The Influence of Media Consumption on Trust, Political Efficacy and Social Media Activism among Young Adults

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Abstract of Dissertation

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By

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For many years, trust in government and political efficacy has increasingly been an area of interest for political scientist. Recently, social media activism has become just as intriguing. With social media playing such a dominant role in society, individuals are consuming news through their social media timelines, without having to seek it out themselves. This is especially true for young adults. Through the advancement of non-traditional media outlets, this generation is submerged in endless Facebook statuses, tweets, and television coverage of civil unrest and political polarization that has certainly had both social and political implications. While past studies conducted by the Black Youth Project, have investigated attitudes of young racial minorities regarding trust in government and political efficacy, more research is needed to determine how digital natives are navigating the political terrain. This dissertation will assess whether media consumption has affected levels of trust in government, political efficacy and social media activism among young adults. This study will also examine the utility of Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory for political science research. In addition, an analysis of how trust in government and political efficacy has changed over time among young adults will be offered. By performing quantitative analysis on primary data from 2017- 2018, this dissertation finds: (1) Media consumption is not a predictor for trust in the government or political efficacy; (2) high levels of media consumption is a predictor for social media activism; (3) race continues to be a predictor for trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism and (4) Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory has utility in political science research. As social media involvement continues to grow, it is becoming increasingly important for social scientist to gain a better understanding of its sphere of influence, as well as determine how it can be used as a tool for change.

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As I sat down to write these acknowledgments, I am truly humbled and thankful for this journey. It is by the grace of God that I made it through this process. I am grateful for my spiritual connection for it kept be motivated to see the journey through to completion.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Malcolm X once stated that "the media is the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses." Although mass media[1] has evolved over time, there continues to be a strong connection between mass media and the American political system. With social media[2] playing such a dominant role in society, individuals are consuming news through their social media timelines, without having to seek it out themselves. This is especially true for college students. Social media refers to electronic communication that is used to capture voices of both traditional actors in media (i.e. news media outlets) and nontraditional actors (i.e. everyday citizens). Social media can include computer applications, websites, blogs, and social networks. These types of communication allow users to share information faster and serve as a way for individuals or information to be linked together by interest or interrelatedness. As digital natives[3], college students are immersed in technology in a way that is different than generations before them (Anderson and Jiang, 2018).

In recent years there has been a great deal of media attention given to police brutality and social injustice. While these topics are not new to the American narrative, media coverage of protests, looting, and rioting has made it difficult for society to

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[1] Mass Media refers to all forms of communication, such as: social media, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines.

[2] Social Media refers to electronic communication. This can include applications, websites, blogs, and social networks. This types of communication allows individuals and information to be linked together bases on interest or interrelatedness. Social media includes traditional journalist as well as everyday citizen who may not have traditional journalism training but who use social media to as citizen journalist.

[3] Digital Native refers to a young generation who have always been exposed the digital language of computers, text messaging, video games, and social media. Digital natives are used to information being at their fingertips. Often the fore mentions apparatus are their preferred method of communication.

overlook their presence. Even further, these issues have illuminated the underlying issues of race and racism in America. Despite the fact that past generations have experienced social justice movements, movements like "Black Lives Matter"[4] and other expressions of civil unrest [5]have served as this generation's "civil rights movement". Through the advancements of social media and other media outlets, this generation has been submerged in endless Facebook statuses, tweets, and television coverage of unrest that has certainly had both social and political implications. Thus, my research will assess whether media consumption[6] has affected levels of trust in government[7], political efficacy[8] and political and social discourse on social media among young adults between the ages of 17-25.

While studies like the Black Youth Project are important because they provide insight on the attitudes and behaviors of youth from underrepresented populations, my study seeks to understand whether the media is influencing the perceptions of how young adults see themselves in the political arena. I am also interested in how they use social media to express their political and social thoughts. Despite the fact that family and friends are often credited as agents for political socialization, there are other factors that contribute to their political cognition (Putnam, 1995). Factors of influence include school,

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[4] Black Lives Matter is a social movement founded in 2012 that promotes the validity of Black life. The movement strives to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

[5] Civil unrest refers to disturbances cause by a group of citizens. Civil unrest can be violent or not violent. Civil unrest develops to display discontent with the status quo. In some instances, civil unrest can produce social and political change.

[6] Media consumption is the sum of information and entertainment media taken in by an individual or group. For this study the focus is social media consumption. It includes interacting with online platforms and applications to view news media, online journals, books and magazines, watching television and film, and listening to podcast or radio.

[7] Trust in government refers to the levels confidence that citizens have in their elected officials and political institutions. These two entities should function in the best interest of its citizens.

[8] Political efficacy refers to the extent in which citizens feel they have the confidence and knowledge to influence public affairs with their actions.

mass media, and religion (Putnam, 1995). In spite of the various factors that influence political cognition, the media continues to be an important agent of influence among young adults. Due to the influence that the media has on political socialization, it is important to investigate the media's effect on trust in government and efficacy.

While political efficacy is often defined by levels of political trust, for the purpose of this study, I define political efficacy as the extent to which citizens feel they have the confidence and knowledge to influence public affairs with their actions (Blach 1974; Coleman and Davis 1976; Converse 1972). When investigating phenomenon like civil unrest, it is important to examine political trust and political efficacy separately because often political trust and political efficacy may change in opposite directions. In some instances of unrest, trust in government can decline and the citizens feel that they have to take action to promote change. Thus, this is an instance where political trust may be low while political efficacy may be high (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000; McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy, 1999; Prior, 2007). If this study focused solely on political efficacy as an indicator of political trust, the findings may not be accurate.

The year 2012 is an important starting point for this study. On February 26, 2012, an African American young man from Miami Gardens, Florida was shot and killed by George Zimmerman, a community watch volunteer. The death of Trayvon Martin dominated the media in 2012 and sparked endless posts on social media. It is during this time that we see the evolution of social media activism being used to correct narratives that mainstream media were broadcasting, as well as the start of the Black Lives Matters Movement.

While this study will examine the responses of various ethnic groups, this study seeks to expand the understanding of whether youth from underrepresented [9] communities are using social media differently than their white counterparts. Additionally, I question whether social media can be used as a tool for young adults to engage in political and social discourse, as well as to be mobilized These are interesting and important questions because they shed light on how young adults are navigating intense political and social inequalities in America. Though research has been done to document the political behavior of young adults, little scholarly attention has been given to the interaction of media consumption and ethnicity on levels of trust in government and political efficacy of young adults in a digital world, and its political implications.

Compared with White Americans, African Americans exhibit lower levels of trust in government (Mangum 2012). A wealth of research has been performed to illuminate the motivating factors driving this disparity in political trust. In studying the topic of lower trust in government among African Americans, scholars have focused on issues that have included political involvement, policy satisfaction, and group influence. Studies have shown that a number of factors, including the previously mentioned, do attribute to lower trust in government among African Americans. Additionally, some scholars have argued that the unique historical relationship between African Americans and the United States of America has contributed to declining levels of trust in government and political efficacy. While these are important factors to consider, the role of the media is another factor that should be investigated. Social scientists George Comstock and Erica Scharrer

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[9] Underrepresented are individuals that are generally considered to be a member of one of more of the following populations: Hispanic/Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders

argue that news coverage has a profound impact on political opinions which affects decision-making. These scholars largely attribute this to the fact that people tend to discount their own opinions and go with the opinions of experts that they see in the media. Thus, it is important to examine how the media coverage on a given topic influences how individuals behave.

My study will focus on how variations in media consumption from 2012-2017 influenced levels of trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism[10] among young adults. I argue that students with high levels of media consumption will have lower levels of trust in government and higher political efficacy and social media activism. I seek to investigate the extent to which media consumption influences attitudes and behavior on social media. I seek to answer the following questions: what function does social media play in the lives of young adults? Do young adults feel that they have the knowledge to create social and political change? How have trust in government and political efficacy among young adults changed over time? Through answering these questions, this project offers a significant contribution to understanding young adult's attitudes and how they navigate the political terrain.

Roots of the Research Questions: The Black Youth Project and Social Media Activism

In 2004, the Black Youth Project was established to thoroughly examine the social and political thoughts and conditions of African American youth between the ages of 15-25. The objective of the Black Youth Project is to determine how various societal issues affect the way that African American youth behave in relation to their counterparts

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[10] Social media activism is a an intentional action on a digital platform or application with the goal of offering counter narratives, social and political expression, raise awareness, or mobilize, or create change

of other ethnicities. The goal of this project was to enrich the lives of young adults from

underrepresented populations. The project functions under the assumption that African

American youth have an important perspective on issues of racism, sexual choices,

government distrust, and police violence. The project collected survey data over ten

years. The data was collected by the National Opinion Research Center at the University

of Chicago. The sampling frame was from large Latino and Black communities. To offer

effective communication, the survey was offered in English and Spanish. The survey

asked questions over a wide variety of topics. These topics include: employment,

education, health, lived experiences, civic engagement, gun violence, and criminal

justice. Ultimately, the studies found the youth from underrepresented populations face

many unique challenges in across various social and political spaces.

Concerning political efficacy, data was collected in 2005 and 2009. The same

questions were asked each time. These sections of the survey focused on four major

statements: 1) I believe that by participating in politics I make a difference, 2) I have the

skills and knowledge necessary to participate in politics, 3) The leaders in government

care very little about people like me, and 4) The government is pretty much run by a few

big interests looking out for themselves and their friends. Overall, from 2005 to 2009, the

data showed that political efficacy decreased across all questions and all ethnic groups.

Additionally, the study revealed "young people of color, and especially Black youth,

express feelings of political alienation with the belief that they are relatively powerless to

influence government" (BYP, 2012). Ultimately, the Black Youth Project continues to

stress the importance of capturing the political and social experiences of young adults

from underrepresented populations.

Over the last decade the Black Youth Project has worked diligently to capture these perspectives and have offered immense insights on the attitudes and behaviors of young people; however, there remains a large gap in the research concerning an essential aspect of the lives of young adults: the media. In a 2018 survey conducted by the PEW Research Center, it was found that "45 percent of youth were online almost constantly" and "44 percent indicated that they were online several times a day" (Anderson and Jiang, 2018). Given that young people are spending so much time on social media and coverage of civil unrest has increased, it is essential to investigate what they are using the web for and determine what impact it is having on their attitudes and behavior. Expanding on some of the findings of the Black Youth Project regarding political trust and efficacy, my research fills an important gap regarding young adults, media consumption and social media activism.

Since the Black Youth Project in 2005, there has developed an interest in online participation and hashtag[11] movements. For example, in 2012 there was a study conducted by the Pew Research Center to determine Twitter usage. This study found that young adults between the ages of 18-29 were using Twitter "nearly double the rate for those ages 30-49" (Smith and Brenner, 2012). Thus this reflected that in 2012, young adults had a stronger relationship with social media platforms (like Twitter) than their older counterparts. Even further, the aforementioned Pew Research Center study found that "Black internet users continue to use Twitter at higher rates than their White and Hispanic Counterparts" (Smith and Brenner, 2012). This study illustrated that Black individuals were using social media differently than their white counterparts. This study

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[11] Hashtags refers to a metadata tag that is used in social media to allow users to easily locate themed content.

is important because it expanded the understanding of social media use. It is through a

2018 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, that the understanding of the utility of

social media platforms among varying racial groups was expanded even further. That

study found that while online presence has increased among adults, social media

platforms play an especially important role in the lives of African Americans, as

illustrated in **Graph 1.**

Graph 1: Level of Importance of Social Media Platforms by Race

Blacks and Hispanic social media users more likely to say these sites are personally important for getting involved with issues, expressing their political views

% of U.S. social media users who say these sites are very or somewhat important to them personally when it comes to ...

● White ● Hispanic ● Black

Finding others who share their views about important issues	39 ● ● ● 54
Getting involved with issues that are important to them	36 ● ● ● 52
Giving them a venue to express their political opinions	32 ● ● ● 53

0   20   40   60   80

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Respondents who gave other responses or who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 29-June 11, 2018.
"Activism in the Social Media Age"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The data illustrated that eight out of ten Black participants stated that "social

media highlights important issues that might not get a lot of attention otherwise"

(Anderson et al, 2018). The same study found that eight in ten White participants stated

that "social media distracted people from issues that are truly important" (Anderson et al,

2018). This clearly indicates that the usefulness of social media differs across race. The

notion that social media could be causing more of a distraction than good is not one that

should be quickly dismissed. In another study conducted by Pew Research Center, the

research found that "many social media users see social media as an especially negative venue for political discussion" (Rainie, 2018). **Graph 2** illustrates that many participants saw social media as a space where political discourse is negative.

Graph 2: View on Political Discussion on Social Media Platforms

Many users see social media as an especially negative venue for political discussions, but others see it as simply "more of the same"

% of social media users who say their political discussions are more or less _____ compared with other places people might discuss politics

	The discussions are less ...	The discussions are more ...	The discussions are the same
Respectful	53%	5%	39%
Likely to come to a resolution	51	5	41
Civil	49	7	41
Focused on policy debates	45	10	43
Politically correct	41	8	47
Informative	34	14	49
Angry	6	49	43
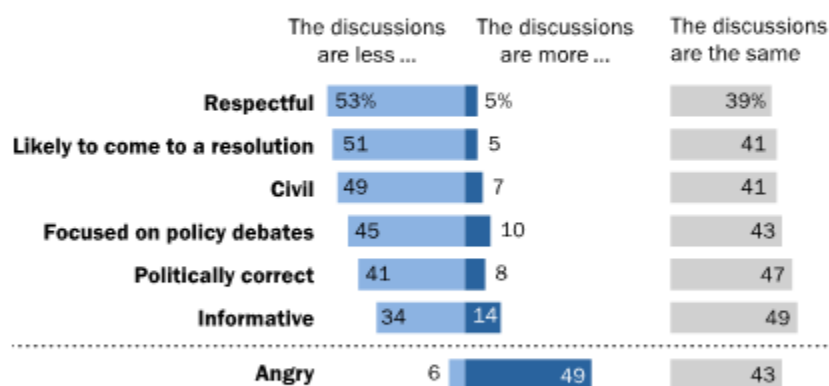
Source: Survey conducted July 12-Aug. 08, 2016.
"The Political Environment on Social Media"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The mixed perceptions of social media utility is an area that this dissertation seeks to address. Does the utility of social media platforms differing across race apply to young adults? Ultimately, this question is important because social scientists must be able to determine if social media is a powerful tool that can be used to create change, or is society simply inflating its power. This is especially true concerning hashtag movements which are gaining popularity. In recent years, political scientists have started to question whether, hashtags movements or social media activism should be considered a form of political participation, given that there have been many events that have garnished a great

deal of public attention. A recent study concluded that the use of "hashtag on Twitter periodically spikes in response to major news events" (Anderson et al, 2018). **Graph 3** illustrates that many of the spikes in hashtag usage were connected to events surrounding race and police shootings.

Graph 3: Number of Hashtags Surrounding Race and Police Involved Shooting

Use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag on Twitter periodically spikes in response to major news events

Number of Twitter posts mentioning the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, Jan. 1, 2013-May 1, 2018

July 7
Five police officers killed
during attack following
protests in Dallas

Sept 22
President Trump
calls on NFL
owners to fire
players who
protest during
national anthem

July 13
George
Zimmerman
acquitted in
shooting death of
Trayvon Martin

July 17
Eric Garner
dies in police
custody

Nov 24
Ferguson, Mo., police
officer not indicted in
shooting death of
Michael Brown

June 16
Minnesota police
officer who shot
and killed Philando
Castile acquitted

March 18
Stephon Clark is
shot and killed
by Sacramento,
Calif., police
officers

1,400,000
1,200,000
1,000,000
800,000
600,000
400,000
200,000
0

2013   2014   2015   2016   2017   2018

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of publicly available tweets using Crimson Hexagon.
"Activism in the Social Media Age"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Given that these events are shaping some of the conversation on social media platforms, it is important to explore in detail some of the major events that yielded unrest on ground and online.

Timeline of Major Civil Unrest 2012-2017

While there were various incidents of civil unrest in the United States between 2012 and 2016, it is important to highlight the major events of civil unrest that were connected to race, police brutality, and social injustice. I defined "major events" as

protests and civil unrest that received national attention from major news outlets. Below is a timeline of the major protest and civil unrest surrounding race, police brutality and social injustice between 2012 and 2016.

- **Anaheim, California Police Shooting**: During July 2012, the Anaheim Police Department were involved in two shootings that killed Manuel Diaz and Joel Acevedo. Diaz was believe to be in possession of heroin which sparked a foot chase with Anaheim Police, which ultimately resulted in his death. Acevedo was in a shooting exchange during a foot chase with the police which yielded his death. Civil unrest and protests occurred after each shooting. More than two hundred individuals gathered to express their discontent about the fatal shooting. During the demonstration, protestors faced opposition from the police (CNN Library, 2019).

- **Shooting of Trayvon Martin**: In 2012, 17 year old Trayvon Martin was shot and killed by George Zimmerman. Zimmerman served as the neighborhood watch coordinator of his gated community in Sanford, Florida. Zimmerman claimed that the community had recently experienced several break-ins which made Zimmerman suspicious when he saw Martin walking through the neighborhood. Zimmerman called the police to inform them of the suspicious young man. He then made the decision to follow Martin, which he was told not to do by the police dispatch worker. Ultimately, Zimmerman and Martin had an altercation which resulted in Zimmerman killing Martin. Following the murder of Martin, many community members gathered to express their anger concerning the repeated killings of African Americans. When the Zimmerman verdict found him

not guilty, this resulted in more unrest. Over the next five years, there continued to be protests and unrest in regards to the death of Trayvon Martin (CNN Library, 2019).

- **Flatbush Riots:** Occurred in March 2013 in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Some of the community gathered to express concerns after the police shooting that killed 16 year old Kimani Gray. It was alleged that Gray pointed a gun at the police, which resulted in Gray's death. The demonstration turned violent when frustrated community members started to throw bottles at the police and looted a Rite Aid (CNN Library, 2019).

- **Shooting of Michael Brown and the Ferguson Unrest:** On August 9, 2014, 18 year old Michael Brown was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, an officer with the Ferguson Police Department in Ferguson Missouri. Brown was a suspect for robbing a local convenience store. Wilson received the robbery alert and pursued Brown because he met the description of the suspect. Brown and Wilson ended up in an altercation that resulted in Wilson firing 12 shots and killing Brown. The shooting sparked unrest because, once again, a black youth had be killed by the police. During the time of the unrest, many people believed that Brown had been killed despite having his hands up to surrender. This drove the hostility between citizens and police officers. The unrest included violent protests, nonviolent protests, and looting. When the Wilson verdict found him not guilty, this resulted in more unrest. Over the next few years, there continued to be protests and unrest in regards to the death of Michael Brown (CNN Library, 2019)

- **Death of Eric Garner:** On July 17, 2014, Eric Garner died after being placed in a chokehold by police officers from the New York City Police Department. The police officers approached Garner outside of a convenience store where they believed that he was selling single cigarettes without a tax stamp. At that time it was believed that Garner stated that he was not selling cigarettes and did not want to be harassed. The police officers tried to arrest Garner, which resulted in four police officers pinning Garner to the ground. The altercation was captured on video. In the video, there are many instances where you can hear Garner yelling that he could not breathe as a result of the chokehold, which ultimately led to his death. When the verdict found the police officers not guilty, this resulted in unrest in several states across America. In response to the protesters, counter protesters gathered to express their support for the NYPD. Over the next few years, the death of Eric Garner and other African Americans killed by the police continue to spark civil unrest (CNN Library, 2019).

- **2015 Baltimore Protest and the Death of Freddie Gray:** In April of 2015, Baltimore Police Department arrested Freddie Gray. While being transported, Gray sustained injuries to his neck and spine, causing his death. Once Gray's death became public, protests gathered to demand answers and justice. The civil unrest was both violent and nonviolent. The violent unrest resulted in 20 police officers getting injured. While the Medical Examiner ruled Gray's death a homicide, the police officers were eventually acquitted. (CNN Library, 2019).

- **Shooting of Alton Sterling:** In July of 2016 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Alton Sterling was detained by the police in the parking lot of a local food mart. The

police had received a call that a man was threatening others and waving a gun while selling CDs. Once the police officers arrived they tried to arrest Sterling. Sterling and the police officers got into an altercation. At some point one of the officers yelled that Sterling had a gun which resulted in an officer shooting Sterling three times at close range. The altercation was captured on video. Over the next several days after Sterling was killed, demonstrators gathered to demand justice. Similar to the aforementioned incidents, no charges were brought against the police officers (CNN Library, 2019).

- **Shooting of Philando Castile:** Only days after the shooting of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile was shot and killed by a St. Anthony, Minnesota police officer. Castile and his family were pulled over by the police for a traffic stop. The Police stopped them because they met the description of two occupants that were involved in a robbery. Once pulled over, the police officers asked for license and proof of insurance. Upon providing proof of insurance, Castile informed the officers that he did have a gun in the car. The police told him not to reach for the gun. The police believed that he was reaching for the gun which resulted in one of the officers firing 7 shots towards Castile. In the end Castile was hit by five bullets and died from his injuries. Castile's girlfriend displayed the incident on Facebook Live. People around the world watched the video of Castile. In the days following, the protests turned violent between the protesters and the police. Over the next year, the death of Castile and others continues to be the reason for civil unrest (CNN Library, 2019).

Black Lives Matters Movement

The Black Lives Matter movement has played a dominant role in the media over the last few years. This movement has become synonymous with civil unrest directed against police shootings of black males. Black Lives Matter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman. Black Lives Matter is a member led movement with more than 40 chapters. This differs from previous movements for equality which had a one clear leader. "Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' humanity, our contributions to society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression" (Black Lives Matter, 2018). Black Lives Matters has a strong presence on social media platforms. The hashtag (blacklivesnatter) has been trending in social media since 2013. Despite its strong presence in society, the movement has received a great deal of criticism (Horowitz and Livingston, 2016). Some argue that the movement lacks direction and leadership. Others argue that the movement does little to improve the lives of African Americans. Another criticism is that the movement is divisive and violent. Despite these criticisms, this movement has appealed to young adults across the nation.

Importance of the Problem

Historically, race has been commonly used to predict political participation and civic engagement. In particular, young adults have exhibited varying levels of political participation and civic engagement.[12] With the election of Barack Obama for President

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[12] According to The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), in the 2012 presidential election, African American youth voted at a rate of 53.7%, the highest among all racial and ethnic groups but down by 4.5 percentage points compared to 2008. Additionally, black youth were more likely than their Asian and Latino peers to be "broadly engaged" or "political specialists".

in 2008, some social scientists started to argue that society has arrived at a post-racial
[13]era. Although voter turnout increased among African Americans in the 2008 elections
(Godsay, 2010), there continue to be major issues with racism in America. In fact, "Data
from the August 2009 wave of the ANES survey reveal a stark contrast between whites'
and blacks' perceptions of the current amount of racial discrimination in America.
Only16% of Whites believe that there is a lot of discrimination in America today, while
56% of Blacks and 26% of Latinos believe that there is a lot of discrimination in
America" (Byrd and Mirken, 2011). Ultimately, this indicates that despite arguments in
favor of post-racialism, the data shows that racial minorities and Whites have varying
experiences in America. While I will later discuss the various reasons why political
participation and civic engagement have fluctuated over time, two contributing factors for
instability are declining levels of trust in governmental institutions and political efficacy.

It is important to note that efforts to stabilize participation and civic engagement
among young adults had varying success. Additionally, global research on the
relationship between media consumption and political interest and knowledge has also
resulted in varying findings. According to the Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), research found that in "the 1980s in the
United States, viewing television news and reading newspapers both played important
roles in the acquisition of current events knowledge" (Amadeo, Henry-Barber, Torney-
Purta, 2004). Other research has found that "while individuals can be exposed to large
amounts of news by viewing television, the information has less depth, and may not
promote the same level of critical analysis" (2004). Along with television and

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[13] Post-racial refers a period or society in which racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist (BYP,
2012).

newspapers, social media plays a very important role in information that is distributed in the lives of young people. Social scientists Joseph Kahne and Nanjin Lee found that "interest driven online opportunities promoted both involvement in civic activities like community problem solving and volunteerism and more frequent political action and expression" (2010). This research indicates that social media serves an important political outlet[14] for young people.

Although it is clear that media plays a role in the lives of young people around the world, trust in the media is something that varies from country to country. The United States has the least amount of trust in the media. "In the United States, the media sources are trusted less than in other countries, while government is trusted somewhat more" (Amadeo, Henry-Barber, Torney-Purta, 2004). Low trust in the government is important because when individuals do not trust the media, they are less likely to trust the news reports and maybe more likely to believe information from partisan or biased sources. Even further, trust in the media is even lower among African Americans. A study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) found that three-fourths of the study's African American participants have "doubts about what mainstream media reports about their communities" (Holland, 2014). Too often members from underrepresented populations seek information about their communities and they are unable to find sufficient and accurate information. Mass communications scholar Tia C.M. Tyree argues that "the stereotyping of African-Americans and Hispanics in the media, and a distrust of systems in the United States contributes to more distrust" (Holland, 2014). Since 2012, there has been a great deal of media coverage that has been

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[14] Political outlet is a source use to express political and social thoughts. Political outlet can be used to circulate information, raise awareness, and promote individual and collective action.

given to civil unrest and violence committed against African American youth. In addition to the lack of trust in the media, there is a lack of trust in the government. According to a recent Gallup poll, "Americans' trust in the federal government's ability to handle domestic problems has fallen to 38 percent" (Jones, 2015). Even further, many African Americans express low levels of optimism regarding their position in society. In a recent Pew Research Center survey, "65 percent of African American participants expressed that they felt that they were on the losing side of issues that mattered" (Fingerhut, 2015).

Although past research has offered some insight on media effects and political behavior, there remains gaps in the current literature. One important factor that is missing from the literature regarding media effects is how consumption can influence political discourse, social media activism and participation. Additionally, there is limited research on the content of media coverage, specifically coverage regarding civil unrest. Most data that does exist focuses on media consumption regarding news coverage about political activities that do not include civil unrest (Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht, 1997; Moy and Scheufele, 2000; Mutz and Reeves, 2005; Marien, 2017). Social science literature is also missing measures regarding social media activism amongst underrepresented youth, as well as an overall measurement that accurately assesses political efficacy. The Black Youth Project has offered some research on political efficacy among African American youth, but recent unrest calls for more research. While there is past research that has investigated institutions, they have often focused on how one institution influences the other, which has limited the understanding of how political trust and attitudes toward the media frequently rise and fall collectively (Bennett et al., 1999). However, this study argues that institutional spheres of influence are fluid. Traditional models regarding mass

media have changed and made way for the citizen journalist. Now citizens can help shape the narratives that are told by mainstream media through the use of social media activism. Guarded with the new perspective that this research intends to extend, social science scholars can develop new theories on the influence of the interaction between race and media consumption on social media activism.

Theoretical Framework

Any study on media and politics requires a theoretical understanding of media effects. Marshall McLuhan is credited for advancing the understanding of media's influence on society. McLuhan's (1962) seminal work, *The Gutenberg Galaxy,* serves as the foundation for understanding how communication tools affect the way individuals process knowledge, which in turn affects how individuals behave. Today most communication scholars would define media effects as the things that happen or do not happen as a result of the influence of media. When discussing media effects, there are four theories that must be considered: cultivation theory, social action theory, agenda-setting theory, and media dependency theory

Cultivation theory refers to how persistent exposure to media content has a measureable effect on how individuals view the world. In the past, cultivation theory has mainly been used to explain media effects regarding television consumption. Ultimately, cultivation theory argues that the more time that individuals spend living in or consuming the media world, the more like those individuals are to align their social realities to what they see in the media. Although originally cultivation theory was largely applied to television consumption, there has been a shift to focusing on how the theory can be applied to social media. This theory is most interested in content and frequency. *Social action theory* was developed by social scientists J.A. Anderson and T.P. Meyer (1988), to

which they argue that individuals actively participate in media and then assert value to the information that they consume. Social action theory is more concerned with the content of media. *Agenda setting theory* was developed by Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw (1972), who referred to media as a tool to set the public agenda by constant exposure to a given topic. This theory asserts that there is a correlation between the media and public ordering of priorities. Finally, *media dependency theory* argues that individuals depend on media content to fulfill their needs and achieve goals. Although all four theories are important, my research applies a cultivation theoretical framework.

In addition to cultivation theory, I also sought to investigate social media use among young adults through the lens of *Uses and Gratification Theory*. Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is a theory used to offer insight on why individuals use certain forms of media, as well as what are they using it for (Blumler and Katz, 1974). Regarding UGT, there are a few basic assumption: 1) Individuals are not passively consuming media, they are active participants, 2) Media choice lies with the individual, and 3) and media is in competition with other sources of satisfaction. Although elements of UGT can be traced back to the 1940s, its connection to the study of politics is not seen until the late 1960s. With the evolution of media choice, the use of UGT to examine individuals' behaviors has expanded (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Newhgan and Rafaeli, 1996). My study seeks to understand if college students are seeking social media to express social and political thoughts. Additionally, I am interested in whether some subgroups are more likely to use social media to express social and political thoughts than others.

Lastly, this study expands the understanding of *Critical Race Theory* (CRT). CRT first took its roots in the legal arena in the 1970s. Despite varying definitions of Critical Race Theory, most advocates of CRT would agree that it is imperative to "question the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012,). While traditional civil rights movements follow an incrementalism model, Critical Race Theory argues that the entire system is flawed. Another important element of CRT is storytelling and narratives. Despite narratives being commonly used by lawyers, black and brown people have dominated the use of legal narratives. This is often attributed to the fact that people of color have a firsthand experience of the complexity of race and racism in America. The narratives that people of color use are often based off of true life events. While there are some Whites that have double consciousness and can easily grasp what it means to be a racial minority in society, there are many whites that cannot sympathize with this notion. Due to the lack of double consciousness amongst the dominant racial group, narratives on race have been left up to those who are racially conscious, which is more often than not, racial minorities. It is my expectation that nonwhite young adults are using social media as a space for storytelling and narratives more often than their white counterparts. Thus, social media is an important source to gain insight on the complexities of race and social injustices in America.

Survey Design

In order to gain an understanding on how individuals constructed and expressed their opinions about government, a computer assisted survey was administrated. I worked

with the Student Life Offices, Multicultural Relations Offices, African American student organization, Political Science department, and Communication department to make students aware of the study at local universities. The survey asked questions regarding daily media consumption. Respondents were asked questions about how they view the media and whether they use social media as a political outlet. Also, the survey includes questions regarding their trust in government and political efficacy, to which they use a Likert-type scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), and agree or disagree. In addition to these questions, respondents were asked questions regarding demographic information. This information was used to determine intra-group differences. These questions explored age, household income, gender, marital status, religion, party affiliation, and social or racial advancement organizations. Most of the wording regarding demographic information was taken from the ANES. A copy of the survey, with exact question wording, can be found in the Appendix A.

The participants for this study were recruited from the following: University of Missouri-Saint Louis, Harris Stowe State University, and Maryville University. These universities have been selected to illustrate responses from a geographical location where there were significant amounts of media coverage of the protest that took place in Saint Louis, Missouri.

Secondary Survey Design

The study examined secondary data from the Black Youth Project survey from 2005. This data was used to compare responses on political trust and efficacy from 2005 with the results of my study. It is my expectation that since 2005 levels of political trust have decreased, while political efficacy has increased. I predict that my results will be

consistent with the Black Youth Project results; however, I predict that both political mistrust and efficacy have greatly increased since 2005. Additionally, with the birth of social justice movements likes Black Lives Matters and other hashtag movements, underrepresented youth now have new avenues to express themselves and build networks of support through social media activism. Comparing these two studies will offer an enriched understanding of how the experiences of American youth are constantly evolving.

Summary

Over the last decade, social media has evolved to play an important role in society. When examining social media use among young adults, the data suggest that social media is of even more significant to this population. While a large portion of political science research investigates trust in government and political efficacy, more research is needed to determine the influence of factors like social media consumption on trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism. Ultimately, this study hypothesizes that individuals with high media consumption will have low levels of trust in government and higher level of political efficacy and social media activism. Further, this dissertation seeks to expand the understanding of the utility of social media platforms among underrepresented youth and their white counterparts. The next chapter will offer a review of the existing literature as well as gaps in the research.

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING LITERATURE

Importance of Political Trust

While public opinion polls are often interested in how citizens feel about their government, it is important to examine why trust and efficacy actually matter in a democratic society. Political scientists have argued that political trust is important for achieving the greatest good for society. "Since parties tend not to agree, they need political trust to provide the context to discuss, and ultimately arrive at, what is best for society" (Mara, 2001). Additionally, trust in political institutions is important for maintaining order. "If people come to think that institutions are not working for either their or the nation's best interest, it is not clear why they would continue to follow the laws set by these institutions. In fact, there is ample evidence to suggest that "those who do not trust government are significantly less likely to obey its laws" (Lubell and Scholz, 1998).

In an effort to gain an understanding of trust in democratic societies, there have been many social science scholars who have conducted studies on trust in government. One of the first longitudinal analysis on trust was conducted by Arthur Miller from 1964 to 1970. Miller was most interested in determining the impact "that reactions to political issues and public policy have on the formation of political cynicism" (Miller, 1974). As a result of the study, Miller found that "support of the federal government decreased substantially between 1964 and 1970. Data presented suggested that this increase in distrust of the government was partially related to changing attitudes on the issues of racial integration and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War" (Miller, 1974). Given that the study had an emphasis on race relations, the author was able to infer an important conclusion concerning African Americans in the American political system. Miller

argues that because African Americans often desire social and political change, it is important for them to have access to political influence. "However, they perceive the legitimate means of attaining such influence as ineffective" (Miller, 1974). Thus, it is likely for African Americans to find other means to bring forward change, which can be legal or illegal, violent or peaceful. As a result of this study, other scholars challenged Miller's study and developed alternative argument on trust in democratic societies.

One of the earliest critiques of Miller's study came from political scientist Jack Citrin. While Citrin accepts Miller's main conclusion of policy-related discontent as a source of political cynicism, he offers three main critiques " (1) The meaning of political trust as measured by the Trust in Government scale; (2) The independent impact, if any, of *attitudes* of political cynicism on political actions at the individual level, and (3) A re-examination of the claim that a continuation of "centrist" policies will inhibit the restoration of public confidence in the political process" (Citrin, 1974). Regarding the meaning of political trust as measured by the trust in government scale, Citrin argues that Miller's study does not provide a foundation for identifying the relationship between relevant "types of cynics". Therefore, the meaning of increased levels of cynicism are unclear. In regards to Miller's findings on the impact of political cynicism on individual's political actions, Citrin (1974, 974)contends that there is little evidence to support that political cynicism will lead to any real political action, but rather "largely ritualistic expressions of fashionable clichés". Concerning Miller's argument regarding adopting "centrist" policies in order to restore public confidence in the political process, Citrin claims that this logic is flawed in the sense that shifts in policies would also

produce cynics of the center. Ultimately, Citrin argues that more research is needed to expand our understanding of political cynicism and public trust.

While past scholarly research on trust has focused on policy dissatisfaction and cynicism causing distrust, political scientist Marc Hetherington argued that "declining trust is a powerful cause of dissatisfaction"(Hetherington, 1998,791). Hetherington offers an alternative understanding of the role of trust in the political environment. While there have been other scholars that offered different methods to improve public trust (Citrin and Green, 1986), the study suggests improved perception of government effectiveness would increase trust. Hetherington concludes that "without public support for solutions, problems will linger and will become more acute, and if not resolved will provide the foundation for renewed discontent" (1998, 780). This study is essential because it highlights why trust matters at many different levels.

In 2001, Hetherington expanded his research on political trust in which he evaluated the impact of declining trust on support for social and racial policies. Hetherington also argues that "since government effectiveness is one component of political trust, media portrayal of leaders as incapable of confronting political challenges, should prime trust orientations" (Hetherington, 2001, 312). Hetherington found that individuals that are most trustful of the government are more likely to support government spending on policies in favor of racial minorities and the poor than individuals that are less trustful in government. This study also supports Hetherington's previous study that suggests that low trust in government will have a negative impact on what political leaders are able to accomplish. This study is especially important to my work because it illuminates some of the factors that can influence trust in government.

Mass Media and Trust

While studies in the past have investigated trust in government through the lens of policy satisfaction (Miller, 1974), other scholars have become interested in the relationship between the media and political trust. Social scientists Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Jamieson conducted a study on media consumption, cynicism and trust. This study sought to gain an understanding of the framing of news media and its impact on cynicism. Through conducting research over a four year period, the authors concluded that "subtle changes in the way news stories are framed can affect consumer's responses, activating their cynicism when strategic or conflict-oriented frames are used" (Cappella and Jamieson, 1996, 79). This study is critical to my research because it serves as an early example of how the content of mass media can have an impact on cynicism and ultimately public opinion. While the Cappella and Jamieson study largely focuses on news coverage in the 1990s, my study seeks to offer insight on social media exposure and trust in the digital age.

A 2000 study by Patricia Moy and Dietram Scheufele investigated the effects of media use on political and social trust. The study tests four hypotheses regarding the influence of various types of mass media consumption on social and political trust. The authors explained social trust focuses on how much citizens trusted each other, while political trust explored how much citizens trusted the government. Moy and Scheufele were able to determine that media use only had an effect on social trust. "Social trust was enhanced by reading newspapers and watching television entertainment content. While watching television news, on the other hand, served to undermine social trust. Listening to political talk radio had no bearing on either form of trust" (Moy and Scheufele, 2000,

414). While this study did not find that media use had an impact on political trust, the study offers important insight on the influence of mass media on citizens.

Similar to the Moy and Scheufele study, social scientists Diana Mutz and Byron Reeves examined the effect of negative television content on political trust. These scholars sought to expand past research that theorized that when citizens observe the government engaging in incivility, their trust in government decreases (Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht, 1997). This study also expands the understanding of "videomalaise", which refers to the negative attitudes that emerge from watching television news (Robinson, 1975). Mutz and Reeves conducted an experiment where participants completed a pretest questionnaire; then they viewed twenty minutes of civil or uncivil political programming. Upon viewing the video, participants completed a posttest. Ultimately, the study found that "television presentation of political differences of opinion do not, in themselves, harm attitudes toward politics and politicians. However, political trust is adversely affected by levels of incivility in these exchanges" (Mutz and Reeves, 2005, 1). Through this study, it is clear that both media consumption and content have a negative impact on political trust, which stimulated my interest to further investigate this phenomenon.

While there have been many studies that have examined media use and political involvement (Aarts and Semetko, 2003; 2012), there are a limited number of studies that examine the role of media in the development of political trust among the youth. Social scientist Sofie Marien is one of the few scholars that has conducted research on the topic. Marien investigates whether news media consumption is related to the development of distrust among youth between the ages 16 and 21. Ultimately, this study found that

"television influences the political trust levels of adolescents but not in the direction the media malaise thesis would expect" (Marien, 2017, 15). This study challenges past findings on the relationship between media consumption and political trust, instead Marien finds that media consumption had a positive impact on the development of political trust. Past research illustrates that more research is needed to understand the relationship between media consumption and political trust among young adults. It is in this area that my study will expand the research, by investigating this phenomenon among college students in the United States.

Another essentials study on trust and mass media is Jonathan Ladd's *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters (2012).* This book uses historical evidence, experiments, and public opinion surveys to argue that the mid-twentieth century institutional news media were unusual. They briefly gained the public's trust for two reasons. First, low levels of economic competition enabled journalism to become highly professionalized. Journalists had the autonomy to enforce a professional norm of "objectivity," greatly reducing salacious or explicitly partisan news coverage. Second, the lack of party polarization reduced political criticism of the institutional press. When these two things ended, trust in the media declined (Ladd, 2011). This study illustrates the factors that lead to a lack of trust in the media. It is the lack of trust in the media that leads individuals to rely on alternative media sources, which may be circulating misinformation. It is this information or misinformation that individuals use to make social and political information. Ladd's study is important to this dissertation because with the rise of social media platforms and citizen journalism, the concerns surrounding media accuracy and misinformation are great. Although his book largely focuses on one's

trust in the media, its underlying focus on the importance of institutions and their influence on trust in government is a foundation for this dissertation.

Political Efficacy and Mass Media

When examining political efficacy, it is often explored at two levels, internal and external efficacy (Blach 1974; Coleman and Davis 1976; Converse 1972). "Internal efficacy, refers to beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in politics, and external efficacy refers to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands" (Niemi et al, 1991, 1029). Early works on political efficacy tended to focus on internal efficacy (Lane, 1959). In a study conducted by Richard Niemi and other social scientists concluded that past methods for measuring political efficacy were limited and new survey questions were needed to effectively measure internal efficacy. The questions that they developed became essential questions that social science scholars use to assess internal political efficacy.

In addition to the Niemi et al. article, I also look to Albert Bandura's 1993 study on perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development. In this article, Bandura argues that efficacy plays an essential role in students learning and motivation for progress. While Bandura's study focuses on academic achievement, it provides significant insight on cognitive processes, which can be applied to the domain of politics and political behaviors. By using Bandura's theory on self-efficacy, political science research on political efficacy started incorporating survey questions that assessed individual's beliefs regarding their capabilities to engage in political activities, which became known as

internal efficacy. Ultimately, this approach becomes the foundation to much of the social science research on political efficacy.

While there have been many studies that have examined political efficacy, the rise of social media has harbored more attention on the impact that social media has on political efficacy and participation. In an article by Zhang Weiwu and other social scientists, the authors investigated how relying on social media websites influenced civic and political activities. Ultimately, the authors found that "reliance on social networking sites is significantly relying to increased civic participation and political activity" (Weiwu et al., 2009, 77). Although this study does not solely focus on political efficacy, it illustrates that mass media has an impact on political behaviors which is essential to democratic governance.

Similar to past studies, another group of scholars (Feldman et al., 2015) were also interested in the relationship between media and political attitudes and behaviors. This study examined the direct and indirect influence of hostile media perceptions on political activism. Past research has defined hostile media effect as " the tendency for individuals who feel strongly about an issue to view media coverage of that issue, regardless of its objective content, as biased against their position" (Vallone, Ross, and Lepper, 1985, 518). Ultimately, the data revealed that "among liberals, hostile media perceptions promote activism, whereas among conservatives, it decrease activism. Hostile media perceptions also has a negative, indirect relationship with activism that is mediated through external political efficacy; however, this relationship is conditioned by both ideology and internal political efficacy" (Feldman, 2015. 1101). Despite the fact that this study does not focus on young adults, it offers essential insight on how media perceptions

can influence how individuals see themselves in the political arena, as well as their political activism.

Following the Feldman et al. study, more research was conducted on the impact of media use on political participation. The authors were especially interested in expanding the understanding of how various types of media influence political participation. Past research indicated that news media outlets are mixing entertainment and politics to attract audiences (Willliam and Delli Carpini, 2011), which differs from traditional hard television news and tabloid newspapers. In the end, the data showed that "the use of hard television news as well as online tabloids positively affects changes in both offline political participation through current affairs knowledge and internal efficacy. Use of soft TV news and printed tabloids has a negative indirect effect" (Andersen et al, 2016, 116). This study is significant because it not only offers insight on the relationship between political efficacy and participation but also provides knowledge on the impact of infotainment concerning many young adults that are especially interested in this form of news. Although there has been some research on political efficacy and mass media, there is still a need for more research to understand how media consumption and content influences political trust and efficacy among young adults.

Political Efficacy and Trust among African Americans

Political trust and efficacy are defined in the literature as a summary of both negative and positive evaluations of government. It reflects the perception of how well government is performing based upon expectations, which involves, to some degree, trust in public officials who serve in government, as well as both the system and process of government (Mangum 2012). Research on trust in government has a long history. In the

1960s and 1970s, researchers began to focus on the importance of citizen satisfaction and trust in government (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974). Based on the findings of National Elections Survey (NES) research, political scientist Arthur Miller (1974, 682) argues that "if discontent accumulated across a set of authorities, distrust of the government institutions and regime would increase". The questions in the survey ask about how satisfied citizens were with policy outcomes. While questions regarding policy satisfaction continue to be used to examine trust in government, other social science scholars argues that there are other factors that better explain varying levels of trust in government especially amongst African Americans.

Another factor that has been used to explain mistrust in government is social experiences and social capital (Putnum, 1995; Damico, 2000; Keele, 2007; Mangum, 2011). Social scientist Alfonso Damico used findings to argue that "earlier levels of personal and political trust are the single best predictor to later levels of trust" (Damico et al. 2000, 381). Unlike earlier research, Damico argues that trust in government goes beyond how individuals feel about policy outcomes. Citizens have social experiences and personal relationships that influence how they feel about governmental institutions. This holds to be especially true for African Americans, who have had to navigate the remnants of slavery, institutional racism, and political and social inequality. As a result of these experiences, African Americans may have higher levels of mistrust in the government. Even further, often these feelings of mistrust are passed down through generations and circulated through social networks. While it is clear that social experiences and social capital may offer some insight on understanding mistrust in government, there continues to be other explanations for mistrust.

In addition to these factors, some researchers have argued that trust in government can also be influenced by racial representation in government (Lublin, 1997; Canon, 1999; Gay, 2002). "Studies of minority holding office at the local level underscore the potential significance of a citizen's ability to identify racially with prominent political actors. Black control of the mayor's office can enhance political trust among African Americans, contributing to more favorable impressions of city government as a whole and, conversely, the election of a black mayor may precipitate a decline in trust among whites "(Gay, 2002, 718). Although research suggests that racial representation in government may influence trust, Gay notes that policy satisfaction can continue to influence levels of trust even if racial representation is present. This research is limited in the fact that it focuses on local government and it has not been applied to other government institutions.

There have been some studies that have examined the influence of media effects on trust in government (Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring, 1979; Patterson, 1993; Finkel and Geer, 1998). These studies argue that negative media coverage of government negatively affects trust in government. Social scientist Maurice Mangum used data from the 1996 National Black Election Study to investigate how a number of factors (demographic, media, and social capita) influence trust in government. The questions in the survey about media asked about the frequency that individuals consumed various types or media as well as their levels of education. Upon performing a logistic regression analysis Mangum found that media alone do not influence levels of trust in government. However, the study did provide evidence that "well-educated African Americans who read newspapers with increased frequency are more likely to distrust government"

(Mangum, 2012, 660). While, this study did offer some insight on factors that influence trust in government, its findings are limited. This can be attributed to the limited questions asked about media. More research is needed to investigate the content of media consumed as well as more in depth questions about frequency and reasons for consumption.

Social scientist Jon Rogowski investigated trust in government during the Obama era. In order to measure levels of trust in government, respondents were asked how often they trust government to do the right thing. Rogowski found that "overall, levels of trust were significantly higher immediately following the election compared to preelection levels but receded to their preelection levels once the Obama administration had been in power for several months" (2012, 3). Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they felt that political leaders were attuned to their needs and concerns. Immediately after the election, respondents felt that political leaders were attuned to their needs; however one year after the election, the responses were less favorable. Another question asked was whether respondents felt that government was ran by big interests. The results indicated that respondents agreed that government is controlled by big interest. Overall, Rogowski argues that "young people and racial and ethnic minorities were greatly encouraged by the results of the 2008 election. However, Obama's election by itself is not sufficient to alleviate the persistent inequities in government responsiveness" (2012, 3). Many of the question used in this study, will serve as the foundation to my study. It will be insightful to see how the findings from both studies compare.

As this summary illustrates, past research has been limited in expanding our understanding on how media influences trust in government amongst African Americans. The few studies that have been conducted have found that African Americans do have lower levels of trust in government than their white counterparts, however there is little evidence that media alone influences trust or political efficacy. Although, research does indicate that media along with education can impact trust in government amongst African Americans. Furthermore, there is limited research on how the content and frequency of media consumption affects trust in government.

Though there have been studies on the relationship between mass media and political trust and efficacy (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000; McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy, 1999; Prior, 2007), there remains gaps in the research on how these elements influence the actions of young adults. For example, we know that young adults are using social media, but we do not know who is using social media to discuss social and political issues and why. When examining social science research often the narrative of young adults is over looked. Of course, there are studies that includes 18 to 25 years old, but often the interest in this age group is mainly how do their responses compare to older adults. This study is interested in how young adults compare to their peers. When reflecting on American history, often students have played an essential role in creating social and political change through unconventional means like protest and resistance movements. I anticipate that young adults have a unique narrative that may not be capture by traditional media sources. Thus they may be more inclined to share their narratives on more nontraditional platforms like social media. Nonetheless, their narratives should not be discounted or minimized. We know that in the past, political disengagement has

remained an issue of concern among young adults (Dimock, Doherty, Kiley, and Oates, 2014; File, 2014; Godsay, Kawashim-Ginsberg, Kiesa and Levine, 2012; Harvard Institute of Politics, 2014). Despite the limitations of past research, the rise of social media has caused some social scientists to investigate how digital natives are consuming information as well as the impact it has on political attitudes and behaviors. An article by Jean Grossklag et al (2011) offered their findings from a study they conducted on the impact of government initiatives to increase the political participation of young adults via using social media tools. Using an experiment on college students, the researchers observed how individuals use the internet to engage with the government. The data revealed that social networks are still underappreciated by users as a tool for political participation. My study is important because it challenges the notion that social networks are perceived by young adults as a tool for political engagement.

Another important area of interest for some scholars is determining the socialization agents that influence political and civic engagement. In an article by Robert Wicks et al., the authors questioned adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 about various topics regarding religion, peers, parents, school, social media, and digital communication. Using regression analysis, the study revealed that " politically engaged youth come from higher income households, discuss news and politics, take action, and are very prone to engage in online/social media political activities" (Wicks et al., 2014, 77). This study offers vital evidence on some of the factors that might be used to predict political and civic engagement. While my study focuses on 18-25 year old college students, it will be important to see how the findings from Wicks et al.'s study compare with the findings of my study.

Yamamoto et al. (2016) explored the role of social media use in determining political disaffections and behavior. Yamamoto's et al. data came from an online survey of college students from a Midwestern public university. Participants were asked questions regarding social media, political interest, ideology, and mass media consumption. Ultimately, the researchers found that "the positive relationship between cynicism and apathy was weaker for respondents who paid greater attention to social media for political information. Also, the indirect relationship between cynicism and apathy through external political efficacy was weaker for those who paid greater attention to social media for political information" (Yamamoto et al., 2016, 153). While my study does focus on college students from public institutions in the Midwest, my research will expand this research by looking at different types of higher education institutions (i.e. private, public, and historically black college/ university).

Although prior research has focused on mass media and political trust and efficacy of young adults as a whole, the research that has been conducted by the Black Youth Project regarding young adults from underrepresented communities is also very important to the foundation of my research study. While the study from the Black Youth Project dates back to 2004, its 2015 study on Black millennials proves to be very insightful. Using data from various government agencies (The Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), as well as a national survey called "The Mobilization and Change Project", the study focuses on a wide range of topics including employment, political efficacy, media consumption, education, gun violence, health, and criminal justice. In regards to attitudes toward the political system, the data indicated that "young people of color, and

especially Black youth, express feelings of political alienation with the belief that they are relatively powerless to influence the government" (Black Youth Project, 2015). Despite having feelings of political alienation, participants express interesting feelings regarding internal political efficacy. "Contrary to common narratives that Black youth do not have enough confidence or capacity to influence and participate in politics, data indicated that Black youth have similar, or even greater levels of internal efficacy compared with white youth" (Black Youth Project, 2015, 16). These findings indicate that the feelings of black youth are intricate and require more investigation.

Although there have been some studies that have selected young adults as their target group, there remains gaps in political science research because some researchers avoid making young adults their target group and this is especially true of college students. The main concern with selecting college students as the target group is the fact that "students are usually considered as more homogenous than representative samples both within and across countries" (Hanel and Vione, 2016, 2). This can pose issues with generalizability. In 2009 political scientists James Druckman and Cindy Kam investigated the extent to which using college students for research posed issues with causal inference. The researchers used simulations to identify situations when student subjects were likely to cause concern with inferences. Ultimately, they found that "such situations are relatively limited; any convenience sample poses a problem only when the size of an experimental treatment effect depends upon a characteristic on which the convenience sample has virtually no variance" (Druckman and Kam, 2009, 3). Therefore, they conclude that "student subjects are not inherently problematic for experimental

research" (Druckman and Kam, 2009, 3). This study offers support for the use of college students in political science research.

In an effort to determine the utility of college students for generalizability and challenge the traditional notation concerning student samples, social scientist Paul Hanel and Katia Vione conducted a study to determine if student samples provide accurate estimate of the general public. The researchers used the World Values Survey to compare responses from college student to those of the general public across 59 countries. Ultimately, they found that "Contrary to previous findings and reflections, students were across 59 countries and twelve variables as heterogeneous as the general public" (Hanel and Vione, 2016, 3). While this may be encouraging, this does not completely eliminate issues with generalizability. However, this study does offer some support that college students should be considered for social science research.

African Americans, Mass Media Coverage and Social Media Activism

In past research the discourse regarding African Americans and mass media coverage has been dominated by misrepresentation, stereotypes, and omissions. Various social science and communication scholars argue that mass media is largely responsible for the misperception regarding African Americans in America (Balkran,1999; Corea, 1993; Fujioka, 1999; Gilens, 1996; Rada, 2000). "Research regarding depictions of African Americans in the media reveals that this group is commonly portrayed as criminals, aggressive, and unintelligent, which helps reinforce and maintain hostile anti-black prejudice" (Ramsubramanian, 2007, 22). In addition to these stereotypes, African Americans have been misrepresented as poor and lazy in exaggerated proportions in the media. Social scientist Martin Gilens conducted research which found that "overall,

African Americans made up 62 percent of the poor people pictured in these stories, over twice their true proportion of 29 percent" (Gilens, 1996, 516). Gilens goes on to explain that misrepresentation in news content is due to availability and suitability (Gans, 1979). Ultimately, "by implicitly identifying poverty with race, the news media perpetuates stereotypes that work against the interests of both poor people and African Americans" (Gilens, 1996, 518).

Similar to Gilens, social scientist Yuki Fujoika (1999) conducted research on how television stereotypes of African Americans affected the perception of African Americans amongst white and Japanese international college students. Fujoika argued that the less contact that a group has with African Americans, the more likely they are to be influenced by media. Fujoika's study investigated three media concepts: 1) Contact Hypothesis, 2) Cultivation Theory, and 3) Social Cognitive Theory. The survey asked respondents questions about their direct contact with African Americans, as well as questions regarding the content and frequency of the television programs they watched. The study then used structural equation analysis to conclude that "the number of television programs seen, significantly affects stereotypes, while exposure to television portrayals itself did not directly affect respondents' perceptions across samples" (Fujoika, 1999, 370). There was also evidence that television messages did have a significant influence on perceptions when firsthand interactions were not present. "The number of perceived positive television portrayals of African Americans significantly related to Japanese international students' positive views of African Americans" (Fujoika, 1999, 372). This study is important because it offers evidence that the media can have a positive influence on public perception when its content is positive regarding African Americans.

In addition to survey research, experiments have been used to investigate the effect of how African Americans are portrayed in the media. Communications scholar James Rada conducted a study that sought to examine the relationship between television news portrayals of African Americans and subsequent attitudes and behaviors towards African Americans. This study expanded the investigation of empathy-altruism hypothesis. Rada hypothesized that "subjects who view unfavorable television news portrayals of African Americans will rate the legitimacy of the recipient's need lower than those subjects who view favorable television news portrayals of African Americans" (2000, 19). Rada used various news stories that portrayed African Americans in different manners, which was then used to stimulate the respondents' attitudes toward African Americans. A post-questionnaire was used to capture the respondent's attitudes. Although the results of the study did not find evidence for the relationship between portrayals and behavior, Rada did find additional support for the empathy-altruism hypothesis.

While these studies do offer some insights on how African Americans have been portrayed in the media, more research is needed. Past studies have sought to explain how portrayals of African Americans impact the behavior of non-African Americans. However, there is limited research on how the depictions of African Americans in the media influence the political and social behaviors of African American youth. The limited studies that have examined media effects on African American youth have focused mainly on self-esteem, (Harter, 1998), body and sexuality (O'Connor, Brooks-Gunn and Graber, 2000; Arnett, 1995; Escobar-Chaves and Anderson, 2008; Ward, Day, and Epstein, 2006; Ward, Hansbrough, and Walker, 2005; Ward and Harrison, 2005;

Ward and Rivadeneyra, 1999) as opposed to political behaviors. Additionally, there are gaps in past research regarding the wide range of mass media. Too often these studies have focused on television effects and not print and social media. Given that the youth of today receive a large portion of their information from social networks, it is important to investigate social media impact.

In a 2002 study, researchers used an experiment to test "whether subtle racial cues embedded in political advertisements prime racial attitudes as predictors of candidate preference by making them more accessible in memory" (Valentino, Hutchings, and White, 2002, 81). In this experiment, participants were asked to watch a randomly assigned television advisement and answer questions surrounding current events. Upon completing the questionnaire and viewing the advertisements, participants were asked to complete a series of task design to assess racial attitudes in memory. Ultimately, they found that "a wide range of implicit race cues can prime racial attitudes and that cognitive accessibility mediates the effect. Furthermore, counter-stereotypic cues—especially those implying blacks are deserving of government resources—dampen racial priming, suggesting that the meaning drawn from the visual/narrative pairing in an advertisement, and not simply the presence of black images, triggers the effect" (Valentino, Hutchings, and White, 2002, 85). This study helps illustrate that media content and consumption can influence political attitudes.

Although it is clear that mainstream media often portrays African Americans in unfavorable light, there is research that indicates that young people have begun to use social media to offer more accurate depictions of individuals from underrepresented populations. Social media serves as a form of narrative storytelling that redefined

traditional thoughts on who society defines as the media. Traditionally the media is thought to be journalists with formal training. However, social media allows for everyone to circulate information. Some scholars argue that it is through this circulation of information that individuals have started to correct the misinformation that mainstream media often conveys.

Redefining Media and Social Media Activism

Communication scholars Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa recently investigated digital protests surrounding the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. These scholars collected and examined various tweets related to the unrest in Ferguson. Ultimately, their research was interested in "how and why social media platforms have become powerful sites for documenting and challenging episodes of police brutality and the misrepresentation of racialized bodies in mainstream media" (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015). By examining hashtags like "handsupdontshoot (hands up don't shoot)", Bonilla and Rosa found that "most mainstream media list the experiences of racialized populations to be overdetermined, stereotyped, or tokenized, social media platforms such as Twitter offer sites for collectively constructing counter narratives and reimagining group identities" (2015, 6). Although this study is a good example of how unrepresented populations have started to correct misinformation stated by mainstream media and tell their own stories through social media, the research remains very limited. This can be attributed to the fact that it can be difficult to develop an effective research design that captures this phenomenon.

Political scientist W. Lance Bennett argues that social media has individualized collective action. Bennett argues that digital technology has yielded "social fragmentation

and the decline of group loyalties which has given rise to an era of personalized politics in which individually expressive personal action frames and displaced collective action frames in many protest causes"(2012, 24). The author examines the Occupy Wall Street protest to expose how young people used social media to circulate information and coordinate protests. This supports the argument of how personalized politics have been used to influence collective action in the real world. Bennett coins this phenomenon as "Do It Yourself (DIY) Politics". This research is important to my study because it sheds light on how society views the media. In the past, the media has been seen as trained journalists, however through social media, everyone has the ability to be part of the media. Not only does Bennett refine how society views media, but he also explores how media is being used to promote social and political activism.

Social media continues to have a global impact which has caused other scholars in other countries to examine how social media is redefining society's understanding of media. Criminal justice scholars C. Greer and E. McLauglin's research explores how multi-media technologies impacted the protest of the G20 Summit in 2009. Through contextualizing mainstream newspaper articles and social media, Greer and McLauglin argues that there has been a "rise of the "Citizen Journalist", both as a key player in the news production process, and a key indicator of the changing contexts within news is generated, disseminated and consumed" (2010, 1050). This study expands our understanding of the "inferential structures" and hierarchy frameworks. Ultimately, Greer and McLauglin finds that "citizen journalists provide a valuable additional source of real-time information which may challenge or confirm the institutional version of events" (2010, 1051). This study is essential to my research because it serves as a

foundation for me to expand how social scientists view the media. It also redefines how social media can be used to correct narratives that mainstream media portrays during times of protest and crisis.

Theories of Interest

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory is a theory from the communications discipline that has been used to explain how individuals perceive reality. Cultivation theory was developed by George Gerbner in the late 1960s. This theory argues that repeated exposure to the media cultivates what individuals perceive to be reality (Gerbner, 1967, 1969, 1973). Over time cultivation theory has become one of the most cited theories in the field of communication. Regarding political science, cultivation theory has been used to explain political ideology, attitudes, and engagement (Morgan and Shanahan, 1991; Baumgatner and Morris, 2006; Jamieson and Romer, 2015). My study seeks to expand what we know about how exposure to the media shapes political reality and ultimately contributes to how individuals navigate the political terrain.

In a 1991 study that investigated the impact of television on the attitudes of adolescents regarding politics and authority, the author argued that "mass media, and television in particular, have important political impacts, not just in narrow the sense of elections and campaigns but in terms of the allocation and distribution of social resources and the structure of social power" (Morgan and Shanahan, 1991, 12). While many political science studies are interested in the media's impact on political participation, it is critical to have studies that assess thoughts on power and authority because they often shape whether individuals will act within traditional institutions and laws or if they will

choose alternative methods. In the end, the authors found that "Argentine adolescents who watch more television are significantly more likely to agree that people should obey authority, to approve of limits on freedom of speech, and to think that it is someone's own fault if he or she is poor" (1991, 13). Since this study was conducted in Argentina, more research is needed to determine what a similar study would find in the United States.

With the rise of infotainment media programs, some social science scholars became especially interested in the impact of political humor television shows on political ideologies. In the article, the authors questioned the role of soft news on political attitudes and support for political candidates and institutions. Similar to the aforementioned article, this study relies on the assumption that mass media played an essential role in shaping how individuals see the world. Through their research, the data indicated that viewers of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, "*exhibit more cynicism toward the electoral system and the news at large. Despite these negative reactions, viewers of *The Daily Show* reported increased confidence in their ability to understand the complicated world of politics" (Baumgartner and Morris, 2006, 346). Even further, this study concludes that political humor television programs may be driving down support for political institutions. This study is important because it offers a deeper understanding the factors that may influence internal political efficacy.

Expanding on past research, social scientists explored how cultivation theory has been used to explain various attitudes regarding many social and political issues. The authors found that individuals that had increased levels of television consumption, displayed "increased levels of fear of crime, activated racialized perceptions, support for

punitive policies, identified as a political moderate, reduced levels of social trust and capital, and activated cynicism" (Jamieson and Romer, 2015, 1). This research displays the wide range of influence that media can have. Additionally, it reflects that the impact of the media consumption can go beyond attitudes, and influence the programs and policies that individuals support.

Although it is clear that cultivation theory has been used to investigate the impact of media consumption on attitudes and behaviors, it has not been used in regards to exploring how media consumption can shape perceived trust in government or political efficacy. Even further, there is little research that examines cultivation theory as it pertains to race or college students. My research expands how cultivation theory can be used to explain phenomena beyond the field of communications. My study also allows for cultivation theory to be used to explore social media platforms and citizen journalism. Past studies have mainly used cultivation theory concerning traditional means of journalism and media. Including citizen journalism and social media broadens the scope of media that individuals are consuming, which may in turn, alter perceived realities.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Similar to cultivation theory, uses and gratification theory (UGT) is a well-respected theory in the field of communication. UGT is a theory used to offer insight on why individuals use certain forms of media,\ as well as what are they using it for (Blumler and Katz, 1974). Regarding UGT, there are a few basic assumptions: 1) Individuals are not passively consuming media, they are active participants, 2) Media choice lies with the individual, and 3) media is in competition with other sources of satisfaction. Although elements of UGT can be traced back to the 1940s, its connection to

the study of politics is not seen until the late 1960s. With the evolution of media choice, the use of UGT to examined individuals behaviors has expanded (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Newhgan and Rafaeli, 1996). My study seeks to understand if college students are seeking social media to express social and political thoughts.

In a 2004 study, two social scientists investigated how strongly internet use correlated with interest in politics and trust in government. Through using survey research, the data revealed that a significant number of politically interested users relied on the internet in order to get guidance on politics. Additionally, "individuals who are more trusting of the government are more likely to turn to the web when seeking political information" (Kaye and Johnson, 2004, 201). Given that this study was conducted before the years of social networking, more research is needed to determine motivation for the use of different forms of media.

Social scientist Lauren Feldman conducted a study which addressed determining the viewer orientation on learning about politics from political humor television shows. The data suggested that individuals that watch *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* "as news and entertainment, invest more mental efforts and subsequently learn more than viewers who have purely entertainment orientation. Further, among viewers with a purely entertainment orientation, increases the amount of mental effort and learning relative to viewers who given no explicit viewing objective" (Feldman, 2013, 594). Similar to the aforementioned articles, this study shows that individuals are goal-oriented when used different forms of media. My research will offer insights on whether certain participants are using social media to express thoughts on social and political issues; thus expanding the understating for motivations for media use.

In recent years, scientists have argued that social networking sites have increased the potential for collective action for political and social change to occur. This is largely attributed to the sharing of common experiences and information (Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield, 2009). The study tested if a blend of self- categorization and uses and gratification theory can be used to predict the willingness to be involved in collective action. Ultimately, "the study demonstrated the utility of blending concepts from Social Identity Theory (SIT), Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) to explore how socially motivated uses of the media can predict collective actions" (Chan, 2014, 234). This study challenges the traditional ways that UGT has been applied.

Similar to cultivation theory, UGT has rarely been used to investigate race or political trust and efficacy. More importantly, I argue that UGT can be used to offer insights on the relationship between social media and racial minorities. My research hypothesizes that nonwhite participants use social media more than their white counterparts. Even further, I propose that individuals from underrepresented populations use social media as a platform to discuss social and political issues more often than white individuals. My study seeks to expand the applicability of uses and gratification theory to the understanding of social media networks as tools for political and social discourse.

Critical Race Theory

While my study examines the relationship between media consumption and political trust and efficacy of college students, I am also interested in investigating whether students from underrepresented communities (i.e., women, low income and racial minorities), are using social media in a different manner than their counterparts.

CRT first took its roots in the legal arena in the 1970s. Despite varying definitions of Critical Race Theory, most advocates of CRT would agree that it is imperative to "question the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, 3). While traditional civil rights movements follow an incrementalism model, Critical Race Theory argues that the entire system is flawed. Although CRT differs from traditional social justice theories, there are many foundational concepts that they borrow from social justice movements. For example, Critical Race Theory builds upon feminism's thoughts on the relationship between social roles and power, as well as borrowing the need for group empowerment and practical social change from the Civil Rights movement.

Despite borrowing from various social justice movements, Critical Race Theory has elements that are unique from other theories. First, CRT holds that racism is a common theme in society. Second, CRT contends that "our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). An important feature of this concept is interest convergence, meaning that the advancement of people of color, only occurs when it is in the best interest of the dominate group (i.e. whites).Derrick Bell explains that Brown v. *Board of Education* (1954) is a great example of interest convergence, given that the great "civil rights litigation may have resulted more from self-interest of elite whites than from a desire to help Blacks" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012).This is an example of the complexity of the relationship between race and power. Third, Critical Race Theory maintains that "race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective,

inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). While there are some physical features that individuals share like skin color, hair texture, and physique, there are many other factors the influence individuals personality and moral behavior. In addition to race being a social construct, CRT argues that "each race has its own origins and ever-evolving history, this is the notion of intersectionality and antiessentialism" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, 16).

Another important element of CRT is storytelling and narratives. Despite narratives being commonly used by lawyers, black and brown people have dominated the use of legal narratives. This is often attributed to the fact that people of color have a firsthand experience of the complexity of race and racism in America. The narratives that people of color use are often based off of true life events. While there are some Whites that have double consciousness and can easily grasp what it means to be a racial minority in society, there are many whites that cannot sympathize with this notion. Due to the lack of double consciousness amongst the dominant racial group, narratives on race have been left up to those who are racial conscious, which is more often than not, racial minorities.

While it is clear that racial minorities dominate the use of narratives in relations to race, whites commonly use storytelling in a different manor. Legal scholar Richard Delgado explains that "the stories or narratives told by the in-group remind it of its identity in relation to out-group and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural"(Delgado, 2013, 22). Often the stories told by the dominate group are used to undermine the realities that minorities express in their narrative. In the minds of the dominant group, they are not telling stories or offering a narrative, they are shining light on society as it truly exists from their perspective. It is

because of this type of white privilege that many whites are unable to experience double consciousness. Although narratives are used to express common cultural stories, counter stories can be used to promote the negatives in the status quo or advance destructive behaviors or attitudes.

Although there is little research on Critical Race Theory being used to assess political trust and efficacy or social media, my research intends to expand the utility of Critical Race Theory. Further, I argue that the narratives that racial minorities are sharing on social media offer insight on their first hand experiences with race, politics, and social concerns. Ultimately, my study seeks to investigate if college students from underrepresented communities are using social media to offer narratives and counter narratives.

Summary

Trust in government is essential to the American political system. There have been past studies that have evaluated the factors that influence trust in government. Despite these efforts there remains a need for additional insights on the relationship between media consumption and trust in government. Though past research indicates that Americans have lost faith in American institutions, people have especially taken issue with mass media. African Americans have often found themselves misrepresented, alienated, and annihilated by the media. The lack of faith in mass media have paved the way for citizen journalism and social media activism. Social media platforms are used by individuals of all ages, however, young adults continue to play a significant role on online platforms. This dissertation expands our understanding of how many of these factors interact. The study will be guided by three main theories: cultivation theory, uses

and gratification Theory, and Critical Race Theory. The following chapter will include

the hypotheses for my study. Additionally, I include variables of interest along with how

those variables will be measured. I will also discuss the sample for my study and the

anticipated relationship between my dependent and independent variables. This will serve

as the foundation for the following chapter.

<u>**CHAPTER 3: METHODS**</u>

Introduction

In the last chapter I reviewed the literature on media consumption, political trust, political efficacy, and social media activism. This chapter describes, in detail, a quantitative method research design used to provide insight on the main research questions for this dissertation. The first section of this chapter discuss the merit associated with quantitative methods in social science research. The next sections will discuss the data, model, and statistical tests used to assess the hypotheses for this study. Additionally, I will introduce the variables of interest. The dataset for this study combines traditional and new questions on political trust and efficacy, to not only capture the relationship between media consumption and public trust and efficacy but also investigates the variations of social media activism across races. Additionally, the survey questions that I have developed expand how Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory can be utilized to explore trust in government, political efficacy and social media activism.

Rationale for Quantitative Research Approach

Survey research has long been used to gain insight on public opinion and political behaviors (American National Elections Studies, 1948- 2018). Surveys "provided the gold standard for measuring citizen opinions that are at the heart of democratic deliberation and they provided a powerful technique for ensuring the openness and transparency of the democratic process through studies of democratic institutions" (Brady, 2000, 3).

It is through survey research that information can be collected directly from individuals, those inferences can be applied to the larger population. "Surveys provide five types of information about respondents: facts, perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and behavioral" (Manheim and Rich, 1986, 153). Given that this study is interested in attitudes of individuals regarding the government, survey research lends itself well to this study. The survey instrument for this investigation is computer-assisted self-administrated questionnaires. Through using both open-ended and closed-ended questions, the data collected can offer in-depth insight on media consumption, political trust, efficacy, and social media activism. The advantage of using both open-ended questions is that it "allows for the researcher to discover unanticipated response from the participants" (Manheim and Rich, 1986, 169). These types of responses can offer in-depth information that may not be captured in close-ended questions. As to keep the questionnaire simple and quick, the survey also includes close-ended questions. This study will rely on survey research due to it convenience and affordability. Through adopting a quantitative approach that includes both open and closed –ended questions, the aim of this study is to provide a more comprehensive examination of the factors that correlated to trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism. This study does not attempt to establish a causal relationship between media consumption and the aforementioned factors. Instead, the objective is to gain a better understanding of the role and influence of media consumption on society.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This research tests the notion that media consumption has an influence on levels of trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism. Even further, the

research anticipates to expand the understanding of how young adults are using social media as a political outlet. Additionally, I argue that during 2012-2017, individuals from underrepresented populations were more likely to use social media to discuss social and political issues. Three hypotheses will be tested to investigate the main research questions. **Table 1** offers a summary of the research questions for this study. While **Table 2** offers a summary of hypotheses, key variables, and expected direction of relationships.

Table 1: Summary of Research Questions	
RQ1	What influence does media consumption have on trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism?
RQ 2	Are young adults using social media for social and political expression?

Hypothesis 1: Young adults with higher levels of media consumption will have decreased levels of trust in the government

Based on past research (Miller, 1974; Vallone, Ross, and Lepper, 1985; Niemi et al., 1991; Cappella and Jamieson, 1996; Moy and Scheufele, 2000; Weiwu et al., 2009; Feldman et al., 2015; Marien, 2017), trust in government has long been a factor of interest for political scientists. Much of the past research has focused on citizen satisfaction and interactions with civil servants and institutions and how they influence trust in government. This hypothesis seeks to determine if there is a relationship between media consumption and trust in government. It is my expectation that young adults with high levels of media consumption will have less trust in the government. While there have been studies in the past that have examined this relationship with traditional forms of media, this study includes both traditional forms of media as well as social media among young adults. Given that more than two-thirds of American adults get their news

from social media platforms (Shearer and Matsa, 2018), it is important to include social media consumption in my study. Even further, this hypothesis expands the understanding of how cultivation theory can be used to investigate social science phenomenon outside of communications studies.

Hypothesis 2: Young adults with higher levels of media consumption will have increased levels of political efficacy.

With consideration of past research (Lane, 1959; Blach 1974; Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974; Coleman and Davis 1976; Converse 1972; Niemi et al., 1991; Weiwu et al., 2009; Willliam and Delli Carpini, 2011; Feldman et al., 2015; Andersen et al., 2016), this hypothesis seeks to expand the understanding of political efficacy among young adults, given that past results have largely focused on adults. This hypothesis is interested in determining the relationship between media consumption and political efficacy among young adults. I anticipate that individuals with high media consumption will have increased levels of political efficacy. While past studies on young adults have concluded that a majority of youth believed that they had the skills and knowledge to participate in politics (BYP, 2005, 2015), this study takes into consideration how social media is consumed as well as how it might impact political efficacy. This hypothesis also expands the understanding of how cultivation theory can be used to investigate phenomenon in political science research. It is the expectation that young adults with higher levels of media consumption have been repeatedly exposed to information that has cultivated their perception about knowledge regarding politics, as well as their ability to work with government to change social and political issues.

Hypothesis 3: As media consumption increases among young adults, it is more likely that they have used social media to discuss social or political issues

This hypothesis is interested in determining the relationship between varying levels of media consumption and social media activism. Much of the research has been interested in how social media is used as a tool for political discourse and participation (Dahlberg, 2001; Hwang and Shim, 2010; Kim, 2011; McLeod et al., 1999; Park, 2013; Wu, 2011) Much of the past research suggests that while some individuals are using social media as a tool for political discourse and political participation, social media is also dominated by "noise" or non- political discourse. Although past research indicates that social media activism and online news media consumption are at an all-time high (Anderson et al., 2018; Matsa and Shearer, 2018), this study seeks to investigate the relationship between media consumption and social media activism. It is my expectation that young adults with higher levels of media consumption are more likely to use social media to discuss social and political issues. Even further, this hypothesis explores the applicability of Use and Gratification Theory to political science research. Along with one of the basic assumptions of Use and Gratification Theory, I expect to find that young adults are not passively consuming media; instead, they are active participants in the media sphere and shaping which social issues are discussed or deemed unimportant.

Table 2: Summary of Hypotheses , Key Variables, and Expected Direction of Relationship		
H1	*Young adults with higher levels of media consumption will have decreased levels of trust in the government*	
	Dependent Variable Trust In Government	Independent Variable Media Consumption	Direction Negative
H2	*Young adults with higher levels of media consumption will have increased levels of political efficacy*	
	Dependent Variable Political Efficacy	Independent Variable Media Consumption	Direction Positive

H3	*As media consumption increases amongst young adults, it is more likely that they have used social media to discuss social or political issues*		
	Dependent Variable Social Media Activism	Independent Variable Media Consumption	Direction Positive

Data and Methods

In order to investigate my research questions, I use a computer assisted survey. Although surveys have been used in the past to assess political trust and efficacy, I have developed new questions to investigate these concepts. A copy of the survey questions can be found in the appendix. The questions will focus on media consumption, political trust, efficacy, and social media activism. Before the survey was administered, it received IRB approval from three different universities. Participants completed an electronic letter of consent before completing the survey. A signed electronic copy of the letter of consent was kept for the researcher. The survey was conducted January 2017- May 2018 across three different university campuses in the State of Missouri: University of Missouri-Saint Louis, Harris Stowe State University, and Maryville University. Demographics for each institution can be found in **Table 3.**

Table 3: Educational Institution Demographics						
	White vs Non-White Percentage		**Gender Percentage**		**On-Campus/ Commuter Percentage**		**Institution Types**
	White	**Non-White**	**Female**	**Male**	**On-Campus**	**Commuter**	
Harris Stowe State University	14%	86%	67%	33%	30%	70%	Public (Historically Black College/University
Maryville University	73%	27%	67%	33%	40%	60%	Private

University of Missouri- Saint Louis	71%	29%	59%	41%	63%	27%	Public

College students were selected as the target participants because I wanted to investigate how media, especially social media is used to influence the political and social behaviors of this population. While college students are the target population, the target age group is 18-25. The University of Missouri- Saint Louis (UMSL) is an urban university founded in 1963 with nearly 12,000 students. Of the 1,000 students enrolled at UMSL, approximately 4,000 students are undergraduates between the ages of 18 -25 who are full time degree seeking. The University of Missouri-Saint Louis is a target location for this study because its physical location is within walking distance to Ferguson, Missouri which was the site for much of the civil unrest in 2014. While the University of Missouri-Saint Louis is a traditionally white institution (TWI), Harris Stowe State University is a Historically Black College/ University (HBCU). Harris Stowe State University was founded in 1857 and located in Saint Louis Missouri. Harris Stowe has more than 1700 students, with approximately 900 undergraduates between the ages of 18-25. This university is important for this study because of its large African American population as well as its location in Saint Louis. Lastly, this study will include students from Maryville University. Maryville University is a private university that was founded in 1872. This university has a student population of 6,400, with approximately 1800 undergraduates between the ages of 18 -25. The university is located 20 minutes from Ferguson, Missouri, the site of the 2014 protest. While Maryville University is a smaller university than some of the other universities in the study, their student population is

from more than 40 countries, which might be insightful. I worked with various Student Life Offices, Multicultural Relations Offices, multicultural student organizations, Political Science Departments, and Communication Departments to recruit participants for the study. During the recruitment process the researcher conducted over 32 class presentations to students to inform them about the research study. Additionally, over 15 recruitment tabling events were held across the three campuses. If a student was interested in participating in the study, they were asked for their email address so that they could be emailed the link to complete the survey. The students email addresses will remained confidential given that the email addresses will only be seen by the researcher and Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a research platform that allows researchers to collect and analyze survey data. Data was collected from January 2017 to May 2018. The survey took each participant approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The target sample size is 150 individuals, with a confidence level of 85% and margin of error of +/- 10 %. This sample size was determined by the overall populations of the three institutions as well as the criteria requirement of participants involved (on ground individuals, degree seeking individuals, between the ages 18- 25). The requirement for participation limited a large portion of individuals that were eligible to participate (i.e. 17 years, non-degree seeking individuals, non-traditional, online individuals). With consideration of the confidence level and margin of error selected, I acknowledge the limitations on the predictive power of the study. Despite many recruitment efforts, this is a convenience sample.

Variables of Interest

Dependent Variables

Trust in Government is one of the dependent variables considered in this study. This variable focused on the relationship between citizens, government, and political institutions. This variable has be used in past research (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974; Citrin and Green, 1986; Cappella and Jamieson, 1996; Hetherington, 1998, 2001; Damico et al., 2000; Moy and Scheufele, 2000; Mutz and Reeves, 2005; Mangum, 2012). Trust in government as a variable of interest has been used in the National Election Study since 1958. This variable was measured on a Likert scale. This type of scale has traditionally been used to measure trust in government, which has proven its reliability and validity. The scale for political trust is 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). There are five questions on the survey regarding trust in government.

Political Efficacy was a dependent variable that was measured by several different questions in the survey. Many of the questions investigate how confident individuals were in engaging in the political process as well as their ability to create change with the government. This variable was measured by a categorical scale allowing for individual to indicate their level of political efficacy. This variable has been used in past research (Lane, 1959; Blach 1974; Coleman and Davis 1976; Converse 1972; Niemi et al., 1991; Weiwu et al., 2009; Andersen et al., 2016). Political efficacy as a variable of interest was used by the National Election Study since 1987, which has proven its reliability and validity. The scale for political efficacy is 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). There are five questions on the survey regarding political efficacy.

Social Media Activism: is a dependent variable in this study. Participants were asked various questions regarding their activism regarding social media. Past studies have used

social media activism as a variable of interest (McLaughlin, 2009; Wicks et al., 2014; Black Youth Project, 2015; Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2016). Over the last decade, social media activism has become a common variable of interest which has provided qualifications for reliability and validity. Social media activism was measured by categorical measure allowing for individuals to indicate how often they use social media to discuss social or political issues. The scale for social media activism is 0 (never) to 5 (daily). There are three questions on the survey regarding social media activism.

<u>Independent Variables</u>

Media Consumption is a variable used to determine how much time an individual spent watching, reading, or listening to media coverage daily. This variable has been used in other studies on media effects (Robinson, 1975; Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht, 1997; Moy and Scheufele, 2000; Mutz and Reeves, 2005; Aarts and Semetko, 2003; 2012; Marien, 2017), which has proven its validity and reliability. Media consumption and exposure as a variable of interest can also be found in the 1980 and 1984 American National Election Studies. The media includes both traditional forms of media as well as citizen journalism and social media. Participants were asked about their media consumption in a range, based on hours. This type of scale had been tested in past studies to measure media consumption. The scale for media consumption is 1 (less than one hour) to 4 (more than four hours). There are one question on the survey regarding media consumption.

Income is an independent variable that was used to measure the financial status of participants in this study. Income is often used as a factor of evaluation in political science research (American National Elections Studies, 1948- 2018). Income was used as

a predictor in many of the aforementioned studies on trust in government, political

efficacy, and social activism (Black Youth Project, 2005, 2015; Cappella and Jamieson,

1996; Hetherington, 1998, 2001; Damico et al., 2000; Moy and Scheufele, 2000; Mutz

and Reeves, 2005; Mangum, 2012 Wicks et al., 2014; Bonilla and Rosa, 2015;

Yamamoto et al., 2016). Participants were ask to select the option that best represented

the dollars amount for their household income for the pervious calendar year. Participants

were given five options to select from. The scale for income is 1 (less than $17,000) to 5

($120,000).

Party Identification is another independent variable used to investigate variations in trust

in government. Party Identification has been used as a variable for American National

Election Studies (American National Elections Studies, 1948- 2018) consistently for

decades, which has proven its reliability and validity. Regarding party identification,

participants were given four options and asked to select the options that best represent

this political party identity. The four options given include: *I don't care about politics,*

Independent, Republican, and Democrat.

Race is an independent variable in this study. Participants were asked their race. Race has

been used in past studies on trust in government and political efficacy (Balkran,1999,

Corea, 1993, Fujioka, 1999; Gilens, 1996; Rada, 2000; Lublin, 1997; Canon, 1999; Gay,

2002; O'Connor, Brooks-Gunn, and Graber, 2000; Arnett, 1995; Escobar-Chaves and

Anderson, 2008; Ward, Day, and Epstein, 2006; Ward, Hansbrough, and Walker, 2005;

Ward and Harrison, 2005; Ward and Rivadeneyra, 1999; Damico et al., 2000; Mangum,

2012; Black Youth Project, 2015). Race has also been regularly used as a variable in

American National Election Studies, which has established its reliability and validity.

Race was measured by categorical measure allowing for individual to indicate their race from seven different options. A dummy variable was created for race. The scale for race was white (0) and people of color (1).

Model Specifications

I used ordinal regression analysis to determine predictability for trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism. Ordinal regression is used to predict the dependent variable given one or more independent variables. Ordinal regression analysis this the best option given that the dependent variables are ordinal level variables. There are 164 participants in this sample. I am most interested in the outcomes of individuals with increased levels of media consumption. This type of analysis will determine the relationship between the variables, as well as offer predictability. It is my expectation that variation in media consumption will influence levels of trust in government, political efficacy and social media activism.

Conclusion

Survey research has long been used to evaluate social science phenomena. Although this study will be taking a quantitative approach, the survey includes open-ended questions that allows participants to offer more in-depth responses. While there has been some research on media consumption and trust in government and political efficacy, this study will attempt to fill some of the gaps in the research concerning young adults and social media activism. I have listed three hypothesis and several variables of interest that I intend to investigate. Regarding this study, media consumption, race, party identification, and income serve as independent variables. While trust in government,

political efficacy, and social media activism serves as dependent variables. It is my expectation that increased levels of media consumption will have a negative influence on trust in government and positive influence on political efficacy and social activism. Given that this study is based on a convenience sample, I acknowledge that there are some limitations with the predictive power in this study. In the next chapter, I will present the results of my study. This will includes descriptive statistics and statistical test to answer my hypotheses. I will also display graphs and charts illustrating the findings of the data.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical findings from the methods described in chapter three. This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section offers demographic information. The second section offers the findings for the participant's personal experiences with police. The third section offers findings for hypothesis 1 which describes the relationship between trust in government, media consumption, and party identification. The fourth section explores the findings for hypothesis 2 and highlights the relationship between political efficacy, media consumption, race, and income. The fifth section describes findings for hypothesis 3 and examines the relationship between social media activism, media consumption, race, and income. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results and roadmap for the final chapter of this dissertation. The results from this chapter offer important insight regarding media consumption, political trust, efficacy, and social media activism. This study offers a unique perspective of how youth perceive the political terrain, as well as insight on the role that social media play in their lives.

Who were the Participants?

Age:

There were many factors that were included in this study, one of which is age. The target groups for this study was young adults between the ages 18 and 25. This target group was selected because there is limited information on young adults and political trust and efficacy. A majority of the participants were either 19 or 20 years old. A full breakdown for the ages of the participants can be found in ***Table 4 and Chart 1.***

Table 4: Age of Participants		
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	32	19%
19	43	26%
20	43	26%
21	17	10%
22	14	8%
23	8	5%
24	4	2%
25	3	2%

Race:

Participants were asked to self-identify their race. Although many of the past

research studies examines race at the binary level, it is important to include the

breakdown for race. Given that past research indicated that racial minorities often have

lower levels of trust than their white counterparts (Damico et al. 2000; Keele, 2007;

Mangum; 2011), this study included race in an effort to further explore this phenomenon.

The largest group present in this study is Whites, making up 56 percent. This group is

followed by African Americans, who make up 26 percent of the participants. The other

18 percent is composed of other racial minorities. *Table 5* and *Chart 2* offer a

background of the race of the participants involved in this study.

Table 5: Race of Participants		
Race	Frequency	Percent
Asian or Pacific Islander	12	8%
Biracial	7	4%
Black or African American	44	26%
Hispanic or Latino	8	5%
White	93	57%

Gender:

Although gender was not a factor evaluated in any of the models analyzed, it is

useful to include it in this summary in order to provide some background information on

the participants. A large portion of the individuals that participated in this study were

female. This reflects the typical make up of higher education institutions, given that

females often outnumber males. A full breakdown for the gender of the participants can be found in *Table 6 and Chart 3*.

Table 6: Gender of Participants		
Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Female	117	71%
Male	47	29%

Income:

Although the participants in this study are college students, I did collect data on their household income. For a majority of the students, this was the household income of their parents. Participants were asked to select the household income that best represented their circumstance for the previous calendar year. 47% of the participants listed a household income of $35,000- $69,999, making it the largest category. While only 19% listed an income of less than $ 16,999, making it the smallest category. A full breakdown for the household income of the participants can be found in **Table 5 and Chart 4.**

Table 7: Household Income of Participants		
Income	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Less than $16,999	19	12%
$17,000- $34,999	26	16%
$35,000- $69,999	47	29%
$70,000-$119,999	46	28%
$120,000 or more	22	14%

Educational institution:

This study included three different types of educational institutions: Public Universities (University of Missouri- Saint Louis), Private Universities (Maryville University), and Historically Black Colleges/ Universities (Harris Stowe State

University). While the majority of participants identify are students from Maryville

University, a very small number of participants are students at the University of

Missouri-Saint Louis. A full breakdown for the household income of the participants can

be found in **Table 8 and Chart 5**.

Table 8: Education Institution of Participants		
Educational Institution	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Harris Stowe State University	37	23%
Maryville University	117	71%
University of Missouri-Saint Louis	9	6%

Political Party Identification:

Participants were asked to select the political identification that best represented

how they identified. A majority of the participants identify as Democrats. A full

breakdown for the political party identification of the participants can be found in **Table**

9 and Chart 6.

Table 9: Political Party Identification of Participants		
Political Identification	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Democrat	64	39%
I do not identify with a political party	58	36%
Independent	17	10%
Republican	25	15%

Participants Experiences with Police

As noted in the fore mentioned chapter, in recent years there has been a

significant amount of media coverage of officer-involved shootings. Based on media

coverage alone, one might infer most individuals interacted with a police officer.

Although interactions with police officers was not a variable in any of the three models, this study was interested in the interaction that young adults were having with police officers. Participants were asked "Have you ever had any interaction with your local police? If yes, would you describe the experience and identify whether the experience was good, bad, or neutral". On the survey, this was an open ended question, therefore, participants were allowed to offer details for any interaction they had with law enforcement. While there were some participants that offered significant details of their experiences, a majority of the responses fell in to one of the four categories: good experience, neutral experience, bad experience, and no experience. One hundred and forty-one participants responded to this question. Thirty-seven individuals indicated that they had a good experience with police officers. Some of the respondents reflected on a time where they have been pulled on for a traffic violation and were let go with just a warning. Twenty-nine individuals indicated that they had a neutral experience with law enforcement. These respondents often stated that the experience was neither good nor bad, the officer simply did their job. Eight respondents stated they had a bad experience with police officers. Some of these individuals stated that the officer was rude or unprofessional. One person stated that they had a bad experiences with law enforcement because they felt that they had been racially profiled. Sixty-seven individuals noted that they did have any experience with police officers. This data is reflected in **Table 10.** Ultimately, there are some notable observation from this data. First, there are many individuals that have not had any experience with police officers. Secondly, a small number of individuals have actually had bad experiences with police officers. Lastly,

more research is need to determine what factor may influence the variance in experiences with the police.

Table 10: Participants Experience with Police		
Participant Experience with Police	Frequency	Percent
Good	37	25%
Neutral	29	21%
Bad	8	6%
No Experience	67	48%

Findings

Hypothesis 1: People with higher levels of media consumption, will have decrease levels of trust in the government
This dissertation asserts that young adults with high levels of media consumption will have decreased levels of trust in government. **Table 11** illustrates the descriptive statistics for the variables used in this model. **Table 12** displays an ordered logistic regression for trust in government. While **Table 13** reflect the odds ratio for the model. Regarding media consumption, the regression reveal that p-value of 0.39, which indicates that media consumption coefficient is not statistically significant, which suggest that media consumption is not a predictor for trust in government. Various types of political party identification were included in this model. Individuals with other political identities were the comparison group for the model. Regarding individuals that identified as democrats, the regression revealed a p-value of 0.00, which indicates that it is a significant variable for predicting trust in government. Compared to individuals with other political identities, Democrats have a third lower trust in government. Republicans had a p-value of 0.01, which shows that it is a significant variable for predicting trust in government. Compared

to individuals with other political identities, Republicans have three times higher trust in government.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics Variable of Interest for Hypothesis One					
Variable	**Observation**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Min.**	**Max.**
Trust in Government	162	2.03	0.08	1	3
Media Consumption	162	2.67	0.96	1	4
Democrat	162	0.39	0.49	0	1
Republican	162	0.01	0.36	0	1
Other Political Party	162	0.04	0.49	0	1

Table 12 : Ordered Logistic Regression for Trust in Government					
					Number of Observation: 160
					LR chi² (3): 28.02
					Prob > Chi²: 0.0000
					Pseudo R²: 0.0800
Log likelihood: -161.07957					
Trust in Government	**Coefficient**	**Standard Error**	**Z**	**P-Value**	**(95% Coefficient Interval)**
Media Consumption	-0.01	0.15	-0.85	0.39	-0.44 0.17
Democrat	-1.10	0.33	-3.34	0.00	- 1.75 -0.45
Republican	1.28	0.49	2.58	0.01	0.31 2.25
Cut 1	-1.39	0.48			-2.34 -0.43
Cut 2	0.00	0.47			-0.92 0.93

Table 13: Ordered Logistic Regression for Trust in Government Stating Odds Ratio						

Number of Observation: 160
LR chi² (3): 28.02
Prob > Chi²: 0.0000
Pseudo R²: 0.0800

Log likelihood: -161.07957

Trust in Government	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Z	P-Value	(95% Coefficient Interval)	
Media Consumption	0.87	0.13	-0.85	0.39	0.64	1.19
Democrat	0.33	0.10	-3.34	0.00	0.17	0.63
Republican	3.61	1.79	2.58	0.01	1.36	9.55
Cut 1	-1.39	0.48			-2.34	-0.43
Cut 2	0.00	0.47			-0.92	0.93

Hypothesis 2: People with higher levels of media consumption, will have increased levels of political efficacy.

Hypothesis two asserts that people with high levels of media consumption will have increased levels of political efficacy. **Table 14** illustrates the descriptive statistics for the variables used in this model. **Table 15** displays an ordered logistic regression for political efficacy. While **Table 16** reflects the odds ratio for the model, the model fit, which suggests that the model is not significant for predicting political efficacy. While the model may not be significant and should not be considered, it is suggestive that individuals that identified as Black might have lower political efficacy. This is the opposite of what Hypothesis 2 predicted.

Table 14: Descriptive Statistics Variable of Interest for Hypothesis is Two

Variable	Observation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.
Political Efficacy	163	1.99	0.79	1	3
Media Consumption	162	2.67	0.96	1	4
Black Young Adults	164	0.26	0.44	0	1
Other Racial Groups	164	0.02	0.37	0	1
Household Income	160	0.01	1.20	1	5

Table 15 : Ordered Logistic Regression for Political Efficacy

Number of Observation: 159
LR chi² (4): 9.34
Prob > Chi²: 0.0531
Pseudo R²: 0.0268

Log likelihood: -169.48717

Political Efficacy	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P-Value	(95% Coefficient Interval)	
Media Consumption	-0.13	0.15	-0.85	0.39	-0.44	0.17
Black	-0.82	0.03	-2.27	0.02	-1.53	-0.11
Other Racial Group	0.36	0.42	0.88	0.38	-0.45	1.19
Household Income	-0.09	0.12	-0.78	0.43	-0.35	0.01
Cut 1	-1.62	0.63			-2.88	-0.37
Cut 2	0.00	0.00			-1.21	1.23

Table 16: Ordered Logistic Regression for Political Efficacy Stating Odds Ratio						

Number of Observation: 159
LR chi² (4): 9.34
Prob > Chi²: 0.0531
Pseudo R²: 0.0268

Log likelihood: -169.48717

Political Efficacy	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Z	P-Value	(95% Coefficient Interval)	
Media Consumption	0.87	0.13	-0.85	0.39	0.64	1.19
Black	0.43	0.15	-2.27	0.02	0.21	0.89
Other Racial Group	1.44	0.06	0.88	0.38	0.63	0.33
Household Income	0.90	0.01	-0.78	0.43	0.07	1.16
Cut 1	-1.62	0.63			-2.88	-0.37
Cut 2	0.00	0.00			-1.21	1.23

Hypothesis 3: As media consumption increases amongst young adults, it is more likely that they have used social media to discuss social or political issues

Hypothesis three asserts that people with high levels of media consumption will have increased levels of social media activism. **Table 17** illustrates the descriptive statistics for the variables used in this model. **Table 18** displays an ordered logistic regression for social media activism. While **Table 19** reflects the odds ratio for the model. The regression revealed a Prob > Chi² of 0.0012, which suggest that the model is significant. Regarding media consumption, the regression reveal that p-value of 0.01, which indicates that media consumption is significant which suggests that media consumption is a predictor for social media activism. Thus, compared to individuals with low media consumption, individuals with high media consumption have 50 percent higher odds of social media activism. Race was included in this model. White individuals

were the comparison group for the model. Regarding individuals that identified as
Nonwhite, the regression revealed a p-value of 0.02, which indicates that it is a
significant variable for predicting social media activism. Thus, compared with white
individuals, nonwhites have two times higher social media activism. Household income
was also used in this model. Household income had negative coefficient and a p-value of
0.15, which displays that it is not significant, and not a predictor for social media
activism.

Table 17: Descriptive Statistics Variable of Interest for Hypothesis Three					
Variable	**Observation**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Min.**	**Max.**
Social Media Activism	162	2.03	0.08	1	3
Media Consumption	162	2.67	0.96	1	4
Nonwhite Young Adults	162	0.39	0.49	0	1
Household Income	162	0.01	0.36	0	1

Table 18 : Ordered Logistic Regression for Social Media Activism

Number of Observation: 149
LR chi² (3): 15.91
Prob > Chi²: 0.0012
Pseudo R²: 0.0399

Log likelihood: -191.11911

Social Media Activism	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z	P-Value	(95% Coefficient Interval)	
Media Consumption	0.40	0.16	2.49	0.01	0.08	0.72
Nonwhite	0.71	0.32	2.19	0.02	0.07	1.34
Household Income	-0.17	0.12	-1.41	0.15	-0.42	0.06
Cut 1	0.14	0.60			-1.04	1.33
Cut 2	0.78	0.63			-0.92	0.93
Cut 3	2.19	0.63			0.95	3.42

Table 19: Ordered Logistic Regression for Social Media Activism Stating Odds Ratio

					Number of Observation: 149
					LR chi² (3): 15.91
					Prob > Chi²: 0.0012
					Pseudo R²: 0.0399

Log likelihood: -191.11911

Social Media Activism	Odds Ratio	Standard Error	Z	P-Value	(95% Coefficient Interval)	
Media Consumption	1.49	0.24	2.49	0.01	1.08	2.05
Nonwhite	2.03	0.66	2.19	0.02	1.07	3.85
Household Income	0.83	0.01	-1.41	0.15	0.65	1.07
Cut 1	0.14	0.60			-1.04	1.33
Cut 2	0.78	0.60			-0.40	1.97
Cut 3	2.19	0.63			0.95	3.42

Summary of Findings

Although the findings from this study may not reflect the predicted outcomes, the findings are insightful for political science research. Media consumption is not a predictor for trust in the government; however, party identification is a predictor. Republicans trust the government substantially more than Democrats. Additionally, these findings revealed that using media consumption, income does not predict political efficacy. However, there results suggest race might be a predictor for political efficacy. Given that the findings are suggestive, more research is encouraged to further investigate this phenomenon. Regarding social media activism, these findings are suggestive that high media consumption is a predictor for activism. This serves as a strong starting point for further research. This study also reveals that race can be used to predict social media

activism. Additionally, this study offers insight on the lack of interaction that young adults are having with police officers. For those individuals that are having interactions with police officers, they would describe their interaction as good or neutral. Ultimately, the findings from this study are encouraging for further political science and communication studies research. The next chapter explores how the findings challenges or advances Cultivation Theory and Use and Gratification Theory. Additionally, I discuss how the findings from this study compare with finding from the Black Youth Project, and explore limitations and implications of this study and offer concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

While Chapter four offered findings for this dissertation, this chapter will have seven major sections. The first section will compare the findings of this dissertation with findings from studies conducted by the Black Youth Project in 2005 and 2015 concerning trust in government. The focus of the next section is the evolution of political efficacy among young people from underrepresented communities. The section will rely on the findings from this study as well as the findings from studies completed by the Black Youth Project in 2005 and 2015. The third section of the chapter will address the evolution of social media activism among minorities. This section will be grounded with the research findings from this study and the Black Youth Project's "Black Millennials in America" study. Next, I will discussed how the findings from this dissertation advances or challenges existing literature. The fifth section will discuss the implications of these findings. Next, I will provide the limitations of the research study. Last, I will offer recommendations for future research and overall concluding remarks

Comparing Adults Feeling about the Government

The Black Youth Project sparked the interest for this study. The interest in the attitudes and behaviors of young adults is a commonality of this study and the studies[15] conducted by the Black Youth Project. The findings from Black Youth Project are unique, as they offer vital information on a population that is often omitted or misrepresented by mainstream sources. Since the 2005 survey, the Black Youth Project rendered attention from academia and practitioners. The Black Youth Project continues to

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1"Black Youth Project Original Research",2005

 "Black Millennials in America", 2015

serves as community and platform for underrepresented and those that are interested in raising awareness about their experiences and hardships. Despite the commonality that this dissertation shares with the studies completed by the Black Youth Project, there are many factors that the Black Youth Project includes that were not included in this study. Nonetheless, insight regarding trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism can be gained from both studies. In 2005, the Black Youth Project completed a study that included research questions regarding young adult's trust in the government. Ultimately, that study revealed that a large portion of young adults "believed that leaders in the government care very little about people like them" (BYP, 2005). This was especially true for Black and Hispanic youth. Fifty-six percent of the Black participants believed that government leaders cared very little about people like them, while fifty-two percent of Hispanics had the same belief. Forty-four percent of their White counterparts expressed the equivalent feelings about government leaders. When the Black Youth Project conducted the "Black Millennial in America" study in 2015, it revealed that negative feelings towards the government had increased. This time, Seventy- Four percent of White participants "believed that leaders in the government care very little about people like them" (BYP, 2005, 5). Sixty- eight percent of Blacks and Hispanic participants indicated the same feelings. According to their studies, over time, Whites negative feelings towards the government have increased at a greater rate than their nonwhite counterparts. This dissertation included similar questions to determine the participant's feelings towards the government. Participants were asked their feelings regarding how much they trust that the government cared about what happened in the lives of African Americans. When asked this, sixty-six percent of the people stated that

they disagreed with the statement that the government cared about what happened in the lives of African Americans. This information is reflected in **Table 20**.

Table 20:Feeling About the Government Over Time							
	2005			**2015**			**2018**
Percentage of Youth With Negative Feeling Towards Government	**Black**	**Hispanic**	**White**	**Black**	**Hispanic**	**White**	**All Participants**
	56%	52%	44%	68%	68%	74%	66%

This confirms that even in 2018, negative feelings toward the government remain. This also indicates that negative feelings towards the government have grown at a greater rate for whites than their non-white counterparts. Declining trust in government holds to be true across different generations. A 2017 Pew Research Center study found that only "20% of Millennials (now ages 18-36) report trusting the government, similar to the shares of older generations who say the same" (Pew Research Center, 2017, 1). That same study revealed that "a downward trajectory in trust in government also is seen across racial and ethnic lines. Currently, white non-Hispanics, black non-Hispanics and Hispanics all express historically low levels of trust in government" (Pew Research Center, 2017, 1).When asked if the individuals trust the government in Washington always or most of the time, only fifteen percent of Blacks agreed with this statement. While seventeen percent of Whites and twenty-three percent of Hispanics stated that they had similar feeling (Pew Research Center, 2017). While trust is declining across generations and racial groups this study and the studies conducted by the Black Youth

Project suggest that overall trust among young adults is higher than their older

counterparts.

Comparing Political Efficacy over Time

In addition to sharing questions regarding feelings towards the government, this

dissertation and studies conducted by the Black Youth Project also included questions

that determined political efficacy among young adults. In the aforementioned 2005 Black

Youth Project study, the survey also included questions regarding political efficacy. The

findings of this study revealed that seventy-four percent of Black youth believed that they

had the skills and knowledge to participate in politics, whereas seventy percent of their

White counterparts indicated that they had the knowledge and skills needed to participate

in politics. In the same study sixty-six percent of Hispanic participants believe that they

had the same skills and knowledge. In the 2015 "Black Millennials in America" study by

the Black Youth Project, similar questions were asked to gauge political efficacy. In the

2015 study, it was revealed that seventy-one percent of Black participants believed that

their participation in politics could make a difference, while fifty-one percent of Latinos

had the same feelings. When asked the same question, only fifty-two percent of White

participants believed that their involvement in politics made a difference. Considering

these two studies, it appears that political efficacy among young adults has declined. This

dissertation also included questions on political efficacy. When participants were asked if

they believed that they could work with government to fix social and political issues, the

responses were split. About forty-seven percent of participants agreed that they could

work with government to make social and political improvements. On the other hand,

forty-eight percent did not believe that they could do so. About five percent of the

participants stated that they were not interested in politics. Additionally, responses were

also split when asked whether the Black Lives Matter movement would produce political change. Forty-one percent stated that they believe that the Black Lives Matter Movement would indeed cause political change. On the other hand, 56 percent of participants stated that they did not feel that the movement would create political change. Although, the questions from the three studies were not the same, their findings offer important insight regarding political efficacy among young adults over time. These studies offer evidence that young adults are split on their ability to create change by working with the government. Although a large portion of youth believe that they have the skills and knowledge to participate in politics, political efficacy as a whole is fragmented.

Table 21: Percentage of Youth with Political Efficacy							
	2005			**2015**			**2018**
Percentage of Youth with Political Efficacy	**Black**	**Hispanic**	**White**	**Black**	**Hispanic**	**White**	**All Participants**
	74%	66%	70%	71%	56%	52%	47%

Comparing Social Media Activism

In recent years, social media activism has become a focal point of social science research. Although, social media activism was not captured by the 2005 study completed by the Black Youth Project, the "Black Millennials in America" study did investigate social media activism. The 2015 study was mainly interest in the online activity during the 2012 presidential election. Participants were given a list of options, and were asked to indicate the option that best reflected their online activity. The options include: received campaign emails, started or joined a political group, watched political materials on YouTube, wrote a blog or sent an email about a campaign, and forwarded or circulated

political news. The response that was most selected was watched political materials on YouTube. The study revealed that over forty percent of Black participants have viewed political materials on YouTube, while twenty-nine percent of Whites, and twenty-six percent of Latinos had done the same. Overall, the study found that Black youth engaged online with political materials at a higher rate than their White and Latino counterparts. This also displayed that social media is a space where Black youth are absorbing and engaging in political discourse. Similar to the "Black Millennials in America" study, this dissertation was especially interested in social media activism among young adults. The data revealed that more than fifty-six percent of the participants indicated that they spent 3 hours or more using social media daily. These findings confirmed that social media continues to be an important space where young people are absorbing information and engaging with one another. Though it is clear that young people are spending time on social media, it does not appear that all youth use social media for the same purpose. Nonetheless, my study does support past research that indicates that Nonwhite participants use social media to discuss social and political issues more often than their White counterparts. More research is essential to determine why Nonwhite youth prefer social media as a tool for political engagement more frequently than White youth.

Overall finding in Comparison to Existing Theories:
Cultivation Theory

Although Cultivation Theory is commonly used in the field of communication studies, it can be applied to political science research. This theory asserts that repeated exposure to the media cultivates what individuals perceive to be reality. This dissertation specifically investigates whether what individuals see in the media makes them feel good about themselves and the government. The findings from this study concluded that more

than seventy-two percent of the participants felt that the media coverage that they consume did not make them feel good about themselves. Additionally, more than eighty-four percent stated that the information that they consumed made them not trust the government. Although my findings are limited in its ability to determine if media consumption shapes actions, this research does offer some insight on how media consumption influences self-esteem and attitudes toward the government. This dissertation advances past studies[16]on cultivation theory. This research, along with the aforementioned studies, serve as evidence that media consumption does have an influence on how individuals perceive themselves and reality.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Similar to Cultivation Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory is commonly used in the field of communication studies. Uses and Gratification Theory is a theory used to offer insight on why individuals use certain forms of media, as well as how they are using them. This theory asserts that individuals are not passively consuming media, instead, they are active participants. While this dissertation confirms that a majority of young adults are spending more than three hours a day on social media, the data also suggest that different racial groups are using social media in different ways. The findings assert that Nonwhite youth are using social media to discuss political and social issues more often than their White counterparts. Although this study does not specifically investigate why certain groups choose to use social media platforms for social and political discourse and other groups do not, this dissertation does confirm that young people are not passively consuming media. For Nonwhite youth, social media is a space that they

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[16] Gerbner, 1967, 1969, 1973; Morgan and Shanahan, 1991; Baumgatner and Morris, 2006;Jamieson and Romer, 2015

actively use as a tool for community and discourse. This dissertation offers evidence that support past findings[17] on Use and Gratification Theory. As social media continues to play a significant role in the lives of young people, more research is needed to expand the understanding of how Uses and Gratification Theory can be applied to other social science research.

Critical Race Theory

Though Critical Race Theory has largely been applied to the discipline of law, many of the elements of the theory can be applied to other social science disciplines. This dissertation does not claim to test Critical Race Theory but seeks to understand its utility in social science research. An important element of CRT is storytelling and narratives. Due to the fact that mainstream media does not always include the narratives of underrepresented populations, storytelling and narrative have come to be an important tool for capturing the experiences and hardships of this population. Although this dissertation relied on survey research, this study does offer insight on how young people from underrepresented populations are using social media for storytelling and narratives. It is through this type of social media activism that minorities are expressing themselves and building safe spaces online. This dissertation offers evidence that Nonwhite individuals are using social media to discuss social and political issues more often than their white counterparts. Thus, illustrating that social media serves as an important tool for the underrepresented. In the future, interviews should be conducted to capture more storytelling and narratives from this population. Future research should address why are Nonwhite individuals more likely to discuss political or social issues on social media than their white counterparts? Ultimately, this study displays that Critical Race Theory should

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[17] Morris and Ogan, 1996; Newhgan and Rafaeli, 1996; Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield, 2009

be used as theory to investigate the lived experiences of individuals from underrepresented communities.

Implications

This dissertation offers insight on various factors. First, the study confirms and advances the understanding of media consumption among young adults. Although there is existing research that suggests that most American spends a large portion of their day on social media platforms, this dissertation asserts that many young adults are spending more than 3 hours a day on social media. Additionally, this study revealed that social media is the most significant source for news media consumption. This implies that traditional sources for media consumption like television are no longer the main media sources for reputable news stories. Even further, the data revealed that some young people are using social media to offer counter narratives, thus, giving rise to the citizen journalist. Due to the nature of social media, news media no longer has to be sought out by individuals, instead news stories will appear on an individual's news feed. Therefore, the function of social media allows for individuals to connect with their friends and family, and largely only expose them to individuals that share the same ideologies. In turn, this creates social media spheres that eliminate diversity of thought. This lack of exposure does little to build positive relations among individuals from different backgrounds or for collective action to improve society.

Though media consumption may not be a predictor for trust in government, this dissertation serves as evidence that young people continue to have mistrust in the government and the media. This lack of trust in American institutions can have a negative impact on the political process. Despite the fact that there is more representation of racial minorities in political leadership, there remains a large gap. "In 1965, there were no

blacks in the U.S. Senate, nor were there any black governors. And only six members of the House of Representatives were black. As of 2019, there is greater representation in some areas – 52 House members are black, putting the share of black House members (12%) on par with the share of blacks in the U.S. population overall for the first time in history. But in other areas, there has been little change (there are three black senators and no black governors)" (Brown and Atske, 2019, 1). Despite the increase in diversity in political leadership, it is also clear that diversity in political leadership alone is not going to change trust in government. More than fifty-six percent of individuals lack trust that the government will develop policies that will benefit them in the future. Attitudes on trust are important because they are connected to political behaviors and participation. If individuals do not trust that the government will makes changes that will benefit them in the future, one has to question who will be responsible for creating social and political change in the future.

Over the last five years, there have been many instances of civil unrest and protests. This would lead society to believe that young people are demanding social and political change through informal means. However, this dissertation finds that this is not always the case. When asked if the actions of political and social movements like the Black Lives Matters movement would actually create change, more than fifty-six percent of participants indicated that the movement would not yield change. Therefore, if participants have little confidence in formal and informal means of political participation to create change, it is unclear who or what will serve as agents of change in the future. Although it is clear the young adults appear to display pessimism, there is not one specific reason for these feelings. I argue that it is a combination of factors, such as lack

or trust in government, lack of political leadership that represent their interests, lack of visible change by existing social justice movements, and personal experiences.

Ultimately, this dissertation suggests that the attitudes and behaviors are very polarized. While society often refers to young adults as a group of likeminded individuals, there is variability in their attitudes and behaviors regarding certain social and political issues. Additionally, more attention must be given to the individuals that indicate that they are not interested in politics. Too often this is a group that is disregarded in the research. For this study, between seven and ten percent of the participants indicated that they were not interested in politics. It would be productive to determine what are the factors that causes individuals to engage or disregard politics. Further, individuals are not passively consuming media. Social media is playing a significant role in how people perceive reality. This is not something that should be taken lightly. Individuals, in particular young adults must be encouraged to explore media literacy and media platforms that motivate them to positively contribute to society.

Limitation of the Study:

Though the findings from this study are insightful, this study does have some limitations. This is a convenience sample which presents issues with generalizability. Despite there being over 150 participants' part of this study, more participants would have increased representative distribution of the larger population. Although there were efforts made to recruit participants from three different Higher Education Institutions, the number participants from Harris Stowe State University and the University of Missouri-Saint Louis were much smaller than the number of students from Maryville University. Due to the limitations regarding sample size, the transferability of the results may be limited. Additionally, the data may be a skewed because all of the participants reside in

the Saint Louis area, which has been the location of a great deal of unrest and media coverage. In addition to limitations regarding the sample size, there are also limitations concerning measures used to collect data. Surveys with Likert scales were used to collect the data for this dissertation. While this was very insightful for some factors, there are other instances where open ended questions should have been included. Additionally, when using the Likert scale, I should have limited the number of response categories. I believe this would have gave me more informed results. I regret not including open ended questions about why or why not participants choose social media to discuss social and political issues, as well as open ended questions for individuals that stated that they were not interested in politics.

Future Research

The avenues and areas for future research for vast for individuals that are interested in the thoughts and experiences of young adults, media consumption, trust in government, political efficacy, and social media activism. Media content would be an important factor to add to future research. While media consumption proved to be important for predicting social media activism, media content might be insightful for trust in government. Despite the growing interest in social media activism, there is little research that has confirmed why certain groups use social media platforms to discuss social and political issues and others do not. While survey research has been traditionally used to investigate this phenomenon, qualitative or multi- method approaches would be insightful to capture the narratives of what social media platforms truly means to different populations. In the future, it would be insightful to conduct this study on a scale that included different regions of the nation, which would allow for more racial diversity.

This would allow more representative results. Additionally, future research should focus on determining the true power of social media platforms in regards to political participation and as a tool for social and political change. Is social media causing chaos or is social media a tool for mobilization and unity? Further, future research should investigate psychic numbing. As this study and past research indicates, individuals are spending more time consuming media. Often this is resulting in individuals consuming the story repeatedly. One has to question if an individual hears the same topic repeatedly, does that lead to disengagement? If so, how does that disengagement play out in political attitudes and behaviors? Last, more research is needed on individuals that indicate that they do not care about politics. This was a common response among college students. What causes this disinterest, and does this disinterest translate to a lack of political participation? Overall, the findings from this study as well as the challenges encountered in this research assures that more investigation is essential.

Concluding Remarks

My original goal was to determine the impact of media consumption on the attitudes and behaviors of young adults and racial minorities. I realize that was extremely ambitious. Despite the limitations of this study, there are some important takeaways. Media consumption is insightful for understanding social media activism. While party identification continues to be an important predictor for trust in government. Although there is existing literature on trust in government and political efficacy, there are some fragmentations and conflicting findings in the research. While there are accepted measures for political efficacy, it remains a difficult variable to truly measure. Although research on trust in government and political efficacy has traditionally been investigated through a quantitative approach, the literature would benefit from a mix-methods

approach. Additionally, college students are often avoided out of fear of concerns with generalizability, however they are an important populations that offers a unique perspective, especially as digital natives. As social media involvement continues to grow, it will become increasingly important for social scientists to gain a better understanding of its sphere of influence, as well as determine how it can be used as a tool of change. It is my hope that work continues on youth from underrepresented populations, media consumption, and trust in movement, political efficacy, and social media activism through methods that will truly capture their narratives and experiences with American institutions. Ultimately, there is still a lot more to be learned about political trust, efficacy, and social media activism.

Appendix

Appendix A

Survey Questions

1) Please select your University:
   Maryville University
   University of Missouri- Saint Louis
   Harris Stowe State University

2) Do you give your consent according to the attached consent letter

3) Are you volunteering to be part of this survey?
   Yes
   No

4) How old are you? Please type the two digit number. _____

5) Please indicate your gender:
   Male
   Female
   Not listed

6) Please indicate you marital status:
   Single
   Married
   Divorced
   Widow

7) Please indicate your religious affiliation._____

8) Please list any social or racial advancement organization that you are a
   member_____

9) Which of the income groups listed below best describes the total income of all
   members of your family living in your house in 2015 before taxes? This figure
   should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest and all other income.
   (IF UNCERTAIN: what would be your best guess)?
   Less than $16,999
   $17,000-$34,999
   $35,000-$69,999
   $70,000-119,999
   $120,000 or more

10) What is the highest degree that you have completed?
   High school
   Some college (13 grades or more but no degree)
   Junior or Community College (Associate degree)
   Bachelor's degree)
   Advanced degree

11) Which political party do you identify with?
   Republican
   Democrat
   Independent

These next questions will be about your media consumption

12) How many hours a day do you spend on social media?
   Less than 1 hour
   1-2 hours
   3-4 hours
   More than 4 hours

13) From what media source do you obtain your current events?
   I don't care about current events
   Newspapers
   Social media
   Websites
   Television
   Radio
   Other_____

14) If you hear the same news story more than twice, my interest level _____
   Increases
   Decreases
   Remains the same

15) The media coverage I see makes me feel good about myself:
   Agree
   Strongly agree
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

16) People like me don't have any say about what the government does:
   Agree
   Strongly agree
   Neutral
   Disagree

Strongly Disagree

17) I can trust that the government will do the right thing:
 All of the time
 Most of the time
 Some of the time
 Almost never
 Never

18) I trust that the government cares about what happens in the lives of African Americans?
 Agree
 Strongly agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

19) I trust the government will make policies that will benefit me in the future.
 Agree
 Strongly agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

20) I would feel comfortable being part of a protest.
 Agree
 Strongly agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
 I don't care about social or political issues

21) What I see in mass media makes me hopeful about my future in America
 Agree
 Strongly agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

22) Between 2012-2017, I used the hashtag (#) "blacklivesmatter", Or discussed the " Black Matter Hashtag in social media
 Daily
 Weekly
 Monthly
 Annually
 Almost Never
 Never

23) Between 2012- 2017, I used social media to discuss my feelings about political or social injustice.
All of the time
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Annually
Almost Never
Never

24) Sometimes politics and government seem to complicated, that a person like me can't really understand
Agree
Strongly agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
N/A

25) Please list some of the political or social issues that you have expressed your thoughts about on social media. If this does not apply to you, please write "NA"

26) Who do you think controls what the media reports?

27) Have you ever had any interaction with your local police? If yes, would you describe the experience as good, bad, or neutral?

28) I feel that the actions of the Black Lives Matter Movement will change government?

Agree
Strongly agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
I don't care about social or political issues

29) The information that I see in the media make me feel like I can trust the government.

Agree
Strongly agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

30) I feel that I can work with government to fix some of the issues that I see in new media

Strongly Agree
Agree

Disagree
Strongly Disagree
I don't care about social or political issues

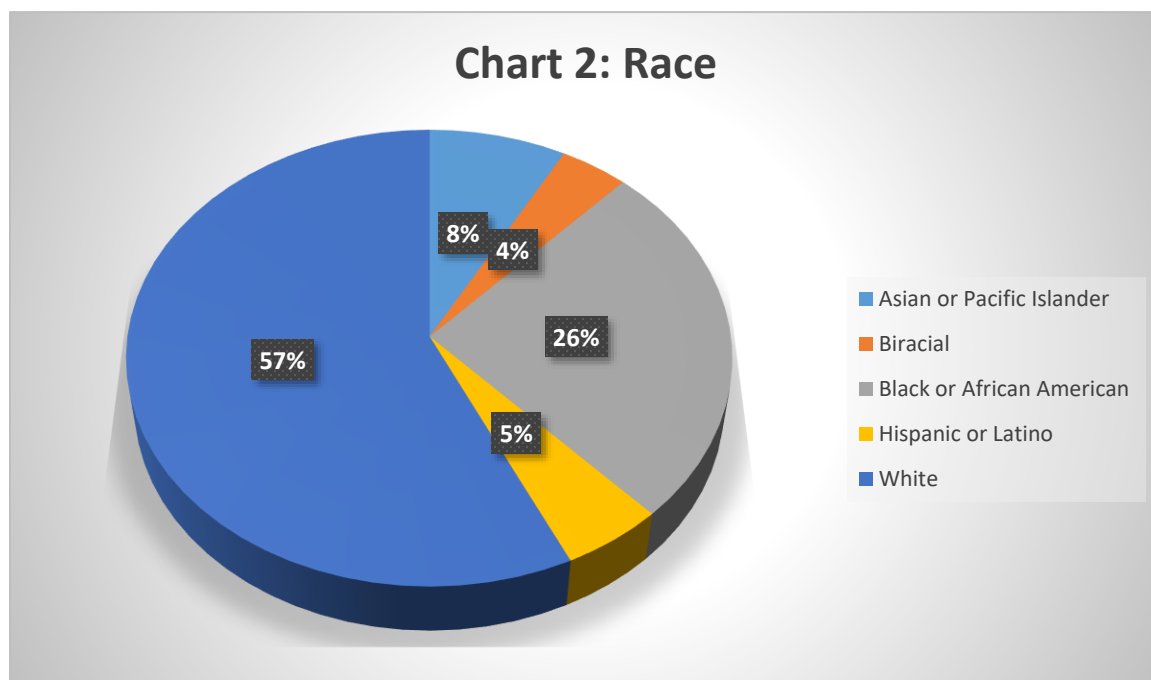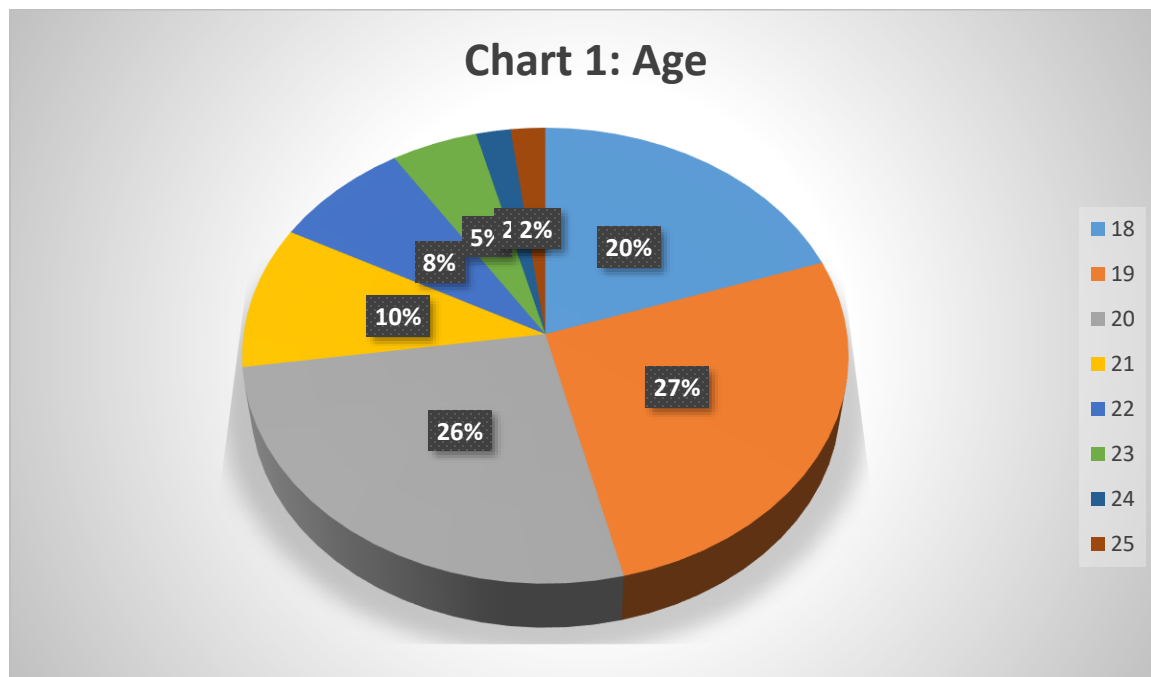31) The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves
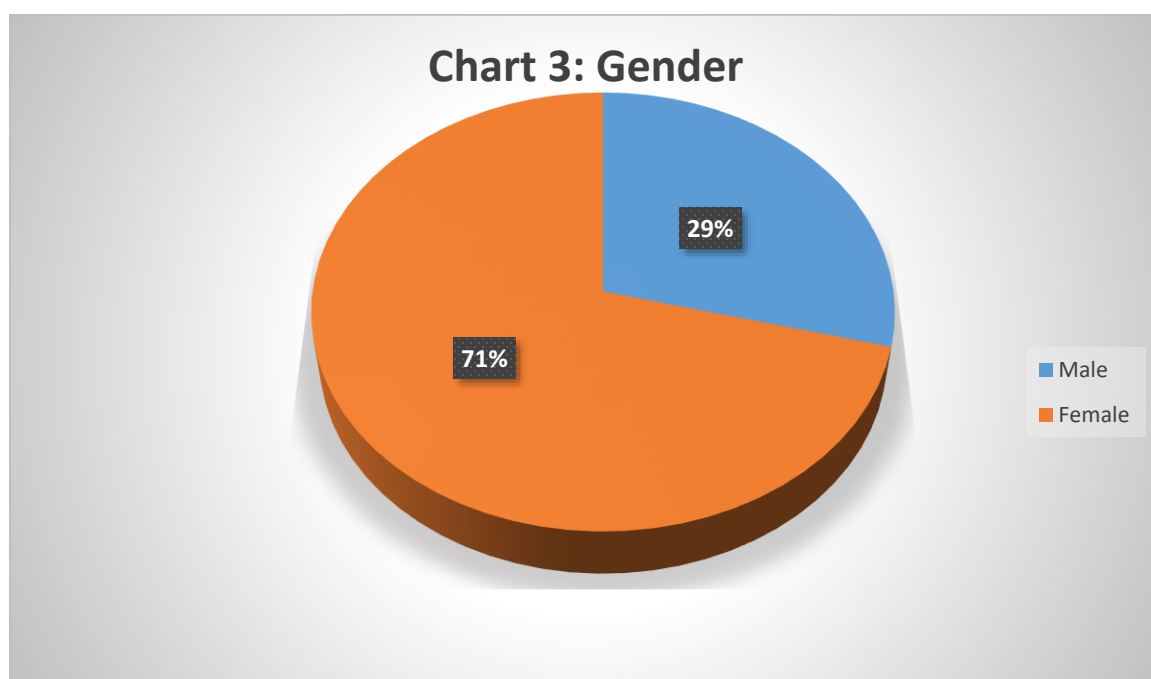Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

32) The people run the government are corrupt:
Strongly Agree
Agree
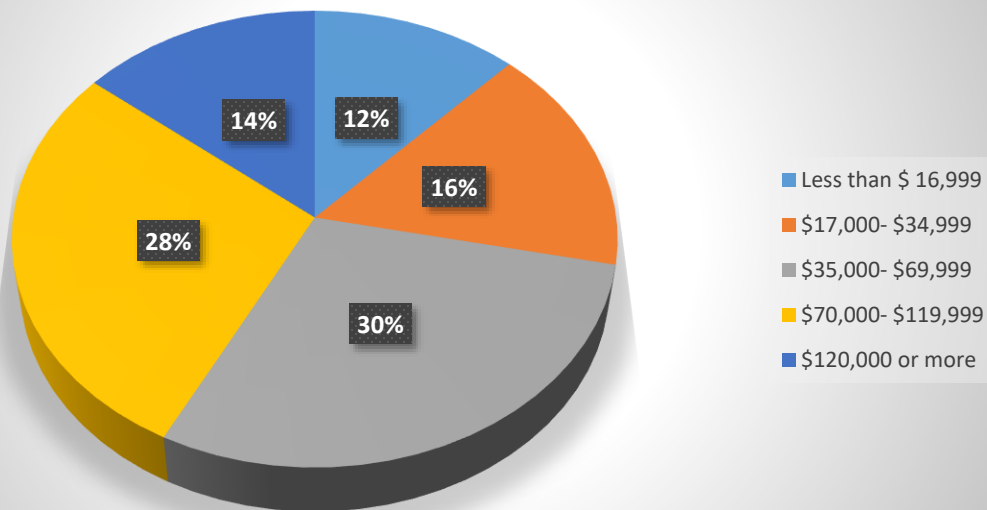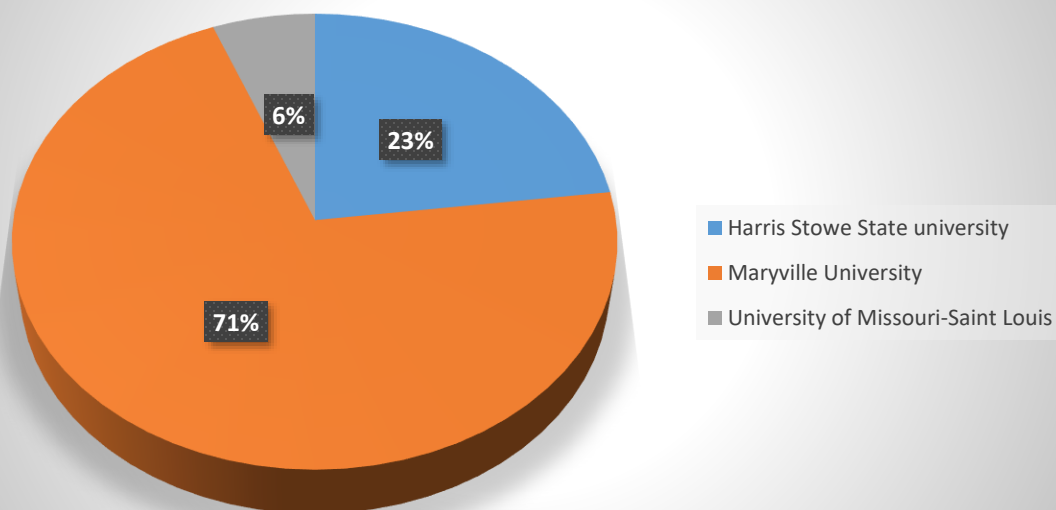Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Appendix B

Charts

Chart 1: Age

18 — 20%
19 — 27%
20 — 26%
21 — 10%
22 — 8%
23 — 5%
24 — 2%
25 — 2%

Chart 2: Race

Asian or Pacific Islander — 8%
Biracial — 4%
Black or African American — 26%
Hispanic or Latino — 5%
White — 57%

Chart 3: Gender

- Male 29%
- Female 71%

Household Income

Legend:
- Less than $ 16,999
- $17,000- $34,999
- $35,000- $69,999
- $70,000- $119,999
- $120,000 or more

Values: 12%, 16%, 30%, 28%, 14%

Chart 5: Educational Institution

Legend:
- Harris Stowe State university
- Maryville University
- University of Missouri-Saint Louis

Values: 23%, 71%, 6%

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