: Questions 8-14, 18-19, 25-29, 35-37.

## Definitions

Below are operational definitions for key concepts included for the purpose of the research study.

Educational Level – the highest degree of education an individual has completed indicated as having a college or no college degree (Q7).

Family policy – A course of action by government intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters relating to family issues and trends.

Income - The amount of money received during a period of time in exchange for labor or services, from the sale of goods or property, or as a profit from financial investments; operationalized in this study as total earnings from occupation (Q4).

Occupation – An activity that serves as one's regular source of livelihood classified according to skill level, economic function, or social status.

Occupations in the United States are generally classified as white or blue collar jobs. White collar jobs where employees perform non-manual work, includes the majority of employees in the United States today. White-collar employees work in clerical, administrative, and professional non-manual occupations. Those working in factories or doing manual labor typically considered blue-collar workers. The research will categorize occupation type using Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) codes.

Policy makers-One who sets the plan pursued by government.



Political trust – a basic evaluative orientation toward government based on how well the government operates according to individuals' expectations.

Political participation–Involvement in activities by private citizens that are aimed at influencing the selection of political leaders or political decisions. For example, contacting political officials, participation in debates, volunteering for political campaigns, voting etc. For the study This research will identify politically active or inactive participants using a scoring method of questions from the research instrument (Q13)

Political officials-One who is actively involved in politics, seeks or holds a political office and usually experienced in the administration of government.

Psychological involvement-Participation by private citizens in an effort to understand and gain knowledge regarding social and political issues, regardless of the opportunity to influence the issues. Examples include, reading the newspaper regarding political issues, watching news and media update, watching political debates and state of the union addresses, etc.

Social trend- a general tendency related to a group or individual's socialization in human society as a result of their behaviors and attitudes regarding family, community, health, finance, work and leisure.

Social class - A measure of an individual or family's group ranking within a hierarchical social structure, for this study, as defined income level, occupation type, and educational attainment.

Socioeconomic factors - educational level, individual or family income, and occupation.

### Summary

Research suggests that political participation is a trend that is significantly higher among citizens with high socioeconomic statuses compared to those with low socioeconomic statuses. Researchers suggest that a comparative analysis identifying social and political trends and attitudes associated with citizen political participation levels across socioeconomic statuses could promote further research and development of a more effective political process and policy making approach. With this in mind, four hypotheses were developed to test for statistically significant difference in social class, socioeconomic factors such as education, occupation type, and income level, and political participation. To support the research the purpose and proposed test(s) were identified for each hypothesis and operational definitions were provided for each factor relative to the research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature reviewed for this study demonstrates the need for empirical research that examines participants' social class, socioeconomic factors contributing to social class, political attitudes, and social influences on their political participation levels. This research first explores and provides previous research regarding the trend in political participation among multiple social classes and socioeconomic status groups. Second, the research provides literature regarding the political attitudes and influence of political efficacy on voters' political participation levels. Third, literature exploring multiple aspects of family and social issues that affect political participation as well as the influence political participation may have on the development of family and public policies that address these issues are discussed. Finally, literature regarding the theoretical framework used to support the study is also explored.

Cohen et al.(2001) suggested that the role of socioeconomic status has been recognized as one of the most important factors influencing political participation. Contrary to individuals from higher socioeconomic statuses, according to the study, those from low socioeconomic statuses yield lower levels of political knowledge, involvement, and participation due to scarce resources, low motivations and expectations and/or a disbelief in their ability to become a

“meaningful player” in the political game. Brady et al. (1995) suggested in their previous explanations for political participation levels, factors associated with political efficacy, such as lack of interest in politics, minimal concern with public issues, a belief that their political participation would make no difference, and no preference for or membership within a group with shared political interests.

Although the researchers agree that the aforementioned factors certainly encourage political participation, increased participation ultimately enhances political interests and other factors associated with political efficacy. Cohen et al. added that individuals from higher socioeconomic statuses may have more opportunities to participate, more access to personal contacts with political officials, and more personal resources, such as education, that are helpful in the political participation process.

Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) implied that socio-economic factors that contributed to individuals' political participation level were necessary resources. Time, which could be associated with occupation, might limit the level of political participation for socio-economic groups. Money, which would be associated with income, could determine individuals' ability to or level of financial political participation through contributions. Finally, civic skills, which could be associated with education and determines the communications and organizational skills available to individuals, might encourage their level of political participation. These resources provide more ideal explanations for

different levels of political participation beyond the simple socio-economic factors of occupation, income and education.

Furthermore, Sacerdote (2002) conducted a study which examined a range of outcomes of children who had been adopted into high socioeconomic status families versus low socioeconomic status families. Sacerdote included in his analysis educational attainment, marital status, test scores and college attendance. Like other research studies, Sacerdote's research findings suggested that the children who lived in family structures with a higher socioeconomic status were least likely to have "no college" status. In an effort to universalize the U.S. society, policy makers may be encountering challenges due to the growth in non-traditional family structures, who are most likely to be negatively affected by disruption.

#### Variables Defining Socioeconomic Status

Karl Marx (1930) was the first to attack the social class inequalities. Marx focused on advocating for the class at the bottom of the hierarchy table and often ignored. A universal social class was an ideal concept for Marx suggesting the removal of the privileged upper class. Bogenschneider (2002) suggested that economic growth has continued to be shared unequally among families and the widening gap between the rich and poor has been consistent across African-American and White households as well as across states.

According to the United States Census Bureau (2007), the average family income in 2007 was \$60,374. With this in mind, Thompson and Hickey (2005) defined the multiple social classes as follows:

1. The Upper Class usually includes individuals who are top-level executives, celebrities, and heirs to an empire. These individuals usually have incomes of \$500,000 or more and may have an education from an Ivy League institution. Only about one percent (1%) of the U.S. population is among the upper class.
2. The Upper Middle Class are professionals and managers. These individuals have incomes with high five figure salaries to above \$100,000 and are usually highly educated with graduate degrees. About fifteen percent (15%) of the U.S. population is among the upper middle class.
3. Lower Middle Class households include semi-professionals and craftsman. Their household incomes range from \$35,000 to \$75,000 and they usually have some college education. About thirty-two percent (32%) of the U.S. population is among the lower middle class.
4. The Working Class consists of clerical or pink and blue collar workers. Their household incomes range from \$16,000 to \$30,000 and most have completed high school. Another 32% of the U.S. population is among the working class.
5. Finally, the Lower Class is considered to be those who occupy poorly-paid positions or rely on government assistance for income and support. Many

have completed some high school. Approximately 14% to 20% of the U.S. population is among the lower class.

The categories indicate that about 47% of the U.S. population considered to be middle class. However, approximately 46% to 52% of the U.S. population is considered to be below middle class. According to Kefalas (2007), there have been few scholarly accounts of those in the lower middle class, making it difficult for policymakers to appreciate the distinctive importance of the lower middle class to the world. While they are more likely to describe themselves as conservative rather than liberal, they are not usually extremist.

Lawless and Fox (2001) conducted research that addresses the political participation of the urban poor based on the previous research which suggested that although citizens living in poverty are perhaps the most directly affected by government policies than citizens from higher socioeconomic groups, citizens living in poverty are less likely to vote or engage in political activities. Lawless and Fox also mention that while political participation of citizens living in poverty appears to be essential in ensuring fair representation in the political system, most political participation literature suggests that individuals living in poverty lack the material and social resources necessary to motivate political participation.

Lawless and Fox examined the attitudes of citizens living in poverty stricken areas and interaction with government officials. They proposed a hypothesis that would indicate an increase in political participation among

handicapped individuals have also received heightened interest in regards to family policy research and development.

These areas seemed to receive much more family law activity at the state level. For example, according to Monroe (1995), over two dozen states passed a version of family and medical leave in a decade while the federal government stood still. The question of whether state and community levels might be more inclusive raises more than just the issue of tolerance and encouragement for varied family structures.

### Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of understanding the rationale of the study, it is important to summarize the theoretical foundation supporting key factors analyzed in the study. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1976) conceptualized the context in which human development occurs through four organizational structures – the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

In summary, Bronfenbrenner's micro-system is the immediate setting or place in which the person is engaged in particular activities or roles. The mesosystem is the structure which includes two or more micro-systems that both contain the developing person. The exosystem is a structure between two or more settings of which only one contains the developing person and the macrosystem is the broad cultural and socio-economical environment which influences the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; see also Boss et al., 1993; Eamon, 2001).



Referencing the terminology applied to these structures of a person's environment from earlier studies, Bronfenbrenner (1976) further describes each system and how structures within these systems influence the individual person. For the current research the exo-system and the macro-systems are concepts of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory that served as the framework for examining the ecological influences of individuals from multiple social classes and the influence of socio-economic factors and social interactions within the systems on individual political participation. Davis (1988) referenced Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development recognizing social policy as a part of the exosystem. As a part of the exosystem, public policy will impact individuals and consequently families. In addition, the socio-economic environment of the individual's macrosystem will also be examined which, according to Bronfenbrenner's (1976) identification of the macro-system, includes social class differences, ethnic differences, and family structures (size of family).

According to Monroe (1995) many contemporary writers and researchers on issues of family policy urge advocates and policymakers to use an ecological approach to policy development for children and families. In doing so, one must consider the family structure, the work and school context, the community, and even the era in which the family exists. The ecological approach also helps to identify heterogeneity of family forms and the resulting heterogeneity of needs.

## Summary

With these social factors in mind, the current research study proposed to identify the roles that social trends, such as economic variations, issues regarding youth and education, and current political issues play in encouraging political participation among individuals across socioeconomic statuses. Additionally, the research literature supports the current study in identifying political attitudes, motivators and levels of political participation of individuals across socioeconomic statuses. Concentrating on human ecological theory as the theoretical framework for understanding the concepts regarding families and individual members, the research also recognizes the importance of understanding the basics of the exosystem and the role of policy and policy development on family environments.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the research study is presented in this chapter. The research study was carried out using quantitative research methods. This research conducted the study using sampling procedures that support use of a reliable survey instrument to collect, test, and analyze findings of the data. The survey items were identified according to the purpose and proposed research outcomes. Finally, appropriate statistical tests were identified and analysis procedures described that were used to identify factors that either supported or rejected the hypotheses.

#### Sampling Procedure and Characteristics of the Sample

This research initiated a sampling procedure that supported the collection of data from subjects of varying socioeconomic statuses and political attitudes. Data were collected from personal contacts in both the states of Texas and Louisiana. This research identified a non-random sample whose characteristics included participants who were adults at least 18 years of age and who acknowledged that they were registered voters. This research's sampling procedure also encouraged data from groups of varying family structures and ethnic backgrounds in the sample. The sample included 113 participants identified from various settings.

### Data Collection and Instrumentation

With the permission of the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) (see Appendix A) and approval of the Texas Woman's University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B), the research conducted the study using a political participation study survey instrument based on the American Citizen Participation Scale. The scale was originated in 1990 by Sydney Verba of Cambridge University for an empirical research study designed to examine political and non-political civic participation in the United States (Verba et al., 1993). According to the ICPSR, the instrument or data from the original study have been used in at least 30 other published and non-published works since the 1990 study was conducted.

The survey instrument that was used for the current research (see Appendix C) was administered to 6 individuals, who were personal contacts of the research, to conduct a pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to acquire feedback from participants to ensure the appropriateness of the survey instrument prior to conducting the complete study. Upon completion of the pilot study and modifications as necessary to the survey instrument, information regarding the research study was shared with potential participants of the population for the formal research study. Participants were assured confidentiality in the use of their responses for the study. The instrument allowed respondents to be anonymous.

Upon consent to participate (See Appendix D), each respondent was provided a survey instrument in person by the research and asked to complete the instrument. Each respondent was asked to complete the survey and return the completed survey, in a sealed envelope that was provided by the researcher, to the drop box or site contact for each location identified for the respondent. The instrument included descriptive information, such as age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, income, education level, number of dependents, political party affiliation, as well as several questions that assisted in identifying the respondents' political attitude and political participation levels. To identify level of political involvement and participation among participants, each respondent was required to identify their source of political information, checking all sources that apply, to include newscasts, newspapers, radio talk shows, televised political debates, televised state of the union addresses, gossip columns/tabloids, post-secondary classrooms, religious activities, friends, family, through affiliation with political organizations/memberships, political volunteer activities, debate or rally attendance, etc. Respondents were also required to respond to questions regarding their political attitude, sense of ability to make a difference, and motivation to participate in political activities that support social factors that they believe deserve political attention or would directly affect them.

### Summary

This research conducted the study using quantitative research methods to analyze data collected from a survey instrument. The selective sample included

participants from the north and south Texas region as well as south Louisiana. The participants provided information regarding their political attitude, involvement and participation, as well as political attitudes across socioeconomic statuses. This research used quantitative research software (SPSS) for statistical testing and analysis of the data collected and to identify results that supported or rejected the hypotheses.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Data Analysis

This research distributed a total of 290 surveys to sites and potential participants. Of the total surveys distributed 119 surveys were returned. Of the surveys returned, 6 (approximately 5%) could not be used. Three of the surveys that could not be used were incomplete; the other 3 survey participants reported that they were not registered voters. Therefore, the final sample for the research study consisted of 113 registered voters.

#### Descriptive Data

The sample consisted of both males and females as indicated in Table 2. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 76 years of age (Table 3). The sample was also diverse in ethnic representation. According to results shown in Table 4, 42% (n=48) of research participants were African-American, 33% (n=37) were Anglo-Americans, 7% (n=8) were Hispanic, 2% (n=2) were Native American, and 1% (n=1) of research participants were Asian-Americans. The instrument used for the study provided participants with the option to identify their ethnicity as they preferred rather than choosing from selective options determined by the research. As a result, 15% (n=17) of research participants identified themselves

from ethnic backgrounds other than typical categories identified above such as bi-racial.

Table 2

*Gender Reported by Participants*

Gender	N	%
Male	44	41
Female	69	59
Total	113	100

Table 3

*Age Reported by Participants*

Years	N	%
19-28	14	12
29-38	36	32
39-48	29	26
49-58	19	17
59-68	13	12
69-78	1	1
Total	113	100



Table 4

*Ethnic Representation Reported by Participants*

Ethnic Categories	N	%
Anglo-American	37	33
African-American	48	42
Hispanic	8	7
Native-American	2	2
Asian-American	1	1
Other	17	15
Total	113	100

Socioeconomic Data

In order to test the hypotheses, the survey also identified participants' income levels. As a result, 55% (n=62) the participants reported income levels between \$30,000 and \$74,999. As indicated in Table 5, there was a representation from all three income levels included in the sample. However, the middle income level was reported by the largest group of participants. Additionally, 13% (n=14) of the total participants indicated that they also received Social Security benefits, veteran's benefits, or food stamps.

Table 5

*Income Levels of Participants*

Income Levels	N	%
\$0 – 29,999	27	24
\$30,000 – 74,999	62	55
\$75,000 and above	24	21
Total	113	100

Also to obtain data to test the hypotheses, participants were asked to indicate their educational attainment. As a result, 97% (n=110) of the participants in the sample indicated that they had completed high school and acquired a high school diploma or a higher level while 3% (n=3) indicated that they did not complete high school or receive a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency test. Additionally, of the 113 responses, 74.3% (n=84) indicated that they also held a college degree, while 25.7% (n=29) did not have a college degree (Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

*Educational Attainment Level of Participants*

	N	%
High School Completion		
Completed HS	110	97
Did not Complete HS	3	3
Total	113	100
College Degree		
College Degree	84	74.3
No College Degree	29	25.7
Total	113	100

Family and Political Data

To identify factors associated with family and political participation, the survey requested that participants respond to questions related family and political participation levels of family members. For example, as indicated in Table 8, participants identified how many children they had, if any. The majority of participants (57%, n=64) indicated that they did not have children, while the remaining 43% (n=49) had 1 or more children. Participants were also requested to indicate political participation levels of their parents as observed when they were teenagers (age 16). Of the 113 responses, 42% (n=47) indicated that they recalled that their parents were not active at all on politics when they were age 16, while 37% (n=42) recalled their parents being somewhat active in politics, and 17% (n=19) recalled their parents being very active in politics when they were age 16 (Table 9).

Table 8

*Number of Children of Participants*

Number of Children	N	%
No children	64	57
1 – 3	42	37
4 – 6	5	4
7 or more	2	2
Total	113	100

Table 9

*Parents' Political Activity at Age 16*

Parents' Political Activity	N	%
Don't Remember	5	4.8
Not At All	47	42
Somewhat Active	42	37
Very Active	19	17
Total	113	100

The survey also required each participant to identify their parents' political affiliation. The majority of participants (65%, n=73) reported that their parents considered themselves to be politically affiliated with the Democratic Party. Accordingly, as indicated in the tables below, the majority of participants (59%, n=67) from the sample also considered themselves to be politically affiliated with the Democratic Party (Tables 10 and 11). Additionally, 61% (n=69) of participants reported that they are currently somewhat active in politics most of the time, while 17% (n=19) reported that, most of the time, they were very active.

Surprisingly, 22% (n=25) reported that they were not active at all in politics most of the time. However, the majority (72%, n=81) of participants reported that they were currently more active in politics than in the past (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 10

*Parents' Political Affiliation*

Political Affiliation	N	%
Republican Party	24	21
Democratic Party	73	65
Independent Party	4	4
Other	12	11
Total	113	100

Table 11

*Participants' Political Affiliation*

Political Affiliation	N	%
Republican Party	25	22
Democratic Party	67	59
Independent Party	17	15
Other	4	4
Total	113	100

Table 12

*Participants' Current Political Activity*

Current Political Activity	N	%
Very Active	19	17
Somewhat Active	69	61
Not At All Active	25	22
Total	113	100

Table 13

*Participants' Past Political Activity*

Past Political Activity	N	%
Not More Active in Past	81	72
More Active in Past	32	28
Total	113	100

In regards to political views of participants, there was a diverse distribution between extremely liberal and extremely conservative among the sample. However, although the largest number of participants (29%, n=33) responded that their political views were “middle of the road,” 21% (n=24) reported that their political views were “somewhat conservative.” The data were collected using a scale for participants’ responses ranging from 1, representing extremely liberal, to 7, representing extremely conservative. As a result, 36% (n=41) of participants reported their political views were more liberal, while 34.5% (n=39) reported their political views were more conservative (Table 14).

Table 14

*Political Views*

Political Views	N	%
Extremely Liberal	4	3.5
Liberal	15	13
Somewhat Liberal	22	20
Middle of the Road	33	29
Somewhat Conservative	24	21
Conservative	13	11.5
Extremely Conservative	2	2
Total	113	100

When active in politics, the majority of participants (88.6%, n=100) reported that they dedicated the most time and effort toward the selection of the President of the United States, while 11.4% (n=13) reported that they have dedicated more time and effort toward the selection of candidates for other state or local officials. Additionally, participants indicated factors that influenced their reasons for voting. As a result, 81% (n=91) of total participants reported that their duty as a citizen influenced their reasons for voting. Eighty-one percent (81%, n=92) of total participants also reported that making the community a better place to live also influenced their reasons for voting. Additionally, 65.5% (n=74) of total participants reported that they wanted to add their vote to others who shared their ideals, 73% (n=83) of total respondents also reported that voting gave them the chance to influence policy, and 53% (n=60) of total

respondents reported that they were the kind of person who believed in doing their share.

Participants were also asked to respond to specific questions regarding their political views on the government's role and responsibility toward the welfare of citizens and specific populations. Using a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 representing that certain responsibilities should be expected of the government and 7 representing that certain responsibilities should be expected by citizens, the mean, median, and mode for all participants responses were 4, the middle-point of the scale.

Finally, when asked if participants enjoyed or avoided political discussions, while 38% (n=43) reported that they enjoyed participating in political discussions with others, 43% (n=49) reported that they were actually in-between in regards to participating in political discussions with others. Nineteen percent (19%, n=21) reported that they preferred to avoid political discussions with others (Table 15).

Table 15

*Participation in Political Discussions*

Political Discussions	N	%
Enjoy	43	38
Avoid	21	19
In-between	49	43
Total	113	100



## Hypotheses

The operational definition for political participation in this study is the involvement of private citizens in activities that are aimed at influencing the selection of political leaders or political decisions. For example, participation includes contacting political officials, participating in debates, volunteering for political campaigns, voting, etc.

To examine factors of socioeconomic and social class status in the study, the research averaged and grouped the income ranges from the original instrument into three ranges that mirrored Thompson and Hickey's (2005) definition of multiple social classes that were more appropriate to the current average family income levels in the United States. The instrument also allowed respondents to identify their occupations rather than choose from a category. The occupations were then grouped into four categories based on the operational definition of occupation and types of occupations according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2208). Additionally, each respondent was asked to identify whether they completed high school or any college education. The table below indicates the overall results of each hypothesis tested by the independent variable and their p values to identify the probability of statistically significant difference.

Table 16

*Hypothesis Results*

Independent Variable	ANOVA Results	P value
Social Class	F (3,109)	P<.24
Income Level	F (2,110)	P<.27
Occupation	F (3,108)	P<.17
Education	F (1,111)	P<.60

*Note.* Based on total number of responding to each variable from the sample.

*Hypothesis 1: Social Class*

The first hypothesis for the research study proposed that there would be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals across social class. Based on Thompson and Hickey's definitions The research was able to group the respondents into four categories: Lower class, Working Class, Lower Middle Class, and Upper Class. As indicated in Table 16, the majority of participants in the study (55.6%, n=63) were categorized as Lower Middle Class. The independent variable was social class and the dependent variable was political participation.

Table 17

*Social Class*

Social Classes	N	%
Lower Class	7	6.3
Working Class	20	17.7
Lower Middle Class	63	55.6
Upper Middle Class	23	20.4
Total	113	100

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between social class and political participation. The one-way ANOVA was not statistically different,  $F(3,109)=1.41, p<.24$ . As a result, the ANOVA results support the research's proposed hypothesis 1 that there is no statistically significant difference in political participation and social classes.

*Hypothesis 2: Income Level*

The second hypothesis for the research study proposed that there would be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by income levels. The majority of participants were identified as having an income between \$30,000 and \$74,999. The independent variable was income level and the dependent variable was political participation.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between income levels and political participation. The one-way ANOVA was not statistically different,  $F$

(2,110)=1.32,  $p < .27$ . As a result, the ANOVA results support the research's proposed hypothesis 2 that there is no statistically significant difference in political participation and income levels.

### Hypothesis 3: Occupation

The third hypothesis for the research study proposed that there would be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by occupation types. Utilizing the definition for occupation and the participants responses to the survey, the research categorized the occupations identified into four categories: Teacher/Education, Sales/Real Estate/Customer Service, White Collar (such as clerical secretary or flight attendant), and Blue Collar (such as warehouse supervisor or truck driver).

As indicated in Table 17, the majority of participants in the study (40%,  $n=45$ ) were educators, or worked in the field of education, while 32% ( $n=36$ ) were categorized as having white collar occupations. Nineteen percent (19%,  $n=21$ ) of participants in the study worked in sales, real estate, or customer service, while 9% ( $n=10$ ) of participants were categorized as having blue collar occupations. The independent variable was occupation and the dependent variable was political participation.

Table 18

*Occupation of Respondents*

Occupations	N	%
Teacher/Education	45	40
Sales/Real Estate/Customer Service	21	19
White Collar	36	32
Blue Collar	10	9
Total	113	100

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between occupations and political participation. The one-way ANOVA was not statistically different,  $F(3,108)=1.71, p<.17$ . As a result, the ANOVA results support the research's proposed hypothesis 3 that there is no statistically significant difference in political participation and occupations.

*Hypothesis 4: Education*

The final hypothesis for the research study proposed that there would be no statistically significant difference in the political participation of individuals by education. Utilizing the educational attainment levels identified in the instrument, the research categorized education into College Degree and No College Degree. As indicated in the Table 7, the majority of participants in the study (74%, n=84) had a college degree, while 26% (n=29) of participants had no college degree. The independent variable was education and the dependent variable was political participation.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between education and political participation. The one-way ANOVA was not statistically different,  $F(1,111) = .272, p < .60$ . As a result, the ANOVA results support the research's proposed hypothesis 4 that there is no statistically significant difference in political participation and education.

### Summary

There were a total of 113 registered voters as participants in this study. Descriptive statistics regarding the participants and findings for this study were presented. The sample consisted of Anglos, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians, and other nationalities. The majority of the participants had at least one college degree and were categorized as Lower Middle Class, and held white collar occupations or occupations in education.

The majority of participants considered themselves to be affiliated with the Democratic Party and to hold liberal views; they described multiple influences on their decisions to vote. All four of the hypotheses were tested using a one-way ANOVA and not rejected. The mean scores for each dependent variable were presented. As a result of the statistical tests and based on the probability value of each tests, the research concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in political participation and individuals' social class, income level, occupation, or education.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Discussion

The purposes of this research study were to (a) identify political participation levels of individuals across social classes and socioeconomic factors, (b) to identify political attitudes about family policy across social classes, and (c) to describe participation related to issues across social classes. The theoretical framework supporting the study provided a foundation which allowed the research to emphasize the social and political components of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory that may contribute to an individual's political attitude and political participation level. Recognizing the impact that public policy has on individuals and families, the research attempted to identify political views and perspectives of the research participants based on their social class and the influence of ecological environment their political participation as well as family and social policy.

In this chapter the research responds to the data and makes conclusions about political attitudes, the contributions to political views and perspectives, and political participation levels of individuals who participated in the study from differing social classes and how these findings represent the population. This research also discusses factors or limitations that may have contributed to the

research results and recommendations for future study on political participation across social class.

### Conclusions

After testing each of the four proposed hypotheses, using a one-way ANOVA, this research study concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in socio-economic factors, such as income, occupation, and education, and an individual's political participation levels. The findings are contrary to the original research conducted by Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995).

This research defined socio-economic factors as educational attainment level, individual or family income, and occupation. A detailed explanation of social class, referencing Thompson and Hickey's (2005) five category scale ranging from Upper Class to Lower Class, was used to analyze the data and categorize occupation types indicated in the study. The research study included participants who were identified as ranging from Upper Middle Class (those having income levels over \$75,000, college degree, and white collar or professional occupations) to Lower Class (those having income levels of \$0 to \$29,999, no college degree, blue collar occupations if not unemployed, and may also be receiving supplemental benefits, such as food stamps).

The majority of participants (55.6%) from the sample were categorized as belonging to the Lower Middle Class (those having income levels of \$30,000 to \$74,999, some college, and white collar or semi-professional positions).

Although Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly (2001) concluded that political



participation is a trend that is significantly higher among citizens with high socioeconomic statuses compared to those with low socioeconomic statuses, the current research shows no statistically significant difference in individuals' political participation regardless of social classification or socioeconomic status.

One possible explanation for these findings could be attributed to the fact that combined, the majority of participants (76%) were associated with the Upper and Lower Middle Classes compared to the Working and Lower Classes (24%). With a large percentage of the sample population representing the social class categories recognized as most likely to be involved in political participation, the likelihood of a significant difference and variation in political views, influences, and political participation levels would be limited.

One unexpected discovery from the research study was the percentage of participants from the sample who were categorized as members of the Working Class. An often forgotten population, as a result of analyzing participants' responses to socio-economic factors, 17.7% of individuals categorized in a social class lower than the Lower Middle Class were members of the Working Class. Although possessing different socio-economic factors than participants who work in professional or white collar occupations, have higher income levels, and more education, according to this research study, many Working Class participants may be just as interested as participants from other social classes in public policy and political issues that contribute to their well-being and that of their families.

With that in mind, the current research study also tested each socio-economic factor in regards to political participation. Although 74% of participants reported having a college degree, the research concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between an individual's education and their political participation. Likewise, although the majority of participants reported having income levels between \$30,000 and \$74,999 the research concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between an individual's income level and their political participation. Finally, the majority of participants reported that they worked in professional (such as education) or white collar occupations. However, the research concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in an individual's occupation and their political participation.

There were other findings of interest relating to reasons individuals participated politically and factors that influenced political participation. In the current research study participants from the sample were asked to identify the number of children they had, if any, as well as respond to questions regarding political participation as a result of family and/or social influences. Using the data collected to describe and analyze political participation related to issues that span social classes, the research examined participants' responses regarding the significance of issues and/or activities on voters' current political participation levels.

An interesting result of the study, the research found that 64% of research participants did not have children. This was an interesting finding considering the

variation in age of participants and the majority of participants. The majority of the participants' ages ranged between 29 and 48 years of age. In addition, the majority of the research participants were female. However, of those participants who indicated that they had one or more children, the majority of participants who were parents indicated that family responsibilities (such as child care or babysitting) was not an issue relating to their political participation levels. The research study did not request marital status from the participants. As a result, the data collected limited the research's ability to analyze political attitudes and participation levels of individuals with varying social factors that may influence their political participation.

This research also used the data to identify how voters' political attitudes about politics might influence their political participation. Consequently, affecting or limiting representation of their political views and social class in family and public policy development. When analyzing data collected associated with political attitudes and party affiliation 67% of the participants in this study identified themselves as affiliated with the Democratic Party. Although 73% of the participants' indicated that their parents were affiliated with the Democratic Party, nearly a third (29%) of research participants indicated that their party affiliation was different from that of their parents.

These findings suggest that although the majority of voters' political views may be influenced by the political views of their parents or political exposure, approximately 30% of voters' political attitudes or views may be independent of

traditional or family-oriented attitudes or views regarding politics. Additionally, where the majority of participants appeared to be affiliated with a more liberal political party, most respondents identified their political views as having an equal balance between liberal and conservative. The remaining majority considered themselves as having political views that were only “somewhat (or slightly more) liberal” or “somewhat (or slightly more) conservative” than “middle of the road.”

Cohen et al. (2001) also suggested that there is a difference in levels of political knowledge, involvement, and participation among social classes due to resource availability, motivations and expectations, as well as their belief regarding their ability to become a “meaningful player” in the political game. Although there was no statistically significant difference between social class and political participation reported from the current research study, 46% of participants reported that if they had a complaint about a local or national government activity they believed that little, if any, attention regarding their complaint would be given by an official. Forty-seven percent(47%) of participants in the current study believed that they could have little, if any, influence on local or national government decision. Since only 24% of participants were from Working or Lower Class categories, these feelings regarding political efficacy apparently exist across social classes.

The current research also identified reasons why individuals voted or engaged in political activities even if they do not believed that they are a “meaningful player” in the political game. When asked what were their reasons

for voting, the majority of respondents indicated that they voted because they wanted the chance to make the community or nation a better place to live, that they felt that it was their duty as a citizen, or that it gave them the chance to influence policy. Ninety-two (81%) respondents indicated that they voted because it gave them a chance to make the community or nation a better place to live, while 81% also said that they believed that it was their duty as a citizen. In regards to family or public policy making, 73% of the research participants gave “the chance to influence policy” as a very important reason they voted. The table below identified the top reasons the participants gave as reasons that were very important in their decision(s) to vote (Table 18). Participants also shared multiple reasons for voting as indicated by the number and percent of responses below.

Table 19

*Reasons for Voting*

Reasons for Voting	N	%
The chance to make the community or nation a better place to live.	92	81
My duty as a citizen.	91	81
The chance to influence policy.	83	73
Wanted to add my vote to that of others who share in my ideals.	74	65.5
Kind of person who does my share.	60	53
Total	113	100

*Note.* Data based on number of responses from the sample for each reason.

The research study also asked respondents about their participation in political activities such as rallies, protest, or marches and what issue(s) motivated their participation in such activities. However, the majority of participants indicated that they had never participated in a protest, rally, march, or similar political activities. The respondents were further asked to indicate whether they were influenced to participate in such political activities that addressed issues that affect themselves, their family, themselves and their families, their community, or all people in the nation or world. However, since the majority had not participated in any such activities, whether they were influenced to participate based on the issue and who the issue(s) affected were not applicable.

This research also examined past and current political participation of respondents. Although 69% of respondents considered themselves to be “somewhat active” in politics, 81% said that they were more active in politics today than in the past. Furthermore, when asked to think about the election for which they gave the most time and effort, 86% of respondents indicated that they had given the most time and effort to an election for the President of the United States.

For the purpose of the current research, political participation was defined as involvement in activities by private citizens that are aimed at influencing the selection of political leaders or political decisions. For example, contacting political officials, participating in debates, volunteering for political campaigns, voting, etc. were identified as political participation activities. Activities such as

reading a newspaper, watching a debate, or participating in a classroom political discussion were not considered activities that would influence the selection of a political leaders or political decisions.

To collect data measuring participation levels of overall participants the research added a series of political participation activities (Appendix: C) to the survey instrument allowing the participants to choose the activities that best described their participation in political activities. The results of the data indicated 93% of the participants engaged in at least one of the political participation activities listed and 42% engaged in more than one political participation activity. Of the activities provided the majority (92%) of participants indicated that voting was a chosen political participation activity, while 22% indicated “contacting a politician on a public issue” as one of their political participation activities.

Only 2% indicated “running for a state office position” as one of their political participation activities and no respondents indicated “running for a national office position” as one of their political participation activities. However, 11% indicated that “running for a local office position” was one of their political participation activities. These results suggest that where individuals may not be motivated to get involved in state or federal political participation activities, they may be influenced to participate in local political activities that allow them to make their community a better place to live, as the data also implies in regards to respondents’ top reasons for voting. The data also indicated that 16% of

respondents have volunteered for a campaign and 14% have attended a rally. These political participation activities, along with voting and contacting a politician, allow individuals to increase their political participation with little worry of having to display or voice their political views before an audience. The research suggested that the majority of voters want to participate but may not want to do so where public attention is evident.

Additionally, when asked about their participation in political discussions, 38% of participants said that they enjoyed political discussions while 19% avoided political discussions. The majority of participants (43%) responded that they neither enjoyed nor avoided political discussions. With this in mind 81% of the participants were open to political discussions where, according to Klofstad (2007), the exchange of information regarding political activities and encouragement in voter participation might take place.

#### Limitations of the Study

One factor that some researchers may consider a limitation to the study was the number of participants from each social class. Although there was a representation of multiple social classes included in the sample the overall majority of research participants were considered to be from the Lower Middle Class. However, the sample included a larger group of middle class participants, which according to Cohen et al. (2001) exemplifies the largest group of voters in the United States. Therefore, the sample could be considered an appropriate representation of the voting population.



Another limitation to the study was the small number of participants with children. Although the sample included participants who were diverse in age, background, and social class, few were able to share ideals regarding political influence on family policy-making. Additionally, the instrument gave participants the opportunity to indicate the type of political participation activities they had engaged in for regarding a specific issue. However, the limitation in the sample of individuals with children resulted in limited responses that were applicable to questions used to examine influence in political participation regarding family or social issues.

Although the current research study was proposed with little concentration on the influence that current events might have on the results, the timing of the research study and historical events of the most recent election may have posed a limitation to the study and contributed to the outcome, participants' responses, and demographics of the research study.

#### Implications

Based on the participants' responses to questions regarding political activities, the research study suggested that a low level participant would be considered "not at all active" in political activities. Based on the study an average participant would be considered "somewhat active" in political activities and a high level participant would be considered "very active" in political activities. Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents indicated voting as one of their political

participation activities. Only 22% indicated other political participation activities that they engaged in.

With this in mind, the research study implies that those respondents who were considered to be “very active” and engaged in a high political participation level might be individuals who participated in two or more political participation activities. The majority of participants were considered to be “somewhat active” and engaged in an average political participation level. This category might be individuals for whom voting is their chosen political participation activity and engagement in other political participation activities is limited or non-existent. The lowest political participation level of individuals who were considered “not at all active” might be individuals whose political participation is limited or non-existent most of the time, except in certain circumstances, such as those who may have voted in the most recent election because they found it exciting.

Recognizing that the extent of the average citizen’s political participation level may be voting, the research also implied that there are limitations on the level of influence individuals can have on policy making. The influence of those whose political participation levels are limited to voting depends upon the shared views of the candidate they chose. Their views are not guaranteed to be heard other than through representation by a political leader. Furthermore, the research suggests that the higher an individual’s political participation level the greater influence an individual can have on policy development regarding family and other social issues regardless of social class.

With this in mind, the current research implies that in regards to political participation levels of individuals, it is necessary for political science researchers, faculty, and students to understand and be able to define political participation and political participation activities before examining political participation levels and voting trends of citizens. Furthermore, in regards to family policy development, researchers, faculty, and students in the family and social sciences, in addition to understand and being able to define political participation and political participation activities, should also recognize the multiple factors within the family systems where policy development may have an impact. The effectiveness of political participation activities in regards to specific family issues may encourage the political participation levels necessary to influence policy development.

#### Further Research Regarding Political Participation

Contrary to most of the literature regarding political participation across socio-economic status, the results of this study challenge earlier researcher studies that imply a statistically significant difference in political participation between different socio-economic groups. However, considering the large population of the Election of 2008, the current research supports the time appropriate research of Fowler et al. (2008), which suggested that there is little or no variation in individuals' political participation in large popular elections. The earlier research also concluded that most individuals either always vote or always abstain. However, the current research results indicate that individuals

were more active in political participation activities than they were in the past. In addition, nearly half (48%) of the respondents in the current research indicated that one of their top reasons for voting was because they “found it exciting.” As a result, future research is recommended that will examine political participation levels among social classes outside of an election year. Future research that is conducted when political participation is not a national focus of attention may provide different results.

#### Further Research Regarding Policy Development

Local and state governments sometimes add proposed policies or internal improvements to the ballot in an election, giving citizens an opportunity to influence policies or activities. However, on a national level the extent of policy-making and representation of citizens’ views depends solely on the vote or influence of their congressman. When citizens are not sure how a congressman will vote or influence the development of policies regarding family or other social issues they feel strongly about, they must increase their political participation level to include political activities that will further influence the actions of political leaders in policy-making.

If the national political system aspired to enhance the democratic process to allow citizens the opportunity to further influence policy development based on the average level of political participation, further research examining policy development where strategies were used to increase political participation and influence on policy-making would be beneficial. The current administration has

incorporated electronic communication strategies, supplementing the resources available for enhancement of political participation activities. As a result increased political participation among the average citizen has emerged in a manner that is modern, more convenient, and comfortable for many.

### Summary

The results of the study conducted provided information that allowed the research to conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in political participation levels among voters, regardless of social class or socioeconomic factors that exists within their ecological systems and environments. However, the study did indicate that an individual's political participation level is associated with the number of political participation activities they are engaged. Additionally, the study suggested that the majority of individuals exemplify an average political participation level where political participation activities may be limited to voting. Further research regarding political participation and policy development is recommended considering the average political participation level of citizens within the United States. Further research and development of strategies that will include opportunities that may inspire an increase in political participation levels among citizens during a election-free timeframe is also encouraged.

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APPENDIX A  
PERMISSION TO USE ARCHIVED INSTRUMENT

*Entered on 04/22/2008 at 08:18:31 by Mary E Morris:*

Hello Tricia,

If you are just interested in the study instrument/survey, that is freely available. It is the raw data that are members-only. To download the codebook and questionnaire, click on Documentation Only in Step 1 of the study download page. The codebook provides information on variables and how they were coded.

If you are interested in obtaining the raw data for the study and plan to do secondary analysis using a statistical package such as SAS or SPSS, we do have a nonmember student rate of \$125. We would supply the data on cdrom and you would have to sign a data loan form indicating that data were for your use only and that the raw data would not be redistributed. We require prepayment by check or credit card.

If you are interested in purchasing the data, let me know and I can provide more details, along with the data loan form. Please also provide a street mailing address.

Mary Morris, User Support, ICPSR.

*Entered on 04/21/2008 at 18:37:14 by thomast@mail.twu.edu:*

Hello:

Through a very lengthy search I was ecstatic to have finally located the data collection instrument (The American Citizen Participation Study, 1990) that matches my research topic for my dissertation. My institution, Texas Woman's University in Denton Texas, is not a member institution. Does this mean that in order to utilize the instrument to aid in my current research that I would be subject to the non-member fee of \$500? If so, is there a discounted fee for students? How would I go about purchasing the rights to use the instrument?

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Tricia Thomas

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APPENDIX B  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL



**Institutional Review Board**  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
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November 12, 2008

Ms. Laticia Thomas  
947 Medina Drive  
Arlington, TX 76017

Dear Ms. Thomas:

*Re: 2008 Political Participation Study*

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was determined to be exempt from further review.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. Because a signed consent form is not required for exempt studies, the filing of signatures of participants with the TWU IRB is not necessary.

Another review by the IRB is required if your project changes in any way, and the IRB must be notified immediately regarding any adverse events. If you have any questions, feel free to call the TWU Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Nichols, Chair  
Institutional Review Board - Denton

cc. Dr. Larry LeFlore, Department of Family Sciences  
Dr. Lillian Chenoweth, Department of Family Sciences  
Graduate School

APPENDIX C  
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION STUDY SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**Please answer the following questions for the political participation study. All responses will remain anonymous and confidential.**

- 1) In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) In addition to being American, what do you consider your main ethnic group or nationality group?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What gender are you?
  - A) Male
  - B) Female
- 4) In which of these groups did your own total earnings from your occupation fall last year (2007) before taxes?
  - A) Low-Income (\$0 – 29,999)
  - B) Middle Income (\$30,00-\$74,999)
  - C) High Income (\$75,000 and above)
- 5) There are many benefit programs sponsored by the federal, state, and local government. Please indicate if you or any family member in your household currently receives social security benefits, veteran's benefits, or food stamps. Check all that apply.
  - A) Social Security benefits
  - B) Veteran's benefits
  - C) Food Stamps
  - D) None
- 6) Did you get a high school diploma or pass a high school equivalency test?
  - A) Yes
  - B) No
- 7) Do you have any college degrees—that is, not including degrees from a business college, technical college, or vocational school?
  - A) Yes
  - B) No
- 8) What kind of work do you/did you do?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9) How many children do you have living at home with you? Please include step and adopted children living in the household. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) If you wanted to go to a meeting how difficult would it be for you to arrange for someone to look after your child(ren)?
  - A) Very Difficult
  - B) Somewhat Difficult
  - C) Not Very Difficult
  - D) Not At All Difficult
  - E) Children Can Look After Themselves

11) Are you currently registered to vote?

- A) Yes
- B) No

12) In talking to people about elections, they are sometimes not able to vote because they are not registered, they don't have time, or they have difficulty getting to the polls.

Have you ever not been able to vote because of any of the reasons above? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY.

- A) Not registered
- B) Not enough time
- C) Had difficulty getting to the polls
- D) Not Applicable

**IF YOU ARE NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE YOU MAY STOP HERE.  
IF YOU ARE REGISTERED TO VOTE PLEASE CONTINUE.**

13) When you were 16 how active were your parents in politics?

- A) Very
- B) Somewhat
- C) Not at all
- D) Don't Remember

14) How active are you most of the time in politics?

- A) Very
- B) Somewhat
- C) Not at all
- D) Don't Remember

15) Was there a time in the past when you were more active in politics than you are at present?

- A) Yes
- B) No

16) Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as:

- A) A Republican
- B) A Democrat
- C) An Independent
- D) Other

17) When you were 16 years old did your parents think of themselves as:

- A) Republicans
- B) Democrats
- C) Independents
- D) Other



18) Below is a scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal (point 1) to extremely conservative (point 7). Where would you place yourself on this scale? CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT CORRESPONDS WITH YOUR ANSWER.

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
Extremely Liberal	Somewhat Liberal	Liberal	Middle of the road	Conserv.	Somewhat Conserv.	Extremely Conserv.

19) Thinking about the election to which you gave the most time and effort, what office was the candidate running for?

- A) President
- B) U.S. Senator
- C) U.S. Representative
- D) State Senator
- E) State Representative
- F) Governor
- G) Mayor
- H) City Council
- I) School Board
- J) County Official
- K) Other State Official
- L) Other City Official
- M) Other

20) Is your political involvement on the national, local, or on both levels?

- A) National
- B) Local
- C) Both

21) Here is a list of reasons people give for voting. Thinking about the last time when you voted in the (local/national) election, please tell if each of the reasons below were very important, somewhat important, or not very important in your decision to vote.

CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT CORRESPONDS WITH YOUR ANSWER.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important
A) I found it EXCITING.	3	2	1
B) I wanted to add my vote to that of OTHERS WHO SHARE MY IDEALS.	3	2	1
C) The chance to INFLUENCE POLICY.	3	2	1
D) MY DUTY AS A CITIZEN.	3	2	1
E) I am the KIND OF PERSON WHO DOES MY SHARE.	3	2	1
F) The chance FOR RECOGNITION FROM PEOPLE I RESPECT.	3	2	1
G) I DID NOT WANT TO SAY NO TO SOMEONE.	3	2	1
H) I might want to GET HELP FROM AN OFFICIAL on a personal or family problem.	3	2	1

I)	The chance to MAKE THE COMMUNITY OR NATION A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.	3	2	1
J)	The chance TO FURTHER THE GOALS OF MY PARTY	3	2	1

- 22) If you had some complaint about a local or national government activity and took that complaint to a member of the local or national government, do you think that he or she would pay a lot of attention to what you had to say, some attention, very little attention, or none at all?
- A) A lot
  - B) Some
  - C) Very little
  - D) None at all
- 23) How much influence do you think someone like you can have over local or national government decisions? A lot, some, very little, or none at all?
- A) A lot
  - B) Some
  - C) Very little
  - D) None at all
- 24) Imagine you went to a community meeting or political rally and people were making comments and statements. Do you think that you are knowledgeable enough and speak well enough to make an effective statement in public at such a meeting?
- A) Yes
  - B) No
  - C) Uncertain, depends on meeting
  - D) Depends on issue, etc.
  - E) Would never want to make a statement
- 25) Suppose you wanted to write a letter to someone in the government on some issue or problem that concerned you. Do you feel that you write well enough to write a convincing letter expressing your point or do you feel that you do not?
- A) Could write a convincing letter
  - B) Could not write a convincing letter
- 26) In the past five years have you served on the board or been the officer of an association related to where you live – like a neighborhood or community association, or a homeowners' or condominium association, or a block club?
- A) Yes
  - B) No
- 27) Have you attended a meeting of the association in the past 12 months?
- A) Yes
  - B) No

28) In the past two years, have you taken part in a protest, march, rally, or other political participation activity on some national or local issue (other than a strike against your employer)?

- A) Yes
- B) No

29) Thinking about your most recent protest, march, rally or other political participation activity, what were the issues or problems ranging from public policy issues to community, family or personal concerns that led you to take part in this activity?

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30) Thinking about the issue you mentioned, which of these categories best describes who was affected by the problem?

- A) Only myself or my family
- B) Only other people, but not myself or my family
- C) Myself or my family, as well as others like us
- D) All people in the community
- E) All people in the nation or all people in the world.

31) Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point 1. Others think that the government should just let each person get ahead on his or her own. Suppose these people are at the other end of the scale at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at point 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
Government should see to it that everyone has a job and a good standard of living.						Everyone should ensure that they have a job and a good standard of living themselves.

32) Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of women. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point 1. Others think that the government should not make any special effort to help women because they should help themselves. Suppose these people are at the other end of the scale at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at point 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
Government should help women.						Women should help themselves.

33) Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of minorities. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point 1. Others think that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves. Suppose these people are at the other end of the scale at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at point 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
Government should help minorities.						Minorities should help themselves.

34) Some people try to avoid getting into political discussions because they think that people can get into arguments and it can be unpleasant. Other people enjoy discussing politics even though it sometimes leads to arguments. What is your feeling on this? Do you usually try to avoid political discussions, do you enjoy them, or are you somewhere in between?

- A) Avoid political discussions
- B) Enjoy political discussions
- C) In between
- D) REFUSED TO ANSWER

35) Think about the kinds of people you respect and admire. Whom do you admire more? CIRCLE EITHER 1 OR 2 FOR OF EACH LETTER THAT CORRESPONDS TO YOUR ANSWER.

- A) 1. Someone who avoids getting involved in political controversies  
2. Someone who speaks his or her mind on controversial political issues
- B) 1. Someone who is active in politics and public affairs  
2. Someone who is active in religion and the church
- C) 1. Someone who spends his or her extra time with the family  
2. Someone who spends his or her extra time working for the benefit of the community.

36) Which activities below describe your participation in and source of information regarding political activities? Check all that apply.

- |                                                                    |                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voting                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Attending a rally           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading A newspaper                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading a newspaper         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio talk shows                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Gossip columns/tabloids     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching State of the Union Address       | <input type="checkbox"/> Post-secondary classrooms   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious activities                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Membership   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching a debate                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering for a campaign |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching the news                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Running for state office    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Running for local office                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Running for U.S. office     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contacting a politician on a public issue | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobbying                    |

37) What motivates you most to participate in political activities?

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38) How does your involvement in any family, church, or other social networks encourage your participation in political activities?

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APPENDIX D  
RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

**TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Title of the Study:** 2008 Political Participation Study

**Researchers Conducting the Study:**

Tricia Thomas, M.A.T. - (817) 394-1468  
Lillian Chenoweth, Ph.D. - (940) 898-2688

**Purpose of the Research:**

- 1) To identify political participation levels of individuals across social classes and socioeconomic factors;
- 2) To identify political attitudes about family policy across social classes; and
- 3) To describe political participation related to issues across social classes.

**Description of the procedures to be used in the study:**

The researcher will conduct the study using quantitative research methods to analyze data collected from a survey instrument. The selective sample will include participants from the north and south Texas region as well as south Louisiana. The participants will provide information regarding their political attitude, involvement and participation, social trends and stressors that they believe deserve political focus to encourage resiliency and success in family life, as well as political attitudes across socioeconomic statuses. The researcher will use quantitative research software for statistical testing and analysis of data and results that support or reject the hypotheses.

The expected maximum total time commitment required for your participation is 30 minutes and there are no potential risks involved in this study. By completing and signing this consent form you agree that you are at least 18 years of age and eligible to participate in the study. Although your survey responses will be anonymous, confidentiality of this consent form will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The consent form will be stored in a lock storage file for at least one year after the completion of and disclosure of results of the study. Thereafter the consent forms and surveys will be shredded by the principal investigator.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might occur because you are taking part in this research.

The researchers and site sponsors involved in the study are committed to ensuring that each potential participant understands that participation is voluntary and as a participant, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. There will be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. As a participant, you are entitled to information regarding the results of the study. This information will be provided upon written request from the researchers.

You will be given a carbon copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Consent of Participant  
Approved by the  
Texas Woman's University  
Institutional Review Board  
Date: 11-12-08

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Consent