POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
DEAF CULTURE AND POLITICS

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Politics is the cornerstone of every developed society where citizens participate in political activities and actively seek out political information every day. The deaf community is the focus in this paper due to its unique culture, language, and needs which can make political participation and accessibility difficult at times. Topics like political participation, accessibility, communication, perception, and motivation are explored in depth in this study. This pursues a quantitative objective where questionnaires are used as the primary method to collect information through the usage of closed ended questions and Likert Scale measurements. Through the usage of descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, and simple linear regression, variables associated with political participation, accessibility, perception, and motivation are explored in depth.


Introduction

The intricacies of politics is found in all developed societies, like the United States for example, as it is a federal constitutional republic. This particular political system empowers its citizens to vote for officials and representatives to be appointed a respective government position. In the case of the United States, there are three government branches - the executive, the legislative, and the judicial, where candidates are placed into on limited terms to serve the needs of the people. Those government employees cater to their citizens through the creation and passage of laws and acts. Due to the fact that the people elected them, it is their due diligence to listen to the people and serve them to the best of their abilities in the established terms of their offices.

There are a lot of reasons why citizens of a developed society would decide to participate in politics. It has to do with a multitude of reasons such as the desire to solve a problem that takes place nationwide or at home, to protect and uphold basic rights enumerated in the written laws of their homeland, to lend his or her support for a proposed law or act, or to improve the conditions in their society so citizens can lead better lives. It proceeds as if we have agency, identity, and some desirable end toward which we devote collective effort (Chandler, 2003, p. 3). The ways one can participate in politics includes but is not limited to voting, participating in rallies, volunteering for a political campaign, and working to stay up to date on political events.

The deaf community provides an unique insight into the political process, especially when it comes to factors such as accessibility and engagement because they interact with the political system differently. It is through "effectively mediating two languages, American Sign Language
and English; and two cultures, the deaf community and mainstream American society” (Zangara, 2011, p. 5) that the deaf community is a minority group with differing political needs and outlook from the mainstream American society. Deaf leaders will experience unique linguistic and cultural challenges that sets them apart from the dominant culture again and again (Zangara, 2011, p. 5). There is, unfortunately, not a lot of literature that explores the dynamics between the deaf community and politics. I found that the number of available published research documents is extremely limited (Zangara, 2011, p. 9).

This thesis paper will show how the dynamics of access to political information and perception of oneself and one's political counterparts in the government have an influence on deaf individuals' rate of participation regarding politics. This may lead to a better understanding of the particular needs the deaf community has in order to gain equal accessibility to political information. This is important because it provides political actors the necessary knowledge to modify their political information systems and communication channels to better accommodate the deaf community which relies exclusively on visual cues and transcripts in place of audio. This results in a minority group gaining equal access to political information that should have been accessible to everybody in the first place. It may also lead to a larger pool of potential voters and supporters for a political cause.

**Literature Review**

**Deaf Community**

There is a book entitled, "Cultural and Language Diversity and the Deaf Experience" which has a chapter that focuses on the attitudes of the deaf community towards political activism. It
discusses the civic disenfranchisement that deaf people often feel. Bateman (1996) writes that deaf people "feel that they have little voice in the decision making processes that would determine their political, social, and economic futures" (p. 146). Historically, the deaf community has faced discrimination and oppression because their culture was once considered to be defective and their inability to hear as a problem that needed to be solved. Deaf people are one of the several minority groups who have experienced a sense of oppression and feeling of futility in changing their lives (Bateman, 1996, p. 146). The experience of being part of a minority group that is marginalized as much as possible in mainstream American society is quite demoralizing. As Higgins (1980) states, many deaf adults feel that they are "outsiders in the hearing world" (p. 146).

It is this way partly because of sign language, where hands and fingers are dominantly used to communicate, setting the deaf community apart from the mainstream American society where speaking with one's voice is the common form of communicating. Thus, signing does not emulate the spoken word, but stands as a distinct language on its own, with its own syntax, lexicon, and nonverbal cues (Avon, 2006, p. 187). It is also partly because the mainstream American society does not recognize the particular needs of the deaf community and neglects it instead. Fraser (2007) writes that "deaf people subsequently face institutional obstacles: job discrimination, inadequate interpreting services, restrictions on the use of sign language in the process of learning, the pervasive notion that deaf people can and should learn to speak" (p. 434).

Historically, the mainstream American society usually does not try to accommodate the needs of the deaf community unless the federal government intervenes. Good examples of intervention would be the passage of laws by Congress that directly benefits the deaf community such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, Telecommunications Act, Voting Accessibility for the Elderly
and Handicapped Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and The Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (U.S. Department of Justice, Disability Rights Section, 2009). All of those acts helped the deaf community gain equal access to information and to prevent acts of discrimination when it comes to political participation.

The lack of adequate communication channels when it comes to live political events and possible participation in those events contributes to less participation and voting turnouts by the deaf community. The issue becomes even more pertinent and pressing if certain groups such as persons with disabilities are systemically excluded from the benefits of connecting to the available range of digital media resources (Karras & Cheong, 2008, p. 4). Deaf individuals have to rely on alternate means of gathering information, usually unofficial sources that aren’t instant news. The primary reason cited for relying on alternate means was that Deaf people lacked access to information on political issues: Many Deaf people perceived that limited technology, especially captioning, made it difficult for them to inform themselves (Bateman, 1996, p. 149).

The lack of accessibility to political information can cause knowledge gaps which reduces motivation for deaf individuals to participate in political activities. In reviewing past literature, gaps exist in research on the Deaf community and their use of communication technologies, although prior literature on the knowledge gap and digital divide suggests that the Deaf population may face multiple barriers in Internet access and use and consequently experience looming knowledge gaps (Karras & Cheong, 2008, p. 4). Individuals belonging to a minority group generally do not participate in the voting process due to the lack of adequate access to political communication channels. Although this has been changing during the last few years with more and more captioned television news programs available for deaf people, limited access
to information continues to be a barrier for Deaf people to fully participate in the political process (Bateman, 1999, p. 149).

**Political Participation**

Politics is one of the cornerstones of developed countries. It embodies the complicated relationships that individuals have with one another regarding both public and private affairs. Individuals, in their respective societies, need to collect information to make rational decisions to manage their public and private affairs. The tales of a soldier home from war, an individual relating an interaction with an elected official, even a discussion of a doctor's bill may shape perceptions of current conditions, opinions of government competence, or beliefs about which issues should have priority (Ryan, 2009, p. 1).

In a federal constitutional republic like the United States, where its citizens are empowered to vote for officials and representatives to represent their interests, it is important to participate in political activities. Political subjects act a certain way because they have a sense of obligation to certain values, and their actions are meant to honor that obligation (Chandler, 2003, p. 4). Citizens all have varying interests that often conflict with one another, resulting in a struggle to secure enough votes for a particular candidate, or ensuring that a proposed law gets enacted, because their interests can result in short and long term ramifications that will influence the lives of many individuals. Ideal democratic citizens are expected to have an interest in public affairs, possess the ability to relate their opinions on issues to their vote, and properly exercise their political rights and responsibilities (Baek, 2009, p. 1).

This complicated yet lively interaction is often conducted between individuals regarding private affairs, and between an individual or group of individuals and their government regarding
public affairs. Regarding public affairs, "these concepts emphasize collective participation in activities of the broader community such as discussion of civic affairs with community residents, participation in civic activities such as involvement in political affairs, membership in formal or informal groups, or participation in political hearings or rallies" (Kang & Gearhart, 2010, p. 444). The ways a concerned citizen can express his or her opinions are diverse and virtually endless.

Citizens actively pursue their interests through a variety of political activities like voting, participating in rallies, volunteering for a campaign, posting opinions on a blog, watching television to remain up to date on current events, writing how they feel about a certain issue or topic to their representatives, and so on. This can include efforts to recruit supporters to join an interest group or campaign, raise money and resources, and/or mobilize political action (Epstein, 2011, p. 8).

**Communication**

Communication is a critical tool for citizens in a developed society like the United States. In such a society, it is very important to maintain a clear and consistent method of interacting with others. By successfully communicating with others, an individual is capable of attaining the needed tools to pursue a secure and comfortable life. Abundant evidence underscores the fact that communication is an essential, pervasive, and consequential behavior in our society (West & Turner, 2010, p. 4).

Communication is a key concept when it comes to handling both public and private affairs as regards to politics. Clear and consistent communication is important when it comes down to your ability to make your opinions or concerns heard on matters that are of importance to you. When
communication is social, it involves people who come to an interaction with various intentions, motivations, and abilities (West & Turner, 2010, p. 5). When we communicate with other individuals, there is often a motive or an intent behind the interaction. That motive or intent is often used as a tool to help us accomplish a certain goal or objective.

The transactional model of communication portrays political interaction and dialogue quite accurately. To say that communication is transactional means that the process is cooperative; the sender and the receiver are mutually responsible for the effect and the effectiveness of communication (West & Turner, 2010, p. 14). When an individual is discussing or persuading another individual on topics or issues related to politics - the effect and effectiveness of communication is important in convincing others. When others are convinced, their priorities are rearranged to accommodate the topics or issues that the one doing the persuading considers most relevant to his or her notions of a secure and comfortable life.

The model focuses on the exchange of messages that have shared meaning between individuals. Furthermore, what people say during a transaction is greatly influenced by their past experience (West & Turner, 2010, p. 14). Every individual is brought up in a different way and in a different environment, but citizens in a specific society have broad similarities. As an example, the majority of American citizens are born in the United States, speak the national language which is English, and use the old English Imperial system instead of the metric system. Individuals will find a narrower range of similarities that may exist for one person and not for another. For example, both of their parents are divorced, they share a passion for playing the piano, or share similar political interests on a certain topic or issue.

**Political Communication**
In the world of political communication, it is essential that anybody who is a political participant has established channels that are clear and effective in relaying messages to their targeted audiences. Graber (1993) defined political communication as, “the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that are likely to have a significant impact on politics” (p. 124). The communication channels established for the political participants to relay their messages serve as a pipeline for new ideas, inspirations, and information. The pipelines cause various things to happen such as an increased awareness of a particular issue, incentive to vote for a specific candidate, or motivation to do something to accomplish a targeted goal.

It is critical for everybody, especially those who want or are interested in political engagement to have access to political communication channels through the fairest and most accessible way possible. This is something that politicians would ideally want because a larger population that has an increased responsiveness to government civics results in a potential surge of votes, giving them a possible lead over their opponents. According to Baek (2009), “Political communications produce messages that stimulate political behavior and images that determine the dynamics and quality of politics” (p. 1). It is a two-way communication channel because when politicians send a message to political participants, they in turn, after analyzing the content of the message, create their own and send it back to the politicians as a way of responding, and so forth.

In the midst of all the devices used for clear and effective communication channels that political participants use, many of those channels persist in giving inadequate or no access to minority groups, especially to the deaf community. Devices utilized for political communication channels such as talk shows, debates, rallies, addresses, interviews, et cetera are either poorly
implemented or provide absolutely no access for deaf viewers. According to Bateman (1996), “Deaf people are one of the several minority groups who have experienced a sense of oppression and feeling of futility in changing their lives. In other words, many deaf people feel a sense of “civic disenfranchisement” (p. 146). This results in the deaf community feeling left out when it comes to events such as attending a political rally (lack of access to an interpreter) or watching a live stream video of an interview featuring a prominent political candidate (lack of access to live captioning options).

**Perception**

How one sees himself or herself is influential when it comes to deciding which political issues should he or she dedicate time and resources towards, which topic should be given the most attention, and which concerns should be alleviated first. This conceptualization is consistent with Gandz and Murray's (1980) view of politics as a state of mind rather than an objective reality and Lewin's (1936) 'eye of the beholder' assumptions regarding individuals' reactions to social cues, including those that represent threat (Hochwater & Thompson, 2010, p. 1373). How an individual approaches politics depends on his or her outlook on life, influencing the rate of participation in political activities and how frequently one collects political information. Importantly, this perspective argues that reactions to politics depend largely on characteristics of the individual (Hochwater & Thompson, 2010, p. 1373).

If an individual has a positive outlook on life, he or she may be more interested in participating in political activities. In support, evidence confirms a direct relationship between optimism and self-regulation effectiveness (Carver and Scheier, 2001; Rasmussen et al., 2006), supporting a neutralizing effect for those experiencing heightened political activity (Hochwater...
Politics is a way of life, which citizens can choose how often he or she should participate in political activities, or choose not to participate in it at all. Specifically, we view politics as neither inherently positive nor negative, but rather an aspect of the external environment that can predict reactions ranging from encouraging to caustic (Hochwater & Thompson, 2010, p. 1373).

The morals and values an individual has can determine party alignment, adoption of a particular type of ideology, which political issues or topics should be given the foremost attention, and how much effort should go into addressing them. Hence a person's use of a particular type of moral reasoning is determined not just by that individual's ability to generate this reasoning but also by his or her social goals (Emler & Stace, 1999, p. 458). The social goals of a citizen influences the methods one uses to persuade others in adopting his or her outlook on political matters. These goals may be to modify others' behavior through criticism, persuasion, or self-justification, but they may also be to express a social identity (Emler & Stace, 1999, p. 458).

**Technology**

It is necessary to put in effort to stay up to date on political events otherwise one falls behind on what is going on the local, state, and national levels. One of the grand maxims of democracy is the assertion that a good citizen is an informed citizen (Poindexter & McCombs, 2001, p. 113). Technology plays a central role in assisting and enabling citizens to have an easier time accessing political information. In terms of actual behavior, these normative assertions about being an informed citizen mean reading newspapers and watching the news on television with some regularity - and perhaps in contemporary society, also availing oneself of the many
publications, cable channels, Web sites, and chat rooms that specialize in public affairs (Poindexter & McCombs, 2001, p. 113).

The advent of the newspaper, telephone, radio, and especially the internet had a pivotal impact on how society as a whole collects and assimilates information. An informed electorate sustains a vital democracy (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Introduction of the television and the internet has drastically changed how we gather information and remain up to date regarding political events and candidates. It is easier to retain political knowledge, which serves as an incentive for citizens to participate in political activities more often. In their perspective, knowledge about political institutions, issues, and players is a fundamental requirement of being a capable citizen (Shen, 2009, p. 5).

The internet has transformed the political landscape regarding communication, information gathering, and participation in activities. They offer citizens a new channel for civic engagement opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels (Kang & Gearhart, 2010, p. 443). Websites are products from the creation of the internet, bringing benefits to citizens nationwide because it enables people to have an easier time accessing information, expressing his or her opinions on a political issue or topic, and participating in various activities that are political in nature. Via web sites, citizens often have a public commitment to, knowledge of, and interest in issues, places, and social networks that enable public decisions and actions (Bowles & Gintis, 2000; Jeffres & Lin, 2006).

**Motivation**

Citizens determines how much effort will go into collecting information and participating in activities associated with politics. If there is enough of an incentive to put effort towards
something, an individual will be motivated to do so. Results showed that identification was associated with actively seeking information about political events, possessing a complex set of political attitudes, experiencing pleasant emotions if political outcomes favored one's position, and being more likely to actually vote (Losier & Koestner, 1999, p. 288).

If participating in a political activity or collecting information for a particular political issue or topic is deemed important enough then individuals will do it. Self-determination theory posits that people are inherently motivated to internalize the regulation of important activities, even those that are initially perceived as uninteresting (Losier & Koestner, 1999, p. 288). If other citizens demonstrates an interest or is actively participating in politics, it can motivate the individual to follow suit. Thus, the theory suggests that even teenagers who do not find politics intrinsically interesting will still be motivated to internalize the cultural value placed on political participation (Losier & Koestner, 1999, p. 288).

If an individual has others who shares similar demographic categories such as hearing identification, race, and gender that works in government positions or is part of a political organization, it may influence the individual to have an increase in motivation regarding participation in political related activities. Those connections involve connections between people, connections between private troubles and public issues, and connections that lead to political awareness and political action (Garcia & Martinez, 2001, p. 112-122). Individuals are more willing to engage in political activities if he or she find common ground with his or her beliefs, perceptions, and outlook. That is, it is important for citizens to see not only that politics can be interesting but that what happens is also personally meaningful to them (Losier & Koestner, 1999, p. 289).
**Research Questions**

RQ1: Does insufficient political communication accessibility correlate with less frequent participation in political activities?

RQ2: Does positive self-perception regarding hearing status, race, or gender identifications correlate with a higher satisfaction rate regarding the decisions politicians make?

RQ3: Does positive self-perception predict an increase in participation of political activities?

RQ4: Does an increase in the visibility of individuals who share the same hearing status, race, or gender identifications increase participation in political activities?

**Methodology**

The independent variables are political communication accessibility, perceptions, and visibility of individuals sharing the same demographic categories working in various government positions. The dependent variables are political activities and the level of satisfaction one feels by the decisions that politicians make. The variables are analyzed through using questionnaires that asks questions in the form of two, three, and five-point Likert Scale items.

The activities associated with the frequency of political participation are categorized into seven sections: voting, volunteering, attending rallies for politicians, writing to their representatives, donating money to political organizations, signing political petitions, and working to stay up to date on events that are related to politics. They are generalized activities that fall into the category of political engagement. The frequency of participating in the
aforementioned political activities is measured through a five-point item that ranges from 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Occasionally), 4 (Often), to 5 (Always).

The measures for collecting political information are categorized into five sections - television, radio, internet, newspaper, and word of mouth. Individuals' perceptions on which methods are the most useful, least useful, most accurate, and least accurate are measured through a five-point item that ranges from 1 (Television), 2 (Radio), 3 (Internet), 4 (Newspaper), to 5 (Word of mouth).

The motivation levels associated with participating in politics when an individual's written, spoken, and signed language is presented or not presented are measured. The motivation levels related to relying on unofficial sources when an individual's written, spoken, and signed language is presented or not presented are measured. Both categories are measured through a five-point item that ranges from 1 (Very Low), 2 (Low), 3 (Moderate), 4 (High), to 5 (Very High). An example of a question would be the following - 'If my spoken language is not presented as an option through an official source to gather information related to politics, my motivation to participate in politics will be:'.

There is a section dedicated to asking about the individual's financial status. Items ask whether they have financial support, scholarship(s), vocational rehabilitation support, or social security income. They are measured through a two-point scale that ranges from 1 (Yes) to 2 (No). From this point onwards, the rest of the questions are related to demographics: an individual's identification regarding hearing, race, and gender statuses, the degree one is in the process of attaining, and the socio-economic category of the household one grew up in.
The perception an individual has regarding his or her hearing, race, and gender statuses are measured through a five-point item that ranges from 1 (Very negative), 2 (Somewhat negative), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Somewhat positive), to 5 (Very positive). An example of a question would be the following - 'I perceive my hearing status identification to be:'. The next set of questions asks how satisfied the individual is with his hearing, race, and gender statuses when it comes to decisions that politicians makes. Those questions are measured through a five-point item that ranges from 1 (Not at all satisfied), 2 (Slightly satisfied), 3 (Moderately satisfied), 4 (Very satisfied), to 5 (Extremely satisfied). An example of a question would be the following - 'How satisfied are you with the representation of your race identification when it comes to decisions that politicians make?'.

The next set of questions asks whether an increase in the visibility of individuals working in various government positions who share his or her hearing, race, and gender statuses would influence that person's participation in politics. The questions are measured through a five-point item that ranges from 1 (Not at all influential), 2 (Slightly influential), 3 (Somewhat influential), 4 (Very influential), to 5 (Extremely influential). An example of a question would be the following - 'If there is an increase in the visibility of individuals working in various government positions who share my gender identification, it will influence my motivation regarding participation in politics to be:'. All of the questions mentioned above are found in the questionnaire.

Students attending Rochester Institute of Technology were sampled. One subsample focuses on hearing students while the other subsample focuses on deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The subsamples will be used to compare and contrast one another regarding the dependent variables after the data have been compiled and analyzed. The questionnaire contains close ended
questions that use two, three, and five-point Likert Scale measurements. Once the Institutional
Review Board approved the questions, the questionnaires were completed in either a one-on-one,
one-on-small group, or one-on-a-classroom setting.

Results

Demographics

The sample consisted of 59 participants (59%) identified themselves as hearing, 31
participants (31%) as deaf, and 10 participants (10%) as hard of hearing. 47 participants (47%)
identified themselves as male while 53 participants (53%) as female. 15 participants (15%)
identified themselves as Asian/Asian-American, 7 participants (7%) as Black/African-American,
6 participants (6%) as Hispanic, 1 participant (1%) as Native American, and 70 participants
(70%) as White.

Thirty two percent of the participants never votes, 21% rarely votes, 19% occasionally votes,
11% often votes, and 17% always votes. Seventy nine percent of the participants never
volunteers for politicians, 15% rarely volunteers, and 6% occasionally volunteers. Eighty six
percent of the participants never writes to their representatives, 10% rarely writes, and 4%
ocasionally writes. Seventy eight percent of the participants never donates money to political
organizations, 19% rarely donates, and 3% occasionally donates.

Eighty percent of the participants never attend political rallies, 14% rarely attends, and 6%
ocasionally attends. Fifty five percent of the participants never signs political petitions, 27%
rarely signs, 9% occasionally signs, and 9% often signs. Thirteen percent of the participants
never puts in effort to stay up to date on current events related to politics. Thirty percent of the

participants rarely puts in effort, 39% occasionally puts in effort, 11% often puts in effort, and
7% always put in effort.

No participants perceived their hearing status identification to be very negative. Two percent of the participants to be somewhat negative, 45% to be neutral, 11% to be somewhat positive, and 42% to be very positive. No participants perceived their race identification to be very negative. Two percent of the participants to be somewhat negative, 38% to be neutral, 18% to be somewhat positive, and 40% to be very positive. No participants perceived their gender identification to be very negative or somewhat negative. Thirty five percent of the participants to be neutral, 18% to be somewhat positive, and 47% to be very positive.

Nine percent of the participants are not at all satisfied with the representation of their hearing status identification when it comes to decisions that politicians make. Sixteen percent of the participants are slightly satisfied, 32% are moderately satisfied, 27% are very satisfied, and 15% are extremely satisfied. Seven percent of the participants are not at all satisfied with the representation of their race identification when it comes to decisions that politicians make. Seventeen percent of the participants are slightly satisfied, 34% are very satisfied, 25% are very satisfied, and 16% are extremely satisfied. Eleven percent of the participants are not at all satisfied with the representation of their gender identification when it comes to decisions that politicians make. Twelve percent of the participants are slightly satisfied, 37% are moderately satisfied, 28% are very satisfied, and 11% are extremely satisfied.

Sixteen percent of the participants finds not at all influential when it comes to motivation to participate in politics if there was an increase in the visibility of individuals working in various government positions who shares the same hearing status identification. Nine percent of the
participants finds slightly influential, 40% found somewhat influential, 24% finds very influential, and 10% finds extremely influential.

Eighteen percent of the participants finds not at all influential when it comes to motivation to participate in politics if there was an increase in the visibility of individuals working in various government positions who shares the same race identification. Sixteen percent of the participants finds slightly influential, 41% found somewhat influential, 13% finds very influential, and 10% finds extremely influential.

Fourteen percent of the participants finds not at all influential when it comes to motivation to participate in politics if there was an increase in the visibility of individuals working in various government positions who shares the same gender identification. Sixteen percent of the participants finds slightly influential, 43% found somewhat influential, 16% finds very influential, and 10% finds extremely influential.

**Correlation**

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between insufficient political communication accessibility and less frequent participation in political activities. A weak positive correlation was found \( r (98) = .210^*, p < 0.05 \), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. It indicates a reliable relationship, but not necessarily a strong correlation.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between positive self-perception regarding hearing status, race, or gender identifications and higher satisfaction rate regarding the decisions politicians make. A strong positive correlation was found \( r (97) = \)
.365**, p < 0.01), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. It indicates a reliable relationship.

**Regression**

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict an increase in participation of political activities based on positive self-perception. The regression equation was not significant (F(1,98) = .270, p > .05) with an R² of .003. Positive self-perception is not a significant predictor of an increase in participation of political activities.

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict an increase in participation of political activities based on an increase in the visibility of individuals who share the same hearing status, race, or gender identifications. The regression equation was not significant (F(1,96) = .565, p > .05) with an R² of .006. An increase in the visibility of individuals who share the same hearing status, race, or gender identifications is not a significant predictor of an increase in participation of political activities.

**Discussion**

The findings in this study lead to a better understanding of the influence that the variables has regarding political accessibility, perception, communication, participation, and visibility. The results for the first research question resulted in a significant yet weak relationship. It shows that accessibility has a strong correlation regarding the rate of participation for political activities. The results for the second research question resulted in a more significant yet weak relationship. It shows that positive self-perception regarding hearing status, race, or gender identifications
does correlate with a higher satisfaction rate regarding the decisions politicians make. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used for both research questions.

The results for the third research question resulted in an insignificant and weak relationship. It shows that positive-self perception does not predict an increase in the participation of political activities. The results for the fourth research question resulted in another insignificant and weak relationship. It also shows that an increase in the visibility of individuals who shares the same hearing status, race, or gender identifications does not cause an increase in the participation of political activities. The Simple Linear Regression was used for both research questions.

The sample size was a hundred participants. Future studies should expand on that number to see if the relationships between variables changes or not. In the future, other methods of collecting information that does not involve questionnaires will be used such as open ended interviews and surveys. They would give me the opportunity to take a deeper look into why a particular participant feels that way and why. It also provides me the opportunity to engage in discussion with participants and ask their thoughts on variables associated with political accessibility, perception, communication, participation, and visibility.
References


