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"All Blacks Vote the Same?": Assessing Predictors of Black American Political Participation and Partisanship

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"All Blacks Vote the Same?":

Assessing Predictors of Black American Political Participation and Partisanship

by

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Abstract

The politics of Blacks are stereotypically assumed to be the same and share the same race-based root, be it disenfranchisement or solidarity. Given the recent jump in Black political participation and the seemingly race-based and partisan nature "the Black vote" holds, it is essential to investigate what factors drive Black voter turnout as well as what factors contribute to the partisan nature of Black voters. Most other studies of political opinion, turnout, and party preference only consider comparable demographic groups such as men versus women or Blacks versus Whites. This study examines partisan preference and participation only among Black Americans. The data used here come from the American National Election Survey (ANES) 1984, 1996, and 2008 Pre- and Post-Election Survey, election years that coincided with peaks and lows of Black voter turnout since the Civil Rights Movement. Findings indicate that Black Democrats report higher voter turnout than Black non-Democrats, and younger Blacks and those who opposed abortion were less likely to vote. Also, results suggest that although Black partisanship can be predicted by gender, abortion stance, and age, partisanship is largely not a product of demographics or political stances based on how little variance these models account; rather, Black partisanship may be explained by aspects that go beyond these usual determinants, measures, and proxies. Implications of this study show that non-Democratic Blacks were political available to other parties, and it warrants a further investigation into Black partisanship.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

The politics of Blacks are stereotypically assumed to be the same and share the same race-based root. First, Black voters have been largely underrepresented in political participation, a trend usually reduced to racial disenfranchisement (Diemer and Li 2011; Ochs 2006; Uggen, Behrens, and Manza 2005; Clayton 2004; Uggen and Manza 2002). Recently, Black voter turnout has been on the rise. The Presidential election of 2012 surprised many pundits as Black turnout mirrored the overwhelming figures from 2008 as Blacks returned with massive support for Democratic President Barack Obama (SSDAN 2012; Taylor 2012). The elections of 2008 and 2012 were the first elections in which Blacks were *overrepresented* at the polls when compared to Whites and the national average (Taylor 2012).

Second, Black voters lean overwhelmingly toward Democratic Party candidates in local, state, and federal elections, a phenomenon attributed to race (Gerber 1996). While many Republicans readily tag themselves as the "Party of Lincoln" to harken the abolitionist president, a partisan shift in racial ideology followed the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The New Deal coalition and its Democratic Party began to take a stand against racial injustice along with various other social ills (Harris-Lacewell 2003; Wielhouwer 2000), and later Democrats continued to advocate for racial equality through the 1960s until now (Whitby 2002), signaling a turning point in voting behavior and party identification among Blacks (Luks and Elms 2005). This pattern has been so consistent

that Black voter solidarity has become known as "the Black vote." Despite this strong allegiance, few scholars have pointed out that Blacks differ from the Democratic platform on social issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and all forms of government welfare (Clawson and Clark 2003; Harris-Lacewell 2003; Bovasso 1993).

Because of the consistency in the political direction of "the Black vote" and the racially-based presumption of its political presence and force, actual Black voter turnout and partisanship remain mostly assumed and understudied. Table 1.1 demonstrates that despite the assumed allegiance of Blacks with the Democratic Party via national Democratic candidates, a significant number of Blacks are *not* Democrats. Given the recent jump in Black political participation and the seemingly partisan nature "the Black vote" holds, it is essential to investigate what factors drive Black voter turnout as well as what factors contribute to the partisan nature of Black voters. These trends suggest that in the future, Black voters may have more power to influence the direction and shape of American politics.

To grasp a more complete understanding of the factors that influence Black political participation and political behavior, three distinct Presidential election periods were chosen. Table 1.1 also provides evidence of the federal voting pattern among Blacks in the Presidential elections of 1984, 1996, and 2008. Census data from the Social Sciences Data Analysis Network (SSDAN) indicates that these three target years were milestones as far as Black political participation. The 1984 election was the highest level of Black voter turnout since the Civil Rights Movement; the 1996 election held the lowest rate of post-Civil Rights Black voter turnout. Black voter turnout hit a new post-Civil Rights peak in 2008 with voter turnout among Blacks eclipsing that of Whites and

the national average for the first time (SSDAN 2012). Note that 1984 and 1996 Black turnout patterns of SSDAN (2012) are not clearly reflected in Table 1.1, probably due to the difference in Black sample sizes of SSDAN (who utilizes census data) and ANES (see Chapter 3).

Table 1.1: Turnout Statistics (%) for Black Respondents in ANES 1984, 1996, 2008

	1984	1996	2008
Voter Turnout			
Voted	65.6	67.8	81.5
Did not vote	34.4	32.2	18.5
Vote for President			
Rep. candidate	9.1	0.9	0.5
Dem. candidate	88.6	96.3	99.3
Other candidate	2.3	2.8	0.2
Party Identification			
Democrat	63.6	65.7	71.1
Republican	3.6	3.4	1.9
Independent	21.5	22.2	22.4
Other/No Pref.	11.3	8.7	4.5
Voter Turnout by Party			
Democrat	76.9	75.2	88.9
Non-Democrat	46.3	53.4	64.6

This study investigates both voter turnout (political participation) and party preference (political behavior) of Black Americans of the Reagan Era to the election of the first Black president in order to debunk stereotypes placed on Black voters. Research examines the influence of party affiliation on voting and factors related to party affiliation among whites or all voters, but little research examines these factors among minority voting blocs such as Blacks. This study is an analysis of gaps in American political participation and behavior that usually occur along demographic lines that many scholars believe influence our political system as well as our understanding of American politics such as socioeconomics, education, age, sex, and region characteristics (Fisher 2011; Fhagen-Smith, Vandiver, Worrell and Cross, 2010; Luks and Elms 2005). Most

other studies of political opinion, turnout, and party preference only consider comparable demographic groups such as men versus women or Blacks versus Whites. This study examines political preference and participation only among Black Americans in order to emphasize in-group variations by gender, age, and region as well as political ideology. It also focuses on Black Democrats versus Black non-Democrat voters instead of Black Republicans, because there is a sizable Black Independent or unaffiliated population.

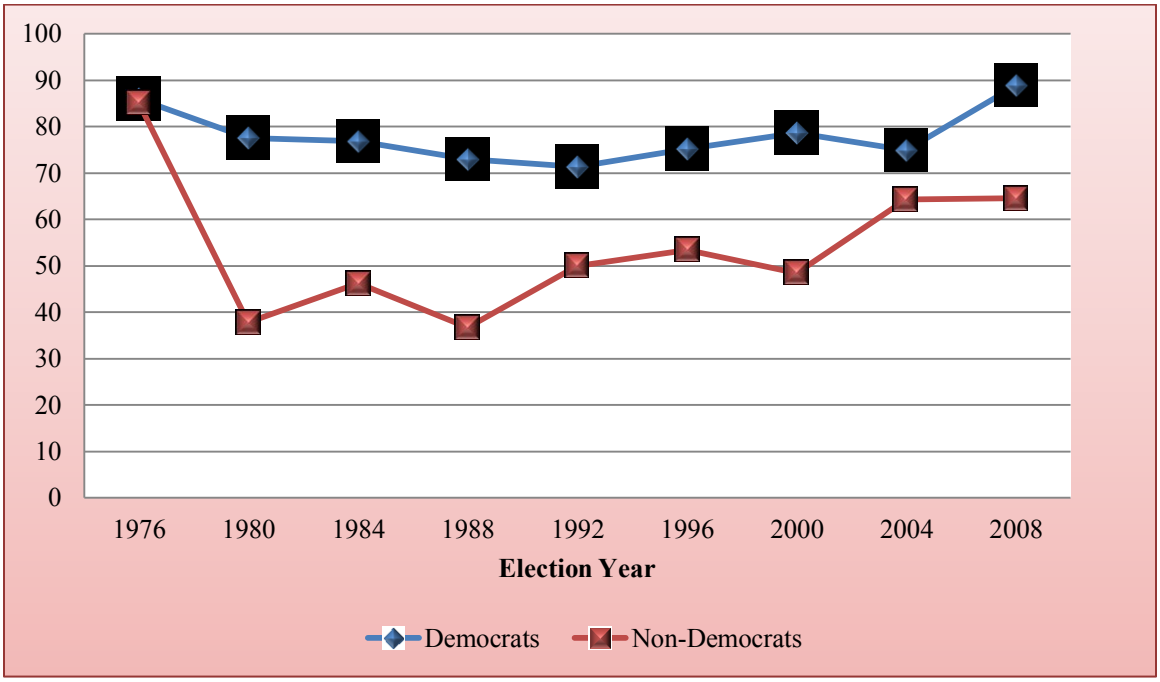

Figure 1.1: ANES Black Voter Turnout (%) by Party Affiliation 1976-2008

The first set of analyses in Chapter 4.1 examines factors that drive voter turnout among Blacks. Findings in Chapter 4.1 mirror Table 1.1 evidence that Black Democrats report higher voter turnout than Black non-Democrats. Figure 1.1 highlights the disparity within Black voter turnout in presidential elections since 1976, and Black Democrats appear to vote more than Black Republicans and Independents (non-Democrats). This trend may have begun after 1960, and Black non-Democrats' turnout converged with turnout levels of Black Democrats in the 1976 election. The American National Election

Survey (ANES) data for election years prior to 1976 were problematic with a significant number of Black responses missing for turnout and political-based question. (Such a time in American history may not have been as conducive for Black respondents to answer phone callers' inquiries about voting and candidate preference.) The 1980 election witnessed the sharp decline in Black non-Democrat voting, but it was slowly returning to Democrat turnout levels after the Reagan Era, that is until 2008 when Black Democrats' voting escalated. This discovery justifies an in-depth look into Black voter turnout.

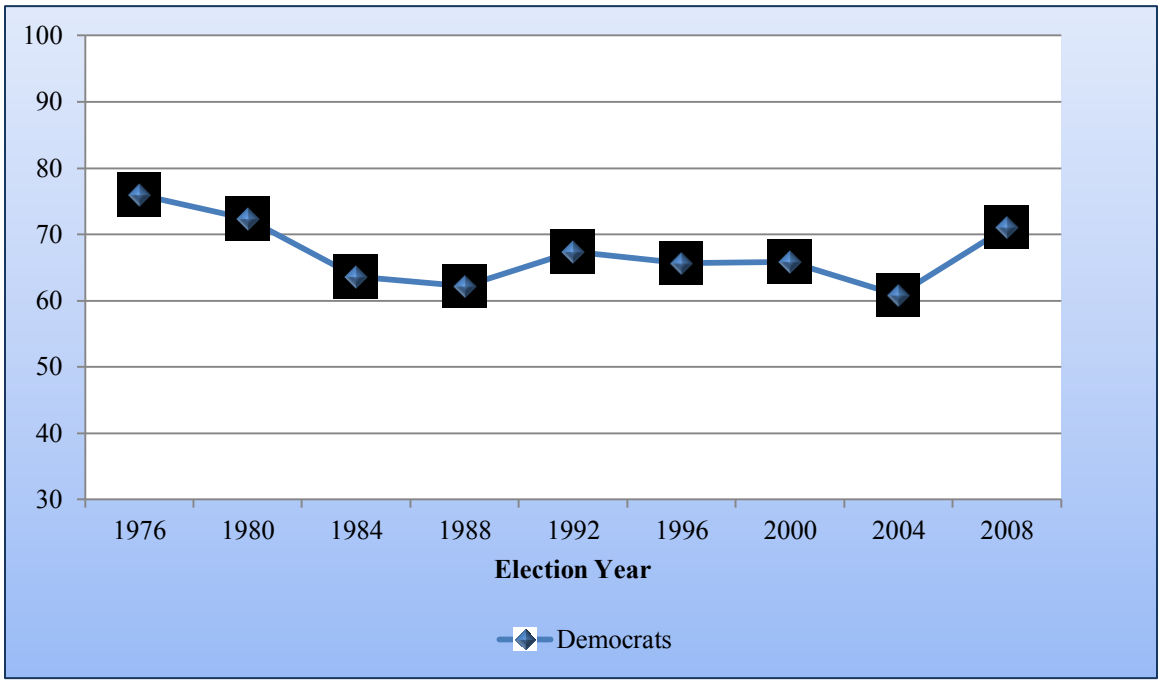

Figure 1.2: ANES Black Democratic Party Affiliation (%) 1976-2008

Chapter 4.2 focuses on factors that inform Black partisanship. Chapter 4.2 findings suggest that although Black partisanship can be predicted by gender, abortion stance, and age, partisanship is largely not a product of demographics or political stances based on how little variance these models account; rather, Black partisanship may be explained by aspects that go beyond these usual determinants, measures, and proxies. Figure 1.2 shows the shifts in Black partisanship via Democratic Party affiliation in

presidential elections since 1976. Luks and Elms (2005) describe a slow trend of fewer Blacks identifying as Democrats since the early 1970s as more political rights were gained. Perhaps this partisan migration away from Democrats has slowed or even reversed with the subsequent election of Barack Obama as President because of descriptive representation, defined as having a candidate that have/has the same demographic(s) (here being Black). Even so, the past "defections" do not necessarily equal a rise in Black Republicans; most of the non-Democratic Blacks are Independent (Luks and Elms 2005). The research question is what factors are related to Black voter resistance to Democratic affiliation while the majority of the racial group aligns itself with Democrats?

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Scholarship, media, and political tracking organizations like Pew and Gallup analyze voter turnout, partisanship, and political opinions along demographic lines to illustrate trends, breakdown elections, and describe factors that influence political participation (voter turnout). These trends are widely broadcasted and routinely examined, but unfortunately, they are only applied to the general American population. Little is known about how demographic factors impact the political outcomes of specific racial groups. Most studies about political participation and partisanship fail to take into account race/ethnicity at all, believing that racial differences disappear after other demographic factors are held constant (Timpone 1998). Research that does address race simply compares Blacks versus Whites or Latinos versus Whites.

By contrast, this study explores how demographics and political stances impact political participation and political behavior within a specific racial group, Black Americans. The following demographic subsections review what is known about the impact each has on political participation and partisanship in general. These documented patterns in the literature provide a guide to compare how demographics impact Black voter turnout and partisanship.

2.1 Gender

Since 1980, women have made up most of the active electorate, and their percentage of the overall voter turnout has grown in each election (SSDAN 2012). The

political gender gap is a multifaceted relationship with sources rooted in the socialization of men and women (Wolak and McDevitt 2011; Matthews, Hempel, and Howell 2010; Fridkin and Kenney 2007; Hooghe and Stolle 2004), men and women's willingness to oppose hierarchy and domination (Fridkin and Kenney 2007), ideological gender differences (Burrell 2005), gendered differences in the awareness of and attraction to politics (Ondercin and Jones-White 2011; Wolak and McDevitt 2011; Brooks 2010; Gordon 2008; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997), and gendered differences in economic vulnerability (Manza and Brooks 1998). Also, attitudinal characteristics and demographics affect voter turnout differently for men and women (Coffe and Bolzendahl 2010).

Unfortunately, few studies of women's voting patterns consider voting patterns and trends in political thought among minority women. Cole and Stewart (1996) believe voting differences between Black and White women are due to different meanings political participation has for each group. Robnett and Bany (2011) note that church involvement fosters an increase of political participation for Black men more so than Black women. Overall, the focus on trendy White swing voter groups such as "security moms," "soccer moms," or "mama grizzlies" limits the persistence of the gendered political participation gap, especially when it comes to gender intersectionality and intra-racial gender differences in political participation and partisanship.

When it comes to gender and partisanship, women are more liberal in their political orientation when compared to men (Lien 1998; Gay and Tate 1998; Carter, Corra, and Carter 2009). Scholars tend to believe race is a stronger bond than gender for Black women (Burns and Gallagher 2010; Carter et al 2009; Wilcox 1997). Simien and

Clawson (2004) posit that Black women develop Black feminist consciousness—an awareness of oppressions and a specific political response to oppressions—that, to an extent, spills over to Black men via recognition of the double discrimination faced by Black women. For such reasons, gender gaps in political behavior are thought to be smaller among Blacks and other non-White groups when compared to Whites, thus justifying the all-encompassing notion of "the Black vote" (Fisher 2011; Hardy-Fanta et al 2006; Lien 1998).

Most studies that include race, gender, and politics focus on racial comparisons or only Black female ideology. The political orientation of Black women is often considered to be an overlapping of race and gender identities with the assumption that both identities should promote a rather liberal political standpoint (Gay and Tate 1998). In regards to which identity is more salient, Wilcox (1997) and Gay and Tate (1998) contend that Black women view politics through racial lens because "gender is simply a weak vehicle for political identification" (Gay and Tate 1998:182). Race is more influential than gender in predicting political outcomes as evidenced in descriptive representation where Black candidates can mobilize same-race Black voters, but women candidates do not provide the same motivation for Black women (Carter et al 2009; Huddy and Carey 2009; Reingold and Harrell 2010; McDermott 1998).

Conversely, other scholars position the politics of Black women to be divergent from other race-gender groups. For Black women, race and gender interact to create experiences unique from Black men and non-Black women that determine the attitudes and personal realities of Black women about their situation and the surrounding world (Carter et al 2009; Philpot and Walton 2007). Kam, Zechmeister, and Wilking (2007)

suggest that factors such as opportunities, resources, and motivation impact a gender gap in political participation even across ethnic/racial groups.

Differing experiences and philosophies between Black women and Black men may result in divergent political expressions that have mostly been taken for granted. Allison's (2011) study found that favor for the Iraq War differed between Black men and Black women, with Black men's favor of the war actually not significantly varying from White men's, and Black women were in the strongest opposition out of any group measured, showing a more liberal stance in this issue. These results counter previous literature that Black support for war and military force is consistently low. Furthermore, Allison's (2011) study demonstrated a gender gap on a political issue was far more significant than a race gap which supports Philpot, Shaw, and McGowen's (2009) notion of a growing complexity and heterogeneity in Black political attitudes.

2.2 Age

Research on age effects is sparse and typically generalized for the entire American population. Evidence has shown that voter turnout and civic participation increases with age and is also considered to be an act of productive aging (Burr, Caro, and Moorhead 2002). Younger voters or those of "Generation X" and "Generation Y" tend to be more liberal and have lower turnout than older voters. Post-depression born Baby Boomers (born between the 1946 and 1964) have the highest turnout. Voters born during the Great Depression trend more conservative and have lower turnout than Baby Boomers (Lau and Redlawsk 2008; Gimpel, Morris, and Armstrong 2004). Age distribution in a region can severely affect turnout and political outlooks (Gimpel et al 2004).

Diemer and Li (2011) find that youth voting behavior among Black and Latino groups is different than White youth and older people. These differences are facilitated by critical consciousness and peer and parental sociopolitical support. The voting behavior of marginalized youth increases when parents, teachers, and peers foster ideas about the youth's capacity to consider and impact the sociopolitical environment in America; if they are critically aware of the social and political worlds, they will probably be empowered and inspired to take action (Diemer and Li 2011).

It is typically assumed that older voters are more conservative and resistant to change than younger populations (Lau and Redlawsk 2008). Strong determinants of Black partisanship include age and generation (Luks and Elms 2005). The oldest and youngest generational cohorts may actually feel less attachment to the Democratic Party when compared to those in the middle because of the varying historical experiences: growing up prior to Democrats being known as the party of racial and economic equality or growing up in times after the Civil Rights Movement and its aftermath (Luks and Elms 2005).

2.3 Education

Media and scholars tell us that increases in educational attainment lead to increases in voting and political engagement (Straughn and Andriot 2011; Sondheimer and Green 2010). Yet greater educational attainment in America has not led to greater voter turnout overall. Burden (2009) contends that the relationship between education and political participation is dynamic, having more of an effect after the 1980s, and manifests value in voting and not political knowledge like being aware of the names of one's senators and representatives (Burden, 2009). Berinsky and Lenz (2011) suggest that

education may not actually create larger political participation. Instead, the very psycho-social factors that influence the choice to actively pursue higher education may also influence the choice to vote, although the authors do not list specific factors.

Low-income college students are more likely to be politically active and engaged; their opportunities, fates, and economic well-being are linked to government activities and policies (Ozymy 2012). Diemer and Li (2011) note that marginalized youth's critical and political consciousness may be fostered by education. As such, an education *in* politics can be valued as an education *for* politics, an idea highlighted by the modern controversies involving multicultural education, historical perspectives presented in classrooms, and pro-ethnic humanities courses.

In general, it is believed that more education leads to more liberal outlooks on political as well as social issues, but many authors agree that there are several nuances to this relationship. Campbell (2007) shows that high school classroom racial diversity actually decreases political discussions in the classroom and subsequently produces a less informed and engaged future voters. Within higher education, Elchardus and Spruyt (2009) find that while there does exist a small socialization effect, the relationship between higher education and political behavior is more selective; those who support liberal ideology select liberal fields, for example. While education may have a direct relationship with more liberal ideas in politics and race, educated Whites who still maintain negative racial perceptions are more likely to apply such views to policy stances than less educated Whites who hold the same attitudes (Federico 2005).

2.4 Socioeconomic Status

While the "haves" usually vote, those at the economic bottom rungs tend to be disenfranchised and not be civically or politically active (Levin-Waldman 2013; Rehm 2010). Lim and Sander (2013) report high levels of income inequality and unemployment are correlated with less political participation. On the other hand, authors like Cho and Gimpel (2009) call into question the salience of personal economics, especially in times of hardship. Referencing the 2008 Presidential Election, Cho and Gimpel (2009) find that regardless of any strength and magnitude of the effects of the economic downturn by region and community, the political stances of large minority areas and those with strong conservative views like in the South were bound to remain the same ideologically.

In a study of some of the poorest inner city regions of the country, Lawless and Fox (2001) find that some of the same demographic and material factors that influence overall voting trends impact political participation such as age, gender, and education. In her research on neighborhood conditions and mothers' political and civic participation, Casciano (2007) finds that participation is largely influenced by individual characteristics, too, albeit not in the directions expected. "For more advantaged mothers—specifically, those with higher education levels or who are married—the odds of voting tend to *decrease* as neighborhood poverty grows; however, for mothers with only a high school degree and cohabiting mothers, voting is higher in poor neighborhoods than it is in more affluent neighborhoods" (Casciano 2007:1143, emphasis added). Additionally, Casciano (2007) finds that the odds of volunteering for political causes increase with neighborhood poverty for mothers of color and unmarried mothers, whereas neighborhood poverty is unrelated to White and married mothers' volunteering.

When it comes to income and political behavior, conventional wisdom and years of research tells that the "haves" prefer the Republican Party, and the "have-nots" trend toward Democrats (Rehm 2010). In his work, Rehm (2010) shows that "the same [relationship] is true when it comes to income *prospects* (risk exposure): the '*will*-haves' tend to be pro-Republican, while the '*will*-have-*nots*' tend to favor the Democrats; *future* income– risk exposure– is a powerful factor in shaping individuals' social policy and partisan preferences (just like current income)" (384, emphasis added). This trend may be responsible for the rise in strong partisanship as risk inequality continues to grow. Upper-income Americans have a far less economically risky outlook than those on the bottom who face union shrinkage, lagging minimum wage, and declining low-skill/high-paying jobs (Rehm 2010). Brewer and Stonecash (2001) find that income is responsible in the declining White support for the Democratic Party in the South over the last half century, even when ideological positions on race and racism that have historically impacted Southern politics are held constant. However, studies show a weak correlation between Democratic Party affiliation and socioeconomic status among Blacks (Philpot and Walton 2007; Luks and Elms 2005). From 1973 to 1994, poor Blacks moved from the most likely to the least likely to identify with a major political party (Luks and Elms 2005).

Brooks and Brady (1999) agree that income is a significant variable in voter alignment, but they also contend that it can be a predictor of political change. Rather than the notion of whichever party presides over economic growth periods steers the political direction of America, Brooks and Brady (1999) argue that shifts in mean income actually determine this relationship: the more income people have, the more conservative their political/economic stance becomes. In other words, it has little to do with national growth

where stock values and Gross Domestic Product do not necessarily translate into what's actually in people's pockets. And Levin-Waldman (2013) speculates that a policy to raise the wages of the impoverished (vs. the conventional middle-class focus) and reduce income inequality would also increase their civic and political participation.

2.5 Region

Typically, region is not a variable considered in studies of voter turnout. Cho and Rudolph (2008) did find that community homogeneity—mainly by race and socioeconomics—is strongly related to political participation or voting, having a greater effect than heterogeneity in either direction. In other words, both the lowest of low and highest of high voter turnouts are typically located in same-race/same-income communities rather than racially-diverse and/or mixed-income communities. If this localized pattern applies to national regions because Blacks are more concentrated (homogeneous) in big cities in the Northeast and West instead of being more dispersed via towns and neighborhoods like in the South and Midwest, then region may be influential in Black voter turnout.

American political behavior has long thought to be subject to political regionalism, especially in respect to the North, the South, and the West. It is part of the basis of the concept of "red states" and "blue states". Political regionalism posits that "if regions are politically exceptional, then individuals sharing the same profile but living in divergent regions will vote differently from one another" (Aistrup 2010:924). Regionalism plays a role in the small, yet growing, Black political heterogeneity. Traditionally, Blacks in the South were more Democratic than Blacks residing in other regions of the United States; but in more recent times, Southern Blacks are more likely to

be Independents than Blacks in other regions (Luks and Elms 2005). Metropolitan and urban-dwelling Blacks are less likely to identify as Republicans than those living in small towns, suburbs, or rural areas (Luks and Elms 2005).

In general, Aistrup (2010) finds that political regionalism seems to be waning with the South beginning to mirror the non-South "relative to the influences of race, family income, union membership, in-migrants, and gender; and the non-South is converging with the South relative to the influences of education, blue-collar workers, and age" (906). Traditional notions of regionalism are also being augmented by other concepts of location and localism. Cho and Rudolph (2008) conclude that learning, creating, sharing, and responding to political ideas do not hinge on the active communication with those around us but can be executed through mere observation, a point neglected in the literature.

Given all that the literature has offered in terms of demographic influences on political participation and partisanship, little is known about how these demographic factors impact the political outcomes of specific racial groups. Here, this study explores voter turnout and partisanship among Black Americans. I use ANES data from 1984, 1996, and 2008 to explore how the demographic factors outlined in the literature as well as political stances impact Black political participation and partisanship.

Chapter 3:

Data and Methods

This study examines voter turnout and party affiliation among Blacks using data from the American National Election Survey (ANES) 1984, 1996, and 2008 Pre- and Post-Election Survey. In addition to collecting demographic information, these surveys focus on political participation, voter perceptions of Democrats and Republicans, social issues, candidates and political figures, and national and international issues (ICPSR 2012). These surveys were collected starting in the month of September of the respective year by random digit sample phone numbers (phone interviews) in the United States. The response rate for each survey was around 60%. The three surveys include a total of 1,040 Black respondents: 250 in 1984, 207 in 1996, and 583 in 2008. The 2008 survey included a Black oversample justified by the presence of the first Black general presidential election nominee, Barack Obama, on the Democratic ticket.

Each set of surveys was completed directly prior to and following the Presidential election when conversations of political approval of the President, his party, and the Presidential election are in the forefront of the media. Up until that point, the 1984 election was the highest level of Black voter turnout since the Civil Rights Movement; 1996 was the lowest rate of post-Civil Rights Black voter turnout. Black voter turnout hit a post-Civil Rights peak in 2008 with voter turnout among Blacks eclipsing that of Whites and the national average for the first time (SSDAN 2012). These surveys also represent periods of very different national, political, and economic situations: 1984 was

the Reagan Era; 1996 was the re-election of President Clinton, at the time colloquially considered by some to be the "first Black president"; and 2008 featured the economic downturn, the financial bailouts, the sharp rise in unemployment, and the burgeoning change to more divisive political discourse, as well as the first Black presidential nominee. Because they were taken from the same series, each dataset contains corresponding questions and coding. This investigation includes different Black respondents at different points rather than longitudinal or panel methods. Because of the small sample sizes in 1984 and 1996, all three datasets were combined into one. I use multinomial logistic regression to uncover any determinants of Black voter turnout.

3.1 Variables

The primary dependent variable for Chapter 4.1 is voter turnout: if the respondent voted in the election of that survey year. Independent variables include political-based variables: self-identified party affiliation and political opinions on abortion, government spending on defense and services, and a question on the rights of gays and lesbians to serve in the military. Control variables include demographics: gender, age, education level, family income, and census region. Descriptive statistics and the distribution of these variables can be found in Table 3.1.

Black Republicans, Independents, and other non-Democrat parties were collapsed into one group, *non-Democrats*, because Republicans' relatively small numbers made Republican vs. Democrat comparisons both problematic and neglectful of the significant number of self-identified Black Independents (see Tables 1.1 and 3.2).

Other variables called for recoding as well. Preliminary analyses of the Black age distribution and voting revealed M-shaped and irregular curves. For example, in 1984, voter turnout was low among young Black voters, high among those in their late 20s to

Table 3.1: Demographic Descriptive Statistics (%) for Black Respondents in ANES 1984, 1996, 2008

	1984	1996	2008	Combined
Age				
Mean	41.7	44.7	46.3	44.9
18-30	38.4	18.4	20.1	24.1
31-45	24.4	43.0	28.1	30.2
46-60	16.0	17.9	32.2	25.5
61+	21.2	20.8	19.6	20.2
Sex				
Female	65.6	61.8	59.2	61.3
Male	34.4	38.2	40.8	38.8
Region				
South	60.0	62.3	59.7	60.3
Northeast	13.6	19.8	10.5	13.1
North-Central	17.6	10.1	21.8	18.5
West	8.8	7.7	8.1	8.2
Income Tertile				
Bottom	$0-16,125	$0-16,542	$0-24,331	-
Middle	$16,126-46,078	$16,543-45,118	$24,332-55,299	-
Top	$46,079+	$45,119+	$55,300+	-
Median income range	$25,344-27,646	$22,560-25,566	$33,180-38,709	-
Education Level				
< Diploma	34.3	23.7	19.3	23.7
H.S. diploma	35.1	35.3	38.0	36.7
Some college	20.2	19.3	20.0	19.9
Comm. college or A.A.	2.0	11.1	10.2	8.4
B.A. or higher	8.4	10.6	12.5	11.3

late 30s, low again for middle-aged Blacks, high again for Blacks in their late 50s to late 60s, and low again for the oldest in the population. For this reason, I created five age groups using the oldest voters as the comparison groups. It should also be noted that the age distribution within and between each survey were unequal. Family income, my proxy for socioeconomics, is coded by ANES in monetary brackets, but the category sizes vary

within each survey (i.e. $1000, $2500, and $10,000 ranges), and category levels vary between surveys (i.e. $14,000-15,000 versus $14,000-16,500). Because of categorical differences and the fact that Blacks have lower income levels (skewed even further right)

Table 2.2: Political Descriptive Statistics (%) for Black Respondents in ANES 1984, 1996, 2008

	1984	1996	2008	Combined
Sample (N) %	24.0	19.9	56.1	100.0
Party Identification				
Democrat	63.6	65.7	71.1	68.2
Non-Democrat	36.7	34.3	28.9	31.8
Voted % by Party				
Democrat	76.9	75.2	88.9	83.8
Non-Democrat	46.3	53.4	64.6	57.2
Abortion Stance				
Never permitted	19.5	17.0	14.3	16.8
Only in rape/incest	31.8	27.0	29.4	29.5
Some restriction	13.6	16.5	12.2	13.8
Woman's choice	35.1	39.5	44.1	39.9
Defense Spending				
Increase	33.1	36.2	26.7	30.2
Keep the same	20.9	25.5	35.3	29.3
Decrease	46.0	38.3	38.0	40.5
Services Spending				
Increase	62.4	58.9	58.9	60.0
Keep the same	24.7	27.2	29.3	27.3
Decrease	12.9	13.9	11.8	12.7

than Whites, creating traditional ordinal income categories—low, middle, and high—proved difficult. Therefore, income was divided into thirds or tertiles: the bottom 33%, the middle third, and the top 33%. Although not perfect, this approach to income was also the most useful when combining datasets. Each category was presented in 2012 dollars, rounded to the nearest dollar (Manuel 2013).

The education variable is presented categorically, because not all surveys directly asked the number of years of education. The category named "some college" means the respondent attended college but subsequently did not or have not yet obtained a degree.

The ANES categories of "Bachelor's degree" and "advanced (graduate) degree" were consolidated. Education for all Americans, especially Blacks, is skewed right, so the number of respondents who filled these latter categories was small. Views on abortion included four categories in each survey: "never permitted," "only in the case of rape or incest," "some restrictions," and "always a woman's choice". The "some restrictions" category meant something other than restricting abortion to rape or incest cases. Perhaps such a restriction could be by gestation period, legality of the mother's decision (rights of the father or parents), or life of the mother, but none of the ANES surveys specify. The original scale questions concerning preference on what the government should do about defense and services spending had seven points including 1) increase spending, 4) keep spending the same, and 7) decrease spending. I condensed the scale into three categories—1-3 increase spending, 4 keep spending at the same levels, 5-7 decrease spending—based on the distribution of the responses. Also, a year variable was added with 2008 as the reference group to note any significant turnout differences as cohort effects.

The models for Chapter 4.1 were set up according to variable types. Model 1 features demographic control variables. Model 2 features the political-based variables: stances on abortion, positions on government spending, and election year. The final model in Chapter 4.1, Model 3, only adds my primary independent variable of interest, political party affiliation. Again, this variable is divided into Democrat/non-Democrat comparison. It is included in Model 3 to assess how much party affiliation contributes to variance in Black voter turnout.

The statistical method used in Chapter 4.1 is multinomial logistic regression, but a few points need to be noted here. First, although not represented in the regression tables, indicator variables for missing responses were included in the models to avoid losing responses, because the Black samples in 1984 and 1996 were relatively small. Additionally, the reference categories for the political opinion variables are not the standardized center or neutral response; rather, the reference groups here are the traditional Democratic/liberal positions on the particular question. This was implemented to reveal a far more *meaningful* result. For example, the difference between the likelihood of those who favor more or less government defense spending versus those who want to keep it at current levels may not be as telling when comparing those who favor increases versus those who favor decreases in defense spending or want spending levels kept the same. Additionally, the traditional Democratic response, in this example decrease defense spending, is less subjective than "keep spending the same" response. The latter response may mean very different things in each time period.

The statistical method used in the Chapter 4.2 study is also multinomial logistic regression, but it also includes the separate analysis of ANES 2008. This election was singled out for partisanship factors, because it contained an oversample of Black respondents and variables not present in other elections that may have impacted partisanship: positions on gays and lesbians serving in the military and stances on same-sex marriage. The primary dependent variable for Chapter 4.2 is Democratic Party identification: if the respondent identified as a Democrat or not in the election of that survey year. Again, control variables include demographics: gender, age, education level, family income, and census region. Descriptive statistics and the distribution of these

variables can also be found in Table 3.1. Similar to Chapter 4.1, political-based variables include political opinions on abortion, government spending on defense and services, and for 2008, the questions on gay rights in the military and same-sex marriage.

The military issue (which also appeared in 1996) was selected, because 2008 was a period when "Don't Ask Don't Tell" was being questioned. It was coded as "strongly allow," "allow," "not allow," and "strongly not allow." The issue of gay marriage was included in the 2008 analyses, because of Black's controversial position: mostly identifying as Democrats—the liberal party that supports same-sex marriage—but typically not in favor of same-sex marriage. The opinions on marriage in ANES 2008 were: "should be allowed to marry," "should not be allowed to marry," and "should not be allowed but should be able to have the same legal rights" or statuses commonly referred to as "civil unions." Liberal/conservative ideology was omitted despite its strong attachment to American partisanship and regionalism. Because of the full scope of meanings that different terms like "liberal," "moderate," and "conservative" held at different periods in American political history and especially because these datasets are combined, the substantive use of this variable was impractical. The political opinion questions serve as a form of proxy for ideology.

As in Chapter 4.1, the models for this study were set up according to variable types. Chapter 4.2 Model 1 features demographic variables, the variables used as controls. Model 2 features the political-based variables. There was no Model 3 in this part of Chapter 4. If there is no strong association between ideology and partisanship among Blacks, then it would suggest that Black partisanship is governed by entirely different forces than what is commonly asserted.

Chapter 4:

Results

4.1 Predictors of Black Voter Turnout

Chapter 4.1 analyses examine how demographic factors, political ideology, and party affiliation influence voter turnout. Stereotypically, it is thought that all Blacks vote the same. While not measuring *how* they vote, these analyses will tell the story of *who* votes. If it is discovered that there are differences between Blacks who vote and those who do not, then the assumption of Black America's politics—all Blacks vote the same—would be replaced with issues of Black voter dynamics; it matters *which* Blacks are voting. Results are presented in Table 4.1.

Age predicted Black voter turnout as the oldest Blacks were more likely to vote than younger groups, a patterning consistent with the literature on Americans in general. Although all brackets of Blacks were less likely to vote than the oldest Blacks, the youngest group was the most significantly and substantially less likely to vote. Interestingly, the second oldest (46-60) Black group was next least likely to vote. These results are not entirely consistent with conventional wisdom that voter turnout directly increases with age. Turnout was the highest among the oldest Blacks, but the non-linear results could indicate possible generational trends in Black political participation. Comparing preliminary individual election analyses did not show strong generational trends. Incidentally, the election years are spaced apart so that an individual in an age group in one election would be part of an older age group in another, creating pseudo-

measure of generation. While the influence of age was not perfectly linear in any election, the variability was not consistent between elections to clearly point to generational patterns rather than age groups interacting with specific elections.

Table 3.1: Exponentiated Logistic Regression Coefficients for Predicting Voter Turnout among Blacks in 1984, 1996, and 2008 (N= 902)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Woman	1.122	1.252	1.204
Age			
18-30	.202***	.179***	.261***
31-45	.495**	.450**	.557*
46-60	.502†	.372***	.419**
Education Level			
< Diploma	.520**	.582**	.682†
Some college	1.384	1.352	1.414
Comm. college/A.A.	2.003†	1.877†	1.937†
B.A. or higher	3.266**	2.874**	3.313**
Income Tertile			
Bottom	.615*	.638†	.656
Top	.916	1.047	1.021
Region			
Northeast	1.176	1.290	1.335
North-Central	1.639*	1.351	1.381
West	.962	.863	.978
Abortion Stance			
Never permitted		.401**	.483*
Only in rape/incest		1.114	1.360
Some restriction		1.010	1.262
Defense Spending			
Increase		1.131	1.136
Keep the same		.745	.799
Services Spending			
Keep the same		.849	.921
Decrease		1.154	1.296
Year			
1984		.448**	.461**
1996		.371**	.389**
Democrat			3.212***
Pseudo-R^2	.149	.213	.270
Constant	1.975***	2.760***	1.499**

† = $p < 0.10$, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

All age categories of Blacks experienced a drop in odds ratios and increase in p-value in Model 2, suggesting that the political opinions of the oldest Blacks (61 and

older) were less diverse than those of younger age groups. Voter turnout for the younger groups may have been linked to certain political stances or perhaps if they took a stance at all. This trend was most notably among Blacks ages 46 to 60 who moved from .502 to .372 and strongly increased in significance. Once party was added in Model 3, the odds ratios for age increased; and each group, except for the youngest, shed strength in p-value. What appeared to be purely political in Model 2 was mostly revealed to be the impact of partisanship in Model 3. Overall, the results show that age was the strongest demographic predictor of Black voter turnout, and the oldest Black voters (61 and over) were the most reliable to turnout, a pattern similar to Americans in general.

Neither gender nor region yielded any significant results. The analyses suggest that Black women were more likely to vote than Black men, but again, this pattern lacks strong p-values. The lack of statistically significant difference between the odds ration turnout of Black men and Black women counters the political literature that says that women are more reliable voters than men. The findings for region were not surprising as neither scholars nor pundits linked census region to *political participation* as much as political behavior. There was some significance of Blacks voting more in the North-Central United States (Midwest) than in the South in Model 1, but this difference was explained away by political variables in subsequent models.

Education revealed another pattern shared with previous studies. All models point to a positive relationship with voter turnout. Blacks with no high school diploma were significantly less likely to vote than Blacks who only graduated high school. The significance level drops in each model, meaning that this trend was weakened in the face of personal politics and partisanship. There was no strong statistical advantage for turnout

between Blacks who attended some college and those who discontinued education after high school. Specific election-based results, albeit small samples, reveal that this group's turnout varied by age composition. For example, in 1984, "some college" Blacks mostly consisted of younger respondents who probably had yet to complete college rather than simply dropped out, therefore voted more than Blacks with an associate's degree or equivalent. Blacks with four-year degrees or greater were over three times the as likely to vote as Blacks with only a high school diploma. It held a constant and strong significance in all models. A college education had the most powerful educational impact for Black voter turnout.

Blacks in the lowest income tertile were substantially less likely to vote than Blacks in the middle bracket by a factor of .656 in Model 3. Such a pattern is reflected in previous studies; however, there are a couple of caveats. Notice here the loss in significance among the lowest tertile when political variables were added in Model 2 and partisanship in Model 3. This suggests that differences in poll attendance between the middle and lower income Blacks could be partially explained by differences in political opinions such as abortion: low income tertile Blacks are generally less likely to vote than those in the middle, but the odds of voting for the former group increase if they share the same political views as the latter. Election-specific analyses hint that Black income patterns trend toward the larger prescribed American income-voting positive relationship. For example, in 2008, Blacks in the bottom third bracket had slightly lower odds of voting than middle tertile Blacks in all models. On the other hand, Blacks in the top income tertile were far more likely to vote than middle third Blacks. Again, 2008 involved a small sample of N=583. Overall, the statistical and substantive findings are

counter to the literature and media reports that assert income has a positive relationship with voter turnout.

Models 2 and 3 include political opinions. Although few were statistically significant, a story was still told. First, these variables explained half as much variance in Black voter turnout as the demographic variables, increasing Pseudo-R^2 from .149 in Model 1 to .213 in Model 2. Abortion held the most significant result. Blacks who oppose abortion in all circumstances were far less likely to vote than pro-choice Blacks in Model 2 and Model 3. Interestingly, however, Blacks who favored restrictions were more likely to vote than pro-choice Blacks, especially those who wanted some restriction different from just rape and incest. These findings suggest that although Blacks were motivated to vote by party (discussed below), they turned out to vote based on the issue and not total partisan alignment. Otherwise, we would have witnessed all of these stances having a lower likelihood of voting when compared to pro-choice Blacks, the position commonly associated with Democrats.

Although non-significant, Blacks who were satisfied with both social services and defense spending had lower odds ratios of voting than the respective Democratic positions (more spending on services, less on defense), and holding conservative spending positions meant greater likelihood of voting. Closer analyses show that the impact of spending position on voting varies by election, suggesting less of an ideological trend and instead specific socio-political context reactions. Not surprisingly, Blacks in 2008 were more likely to vote than Blacks in 1984 and especially 1996. These results do not suggest any particular predictor of Black voter turnout, but the variable does reflect

the trends in Black voter turnout through modern elections. SSDAN (2012) shows that 1996 witnessed one of the lowest Black turnouts since the Civil Rights Movement.

What is missing from the literature on voter turnout is the possible role party identification has as an independent variable. Again, all of the demographic variables account for just about 15% of the variation in Black voter turnout, and political opinions added just fewer than 7%. Here, partisanship added a healthy 6% on its own, bringing Model 3 to a solid .270 Pseudo-R^2.

The partisanship variable indicated that Black Democrats had a 3.212 odds ratio of voting from 1984 to 2008. Individual analysis of each year indicates that Black Democrats had stronger turnout odds ratios even in 2008 that had unprecedented Black turnout in general. The partisanship effect was the weakest (but still statistically and substantially strong by itself) in 1996, the election with the lowest Black turnout according to SSDAN (2012). If Black Democrats vote more than Black non-Democrats as Figure 2.1 and Tables 1.1, 2.2 and 2.3 suggest, then it seems that declines in voting among *Black Democrats* (the reliable voters) contributed to the 1996 drop in turnout which, in turn, may explain the smaller party affiliation effects on voter turnout in 1996 when compared to 1984 and subsequently 2008.

4.2 Determinants of Black Democratic Affiliation

Chapter 4.2 of this study examines demographic and ideological effects on party affiliation. The popular notion is that Blacks have the same politics and Democratic Party alignment—the "Black vote"—with the underlying assumption that Black politics are a product of race, simply being Black. If true, analysis should reveal little in terms of independent demographic and political variables. If Black attachment to the Democratic

Table 4.2: Exponentiated Logistic Regression Coefficients for Predicting Democratic Party Affiliation among Blacks in 1984, 1996, and 2008 (N= 1029)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Woman	1.456**	1.556**
Age		
18-30	.253***	.226***
31-45	.469**	.438***
46-60	.640†	.567*
Education Level		
< Diploma	.594**	.621*
Some college	.985	.909
Comm. college/A.A.	.932	.812
B.A. or higher	.905	.728
Income Tertile		
Bottom	.612*	.629*
Top	1.095	1.116
Region		
Northeast	.955	.960
North-Central	1.067	.977
West	.732	.654
Abortion Stance		
Never permitted		.397***
Only in rape/incest		.699†
Some restriction		.582*
Defense Spending		
Increase		1.138
Keep the same		.764
Services Spending		
Keep the same		.741
Decrease		.763
Year		
1984		.650†
1996		.587*
Pseudo-R^2	.090	.126
Constant	1.558***	2.697***

† = $p < 0.10$, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

Party is purely racial and/or cultural and extends beyond any other factor, then one would expect to find little association between variables such as age, education, and government spending stances, and the models would not explain very much variance; Blacks would self-identify as Democrats regardless of demographics or political stances. Results are presented in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3.

Black women in were more likely to identify as Democrats than Black men, significant at $p < .01$ in both models. This supports past studies that being Black and a woman leads to a more liberal stance which may be manifesting itself via Democratic Party alignment.

Age and Democratic Party affiliation once again demonstrated a strong, positive relationship as odds ratios for being Democrat decreased for each younger age category when compared to the oldest group of Blacks. The findings for all groups were highly significant. Although Black voter turnout increased in 2008 and support for Democrat candidate Obama was phenomenal, Black Democratic affiliation was still a factor of age. Rather than interpreting the findings in the direction of younger Blacks not being involved much with the Democratic Party, further examination indicates that the story is perhaps on the other end: nearly all of Blacks ages 61 and over identified as Democrats in 2008.

Education tells an unusual story for Black Democratic Party affiliation. Blacks without a high school diploma were less likely to be Democrat than Blacks with only a diploma. What is notable here is the lack of significant findings. Typically, it is thought that education produces more informed and/or liberal (Democratic) Americans, but here, the effect of education on Black partisanship was simply contingent on having a high school diploma or not. And based on the results for the least educated Blacks, one cannot argue that being Democrat was the stereotypical, default Black partisan position, an identity that is an assumed product of race and can be transcended through education and political awareness.

Family income level findings among Blacks counter any previous defined patterns. Although there are several factors that impact Democratic identification, typically greater income means greater support for conservative, usually non-Democrat-associated policies that protect the finances of those well off. Here in both models, Blacks in the lower income third were less likely to be Democrats than middle tertile Blacks, and top income Blacks displayed no statistical difference with those in the middle. This pattern echoes the pattern found with the education variable, if we assume education and income have a direct positive relationship. The lack of strong directional findings with family income level and partisanship could also be attributed to a combination of lesser diversity of Black family incomes when compared to Whites as well as the 1984 and 1996 economies where high-pay/low-skill jobs such as industrial work (that many Blacks occupied) were still a reality. In other words, Blacks who had only a diploma could fit into the middle or top income tertile along sided college-educated Blacks, diversifying these income categories to not reflect any directional trend.

Based on the layout of the American Electoral College (red states and blue states) and the reliability many hold in presidential elections, the result for region and Black partisanship are somewhat surprising. Region did not manifest as a predictor of Black partisanship. For instance, the western United States has the reputation of being reliably Democrat (blue states) while the South is largely Republican. Large opposition to racial and social issues in the South on the part of Republicans in statewide and local districts may have galvanized Black support for the Democratic Party. Juxtaposing the strength of that these regionalisms have on Blacks yielded no consistent results. Preliminary investigations suggest that small regional effects existed in specific elections but vary in

direction and reason (i.e. possibly by states with open and closed primaries in 2008), becoming lost in the ANES combined data. So, region does not contribute to understanding Black partisanship as a whole.

Political opinions yielded interesting results in Model 2. Abortion stance results were somewhat consistent with what one would expect to find based on popular party platforms. Blacks who did not support the full pro-choice position had lesser odds ratios for being Democrats as those who did, especially among the most pro-life Blacks. By a factor of .397, Blacks who would never support abortion under any circumstance were the least likely to be Democrats when compared to those who supported a woman's right to choose. This was the statistically strongest factor of all the political variables. Blacks favoring at least some restrictions on abortion reported less than 60% of a chance identifying as Democrat as pro-choice (woman's choice) Blacks at the $p < .05$ level. Similarly, Blacks wanting abortions restricted to cases of rape and incest had lower odds ratios for being Democrats, but they were actually next likely to identify as Democrats after pro-choice Blacks.

On the other hand, political ideology on defense and social spending had no significant effect on Black party affiliation. Additionally, Model 1 has a Pseudo-R^2 of .090, suggesting that demographics accounting just 9% of the variance in Black partisanship. Political opinions add another 3.6%. Together, these facts and a mild Pseudo-R^2 of .126 in Model 2 tell a strong story for Black partisanship: it is largely based on something other than conventional measures. Conventional wisdom tells that Democrats are associated with the political left. These proxy measures for ideology—the often-assumed basis of American partisanship—unsuccessfully produced any stereotyped

results. Subsequent individual results did show that larger (although still mild) Pseudo-R^2 were revealed in 1984 and 1996, but 2008 reported a sharp decline in what the same variables accounted for. Unlike the previous years, the results indicated something unique happened in 2008. Whatever contributed to this outcome may also be responsible for both the increased Black turnout and increased Democratic Party affiliation in 2008, perhaps an Obama effect.

Finally, Model 2 indicated Democratic attachment among Blacks varied by election year. Not surprisingly, Blacks in the unprecedented election of 2008 were more likely to be Democrats than Blacks in 1984 and even more so than in 1996. This is consistent with SSDAN (2012) who contend that Black voter turnout in 1996 was the lowest in modern elections. If Black Democrats vote more than non-Democrats as the analyses in the previous section suggest, then it makes sense that low voter turnout was due to lower Black Democratic identification in 1996.

Table 4.3 mostly mirrored the results found in Table 4.2, but there were some notable shifts. The 2008 results show that in this more recent election, the difference in Democratic Party identification between Black men and Black women disappeared. The lack of statistical significance for gender found in ANES 2008 data may be a product of the unique 2008 election. If Blacks were motivated to vote in 2008 because of Barack Obama, many may have begun voting in the Democratic Primary to nominate him as candidate of the party, a task that would have meant more registered Black Democrats especially in states with closed primaries. Since Black women were more likely to be Democrats than Black men in previous times, this increase in registered Democrats in 2008 would mostly have to have come from Black men.

Table 4.3: Exponentiated Logistic Regression Coefficients for Predicting Democratic Affiliation among Blacks in 2008 (N= 575)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Woman	1.245	1.322
Age Category		
18-30	.207***	.174***
31-45	.277***	.246***
46-60	.360**	.318**
Education Level		
< Diploma	.415**	.421**
Some college	1.029	1.012
Comm. college/A.A.	.717	.664
B.A. or higher	1.117	.999
Income Tertile		
Bottom	.628	.614
Top	.825	.876
Region		
Northeast	.837	.844
North-Central	1.373	1.289
West	.736	.686
Abortion Stance		
Never permitted		.346*
Only in rape/incest		.777
Some restriction		.637
Defense Spending		
Increase		1.031
Keep the same		.995
Services Spending		
Keep the same		.986
Decrease		.690
Gays in Military		
Strongly allow		.758
Not allow		.646
Strongly not allow		.897
Gay Marriage		
Civil Unions		1.097
Not Allow		.925
Pseudo-R^2	.103	.131
Constant	2.339***	3.622***

† = $p < 0.10$, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

The findings for age and education in 2008 were about the same as the combined data, but the coefficients were a bit more extreme: younger Blacks and Blacks without a diploma were even more likely to be non-Democrats in 2008. Family income ceased to be a predictor of Black Democratic affiliation in 2008, probably for the same rationale as

the decline in gender significance. Since Democratic Party affiliation increased in 2008 in general, new Black Democrats probably came from groups typically less likely to be Democrats such as low-income Blacks. As far as abortion stance, only those who agreed that abortions should never be permitted were statistically less likely to be Democrats, but this was significant at the $p < .05$ level versus the $p < .001$ in the combined data (1984 and 1996).

What is interesting is how neither positions on gays serving in the military nor same-sex marriage served as predictors of Black partisanship. Again, Blacks typically have been slow to back such stances that the Democratic Party has championed, yet these issues had no effect on Black partisanship.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

The conventional political wisdom behind the notion of, "All Blacks vote the same," assumes the political expression of Blacks and subtly their propensity to vote with turnout being only a product of race. This study investigated both voter turnout (political participation) and party preference (political behavior) of Black Americans of the Reagan Era to the election of the first Black president. Prior to this work, the relationship of party and voter turnout have been largely neglected or simply assumed to be non-existent, and this relationship had not been explored among specific voting blocs such as Blacks. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the accuracy of the political stereotype placed on Blacks as voters and to gain a greater understanding of Black voter turnout and the partisanship of Blacks, tasks that subsequently rendered promising and enlightening insight into Black politics. The conclusions of this study were located in what the analyses found as well as what it did not.

Chapter 4.1 uncovered factors that impacted Black voter turnout. The strongest of these predictors were age, abortion stance, and party identification. Age had a strong positive relationship with Black political participation; the older the person, the more likely he or she will vote. In this respect, Blacks share broader American voting trends (Gimpel et al 2004; Burr et al 2002). No support was found to detail any consistent generational patterns, meaning any age differences in voting *within* a given year were most likely due to the sociopolitical environment at that time.

Even though other measures were not as consistently strong statistically, they still told an interesting story. Because no results suggested Black women vote more than Black men, it suggested that gendered political differences between Blacks are minor when compared to Whites (Fisher 2011; Hardy-Fanta et al 2006; Lien 1998). The positive impact of education on Blacks going to the polls was only contingent on graduating high school, somewhat mirroring the rest of America (Straughn and Androit 2011; Sondheimer and Green 2010; Burden 2009). Low-income Blacks were less likely to vote than others, and there was no notable difference in turnout odds between middle- and high-income Blacks. This was probably a reflection of Blacks' lower median income than Whites, diversity of income brackets by education, and the past presence of high-pay/low-skill jobs Blacks occupied. With the exception of abortion, neither region nor political opinions proved reliable predictors of Black voter turnout. The most conservative pro-life Blacks were always less likely to vote than those who supported a woman's unhindered right to choose.

The most prominent story in Chapter 4.1 was the role party identification plays in Black voter turnout. With the exception of midterm elections, the role of partisanship in political participation in national elections, minority-centered or otherwise, remains either assumed or not assessed. Here, I found that Black Democrats were more likely to vote than Black non-Democrats by a ratio factor of over three. Partisanship alone greatly contributed to explaining Black voter turnout variance. If political stances drove Black partisanship as it is assumed to for Americans in general, one would expect Black political opinions to echo the turnout coefficients found for being Democrat, almost as if one were measuring the same variables. For example, if Black Democrats were more

likely to vote more than non-Democrats and all took the Democratic stance of defense cuts when it came to defense spending, the results should show that Blacks who are pro-cuts vote more than those adhering to pro-military spending ideology. Since the outcomes here do not exactly show this, it justified the focus of Chapter 4.2.

What motivates Black Americans to vote is somewhat different from the rest of America. Blacks strongly follow national trends on age and somewhat on education and income, but partisanship is the most interesting finding. Because Democratic affiliation matters in Black voter turnout which usually backs Democrats, simply holding that Blacks *vote* for Democrats as a product of being Black is called into question. Black turnout is not just a factor of disenfranchisement or cross-the-board race-based political solidarity. In other words, rather than the notion of "Blacks vote *Democrat*," it may be more accurately stated that "Black *Democrats* vote (Democrat)." This finding necessitated an exploration into what makes a Black Democrat.

The strongest and most stable determinants of Black Democratic affiliation proved to be gender, age, and abortion stance. Black women were more likely to be Democrats than Black men, a finding that agrees with the intersectional literature (Allison 2011; Kam et al 2007; Philpot and Walton 2007). This was true until 2008, were Black men mostly comprised the new wave of Black Democrats. Unlike the general American trend of older voters being more conservative and Republican (Lau and Redlawsk 2008), the outcome was reversed for Black Americans. These findings partly confirm the conclusions of Luks and Elms (2005) who stated that young and the oldest Blacks are less attached to the Democratic Party. What was also interesting here is that the youngest Black Americans were still the least likely to be Democrats when compared

to the oldest in 2008; Blacks have been one of the strongest and consistent supporters of the Democratic Party, and this was the election that supposedly inspired new, younger voters. It is interesting that young Blacks were still less likely to be Democrats. It raises the question of what will the future hold for the Democratic Party.

Of all the political variables, abortion was the strongest factor for Black partisanship; Blacks holding conservative views on abortion were far less likely to be Democrat that Blacks in favor of a woman's right to choose. Abortion remained significant when individual elections were investigated in additional research, particularly in 2008 as presented in Chapter 4.2. Gays serving in the military and the hot-button issue of gay marriage were examined. Blacks largely did not support same-sex marriage despite Democrats being the liberal party that does. Many pundits went as far as to blame large voter turnout of Blacks for the passage of bans on same-sex in both California and Florida, although scholars have shown these measures would have passed without increased Black turnout (Abrajano 2010; Slade and Smith 2010). Sherkat, de Vries, and Creek (2010) attribute anti-same-sex marriage attitudes to Blacks' strong ties to Protestant religion. The interesting tale here was that opinions on gay marriage *did not* impact partisanship. Positions on gay marriage (and homosexuality in general) and abortion are thought to be strongly impacted by religious views, and Black support for several issues hinges on how it lines up with their religion. It is curious that abortion stances were strong predictors of Black partisanship in 1984, 1996, and 2008 individually and collectively, but gay marriage—largely opposed by Blacks because of religion—was not.

Black Americans typically counter common political knowledge of partisanship in other areas. The likelihood of Democratic partisanship increased for Blacks with a high school diploma or more. Unlike Americans as a whole who become more conservative and Republican as income increases (Rehm 2010; Brewer and Stonecash 2001; Brooks and Brady 1999), low-income Blacks were less likely to identify as Democrat, a finding that supports Luks and Elms (2005). But counter to Luks and Elms (2005) who find that Blacks in the South are less Democratic than Blacks in other regions, this analysis did not detect any consistent regional patterns.

The story within Black partisanship was told by the role of ideology, represented here by abortion and opinions on government spending. Although abortion presented strong, typical results, positions on spending were not dependable factors in Black partisanship. These measures added little in terms of explaining Black partisanship. Ideology and partisanship in America are so frequently and interchangeably paired, making this finding very valuable. Although it does not have to be reflected by individual issues, ideology is the assumed basis of political opinions and partisanship. If these variables were minimal in variance explanation and not significant, then what does it mean for Black partisanship? The popular notion is that Blacks have the same politics and Democratic Party alignment—the "Black vote"—with the underlying assumption that Black politics are a product of race: simply being Black and/or more recently, an Obama effect. Understand that this research does not have the capacity or data to directly confirm this undoubtedly, but if it were true, analyses should reveal little in terms of independent demographic and political variables. For the most part, the outcomes *do* show that Blacks largely self-identify as Democrats regardless of most political stances

and ideology. In other words, while it cannot be said that Blacks are Democrats because they are Black, one can say that something other than ideological and demographic differences are driving Black partisanship.

In summary, this study addresses Black political stereotypes in three ways. First, descriptive statistics revealed that not all Blacks are Democrats; few are Republicans, but a significant number are Independents. Second, Black Democrats vote more often than Black non-Democrats, and voting is also a factor of age and abortion stance. Finally, although Black partisanship is sculpted by age, gender, and abortion, Black partisanship does not appear to be cleanly ideological.

There are several practical applications of this research. Politically speaking, the combination of these facts meant that perhaps Republicans had opportunities, especially in the decades prior to the 2008 Presidential Election, to recruit a significant amount of Black support and appeal and motivate to them to vote. For example, low-income, young, Black men who do not support abortion were more likely to be divorced from the political system: less likely to vote and be attached to a political party. Republicans had the opportunity to appeal to such Americans similar to the manner they appeal to low-income Whites who support them despite income trends and economic policy disadvantages. Further analyses indicate high turnout and Democratic Party identification that is not dependent on ideology make it very difficult for Republicans to sway Blacks. But again, this is a very recent development.

Furthermore, Meredith (2009) and Gerber, Green, and Shachar (2003) find that voting is habit-forming; past voting has an even greater effect on political participation than age and education (Gerber et al 2003), meaning that the increase in Black voters

witnessed in 2008 will likely endure for at least a few generations as evidenced by historically high Black turnout in the 2012 Presidential Election. This standing pool of potential anti-Democrat Black voters could have already been solidified behind the Republican Party if Republicans would have garnered their appeal and support. But other racial groups are not as politically "unsalvageable." Latinos have recently reached voting and partisanship levels that Blacks occupied in elections prior to 2008 (Lopez and Taylor 2012). Even if the solidification of Blacks in the Democratic Party is due to descriptive representation in 2008 and 2012, it is not far-fetched that a Latino presidential candidate could emerge over the next few decades and complete the process for Latinos as Obama did for Blacks. Further research should determine if Black political thought and progression described here is unique to Blacks or if Blacks are just at the forefront to minority voting patterns and development that may later be adopted by Latinos.

This study has some limitations. The first and most obvious of which is sample size. Because of the size of the Black population in general, datasets like the ANES with sample sizes of around 1200 are not the best for minority groups, making individual election evaluation results less generalizable. Surveys with larger Black samples like the National Black Election Studies (NBES) were considered, but no survey existed for 2008, and the issue of question consistency arose when ANES 2008 was to be used in place of a 2008 NBES. Another limitation is the strength of the models. With low pseudo- R^2's in each Table, the models only accounted for some factors that determine Black political participation and Black partisanship; however, the full profile of variables was neither practical nor was it the goal.

Future directions of this research should investigate predictors of party affiliation and political participation among other racial groups, especially Latinos. Also, the research conducted here only examined presidential elections. Would my findings hold true in midterm, local, and state-level elections? Additionally, more theories are needed concerning the findings of this study and other reported relationships in Black political thought, behavior, and participation. For instance, are non-Democrat non-voters a separated community from voting Black Democrats if community is defined in political expression?

The seemingly faith-based contradiction among Blacks is worth investigating extensively; abortion was a predictor of Black partisanship (and voter turnout) in each year, while same-sex marriage positions in 2008 were not. Historically, the Black church has been at the forefront of political engagement, the locus of planning during the Civil Rights Movement, and the refuge and forum of social ills. What contemporary role does religion and church attendance play in Black voting habits and party identification? Church attendance was included in preliminary research here but was subsequently dropped because of its interaction with abortion and the nature of the variable: behavioral rather than demographic or political opinion. Further research should measure the influence of behavioral and identity variables like church attendance and denomination.

Finally, the results of this study warrant future investigation into what makes a Black partisan or non-partisan. Questions should address the role of candidates and elections. Do Black non-Democrats not vote and/or not identify with a party because of weak non-Democrat opposition candidates, satisfaction with strong Democratic candidates, or because they feel content with either candidate's representation? And what

about the actual work of voting? Is Black voter turnout a matter of party outreach and get-out-the-vote campaigns as Philpot et al (2009) suggest, or do Black non-Democrats simply find politics and elections not worth the trouble? The political attitudes of young Blacks should be explored as well. Why is it that the youngest Black Americans were still the least likely to be Democrats in 2008 when Blacks have been one of the strongest and consistent supporters of the Democratic Party, and 2008 was the election that supposedly inspired new, younger voters? Such inquiries may venture beyond typical political and demographic data found in surveys and into areas of identity and Black conceptions of politics (qualitative analyses), because as the findings here suggest, political and demographic variables only account for a small portion of Democratic alignment, even in 2008.

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