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A STUDY OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science in Social Work
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Elizabeth Ann Shelton
August 2006

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my parents The Honorable Wayne C. Shelton who took me into the voting booth as soon as I could walk, and Mrs. Pixie Woodall, who never let me believe that I wouldn't finish this or anything else.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Drs. Muammer Cetingok, Marcia Egan, and Susan Neely-Barnes of the UTCSW Memphis campus, for all of their support, encouragement, and assistance with this project. I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Gertha Alexander, Ms. Tammi Redmond, Ms. Ann Smith of Memphis, and Ms. Ruby Grace of Nashville for the help they each gave. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the faculty members or the UTCSW for their assistance with the distribution and collection of the surveys.

ABSTRACT

This localized study explored the level of political activity of students at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work. Students were asked to respond to several demographic questions and answer questions regarding the frequency with which they performed certain tasks of political activity. Additionally the study explored relevant literature to establish a framework of national political behavior and political behavior within the field of social work. Political behavior is most strongly predicted by the age of the student with little regard for race, gender, or religious background. Students with a higher level of family history of political interest and those that responded as liberal or very liberal are more likely to engage in a higher level of political activity. Implications for social work educators, administrators, professional, and professional organizations are discussed.

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NOMENCLATURE

β	standardized regression coefficient
H	hypothesis
H_o	null hypothesis
M	mean
p	significance
r	correlation coefficient
R	multiple correlation coefficient
SD	standard deviation
Y	criterion
X	factor
χ^2	chi-square
Z_Y	*z* score for criterion (dependent variable)
Z_X	*z* score for each factor (independent variable)

ABBREVIATIONS

BSW	Bachelor's of Social Work
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
CSWE	Council on Social Work Education
GR	Graduate
IDN	Individual Document Number
MCP	Management and Community Practice
MSW	Master's of Social Work
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
PAC/E	Political Action Committee
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSI	Supplemental Social Security Income
UG	Undergraduate
UT CSW	University of Tennessee College of Social Work

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Political activity as an ethical responsibility of the profession to the broader society is a major component of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Political activity was defined by Haynes and Mickelson (2003) as those activities that "have (…) impact on legislative, administrative, and fiscal descision[s]" (p.83). Specifically the Code of Ethics stated, "Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully" (National Association of Social Workers, 1996, p. 27). In addition, social workers are committed to the responsibility of promoting "…policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference…" and of promoting "policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people" (NASW, 1996, p. 27). Political activity should begin as early as possible in preparation effort for the profession, i.e. undergraduate and graduate level social work programs. Haynes and Mickelson have stated, "All social work is political" (2003, p.2). Indeed Haynes and Mickelson encouraged us to discover an aspect of the social work profession *not* affected by politics and the policies it creates.

As a member of the age cohort (18-24) least likely to participate in electoral politics (Lenkowsky, 2004), the traditional aged undergraduate student is thereby, also, less likely to participate in this process. Lenkowsky (2004) conveyed, "…today's average college student knows only as much about politics as the average high-school student did

50 years ago" (p. 58). The problem lies in the contradiction between the underlying values of the social work profession and the political behavior of social work students.

This study investigates the level of political activity in which students at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work (UTCSW) are engaged. The study attempts to determine the relationship between the level of education of the student and the student's level of political activity. Additionally, this study explores demographics characteristics that serve as possible predictors of political activity.

Additionally, this study establishes the historical background of political activity within the profession of social work and discusses relevant studies concerning the political activity of social workers. The researcher found no other studies specific to the population studied here. The literature does however create the framework through which political activity of social work students can be studied.

The findings of describe the sample population and illuminate the various types of political activity in which students engage. The statistical analysis run on the data generated from the study provides a framework through which the policies and practices of the social work profession can focus its efforts on increasing the likelihood of students to engage in political activities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social Justice and Social Workers

Political activity of social workers takes place in the broader context of social justice as one of the core values of the social work profession. Political activity takes place as well in the more specific context of the war on poverty as a major area of social work practice inspired by social justice. As a core value, "Social justice involves the idea that in a perfect world, all citizens would have identical rights, protections, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits" (Kirst-Ashman, 200, p. 13). Social workers are responsible for actively supporting policies that will improve the human condition and that will promote social justice (Kirst-Ashman, 2000). Additionally, social workers "…should work to prevent and eliminate conditions and policies discriminating against or exploiting people, especially vulnerable populations" (Kirst-Ashman, 2000, p. 14)

Jansson (2003) stated, "If persons who are committed to social justice and fairness do not use power, they simply concede to persons who are not committed to those values" (p.61). Social workers, bound by the professional code of ethics are defined by their commitment to social justice. Social workers "…bring distinctive viewpoints into the policy-making process" (Jansson, 2003, p. 62), and, as Jansson argued, are morally deficient "…if they do not engage in policy-sensitive and policy-related practice, because they occupy a unique position in the human service system" (2003, p. 36)

Linhorst (2002) stated, "To maximize their ability to promote social justice, social workers need a clear understanding of the political structure and changing political environment that provides the parameters in which social justice is enacted…" (p. 201). Two decades earlier Mahaffey and Hanks (1982) expressed their concern that, "…the literature of the profession contain[s] so little relating the values, objectives, and skills of social work to the political process" (p. vi). Several texts and articles have been written since Mahaffey and Hanks produced this foundation text; however, "…the last two decades have not been positive ones for our clients or our profession" (Haynes & Mickelson, 2003, p. xi).

2. Historical and Current Trends in Federal Social Welfare Legislation

As Brill (2001) discussed, the changing philosophies of the times in which we live have affected the lives of the clients that social workers serve, as well as our personal lives, work sites, and practices. These changes include, but are not limited to: more conservative tax policies including tax cuts for the wealthiest, budget cuts, and denial of certain benefits to the poor, (specifically those families that made less than $26,625 per year were denied the $400 per child tax credit given by the George W. Bush administration (Shipler, 2004)). Another important change is an aura that "people should take care of themselves"; and the "me first" attitude of Western individualism and consumerism (Brill, 2001). These characteristics of society require social workers to have a louder voice than ever before. Brill stated, "We must be bolder than we have been in pointing out that major social, economic, and political change is needed to solve the problems of this society" (2001, p. 233).

The trends in cuts to the federal budget can be traced back to President Nixon who "…initiated a general reduction and selective elimination of social welfare program" (Mahaffey et al. 1982, p. 21). The Reagan administration furthered cuts to federal social programs and reductions to state and local governments (Linhorst, 2002). The 1994 Republican landslide victory of both the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Federal legislative Congress made it difficult for liberal policy advocates to influence legislators (Jansson, 2003). The national elections of 1996 saw the lowest voter turnout in the 20th century, (Putnam, 2002), which perhaps explains why in 1997, 57 percent of Americans endorsed the view "…the people running the country don't really care what happens to you" (Putnam, 2002, p. 47).

Continuing with the theme set by the Reagan administration, the Republican-dominated Congress was able to continue its Contract with America (Haynes & Mickelson, 2003). This contract was, in the opinions of some, "…a continuous campaign against the welfare state" (Haynes & Mickelson, 2003, p. 22). This "attack" on the social welfare system made drastic changes to many of the benefit programs social work clients depend on for survival. These programs include "…child care, the Food Stamp program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for children, benefits for legal immigrants, and the Child Support Enforcement program" (Haynes & Mickelson, 2003, p. 22). While welfare reform might have been a priority of the Republican majority in Congress, President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, signed the welfare reform bill into law.

Peterson (2004) described the time immediately following the inauguration of George W. Bush in 2001 as a "…fiscal swan dive…" (p. 143). Every year of his administration the president asked congress for and subsequently signed a major tax cut.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected a 4.1 trillion dollar budget cut in the 2004 budget because of these tax cuts (Peterson, 2004). All said the tax cuts totaled 1.35 trillion dollars (Jansson, 2003). These fiscal policies have led to a continuation in cuts to social programs, furthering the plight of those social workers serve.

3. Poverty as a Social Justice Concern

Existence of poverty has historically been the raison d'etre of social action for social workers. Poverty is defined, according to Barker (1999), as "the state of being poor or deficient in money or means of subsistence" (p. 369), and is further reflected by Shipler (2004) as the cycle of poverty:

> A run-down apartment can exacerbate a child's asthma, which leads to a call for an ambulance, which generates a medical bill that cannot be paid, which ruins a credit record, which hikes the interest rate of an auto loan, which forces the purchase of an unreliable used car, which jeopardizes a mother's punctuality at work, which limits her promotions and earning capacity, which confines her to poor housing (2004, p. 11).

Haynes and Mickelson referred to the relative inactivity of the social work profession since the 1970's by describing "…its failure to speak out about the inadequacies of welfare and other programs" (2003, p. 11). Current poverty related questions are as much relevant for political activity as are the concerns of the nation's

political and fiscal history. For example, Kozol (1995) asked the question, "How does a nation deal with those whom it has cursed?" (p. 186). Mickelson and Smith (2004) might have responded with, "…that inequality is so deeply rooted in the structure and operation of the U.S. political economy, that, at best, educational reforms can play only a limited role in ameliorating such inequality" (p.362).

Shipler (2004) told us, "Being poor means being unprotected" (p. 5). Burnham (2002) furthered this concept by explaining, "While U.S. officials pledged in international forums to uphold women's rights, those rights were substantially undermined by the 1996 passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)" (p. 371). The intent of the PRWORA was "…to reduce the welfare rolls and to move women toward economic self-sufficiency…" (Burnham, 2002, p. 371).

Kozol (1995) argued, "…the discussion of poor women and their children is divorced from any realistic context that includes the actual conditions of their lives…" (p. 180). Shipler (2004) acknowledged that welfare reform has left many persons stuck with low wages and unchanged living conditions as when they were on welfare. The poor in the United States, despite or perhaps because of welfare reform "…still cannot save, cannot get decent healthcare, cannot move to better neighborhoods, and cannot send their children to schools that offer a promise for a successful future" (Shipler, 2004, p. 4).

Burnham (2002) argued that while there has been a noticeable difference in the number of women off the welfare rolls, "…many women who move from welfare to work do not achieve economic independence. Instead, most find only low-paid insecure jobs that do not lift their families above the poverty line" (2002, p. 372). Burnham

mentioned studied that "…document that former recipients cannot pay for sufficient food and that their families skip meals, go hungry, and/or use food pantries, or other emergency food assistance" (2002, p. 373). Burnham continued this by stating "Welfare reform has made women's struggles to obtain food for themselves and their families more difficult" (2002, p. 373). Finally, Burnham discussed the 1999 U. S Conference of Mayors report. This report revealed that following the 1996 law, cities saw increases in requests for emergency shelter, increased housing insecurity, homelessness, and a rising trend of splitting families apart (Burnham, 2002).

Social workers are ethically committed to be strong advocates in the political spectrum, since the future of the nation, and of its most vulnerable populations, continue to take forms that challenge the core values of the profession, such as social justice, and may jeopardize the political action efforts of the "war on poverty" of the profession. Future social workers need to be prepared for a career of social and political action.

4. Current Trends in Americans' Political Activity

Political activity of the American Society has consistently been a concern of significant proportions for citizens of all ages. Although older age ranges tend to be more active than younger ranges, Putnam (2000) has stated that in general, political activity has become less common among Americans. Putnam stated "…more than a third of America's civic infrastructure simply evaporated between the mid 1970's and the mid 1990's" (p. 43). He continued to list activities that have become less common among Americans. These activities include signing petitions, writing congress persons, writing

an article for a magazine or letter to the editor of a newspaper, attending a campaign meeting, or simply volunteering for a campaign (Putnam, 2000).

The Congressional Digest (2004) stated that the majority of people who register to vote, actually vote. Additionally, white non-Hispanic citizens have the highest level of voter turnout, followed sequentially by African-Americans, Hispanics (Latinos), and Asian and Pacific Islanders. The Congressional Digest also suggested that, "Educational level may also influence and individual's interest in and commitment to the political process" (2004, p. 227). Those individuals with a high school education or less are less likely to show an interest in politics or to participate in the electoral process (Congressional Digest, 2004).

Wilkinson, (1996) stated "…people under 25 were four times less likely to vote or join a political party and significantly less likely to be politically active" (1996, p. 242). Additionally, Wilkinson described the importance of televisions, telephones, and computers as ways of relaying political information as 75 percent of young people use these versions of mass media (1996).

Roker, Player, and Coleman (1999) discussed several demographic characteristics that are related to political participation. Their study (n=1160) found that young women were more involved in activities such as campaign work, protesting, and volunteering than were young men. Their study also discovered differences in ethnic background with relation to political activity stating, "Some of the Asian young people indicated that participation in campaigning or related activities was dependent on parental agreement" (Roker, Player, & Coleman, 1999, p. 191).

Roker et al. also discussed rurality and geographical location along with religion and the influence of family and friends as factors contributing to political activity. Of rurality and geography, Roker et al. listed the difficulties faced by those in rural areas of engaging political participation as access to transportation and difficulty in participating in campaigning when the nearest city or community is miles away. As to religion, the researchers found "…that those young people who were members of campaigning organizations were also more likely to have a religious commitment" (1999, p. 192). With regard to the influence of family and friends, Roker et al. found significant relationships suggesting the importance of parental modeling of social behavior. Additionally, "…peers can also be important in legitimating and encouraging involvement…" (1999, p. 193), in social and political activities.

5. American Youth and Political Activity

Literature concerning the engagement of youth in the political realm is similarly themed. Among these themes, American youth turn out to vote in low numbers, with only 42 percent voting in the 2000 election (Lenkowsky, 2004). Youth between the ages of 18-24 are more likely to be disengaged in the political system than older age cohorts (Feldman, 2000; Fetto, 1999; Lenkowsky, 2004). Candidates tend to ignore the 18-24 age group due to their low voting turnout rate. This results in young voters subsequently indicating that candidates are indifferent towards them; resulting further in young voters not being involved in the process (Feldman, 2000; Fetto, 1999; Skaggs & Anthony, 2002). Finally, the politics of the family and the individual's upbringing has an

incredible impact on the political behavior of the individual (Feldman, 2000; Fetto, 1999, Skaggs & Anthony, 2002).

Lenkowsky (2004) speculated about the factors contributing to the low proficiency of political and civic knowledge among youth. One of these factors is the lesser likelihood of students' enrollment in civics and government courses. "Numerous surveys have shown that many young people cannot identify the principal officeholders in their states, what government agencies do, or how citizens are expected to act" (2004, p. 58). Furthermore, the courses taken are less apt to provide practical political information, for example, on how to use a voting machine, than civics courses did a generation ago (Lenkowsky, 2004). Lenkwosky identified the low level of engagement of youth in the American political system as a concern despite recent philanthropic efforts to improve civic education. The foundations providing funding to improve civic education must recognize, Lenkowsky suggested, "…that today's young people are particularly likely to shun party affiliations and view office seekers cynically" (2004, p. 58).

Feldman (2000) discussed the topic of youth political disengagement. Feldman cited lack of civic instruction as a contributor. He also stated civic and personal factors such as apathy and cynicism, lifestyle patterns, and perhaps even the effects of divorce. Additionally, Feldman claimed politicians themselves "…do not always live up to expectations, dashing youthful idealism" (2000, p. 2). Also considered to contribute to a lack of political disengagement among youth is that, "Young adults tend to be less settled, and tend not to have the kids and mortgages that connect people to their

communities-and to the elected officials who make decisions that affect them" (Feldman, 2000, p. 2).

Other factors that contribute to young adults' lack of political involvement are lifestyle patterns including amount of television consumption because the media are likely to discuss only the negative of politics and do a poor job of defining party differences (Feldman, 2000); and a surge of single-parent households where families do not regularly have dinner together. Infrequent family sit-down dinners disallow for "…a setting where children learn parental values, such as the importance of voting…" (Feldman, 2000, p. 3).

Finally, Feldman referred to an issue gap between politicians and youth, or the concept of mutual neglect, in which campaigning politicians and elected officials are not talking about issues that have proven to be important to a younger group. Youth are more concerned with issues of education, gun control, reproductive rights, and affirmative action than prescription drug benefits for seniors (Feldman, 2000).

Fetto (1999) explained that in the first presidential elections in which 18-20 year olds were allowed to vote (i.e. 1972), 50 percent of the 18-24 age group voted, compared to 63 percent of voters overall. 1972 represents the largest voter turnout rate of the 18-24 age group. In 1996, only 49 percent of the 18-24 age group were registered to vote. Of this group, 76 percent of college students were registered to vote. Among college graduates in the age group, registration rates rose to 89 percent. According to Fetto, "…parents' voting history is one of the strongest predictors of young peoples' voting patterns…" (1999, p. 47). Not only parental voting patterns predict political activity of

youth. Fetto also stated "…half of the young voters who engaged in frequent political discussions at home said they voted in 1998" (1999, p. 47).

To further develop the concept of parental impact on youth political engagement, Skaggs and Anthony (2002) defined three types of young voters. These were: Likely Young Voters; Potential Young Voters; and Unlikely Young Voters. The Likely Young Voter groups had "parents who took them to the polls as children, who voted themselves and, who discussed political issues at home far more than the average household" (2002, p.24). This group is also more likely to have more education and attend religious services regularly. Those young voters less likely to vote had far less parental instruction and modeling as children.

In summary, with respect to political activity, American youth 18-24 tend to vote less than Americans of older age groups do. Many contributors exist to explain this low level of voting behavior. Among these are youthful perceptions of politicians and vice-versa, and parental influence on the young person's knowledge of politics. In addition, a lower level of civic education and some personal and familial factors have been mentioned as a possible explanation, as has a difference of opinions in issues of importance from one generation over the next.

6. Political Activity of Social Workers, Professionals and Students

The relevant literature regarding the political activity of social workers tends to be located under five major headings. These are: the basic history of policy practice in the profession (Wolk, Pray, Weismiller, & Dempsey, 1996); the role of education in policy practice (Abramowitz, 1993); the relationship between social work and policy practice

(Figueira-McDonough, 1993; Reisch, 2000); the recent trend in the profession to focus on individual, not structural change (Aviram & Katan, 1991); and the overall implication of policies on the profession and the practice of social work (Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Salcido & Tramel-Seck, 1992; Wolk, 1981).

With respect to the history of policy practice with the social work profession, Wolk, Pray, Weismiller, and Dempsey (1996) started their discussion with the settlement house movement and Jane Adamms as the beginning of the understood relationship between the client's quality of life and policymaking. The depression era is discussed as a time when "…social workers sought to ameliorate the misery experienced by millions of people by lobbying elected officials to adopt policies that are more humane" (1996, p. 92). In addition to the creation of the Social Security Act of 1935 and other federally supported programs, activism by social workers led to the adoption of merit systems within the public social service sector.

Wolk et al. also described the period following World War II as a time when the profession of social work experienced a reduction in political activity. This reduction happened despite the call of some upon social workers to "…use their expertise and professional responsibility to raise their voices on the significant issues…" (1996, p. 92). Social work scholars then began to question the role of the profession in the political realm. The researchers clearly "…admonished the professional association to refrain from direct participation because he viewed it as anathema to its primary function…" (1996, p. 92). This trend continued through the 1970's. Social work as a profession began to change in the 1970's when Alexander served as the executive director of the NASW. Under his administration, the position of the NASW was, "…the association can

and should pursue its purposes and functions in every legitimate arena, including the political realm…" (1996, p. 93).

In 1976, the board of directors of the NASW established a political action committee (PACE), which endorsed Jimmy Carter as a U.S. presidential candidate. As most of the NASW chapters nationwide now have their own PACs, Wolk et al. (1996) explored the effect, if any, of this increased political participation of the NASW on individual practitioners. Past findings of studies conducted on the political activity of social workers found that social workers are likely to vote and they are not as likely to participate in other forms of political activities. In the authors' opinions, the most appropriate setting in which to initiate attitudes, knowledge, and skills about political behavior is the social work educational program (Wolk et al., 1996).

Wolk et al.'s research sought to discover the "…scope of political training at the undergraduate and graduate training levels…" (1996, p. 94). The research discovered that Master of Social Work (MSW) (n=30) programs were more likely than Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) was (n=131) programs to have political practica as a part of their curriculum. However, political practica were typically limited to the second (concentration) year of graduate study. In addition, of the programs surveyed (n=161) only one BSW program had a student placed in political placements, and MSW programs rarely reported having more than two students in political placements. The one exception was an MSW program that 9 out of 250 students placed in a political placement (1996).

Wolk et al. speculated that a lack of student interest in political practica disappointed many of the respondents to their study. They also stated that if the lack of political practica violates the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) standards for

generalist education, then many of the programs surveyed were out of compliance with these standards.

Abramovitz (1993) discussed the importance of educating social work students for not only individual change, but also for institutional and structural change. She stated, "If for no other reason, social work schools must teach about the relationship between individual distress and the oppressive social forces and then train students to intervene at all levels" (1993, p.7). Students, in Abramovitz's opinion, must be instructed from the premise that "…effective social work practice requires enlightened social policy and that individual growth is impeded by inadequate living and working conditions" (1993, p. 7). She continued to express her concerns regarding social work education that unless a student is specializing in community organization, the practice of seeking change through practice is more of a personal choice rather than a professional mandate.

Abramovitz (1993) continued stating that because politics deal with either general consciousness or the overall allocation of resources, the profession of social work is already political. If families within society are to meet the socially assigned tasks of producing, nurturing, and socializing the current and future labor force, then they must meet an adequate standard of living (Abramovitz, 1993). Yet, "…the market often fails to produce the wages and employment needed by families…" (Abramovitz, 1993, p. 6). The drive by industry to establish low wages and high profits "…often creates substandard levels of health, education, and economic security" (Abramovitz, 1993, p. 7). Rather than prove correct the accusation that the profession of social work is the "…handmaiden of the status quo…" (Abramovitz, 1993, p. 6), the more progressive possibilities of the profession must be restored (Abramovitz, 1993).

Figueira-McDonough (1993) stated that social workers "…by virtue of their roles and commitments, are particularly well placed to act as the social conscience of liberal democracies…" (1993, p. 180). She expressed concerns that the typical roles of social workers fall short of the goal to ensure access to basic social goods. Specifically she stated, "…social work has been more devoted to the implementation of the goal of self-determination than to social justice…" (1993, p. 180). Figueira-McDonough speculated that the lack of emphasis on policy practice in social work education is in response to the long time exclusion of social workers from policymaking and management. This was of importance to Figueira-McDonough because "…decisions that are likely to have enormous impact on the lives of the recipients are made by people who have little or no direct knowledge of that constituency or contact with their circumstances" (1993, p. 180). She offered as methods of possible policy practice: legislative advocacy, litigation reform, social action, and social policy analysis (1993).

Reisch (2000) discussed the reciprocal importance of social workers and politics. He stated that while objections to political participation, specifically that policy practice is unprofessional and electoral politics, corrupt, are understandable because, "…they obscure the wider context of policy and practice and overlook the history of our profession" (2000, p. 293). Social workers, in his opinion, will be most effective politically when "…they focus on what we know best and do best…" (2000, p. 296).

Aviram and Katan (1991) conducted a study regarding the trend of the social work profession to focus on individual, not structural change. This study supported the assumption that the trend toward lack of interest in working with the neediest and more traditional social work clients actually begins at the student level. The study, conducted

with BSW students approaching graduation in Israel (n=238) found the majority of students desired to work with families, children, and young couples, instead of the aged, the mentally ill, or the poor. The BSW in Israel is comparable to the MSW degree in the United States. The results of this study "…show that either we have not been trying to educate and prepare students for some of the most important tasks in social work, or that we tried but failed in our efforts" (1991, p. 53). The study illustrates both the trend of social workers to gravitate toward a more clinical approach, and the importance in the education of social workers to emphasize the responsibilities of practitioners. To this point, the authors state, "The preferences of new entrants into the profession may indicate that something is lacking or, perhaps, something should be changed in the process of social work education and the socialization into the profession" (1991, p. 53).

Wolk (1981) conducted a study that asked "Are social workers politically active?" Through a survey of members of the Michigan NASW chapter (n=289), he collected demographic data and responses to Woodward and Roper's Political Activity Index. While he made slight adjustments to the scale, (i.e., omitted the voting question as he thought it carried too high a value on the point scale, and other slight changes to help refine questions), the main integrity of the scale held true. Findings indicated that a majority of social workers are politically active (43 percent active, 23 percent very active). The level of political activism, which Wolk described as high as any profession has the right to expect, "…seems to occur in the same degree as for other professional groups and business executives" (1981, p. 287). Wolk also discovered that social workers in macro level positions are more active politically than those in micro practice. He suggests that the level of political activity is related to the particular job of the social

worker. In opposition to other scholars, Wolk believes that micro level practitioners "…do not have the same political pressures linked to the immediate responsibilities of their jobs" (1981, p. 288).

Parker and Sherraden (1992) conducted a study to determine the electoral participation of social workers. Electoral participation included voting as well as other campaign activities, such as, contributing money to a campaign, or working for a candidate. Their study found that the most common activities performed by social workers were "…telephoning for a candidate or an issue, canvassing for a candidate or an issue, or helping to raise money for a candidate or an issue" (1992, p. 26). In fact, 92 percent of their sample (n=222) voted in the 1988 presidential election. However, the only questions asked were regarding voting behaviors in presidential and congressional elections. This study did not survey social workers about voting behaviors in local or state elections. The sample consisted of students and professional social workers. The researchers expressed concerns that "…despite this high level of electoral participation, legislators rate social workers as having little political influence compared with other groups and professional organizations" (1992, p. 27). However, the researchers considered the overall results encouraging. The researcher specifically defined the implications of their study:

> If NASW, with a membership of 130,000, can demonstrate a more than 90 percent participation rate in elections, as well as high rates of involvement in other electoral activities, the influence of NASW on candidate's positions

> on issues, as well as the legislative process, is potentially much stronger (1992, p. 27).

Salcido and Tramel-Seck (1992) conducted a study to determine the level of political participation among NASW chapters. They desired to "…explore the extent to which political activities implemented by the chapters had an influence on the political arena" (1992, p. 564). The majority of the NASW chapters (n=52) found lobbying, (i.e. writing letters) to be the most effective method within the legislative arena (56 percent = 29). However, these chapters also stated that their predominant reason for organizing a lobbying effort was for licensure issues. The researchers speculated that, "…the low level of participation in campaign work suggests that few chapters understand the long term importance of this mechanism in building political power and providing access to elected officials and party leaders" (1992, p. 564). The researchers expressed concerns that very few chapters reported being involved with protest rallies or organizing interest groups, both of which the researchers viewed as being an area of influential impact. In addition, the researchers were concerned that the apparent primary reason for political action on the part of NASW chapters was the promotion of the profession and not the betterment of its clients.

In sum, the literature supporting the political activity of social workers with respect to history, the role of education trends in the profession and implications suggests that the development of the social work profession experienced various phases of public service and political activism, to periods of reduced activity, to eventually defining political activity as an ethical obligation of the profession. While some research has been conducted in the last few decades relating social work to the likelihood of political

activity, there has been no specific research conducted with social work students to discover any relationships between their characteristics and their level of political activity. It is a major contention that social work education is the knowledge and training base from which all professional practice forms, including political activity. As the political trends of society have taken a more conservative swing, there is no time like the present to explore the dimensions of political activity among social work students entering the profession that claims to represent the most vulnerable in society.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

1. Research Question

This research asked the question, what are the relationships between demographic and attitudinal characteristics and political activity among social work students? Specifically, is there a relationship between the level of education of the student and level of political activity?

2. Hypothesis

The primary hypothesis of this study was: "There is a statistically significant relationship between the level of education and the level of political activity of social work students."

The secondary hypotheses of this study was: "There are statistically significant relationships between the demographic characteristics age, gender, race, religious preference, hometown, campus of program, years in social work field, status of voter registration, family history of political interest, political identification of self, and predominant source of information for current events and basis of political opinion, and the level of political activity." This hypothesis served to enhance the primary hypothesis and explored possible predictors of political activity in addition to level of education. The relationship of the demographic characteristics of the sample and the level of political activity is represented here:

$$y' = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 + b_7x_7 + b_8x_8 + b_9x_9 + b_{10}x_{10} + b_{11}x_{11} + b_{12}x_{12} + b_{13}x_{13} + e$$

Where: $\mathbf{y'}$ = level of political activity, $\mathbf{x_1}$ = age (continuous), $\mathbf{x_2}$ = gender (0,1), $\mathbf{x_3}$ = hometown (1-5), $\mathbf{x_4}$ = ethnicity (1-6), $\mathbf{x_5}$ = religion (1-5), $\mathbf{x_6}$ = level of education (1-6), $\mathbf{x_7}$ = campus of program (1-5), $\mathbf{x_8}$ = years in social work, $\mathbf{x_9}$ = status of voter registration (0,1), $\mathbf{x_{10}}$ = family history of political interest (0,1), $\mathbf{x_{11}}$ = political identification of self (1-8), $\mathbf{x_{12}}$ = source of political opinion (1-6), $\mathbf{x_{13}}$ = source of current events (1-5), $\mathbf{e}$ = error term.

3. Measures

The independent variable of the primary hypothesis was the level of education. For this study, level of education meant specifically: (1) whether the respondent was an undergraduate (UG) or graduate student (GR) and (2) in what year of study the respondent was. The level of education did not refer to the number of years the respondent had been in school but at what stage of education he/she was participating. The survey (Appendix I) asked the student to respond as a first year BSW, second year BSW, first year MSW, second year MSW with a clinical concentration, or a second year MSW with a Management and Community Practice (MCP) concentration, or "other" student. The category "other" was intended to capture those students who might have been working on their doctorates or those students who might have received the survey who are not enrolled in a social work program.

For the secondary hypothesis the demographic variables were the age (x_1), gender (x_2), ethinicity (x_3), religious preference (x_4), hometown (x_5), campus of program (x_6), years in social work field (x_7), status of voter registration (x_8), family history of political interest (x_9), political information of self (x_{10}), predominant source of current event

information of the respondent (x_{11}), and source from which respondents derived their political opinion (x_{12}). All variables with the exception of age, years in program, political self-identification, were nominal and measured categorically. The variables gender, status of voter registration, and family history of political interest were dichotomous categorical variables. Age and years in field were measured continuously. The political self-identification variable was measured continuously on a Likert Scale ranging from "Very Conservative" to "Very Liberal."

In addition to the level of education, the variables religion, race and predominant source of current events information provided for other responses with appropriate space give for the respondent to state specifically what "other" meant. Justification for the independent variables of concern to this study derived form the literature previously discussed.

The dependent variable for both hypotheses was the level of political activity of the social work student. Political activity, as discussed in the literature review section, was defined as having components including, voting, direct contact with legislators, and discussing issues of politics with other people (Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Putnam, 2000; Salcido & Tramel-Seck, 1992; Wolk, 1981).

The survey operationalized political activity by asking respondents to identify types of political behavior including: correspondence with legislators, attendance at peace vigils or protest rallies, working on a campaign, following legislation of importance to the respondent, voting in local, state, national and presidential elections, and finally, discussing politics with family and/or friends.

The dependent variable was continuously operationalized as an interval level variable based on a Likert scale (1-5) using the total (composite) score for each subject's answers to the political activity scale, providing for a range of 9 - 45. The political activity scale was constructed specifically for this study by the researcher.

4. Sample

The population for this study was the students of the University of Tennessee College of Social Work (UTCSW). The sample of this study was generated with cooperation of the different campuses of the UTCSW, including Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville and the BSW program of the UTCSW in Knoxville. The program directors of the BSW program and the associate deans of each of the campuses of the UTCSW were contacted by mail, email, or phone and were asked for their assistance with this project. It was the intention that the directors and the associate deans were asked to select appropriate instructors and classes for distribution of the surveys. Appropriate instructors and classes were those that were required by the curriculum of the program. Choosing required classes over electives allowed for a distribution to more potential respondents. The surveys were returned at a rate of 92 percent with 302 of the 330 surveys returned.

5. Instrumentation

Surveys were mailed to a campus when the director or the associate dean of the program agreed to assist with the project as explained above. The schools received a pre-addressed and stamped envelope for return delivery of the surveys to the researcher in

care of the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, Memphis campus. The surveys were mailed directly to each of the agreed instructors on the Knoxville campus and were hand delivered to the agreed instructors on the Memphis campus. In two instances on the Memphis campus, upon request from an instructor, a student other than the researcher distributed the surveys. The administrative assistant on the Nashville campus distributed the surveys to the instructors of that campus. Upon their completion, the surveys from the Nashville campus were returned to the administrative assistant who delivered them, by courier, to the researcher. Full time and Extended Study students were captured on the Nashville campus. At the Knoxville and Memphis campuses the instructors of the pre-selected classes distributed the surveys to the students. The instructor also collected the surveys upon completion. This method, while not random, enhanced the likelihood of a high return rate of the survey, thereby securing a large sample size.

Each survey was given an Individual Document Number (IDN) upon its return to the researcher to prevent duplication of data entry. The surveys were anonymous as no space was provided for respondent's name. The surveys were stored in a locked file in the possession of the researcher at the Memphis campus of UTCSW.

6. Analysis

All data were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 13.0. Univariate analyses provided descriptive statistics and graphic representations of all independent and dependent variables. Bivariate analyses were conducted to test the primary hypothesis and examine the relationships among all

independent variables and the dependent variable, and as a preliminary aid to the regression analysis. Bivariate analyses included correlations, cross tabs, and chi-square tests. Multivariate analysis, specifically regression analysis, was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable and to ultimately develop a regression analytic model to predict political activity. The level of significance was set at .05. Various models of the multiple regression analysis were employed. Inclusion of categorical variables in the regression analysis was accomplished by dummy variable coding.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

1. Univariate

This study was conducted with 302 students in the UTCSW BSW program in Knoxville, TN, and the MSW programs in Knoxville, Nashville and Memphis, TN. The students were predominantly female (89.1 percent), white (72.1 percent) and protestant (71.6 percent). The majority of the students were enrolled in MSW programs (85.9 percent). Other demographic findings are reported in Table 1, Appendix II. All tables and figures are located in the appendix.

The students were an average age of 29 with an average of 4 years in social work field either as a student, a volunteer or a professional. The ages of the students ranged from 20-64, with most of the students between 20 and 35. Years in the field of social work ranged from 0 to 30. Findings are further detailed in Table 2.

Students reported TV as the most often reported source of current events (50.2 percent) followed by the Internet (23.6 percent), newspapers (13.0 percent), and other (10.0 percent). Other was most often specified as radio, specifically National Public Radio (NPR). Only one percent of students relied on magazines for current events. Mass Media (TV, Internet, Radio) was reported as the most common source of information for political opinion (51.6 percent). Personal experience made up 25.6 percent of political opinion source. Those reporting no political opinion were in the minority (1.4 percent) (Table 3).

More than half of the responses (69.3 percent) to the political self-description scale fell in the middle of the political spectrum; (13 percent somewhat conservative, 25.2 percent neutral, and 24.1 percent somewhat liberal). A complete description of this variable is described in Table 4. A graphic representation of this variable is provided in Figure 1 in Appendix III.

The vast majority of students surveyed report that they always vote in presidential elections (79.7 percent). Fewer reported that they always voted in national, state and local elections respectively (44.9 percent, 27.2 percent, 21.9 percent respectively) (Table 5, Figures 2-5). The students' responses to the remaining political activity determining variables showed that the majority of students did not perform any of the other activities with frequency. These responses are outlined in Table 6 and Figures 6-10.

The mean score (M = 26.31, SD = 7.16) of the responses to the political activity scale score showed that the students, are neither very active nor very inactive). The scores ranged from 8 to 43 (Figure 11).

2. Bivariate

The chi-square test of association was run to examine the association between the categorical independent variables, gender, description of hometown, race, religious preference, level of social work program, source of political opinion, and source of current events and the dependent variable. The results showed a significant association only between source of current events and level of political activity ($\chi^2_{(df=198)} = 396.418$; $p<.01$). This result indicates that source of current events and level of political activity are related in this population.

Pearson's correlation showed age was significantly positively correlated to level of education ($p < .01$, $r = .202$) and years in social work field ($p < .01$, $r = .470$). Years in social work field was significantly positively correlated to source of political opinion ($p < .01$, $r = .188$) (Table 7). Pearson's correlation results showed positive correlations between political activity and age of respondent ($p < .01$, $r = .268$). Other positive correlations existed between political activity and: level of social work program ($p < .02$, $r = .134$), status of voter registration ($p < .01$, $r = .404$), family interest in politics ($p < .01$, $r = .149$), political self description ($p < .01$, $r = .199$), and years in social work ($p < .05$, $r = .132$) (Table 8).

3. Multivariate

A multiple regression was performed between the dependent variable, level of political activity and the independent variables that held significant correlations as well as the independent variables established by the literature to assess the predictors of level of political activity. Neither level of education nor years in social work practice contributed significantly as a predictor of political activity. Age, status of voter registration, family history of interest, and political self-description were found to be predictors of political activity among this sample (Table 9).

Independent variables entered into the first model included dummy variables for age, race, gender, and religious preference. These variables generated an R^2 value of .075. Variables in the second model included dummy variables for source of political information, family interest in politics, source of current events, political opinion, status of voter registration, political self-description, and campus of program. This model

generated an R^2 value of .331. Entered into the third model were years in social work field, and level of social work program generating an R^2 value of .333. The F value for the overall regression analysis was 5.802, significant at .001 (df = 21).

4. Test of Hypotheses

The primary hypothesis was tested utilizing the bivariate results from the Pearson's correlation analysis. The hypothesis was not supported as the level of education and the level of political activity did not have a statistically significant relationship.

The secondary hypothesis was supported in part by the results of the various bivariate and the multivariate analyses. Certain demographic characteristics, specifically, age, status of voter registration, family history of politics, and political self description had a significant relationship with level of political activity.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

1. Discussion of Findings

The average respondent in this study was a white, protestant, 29 year-old female student enrolled in a clinical concentration MSW program at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work. She had a few years of experience in the social work field and was registered to vote.

The student's race, gender or religious preference (Lenkowsky, 2004; Roker et al., 1999; Wilkinson, 1996) had no impact on her level of political activity. Although Skaggs and Anthony (2002) would suggest that a student with any religious identity would be more inclined to be politically active, the students that described themselves as protestant had a lower score on the political activity scale.

The average student was registered to vote and she was very likely to vote in presidential elections and likely to vote in other elections in agreement with the literature (Congressional Digest, 2004). She was also quite likely to talk about politics with family and friends, which the literature suggests has an impact on the likelihood of political activity (Feldman, 2000; Roker et al., 1999; Skaggs & Anthony, 2002). She was not however very likely to perform other types of political activity such as to attend rallies/vigils, perform campaign work, or correspond with their legislator (Putnam, 2000; Roker et al., 1999). These findings would support the concerns of Haynes and Mickelson (2003), Jansson (2003), and Mahaffey and Hanks (1982). Considering the realistic political impact of voting in presidential elections, it is doubtful that much could

be accomplished for our clients or our profession. The values of social work would be much better represented by a social work student who regularly corresponded with her legislator or volunteered with the campaign of a candidate that represented these same values (Wolk et al., 1996).

Also consistent with the literature, the older the student, the more likely she was to be politically active (Lenkowsky, 2004; Roker et al. 1999; Wilkinson, 1996). The student's age was also, not surprisingly, related to level of education and years in social work practice. Considering these strong relationships, it could be argued that while the statisitics did not show a significant positive relationship between level of education and level of political activity, they were in fact, related. The older the student is the more likely she is to have more education. The older she is the more likely she is to be politically active. This could also mean that education is not as relevant to political activity as much as the normal maturation process of the person; or the student is more likely to be politically active as the student ages.

Also of note, the more liberal the student was, the older she was likely to be. Additionally because political self-description had a positive relationship with political activity, the more liberal the student was, the more likely she was to be politically active. Overall, the students were more liberal than conservative, but were most likely to describe themselves as politically neutral or somewhat liberal.

Reflecting on the literature that discusses the decline in civics education(Feldman, 2000; Lenkowsky, 2004; Putnam, 2000), it might be concluded that the students in this sample were inclined to define themselves as politically neutral secondary to a lack of knowledge of the dichotomous political philosophies represented in American politics.

Another explanation for the neutral or somewhat liberal political description could be the issue gap referred to by Feldman (2000). This student might not feel it is important to understand the tenets of the conservative and liberal political philosophies because those politicians that represent said ideas do not agree with the student about what is really important.

Despite age as a predictor of political activity, the strongest combination of variables did not explain more than 33 percent of the likelihood of political activity. It could be interpreted from this result that despite the age of the social work student, the social work student is not very politically active. Considering that the scores fell predominantly in the middle of the political activity scale, it is clear that this group of social work students is not prepared to promote the policies described by Haynes and Mickelson (2003) or to perform the functions required by the NASW to fight for social justice.

2. Limitations of Study

This study possesses several limitations. First, the findings are limited because the sample is not random. Secondly, there was a degree of inconsistency with distribution as each campus followed a different method. The faculty on the Knoxville campus received and returned the surveys individually. The Nashville faculty received the surveys via the administrative assistant who returned them to the survey in bulk. One member of the Memphis faculty distributed the survey to first year students, while another requested that a student distribute the surveys. This inconsistency led to a higher return rate from the Nashville campus. This higher return rate barred any inquiry into

differences based on campus, thereby making any interpretations difficult based on region or specific campus of program.

In addition, the interpretation of the results must be restricted only to UTCSW students. The study itself is limited by its geography. A broader study involving students from other social work schools would be appropriate to determine implications for the profession as a whole.

Questions were not asked regarding students' reasons for entering the field of social work, which could have led to greater understanding of students' likelihood to be politically active. The question pertaining to religion only asked students to identify their religious preference. No inferences were made regarding the level of religious commitment of the students, which literature supports as a predictor of politically activity.

While the research suggested lack of civic knowledge is a culprit in the decreasing levels of political activity, the survey made no inference to the level of actual civic knowledge of the student. Knowledge of the percentage of students able to identify national, state, and local officials would allow for more focused implications.

The survey was pilot tested on a small group. More extensive pilot testing could have allowed for the avoidance of certain discrepancies in responses. For example, many respondents stated other in the religion category and described other as Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc. Also, some responses were unusable as respondents answered more than one response.

3. Implications for Social Work Education

The findings have implications for social work educators, administrators, professional, and professional organizations. The findings also may have implications the for CSWE educational policies. The data implied that older liberal students with a family history of interest in politics are most likely to be politically active, therefore considering these findings allows us to narrow the scope of implications to be considered.

Social work educators should be encouraged to work more political topics, including advocacy, into their courses. Educators are in a prime position to stimulate and encourage conversations and discussions regarding the importance of political activity to the profession and the clients social workers serve. Additionally, educators should encourage students to consider policy implications of social welfare issues as a component of critical thinking. More assignments should be focused on political action, (i.e. writing letters to legislators, or attending local or state level government meetings). Field coordinators might encourage more politically relevant field placements at the local, state, and national levels. Social work students could perform many professionally relevant tasks in the offices of state and the U.S Senators and Congress staff. Field coordinators could also encourage students to participate in local and state level political events in exchange of field hours.

Faculty should consider requiring more political and civic training across the curriculum of required classes in the various programs and concentrations. This could be done by adding discussions of political activity relevant to various life stages in the required Human Behavior and the Social Environment content. Or, by including family political interest history in the family of origin assignment and discussion relevant to the

required foundation level Practice courses. The foundation practice course content relevant to community organization could very easily include assignments relevant to civic knowledge and political activity. This course would also be an appropriate place in which to encourage students to actually participate in the process relevant to the current environment. Relevant activities, might include volunteering for a petition drive, starting a letter writing campaign to a local, state, or national official, attending a rally or vigil, or volunteering for a campaign or candidate.

Social work professionals in the communities surrounding UTCSW campuses should participate as mentors to students enrolled in the program. These professionals could participate in the education of future social work professionals by generating extracurricular activities, making presentations, and encouraging volunteerism and involvement.

Local and state level NASW chapters should provide for more opportunities for political activity and discussion. These NASW chapters could provide contact hours for political education. Additionally NASW should create more localized events similar to Social Work Day on the Hill to continually guide, instruct, and encourage students of social work toward more political practice.

Finally, CSWE should consider adopting more stringent policies regarding accreditation standards with the intention of increasing the focus of political activity and advocacy for students. CSWE should consider a more thorough review of educational standards regarding educating students for political practice. By creating the standard that more required courses in the social work curriculum include political and civic

education, and conducting more research on the effectiveness of these curricula the level of political activity of social work students could improve.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Demographic Survey

1.How old are you?_____

2. What is your gender? ***Circle one***

male **female**

3. How would you best describe your hometown? ***Circle one***

Large City Small City Suburb Small Town Rural Area

4. With which of the following do you identify? *Circle one*

Asian **Black** **Latino** **Native American** **White** **Other _____**

5. How would you describe your religious preference? *Circle one*

Catholic **Jewish** **Muslim** **Protestant** **Other_____** **No preference**

6. In what program are you currently enrolled? *Circle one*

BSW 1st year **BSW 2nd year**

MSW 1st year **MSW – MCP** **MSW – Clinical** **Other_____**

7. In what UT System campus are you a student? *Circle one*

Chattanooga **Knoxville** **Martin** **Memphis** **Nashville**

8. For how long (in years) have you been working in the field of Social Work, either as a professional, student, intern, or a volunteer?

_____

9. Are you registered to vote? *Circle one*

Yes **No**

10. Do you agree with this statement, "My parents/family are/is interested in politics"?

Yes **No**

11. How would you describe yourself politically? *Circle the appropriate number*

Very Conservative ----------Very Liberal

1 ----------2----------3----------4----------5----------6----------7

I would not describe myself as political

12. Which one of these do you rely on most as the source of information that shapes your opinion about politics? *Circle one*

Mass Media (TV, the internet, etc.) Family

Professors/Teachers **Friends**

Personal Experiences **I have no opinion about politics**

13. Which one of these is your main source of information on current events?

TV **Newspapers** **Magazines** **Internet** **Other_____**

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE

Political Participation Survey

Please circle the appropriate response

1. How often do you write letters / emails or phone your legislators on issues important to you?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

2. How often do you attend protest rallies or vigils for peace/prayer, etc.?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

3. How often do you perform campaign work, for example, a petition drive or canvassing for a candidate or issue important to you?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

4. How often do you follow legislation on issues important to you?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

5. How often do you vote in local elections, for example for city council or referendums?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

6. How often do you vote in state elections for example, for state legislators or referendums?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

7. How often do you vote in national elections, for example for Senators or Congress persons ?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

8. How often do you vote in presidential elections?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

9. How often do you discuss politics or political issues with your family or friends?

1	2	3	4	5
never	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**always**

Appendix II

Table 1. Results of univariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N = 302), personal descriptors

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	33	10.9
Female	269	89.1
Description of Hometown		
Large City	82	27.5
Small City	80	26.8
Suburb	32	10.7
Small Town	81	27.2
Rural Area	11	3.7
Missing	12	4.0
Racial Identity		
White	217	72.1
Black	65	21.6
All other Races	19	6.3
Description of Religious Preference		
Catholic	33	11.0
Protestant	219	72.8
All other Religions	8	2.7
No Preference	41	13.6
Level of Education		
BSW 1st year	26	8.7
BSW 2nd year	14	4.7
MSW 1st year	134	44.8
MSW 2nd year	123	41.1
Other	2	.7
BSW/MSW		
BSW	40	13.3
MSW	260	86.7
MSW Concentration		
Clinical	97	76.4
MCP	30	23.6
Campus of Study		
Knoxville	97	32.2
Memphis	79	26.2
Nashville	124	41.2
Missing	1	.3
Status of Voter Registration		
No	14	4.6
Yes	288	95.4
Family Interest in Politics		
No	90	29.9
Yes	208	69.1

Table 2. Results of univariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N=302), age and years in social work

Variable	*M*	SD	Range
Age	29.36	8.54	20-64
Years in Social Work	4.41	5.07	.5-30

Table 3. Results of univariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N=302), information sources

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Current Events		
TV	152	52.1
Newspapers	38	13.0
Magazines	3	1.0
Internet	69	23.6
Other	30	10.3
Political Opinion		
Mass Media	143	51.6
Family	32	11.6
Professors/Teachers	15	5.4
Friends	11	4.0
Personal Experience	71	25.6
I have no Opinion	4	1.4
Missing	1	.4

Table 4. Results of univariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N=302), students' political self description

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Very Conservative	4	1.3
Conservative	17	5.6
Somewhat Conservative	39	13.0
Neutral	76	25.2
Somewhat Liberal	73	24.3
Liberal	50	16.6
Very Liberal	28	9.3
Not Political	14	4.7

Table 5. Results of univariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N=302), voting trends

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Vote in Local Elections		
Never	46	15.3
Rarely	59	19.6
Sometimes	63	20.9
Often	66	21.9
Always	67	21.9
Vote in State Elections		
Never	50	16.6
Rarely	39	13.0
Sometimes	61	20.3
Often	69	22.9
Always	82	27.2
Vote in National Elections		
Never	38	12.6
Rarely	21	7.0
Sometimes	51	16.9
Often	56	18.6
Always	135	44.9
Vote in Presidential Elections		
Never	16	5.3
Rarely	6	2.0
Sometimes	9	3.0
Often	30	10.0
Always	240	79.7

Table 6. Results of univariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N=302), political activities other than voting

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Correspond with Legislators		
Never	147	48.7
Rarely	94	31.1
Sometimes	47	15.6
Often	11	3.6
Always	3	1.0
Attend Rallies/Vigils		
Never	172	57.0
Rarely	88	29.1
Sometimes	33	10.9
Often	7	2.3
Always	2	.7
Perform Campaign Work		
Never	174	57.8
Rarely	78	25.9
Sometimes	40	13.3
Often	6	2.0
Always	3	1.0
Follow Legislation		
Never	34	11.3
Rarely	51	16.9
Sometimes	125	41.5
Often	76	25.2
Always	15	5.0
Discuss Politics		
Never	4	1.3
Rarely	38	12.6
Sometimes	111	36.9
Often	104	34.6
Always	44	14.6

Table 7. Results of bivariate analyses of social work students at the Univeristy of Tennessee (N=302), correlations of independent variables

Pearson's Correlation Variables	*r*	p
Age & Level of Education	.202*	.000
Age & Years in Social Work Field	.470*	.000
Age & Family as a Source of Political Opinion	-.162*	.007
Years in Social Work Field & Source of Political Opinion	.188*	.002
Family Interest in Politics & Source of Current Events	.154*	.008

* Correlation is significant

Table 8. Results of bivariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N=302), correlations of political activity scale and independent variables

Independent variable	*r*	p
Age	.268*	.000
Gender	-.007	.902
Description of Hometown	-.056	.338
Racial Identity	-.025	.660
Description of Religious Preference	-.023	.696
Level of Social Work Program	.134*	.021
Status of Voter Registration	.404*	.000
Family Interest in Politics	.149*	.009
Political Self Description	.199*	.001
Years in Social Work Field	.132*	.022

* Correlation is significant

Table 9. Results of multivariate analyses of social work students at the University of Tennessee (N = 302), predictors of political activity

Variable	β	t	R^2
Model 1			.075
Age	.248	4.093	
Black	.069	1.204	.
Male	-.081	-1.470	
Protestant	-.168	-2.900	
Model 2			.331
Professors/Teachers	-.008	-.152	
Other source of info	.059	1.030	
Family interest in politics	.178	3.263	
Friends	-.105	-1.940	
No opinion about politics	-.165	-3.027	
Magazines	-.011	-.211	
Newspapers	.073	1.271	
Personal Experiences	.052	.927	
Knoxville	-.114	-1.873	
All other races	-.012	-.336	
Status of voter registration	.379	6.766	
Family	-.005	.020	
Internet	.086	1.477	
Political Self Description	.116	2.015	
Memphis	-.114	-.971	
Model 3			.333
Years in social work field	.005	.076	
Level of social work program	.056	.894	

Appendix III

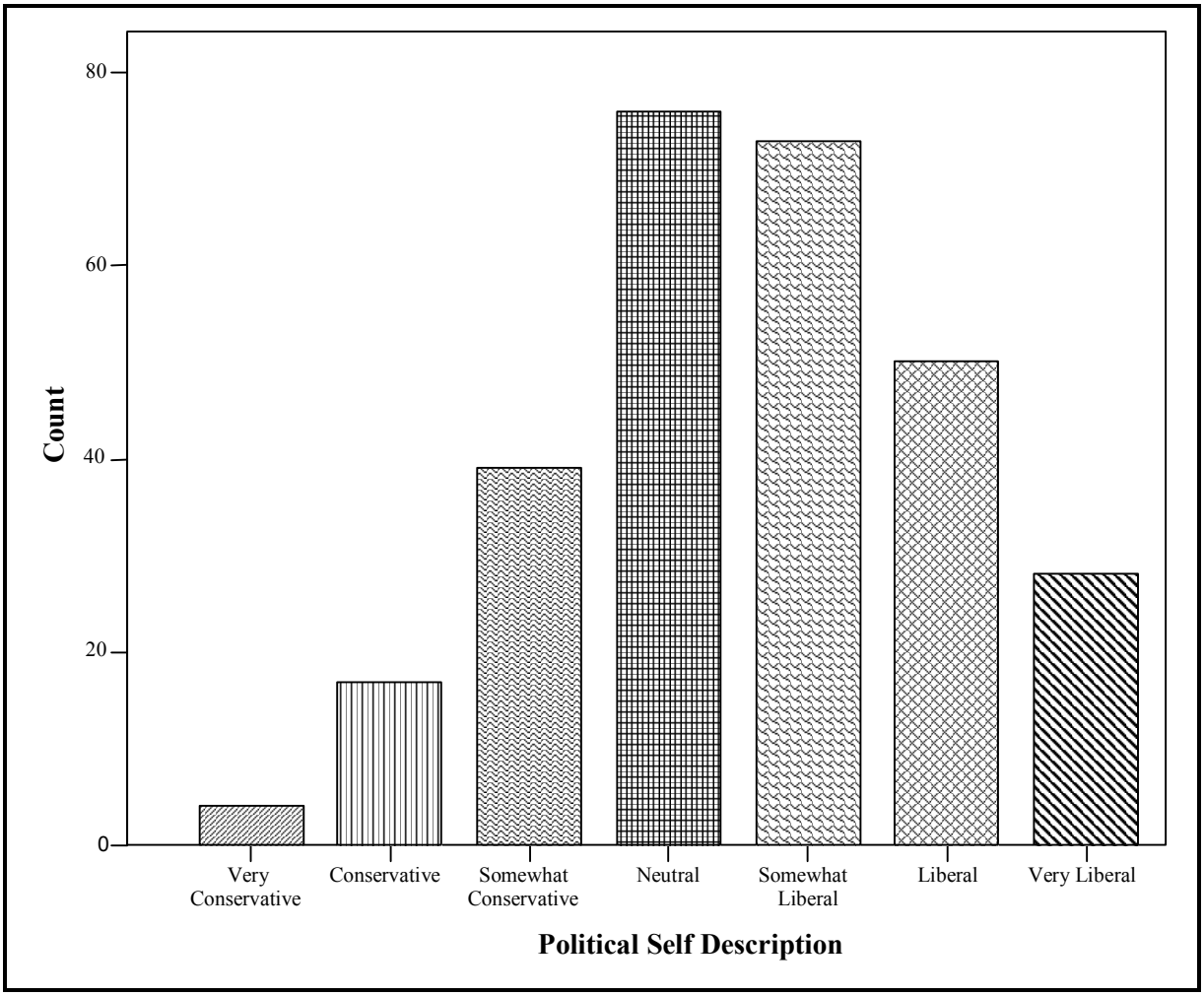


Figure 1. Students' political description of self

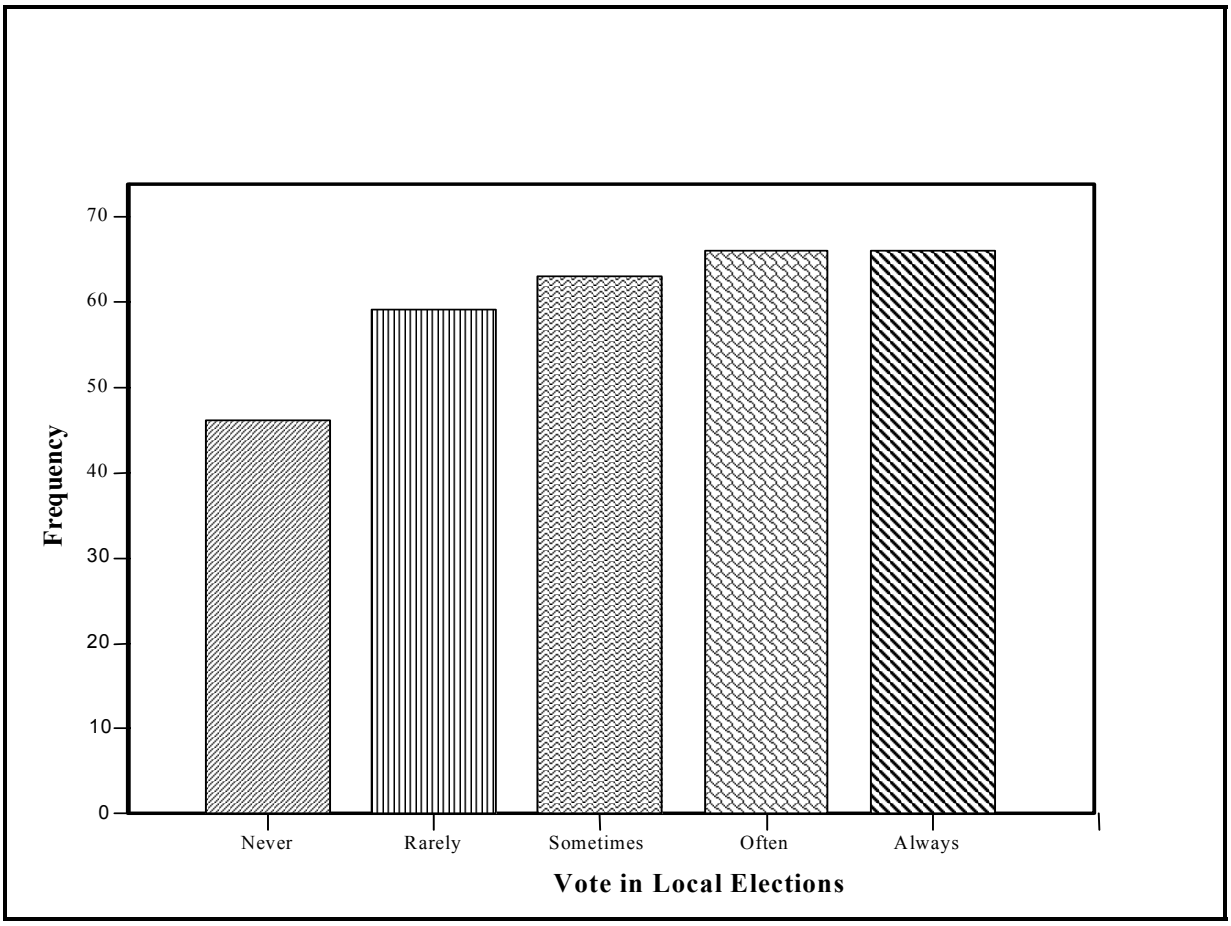


Figure 2. Frequencies of students who vote in local elections

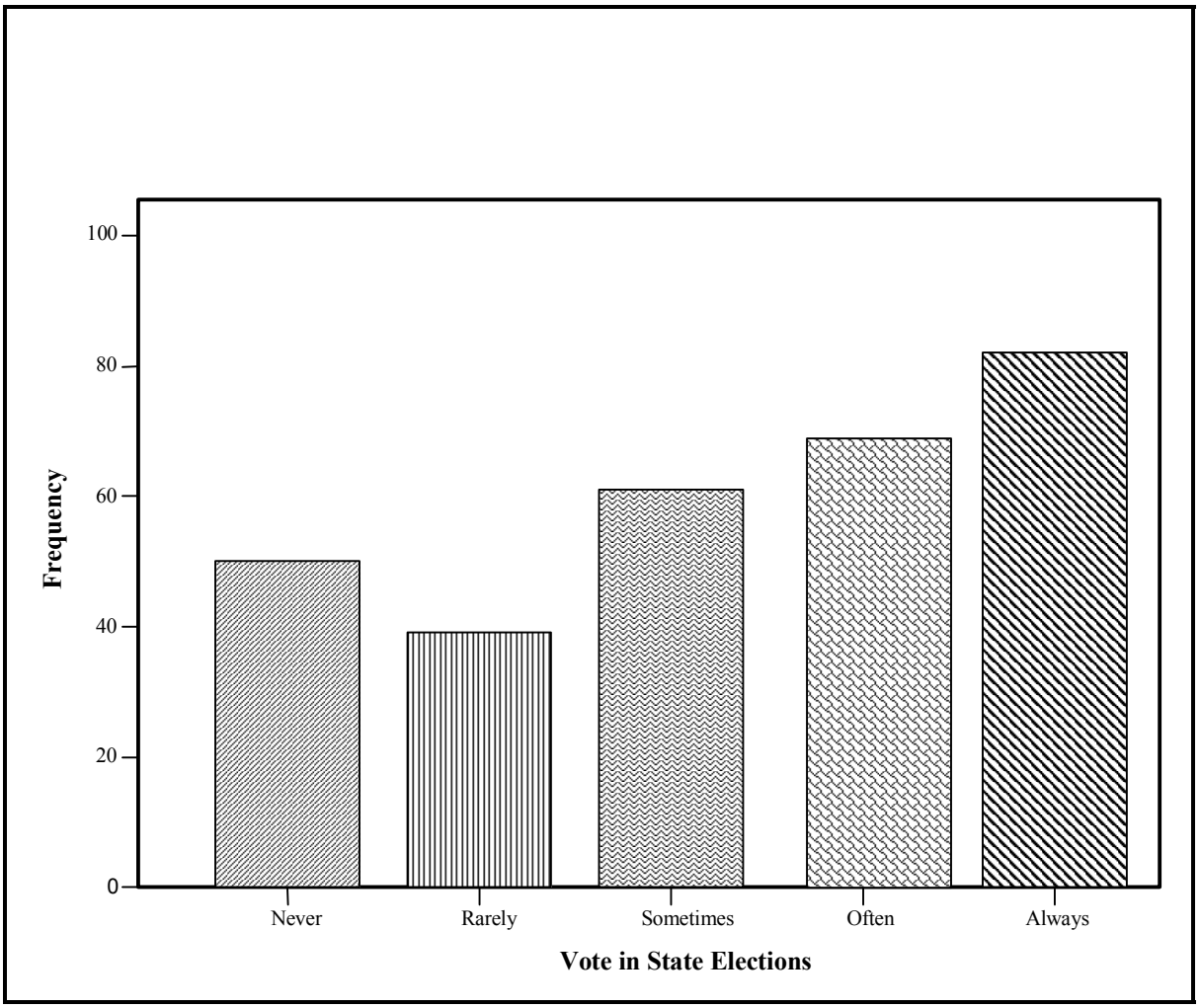


Figure 3. Frequencies of students who vote in state elections

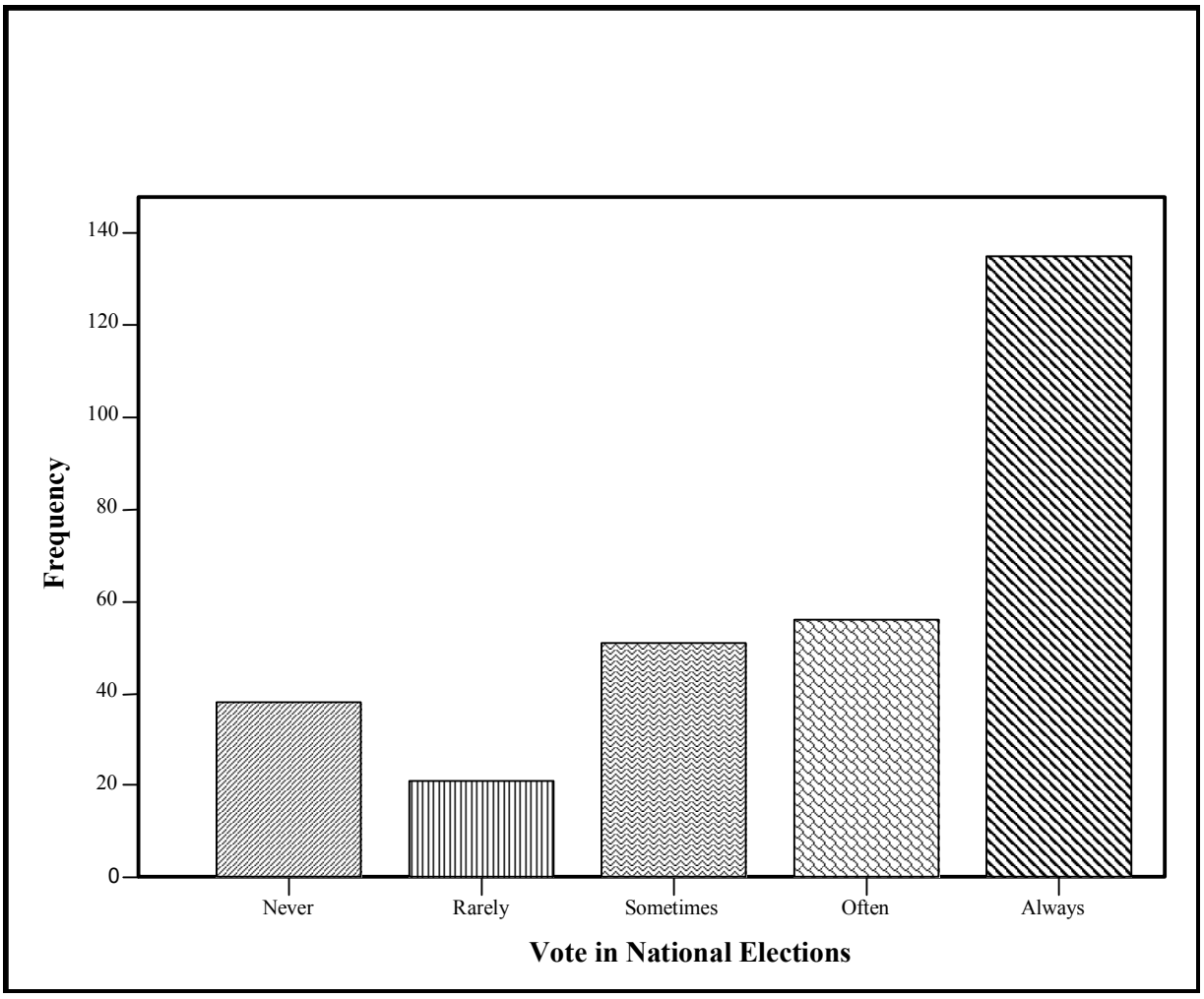


Figure 4. Frequencies of students who vote in national elections

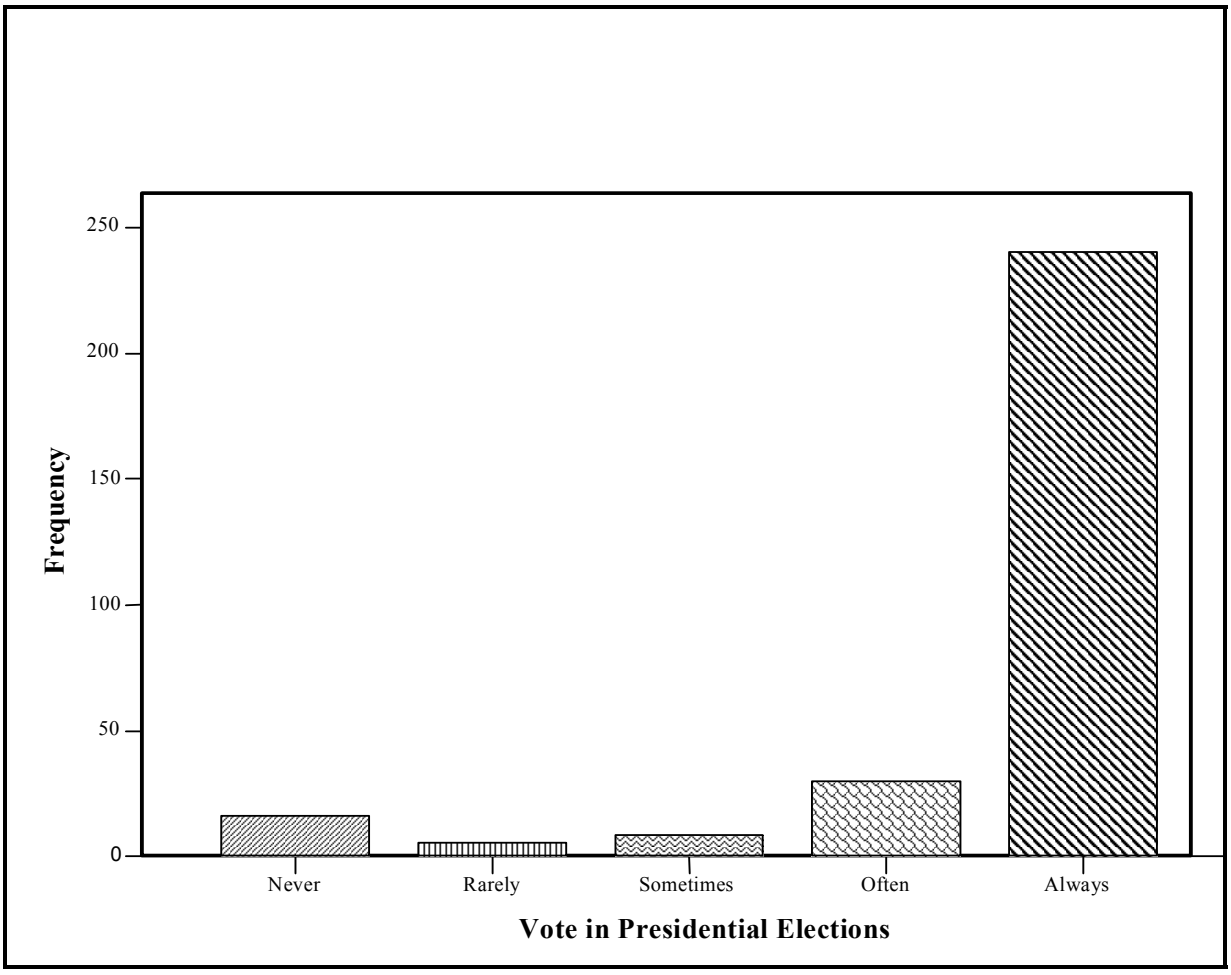


Figure 5. Frequencies of students who vote in presidential elections

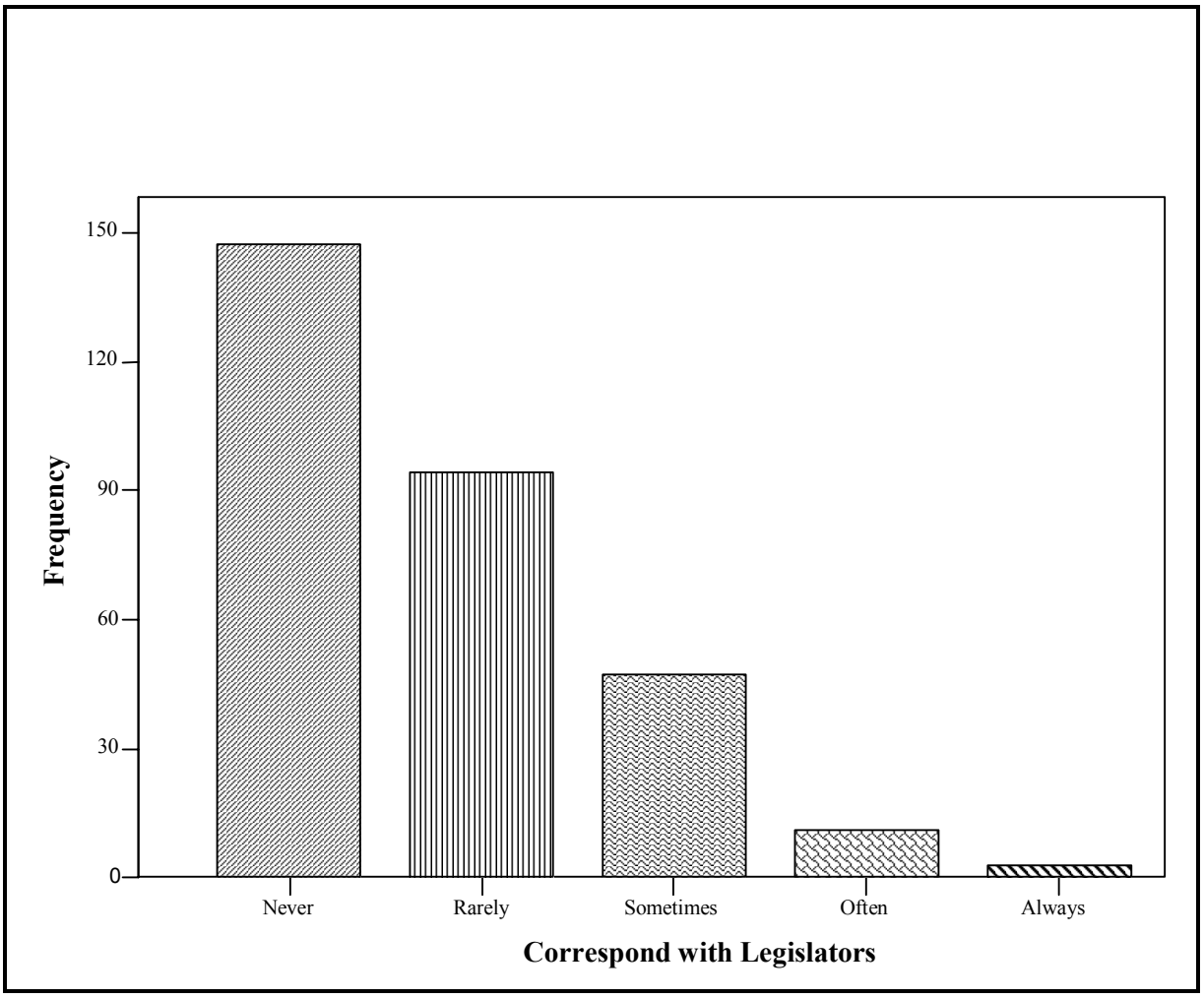


Figure 6. Frequencies of students who correspond with legislators

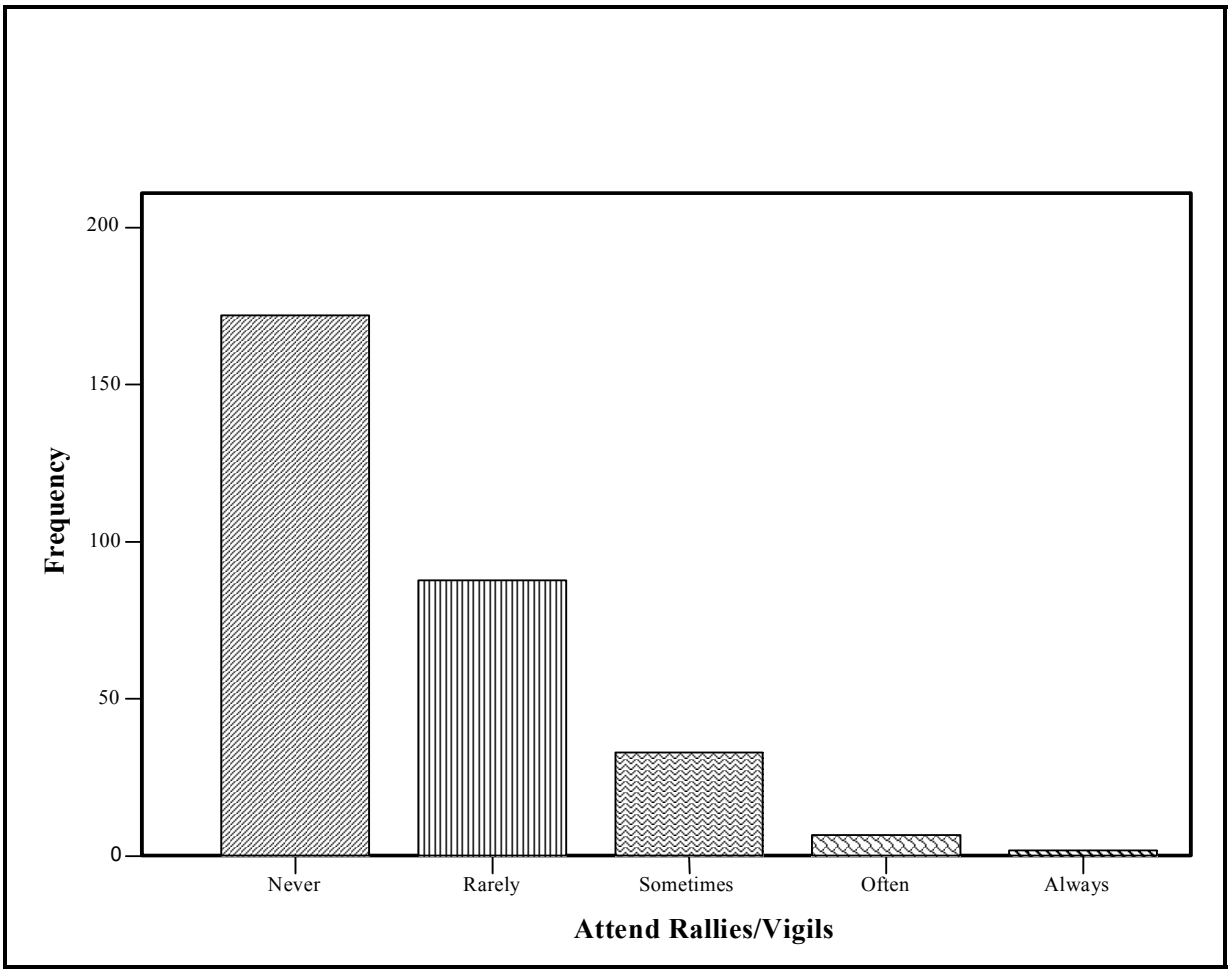


Figure 7. Frequencies of students who attend rallies/vigils

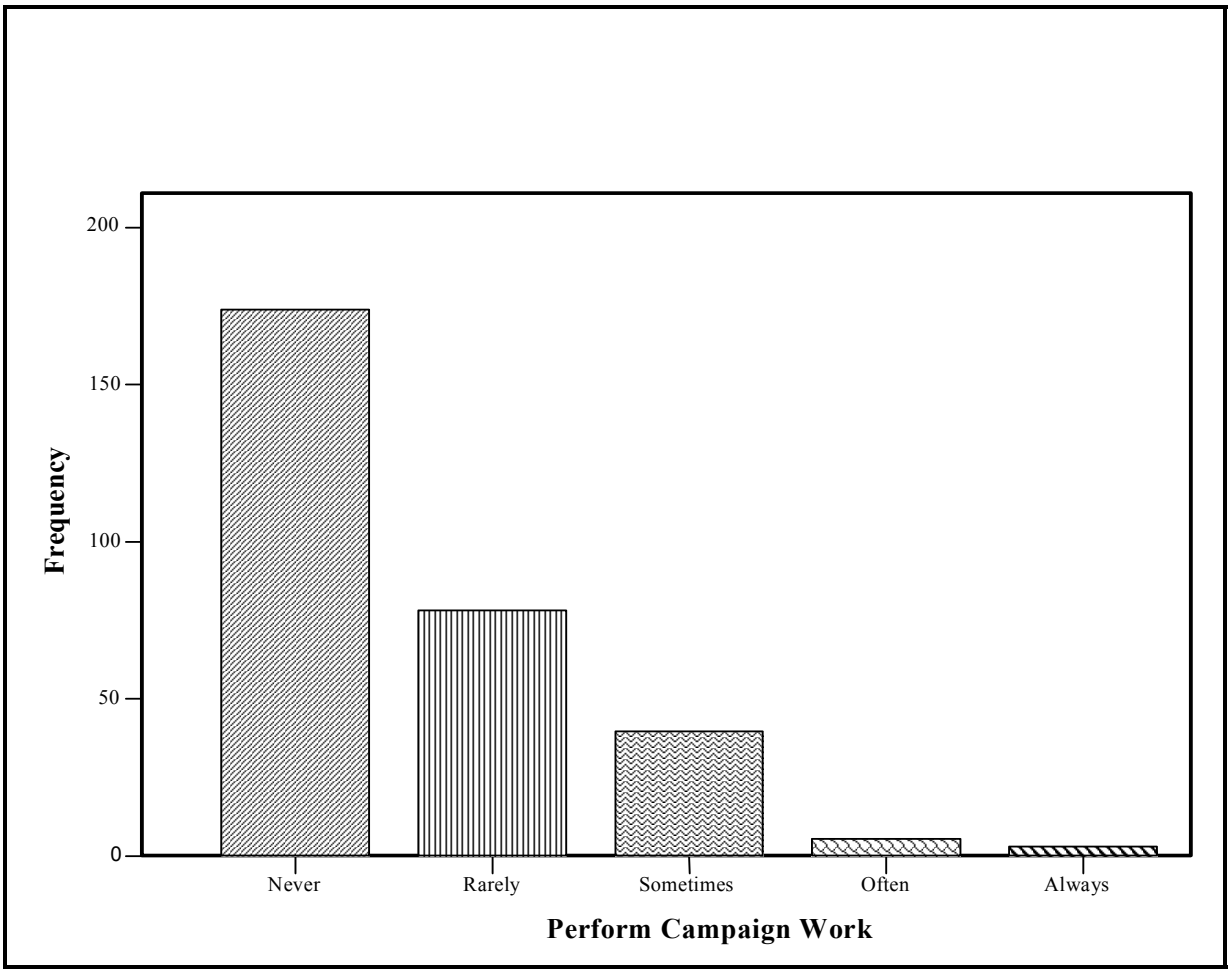


Figure 8. Frequencies of students who perform campaign work

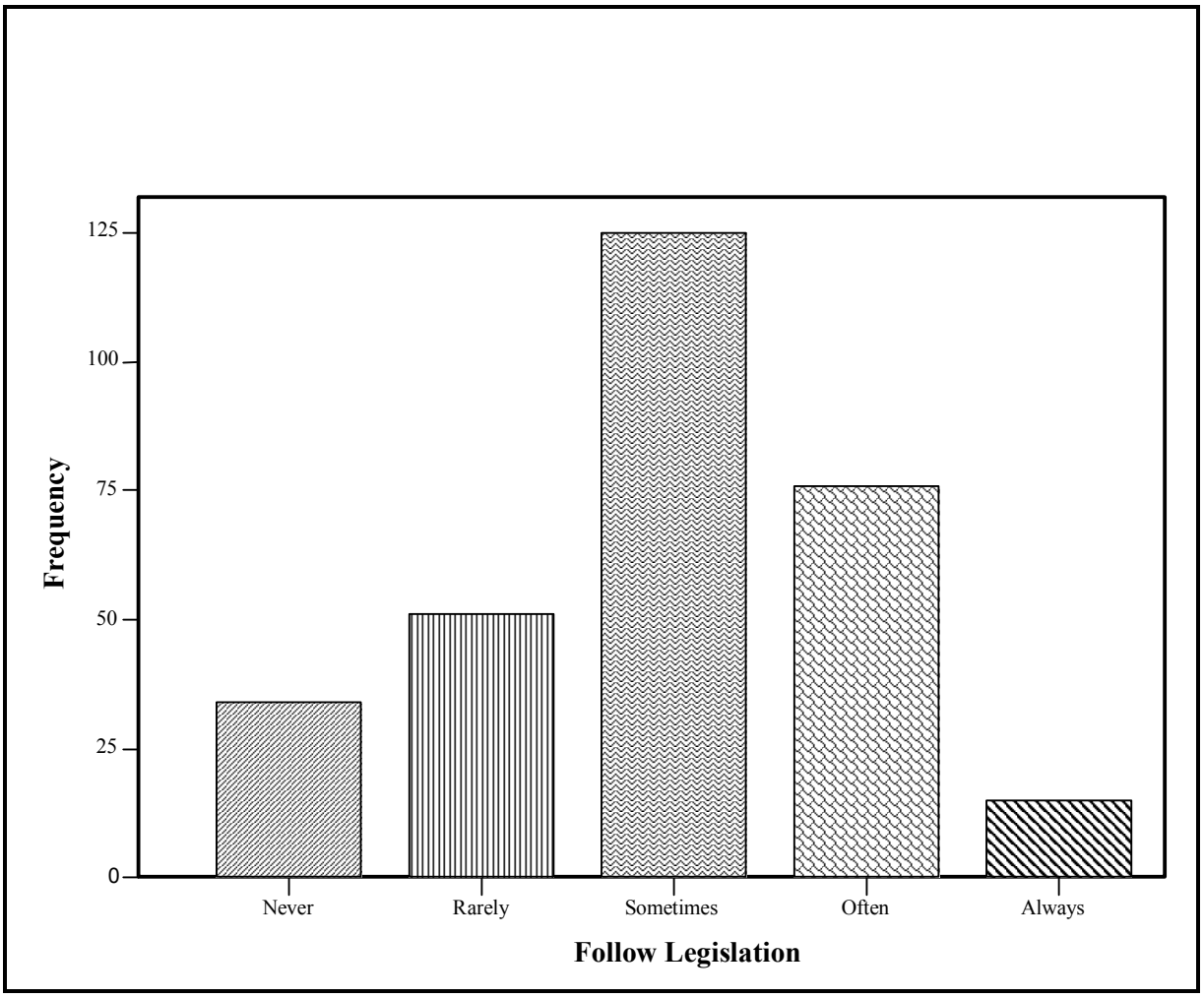


Figure 9. Frequencies of students who follow legislation

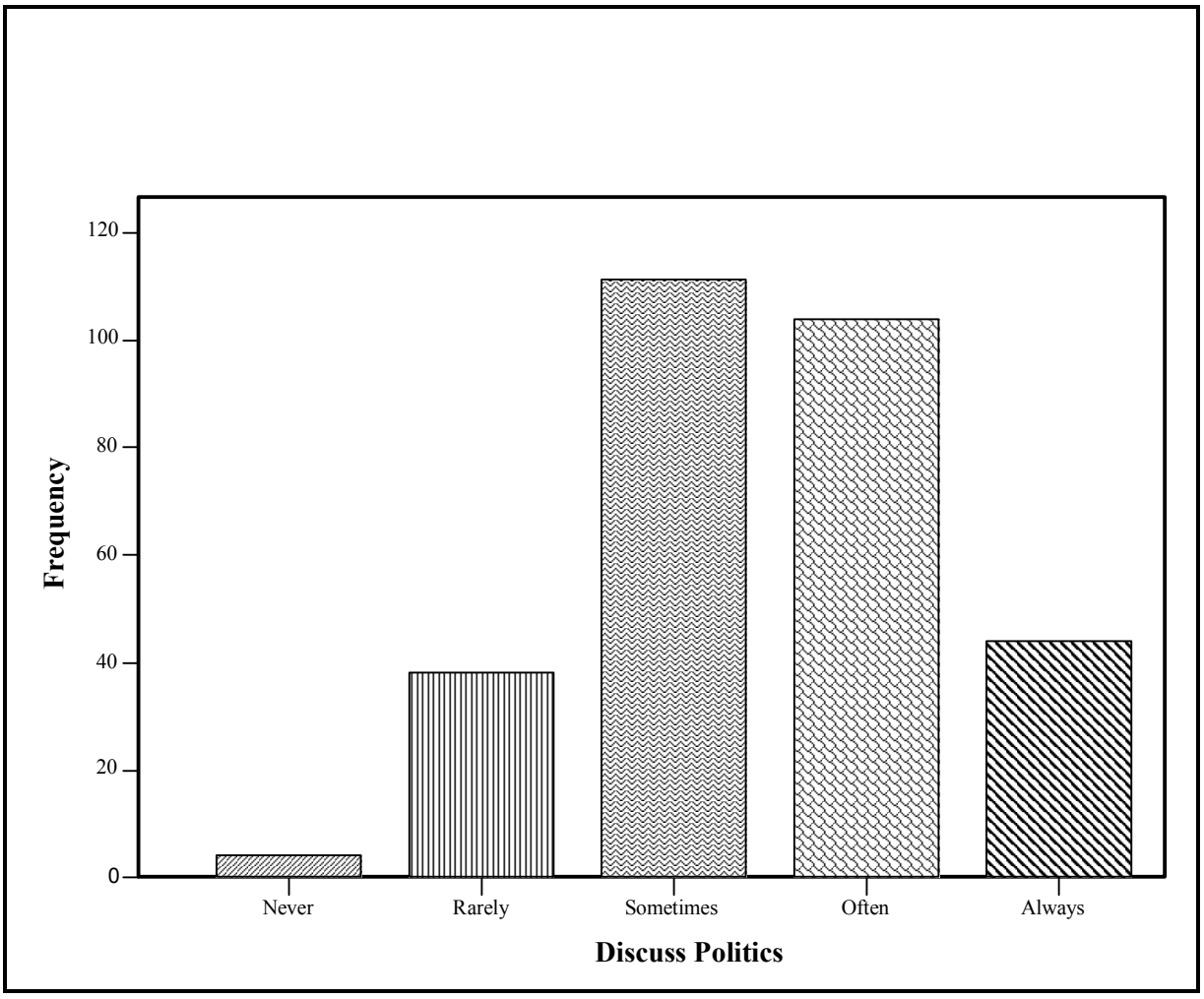


Figure 10. Frequencies of students who discuss politics with family or friends

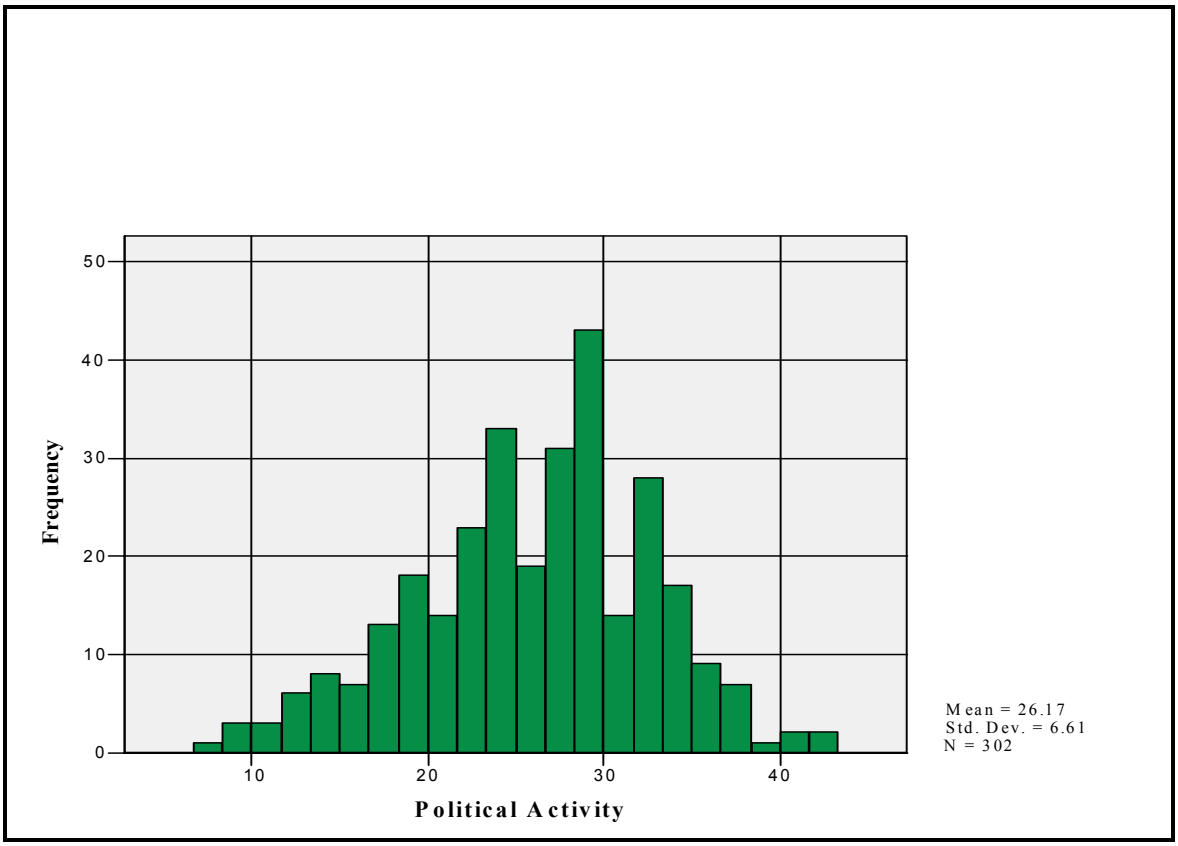


Figure 11. Students' levels of political activity

VITA

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