Racial, socioeconomic, and gender gaps exist in Advanced Placement course participation, despite the consistent increase in availability. Several studies have shown that student demographic backgrounds, along with factors, such as attainment value and self-concept of ability, can influence a student’s decision to pursue the AP pathway. This dissertation examines the racial, socioeconomic, and gender gaps present in Advanced Placement class participation in a large Indiana high school and attempts to describe why certain demographic groups opt to participate in AP classes and others do not. The perceived academic benefit of AP classes in reference to students’ motivational patterns, as well as other potential factors of influence, was researched through surveys and interviews. It is apparent that students, despite their demographics, are subject to an assortment of influences, both internal and external, while in high school. When removing the demographic groups and focusing only on motivational patterns, three constructs test at the significant level for predicting AP participation: expectations, self-concept of ability, and utility value. Of the demographic groups, only race was shown to have an effect on AP participation for students who identified as either White or
Hispanic. Students participating in AP classes in Indiana follow the national trends reported by College Board. The majority of students are White and female and do not qualify for free or reduced lunch at school per federal regulation guidelines.

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