AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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For my parents and grandparents
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African American political behavior is a puzzling thing some days. Their still sometimes differential status creates seemingly unexplainable behavior. This dissertation explores three interesting concepts in the political participation of African Americans. The first paper explores the effect of two factors of alienation on voting behavior. The results show that voters that mistrust the government are more likely to vote than those with more trust in the government. The second paper is a qualitative look into African Americans who choose to veer from the assumed norm in African American party identification. Why does a small, faithful pocket of Blacks continue to identify as Republicans versus Democrats? Their own words will speak to their choices regarding the party choice, important issues facing their community, the pressure to be a Democrat, and why Republican outreach to African Americans is an epic failure. The third paper examines the effects of alternative political participation on voting behavior for African Americans. Does engaging in protest behavior increase the likelihood of voting? The research indicates that not only does protest increase voting, but signing a petition is an even stronger indicator of whether one will cast a vote or not.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A funny thing happened on the way to graduate school… In June of 2008, the Democratic nomination for President went to Barack Hussein Obama, a then three year veteran of the United States Senate and first African American to garner the nomination for President from a major political party. Cut to November 4, 2008 and the United States sits on the precipice to make history yet again by electing the first African American as President of the United States. This event was not altogether surprising. After all, this is the nation that has found itself engaged in all manner of historic events, beginning with its founding. As the series of events that will eventually lead to the election of a man with an almost unelectable name unfolded, all manner of questions developed. In the main – are the politics of African Americans different, or is it the ways in which they engage that make it unique? The theories behind voting behavior and their application to this population are the same, but the strong suspicion that Blacks somehow are affected in a different manner became the key topic for many discussions and debates. Those questions turned into theories of their own and the results of that have become this paper.

The history of African Americans in U.S. politics is rich. It is full of people and events such as Alexander Twilight, the first Black elected to political office and Frederick Douglass, the former slave who would go on to be a founding member of the Republican Party. We of course cannot forget, Colin Powell, Douglas Wilder, Condoleezza Rice, Carol Moseley-Braun and many others who have been integral in the making of history but in defining African American politics in the United States. For all these firsts, the African American political struggle has been real. Hobbled by the institution of slavery, Blacks have been for most of their time on the
margins if not completely on the outside of having any power or equality. The rights and freedoms that many young African Americans today cannot conceive of being without did not come without a hard push for participatory rights.

The goal of this research is to contribute to the literature in political science on African American political engagement. There are places where the information is relatively thin when it comes to specific aspects of African American political participation, even though the history is rich. I examine three underreported areas in hopes of bringing new perspective on where the Black political experience connects with the overall American political experience.

The first essay investigates the concept of trust. This most critical concept of everyday life is critical for functioning democracies. Given the history between the federal, state, and even local governments and African Americans, is there reason to believe they trust the government at all, let alone unequivocally? I examine two factors, trust and efficacy, and how they affect voting behavior for Blacks. Will those citizens with the least amount of trust be more likely to cast their ballots at election time?

The research on African Americans and the Republican Party is equally light, maybe more so than other topics. After all, there are two reliable presumptions about the African American electorate - Blacks are going to vote for Blacks, and that vote will be Democratic. The second essay in this paper challenges those assumptions with a deeper dive into those African Americans who choose to identify as Republicans. Often the subject of scathing diatribes, jokes, and outright disgust over their presumed betrayal of their race, they are viewed as somehow being not being as Black by those outside of the Republican Party. Through in-depth interviews, I examine the right (or wrong) perceptions of African Americans regarding Blacks in
the Republican Party. What exactly are their concerns for not only America and specifically the African American community? Where is it that the Republican Party seems to be going wrong in recruiting African Americans to the party where they were once so firmly entrenched? The answers are candid, sometimes funny, and sometimes a little sad.

In the third essay, I examine what at first glance may appear to be a no brainer idea. Does participation in informal political activity such as protest or signing a petition increase the likelihood of voting? Of course, the obvious answer seems to be yes. Who would even doubt that? Protest is a very important concept to African Americans. How do we hear the voices of a group crippled by slavery and years of disenfranchisement? Blacks have utilized alternative participation for hundreds of years in various ways. What began with single actors or a select few on slave ships and plantations grew into overwhelming activity including marches, protests, sit-ins, rallies, pamphlet writing, speeches, and even a court case here and there. I contend that inclusion in alternative activity does increase the odds of voting for African Americans.
CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF TRUST AND EFFICACY IN THE VOTING BEHAVIOR OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

In the cradle of American automobile manufacturers, a water crisis that began in 2014 continues to loom large. It has shaken the trust of African Americans in the community in their local government. Flint, Michigan is a city long in an economic downturn after deep cutbacks at General Motors beginning in the latter part of the 1980’s. After declaring a potential $25 million-dollar budget shortage, a takeover of city finances occurred in 2011 (Flint Financial Review Team 2011). Subsequent attempts to cut costs regarding the city water fund would lead to serious problems with the water utilized by citizens in this once flourishing city. The anger and shock of the situation grew became so great, a debate was scheduled in Flint between potential Democratic Presidential nominees Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders in 2016. Citizens expressed to the candidates high levels of discomfort and fear regarding the water and attempts to correct the problems. One resident questioned the candidates on a course of action by the federal government to regain the trust of the city’s citizens (Federal News Service 2016).

Trust. A basic definition from Merriam-Webster states it is “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” (Merriam-Webster 2012). Financial definitions indicate trust as “…a relationship in which one person holds title to property, subject to an obligation to keep or use the property for the benefit of another” (Internal Revenue Service 2017). Using these two definitions, we can assess trust as reliance on someone to perform services with the expectation of a favorable outcome. Politics is a system that requires trust.
The study of trust (or distrust) is well established within the political science discipline. Regarding the relationship between elected officials and constituents, we can date it as far back as Madison’s ideas on representative government and Burke’s trustee delegate representation (Dovi 2017). Talk on the topic is climbing on the charts for African Americans with increasing levels of despair and lack of confidence in the ability of the government to provide the basic protections. In this paper, I examine two dimensions of alienation – trust and efficacy and their effect on voting for African Americans.

It should come as no surprise that prior to 2008, Blacks and their trust in government is lower than that of Whites, Hispanics, or Asians. The reasons are many. Blacks outpace Whites and other minorities in unemployment, incarcerations brought on by harsher policies in the criminal justice system, lack of government interest in correcting poverty and inequality (witness reform in welfare and minimum wages), and the increasing divide in the quality of and access to K-16 education for Blacks. The federal government seems more interested in aiding rather than eradicating problems that affect African Americans in massive numbers. The war on drugs only seemed to place more minorities in the correctional system. Other opportunities for more positive responses to problems tearing Black communities apart (e.g. Hurricane Katrina and HIV/AIDS) also received inadequate reactions.

The hallmark measure in surveys of trust in government asks “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time” (ANES, 2004)? Since the election of Barack Obama, Black trust in government has climbed and almost doubled that of Whites (Pew Center 2010). The presence of the first African American president in the White House really makes this no
surprise at all. However, this vote of confidence in the government has not always existed. Since 1968, trust in government by Blacks has been in a freefall with intermittent spikes attributable to first Gulf War, the inauguration of Bill Clinton, and the 9/11 attacks (Pew Center 2017).

While the trust measure indicates that Blacks do not always have more trust, their belief in the government remains strong. This is mainly due to the protections that have come from the federal government against local and state governments during times of reform (Reconstruction, the New Deal, Civil Rights and the Great Society) in this country. Whatever their views about the government, African Americans believe it is the job of the government to provide solutions to these problems crippling their community. A cursory review of survey data will reveal that Blacks view the government as having a responsibility to provide certain social and economic services to its citizens.

While trust in the federal government has varied over the years, trust in local government remains very low. In her 2012 book, Trust in Black America: Race, Discrimination and Politics, Shayla Nunnally discusses that Black trust in local government is far less when compared to all other racial groups. While there may be other explanations for this, one of the biggest functions of local government comes in the form of policing the community. In Black communities this action has become overwhelmingly aggressive, such as the stop and frisk policy of the New York Police Department. A GenForward poll in 2016 stated roughly a quarter of young African Americans reported being harassed by the police, 28% percent reported being arrested after encounters with the police, and over half reported knowing someone who has been harassed by
the police (Black Youth Project 2016). The numbers are much lower for Whites and Asians with Hispanics somewhere in the middle.

When discussing lack of trust of local government, incidents beyond harassment at the hands of local law enforcement are at the heart of lack of trust in local government. However, unexplained deaths during encounters with or in police custody of the police do little to inspire trust of African Americans. Many of these nationally known incidents include the deaths of Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Alton Sterling, Michael Brown and more recently Stephon Clark. Local leaders such as former Detroit mayor Kwame Kilpatrick have tested trust in local government. His corrupt practices further strained an already bankrupt city. If the government’s responsibility is to its people, actions by local authorities have provided Blacks with fewer reasons to trust.

In the relationship between Blacks and the government, historically speaking, Blacks are emotionally, financially, and politically powerless. This group has unwillingly at times relied upon the government to achieve policy goals. The balance of power leans to one side with trust placed in the government. Trust is still a minimal requirement in order to gain some kind of win for the group. However, the truth is Blacks do not trust the government as much as other groups do (Nunnally 2012).

The ever-weakening trust in government and its relationship to African American political participation is important for a few reasons. The main one is how to maintain the rising levels of traditional political participation by African Americans. There are three points to consider when pondering a potential answer to the questions:
1) The history of Blacks in the United States is one filled with strife and affliction. After emancipation, legal and cultural processes denied African Americans opportunities in education, employment, and political participation. The traditional relegated status of African Americans\(^1\) in America caused by long-standing inequities creates a sense of contempt and disbelief in the system.

2) In spite of the skepticism, African American voting behavior has begun to rival, and in the 2012 general election, exceeded that of those in the mainstream.

3) If number 1 exists within the Black population in America, then how do we (or can we) understand number 2 outside the presence of Barack Obama on the ballot? How can we explain why African Americans that fit the typical demographics of nonvoters (low SES, education, income, occupational prestige, etc…. ) vote at an equivalent pace and show greater political participation than Whites show of equal status? This research focuses on an opportunity to understand how internal factors like political mistrust, alienation, and efficacy affect political participation of African Americans. The scope of trust and efficacy on voter turnout for Blacks is a complex one. Few studies by scholars of African American political behavior seek to uncover the depth impact factors such as political efficacy and trust play in participation.

I also investigate the probability of government mistrust and political participation in nontraditional activities on voter behavior. I expect that Black individuals who have low trust in the government still have a sense of their ability to influence the government. As a result, they

\(^1\) The terms Black and African American are used in this paper. Both refer to people in the United States with origins in any Black racial groups in Africa and the Caribbean.
are compelled to involve themselves in the political process in multiple ways. That exposure may take the form of political discussions, mass media attention (watching the news, listening to radio programs, engaging on social media), or campaign materials. We cannot discount certain people have high interest in politics because they are drawn to it and find it interesting. The goal is to provide a contribution to the literature on voting behavior and explain how micro factors outside of the typical demographics influence turnout in a macro context.

**Review of Political Alienation Dimensions: Trust and Efficacy**

Race relations in the United States have continuously been rife with tensions that had contravening effects on Blacks and their voting behavior. In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois ([1903] 1965) outlines the negative consequences of actions by the White majority to disenfranchise Blacks through legal means. DuBois’ writings are known for his attempts to have Whites understand that an equal, desegregated society was the only way forward for Americans. At the same time, he argued it was important for Blacks to stand up and fight for those “inalienable rights” of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk [1903] 1965). Maybe more idealism than realism, DuBois’ writing is indicative of a hope that Blacks should be as a corporate body highly engaged in the American political culture.

The struggle for Black equality in America can only be described as tense, muddled, drawn out, and violent. The relationship between African Americans and the mainstream has been full of mistrust and tension that has served as the template for Blacks and their actions in politics. The call for action from leaders in the Black community in the mid-20th century gave fire to civil rights and legislative changes such as the 1965 Voting Rights Act that helped level
the playing field of political participation. While the fight for equality has come a long way through these achievements, it may still be too early to say complete equality has been reached in America. African American voting seemingly continues to be compelled by the ongoing struggle for racial parity.

It is notable that there are racial differences in political trust and the sources of that mistrust. The factors that influence trust in Whites do not have similar effects on Blacks (Hetherington and Globetti 2002). Similar findings in other research extends Shingles’ (1981) idea that the lack of trust in government by Blacks is due to overall unhappiness with their lack of economic and political power (J. Avery 2006). Blacks who express mistrust are more likely to be motivated to engage in unconventional versus conventional participation (Shingles 1981). At the same time, White participation tends to be unaffected by political trust (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). An analysis of the 1996 and 2000 National Election Studies finds that in those two elections more Blacks registered and voted in 2000 versus 1996. More importantly, political mistrust increases the likelihood of African American voting (Southwell and Pirch 2003). This is in direct opposition to the effect mistrust has on White participation. The research highlights a major differentiation between races and the impact of attitudinal aspects on voting behavior. While depressing White turnout, mistrust serves as a mobilizing factor for Blacks.

Mistrust

One aspect of diffuse and specific support is the idea of trust. Like other terms in the discipline, trust in government is not easily defined. The most generally agreed upon definition is that trust is “the public’s basic evaluative orientation toward the government in Washington” (Miller, Goldenberg and Erbring 1979). Arthur Miller’s commonly used definition states that
trust is the public’s belief the government is doing what is expected of them (Miller 1974). There is an evaluative piece of the policy outputs and the attitudes of the public when expectations are not met (Clawson and Oxley 2008).

The concept of political mistrust may provide some answers as to how it can engender distrust and apathy in the political system for African Americans. The literature is limited but growing in the discipline regarding the idea for African Americans. While an important concept, the causes, measurement, and outcomes of the concept are not widely agreed upon by scholars in the field. Political mistrust is best defined as a lack of trust starting with political leaders (Miller 1974; Clawson and Oxley 2008). Individuals generalize the sense of mistrust of leadership to the entire process, leading to perceptions that not only is the political process rife with corruption, but also those who would be a part of the system (Capiella and Jamieson 1997). Therefore, as Niemi, et al. (1997) posit, mistrust in politics works as an opposing force to political efficacy.

Political mistrust is multi-faceted and conceptualized in many ways. Citrin (1974) and Miller’s (1974) back and forth discussion highlights the inferences from citizens’ decreasing levels of trust as a representation of dissatisfaction with politics. Miller (1974) discusses how lack of trust is researched starting at the institutional level and spreads out to the entire system of government. Political trust is expressed attitudinally so when individuals perceive a lack of preferred policy, they are less likely to report trust in the government. The conclusion is that legitimacy of government institutions lies in how they perform (Miller 1974). Mistrust is understood as the way voters express their disapproval and negative feelings toward those running for office and incumbents as well (Citrin 1974). Political mistrust is affected by the persistence and intensity of which an individual cogitates on politics. Low trust in government
can be attributed to differences on issues from political parties and unhappiness with the incumbent president if a person has deep-rooted and easily accessible attitudes regarding people and issues (Niemi, Craig and Mattei 1991).

Understanding the framing of political mistrust is worthwhile, but the consequences of the concept may be the more important piece. It is used to explain low voter turnout in the United States and other long-standing democracies (Capiella and Jamieson 1997; Patterson 2002). The indifference of voters and overall dissatisfaction with the government can be attributed to political mistrust as well (Nye, Zelikow and King 1997). The potential may exist for it to explain what drives people to the polls in record numbers when combined with other factors such as candidate characteristics, experiences, and events. While the effects are not often the subject of direct empirical study, the idea that mistrust is overall a bad thing should not be generalized to all voters. Indeed, it may increase political sophistication, hinting that perhaps it is simply a healthy way for individuals to show their own critical thinking about persons in office, their performance, and the system.

The literature does offer a bit of research on the topic of political mistrust and how it works to develop political alienation or motivation of voters. The few studies that are a part of the scholarship offer some insights on the topic among the general population and the possible effects on African American voting behavior. Agger, et al (1961) explain political mistrust as it relates to what they term being “politically potent”- a sense that an individual does indeed have a modicum of authority within the political system. Their research finds a close relationship between political mistrust and variables such as party affiliation, education, income, socioeconomic status (SES), and activism. Posing varying explanations on the correlation
between the two, they report that the more politically potent show more mistrust, but there may be an alternative explanation. Those with more mistrust report lower political potency and people with lower SES show more mistrust (Agger, Goldstein and Pearl 1961).

The findings also indicate that Blacks reported high amounts of political mistrust versus Whites and those with a greater interest in politics and political activism are more likely to report high mistrust (Agger, Goldstein and Pearl 1961). Taking into account this research took place in 1959, the interest in politics is possibly due to the desire by Blacks to improve their situation given life experiences. In other words, the mistrust breeds high political participation with the hope that electing the right representation will, in fact, make a difference in their lives. Research by Jackson (1973) had similar findings regarding Black college students’ political activism and mistrust. The study involved students at places of higher education in the Southern United States, primarily at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and one predominately White university. The relationship between mistrust and groups is shown to be highest among the African American students (J.S. Jackson 1973). A particularly informative piece of data is that the Black students at the primarily White school reported greater feelings of mistrust and alienation than those at the HBCU.

Other studies examine the connections between turnout and alienation, specifically focusing on the ways mistrust, meaninglessness, and powerlessness act on one another to determine voting behavior (Southwell 2008). Like Miller (1974), the suggestion is that attitudinal factors such as mistrust mean just as much when deciding to vote as any other factor whether psychological or demographic. The general results of the research are as expected: individuals who feel meaningless and powerless are least likely to vote. However, among those
who consider themselves moderately meaningless (the government is not responsive) and powerless (political inefficacy), mistrust increases voting (Southwell 2008).

A 2003 Pew Report points out interesting differences between not only races but also political parties and age regarding feelings about the government. Blacks have greater cynicism toward the political system but oddly not about voting (Pew Research Center 2003). After the election of 2000, Blacks still seemingly showed strong beliefs regarding the value of elections and input on government functioning. However, after the 2000 election, mistrust and perceived lack of government responsiveness by Black voters increased. Between 1999 and 2002, the percentage of Blacks who felt they had little to no say in government grew from 34% to 58% (Pew Research Center 2003). Overall, it seems that the groups have moved in opposite directions regarding their views on the good of the government with Blacks becoming more cynical and Whites less so.

More recent data indicates that Blacks mistrust of the government continues to grow. A recent Pew Center (2017) report shows that trust in government is at an almost all time low with 15% of Americans believing they can trust the government to do what is right “most of the time” and 3% believing the government can be trusted “just about always.” The research (Pew Center research 2015) further indicates that while trust has been declining since the Vietnam War escalation, Watergate scandal and ever worsening economic problems of the 1970’s and 1980s, levels of trust have never risen above 30% in recent times even with the post 9/11 boost. Blacks trust in government peaked in 1964 at 77%, but since that time has fallen, to an all-time low of 11% in 2007 (Pew Research Center 2015).
Building on the work of Verba and Nie (1972), and Gurin and Epps (1975), Shingles (1981) postulates that political efficacy and lack of trust is highest among those who have greater levels of race consciousness. This concept describes not only strong racial identity but dissatisfaction with resources available to African Americans (in comparison to that of other groups) and belief that the inequitable distribution of the resources are due to outgroup discrimination (Miller, et al. 1981). As an individual’s sense of self in the group increases, the idea of the “Protestant work ethic” is spurned and the social and political system at large is held responsible for the lack of advantages (Shingles 1981). Psychologically and behaviorally speaking, racial consciousness has a great impact on both mistrust and political efficacy. Higher levels of these two factors affect not only participation but the type of participation and initiative required for implementation (Shingles 1981).

In her book *Trust in Black America: Race, Discrimination, and Politics*, Shayla Nunnally puts forth a brilliant discussion of the way in which race has affected “the status of humanity, equality, and participation of people in American society” (2012, 5). While racial (dis)trust is the focus of the book, Nunnally brings greater light to the issue of the ways in which trust and race intermingle for Blacks and affect political and social perceptions. More importantly she discusses how race as a determinant in the way people engage in politics and political conflict. Those who consider themselves as Black may have that classification in common, but the experiences are not all similar for those in that group. Blacks, she says, are one of the least trustful groups in the United States because of those experiences (Nunnally 2012).
**Political Efficacy**

The idea of political efficacy first appeared in the mid-20th century. Over time it has been described using a variety of terms such as “a sense of effectiveness in public affairs” (Douvan and Walker 1956) and “political potency” (Agger, Goldstein and Pearl 1961) among others. The term is well known via Almond and Verba’s work *The Civic Culture* (1965). Political efficacy, as defined by Almond and Verba (1965) is “subjective political competence.” Political efficacy is the feeling an individual has regarding their ability to engage in politics. An efficacious individual has the required knowledge and confidence to have some impact on the government. While typically studied in individuals, it does not necessarily rule out collective political efficacy.

Modern definitions of this idea break it into two distinct parts: external efficacy and internal efficacy (Flanigan and Zingale 2010). Internal efficacy is an individual’s feeling as to his or her own political skills and political empowerment. External efficacy involves assessing correctness or fairness regarding procedures and outcomes. This idea is separate from trust, which is a judgment of the response by those in power to demands of their constituencies. The two are very close as concepts and often found to be highly correlated in most research.

External efficacy is most often measured using questions that convey how much say people think they have in the government, how much public officials care about what they think, and even how responsive those in government are to individual input. Internal efficacy measurements are designed to discover individual understanding of the way politics work, qualifications for involvement in politics, and level of information about politics. This particular idea varies between individuals. The concept has a positive relationship in both individual
variables (interest, knowledge, and participation) and demographic variables (ethnicity, gender, income).

Efficacy can be affected by age and race. Easton and Dennis (1967) clearly suggest that while young children feel more efficacious, the reason why is not clear. In prior political socialization research, it has been found that younger students have stronger feelings of efficacy than do their parents (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Weissberg and Josslyn 1977). This is true for both Blacks and Whites but is made a bit more interesting by the fact that Black students and their parents still tend to feel less efficacious than their White peers (Abramson 1977; Dalton 1980).

There are some studies on racial differences and efficacy regarding feeling of efficacy between Blacks and Whites. Research by German and Hoffman (1978) shows that North Carolina school age Blacks tend to feel less efficacious than Whites during police interactions. Ruth Jones’ (1976) studies conducted in the St. Louis area fall in line with other studies that show Blacks tend to feel less politically efficacious than Whites. Analysis of additional nationwide studies indicate that when asked about their influence on local government, Blacks do not feel they can affect the decisions in local governance (Jones 1979; Scott 1981). These findings definitely bear updating using more current measures and also incorporation of Campbell’s writings on the impact of events on feelings of efficacy.

**Voter Turnout and Race in America**

Research on election turnout reveals many explanations for the downturn in the frequency of voting by Americans. The factors range from voter apathy, political inefficacy (belief one’s vote does not matter), sociocultural and economic impediments, and intimidation of
voters (Boyd 1981, U.S. Census Bureau 1991, Ferrini 2012). Although political participation is broadly defined, this study uses it in the most common form—voting. Voter turnout for Blacks has lagged behind that of Whites. It experienced a rise until the 2012 election when it surpassed White participation (Taylor and Lopez 2013). The presence of Barack Obama and the potential effect on turnout for African Americans cannot be ignored when discussing the increase. The difficult history of Blacks in the United States combined with attitudes toward government may play a greater role in future elections and turnout rates.

Verba and Nie (1987) reported that participation rates for Blacks in the political process are not as high as that of Whites. Data from the Joint Center and Pew Center indicate that African American voting rates are proportionately similar to that of Whites (Bositis 2012; Lopez and Taylor 2009). Available statistics going back to 1964 show the rate of voting by Blacks to be consistently lower when compared to the rest of the population. Between 1996 and 2008, the gap in voting between Blacks and Whites has been relatively insignificant and in 2012 Black voting outpaced that of Whites by 2.1% (File 2013).

Four major reasons have typically explained low voter turnout for Blacks

1) Physical and economic tyranny (Verba and Nie 1972; Salomon and van Evera 1973);

2) de jure tactics and political fraud (Walton 1972);

3) Lack of understanding by many African Americans of the association between the policy process and their social/economic problems (Morris 1975); and

4) Limited contact for lower income Blacks (Erie and Brown 1979).
Models of Distrust and Efficacy Effects on African American Voting Behavior

The psychology of political involvement is quite simply how much does an individual care about politics and believes that engagement to be a worthy pursuit. Common sense tells us that people who have a close attachment to the political scene will most likely vote more often than those who do not. Understanding the link between various attitudinal variables and political participation of Blacks is an area of the literature that needs expanding. Political mistrust among Blacks can indicate an underlying dissatisfaction with the political process versus those in office (Avery 2006, Walsh 2004). However, it does not mean that political responsiveness to the needs of Black constituents always receives the attention it deserves by incumbents. Popular literature often speaks to public officials and their lack of focus on the African American community, creating a sense of political inefficacy among Blacks.

Political Trust

Trust in government is the result of individual evaluation or emotional judgment (Miller 1974), and mistrust is manifested in the absence of trust. Individuals with trust in the government are more likely to think that elected officials seek to make the lives of their constituents better; and distrustful citizens subscribe to the idea that government responsiveness only occurs for elites and special interests (Milbrath and Goel 1977; M. Conway 1985). The previous research for this in African Americans presents a story that tells of higher participation with lower trust. Mistrust encourages political behavior because it gives African Americans the ability to blame someone for the deprivation and oppression they feel (Shingles 1981; Guterbock and London 1983). Blaming serves as a driving force to be active in government and effect change.
Since the 1960’s, the American National Election Studies (ANES) have included a measure of political trust. The four questions listed in Table 2.1 include one direct question on trusting the government in Washington and three regarding perceived behaviors and trustworthiness. Although the questions may assess different ideas, generally they are accepted as measures of trust in government. Analysis of the items show strong enough correlation with one another to make them acceptable as an evaluative measurement of the government (Stokes 1962)

Table 2.1. American National Election Studies Measures of Political Trust

1. “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or just some of the time?”

2. “Do you think that people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it or don’t waste much of it?”

3. “Would you say that government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of the people?”

4. “Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked?”

Source: American National Election Studies 2004

Effects of Political Efficacy

As political attitudes go, political efficacy is one of the most studied feelings. The concept was first measured by Campbell, Miller, and Gurin in the 1950’s to assess “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954). The items from the original University of Michigan Survey Research Center Measure are listed in Table
2.2. A response of disagree on the questions equates to efficacy. Campbell, et al (1954) find that not only are the items highly related to one another, the relationship between efficacy and voter participation is also high. The authors conclude that individuals are more efficacious and more likely to participate in the political system, even when controlling for demographic factors such as education (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954). Campbell et al extend the work on political efficacy in the 1960 work *The American Voter*.

Table 2.2. University of Michigan Survey Measure of Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: University of Michigan 1952*

The results of Campbell’s (1960) research are used in the political science literature. Typically, the four questions for measuring political efficacy combine to create a single measure. Easton and Dennis’ (1967) questions to test political socialization are similarly used as one single measure. However, in Lane’s (1959) study, the interpretation of political efficacy is different. He discusses two separate parts regarding the effectiveness of the individual and the responsiveness of the government. The research has since influenced how political scientists view and utilize the idea of efficacy.

Previous research posits that citizens participate in government more often when they feel some measure of influence and that the government is listening to their concerns. For African American political participation and efficacy enjoy a positive relationship (Shingles 1981;
Guterbock and London 1983). With this in mind, I expect to find that Blacks who a) think
government seems too complicated, b) feel they have no influence in what the government does,
and c) believe those in elected office have little to no concern about them will go to the polls less
often than those who feel more efficacious. Based on Balch’s (1974) analysis that two measures
should be used, I include an instrument to measure the influence of internal and external efficacy
on voting. Internal efficacy is measured using the question “Sometimes politics and government
seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” External
efficacy is measured using the following questions: “People like me don’t have any say about
what the government does” and “Public officials don’t care much about what people like me
think” (E. M. Simien 2005).

The possibility also exists that there is a collective effect for African Americans with
regard to political efficacy. The Black community has a strong sense of loyalty to one another
and this may well extend to the concept of efficacy. If a Black person feels Blacks as a
collective can influence government listening and responding to the concerns of the group, it is
possible they are more likely to vote. Without question, more Blacks running for office
increases Black turnout (Preston 1989). Black migration to cities in the North, resulting in the
move by Whites to suburban environments, created an important voting bloc that those running
for office paid heed to and increased their clout in local politics. As Preston (1989) further
examines, this boosted political efficacy as a group and their belief that they could get the
representation and policy they wanted. I include a test for group efficacy and the power of the
disadvantaged to improve their lot as a positive influence on voting behavior.
Engagement in Politics

Engagement in politics simply revolves around an individual’s interest in the political scene. While African American political participation is indeed growing, aspects such as interest need additional work. People who pay close attention to and are truly interested in government by reading newspapers, watching politically oriented programming, or engaging in political campaigns, will most likely vote. This research uses a single combined measure of political engagement. I hypothesize that African Americans who exhibit some degree of enthusiasm toward political campaigns are more likely to show up at the polls and vote than those who do not.

Demographic Variables

The impacts of demographic, social, and economic variables on voting behavior are well documented in the literature. They will not be discussed in this section as I expect them to have a positive relationship on the dependent variable (voting). All models will incorporate these factors: gender, income, home ownership, age, marital status, and education. Since Republicans vote more frequently than Democrats (M. M. Conway 1985), Republicanism should be a positive influence on voting. Also, the presumed profile for a Republican is an educated individual with excellent income and occupational prestige. This profile type leads one to believe he or she will vote more often than a Democrat who is un/underemployed, has a lower income, and is less educated. The one demographic variable I do expect to have some effect is region. From a historical perspective, African Americans in the Southern region tend to have greater restrictions on their ability to participate in the electoral process. As such, I expect that respondents from the
South are more likely to not only have less trust of the government but also are more likely to participate in the government.

**Hypotheses, Data, and Methods**

**Hypothesis 1:** African Americans with high mistrust and interest in politics probably will vote at higher rates.

**Hypothesis 2:** High Internal and External Efficacy positively affect African American voter turnout.

To accurately test the effects of mistrust on African American voting behavior, I will use items from the 2005 National Black Feminist Study. The sample consists of approximately 500 African Americans age 18 and older interviewed by telephone between November 2004 and January 2005 (E. M. Simien 2005). The sample is not overly large but should be enough for successful hypothesis testing without the typical issues that cause problems in typical analysis of Blacks in politics. The survey is also inclusive of questions that are distinctive and allow for testing of the above ideas without the use of multiple proxy questions. Other data available includes the 1993 National Black Politics Study. It is not selected due to its age. The more current study incorporates feeling of African Americans after the highly contested election of 2000 but before the nomination and election of Barack Obama.

For this study, I employ a logistic regression model to assess the effects of mistrust and efficacy (internal and external) on African American voting behavior. The original list of variables and coding for each is listed in the table below. I have made modifications for this study to some of the variables and the changes are explained below. No coding for race was needed as all respondents for the survey were African American.
For all hypotheses the dependent variable will be voting. Hypothesis 1 will include independent variables trust in government (govtrust) and political engagement (candmoney, campmaterial). Hypothesis 2 will use independent variables including internal efficacy (govcomplicated), and external efficacy (govsay and officialconcern).

Results

Approximately 61% of the respondents were females. All respondents were between the ages of 18 and 93, with an average age of 46 years. Over half (57%) of the respondents are homeowners, with the same percentage being unmarried. Income is split with 44% of respondents making over $40,000 per year and 56% making less than $40,000 per year. Approximately 87% of the respondents indicate voting in the 2004 general election (E. M. Simien 2005). The percentage is extremely which may be simply explained by overreporting. It is a common error in surveys. The American National Election Studies often finds reports of voting higher than vote totals and even census reports (Belli, Young and McGonagle 1999). It is well documented in the literature that African American voters are more likely to overreport than Whites (Bernstein, Chadha and Montjoy 2001; Karp and Brockington 2005). However, when studies investigate only nonvoters, the gap decreases and African Americans are only slightly more likely to overreport than Whites (Bernstein, Chadha and Montjoy 2001). Social desirability is also a factor in reporting of voting behavior (Belli, Traugott and Beckmann 2001).

Most of the demographic and socioeconomic variables load as expected for Black voters and existing literature. There are a few exceptions in the results. Females, homeowners, those who are older, and the well educated are more likely to vote however; none of the variables reach the expected levels of significance. Additional variables show interesting results. Income is
positive but not significant in any of the models. The marital status variable presents unexpected results. The coefficient is negative in all models with no significance, indicating that married respondents are less likely to vote than single voters. The region variable had negative coefficients in all models as well. It was expected that voters in the South might have a higher probability toward voting over those in other areas of the United States. Also, it is typical for Republicans to vote more frequently than Democrats. In these models, Democrats had a greater likelihood of voting, but also in each model the variable was highly significant. In the education variable, category 4 (postgraduate education) is dropped in all models due to collinearity.

Next, the research focuses on the political alienation variables in the models. In this model, mistrust (of the government) is an important part of the voting calculus for African Americans. It is highly significant for voters who believe the government can never be trusted and those who have only partial trust of the government. The coefficient is positive even for those who feel the government can be trusted. This indicates these voters are still more likely to vote although they have “trust” in government. As hypothesized, political engagement is positive in addition to being significant. This result suggests that for African Americans with an active interest in politics have a greater likelihood of voting than those who do not.

The variables that test for individual efficacy present mixed results. The Government Say variable is negative and not significant. The second variable, Official Concern, has a positive direction and is significant. People who believe that their elected officials are concerned and care about their issues are more likely to vote. The third variable, Government Complicated, is positive but not significant for those with a strong belief that they understand the government.
The direction of the coefficient turns negative and there is a failure to reach significance as confidence in understanding of the government weakens.

**Model 1 – The effect of trust in government on voting behavior**

The demographic variables in Model 1 show expected coefficients and significance. Older voters are much more likely to vote than younger voters, and this pattern holds true to conventional literature. However, results from the 2018 midterm elections show a growing trend of Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z outvoting older citizens (Cilluffo and Fry 2019). The Democrat variable shows greater significance than Republican in the party variable (.011 versus .072). However, the sample is made up of entirely African Americans who overwhelmingly identify as Democrats. The excluded category included those who claim to have no preference for one party over the other. Independent responses were left in the model. Those with the “no preference” answers are more likely to be people who do not participate in politics as much as Independents (Miller and Wattenberg 1983).

Gender and income are not significant. Women vote more often than men which may serve as an explanation. In the 2018 midterm elections, women outpaced men voting 55% to 52% (Hartig 2019). The income variable includes those making less than $40,000 per year. The norm is citizens with higher education levels earn more money and vote more often. However, the exit polls for the 2016 general election show that overall, incomes under $50,000 per year outpaced all other income groups (CNN 2016). In this model, married participants are less likely to vote which runs counter to the exit poll results from 2016 and the general literature. The rural variable was not particularly significant, with those living in large cities slightly more likely to vote than those in small cities. However, it is of note that those Blacks living in suburbs
and small towns are less likely to vote than those in cities. Region did not receive the significance expected. Southern African Americans are just as likely to vote as those in other areas of the United States; however, the coefficient is negative for this specific factor.

The results of the first regression suggest a direct effect of mistrust on voting for African Americans. Although the variable is labeled Government Trust, the results show that voting is more likely for those who think the government can never be trusted. More trust in the government decreases voting among African Americans as shown in Figure 2.1. The large confidence interval for category 4 (the government can always be trusted can be attributed to the small number of cases (14) in the category.

In the model, political engagement also positively affects voter behavior. Political engagement in this model is measured through the variables Candidate Money and Campaign Material. The two variables measure active participation through donations and/or passing out campaign materials. Watching politics on television or having a sign in the yard can be political engagement, the goal is to measure activity versus passive behavior. As seen in Figures 2.2 and 2.3, both variables indicate that those with active engagement in politics are more likely to vote.
The model is designed to test for the power of efficacy on voting behavior for Blacks. Among the control variables, the prior assessment from Model 1 holds true in this model. The predictor variables show similar results as Model 1 and will not be discussed. The variables Government Say and Official Concern are used to measure external efficacy. The Government Say (Figure 2.4) variable is not of any significance. The Official Concern (Figure 2.5) variable
is significant for voters who feel they influential in government through their elected officials. The coefficient in the category displays a positive direction indicating individuals with moderate sense of external efficacy have a greater likelihood of voting. The measure of internal efficacy (Government Complicated) in Figure 2.6 is not significant in any category. Individuals who “strongly disagree” with the statement show internal efficacy and a greater likelihood of voting.

A final note on the collective results. The outcome of model 1 is contrary to what is common in the political science literature. Much of the literature supports trust influencing vote choice (M. Hetherington 1999). The smaller sample size combined with all respondents being African American in addition to 61% female could affect the robustness of the models and the ability to generalize the data. In Model 2, while traditional literature supports the more efficacious a voter feels, the more likely they are to vote, the results here are a bit mixed. While there is little support for internal efficacy, there is more for external efficacy, just not as much as expected. It is understood that many times models are based on perfect world situations and the results here have given the proper answers without meeting all conditions.

Figure 2.4. Government Say Effect on Voting
Conclusion

This research is an empirical test of specific factors of alienation (trust and efficacy) on voting behavior for African Americans. Using the 2004-2005 Black Feminist Study, I used two models to determine how mistrust, political interest, and efficacy affect voting for African Americans. The results provide clear support that among these voters, mistrust plays an important role in the decision to vote. Citizens who express a serious lack of trust in the government (the government in Washington, D.C. can never be trusted) will vote versus those
who express greater trust as indicated by the direction and significance of the variable. As the mistrust of the government would apparently increase a sense of alienation, and trust must receive some serious weight in addressing voting behavior.

Let’s return for a moment to the issue of trust and the case of Flint, Michigan. The citizen asks what the candidates plan to do so residents may trust the government again. Secretary Clinton first responds with an expected yet generic response on double checking and triple checking water usage. The moderator calls for a more specific answer. She responds with support for President Obama’s initiatives in holding departments more accountable and expanding services for children (Federal News Service 2016). Senator Sanders expressed more outraged at the situation. He provided a more satisfactory response given the amount of applause. Regarding trusting a government that created the crisis, Senator Sanders states the government is not holding up its end of the bargain to citizens. His final (non) answer – he trusts the people to make government work for them (Federal News Service 2016).

Of course, these citizens are asking a legitimate question to the candidates. It is altogether fair to presume these people may never have any trust for the government again. The candidates want votes and these citizens are well within their rights to never vote again. However, with the decreasing to absent trust the people of Flint seem to have - in that same year, the primary had near record turnout. More than 2.5 million voters across the state showed up, the largest number since 1972 (Mack 2016). Specifically, in Flint, the city clerk had to deliver additional ballots to various precincts the day of the election. It was a first in 20 years (Mack 2016). Is the turnout unexpected? Not really considering the situation. But it is interesting if we
factor in the causes of the water crisis, assignment of fault, and if there is any hope of future trust.

Active political participation (giving money to campaigns, handing out campaign material) positively affects the voting behavior of African Americans. The individual sense of empowerment pays a much larger role in voting versus that of the group. When deciding to vote, the individual is important which is a bit against expectation and the current literature. According to the hypothesis, it was expected for people to identify with their group and that connection would increase voting behavior. The failure for the variables to reach significance inside the model tells another story that requires further research.

Closer attention to the history of African Americans in the United States is important when considering how trust effects patterns of voting. The lack of trust by African Americans did not suddenly arise. Combined with a desire for a more level playing field, the historical narrative may lend some explanatory power for voting behavior.

What is not addressed in this research is the impact of Barack Obama on the outcomes of voting behavior. One major reason for that is the climb in voting percentages for Blacks to historic highs in 2008 and 2012. This adds a potentially interesting bit to the narrative. African Americans were mobilized at rates unseen since the mid-1960’s after the passage of the Voting Rights Act. It is presumed by the researcher that these voters were already overly mobilized already going to vote for Obama. However, this is a bit of an outlier considering after the 2012 election, the rate of voting for African Americans moved closer to trend.

A permanent change in the trend may be possible. It is well documented in the literature that African Americans overwhelmingly will vote for another African American. Strategy
involving Black politicians and candidates might widen the options and decrease the sense of mistrust and alienation felt by the group. Even better would be a longitudinal study of African American voters and nonvoters which truthfully assesses political alienation and how it affects voting behavior. Lack of trust cannot continue to be the biggest influence on African American voting. It is suspected by this researcher that the votes are not taken as a sign of mistrust. It may be a sign of trust in the representation. In order to move forward in this valuable conversation, deeper analyses of African American politics must be undertaken. They are still a large percentage of the electorate and their political identity not only needs establishing – it will require intense, robust study.
### Appendix A.1

Table A1.1. Essay 1 Coding for National Black Feminist Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in Gov’t</td>
<td>govtrust</td>
<td>How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?</td>
<td>0 – Don’t Know&lt;br&gt;1 – Never&lt;br&gt;2 – Only Some of the Time&lt;br&gt;3 – Most of the time&lt;br&gt;4 – Just about always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Efficacy</td>
<td>govsay</td>
<td>People like me don’t have any say about what the government does</td>
<td>0 – Don’t Know&lt;br&gt;1 – Strongly Disagree&lt;br&gt;2 – Somewhat Disagree&lt;br&gt;3 – Somewhat Agree&lt;br&gt;4 – Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Efficacy</td>
<td>officialconcern</td>
<td>Public Officials don’t care much about what people like me think</td>
<td>0 – Don’t Know&lt;br&gt;1 – Strongly Disagree&lt;br&gt;2 – Somewhat Disagree&lt;br&gt;3 – Somewhat Agree&lt;br&gt;4 – Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Efficacy</td>
<td>Govcomplicated</td>
<td>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on</td>
<td>0 – Don’t Know&lt;br&gt;1 – Strongly Disagree&lt;br&gt;2 – Somewhat Disagree&lt;br&gt;3 – Somewhat Agree&lt;br&gt;4 – Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Engagement</td>
<td>candmoney</td>
<td>Have you given money to a political candidate?</td>
<td>0 – No&lt;br&gt;1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Engagement</td>
<td>campmaterial</td>
<td>Have you handed out campaign material or placed campaign material on cars?</td>
<td>0 – No&lt;br&gt;1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote Choice</td>
<td>vote</td>
<td>Did you vote in the 2004 presidential election?</td>
<td>0 – No&lt;br&gt;1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>party</td>
<td>Do you usually think of yourself as Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?</td>
<td>1 – Republican&lt;br&gt;2 – Democrat&lt;br&gt;3 – Independent&lt;br&gt;4 – No Preference&lt;br&gt;5 - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>maritalstatus</td>
<td>Are you currently married, widowed, separated, divorced, have you ever been married, or</td>
<td>0 – Unmarried&lt;br&gt;1 – Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are you living with a significant other?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Education     | Edu  | What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed and gotten credit for? | 0 – Don’t Know  
1 – HS or less  
2 – Some College  
3 – 4 years college  
4 – Postgrad |
| Income        | income | Is the total yearly income of all members of your family now living at home $40,000 or more, or is it less than $40,000? | 1 – More than 40K a year  
2 – Less than 40K a year |
| Home Ownership| homeowner | Do you own your home, are you buying it, do you pay rent, or what? | 1 – own  
2 – rent  
3 - other |
| Age           | age  | Recoded from year to decade groups                                            | 0 – 0-17  
1 – 18-29  
2 – 30-39  
3 – 40-49  
4 – 50-59  
5 – 60-69  
6 – 70-79  
7 – 80-99 |
| Gender        | gender | Male or Female                                                               | 0 – Male  
1 - Female |
| Region        | South | Southern region                                                              | 0 – non-South  
1 - South |
Appendix A.2

Table A2.1. Models of Trust and Efficacy Effects on Voting

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>(1)</th>
<th></th>
<th>(2)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.152</td>
<td>(-0.381)</td>
<td>-0.161</td>
<td>(0.360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td>(1.467)</td>
<td>-0.422</td>
<td>(1.245)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>(1.453)</td>
<td>-0.260</td>
<td>(1.252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>(1.463)</td>
<td>-0.518</td>
<td>(1.252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>(1.473)</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>(1.254)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>(1.540)</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>(1.318)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1.842</td>
<td>(1.769)</td>
<td>1.268</td>
<td>(1.562)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>1.773</td>
<td>(1.801)</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>(0.926)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1.493**</td>
<td>(2.532)</td>
<td>1.260</td>
<td>(0.570)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td>(1.231)</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>(0.610)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>-0.805</td>
<td>(0.791)</td>
<td>-0.944</td>
<td>(0.791)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small City</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>(0.755)</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>(0.760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>-0.021</td>
<td>(0.891)</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>(0.790)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large City</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>(0.744)</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>(0.732)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeowner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>-2.265</td>
<td>(0.405)</td>
<td>-0.934</td>
<td>(0.399)</td>
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| Candmoney              | 2.031*    | (1.072) |           |         |
| Campmaterial           | 1.328**   | (0.611) |           |         |

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| _cons                  | 0.221     | (-2.09) | 3.11      | (1.88)  |

| N                      | 443       |         | 436       |         |
| Pseudo R2              | 0.2506    | 0.1784  |           |         |

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Bibliography


CHAPTER 3
WHY AREN’T MORE AFRICAN AMERICANS REPUBLICAN?

Introduction

The Comedy Central Series Key and Peele features taped skits on a wide variety of topics in American society. Starring Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele, the two enact several characters that make regular appearances on the show. Some of the more popular sketches include political humor, typically involving President Barack Obama and his “Anger Translator.” Sometimes the skits are a bit controversial, however, there is an aura of truth ringing in them as well. One sketch that captures an interesting stereotype of Black political behavior is “The Black Republicans.”

The vignette takes place at the Tallahassee Black Republicans meeting. Initially shown from the view of the crowd, members arrive at the podium angered because they are seen as a “monolith” (Key & Peele Ultimate Sketch Archive - Black Republicans 2013). As the participants continue to come up and speak, viewers cannot help but see that the members are not only saying the same thing, they are dressed in a similar fashion – blue jeans, turtlenecks, and neutral colored jackets, accented by horn-rimmed glasses in some cases. When the view changes toward the audience, watchers are let in on one of many jokes in the skit: to a man (which is important) the members have similar appearances and similar articulation. The balance of the sketch continues with the members making nearly the same but important claims. The main argument is clear: African Americans tend to share the conservative values of the Republican Party. Legitimately, one member asks the question as to how certain issues (national defense,
limited government, and fiscal responsibility) cannot possibly be appealing to Blacks. The sketch ends when an attendant announces that a members White wife is outside waiting, everyone gets up to leave. The skit is full of stereotypes and controversy and is upfront and outspoken regarding attitudes about Black Republicans. It also oddly holds some potential answers to the question posed in the title about African Americans and their party identification.

One of the first lessons we learn in political science is that once a political identity is established, that identity remains stable for the course of a lifetime. If one decides to affiliate with the Republican or Democratic Party that is unlikely to change. Not that it doesn't happen, of course there are those who make a party switch. An examination of current trends indicates that more and more people have selected to identify as Independent over the two major parties in the United States (Pew Research Center 2018). But how do we go about understanding a wholesale shift in party affiliation by almost an entire group of people? What possible explanation could there be for a group to go from almost 90% support of a political party to less than 10% in less than a century?

The above described scenario is exactly the story of African Americans in the Republican Party. Once a stronghold for the Republicans, the Democratic Party now enjoys this support. Support so staunch that the votes are often counted before the elections occur. In this research, I seek to answer questions regarding African American partisanship, specifically the choice to be Republican. Using interviews from 16 participants, we discuss the decision to be a Republican, racial consciousness, issue stance, and the pressure of being Black and a Republican in U.S. politics today.
Blacks\(^2\) have always been and remain a politically sophisticated group of voters (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Voting behavior and frequency are comparable to that of Whites but there are some differences. One major area is that of party identification and the staggering support of African Americans for the Democratic Party. Currently, 37% of individuals identify as Independent, 26% Republican, and 33% Democrat, but Blacks still overwhelmingly identify as Democrats at 69% and 84% as Democrat leaning (Pew Research Center 2018). The political history of Blacks in the United States began with an association to the fledgling anti-slavery Republican Party. The affiliation remained for several decades due in part to restrictions the Democratic Party placed on the group’s participation. In the 20\(^{th}\) century, an unprecedented political departure occurred by African Americans. The interesting part is not just in the mass exodus, but in the failure by any significant numbers to return to the Republican Party. In this paper the research seeks to address and bring light to party identification. The gaps in the literature on African American party identity as Republicans versus Democrats including demographics, issue preference and social/political expectations are addressed. The research hopes to provide more information regarding those who are Republican and understand their alignment with the Republican Party.

The research begins with the history of the choice by Blacks to affiliate with and vote Republican. Next is a discussion of the factors that prompted the Democratic shift from one party to the other by African Americans. The third section covers party identification with a

\(^2\) The terms Black, African American, nonwhite and people of color are used interchangeably in this paper. All terms refer to people in the United States with origins in any Black racial groups in Africa and the Caribbean.
definition and some theory that explains its power in voting outcomes. Also included in this section is an exploration of the reasons some Blacks remain Republicans, the Democratic stranglehold, and party perception. The paper uncovers areas where the research is currently thin such as the relationship between cross pressure, party identification and social networks. The research will not answer the following but perhaps shed a little more light: Is there any hope for growth of African American participation in the Republican Party?

**The Party of Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Reagan**

Beginning with Reconstruction African Americans largely identified as Republicans. “The Great Emancipator,” Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, an act which led to decades of unwavering support. The fledgling Republican Party seemed receptive to Black interests and political participation. After the Civil War, individuals known as “Radical Republicans” labored to create equal treatment to the newly freed slaves through the 14th Amendment, developed the Freedman’s Bureau, and passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (ushistory.org 2015). The 1868 election would be the first time Blacks could vote in a presidential election. Bolstered by support of Southern Blacks, Ulysses S. Grant won the election with almost three times the electoral votes than that of his competitor (Lorant 1976). During the Grant administration, the 15th Amendment was ratified, providing Blacks (males only) voting privileges (Schlesinger, Israel and Hansen 1985).

Southern segregationists in the Democratic Party (and some northerners) stood in opposition to any legislation that would enfranchise the new citizens, especially the extension of voting rights to Black men. Well-known women’s activists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton became outraged that Blacks (male or female) would obtain suffrage before White women
(Githens and Prestage 1977; Taylor 1988). In the agrarian South, the party of Lincoln was a threat to the economic stability of the region. Extending rights to the group would undermine a way of life for Southerners and this was particularly problematic as most African Americans still resided in the Southern states.

After Reconstruction, Democrats from the South catapulted back into power and many *de jure* means were put in place to disenfranchise African Americans (Weeks 1948). Jim Crow laws and the upholding of “separate but equal” facilities via *Plessy v. Ferguson* also served to strip Blacks of rights and protections recently guaranteed by the Constitution. These actions all but ended any real courtship of Blacks as a voting bloc. In the South, legal instruments were the primary methods, but in the North African Americans simply did not have the numbers that would affect any electoral outcomes, rendering any fight for their inclusion in the process useless (Frazier 1949, ushistory.org 2015).

The political situation and general living conditions were intolerable for Blacks in the South. Harsh economic conditions led many to engage in sharecropping as the only means of earning a living, providing Blacks with circumstances very similar to slavery (Frazier 1949). These events were the impetus for many citizens to move North. The Great Migration was not necessarily a reprieve from the discriminatory policies and actions taking place in the South (Frey 2014). Life in the Northern cities consisted of *de facto* segregation in housing and labor unions, with Blacks hired only as a last resort (Taylor 1988).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Blacks had very little power, politically or economically. Those in the Northern and Western parts of the country were able to take advantage of their suffrage and a few managed to gain appointments in local public office under
Theodore Roosevelt (Lorant 1976). In 1912 Woodrow Wilson, a Southern Democrat ran for the presidency on the promise of doing something for civil rights (Schlesinger, Israel and Hansen 1985). This earned him valuable support from the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Library of Congress 2015). Once in office, Wilson failed to place any items on the political agenda that would serve to push forward equal protections for African Americans. While attempts were made by the federal government to solve the “Negro problem,” it can easily be argued that during his term in office, the problem of segregation in the U.S. government was exacerbated (MacLaury 2000). After World War I, the lack of support for favorable economic, political, and civil legislation drove African Americans back to the Republican Party during the Election of 1920 (Weiss 1983). Blacks who migrated north were now uniting around issues of the time such as the anti-lynching movement and living in urban ghettos. These concentrated population centers would later come about as potentially influential voting blocs (Prestage and Williams, 1982).

Negative attitudes towards Blacks remained deeply rooted in the minds of Southerners. The Democrats had long ago implemented procedures such as the “two-thirds” rule and the “unit” rule would allow the Southern Democrats to maintain their stranglehold on the nomination process (Nelson 2013). First adopted by the party in 1832, the two-thirds rule held that the party nomination would only go to a candidate that had earned “two-thirds” of all votes and the “unit” rule would give all delegates of a state to one candidate (Woodburn 1903). The Democratic Party did not allow Blacks to be a part of the convention process until 1924 (Matthews and Prothro 1966). This participation was limited to attendance only at this time and kept Blacks entrenched
in the Republican Party for several more years. There had to be some allegiance after all the party had given these former slaves what they wanted most – freedom and liberty.

In addition to the two-thirds rule, several Southern states including Texas, South Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama (Farris 1954; Perman 2001; Gordon 2007; Walton, Puckett and Deskins 2012) only allowed White voters to cast ballots in primary elections. The “White primaries” served to create new barriers for African American voter registration in these former Confederate states, completely disenfranchising these voters. This accomplished its intended task: control over legislatures, decreases in Black voter registration and voting through various tactics (Walton, Puckett and Deskins 2012). The Republican Party found itself becoming weaker, providing a de facto one-party system. These laws stood until a challenge to Texas’ 1923 law placed the state front and center in the fight against the laws aimed at ending the Republican Party with three cases in 1927, 1932, and 1935 argued before the Supreme Court (Greenberg 2015). It would not be until the 1944 court ruling in *Smith v. Allwright* that the laws in Texas were in fact unconstitutional as they lawfully allowed the Democratic Party to discriminate (Klarman 2001).

**The Democratic Shift**

The alignment of Blacks and the Republican Party remained in place for many decades. In 1928, Al Smith (Democratic nominee) worked with leaders of the NAACP to court the Black vote (Schlesinger, Israel, and Hansen, 1985). Smith asked leadership at the NAACP for help in garnering the Black vote, and while apparently willing to help, remained steadfast in their determination that the support would not be taken for granted (Library of Congress 2015). It is widely believed that while the Smith camp wanted to show that the Democrats had undergone a
transformation, little had been done to give credence to racial problems (Weiss 1983). During this time, groups campaigned on Smith’s behalf with the argument that it was time Blacks realize the debt owed to Lincoln for emancipation had been paid (Spencer 1978; Weiss 1983).

The Republican counterargument during the election served to remind Blacks of how little the Democrats had done on behalf of African American civil rights. Smith, in a losing effort to Herbert Hoover would receive the largest share of the Black vote to date by a Democrat. In metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Smith earned 27% of the vote, up from 10% in 1924 (Schlesinger, Israel, and Hansen 1985; Weiss 1983). In 1932 Blacks still did not offer any significant support to the Democratic Party, even with the Hoover administration’s rather ineffective attempts to deal with the Great Depression (Sears 1976). Franklin Roosevelt, governor of New York, did not have the best record on civil rights, and John Nance Garner, the vice presidential choice was suspect as he came from Texas, a known Jim Crow state, making the ticket no more viable than the Republican one (Schlesinger, Israel and Hansen 1985). The choice for Blacks came down to the party that freed them versus the party that had done their best to keep their foot on the neck of African American civil rights.

After the election, economic issues affected all men and women not just Blacks or Whites. Blacks who moved north during the Great Migration were now facing economic hardship like what they experienced in the South (McNeill, Hanes and Hanes 2003). Roosevelt’s administration was geared toward helping all Americans and certainly Blacks were included in that count. However, what appeared as an act of incorporation later was in reality cover for the president’s need of Southern Democrats to guarantee passage of legislation (McNeill, Hanes and Hanes 2003). The first hundred days of the presidency saw sweeping legislation passed that at
first glance did not appear to help the cause of Blacks very much. The policies created by the
“New Deal” remained under local control and administration and while Blacks did receive aid,
discriminatory practices kept much of the disbursement from Blacks (ushistory.org 2015).

During the “Second New Deal” intervention from the federal government improved the
distribution of services; and for most Blacks, this was a stark change from the reality being
experienced (McNeill, Hanes and Hanes 2003). In addition, both Franklin and Eleanor
Roosevelt regularly invited African Americans to the White House and were photographed with
them (Jeffries, Liapis and Nash 2010). Roosevelt appointed Harold Ickes, former head of the
NAACP’s Chicago branch as head of the Public Works Administration, who worked to ensure
that this New Deal ensured a “square deal” for African Americans (McNeill, Hanes and Hanes
2003; Weiss 1983). Another move by Roosevelt showing a change in attitude regarding Blacks
was the addition of the “Black Cabinet”. This group of Black officials on the staff of New Deal
agencies served to give jobs to Blacks in the federal government and provide Roosevelt with
advice on racial matters (Weiss 1983; Kennedy 1999; McNeill, Hanes and Hanes 2003). This
important signal from the federal government started a large shift to the Democratic Party.

At this point, many view the party as more giving and active toward social welfare
policies. Franklin D. Roosevelt garnered 71% of the Black vote in 1936 and the interesting fact
is a majority of Blacks still did not identify themselves as Democrats (Bositis 2012). The vote
margin had more to do with Blacks affirming the New Deal and Roosevelt versus voting for the
Democratic Party. During this time frame only 44% of Blacks identified themselves as being a
“Democrat.” (Bositis 2012). Republican candidates for president still received up to one-third of
the Black vote after the shift began (Jaynes and Williams 1989). This indicates that Blacks had
not quite forgotten the less than glowing past of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s party even while appreciating the New Deal programs.

The Election of 1936 was the first time post Reconstruction that both parties made any real attempt to court Black votes. Due to large numbers of Blacks living in states such as Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Michigan, their votes became important as they could then sway key contests (Sears 1976). During the Republican convention, the party platform included African Americans while the Democrats did not have any inclusive language for Blacks. African Americans became a more visible entity in this election and at the conventions. Both parties developed divisions to increase support of Blacks with the advantage going to the Democrats. Although officially independent, the Good Neighbor League was influential in getting Blacks who were well known to appear supportive of the Democratic Party (Spencer 1978). During this time the Democratic Party repealed the two thirds and unit rules loosening the grip held for so long by Southern Democrats on the nomination process (Weiss 1983).

The second shift in party affiliation and voting behavior came in 1948. Harry Truman sought to win the Black vote and successfully walked away with 77% of it as more Blacks began to identify themselves as Democrats (Bositis 2012). Civil rights policies by the Democratic Party were still undefined through the early part of the 1950s but the Eisenhower administration made some gains regarding civil rights and voting equality through the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and desegregation of the armed forces although the policies remained low profile (National Archives and Records Administration 1957). Chief Justice Earl Warren, recently appointed by the Republican president, handed down the landmark Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, a decision that may have created a sense that the “party of Lincoln” still had much to offer Blacks
(Jaynes and Williams 1989). The election of 1960 saw John F. Kennedy take 68% of the Black vote; however, with the addition of Texan Lyndon Johnson to the ticket, perhaps it was not as large a percentage as possible (Bositis 2012).

The transfer to the Democratic Party came to completion in 1964. The Civil Rights Act initiated by one Democratic president was signed into law by another one. Although the majority of its support in Congress came from Republicans, one of six senators that voted against it was Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee in 1964. Goldwater’s campaign for state’s rights (a stand associated with Southern segregationists) effectively ended major support of Republican presidential candidates by Blacks, although in local and state elections, Republicans garnered significant support by African Americans (Jaynes and Williams 1989). In the election, Johnson took 94% of the Black vote, which stood as the record until 2008 and the election of Barack Obama (D. Bositis 2012). Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Johnson’s Great Society program, Blacks have firmly remained in the corner of the Democratic Party; a tie that strengthened after the 1980s when Blacks expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

**Party Identification: A Definition and Theoretical Background**

For approximately 160 years, party identification in America has fallen in two categories: Democrat or Republican. The percentage of Independents is on the rise, and as stated earlier, currently at its highest point in three-quarters of a century. The increase in Independents is important as a possible reason for the lower number of Black Republicans.

The most basic definition of party identification is political party preference or loyalty. Party affiliation typically indicates an individual’s agreement with party platforms and that the
chosen party represents the policy preferences of the individual. This psychological model of party identification started at the University of Michigan by Campbell, et al. (1960) who argue that party identification works as a funnel. Party affiliation is learned at the feet of our parents (inheritance is their actual argument) and through the circumstances in which we are reared. This attachment is resistant to contravening attitudes and tends to remain stable over the course of a person’s life. Attitudes shape our party affiliation. Individuals have positive feelings toward their party and as such adopt the party platform. This does not mean the theory of the Michigan school is always right. Exceptions to the rule exist as people switch affiliation due to major changes in the party platform or even party leadership. Other factors that have great bearing on party identification and voting outcomes including social identity, issue position, and candidate evaluation.

Party identification is perhaps the single greatest factor in determining individual opinions of politics and voting behavior. It is also psychological in nature. There are cognitive and emotional (or affective) aspects to the relationship that forms self-reference points separate from party membership. Party identification serves as a heuristic of sorts for voting behavior. It is a filter for understanding and experiencing politics as well as training our interest and participation in politics. As the authors state, “Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation” (Campbell, Converse, et al., The American Voter 1960, 133).

The sociological model of voting behavior asserts that the most important factor in voting behavior is the group. Primarily the family is the main agent of socialization and is the manner in which political ideas are passed down from one generation to the next. The pivotal work that
serves as the foundation for the Columbia school theory is Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee’s book *Voting* (1954). Berelson, et al find that the group influences of the media, unions, and parties, do not serve as the linchpins to predicting voting behavior as expected. Indeed, parties served more of an administrative role than gaining new members. The media only strengthened the existing opinions of voters versus altering them. The cross pressures from social groups influence a person to select one candidate over the other (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954).

In 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld modeled the two-step flow of communication that proposes the media has an influence on vote choice via an intermediary process. The model argues what Katz and Lazarsfeld call “opinion leaders” as an influencing the opinions of voters. These leaders gather information via elite media and then interpret the content based on their own opinions (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). The leaders filter the opinions down to the general population or “followers,” creating social influence molded by the ideals of those elite media groups. This model falls short of explaining the effect of varying economic factors on voting behavior and does not get at the crux of why voters go against expected norms for voting in their group. For example, with the overwhelming support African Americans give to the Democratic Party, it is accepted that most Blacks will vote for a Democratic candidate over a Republican one. However, the model does little to nothing in explaining why an African American will vote for a Republican candidate if group pressures are such an important factor.

The theory has received much criticism regarding opinion leaders and the flow of information directly from the media to end users (Deutchsmann and Danielson 1960). Further research indicated that a majority of consumers actually credit much of their knowledge to mass
media outlets versus in person contact (E. Rogers 1962). While a single step process may be more influential in learning for modern consumers of information, the usefulness in explaining how individuals look to multiple sources for information and the resulting impact on political beliefs and behavior is important. The emphasis of research in the sociological model is our friends, family, and religion (sociological associations) that determine our voting behavior (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954). Similar to Berelson’s assertion that family and social groups are the source of our party choice, Lupia and McCubbins (1998) put forth a similar theory on the willingness to take “information shortcuts” and rely on the words of others in lieu of gaining correct information on our own. In the same vein, Popkin (1994) takes the shrewd truths of the sociological model regarding socialization and campaign impact to create a theory on the calculus of voting and the role of low information. Popkin blends rational choice theory into his own to counteract the idea that voting is irrational behavior as Campbell, et al (1960) suggest.

The Michigan School or psychological model originated in surveys about the 1948 presidential election and marks the beginning of the American National Election Studies (ANES) administered before and after every presidential election. Based on Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes’ The American Voter (1960), the model attempts to address the perceived shortcomings of Columbia School theory regarding the proper perspectives for the study of voting behavior. The sociological model addresses group behavior while mainly ignoring the context of voting (parties, media, and economics). The psychological model of voting behavior involves partisanship as its chief idea. Partisanship is defined in many ways; however, in this paper the concept is a firmly fixed sense of belonging with a particular political party. It is worth
noting that individual association does not always equal clear cut links such as registering with the party or regular voting.

Hyman and Singer’s (1968) idea of the reference group along with Merton and Kitt’s (1950) theory on anticipatory socialization influence Campbell et al. (1960) and our understanding of partisanship. Partisanship in a simple way can be defined as nothing more than a person selecting some reference group to which they are not a part and proceed to behave in accordance to the observed (or believed) rules of the group. It is an accepted fact that many people gain partisanship through the process of socialization. Socialization happens mainly through the family, but is subject to influence of peers, school, and colleagues. Miller and Shanks (1996) identify this as being like the manner in which individuals select a religion. The affective attachment to “my” party can occur via differing levels of involvement just as a person does when attaching to a religion measured as being anything from non-religious to deeply religious. From this viewpoint partisanship is in its truest essence a kind of social identity whereby “citizens have an enduring sense of what sorts of people belong to various parties and whether they have identity with these social groups” (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002, ix).

It is interesting that the psychological model does not put together the ideas of partisanship with vote selection. The qualitative (psychological) and quantitative (voting behavior) nature of the two are held separate but are reflected in the authors measurement. In the American National Election Studies (2010), voters are asked to identify their party choice - “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and Independent, or what?” and a the strength of that identification - “Would you call yourself a strong (Republican, Democrat) or a not very strong (Republican, Democrat)?” Additionally, those associating
themselves with the Independent label are asked if they view themselves as being closer to either of the major parties - “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?” (American National Election Studies 2010).

With this filter in mind, party affiliation does not always clearly indicate which way a person will vote. Partisanship is also a perceptual screen that refines our processing of information (Campbell, et al. 1960). It creates a perceptual set whereby we use our party identification to disregard information not to our liking, and place greater import on information that we find agreeable (Weiten 2012). For example, understanding policy usually requires information and knowledge that most voters do not possess. Parties then become a key element in defining politics in a democracy and serve as an interpreter for voters.

The theory of cleavages and how they define party formation was first presented in Lipset and Rokkan’s *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (1967). Though their research revolved around what they called frozen party loyalties in European politics, the concepts remain useful in discussing American political behavior. The authors presented a quartet of explanations regarding party loyalty. First, cleavage based issues are divisive by nature and will always give some kind of collective identity. Second, lasting party alignments happen when the base is newly mobilized and not inclined to engage in any differing behaviors without large scale changes in the demographics of the population. Third, the electoral process is designed for political parties to keep the existing structures of influence; and fourth, parties become an integral part of society, creating a deep sense of belongingness so that third parties become a much less interesting option for voters (Lipset & Rokkan 1967). The concept of frozen cleavages as put forth by Lipset and Rokkan may well be influenced by the idea of cross pressures and
provide greater understanding of how the aforementioned freezing affects disengagement and political behavior.

A look at Carmines (1991) discussion of Lipset and Rokkan’s theory on freezing party alignment and its dynamic nature provides some insight into African American attachment in identifying as Democrats. Using Abramson’s (1975) research on generational effects in politics, the attachment to the party can be a function of the interaction between a political reference point (The New Deal) and the continuing salience throughout the lifespan for these individuals (Carmines 1991). Blacks of the New Deal generation most likely experienced the civil rights era in addition to the New Deal. These two highly salient issues for minorities remain a key factor in any discussion people of the generation may have. This may explain why the shift in party alignment occurred for people of color during the post-Depression era through early 1970’s and has support in Franklin and Jackson’s (1983) research on party identification and the influence of economic conditions, issue position, candidate preference, and vote choice.

Surveys conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies indicated a small but growing trend for African Americans identifying as Republican growing from 5.9% in 1984 to 10% in 1990 (Bositis 2012). By the end of the century, the growth dissipated to 6.6%, with a bump in Republican identifiers to 10.4% reappearing by 2004 (Bositis 2012). Barack Obama’s candidacy in 2008 created yet another dip in identification to 7.3% for African Americans.

What does the modern Republican who happens to be African American look like? It is important to examine a potential profile to understand where the common ground is for recruitment. Consider this example - an African American educator living in suburban Collin
County, Texas and working in urban Dallas, Texas. With these limited demographic identifiers, it is easy to assume she is Democrat and ideologically a fairly strong liberal. If we add in some additional information such as her church attendance (at least once a week), religious affiliation (Southern Baptist), evangelical status (born-again), and education (doctorate), we most likely will not change our opinion on party identification. However, if we understood that this person is fiscally conservative, a member of the National Rifle Association, and financially stable, our attitude about her party may change. The additional details may also assist us in understanding how to approach this person politically.

Cross Pressures and the African American Electorate

Will a New York Democrat continue his/her voting pattern if they move to Oklahoma? Consider the following: an African American elevator installer working in New York City and living in Brooklyn. His co-workers for the most part will be Democrats, and his neighbors in Brooklyn are most likely going to be Democrats. Each demographic factor should push him into being a Democrat or at the very least a Democrat leaning Independent. Now, if we transplant the same individual to Norman, Oklahoma, his co-workers are still likely to push him toward the Democratic Party. However, his neighbors in friendly Norman may begin to push him toward the Republican Party. At this point, we will consider him “cross pressured,” a situation in which social and demographic characteristics pull an individual in varying political directions.

The idea of cross pressures affecting citizens voting behavior has been long recognized in political science. Starting with the Columbia School and the sociological model of voting behavior, we find a definition that references the conflicts an individual may be under regarding vote choice. In *The People’s Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944), the authors report
finding that cross pressured citizens put off making any kind of voting decision until the end of the campaign, downplay the importance of electoral outcomes, and in general experience great trepidation regarding candidates. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) and Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948) discuss the “combination of characteristics which, in a given context, would tend to lead the individual to vote on both sides of a contest.” Cross pressures also assist in our understanding of which voters are actually a possibility for conversion from one candidate to another.

In *The American Voter* (1960), Campbell, et al address the typical ambivalence, lack of interest, and general sense of malaise faced by voters trapped by cross pressure:

“The person who experiences some degree of conflict tends to cast his vote for President with substantially less enthusiasm ... and he is some-what less likely to vote at all than is the person whose partisan feelings are entirely consistent. [...] If attitude conflict leaves its impress on several aspects of behavior it also influences what we will call the individual's involvement in the election.” (Campbell, Converse, et al., *The American Voter* 1960, 83)

Most of the early research on social networks and their impact on voting behavior agree “social interaction is the primary mechanism linking social group membership and individual political behavior” (Horan 1971, 659). Measuring the effects typically consisted of taking existing categories (i.e. Catholic and union member, Black and middle class) where conflict is assumed to occur by a researcher (Mutz 2002). However, this prior research involved individuals clearing their way through viewpoints when they are cross pressured instead of their actual voting behavior.

The literature on issue cross pressure remains thin but is growing. Fiorina’s (1976) work presents a highly formal model of voting behavior based on the Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) economic model of voting behavior. Uhlaner (1989) uses formal theory to
explain voting behavior within the context of social structures. However, even though Uhlaner’s model does use ethnicity and expected vote based on group members versus isolated individual expectations of a candidate, it fails to examine underlying factors surrounding attitudes on specific issues. Furthermore, the research uses the 1976 election involving Jimmy Carter. Updated data could yield a different answer.

Recent studies examine the effect of cross pressure (CP) on voting behavior by developing scores to examine political participation, voting outcomes and party identification (Brader, Tucker and Therriault 2013). Individuals may feel pressured in many different ways—introspection as described by Campbell, et al (1960), personal cues discussed by Lazarsfeld, et al (1944), or even elite cues put forth by Converse and Campbell (1968). The research by Brader, et al (2009), and Therriault, et al (2011) provide support for the concept of the pressures individuals may feel via social groups but does little regarding underlying micro-level demographic factors. Perhaps even less studied is the idea of issue cross pressure which is an area that needs work. Hillygus and Shields (2008) take a new approach on the idea of cross pressured voters and argue that the problem is not the cross between an individual’s social and partisan identity, but issue position and partisan identity. In many cases, there is at least one issue where members differentiate from the party platform (i.e. anti-gun control Democrats or pro-choice Republicans). Although party defection is possible over these “wedge issues” as they call them, it still seems so unlikely given our understanding of party affiliation.

The concept of cross pressure and its applicability to Blacks is undeniable and the research needs expanding in this area. With respect and understanding to the work of Hillygus and Shields on issue cross pressure, being Black and Republican is a relatively unique situation.
in modern day American politics. The potential reasons so few Blacks choose to identify as Republican are legion. What could be a more important piece to this puzzle is the effect of their social interactions and networks on their identification. The pressure for many Black Republicans may be who to vote for in any given election. I argue it is not the issues that create the problem but the people surrounding them.

Let’s revisit the situation of our African American educator. Her cross pressure is not necessarily from being Black and Republican but from being a Black Republican who is religious. Blacks are known to be avid churchgoers and as an institution, the Black church is the biggest bedrock of the African American community (DuBois [1903] 1965). Dawson (2001) undeniably argues that the church is not only an agent of socialization but also a basis of social capital and collective action. Blacks report the church alongside education and family as one the most influential aspects on political orientation (Walton, Invisible Politics 1985). Leaders in the Black church are also very active in encouraging members’ political engagement, up to and including who to vote for in any given election (Carmines and Stimson 1989).

The literature on the cross pressured African American voter would not fill a typical volume in any political science journal. Blacks are not normally viewed as being at any kind of juxtaposition to warrant serious investigation in the field. However, that pressure is real, and for African American Republicans the burden to vote a certain party or candidate comes from those in the social network. In the Black community, that network is primarily the church but can include one’s place of employment and social organizations. Perhaps more pressure is brought to bear on Black Republicans by Black Democrats to identify with the majority of Blacks.
Becoming the Growth and Opportunity Party

Recent research in the area of African American party identification indicates that while the majority still associate themselves with Democrats, this number has declined over the years with younger people identifying as Independent and Republican. This is quite possibly due to the lack of social influence of the Civil Rights Movement (Putnam 2008) or even economic changes over time (Luks and Elms 2005). Although Dawson (1994) argues that socioeconomic status does not matter to party identification, the relationship between the two could be more complex than ever considered by previous research. Welch and Combs (1985) find in their research that wealthy African Americans are still more likely to identify as Democrats. However, with the one party assuming control of the minority vote and the other side continually conceding that vote, the fact is that more Blacks are increasing in socioeconomic status (SES) and educational attainment. The lack of focus on racial issues may increase appeal of being Independent to Republican leaning for wealthier nonwhites.

As previously mentioned, people of color have a nearly unanimous attachment to the Democratic Party. Perhaps this is due to an overwhelmingly liberal stance by most on social welfare and civil rights issues (Welch & Foster, 1987). A small cache of Blacks does continue to identify with the Republican Party and cast their votes for Republican candidates. Scholarship on the section of African Americans identifying as Republicans is severely limited leaving very little in the way of knowledge on their demographic make-up (outside of race), racial attitudes, and policy preferences. The focus in research on this issue typically identifies Blacks who are “conservative” versus those that are “Republican.” Some research such as Tate (1993), Dawson (1994) and Bolce, DeMaio, & Muzzio (1993) has focuses on party identification over ideology.
Although the findings serve to explain African American Republicans, most of the questions on the topic (profile, voting behavior when cross pressured) still have remained unanswered.

Blacks in the United States live primarily in 20 states, making them a key voting bloc (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). Those 20 states represent 284 out of the possible 538 Electoral College votes. Minority support is crucial to political victory of either party and as former RNC (Republican National Committee) chairman Atwater stated, the party of Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Reagan would ensure majority status with as little as 20 percent of the African American vote (Bolce, DeMaio, & Muzzio, 1993). The GOP recognized this as recently as 2000 and during the campaign for president the party made several attempts to pursue Blacks to bring them back to the Party of Lincoln. Several high profile Black Republicans such as Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and J. C. Watts gave speeches during prime time at the National Convention.

There are some apparent opportunities for Republican Party outreach to African Americans. The first is in being able to properly identify those Blacks with similar ideological and issue preferences. The second area is knowledge of the Republican Party. There are many Blacks that currently self-identify as Independent or even Democrat but could potentially affiliate with the GOP if only they were sure of what the party stood for in recent times. Many Blacks may see the Republican Party as a party of “White people” and therefore not for them. There is also a potential to reach Blacks through religion. The Republican Party is known for its evangelical stances on many issues such as abortion and gay marriage that many Blacks may agree with over the Democratic Party. It is widely known that Blacks are an ultra-religious group over any other minority group in the US and it would be easy to reach out to them via this avenue. Indeed, Elwood Watson (1998) may be most correct in his argument that Blacks are
socially conservative, have a long tradition of being so, and that is something the Republican Party should examine more closely.

**African Americans in the Republican Party**

Since this group is overwhelmingly Democratic, most of the literature on party identification in the community is geared toward their behavior within that context. Literature in the discipline that examines Blacks in the Republican Party exists in the same vacuum as the subject – few and far between. The pieces that do seek to offer up a different explanation of Black Republicans offer some new light on this group of citizens. As isolated as they have been in real life, these people remain alone in the social science lore. There are a few books available on the topic of Black conservatism in the history, but the list has increased in the last ten years providing a deeper understanding of this seemingly strange and weird political choice by some Blacks.

One of the earliest books to address African Americans and the relationship with the Republican Party is Richard Sherman’s *The Republican Party and Black America* (1973). The book focuses on the reaction of the party to protecting rights of African Americans. Sherman examines the party beginning with the 1896 election of William McKinley through the Depression era politics of Herbert Hoover. After the Civil War, control of the federal government is firmly in the hands of the Republican Party. Although a prime chance to continue the push for continued right, it fell apart at the end of Reconstruction.

Michael Fauntroy’s *Republicans and the Black Vote* (2007) reviews the history of Blacks and the Republican Party. It comes thirty plus years after Sherman’s book. Fauntroy spends a bit of time discussing early activism in the Grand Old Party, its antislavery push, desires for
expansion, and Reconstruction. This wish list led to strategy designed to win over Southern voters with anti-African American ideals. He also includes an examination of the demographic change that occurred in the United States that was in direct conflict with the plan. Fauntroy is one of the many social scientists and even those in the popular literature that argue the attempts by the Republican Party are not terribly substantive. The attempts are more about show and that the truth of this issue (why more African Americans are not Republicans) lies in the fact that Blacks did not necessarily walk away from the party. Instead the party walked away from them. The move after Reconstruction to recruit Southern White voters was swift and, in some ways, harsh (Fauntroy 2007). The book does cover one very important factor regarding African American political behavior – matters of race are important to Blacks and need to be addressed in a not quite so conservative manner by the party.

In Black Republicans and the Transformation of the GOP (2016), Joshua Farrington examines activism by African Americans in the Republican Party during the 20th century. Some of the book discusses the shift between parties. The choice he states is primarily an economic one. Something else Farrington delivers is the connection between the socioeconomic status and differences in locale of those African Americans who shifted and those who remain in the party. As he utilizes quite a bit of information gathered from primary documents at the local and grassroots levels, Farrington tells a story of those African Americans singularly unimpressed by outreach by the Democratic Party at the lower levels of government (2016). There is also an interesting discussion of activism by African Americans in both parties but as the focus of the book is on Black Republicans, he highlights the actions on behalf of civil rights and the strong use of social capital for improvement in civil rights. He ends his account with the Reagan years
and how the activists of the early part of the century fell more in line with the traditional conservatisms of the party.

Leah Wright Rigueur’s *The Loneliness of the Black Republican* fills a gap in the literature by researching the road of Black Republicans from the 1930’s to the Reagan era. She theorizes that the choice to be Black and Republican is a result of historical loyalty to the party, economic safety, the power of contested elections, and the belief in opportunities where there is a lack of attention (Wright Rigueur 2016). Rigueur brings an important conclusion to the study of Black Republicans and their lonely position in the political world – their choice is about coalition building for wins on behalf of African Americans. As such, those Blacks in the Republican Party have felt compelled to hedge between the two parties in hopes to draw more voters over to the party. It is not an easy task as Rigueur notes that the party’s choice to go after White votes isolates those in the party already marginalized by their own community (Wright Rigueur 2016).

Another bright spot in the literature on African American Republicans is Corey Fields 2016 entry, *Black Elephants in the Room*. Based on three years of research involving interviews, Fields develops two categories for explaining some parts of African American Republicans and their choices. It boils down to, Fields discusses, not just their connection but also the depth of meaning when it comes to their feeling of connectivity between the Black community and their own political behavior (2016). The classification looks at how important race is to their views of the world. They fall into two categories, one he calls “raceblind”. These party members would fit the typical stereotype of being an “Uncle Tom” or race traitor. Race is the biggest factor for the “race uplift” African American Republican. Fields points out that both types support the
GOP platform as the way forward for the community. It is the rhetoric that makes the difference in how the goal is achieved.

While most of the literature focuses on being African American and Republican, it is Tasha Philpot’s timely and forward-thinking work on *Conservative but Not Republican: The Paradox of Party Identification and Ideology among African Americans* (2017) that may best address the question on why so few Blacks identify with the party. Using multiple methods, she examines the ways Whites and Blacks are different when it comes to ideology and why ideology does not predict party identification for Blacks the way it does for Whites. Philpot argues the key to understanding ideology and party identification among African Americans is to understand attitudes on issues (2017). One important conclusion from her work that can help frame the lack of attraction to the party involve the differences between Black conservatives and Black Republicans. What makes it unique is the same differences do not exist between White conservatives and White Republicans. The characteristics she discusses are interesting because for Black Republicans, they are similar to the individuals interviewed in the sample (married, homeowners, college educated), while the Black conservatives tend to mainly be female, living in the South with a lower income than Black Republicans. The two groups are the same in church attendance. As found in most research on Black Republicans group consciousness and consideration of the group greatly affects how African Americans express their political decisions (Philpot 2017). Additional gems of the research include the great variance on the ideological spectrum of some issues and how the alliance with one party creates problems for research of ideology and it impact on party.
Data and Methods

One of the biggest issues facing potential research on African American Republicans remains the small numbers of Blacks sampled in the majority of polls. Most datasets include fewer than 250 Blacks in the sample and fewer than 35 Black Republicans. The Black National Election Studies, National Survey of Black Americans, and National Black Politics Study have sufficient sample sizes but as stated earlier, the samples are from the 1980s and early 1990s. While this captures attitudes of Blacks, the probability of not being able to test for the change in the Republican Party makes the data less than desirable for this research. Analysis of data for Blacks is restricted enough and data for the minority of Black Republicans is an obstacle. Due to this, interviews have been used instead of aggregate data. It is believed that the depth of information will be greater and more useful to the research.

The individuals studied in this paper are a rare group and hard to find. As such, the research employed chain referral sampling. Chain referral sampling is relatively common practice in qualitative research whereby the sample is collected via people making referrals to others belonging to the area of research and interest (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). It is ideal for studies where insiders may be used to locate participants. The majority of participants in this study were provided to the researcher by early interviewees.

The interviews for this study included approximately 16 Black Republicans living in the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex, primarily in Collin and Dallas counties. All interviews were conducted between September 23, 2016 and August 7, 2017. Two interviews ended early and are not included. All interviewees are over the age of 25, identified as Republican and the majority voted for Republican candidates during the 2008, 2012, 2016 general elections. The
participants also voted in state and local elections. Some (Joseph, Peter Amy) are currently in elected office or have held elected office or appointments at the county level in the past. Three of the participants of various age ranges had worked for politicians or political campaigns including the 2012 and 2016 campaigns for president. Four of the interviewees are female and 12 are male ranging in age between 27 and 91. Fourteen of the 16 are college educated with a majority possessing postgraduate degrees. Three individuals have served in the military. Every participant self-identifies as a Christian with variation in the denomination. All interviews were conducted face to face over the course of 11 months. Basic demographic details on the interviewees including age, profession, education, and self-proclaimed socioeconomic status are located in Table 3.1.

The names used in this paper are all fictitious. Anonymity was guaranteed by the researcher regarding names as it would make them easily recognizable in some cases. Recruitment began by contacting the African American Republican Club in Collin County. After multiple unsuccessful attempts at contact, I reached out to a social contact in Collin County for further assistance. Following that conversation, contact came from a potential participant. All contact was made via telephone. Approved consent and recruitment scripting are on file with the university Institutional Review Board. Each interview was recorded using a hand held micro-recorder or the voice memo application on my personal cell phone when the recorder failed on a few instances.

Questions asked include personal political party identification, family partisan political choices, perception of the parties (self and public), and the relationship between Blacks and the major political parties. The questionnaire is guided largely by the main question in the research:
Who are these oft maligned and marginalized souls choosing to identify as Republican? Were there family, friends, or life circumstances that influenced the decision to identify as Republican? What issues are important - personally and as a group and why? There are specific questions asked of the interviewees but the answers to seemingly simple questions had deep answers.

Table 3.1. African American Republican Interviewee Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Family Party</th>
<th>U.S Region</th>
<th>Church Attendance</th>
<th>2016 candidate choice</th>
<th>Voted in 2016 election</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Baptist (Southern)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Small Business Owner</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Rick Santorum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Baptist (Southern)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Retired - US Government</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Baptist (Southern)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Rick Perry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle-Upper Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Baptist (Southern)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Ted Cruz</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Nondenominational</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Jeb Bush</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle - Upper Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline</td>
<td>Episcopalian</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Ben Carson</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Small Business Owner</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Immigrated to US</td>
<td>Immigrated to Southern US</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Small Business Owner</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Immigrated to US</td>
<td>Immigrated to Southern US</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Nondenominational</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Director - Education</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Rand Paul</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Carly Fiorina</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle-Upper Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Baptist (Southern)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Rick Perry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Nondenominational</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Marco Rubio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Nondenominational</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once or more/week</td>
<td>Ben Carson</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>Baptist (Southern)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Technology Business</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Once per week</td>
<td>Rick Perry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While every attempt was made to keep the interviews on track, it seemed more important to allow these small but powerful voices come through. As such, information that was not specifically asked for may be included in this paper. All participants were eager to be interviewed and have a record of their thoughts put out in the world. Ray opined:
“One of the biggest issues with being Black and Republican and open about it is nobody and I mean nobody wants to hear much of anything you have to say about politics once they know. Black folks think you are some kind of traitor to the people trying to drag them into hell. Or at the very least, you are trying to get them to do something illegal. These [interviews] are a way for us to be heard in our own voices saying our own thoughts where we can be seen as people and not demons.”

Joseph remarked during his interview that he immediately wanted to be a part of this project.

Although anonymity was assured, he stated “this is important enough that I wouldn’t even mind you using my name.” Warren told me that this mattered so much as:

“Black people need to understand who they are in the context of the Democratic and the Republican parties. Maybe someone will read this and know that there is another way. A way that is about success, about prosperity, and about good things for themselves and their families that do not come in the form of a handout.”

On Becoming a Republican…

Six participants affiliated with the Republican Party since they were able to vote. Patrick joined the Republican Party in college during his freshman year.

“I went to a military college. At the time we were all male. It was also the 60s and the Vietnam War was winding down or maybe winding up, I guess. We wore uniforms every day and I think it affected my thinking. When you are that young you really don’t have that many ideas about what you should be when it’s time to vote. I felt that the Republican Party aligned with the conservative values I had because of where I went to college… but I have never looked back and thought I should have been a Democrat. “

Joseph doesn’t recall wanting to be anything but a Republican. He grew up in a mid-size city in the northern United States. His family was “very poor” and lived in government housing.

“Before I could even vote I read the papers and listened to the radio. When I was 17 I was a part of the Young Republicans and there seemed to be genuine concern there for the American people and how greatness was there for us if we just reached out and worked hard enough. It seemed that the Republican Party had the principles and values that aligned with my own. They matched up with what I wanted out of life. I wanted to have a better life, for myself and my family and Nixon was very convincing at the time. So convincing that I persuaded my mother to vote for him. My family had always been Democrats.”
Stewart, a lifelong Republican, knew he would always be a Republican and being anything else was never a consideration. He grew up in a family of Republicans and could not wait to register and vote.

“I am from Pennsylvania and grew up not only in a Republican family but a Republican town. I don’t want to say I had no choice but to become a Republican but certainly we heard the message and knew the expectation – vote Republican. And honestly, even with that pressure the older I got I found the party lined up with the values I thought were important, so I stayed right where I was.”

Warren, Lisa, and Anthony reported similar stories about their party affiliation.

Lisa: I joined the Republican Party during my freshman year of college. You have to understand, I went to a very liberal women’s college in California in part as I grew up in a liberal family. Being at [my college], I feel safe saying it was expected I would be a Democrat because of the times. I wasn’t old enough to vote for him the first time, but President Obama had just been elected. I looked at him though and while it was great that he was biracial, I was never quite sure what else there was to be so excited about. I went to a meeting at another campus nearby and it was there I heard about a meeting for young Republicans. It took a few meetings for me to come around but I don’t know there was much doubt.

Warren: It seemed to me as a kid that the Democratic Party took Black people for granted. I am old enough to remember the Civil Rights Acts and Voting Rights Acts. My mom, grandma, aunts, uncles... You name it they were all so excited and serious praise for Democrats and Johnson was going around in the neighborhood, at school, and especially at church. But growing up, I felt like the Democrats had bought us as a people for a very small price. The!allegiance Blacks show that party has made us a very cheap purchase indeed and when it came time for me to make the choice I had no desire to be a part of that. I refused to be bought on the basis of some right I already had as a citizen of the United States. It seemed to be a bit too much like being on the plantation and bought and sold over and over again except now, instead of us being bought and sold for our labor it was our votes. And I did not see us as really giving our votes as an act of free will. It almost seemed like we needed to return the favor to this party. Don’t get me wrong – I am not a Republican because it is the party that freed the slaves. I know Lincoln went to war not for slavery to end but to preserve the United States. I made my choice truthfully from an economic standpoint. Republicans represented the ideals to me of what I wanted for myself. So I chose them. Always have and probably always will.

Anthony: I grew up in Alabama and we were poor. Poor to the point you could really call us just ‘po since we couldn’t afford the “or” as they say. I also grew up when it was still very racist even though it had started to become Republican. I lived not far from the
church where the four little girls were killed. You can’t grow up near things like that and not have it affect you. My family became Democrats, I guess because of civil rights and what they thought Democrats were doing for us. We left Alabama when I was still quite young and moved to Oklahoma where there was work with my mother’s cousin. When we finally moved to Texas, I came of age here and in this part of Texas there were just lots of Republicans. I got the Republican message, investigated the party platform and made the decision to be a Republican. It was about conservative values than anything else. Plus, I went into the military and it seemed that Republicans were always on the side of more defense for our country. I don’t mean that in the sense of spending more money as much as they understood the need to defend our country and what that would take.

The Night the Lights Came On…

In 2013, Elbert Guillory, a state senator from Louisiana, discussed his ‘bold decision’ to join the Republican Party. Guillory speaks to many points in the statement, including how it was more of the right thing to do versus a bold thing. He brings up the origins of the Republican Party in 1854 and how the welfare state only serves as a means of controlling the Black community (Real Clear Politics 2013). While the road for their party identification was clear for Joseph, Patrick, Stewart, Anthony, Warren and Lisa, several of the interviewees had an epiphany, some watershed moment like Senator Guillory that led them to changing their party allegiance.

When describing her move to the Republican Party, Amy brought up the Robert Frost poem and how a friend made the remark to her about “the road less traveled” and how “brave I must have been” in order to come over to the Republican side. Jennifer, Amy, and Evan all say it was just a time in their life to make a change.

Amy: What’s funny to me is that I really was Independent before I became a Republican. People in my family, friends, coworkers I think always assumed I was a Democrat but I wasn’t. I was in law school and while there, a female judge came and spoke to my class about her path. It was then and there I made the decision to find out more about these Republicans and what it meant to be Republican. I felt that if this brilliantly successful woman could be who she was and be a Republican in those times and in the South, then I
could too. It did not matter that I was Black. I didn’t see that as the issue. I actually thought being a woman and being Republican was the tougher task.

Jennifer: It was simple for me. After a time, I found that everything my family had hyped the Democratic Party up to be just wasn’t right for me. As I grew older, finished college, got a job and began my true journey into adulthood by getting a mortgage and paying taxes, following that party no longer made sense to me. I have always been fiscally conservative and socially as well. When I discovered more of the party philosophy, especially when it came to economic matters, I couldn’t do it anymore. It’s like this: I go to work every day and at the end of the month I am paid $5000 as an example. My neighbor chose to not go to work because they were angry at the boss, their wife, whatever... His paycheck at the end of the month is $1000. We are not equal at this point in terms of pay checks but Democrats want everyone to be equal so they tell me I must give my neighbor $2000 of my money so we both have $3000. How is that right? The answer is simple: it is wrong. Yes we need to take care of those who are less fortunate, we need to do everything we can for those who cannot do for themselves like children, the disabled and the elderly. But a full grown man who is just choosing not to go to work? I don’t think so. I do not want my money handled like that. I couldn’t agree with the philosophy, tactics, or policies so I bailed and became a Republican. Are they perfect? No but I had to do something.

Evan: I got out of college and I was looking for the right career, and moving around a bit. I got angry because it seemed like there were not many opportunities out there for me as a Black man. I mean, I had good grades, no criminal record, nothing that should keep me from getting hired. I wanted to blame somebody but really there wasn’t anybody. Sometimes you just have to admit other people are smarter, did a bit more than you, or maybe they just know someone that you don’t. One day I was talking with a friend from college about the upcoming election. He made some very good points to me about the Republican Party and their philosophy. Let’s face it, I mean I was a Democrat because all of my family were Democrats, not because I was a huge believer so the jump wasn’t that big in truth. After reading a bit more about them, it occurred to me that I really agreed with more of the Republican platform. Their pro-capitalism stance really appealed to me and made me see how I needed to actually be a bit more responsible for myself and not depend on a company to provide a livelihood for me in exchange for my labor. I could labor hard for myself and do better. I voted Republican in the election and have continued to do so in every election since.

Ray and Nicole (who are married to each other), discussed their interesting exodus from the Democratic Party.

Ray: We both made up our minds at pretty identical moments that it was time to vote differently.
Nicole: Yeah, after the 2008 Democratic Primary, I was done with it all. I actually didn’t want to engage in politics anymore. Don’t get me wrong, it had nothing and then I guess everything to do with Obama at the same time. We were both Hillary Clinton supporters. I felt that she was kind of forced to concede to Obama. He won anyway so they got what they wanted. I felt she was handled badly and it upset me to see things unfold that way because she was a woman. That’s how I felt and I just couldn’t vote for or be a part of calling myself a Democrat anymore.

Ray: I was excited by Obama from the time I first heard him back in 2004. I said then I felt he could be president some day and that is huge for me as it would not be something I could have ever expected. I didn’t think he was ready though in 2008 and that Clinton may have been a better bet. It was history in the making either way but you have to be about more than that and I wasn’t so sure what he was really for even after watching him go up against McCain. I was thinking I just couldn’t hang in there for the long haul with him. I actually became independent for a bit and then later changed over to the Republicans.

James and Paul are brothers who immigrated to the United States from the Caribbean. Both discussed the American Dream and how coming to America was the best day of their lives. Now in their late 80s early 90s, the two were influenced in the 1960s and 1970s by the promise of the Republican Party. The party “seemed to be saying all the things we believed America to be about” said Paul. James added in that “we came to the United States for freedom and better chances. Republicans had the ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps’ and that is who we were and what we thought America was. Just a family of immigrants depending on ourselves to have some success.”

Peter, on the other hand, made the change after a conversation at church. Joseph, who was running for elected office, visited Peter’s church. After the visit (which was not politically driven), the two sat down over coffee to discuss Joseph’s campaign.

“I worked for the post office. In my role, I could not declare for one political party or the other. I never thought about being a Republican or voting Republican. It was not until he pointed out through our discussion that I was a conservative at the very least... I think for me one of the biggest issues I had was that I didn’t know anyone else who was Black and Republican so how could I possibly be one too you know? And that is probably the
attitude of many other Blacks that are conservative but still Democrats. They are Republicans too, they just don’t know it yet.”

Religion and Republicanism

Blacks have shown that regardless of issue, the label Democrat means the most when making their vote choice (Kidd, et al. 2007). Religion may be the greatest opportunity the Republican Party has for increasing African American participation (Streb 2001). Blacks tend to be very religious as a group and the church tends to provide most Blacks with guidance in their daily lives (McDaniel and Ellison 2008). The traditional values of the Christian church so well indoctrinated by the Republican Party tend to be shared by Blacks as they are more likely to be in favor of school prayer, against abortion, and attend church more often than Whites (Streb 2001; Wallace, et al. 2009).

As stated earlier, Blacks are a very religious group. Research shows that nonwhite Democrats are more similar to Republican than White Democrats in many ways. Recent research from the Pew Center shows that in a head to head comparison, 95% of nonwhites (including 99% of Blacks) that identify as Democrats or are Democrat leaners believe in God (or a higher power) which is the same percentage of Republicans and leaners. (Diamant and Smith 2018). Among White Democrats, 78% believe in God or higher power. The rate of White Democrats that are non-believers (21%) is four times that of nonwhite Democrats and White and nonwhite Republicans (Diamant and Smith 2018). The numbers are similar even when discussing biblical descriptions of God with 61% of nonwhite Democrats and 70% of Republicans believe in God as described in the Bible. They (nonwhite Democrats) practically double the percentage of White Democrats in their belief of an omnipotent, omnipresent, and
omniscient God or other higher power 64% to 35%, with 67% of Republicans sharing those beliefs (Diamant and Smith 2018).

Nonwhite Democrats measure like Republicans when it comes to their commitment. Church attendance of at least once per week is comparable to that of Republicans with nonwhites at 39% and Republicans at 44% and almost twice that of White Democrats at 22% (Pew Research Center 2015). Among nonwhite Democrats the percentages are like Republicans for daily prayer at 62% versus 40% of White Democrats.

All 16 of the interviewees identify themselves as Christian. Four belong to Mainline Protestant churches (Methodist, Church of Christ, Episcopalian), two are Catholic, six are Baptist (southern or missionary), and four are non-denominational. All attend church at least once a week with several attending more than once per week. Twelve of the sixteen pray at least once a day (although admittedly for some it is only at mealtimes). As most of the participants are over 50 their religiosity is not surprising nor particularly remarkable. What is interesting is their openness at church regarding their political affiliation.

Joseph, Patrick, Peter, Anthony, Jason, Amy, Warren, Lisa, and Evan all speak openly at church about being Republican. For Jason, it’s not about conversion but discussion.

Jason: I don’t go around telling all of the Black people in the church that they should be Republicans. Not by a long shot. But you cannot avoid it you know? Especially with the election of Donald Trump. Do I think he’s the answer to the problems in America? No. Of course not. The president never is but so many people think that way. I look at it as a way to educate. I hear many people in my life group wanting to blame him [Trump] for so many things. I mean he’s been in office what like three months and people already want him impeached? I just try to get people to keep an open mind. When they are that angry you can’t change a mind. All you can do is get them to understand that there is another side to things.

Warren: I do not spend my time at church attempting to get people to become Republicans. I am just open about it because I have run for office. It can make you the
brunt of a few jokes for certain but if I cannot be proud of my party choice in a place I should be most comfortable then why would I be in that party?

The interviewees do speak about ‘keeping church and state separate’. Nicole and Jennifer attend the same church. Although they not interviewed together, both women mentioned their pastor discussing politics.

**Cross Pressure and Party Affiliation**

Cross pressured voters, although present in the literature since the 1940s and 50s, remain an under-researched area. This is especially true for Blacks who happen to be Republicans. Until 2008 with Barack Obama on one side and party affiliation on the other, the problem of being a Black Republican and voting hardly presented a problem. While there were few reports in the popular literature on how some Black Republicans were struggling with their vote selection, empirical research on this event is even more insignificant. What is truly important here is before voting, pressure to switch parties. Typically research on two identities clashing (Black Republican) are the topics of cross pressure research. However, the pressure on Black Republicans may come from additional avenues (other Democrats) in church, employment and social circles to stop identifying as Republican.

When asked if there is pressure in their lives to change political affiliation, a majority of participants indicated most of that push comes from family and a bit from friends. Lisa described the push from her roommate in college.

“Senior year my roommate decided she would somehow get me converted over to the ‘right side’ according what she believed… I think she felt like many liberals do… it was her job to do outreach and make sure all African Americans were on the right path, voting Democrat and supporting liberal ideas. No matter what I told her about why I chose to be a Republican, mainly about my own beliefs, she kept on and on… my own choices did not matter, only her own agenda. It was a hard semester and I just started doing everything I could to avoid her. I would stay in the library or with other friends
until very late and only come home to sleep and shower. This actually made me very angry as I thought about how I lived there too and why would I allow someone to make me so uncomfortable about what I wanted? For a bit she would go beyond talking and send stuff to my email and text me and put stuff on my bedroom door.”

Three of the interviewees attend historically Black churches and their church leaders are not shy with their opinions, which create varying levels of discomfort. While the comments are mostly veiled some are right out in the open.

Joseph: Our lead pastor commented about voting one Sunday mainly to encourage everyone to head out to the polls during early voting and remind everyone about signing up to drive the elderly and others to those polling locations since they might be a bit far. During the 2012 election and he said “We know brother Joseph is a Republican and won’t agree with this but I’m going to say it anyway – remember who is running and what that means for us… after that part he commented to the congregation that we needed to pray for those who would be voting for the man whose last name started with the same letter as his party (meaning Romney). It was not a direct command to vote for Obama but everyone got the message.

Patrick: Our pastor often has political undertones in his messages. And of course it’s not always positive. In fact since Donald Trump was elected it is rarely anything positive unless it is something he feels makes President Trump look bad. He never calls the president by name...he refers to him as 46-1. Am I offended when he makes comments about Republicans? Not really because I believe the pulpit has always been used for political reasons and always at the expense of God. But if I decided not to go to church because of a man I would not be a faithful servant to Him.

How Black Republicans are Perceived

Most of the interviewees stated they have received some negative statements regarding their political choices. Comments came from a variety of sources but mostly family members. Evan and Lisa talked about being trolled on social media by friends. A majority of comments are from other Blacks but some have come from Whites and Hispanics as well. When probed a bit deeper, it was revealed that they do believe that the degree of openness about party affiliation and politics affected the backlash.
Ray, Nicole, and Peter all mentioned that they cannot even have certain political discussions around certain family members.

Ray: Yeah, our kids know we are both Republican and our son is as well. Our youngest daughter is firmly in the Democrat camp which is her choice and that is fine. But you cannot say anything around her without it becoming a problem.

Nicole: We warn the other kids that there is not political talk when we have family events. I mean NONE [emphasis added]. Especially since our son knows this about her and will make comments to get her riled up now that Trump is president. If something comes up he will purposefully start talking about how he is not so sure what is so great about Democrats, and what is it they have done that inspires such loyalty? Electing one Black guy? That gets under her skin pretty bad.

Ray: Once she started going on about everything Democrats do for us and allow us to do. She went on a bit about how [puts up air quotes] Democrats are better for Black people. It was seriously infuriating to everyone around the table [starts laughing]

Nicole: Our son jumped on that one [loud laughing]. He plainly asked her what was it that the Democratic Party had done that was so wonderful. Put a puppet in office? You need to open your eyes and understand that guy is not affecting your life. You seriously need to open your eyes and understand what they are really doing with your money. And that local government is what she needed to be concerned about - not the government in D.C. They didn’t speak for a couple of months after that.

Peter: We were at a casual family event when I mentioned the upcoming election and my duties as a precinct chair. My wife is the one who made it known I had chosen the Republican Party. My eldest daughter started crying... she asked me how I could betray my people. It was very bad for a long time. She would not speak to me other than to be respectful. Even to this day she is a little on the quiet side when we are around each other. It hurts me. I thought her mother and I did a good job of teaching the children about respecting other’s right to their own opinions and beliefs. I always taught them that you don’t have to agree with what someone else says or does but you must respect their right to say or do it.

Others have had hostile words thrust at them from family members, colleagues and friends. Jacqueline, now a retired teacher was harshly criticized when she stood up for then presidential candidate Donald Trump. She hadn’t intended to divulge her political preferences and in fact always made it a point to keep it to herself.
I was in the copy room scanning some tests when a colleague came in berating women who said they were on the side of Trump. Normally I let this person rant but I just couldn’t take it another day. What happened to free choice? Finally I said to her that so many people were beaten, jailed, murdered and subjected to all kinds of atrocities so we could vote for whomever we please. You assume that because I am a woman I am going to vote for Clinton? That is not always going to be the case. She turned on me and said “Well I guess that means you are voting for him [Trump]... what a traitor you are... to women and to Blacks.” I replied that it didn’t matter who I voted for at the end of the day but that I would vote for him. I know I should have just left it alone but I kept going and let her know that the Civil Rights movement allowed me to vote the way I wanted. After that it was all over the building. I didn’t care because I was retiring at semester’s end. You know the craziest thing about that? She was a White woman telling me how I was a traitor to Black people because I didn’t want to vote for a White woman. A privileged, advantaged, White woman? That’s like all the people that assume you voted for Obama. Ugh.

Stewart, Warren, and Anthony all discussed the fact that since they were always open about their political affiliation, they don’t receive too much criticism any longer. Although Stewart mentions an incident in the 2012 election cycle.

I put a Romney/Ryan sign in the yard and had on the shirt while working in the yard. A lady drove by the house and slowed down. I looked up and waved thinking maybe she was lost and I could help her. Not so much. She saw my shirt and started yelling at me… White people still think you are a stupid coon… just being played by Whitey and the Republicans. Stuff like that. After that there were about four additional times I would step out for the mail or walk the dog and get fairly furious looks from people driving by. I know they were not part of our small neighborhood and probably had come by to see the yard sign and maybe catch a glimpse of the Black guy supporting Republicans. Like I was some kind of circus act (shaking his head).

Jennifer though has a completely different take on being a Black Republican and what others think.

Truthfully, it is simply nobody’s business whether I choose Republicans or Democrats. But you know I see how people talked about Clarence Thomas, Michael Steele, Ben Carson, Herman Cain, Condoleezza Rice, and others. I know they put themselves out there and so the criticism is to be expected. But I know I have read on social media and heard some pretty tough comments about them. They are not lackeys for the Republican Party as I heard someone in my sorority say. It takes a lot to stand up and be out there and I have to admit, while it is important to me to be who I am, others haven’t seen that light and won’t until they are ready so I do not have many conversations with others.
Amy had her own interesting take on perception and criticism from others.

*I think in certain circles if you want to have some peace, especially at work or home, you have to “stay in the closet” as we used to say and still say about being gay and keep your mouth closed about your party. I have anger management problems in my past I had to overcome for the sake of my career and my personal happiness. It gets under my skin enough to hear people call other prominent Blacks such as Justice Thomas tools of the White man to be nice about it. And if I am not being nice about it... people call them ‘Uncle Tom’s, or worse a ‘White man’s n***er’. If that kind of talk gets directed at me, the backlash could be... well let’s say not good.*

Jason and Patrick had a completely different outlook on the perception of Black Republicans.

*Patrick: I don’t want it to seem as if everyone is completely accepting of my choice. However, I think that when I do speak about political things, I come from an angle of just hearing what people have to say then I simply talk about the things that are important to me. Often, people say to me... hey that’s exactly what I think. It’s not until later that they find out I am a Republican and that their own ideas line up with some of the tenets of being Republican. At that point they start trying to find out a bit more about the party, exactly what we stand for and what are the goals for Americans.*

*Jason: Sometimes I do still get accused of only being out for myself and not the community. While it’s not the truth... I am very much for the Black community... but you hear it all the same. When you just seek to have a conversation with people though they see you are not maybe so bad and you have something of value to say.*

As stated earlier, Evan and Lisa took a bit of backlash from family members and on social media.

*Evan: Yeah my mom and dad are Democrats and when they finally found out, they said that’s fine but don’t expect me to vote for no White people. You know they [Whites] are not to be trusted. I mean their attitudes are understandable. My parents grew up in the South where family members had been lynched. They could not eat at the lunch counter, all of the things we know from history. My mother told me the story of her teacher being very excited because they were getting new textbooks for her math class. When they arrived though, my mom could not help but notice they were old and had been marked in by students who went to the all White school. They know what they saw and experienced and I do not want to be disrespectful so I don’t do too much trying to change any of their perceptions. I actually avoid having too much political conversation. If I find a like minded person and we can have a civil, productive conversation, then it happens. I don’t want to say I made a mistake in doing this but I posted on Twitter and Instagram something completely factual and not my opinion at all. It was actually a repost and I*
just commented interesting. Wow – I will never do that again. People I know made some of the wildest comments. One said “n****a, I’ve known you since college, when you become a Republican punk?” Another commented that I was a ‘b**ch a** sellout Republican’. Although I dropped a bunch of people after that, it made me know to keep quiet and basically speak when I am spoken to by someone I can talk to without all of the crap.

Lisa: During President Trump’s campaign I was out at an event passing out information on Mr. Trump. I had a couple of African American women come up to me and say in a very straightforward fashion that I was being a young stupid millennial. They told me I needed to stop being used by White people and couldn’t I see all that we had accomplished with Obama. How could I push people to vote for him [Trump]? In my head I am thinking “Exactly what did Obama or even the Democrats do for African Americans that was so profound?” But it made me think about it’s really kind of insane. Like that saying about if you keep doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. African Americans continue to go to the well of the Democrats and nothing every really changes. Same thing over and over. I said to them, ‘Would you at least like to hear about another choice?’ Since they walked off I guess the answer was no but it bothered me. I told a couple of people just to vent you know? So about a week or so later, another friend showed me a post with my picture in it and it was captioned “Racist Republican Traitor Voting for Trump.” That stung hard. Not enough to make me stop my campaign work but what was so hard about it - my cousin is the one that made the post. MY COUSIN!!! Seriously.

Black Republicans on the Issues

When asking the reasons for joining the Republican Party, many participants remarked the party has similar values and principles. This brings us to the crucial question. What exactly are the issues that concern Black Republicans? Are they the same as other Republicans or are they more like Black Democrats? The results are interesting in a couple of ways. First, the interviewees did have some variation on the issues they deem important, whether it is what is facing the entire country or specifically the African American community. Some of the divides fell along expected lines – gender and age. Second, several of the issues of concern were not only concern for this group but are important to the aggregate Black community.
**Same-Sex Marriage**

A recent Pew Center survey reported that Blacks are not favorable toward same-sex marriage. Only 42% of Blacks agree that gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to marry, 11% less than White at 53% (Geciwicz and Lipka 2014). The same survey found that 61% of Blacks believe wedding businesses should have to serve gay and lesbian couples with only 45% of Whites believing the same. What is even more interesting about Blacks and their beliefs on same-sex marriage revolves around discriminatory practices. The majority of African Americans believe that same-sex couple face a great deal of discrimination. Eighty (80%) percent of Blacks feel this way compared to only 61% of Whites (Geciwicz and Lipka 2014).

A majority of participants are proponents of traditional marriage. The easiest and most common explanation for this is religion. Black Democrats are almost equivalent to Republicans in their beliefs regarding the acceptability of homosexual relations. Thirty-one percent of Black Democrats and 30% of Republicans reported they feel it is acceptable, while 52% of independents, 61% of nonblack Democrats believe it is acceptable (Newport 2008). Lisa (the youngest in the group at 27) supports same-sex marriage. Evan and Jacqueline are in the middle.

*Lisa: I don’t have anything against two guys getting married. And I know many Christians do and many Republicans do. So I am aware it is a place my party and I do not necessarily agree on. I think at the end of the day people have preferences and they love whomever they love. It has nothing to do with what I want.*

*Evan: I wouldn’t say I am in favor of it. But I think if two people want to get married they should be allowed to do so. It is like when the Supreme Court had to rule in the Loving case on interracial marriage. Although I guess it is different because those people were male and female... But I really think from an economic standpoint why should they be excluded? There is a bunch of money to be made there. You have weddings, kids...which I am not sure about at all really..., they buy houses, get divorced like heterosexual couples. That is all money for the economy.*
Jacqueline: One of my very good friends is gay. When he told me he was getting married, it shook me a bit at first. I knew that meant he would want me to come to the wedding, and truthfully I wasn’t sure that I could. But you do what you have to so I went. It’s not like the wedding was bad or anything, I just wasn’t sure how I felt about it. They seemed so in love and all… so I guess it was okay for them.

While others are firmly in the camp against same sex marriage there were a few interesting takes from interviewees about the issue.

Jason: I am completely against gay marriage. To me if it is a question at all, it is a question of religion. Marriage has been made political and legal for economic reasons, which as a Republican should make me happy. However, really it is a religious thing. The Supreme Court should not have to rule on who can get married. It’s about God’s law not man’s otherwise why bother getting married in a church, or a semi-religious ceremony or get married at all?

Jennifer: I feel that gay marriage has become more of a cultural phenomenon than anything else. Like after Angelina Jolie adopted babies from Southeast Asia and Africa. After that you had Madonna, Charlize Theron, Sandra Bullock… a bunch of White women adopting Black babies. Then you started seeing it on TV like in Grey’s Anatomy – the main character adopted a Black girl. People think it is so great and now these kids have a better life than they would have otherwise…blah blah blah… and nobody and I mean nobody ever talks about the real underlying issue of why these kids are out there and in need of adopting to begin with. To the why I feel it is an important issue for Republicans? I think in some ways to get more support, the party has started to waver on some core values and it becomes a slippery slope. One day its gay marriage, the next its whatever the hot issue is.

Amy: I think the issue I have with gay marriage is the discrimination complaint. A colleague was discussing being gay and discrimination. He is a White male and was engaged. During the process he found that the church he and his fiancé attended would not marry them. He was astounded that they would have the nerve to stand behind the tenets of their church and not marry them. I told him it is their right and find someone else to marry you. There are plenty of people willing or you could have a civil ceremony where it doesn’t matter. He went on for quite some time about it before telling me I of all people should understand what it is like to be discriminated against. I finally told him, look, what you are talking about is not the same thing. I cannot help but be a Black woman. People know that about me before anything else. I cannot hide who I am. Nobody knows you are gay until you open your mouth and say so. He said well that’s true. But I could tell he felt what he experienced is the same as what people of color typically experience.
Abortion

With the prevalence of police brutality and the growth of Black Lives Matter, it is interesting that the number one issue for several interviewees was abortion. Many indicated that it is more of an issue for the African American community versus other racial groups. The majority of the participants are pro-life but vary as to their feelings about abortion.

Nicole: I remember the buzz over Roe v. Wade like it was yesterday. Back then I thought to myself as long as she wasn’t pregnant by her father or something, just have the baby and let someone adopt it, which I know is what happened due to the time it took for the case. I think all babies deserve a chance at life. Sometimes though it is not the right situation. It made me parent my children about pregnancy and that if they got pregnant or got someone pregnant they would have to deal. I would not bail them out by taking care of the child... of course I would not let a baby starve or anything... but I also was not going to pay for something they could have prevented. We have far too many Black women who feel free to do whatever they want with their bodies because they have this option. They go to doctors who don’t seem to offer them alternatives so they are not in this situation to begin with. I believe it is necessary because there are circumstances but...if you just use it because you can, there comes a point where you cannot go back and spend the rest of your life with regret.

Jennifer: It is not for me. I don’t care what the circumstances are. I have to look at myself in the mirror every day and the judgment on myself would be too much. I mean for me – I feel that I can control getting pregnant unless I was raped. But for our community, it bothers me that Black women seem to get pushed toward female castration so we can’t have babies or an abortion to cut back on the Black population. Think about it... it’s for real. I was 25 years old and had some medical issues. After five minutes of questions and examination the doctor suggested that I just have a hysterectomy. Really? At 25? Like if you told me I was about to die then sure let’s do the surgery that day. She gave no real reasoning beyond it would be the easiest and fastest way to take care of the problem. After I did my research and got other opinions I found that most women have surgery but nothing that radical and go on to have their babies. But this person was ready to take that away from me. My sister had the same problem and her doctor told her she really should just have surgery. My sister already knew from my experience but she went for a second opinion, spoke to friends, and even consulted a women’s support center about it and found the same thing I did - there were some different options outside of that.

Lisa: During undergrad one of my African American roommates got pregnant. Her boyfriend at the time immediately said to “get an abortion” as if she had no say in the matter. Anyway she went to Planned Parenthood to just get information from some place
other than the internet. It was rough because I know she was upset with her now ex-boyfriend’s attitude and the idea of what she was going to have to say to her parents. The medical staff was not very comforting to her. When she asked about care, etc… the nurse said well if you don’t have an abortion then you go to a regular obstetrician or come here if you don’t have any insurance and can’t afford it. There were just so many issues with what was said and I could not help but wonder if she was treated kind of roughly because she was young, African American or both. It concerns me that women, especially African American women may go into clinics or other places where abortions are assumed or even encouraged. I mean for the first thing out of her mouth to be “if you don’t have an abortion?”

Evan and Anthony state they are pro-life and pro-choice at the same time. Warren is pro-life as well and takes a hard glance at the impact of abortion for Black America.

Evan: I am not in favor of it. But I can also look at it from this perspective: I do not want anyone telling me what clothes to buy, food to eat, car to drive… any of that. I know it is not exactly the same but you get my point. I mean the Republican Party is heavy on the side of limiting the size of government but we want to control women and their choices.

Anthony: Although it is not something I would personally want for my wife, or my sisters or honestly any woman, it is the law. And I do not believe that it will ever be overturned even with nine conservative judges on the court. I think it is one of those things that the party has to accept and move on to other issues that we can do something about.

Warren: I think there are so many problems in the Black community. Abortion is huge because the numbers tell us over half of the abortions performed are Black women. If we are going to say Black Lives Matter then they have to matter outside of just the Trayvon Martin’s, Freddie Gray’s and so forth. Beyond the adult lives we lose. So I think when we look at how this should matter – in a political sense which party is in favor of abortions no matter the circumstance? Abortion on demand as I call it. Democrats support this almost to a person and what is ridiculous to me is how nobody seems to see how this is a way of killing off Black people.

Immigration

There is little question that while there are issues that affect Black Americans, there are issues affecting the WHOLE country. A recent YouGov poll revealed that immigration has rather quickly moved to the top of the list as the issue of greatest concern for Americans. It has become particularly important to Republicans as 70% report it as important and 17% say that it is
their most important issue (Frankovic 2018). The interviewees had a fairly broad spectrum of views on immigration. A majority showed concern for undocumented immigrants, especially children. The concern for children separated from parents was brought up more than once.

Jason: It worries me that you have kids being sent one way and the parents another. When they arrive and are put in what is really no better than a cage with no way to understand what is happening because of language barriers [shakes his head]... you have these poor kids in the equivalent of an internment camp... I know the party line is to say they have not entered the country in the proper way so detain and return them home. But I just don’t know that is the way.

Jacqueline: It is bothersome because I look at how mothers, fathers, siblings, entire families were torn apart in slavery. Now at least there is a chance of reconnecting because we are connected through technology. But the younger children have the probability of going their entire lives never seeing parents that they can barely remember in the first place. I know there are bigger problems within the larger issue but I also worry about these children and their interrupted education.

Peter: Children arrive here sometimes on their own but many times with adults who are sent back while the child stays here. How exactly is it they are then expected to survive? Are some random people expected to take the children in? I know people come to America for opportunities, etc... but I don’t know that I could leave my child here while I went back to my home country. Yes, children are resilient and able to bounce back but there are so many issues that I am not sure you should keep the kids here if the adults aren’t.

While most everyone expressed concern over how illegal immigration is being handled, some also expressed concern over economic and safety issues.

Jennifer: I do not believe that illegal immigrants are bad people. Yes it drives me insane that people who have been here 10 years still claim to not speak the language. If I moved to China – guess what I would probably need to assimilate a bit and learn some Mandarin or Cantonese. But I can get past that. What is of greater concern to me is the impact on our economy. I hear of county hospital after county hospital having to close because of the number of undocumented workers that cannot pay. I feel that is where our party and our country can really take a stand and make serious improvement in the immigration system.

Patrick: Our country was built on the backs of immigrants. Jewish people, Italian people, German people, Irish people... all came here and built things. Many immigrants come to this country and perform in the industries that we do not want to do. And when I
say we... I mean White and Black, but there are jobs we as Black people do not want to
do anymore. My mother and grandmother were domestics. Or let me be real...maids.
Those lower paying jobs used to be all we as Blacks or even White European immigrants
could get. Now we have gotten too good to do some of these honest paying jobs and
would rather the government take care of us. So at any rate... I am not against
immigrants I feel that as a government, the breaks in the system need to be fixed. We as
a party are really taking the wrong angle on this. We have to get at the root of this and
correct the way in which we get illegal immigrants to begin with.

Joseph: I think what is interesting about the complaints regarding illegal immigration is
the same people who want to scream about these people coming here, taking jobs...that
we as Americans don’t want by the way... are in some way probably taking advantage of
them. I overheard a conversation in my office a couple of weeks ago. One of the guys
was talking about getting some yard work done. A lady said she had just had one of the
larger landscaping firms come and do her flower beds...that kind of thing and she could
give him the name and number so he could get a quote for his work. The reply was
simply appalling and truthfully I am a bit ashamed I didn’t stand up and say something.
Well... anyway he replied that he was just going to ask around to see if he could find
some Mexicans he could pay cash to. Illegals would be cheaper because they don’t want
problems. Here is the thing... I think that there is truth in his argument in that if you are
undocumented the last thing you want is to be found out and deported. But the
government should do something so that people aren’t seeking to take advantage and
immigrants can go to work, start their own businesses, or whatever.

Ray: I have no problem with immigrants and truthfully at this point I don’t think you can
ever solve the issue without complete reform of the laws. What do you do with the people
already here? You cannot find them all and send them all back to their former homes.
Some of them may have come here for serious reasons. Like maybe they or their family
were under the threat of being killed. But I do worry about the economic fallout if we do
not get a handle on it.

Nicole: My biggest concern about it? Safety. I know the majority of people that
immigrate here are good people, who just want the opportunity that America offers. It’s
understandable. I just do not want anyone to immigrate here that may cause my family to
be unsafe.

Immigrant brothers James and Paul discussed immigrating to the United States the ‘right way’
and the ‘reward’ of illegal immigration people have pushed for in the past.

James: I came here from a tiny island so many years ago. I had to [brother Paul adds in
‘we’]... yes - we had to learn the language, learn our way. But we did that. But we came
here the right way. We were able to become citizens as soon as we possibly could. We
did things the right way. When you see people come here the wrong way... it is a
problem. Like so many others we had to save money for years. We had to leave people behind and we know many people have come here and left family behind. But still we came here the right way. I built up a business from nothing because I came here for opportunity and I never saw it as coming from working for and putting the lion share of the money into someone else’s pocket. If I worked hard, I should reap the benefit.

Paul: I think something has to be done about immigration. I am not so sure what though. Many people want to shut down borders, build walls, and none of it sounds like the right thing but how are we to know until we try? I don’t think that people who are here should be automatically given citizenship. It seems like we are giving them something they haven’t really earned. It’s like my granddaughter who always wanted free grades in school. I told her “you have not earned an A so why are you entitled to it? If you did a third of the work of a person who did all of the work to get an A then you should get a third of the grade”. I don’t want them sending small children back when they were brought here by their parents or anything. That is not their fault and they should not be punished.

Lisa believes part of the problem many Americans have regarding immigration results from lack of understanding.

Lisa: I feel so many are panicked about immigration because they think so many people are here illegally. I mean my parents do. My dad said well you know half the people that come here are here illegally and my mom chimed in that she thought the number was probably bigger than that. We have to educate ourselves on what the real issue is. I personally did not know how many people were here legally versus illegally which means there is some work to be done. And both parties are responsible for that.

Economics and Wealth

A recent report from the Gallup organization indicates that most Americans and a large share of Republicans are happy with the opportunities for growth in this country. Approximately 63% of Americans, 86% of Republicans, and 50% of Democrats (including leaners) feel that the chance to get ahead is available for those who wish to take advantage of it (Newport 2018).

When it comes to income equality, the numbers are more stark. Overall, 32% of Americans are happy with the income and wealth distribution, with 57% of Republicans feeling good about the distribution and only 17% of Democrats (Newport 2018).
Patrick: I think the key to economic growth for Black people and for America is the expansion of opportunity. We need level playing fields where everyone who is working hard can have a chance at something better. Programs that allow people to get ahead in a nonauthentic way should be stopped. When people agree to let someone do less and get more it creates anger and resentment.

Joseph: What we have had for so long is a middle-class shift. Education has created a larger middle-class but the lower class has not been able to come along. There are policy related ideas we should push to help close the gap. I look at minimum wage as an example. The only way a person can survive on the federal minimum of $7.25 an hour is if you are a high school student with two parents at home still paying for all of your needs. People with families cannot make it. With so many minorities working the jobs that pay that little amount – how can we expect them to have better, I mean a good life where parents do not have to work three jobs to buy food, clothes, pay rent and have heat? The answer is we cannot do that. Yes some states have raised minimum but even that is not enough. The party needs to push for changes not just to the federal minimum but pushing for higher wages in certain industries and also locales. It costs more to live in Los Angeles than it does Dallas. But we are expecting a person to pay $2500 rent on an apartment, run a car, buy food, etc… in Los Angeles on $10.00 an hour. Not happening unless you are in a situation with several roommates. I know that is really against what most in the party would say but I think beyond anything else reality is what reality is and you cannot just wave a wand so to speak and people are going to be doing better.

Warren: I think economic power is a huge issue for Black America. In the greater scheme of things we have killed our economic power by becoming a voting bloc. Now that Blacks are with the Democratic Party – they do not feel the need to actually support Blacks and Black issues.

Jennifer: The idea of income inequality is interesting to me because while I earn a decent amount of money and can take care of myself some in our [Black] community cannot. They are living in inner city housing, going to inner city schools, working low wage jobs without opportunity. Yes the kids going to school may have a chance to change their situation by going to school, getting an education or training but again that comes down to opportunity. Yes people want to do better but they do not know how and it is not as easy as going on the internet getting a list, checking off things and you are a success. It takes hard work absolutely, but gosh it takes knowledge that so many people are not getting. I mean it’s no good if people who have done well are just continuing to do well and we say oh hey young kid you can grow up and be successful and we do nothing to show people the way forward.

Stewart: I think for Blacks and maybe Hispanics too, there is a race gap in unemployment. There are many factors that go into the problem in my mind. There is a problem with education and those with better educations are able to get jobs and
probably spend less time if any time at all unemployed. And when it comes to education, there is the problem of where you go to school. I was able to go to a pretty decent university for my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. But everyone doesn’t go to the schools people think are the best and by that I mean the name of the school and I think that may have something to do with it too. Yes maybe some of the issue is where you live. And that plays into the school issue too. If you go to school in a nice suburban district you probably have a chance to do better on tests and get into better schools. And there is a problem of discrimination. If you went to an HBCU then most likely you are a person of color. Strike one. And forget about if your name is Jamal or something perceived as being ethnic. You can go to Stanford and graduate top of your class. You probably aren’t going to get as many looks as someone named Kevin or David.

Evan: What worries me about the economy really are jobs and related education. I started my own business after college and we serve mainly other small business. But it is a hard thing. Everybody wants to be the boss but they have no idea. But I try to make sure that I encourage growth of people. I cannot pay for people to go to school but I share my own journey and for example if someone needs to leave a bit early to get to class, sure it’s no problem because that what I can give them. Education is important in improving yourself and your situation. I am not saying everyone has to go to college because they don’t. And every job that we need people to do in the world doesn’t require a college degree. So education but whatever that means is appropriate for the person. There are opportunities for programs in high school that I don’t think are available for everyone. Also I think a problem for us and employment is prison. The numbers are pretty high for how many Black men are incarcerated in their lifetime. Like I want to say one in four or something. And then when you get out everyone knows getting a job is going to be a very slow going task if you can get a decent job at all.

Several other issues were of concern to the interviewees. The United States debt, Social Security, gun control, police brutality/Black Lives Matter, and healthcare were all mentioned by participants as well.

**Perception of the Republican Party in the African American Community**

There is no question that the Republican Party is highly unpopular with Blacks. During the last two presidential elections, John McCain and Mitt Romney received 4 and 6% respectively of the Black vote (Bositis 2012). There is a mitigating factor in these elections, in the form of Barack Obama, potentially the first president of African descent in 2008, and his re-election in 2012. Without Obama on the ballot in 2016, Donald Trump garnered eight per cent
of the Black vote, a number slightly less tragic than the previous two elections (Roper Center 2016). That aside, it was 52 years since a nominee received a percentage of the vote this tiny. In that year, the Republican nominee, Senator Barry Goldwater (AZ) campaigned on the fact he was against the Civil Rights Act, a mere four years after 32% of Blacks pledged their votes to Richard Nixon (Schlesinger, Israel and Hansen 1985). Looked at in a different way, the presidential nominee took the side of what we would plainly call White supremacists in today’s terms (and most likely in the 1960s as well).

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Blacks are a politically savvy group of voters. They clearly see what they consider the differences between the two political parties in the United States. As Glaser (1995) reports, education attainment aside, 66% of Blacks versus 61% of Whites perceived various ways in which the parties differ from one another. Typical areas include views on how conservative the attitudes of party members are regarding not just ideology, but assistance to minorities, increasing social welfare, and government provided jobs (Glaser 1995).

One thing is clear – though many African Americans consider themselves ideologically conservative, Democrats are still the party of choice. Most participants had clear views on how their party is perceived by other African Americans and why.

Warren: I know that the way most African Americans view Black Republicans is pretty simple. We are viewed as ‘sellouts’...we are not seen as really being Black. Does that make the party wrong for us? No - of course not. But one of the larger issues here is a lack of knowledge. Most of our [Black] minds are already made up about what the Republican Party is whether that is good or bad.

Joseph: I think the reason most African Americans view the party as wrong for them is simple misrepresentation by the Democratic Party. Most of the Democrats platform is contrary to the belief of many Blacks. However, you have very few people that actually have read both platforms to know the difference.
Patrick: I think much of the perception of the party comes from inaccurate historical knowledge. But we cannot do anything about that. What is much more important right now is to move forward. We as Americans need to focus on the things we can do right here and right now to make the country better. I think to change that perception we need to go forward with what is good for us as a people. Many Blacks are Democrats because that is what their families were. I think we have to help them understand that there is another choice that is good to them — not just good for them as it has been in the past.

Stewart: I definitely think that there is some shame involved in being Black and Republican and that is a reason why many Blacks — especially the ones who are conservative will not be a part of the party. They may not even be able to admit it to themselves but their conservative values really do put them in the party or at the very least toward the right end of the spectrum.

Anthony: So much of our identity as African Americans in this country is tied up in slavery, segregation, and Civil Rights. Somehow it has gotten twisted as to which party pushed for the end of slavery, which party elected the first Black senators after Reconstruction, which party actually proposed the civil rights legislation. That started with Nelson Rockefeller in the 1940’s and he partnered with some on the Democratic side. That’s factual but the party gets no credit for it. And then by that time African Americans had all but left the Republican Party.

Evan: We do not fit in with the narrative some in the Black community have set up as ideals... you know the thug or the hustler who has made it. Since you don’t fit that, then you must be some kind of freak. And nobody is going to go over to anything they don’t understand. Even for those that might be willing to listen, I think it is a hard move. However, you have issues that have very little if anything at all to do with race. Take voter fraud for example — it is not even that huge of a problem that I see but when the Republican party pushes for policy that makes it harder for brown people to vote... it is seen as another attempt by Whites to keep us from being able to have a legitimate say.

Nicole: I think that most African Americans view the party as racist quite truthfully. It is a party for old, White people not Black people and that keeps them from it even though in their heart of hearts they agree with some part if not all of the platform. It becomes a defense mechanism of sorts. You may see the grass is actually greener — not just looking greener but in order to protect yourself and keep yourself safe in your mind you just keep plowing down the same path you always have. But then again — I am not so sure that people in the party and people that have been in the party their entire voting lives know what is in the platform.

Lisa: I am not so sure that most African Americans think the Republican Party is for them. And by that I mean that their policies are there to support them. I don’t think many people understand that Republicans are for social programs. We want people out
of poverty, we want life protected, we want parents to have choice in the schools their children attend. But I see so many Africans Americans on the side of the Republicans because they don’t view the Republicans as being for African Americans.

Jason: I know that in my own family those who choose to be Democrats do so because they do not think Republicans support Blacks and the issues that are important to Blacks. Take Black Lives Matter for example... when Trayvon Martin was killed President Obama came out and spoke about it saying Trayvon could have been his son. I do not agree that he should have done that at all. The comments really only served to widen an already large racial divide in this country. But it was a chance for the Republican Party to come out and do something as well. And something honest and real. The problem is that because most Blacks view Republicans and the party as a bunch of rich, old racist White men the efforts may not have been seen as anything other than patronizing. But for sure you would know until you had at least made the effort. It is probably why many Blacks who are Republican are called names and believed to have sold their souls to the Republican Party. Even when Marco Rubio at least acknowledged his understanding of why people of color may be angry and upset with police, the right really went after him. He never actually agreed with the actual agenda of the movement but showed some real empathy. And it was quite terrible because I had not heard anyone on the right even speak to Black Lives Matter. Finally you have someone come out and give a statement that could be a bridge toward something and his party did not support him in that. If Republicans want to be more effective with a community where it already shares some common ground there has to be more support. But you cannot just keep accusing each side of bad behavior and slamming those on your side. Hate is easy...courage is hard but it is the only way forward as a party if we want to stop being seen as closed off to African Americans.

Ray: At the end of the day I think people go with what is comfortable for them. Their families have been Democrats forever so they stay Democrats. And the opposite is true for Republicans too. The Republican Party doesn’t have a perception problem – they have a reality problem. The reality is that the biggest portion of the Black community doesn’t want to hear anything the party has to say. Why would they? The party has a hard time properly communicating what is good and the link between the party and what is right for Blacks.

Jacqueline: We are a very media focused country. We use social media for good things but so many people just want to know what some celebrity or the other is eating for breakfast. The people that we use as role models in this country push for the other side. If you see the person you idolize singing at rallies and putting things out there on their social media accounts then of course the masses will follow. The party is seen as the party of all the wrong things: wealthy, White, and racist. It does not matter how incorrect the perception is. What matters is our ability to correct the views and get more African Americans engaged with the right things in the Republican platform and the party.
Amy: Outreach has a great deal to do with the poor perception African Americans have of the party. We had a county Republican Party Fair in our county designed to get more people engaged and active in the party workings. Well... I was out of town and was unable to go. But a couple of friends that wanted to know more went. It was awful they told me. There was no African American outreach at all. The people there looked just like what everyone assumes the party to be. One of the women told me she walked around and not a soul even bothered to give her a good morning. You know this kind of thing is huge to Black people. You speak no matter what. It can be your mortal enemy but you will greet them. Anyway, she went up to the table for one of the women’s clubs and the people were cordial she said but not once did she feel like they really wanted her there. What was even worse is the African American club was not there and I am a part of that. It was such a missed opportunity and this is what I feel is the biggest issue we have about how the party is seen by those we would recruit into the ranks. Things like that make it feel like a boys club – a closed shop where a newcomer would have no place. So of course I am going to go over here where I am at least made to feel welcome.

Jennifer: There is the obvious tone from liberals that being conservative is equivalent to being racist. Some of the conservative values like being a responsible individual and conventional morality are supposed to be for everyone in my mind. It seems to me that at issue here is when conservatives speak to the issue of less regulation, smaller government or things like being less dependent on the government the automatic assumption is they mean cutting back on government programs that provide help with housing and food and healthcare. Programs that historically Blacks have been the biggest beneficiaries. So they get labeled racist. But at the same time, you have no one speaking to all of the money the federal government gives for disabilities and subsidies to farmers. They pay people to NOT farm. We are kind and forgiving of the overwhelming number of opioid abusers who tend to be White but expect the harshest penalties to be applied when it comes to drug offenses by Blacks. Yes those tend to be related to illegal drugs like crack but you see what I mean. Conservative politicians tend to favor forgiveness for some and tighter restrictions on others. That is very much racism.

Color Blind or Race Conscious – Going Forward Down a Path Less Travelled

Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” (Frost 1916) lends us a visual about an individual at a crossroads of sorts in life and the path taken going forward.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden Black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

- Robert Frost

The traditional interpretation is the speaker, writer, etc… is doing something bold, and revolutionary, being anti-establishment. Although Black Republicans may not feel as though being in the GOP is anything revolutionary, in order to attract more African Americans into the party, those in the party should not be ignored. In the discussion as to how the Republican Party can reach African Americans many of the participants agreed that outreach is an issue for the party.

*Warren:* I know for a fact that the party does not go over well with many African Americans because of the way we (Black Republicans) are presented to those they want to win over and have vote Republican. When you are presented to people in the same way Whites talk about their one Black friend to combat being called a racist, it does not go over well. It appears that you are just trying to be perceived as non-threatening not that you are on the side of African Americans. One thing I can clearly say the party has to do is stop trotting out Blacks when they need to and make Blacks a more integral part of the party. Right now we (Black Republicans) are still too much of a fringe element. Not only are we maligned by Blacks but our own party leaves us on the edge far too often.

*Jason:* Part of the struggle I see in the party is really saying they are going after the Black vote versus Black voters. There is not enough time spent discussing the
conservative values of the party and how that matches up with what Blacks want and need. There is not a clear consistent message about the individual just the group.

Ray: When I look at the party makeup, yes it is overwhelmingly White. And over the years there have been Blacks in various elected and appointed positions, but when the party brings it up, it almost feels like tokenism versus diversity in our party. Not only do I believe it is not the way to get more Blacks to join the party and vote for Republican candidates, it is also not appealing to Whites.

Lisa: The one thing the Republican party has to stop doing is pretending that being African American or any race for that matter does not affect you as a person and your daily decisions. I don’t believe as an African American, it is possible to not want to discuss things like the income gap, unemployment, and other inequalities that are unique to people of color and have other African Americans see you as part of the community.

The colorblind politics of the Republican Party described by Warren, Jason, Ray and Lisa in their responses are fairly common attitudes about the party by the interviewees. While there are many prominent Black Republicans, the individuals most often in the forefront disagree with things like affirmative action, racial inequality, and that identity politics are even a factor in their lives. In the 2016 book “Black Elephants in the Room: The Unexpected Politics of African American Republicans”, Corey Fields reports on this problem and its presence in Republican politics. He writes about the Black Republican we see most often and tends to be the brunt of jokes, criticism, rants and ridicule: the “color blind” or “race-blind” Republican and the ‘race-conscious” or “racial uplift” Republican that gets far less in the way of press (Fields 2016).

More important than the colorblind African American is the activist, racial uplift Black Republican who is not only active in terms of voting but actively working to get more African Americans engaged with the party (Fields 2016). Several of the interviewees are highly active in their local party. Joseph talked at length about involvement at the local level and the African American community.
“Our county is in need of more African Americans to work in the party. We focus far too much on the national party when the work here at the local level is required. There has to be a more targeted effort by the party here at the county level to bring African Americans in and we do not do that very well. Our party leadership, whether local or national does not communicate the right message to Blacks. They do a good job of making themselves more appealing to Whites but nothing for really any other people. We have more people moving in to this county than anywhere else in the metroplex and I believe the state. Many of those people come here for opportunity and by that I mean jobs. Many people also come here for cost of living, education and other reasons. My point is that many of those moving here come from blue states and they are minorities from blue states. We have to be out there in the community promoting the good things, understanding the needs of people, but especially getting into the Black community and communicating on the linking of values.”

Peter: I live in the most Republican city in our county and we are a very red county in a very red state. What I noticed though was if you want something done in this city, you have to be a part of things. On the local level, conservatives rule the day. That does not mean we are always implementing policy that is bad for African Americans. What it does mean is we as a community have to be a part of this thing in order to get our own needs met. It is why I am a precinct chair, president of the county African American Republican Club. I am at every city council meeting and regularly attend events where the decision makers are so that I can always ensure that our voices are being heard.

Patrick: I’ll put it to you this way – if you are not at the table then you are on the menu. To me that is what has happened with African Americans and the parties. We have become almost an afterthought in the Democratic Party now because they do not have to work hard for our allegiance. The truth of this is that Democrats are good for but not necessarily good to Blacks. On the other side though, Republicans do seem inclusive but at the end of the day are not. Activism in the party is crucial if we are to grow. I do quite a bit of work with young people, not to convince them they need to be Republicans but to get them to make that connection between their wants and needs and what each party has to offer. But even more than that I seek to bring up the idea of opportunity. That we have the chance for a good life, but we cannot wait around for someone to hand it to us. Success does not come without hard work; when you start getting handed things you haven’t really earned, it creates a feeling of doing well when that is not what is actually happening.

Anthony: I work with the Young Republicans Club and one of my main focuses is getting more young Black men and women to understand we have to be involved with the political game in order to have the lives we should not just the life someone else hands you.

Amy: I do not think that as a party there is any kind of focus on being Black but just being Republican. It’s almost as if you are expected to hide it and it is one thing that drives me
absolutely, positively crazy. I cannot hide the fact that I am Black any more than I can hide that I am a woman. It should be embraced and used to welcome other African Americans into the fold. You cannot get that only espousing policy that seems contrary to what they need and the Black people you do have speaking on behalf of the party do not in any way appeal to or make them feel it is a place they would want to be.

Stewart: I have been a Republican my entire adult life. That does not mean I do not know what it means to be Black. That seems to me is one of the biggest issues for the party. They are not able to be upfront about what it is they want and simply say that conservative policy is actually a way for African Americans to rise up. There is value in many programs but the party does not push that angle. They get too caught up in what the other side is pushing and respond to that instead of focusing on their own agenda. Take school vouchers for example. When did it ever become a bad thing for a parent to want their children to attend the best possible schools? I see it all the time here in Dallas. Parents who can afford it send their kids to one of the many private, Christian schools we have. If not that, they figure out how to move into a district with better schools even if they cannot afford it for the opportunity. But back to the vouchers... I think they give our parents power in the choice. So I advocate for that, and I also help my wife with holding informational sessions at churches, community centers, really anywhere we can be heard to make sure parents know what are their school options for the children. It doesn’t mean that their local schools are terrible but in some cases it is not the best choice for a child and that means parents knowing their options. And sometimes they will not get that from calling the school district.

Nicole: I always say to my kids – what affects you affects me. And I feel it applies to our larger community as well. If I am doing great, that is perfect for me but what about the rest of the Black people in America? As far as I know, there was no magic line of when I have this much money in the bank and my stock accounts or my retirement plan, or have this size house that makes me less responsible for others. I do not get to throw them away... or anyone for that matter. The Republican Party has to get it right here and they may be able to even though at times it does seem that they may not be that interested. Black people need to see that there is a chance for them to make their own decisions about how their money is spent and how that can happen with less government interference. There are those in our community that simply do not get that the reason less government is actually better is it keeps the White politicians out of our Black communities. This is especially powerful in areas where the population is predominately African American. We can only have more power when we have less control.

Jennifer: I am always on the lookout for chances to get more African Americans involved with the party. And much of that starts with small conversations, in the grocery store, the coffee line, and so forth. But I am frustrated that I seem to be working very hard to get Blacks engaged with the party and the party itself does not seem to care too much for that. I feel that the only thing the leadership of the national party wants is a warm body
they can trot out at times to show they are diverse but the real message of what is important to me is not what they want to hear.

Evan: I am not as active in party politics as I was once. My company is growing, I have a family and there is not as much time to get involved like I did once. My wife and I have started a small group with a few other African Americans that revolves around local politics. Our goal is to simply make sure information gets out to people about elections, especially local ones. There is so much focus on the big election when it means so much more who the mayor and town council are than anything else. At any rate we work with churches to fill gaps in getting the elderly who do not want to vote by mail (don’t trust it to be honest) to the polls. On these days it is a powerful thing to talk to some of the people and they are not shy about their political opinions. One thing I do hear over and over is the problem of not being heard. One couple brought up the racism factor with Republicans. They said some things that I have thought before and even discussed with my wife and others. Our party must develop its own activism with regard to African American outreach. They have to and by extension we have to at the local level stop getting tense about race. The party has to own what they want and cease to fear being called racist. We need to find ways to combat the things that stand in the way of Black people and opportunity. And not only that stop putting the blame for everything on Democrats.

Why Aren’t More African Americans Republican?

Early on in any conversation with Black Republicans comes the mention of the beginnings of the Republican Party. There is pride in discussing the Great Emancipator Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt who invited the first African American to dinner at the White House, or even Ronald Reagan. In the book *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservativism in America* (2001), Angela Dillard discusses the past as a way of legitimizing the choice to be conservative. She states minorities that choose to fall on another end of the political spectrum do feel the pressure to justify their political choices. In that defense, the individual will typically rely on the past to give truth and legitimacy to their chosen philosophy.

Many participants discussed the history of the Republican Party and its early role in American civil rights movements. Their views on the lack of historical knowledge and failure by
the party to own the past with voters of today may be why Black identification with the

Republican Party is so low.

Joseph: After Andrew Johnson vetoed one civil rights bill and was also very much
against the 14th Amendment (equal protection and equal rights). These same pieces of
legislation were strongly favored by the Republican Party. Grant came along and put in
place the Enforcement Acts which was the beginning of the end of the KKK... although I
guess not the true end of the KKK but it did help to start the breakup. Civil rights
legislation was finally passed under Grant to help protect African Americans voting
rights. After all of the work done by a Republican president in Grant, the next president,
Cleveland, also a Democrat did much to undo that work. Then you have Wilson, another
Democrat, who openly stated that segregation was basically a good thing for Blacks.
The League of Nations approved equality proposals, but Wilson worked to make sure it
did not see the light of day. Why? So he could keep segregation in the U.S. alive and
well. Many Blacks make a pretty big deal out of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal
policies helping us out. What they don’t know are the things that happened under his
administration that were not favors for people of color either... things like appointing
Hoover as FBI director. He also was in favor of policy that kept Black farmers and
domestics from claiming government benefits and that put us into a downward spiral
economically that I am not sure we have ever recovered from. It really isn’t until
Eisenhower that civil rights came back to the forefront. Because of the backlash Truman
got from ending segregation in the federal government, Eisenhower actually ended up
fulfilling most of that legacy. Not only did he support the first civil rights legislation
since Grant, he was also the one who sent troops to protect Black students at schools
after the Brown decision. We have history in our party of pushing for civil rights and it is
past what people typically know about that is Lincoln freeing the slaves.

Anthony: What is not well publicized but out there for anyone to know is Eisenhower’s
push for civil rights and Kennedy’s subsequent failure to advocate for those rights.
Johnson was a champion for civil rights but it was really to quiet the gathering storm
clouds. And you get Goldwater, Nixon and Reagan playing into White fears about Blacks
and bind poor and rural Whites together and in the case of Nixon and Regan get
themselves elected. However, Nixon had also made small business and minority business
growth central to his campaign in 1968. While Blacks and Whites alike like to blame
Reagan’s tough policies in the war on crime for putting so many Blacks in prison, that
was based on policies of the Democrats. You can read about that in a book by Naomi
Murakwa [The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America]. And nobody gets
on Clinton’s policies that did about as much damage as Reagan’s. But Republicans have
pushed for minority growth since the 13th Amendment and only Democrats get the credit
for what a Republican started. If you don’t let it be known then of course the only thing
we can expect is the low participation of African Americans in the party.
Stewart: Republicans (probably rightfully so) get slammed for doing things like putting all of the Blacks together in districts through gerrymandering to marginalize their vote. Even though those tactics were put in place much earlier by Democrats throughout American history, we tend to not blame Democrats for it. Now you have ‘safe districts’ (puts up air quotes) for minorities which simply is the same gerrymandering business they have always engaged in with Blacks. But what so many people fail to see is how this only makes these all Black districts. When you compare it to the balance of the districts where there are too few Blacks to have any kind of say that would make a difference.

Warren: The party has a legacy with regard to civil rights but once the push to get the Black coalition was won by the Democrats, we seem to have given up and refuse to embrace it. Plus when you have some Republicans openly going after the votes of those in neo-confederate and various nationalist organizations it becomes hard to hold on to the history and carry the mantle of Lincoln anymore. And what can you do about it when those in the party wish to get rid of affirmative action?

Paul: The idea of individuals being responsible for themselves and their lives is what drew us into the party. But the Republican Party has strayed so far from that in recent years I can see how people might say ‘those people are not right for me’. I had the thought for a while. But then I remember what America was like when I came here. Slavery was over but Jim Crow laws and segregationist practices were still effecting Black people particularly in the South where we lived. That is the legacy of the Democrats but the way Republicans handle things and by that I mean not handling it or not discussing it then whatever you say comes off a bit less like anything true and real for people to grab hold of and believe in.

Patrick: One thing we do not really talk about though in modern times are the efforts of George W. Bush. I worked closely with him when he was still the owner of the Texas Rangers and it was a topic of conversation time and time again. Even before his gubernatorial run in Texas he was genuinely concerned about getting more Blacks to vote Republican. He did work to reach out to Black voters, through the NAACP, through working with African American pastors, and even made some very high profile, first of their kind appointments once he became president in Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. But was there any president in recent times... at least up until Donald Trump that may have been more unpopular with Blacks? The problem is if he did all of that to only be that disliked. What is it that anyone else could do to change that? How is any other strategy going to be any better and have potential to work in recruiting more African Americans to the party?

Interestingly, a few of the interviewees have opinions about the past versus the present that clearly differ from other Black Republicans.
Ray: I think something the party could do is to simply humble themselves, fall on their sword and take responsibility for what they have done in terms of outreach to the community. I am not saying it would work but there comes a time when you have to forget the past and say this is not about what we have done but what we are about to do. If the Republican Party wants to grow and really be about things like growth and creating more opportunity, then look to that.

Nicole: Yeah there is a saying that I don’t even know who originally said it, but is goes “yesterday’s history, tomorrow’s a mystery, what are you going to do today>” The party has spent quite a bit of time pandering quite honestly to poor Whites because perhaps at the end of it that is who they felt would vote Republican. And Democrats have done the same to poor Blacks. I think though that having grown up during segregation that time frame really cut a deep divide in America which is still hard to heal. Black people still continue to look at things from an us versus them point of view. What are you going to do to get past that? I don’t honestly know.

Jennifer: Sometimes I think the only way forward for the party is to do what Forrest Gump’s mother said in the movie. I do not remember what he was even doing but I agree with the sentiment of the past being the past. And it is not just the Republicans, I think African Americans need to be willing partners in listening and being open minded to the idea that just as things shifted once, they can shift again. The Republican Party can own their mistakes regarding African Americans. But you have to do that without getting too far away from the core values of the party, becoming too moderate of a party and sounding like Democrats. Although as far left as it seems some liberals have gone, becoming moderate for the Republicans might be refreshing and work.

Amy: In the current U.S. political season and even before now but especially now you have African Americans asking the GOP a simple question and that is what have you done for me lately? The problem is the party has no answer that either doesn't sound like they are grasping for something, or saying ‘well here is an African American who is Republican’.

Jason: You’ve heard Black Lives Matter? Well Trump won his election in much the same way – White Lives Matter. He was able to do the same thing others did in the 60s and get blue collar Whites to the polls for fear of Black social movements. Take a serious look at the election map broken down by county. You see where most of his support came from. It is not from urban centers in blue states for sure. People forget that while most of the population centers are also blue voters, it is only a percentage of the population. Trump said he was going after forgotten voters in rural areas and working a grassroots campaign to win. And he did just that. Why people are so upset at him winning I don’t know. Is he a bit of a humble head? Sure he is. But I know of at least four Black women that came to me and said they were voting for Trump. Why? Because they felt he was at least trying to do something different. He didn’t take their vote for granted and in whatever way whether it was the focus on inner cities, or another topic, he convinced
them he would be different. And yeah I agree in the few short months he’s been in office he has been different.

Evan: In some cases, when I do speak with others about the party and African Americans, I get some fairly harsh comments back. I said to one person that they really needed to know the history regarding the civil rights acts and this person told me that he did not really give a damn about history. He did not know his family past his grandmother and did not care at all about who those ancestors even were. He said “if they want us then they need to show us. Forget about what happened a long time ago, focus on what matters to our people and maybe you would have a chance at winning some elections.” Another friend said once that if the Republicans ‘want my vote, I have to see that the Democrats are worse.’ Which made me think about how Blacks see the party. It is not favorable and you cannot make things better by just going around finding or creating another enemy to make yourself appear better. The country is so fractured right now...we must make ourselves whole again and the current path is not working.

Reaching out of the Red Political Wasteland

Black Republicans exist in our lore alongside things like the Loch Ness monster, unicorns, red diamonds and the Black luxury card. Rare to the point we think they must not exist for surely no one we know has ever seen one, forget about knowing one personally. In the latter part of 1980, the epic comedy show Saturday Night Live (SNL) broached the rarity of Black Republicans in a sketch that includes the first appearance of Eddie Murphy. Airing on NBC at the same time as SNL was the oddly sponsored nature and wildlife documentary program Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom. The SNL piece features a zoologist based on the lead documentarian in the Wild Kingdom series at an upscale soiree in Manhattan on the lookout for a most elusive being: a Negro Republican (Wright Rigueur 2016).

The researcher comments about tracking the migration of Blacks from the “liberal lake wetlands” toward the “promised land of the GOP,” all the while mistaking person after person for a Black Republican. After some time, more careful observation (music preferences, clothing, fiscal beliefs, and speech) leads the scientist to a single individual whom he can confirm is that
very rare animal indeed – a Negro Republican. After sedating the man, he places a tracking device on the man in the guise of an American flag lapel pin. The man slowly begins to awaken and the zoologist retreats to make continued observations once the subject returns to the “wild” (Saturday Night Live Transcripts 1980).

What makes this skit so powerful is not masterful writing or spot on acting, but the stereotypes regarding African Americans in the Republican Party. The latter part of the 20th century would seemingly be the least likely time for Blacks to leave the promised land of the Democratic Party and politically align themselves with Ronald Reagan’s party (Wright Rigueur 2016). Black Republicans are race traitors. Individuals who adopt the assumed hallmarks of White, middle-class America including dull, uninteresting voices, Yacht Rock over Soul, basic suits, and an amiable disposition toward the bastion of patriotism – the American flag. The skit, with under the radar racial tones, does an excellent job of conveying the widely accepted clichés about Black Republicans while remaining wonderfully subtle. Everyone watching knows the stereotypes are ridiculous, and we should not believe them, but at the end of the day somewhere deep down they resound with the public. All racial undertones and political nuances aside, the sketch does put forth the question many people ask when it comes to African Americans and political affiliation – How could any self-respecting African American align with the Republican Party?

It is very clear from these interviews that these participants affiliate with the Republican Party, are ideologically conservative, and engage with Republican politics in terms of voting and activism. In their profoundly personal responses, we see differences in point of view and policy. They did not spout the party line in many cases, especially when it came to discussing hot button
issues like immigration and economics. They are serious in their desire for change within their party. In several instances, the change involves outreach to the African American community and not in a generic, colorblind sort of way. These men and women were clear about their desire for more African Americans to understand the party and the Republican party over being Independent or Democrat. The richness of the responses indicates an even greater need to expand this research to include additional Black Republicans and perhaps even increase the breadth and depth of questioning.

My original hypotheses, which that became untestable due to the sample sizes in the data sets, have found answers in an unexpected way. Below are the original six hypotheses I planned to test.

**Hypothesis 1:** African American males with little to no experience with Civil Rights or Jim Crow laws living outside the South have a greater likelihood of Republican affiliation.

Although not frequently discussed in research on party affiliation, the contention was that age is a very important piece for Blacks. Younger African Americans who are simply too young to remember the change in allegiance to the Democratic Party in the middle part of the 20th century will be less likely to attach to that party. Current experiences by young Blacks in America with the Democratic Party revolve more around restrictions of social programs versus the attainment of basic equalities in political participation, education, and accommodation. Gender is include as part of the hypothesis is grounded in research that finds men typically support the Republican Party more frequently than females (Tate 1993).

The interviews supported the idea that more African American men who chose to identify as Republican than women. Of the 16 interviewees, 11 are males. While only four of the participants would be young enough to have no direct experience with the effects of Jim Crow
segregation or the passage of the Voting rights Act in 1965, they are old enough to feel some lingering effects.

**Hypothesis 2:** African Americans with strong religious affiliation (evangelical) have a greater likelihood for Republican Party identification.

Blacks have shown that regardless of issue, the label Democrat means the most when making their vote choice (Kidd, Diggs, Farooq, & Murray, 2007). Religion may be the last and yet greatest opportunity the Republican Party has to increase African American participation (Streb, 2001). Blacks tend to be very religious as a group and the church tends to provide most Blacks with guidance in their daily lives (McDaniel & Ellison, 2008). The traditional values of the Christian church are so well indoctrinated by the Republican Party. These values tend to be shared by Blacks as they are more likely to be in favor of school prayer, against abortion, and attend church more often than Whites (Streb, 2001; Wallace, Abduk-Khaliq, Czurchry, & Sia, 2009).

The interviews did confirm the strong religious affiliation through a question on church attendance. All 16 of the attendees attend church services at least once a week. Although not questioned, most volunteered that they are at their church more than once a week for additional services or meetings.

**Hypothesis 3:** African American’s with lower levels of race consciousness are more likely to identify as Republicans.

Dawson (1994) and Tate (1993) discuss the concept of “linked fate” and African American political attitudes. Dawson’s (1994) theory argues the idea of unity amongst Blacks is a result of a historical legacy unique to African Americans. This experience creates a heuristic for most Blacks to use when making decisions about political behavior. Basically, Blacks use
being Black as a proxy no matter their own interests. Democrats are seen by most Blacks as the party that has done the most to push the cause of civil rights and social welfare for African Americans forward and reward that behavior with their votes. Republicans, on the other hand, do not appear friendly regarding issues that are deemed important to Blacks (Petrocik, 1996; Streb, 2001). Strong identification with race should have an effect on party affiliation. I argue that since Blacks are extremely loyal to the Democratic Party, setting aside racial consciousness by an individual will make them more likely to identify with the Republican Party.

Often Black Republicans are stereotyped as race traitors or as defined by Corey Fields research - race-blind (2016). The participants were strong in their support of the African American community. There are many references within the interviews to a sense of collectivity and belonging. Many espoused that Blacks should depend less on the government and more on themselves and one another. I would not classify them all as racial uplift but these citizens are highly race conscious.

Perception of the Republican Party

**Hypothesis 4:** African Americans with strong feelings as to the ability of the Republican Party to handle issues they deem important to Blacks and the nation are more likely to identify as Republican.

The interviews revealed interesting answers for this. Although the respondents are definitely supportive of their party and feel it is the better party for African American support and growth, there were comments regarding the reasons why they felt many Blacks chose not to identify as Republicans.
Cross Pressure and Voting

Hypothesis 5: African American Republicans with deep religious affiliation, greater political interest, and high political involvement are more likely to be cross pressured to vote for Democratic candidates.

Cross pressured voters, although present in the literature since the 1940s and 50s, remain an under-researched area. This is especially true for Blacks who happen to be Republicans. Until 2008, the problem of being a Republican and voting for president hardly presented a problem. While there were reports in the popular literature on how some Black Republicans were struggling with their vote selection, empirical research on this event is even more insignificant. Regardless, the argument in the paper does not revolve around cross pressure from two identities clashing (Black Republican). I expected that the pressure on Black Republicans comes from those in their employment and social circles who are Democrats.

In addition to cross pressure from work and friends, several interviewees reported that they consistently receive pressure to at least vote for Democratic candidates. Most of the cross pressure actually came at church.

Conclusion

During the research process, I was time and time again, floored about the openness and honesty about their views. I had begun this research knowing that Black Republicans had to be different in specific ways. The perceptions Americans generally hold are likely what we see in the Saturday Night Live and Key and Peele sketches. The only thing these individuals have in common with those skits – they are all African American.

One of the greatest learning experiences I had involves the lack of quantifiable data. While many months were spent bothered by data sets having so few African American
Republicans, it was there that the answer lay. While the results came back with problems I wanted no part of (collinearity and perfect prediction), it occurred to me that science can rely too much on those easily obtainable numbers and miss the beauty of the research. The need to be heard and feel included was an overwhelming theme in the discussions. It is obvious from this research that the party does run the risk of losing dedicated members through their lack of action. Not hearing these voices who believe in the power of African Americans is dangerous not only to the party but also to our country and to democracy. I thank them for inviting me into their homes and talking over spaghetti dinners. I left my keys with valets at swanky country clubs and high rise office buildings to be blown away with the passion and concern of people it would be easy to discount simply because on the outside they matched up with the American stereotype of a Black Republican. Being invited to the monthly African American Republican Club meetings challenged me to think about my own political activism and where I could do more to encourage others.

Indeed, the story is far from over as there is much to learn about African Americans in the Republican Party. However, one thing that made some of this research so difficult is not being able to conduct quantitative research. As they do not exist in very large quantities in the population, very few African Americans are in the existing data. Large datasets such as the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the Cooperative Campaign Election Studies (CCES) have nice sample sizes and even oversample minorities. Black Republicans continue to be microscopic and make analysis difficult. It would someday be more beneficial to analyze patterns of issue stance, cross pressure and even certain demographic factors.
One of the major benefits in this research has been the gathering of qualitative, modern data on the attitudes and behaviors of African American Republicans. The majority of studies in political science use data on minorities as part of a large study. This type of data provides convenience in research but fails to get at crucial cultural aspects of the reasoning behind why specific political party choices are made. The use of the interview in future research may include information on the role of Black only social participation (Jack and Jill, the Links, Boule, etc..), Greek letter organizations (fraternities and sororities) and mainstream community organizations (Junior League, Exchange Club, Lions Club, Rotary Club). Affiliation with specific political groups may be examined (African American Republicans and Democrats) in conjunction with socialization to broaden understanding of the more than durable association nonwhites have with the Democratic Party.

The information gathered will be useful in many applications including potential use by the major political parties. We can begin to understand why more African Americans are not identifying as Republican based on the importance of religion and specific issues such as police brutality and economic inequality to Blacks in America. It can also provide a path to take that understanding and shift current loyalties. It is also possible to gain new inputs as to why not only the Black vote is continually ceded to the Democratic Party but also why the Democratic Party concedes the vote in certain geographic areas such as Texas.

Does understanding these Black Republicans help the party overall? How can the information be used for outreach? The issue here is far more complex and requires deeper research. Perhaps for now it is enough to understand the African Americans that do choose to identify as Republican. If we study them enough, write enough about them, and get their stories
out to the world maybe that has to be the process for now. During the research process and the answer to the original question (and yet not really an answer at all) appeared. We cannot truly know why more African Americans are not identifying as Republican without knowing more about Black Democrats. Maybe the question after all isn’t why aren’t more African Americans Republican but why are so many of them Democrats?
Appendix B.1

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me your age.
2. Do you have any postsecondary education? If so, what level? For example – Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate
3. Do you have a religious affiliation? Is there a specific denomination?
4. Do you have a church you attend on a regular basis? How often do you attend services at your church? Once per week, more than once per week, special occasions (Christmas, Mother’s Day, Easter only)?
5. Do you include prayer in your daily routine? If so would you say it is a formal or informal process with set times or do you pray as you go throughout the day, week, etc…?
6. Would you describe yourself (and/or your family) as upper class, upper middle Class, middle Class, working class, or something else?
7. Please tell me what region of the United States you grew up in or have spent the majority of time living.
8. Now a question about your political party identification. Would you say you have always affiliated with the Republican Party? If not, please tell me about your past party identification and any circumstances surrounding your change to the Republican Party.
9. How would you describe your family party identification? Are they apolitical, Independents, Democrats, Republicans or is there another way you would describe their political affiliation?
10. If you are not the same party as your family traditionally has been, has that been an issue for you with your family, friends, colleagues, or community?
11. Please tell me one or two things that appeal to you regarding the Republican Party? Is there anything that does not appeal to you about the party?
12. Do you agree that the image of Republicans that are African American is not always positive? What, if anything do you think could/should be done by the Republican Party to create a more positive image?
13. Please tell me about one or two issues you feel are greatly affecting the United States.
14. Can you tell me if these issues are the same for the Black community or are there different issues that you feel affect the community differently?
15. In the 2016 presidential election cycle, was there a specific candidate that appealed to you? Please tell me why this person.
16. Did/will you vote in the 2016 general election?
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CHAPTER 4
FROM OTHERS TO KNEELING BROTHERS: PROTEST AS ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE EFFECT ON VOTING BEHAVIOR FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave? (Key 1814)

We know the origins of the Star-Spangled Banner. It was written as a response to the sight of the American flag still flying over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. The song is a battle hymn penned by Francis Scott Key after a long night of British attacks. The lyrics taunt the British, screaming out loud it would take much more than what they had shelled out to defeat America. The words tell our foes that this most precious symbol of the still fledgling country was still flying high.

In a country that lauds victory on the battlefield and on playing fields, it is only appropriate that somehow this beautiful piece of American music would become inexorably intertwined with American sports. President Wilson ordered it to be played during all naval and military events in 1916 before official adoption in 1931 (U.S. Army 2019). The song has been played with millions of Americans standing up then sitting down at countless ballgames and sporting events for as long as most Americans can remember. It is expected to be heard, whether a pre-recorded playing or the most profound of live renditions. The first performance occurred on May 15, 1862 in Brooklyn, N.Y. during the dedication of a baseball field (Goldman 2018).
Fifty-six years later, during the 1918 World Series the song would become closely intertwined with sports. The link between the song and sports is easy enough for us to get. In current times, the question is no longer how did it become linked with sports – but how did this anthem-sports link also become one of the hottest and possibly angriest political debates?

August 14, 2016 started out like any other day for preseason games in the National Football League: field preparation, run throughs of plays, and the national anthem. During the first preseason game between the Houston Texans and San Francisco 49ers something would change. In reaction to the ongoing and highly public acts of police brutality against African Americans, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick would sit during the national anthem. In subsequent games, he (and teammates) would kneel on the sidelines. These actions would lead to widespread instances of peaceful protest across the NFL and other sports. The debate over the actions of the athletes has included conversation over the appropriateness of the acts and the appropriateness of using the playing field as a place to bring attention to social injustice.

However, these actions are far from the first instances of African American athletes protesting for a cause during the national anthem. During the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, Black sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos held black gloved fists high during the playing of America’s anthem. Smith and Carlos also wore buttons for the Olympic Project for Human Rights, an organization formed by amateur African American athletes. The main goal of the group was a boycott of the games as a means of protesting the crushing oppression happening in the United States during the Civil Rights Movement (Zirin 2014). The backlash against Smith and Carlos was like the response to Colin Kaepernick and the NFL anthem protests. Those
athletes were removed from the Olympic Village, suspended from the American Olympic team and received multiple death threats. Kaepernick, a highly regarded quarterback in the league was released by the team and has remained unsigned by any team. Death threats have also been a part of the reaction to the protest.

Protest as a form of political participation has occurred in the African American community for hundreds of years. The earliest accounts came in the middle passage during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Protest continued during the early years of the republic in the form of escape attempts from plantations and rebellions. These actions were followed by the struggle to abolish slavery and then to become citizens integrated into American society. As a result, most of the involvement by African Americans in politics happened as opposition to their unequal status. There is a crucial question that has received little attention in the literature. Does alternative participation affect voting behavior for African Americans? This research will review informal, alternative political participation, early protest and modern activism, and the effect of nontraditional participation on voting. I hypothesize that African Americans who choose to engage in protest, demonstrations, rallies or even petition signing are more likely to cast votes in elections.

**African Americans and Political Participation**

Democracy as generally defined refers to a system in which decisions are made by a group, for a group, with some level of equality of the group members (Christiano 2015). The depth of the equality may vary from voting for elected representatives to a more robust meaning involving equality in the deliberative process or building coalitions. Democracy may be the inclusive process of direct democracy or the more formal election of delegates to decide for the
group. One of the cornerstones of democratic theory and practice is political participation. Much of the research on post New Deal politics in the United States has focused on groups as blocs distinguished by race, ethnicity, religion, and gender in the political process. Modern research in the discipline has included a focus on the concept du jour - identitarian politics more commonly referred to as identity politics with organization of groups occurring via shared experiences of injustice by members of specific groups (Heyes 2016).

The political science literature contains a broad spectrum of resources on political participation in the United States. The subject’s status within the body of works can be considered canonical; however, there is a fragmentation in the available sources. The gaps create difficulty in any attempt to make serious, in-depth conclusions or comparisons via one method that provides the most meaning as to how and why African Americans select to engage in the political system. There is no doubt a vast amount of literature covering political science, government and politics exists; however, the topic of alternative participation and African American voting is not particularly rich.

Political participation for most Americans begins and ends with voting. True participation goes far beyond casting a ballot though. In the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment including being free to say what we want, gather as we wish and engage in the political process: participation in the United States has its roots in protest and rebellion. Men and women alike may be a part of politics by running for elected office at the various levels of government. Formal participation in the process for women and minorities is based in law. While there are no longer formal barriers, these groups continue to experience difficulties in their freedom to participate in politics.
Political participation, whether voting, protesting, or being a part of the judicial process, is primarily undertaken in order to influence the political process in some way. It is the one way most Americans make real contributions in their local community and feel as if they are a vital part of society. As stated earlier, the form of participation most common among Americans is voting. Casting a ballot guarantees that our leaders are selected by the populus versus being appointed by someone else in power. Other popular ways of participating include jury duty, town hall style meetings, and protest. In addition to the common forms several other forms of engagement exist. These include holding elected or appointed office, volunteering for campaigns, donating to campaigns, contacting public officials, petitioning, and in some democracies more informal ways like blogging and posting on social media.

When it comes to alternative, nontraditional, illegitimate, or informal participation, there are common reasons that drive people to engage in this manner. Typically, there are political, economic, social, and even technological factors that factor into exactly why individuals choose these alternative methods over formal participation (Houses of Parliament PostNote 498 2015). For African Americans, the reasons are many and most likely stem from historical exclusion from the political process.

Early protest by slaves on ships coming across the Atlantic and later by those on plantations in the Caribbean and Southern United States serve as an early method of fighting for sovereignty and change. The research serves to enrich and enlighten the political science literature in this regard. Protest is fairly well covered from a historical perspective, but this paper engages in revealing the crucial interconnectedness of alternative participation (protest, demonstration, rallies, petitions, organizations) and their effect on voting behavior for African
Americans. We cannot understand American politics without first knowing about the Black experience and how it fits within the broader context and theory of political science. The United States sits in a most distinct place in the history of this planet with the ideals of freedom and democracy in its existence from the beginning of its founding, not an evolution after popular rebellion.

Even with those standards at its core, in the course of American history, Blacks have had to experience the tightest restrictions on that social equality. While growth in the number of African Americans in elected offices have increased since the first Reconstruction, by no means can a claim of parity be made. Not only does there continue to be great disparity in most socioeconomic categories, but we are also electing minority representatives in a majority rules system that continues to bring waves of uncertainty regarding much needed influence for the group. The majority vote required by the legislative body can only mean that the interests of the many will always supersede any needs of the minority. While not the focus of this paper, we must consider this question: Is simply having Black representatives from majority minority districts enough? Or should those elected from these districts push harder for the policies of interest to this group that normally receive cursory treatment?

The result of the inequalities has been the fight to bring change to the status quo. Social science should seek to examine the wide scope of alternative political participation by African Americans as a response to their treatment as inferiors. The research examines historical periods and the ways African Americans engage with the political system when the status before rights were formally and legally granted to the current day. While much of the historical information may not necessarily be new information, a wider goal of creating a depth of knowledge for the
growth of the discipline may be reached. The country is at a point in time where innovation leads us in a new direction almost every day. This has come at the expense of remembering details of the short yet very rich history of the United States. It is the sincere desire for this research to bring together a whole picture of the how and why African Americans choose to be a part of the American political experience.

**African American Status in America: Slavery's Long Legacy**

The status of Blacks in America has always been an interesting one, even though they make up one of the earliest population groups. Slavery and its lingering effects remain the single greatest factor influencing African American status in the United States. For approximately two centuries, they constantly fought for their freedom using a variety of methods. Some tried ways within the structure of democracy while others employed non-traditional methods. The institution of slavery brought the still young republic to a critical point that could only be resolved by civil war.

The end of slavery has not necessarily meant an improved social and political context for African Americans over time. Long held ideas about the genetic inferiority of Blacks and uncertainty over the extension of citizenship has led to sustained, upfront discrimination. The first Reconstruction period after the Civil War during which African Americans were granted legal citizenship, was cut short by serious failures to observe and apply the laws. This was especially true in Southern states where life as a free citizen bore striking similarities to daily existence as a slave before the war. In the course of United States history, African Americans have for the most part been subjected to basic violations regarding their rights as citizens. Racism and discrimination became customary practices with no attempts to make amends.
Feeble and irregular administration of the laws has served to fill uncertainty at times and made the day to day struggle for African Americans an even greater one.

Indeed, if there has been one thing to ameliorate the uncertainty it would be the consistent effort by Blacks and their supporters to fight the culture of racism and discrimination that permeated American society. Much energy has gone into finding some resolution to the basic inconsistencies in the treatment and by extension, the status of Blacks. These very actions make it possible to make some type of analysis of African American’s choices as they relate to participation in U.S. politics.

**Racial Politics and Political Theory**

Before making any serious attempt at defining alternative participation for African Americans, it seems necessary to first discuss the concept of the groups politics. Primarily, it is an inquiry into the politics of race in America and the specific assignment of Blacks to a lower status due to perceived inferior attributes of those belonging to this race (Nobles 2000). Scholars such as Marguerite Ross Barnett (1976) have outlined the idea of Blacks having some type of otherized status. She further discusses how African Americans have been marginalized and remain on the outside in America via the concept of racism (Barnett 1976). Barnett’s theorization leads to the thought that ascription has in fact put African Americans in a position to engage in resistant political behavior. There is a hierarchy based on the ranking that can only allow them to succeed by becoming a source of change through challenge. In other words, as the general political system allows them very little to no power, the only voice they have is through alternative means.
Other political scientists have found themselves in agreement with Barnett. In one large scale analysis Walton (1972) wrote that the politics of Blacks comes as a result of the environments they reside in everyday. Walton expanded this concept along with Smith (2000) to show how racialization has given meaning to the all too real struggle for freedom. Barker, et al (1998) elegantly postulate that the way Blacks are positioned in American politics is largely a result of race. Their analysis makes evident the almost stark difference among the races. The research supports the belief that uncertainty about the equality of Blacks and widespread discrimination account for the distinctions. The disparate treatment is brought to light through continued opposition and the push for change at the national level. Since African Americans are a large percentage of the population in the United States with some degree of influence in elections, it is difficult to imagine leaving the policy wants of this group on the back burner.

**Constructs of African American Politics**

The previous section highlighted basic concepts in the makeup of Black politics in America. In this part, I examine various theories in political science to help explain the circumstances of African Americans in the political system. Elitism and pluralism, two of the theories regularly used to describe general American politics, along with several other models are discussed.

*Pluralism*

The pluralist model (group politics) is most closely linked to Robert Dahl and his seminal work about local politics in New Haven Connecticut Who Governs? (1961). David Truman (1951) and David Easton (1965) are also closely associated with the theory. Although some variants of pluralist theory have been set out in detail, this discussion will focus on what most in
political science would consider ‘classic pluralism.’ This model has widespread influence with roots in the study of the power distribution, primarily in Western democracies. In this context, power is generally defined by pluralists as the ability to achieve one’s goals even when opposition is present (Held 2006). Dahl defines it as the following: “by ‘power’ we mean to describe a…realistic relationship, such as A’s capacity for acting in such a manner as to control B’s responses.” A’s power is determined by resources available and the equality of available resources (Held 2006, 160). A wide variety of resources are available to groups; however, inequities in the types of resources and certain kinds may override one another. As an example, some groups may not have large financial backing, but may have large numbers of people willing to work for the cause. More importantly, in this idea for African Americans as a group trying to gain power may well reside in the fact that there is not any equivalency in obtaining or having the resources. This creates issues when trying to accomplish goals for the group as the lack of leverage in the form of a resource creates a definite lack of influence in getting attention for their issues.

In the ‘classic’ model of pluralism power is essentially scattered across society with multiple critical issues ripe for exploitation. As a result, there is a constant tug of war when it comes to policy creation compounded by the increased number of decision making bodies. Held (2006) asks outright “How, then, can any equilibrium or stability be achieved in a democratic society like the United States?” David Truman suggests that stability comes through the “protean complex of criss-crossing relationships that change in strength and direction with alterations in the power and standing of interests, organized and unorganized.” (Held 2006, 161).
In addition, Truman (1951) adds that belonging to multiple factions or cleavages has added explanatory power.

In a pluralist model then, exactly how and where do African Americans fit? It is assumed that there is an equality for those groups in the process of making the desires known. African Americans are at a true disadvantage in this system. It can be argued that Blacks in America are only at an unequal position due to slavery and after the war increased political participation was just a matter of time. Words like “melting pot” (Moynihan 1965) were used along with another euphemistic phrase “assimilation” (Park 1950) to show a pluralistic style incorporation of Blacks into American society. Pluralism, it seems, would offer no real place for Blacks and the odd position they hold in the hierarchy of American politics. Social scientists discuss that in the quest for power, similar opportunities for African Americans are the exception and not the case (Pinderhughes 1987).

Elitism

Elite theory has roots in several places, one being Beard’s early analysis of the founders of the United States (1913). The viewpoint holds that “political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy group of people sharing similar privileged backgrounds”. (Johnson 2005) In elitism, power is not coercive but rather hegemonic. The elites control the labor and the means of production because they have convinced the mainstream it is the best thing for them. Institutions are designed solely to bring together these ‘power elites’ from arenas such as government, business, social organizations, cultural foundations, and even the mass media. This allows the members of this group to control not only policymaking but also the agendas and
activities of major media, social, and educational groups due to the broad oversight of finance and business directorates in the United States.

In the United States, Blacks have never been a part of these elite groups and therefore are powerless. Some elite theorists argue that this power circle is open to new blood which would allow new money elites to become a part of this ruling class (Johnson 2005). This however, does little to change the elitist core of the American political system. Dolbeare and Edelman’s (1979) thesis that the small number of powerful people make the decisions on what policy is important and not the poor masses, is supported by the writings of other social scientists on the lack of power and class hierarchies based on the differences between races (Reed 197, Jones 1972, Davis 198, Robinson 1983).

Colonialism

While small in number and dated, some scholars have made attempts to explain the situation of African Americans through the model of colonialism. Colonialism, like its cousin imperialism involves control or the exertion of authority over another territory in some fashion, typically economic or political. Often confused with one another, a quick review of their Latin roots will provide a key difference for the usage in this section. Colony is based in the Latin word *colonus*, meaning one who cultivate another’s land, while imperialism comes from the Latin *imperium*, meaning command or order (Lewis and Short 1891). While it is common to use the words interchangeably, the examination of the root words shows the colonial model to be more appropriate in describing the situation of Blacks in America versus imperialism.

Colonies typically refer to territories with a population that has been transported to the new area. The inhabitants of the colony remain politically loyal to the colonizing entity. This
term most often recalls areas such as Australia, New Zealand, Algeria, Brazil, and North America—lands with vast numbers of Europeans in residence. Imperialism, with its base meaning of a command or order brings about a connotation of power but in the ways that Country A may utilize power over Country B. There is not a large instance of resettlement as seen in the European rush in Africa or even Puerto Rican dominance by America.

Colonialism, as used by these scholars, postulates that Blacks are exploited in a fashion that is in fact like the European dominance in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The abuses by the hegemon creates powerlessness via force and manipulation (King 2010). The theory resembles that of noted French sociologist Georges Balandier (1965) and his analysis of African colonization. The research hones in on the effects of one racial group dominating another and that nature of relationships amongst diverse race groups tends to be one of an adversarial nature (Balandier 1965). He further states that the group in a position of power can tear down the customs and way of life of the opposing group (1965).

In the United States, it has been argued by some scholars that this is the exact situation of African Americans. By making decisions for Blacks based on their race, with the goal of controlling that group “is what constitutes colonialism in the United States”. (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967). These researchers further discuss the upfront, ‘in your face’ acts against Blacks versus undercover, ‘behind your back’ acts that encourage anti-Black sentiments leading to discriminatory practices and majority control over African Americans. Based on their theory, the exploitation of Black neighborhoods is what has left the group with emotional and mental scarring creating a closed mindset as to their ability (Balandier 1965; Carmichael and Hamilton 1967).
Conflict Theory

Karl Marx’s conflict theory may shed some light on the position of African Americans in U.S. Politics. This model states that there is ongoing conflict grounded in the constant fight for power (Blalock 1967; Jones 1972). Order in society comes from one group exercising its dominance over the other. In American politics, the fight for power occurs between Whites and Blacks, the two groups who have always been at odds with one another. Consensus is not the goal and the upper classes hold on to their power mainly by oppressing the lower classes who are without wealth or power.

Social Dominance Theory

Formulated by Sidanius and Pratto (1999), the model delves into social hierarchy and suppression. The theory is tangentially close to colonialism and perhaps a bit less close to conflict theory. Specifically, the theory tries to explain the group hierarchy in a society from groups of dominance to those with no power. In multiethnic societies, they argue people are divided into pecking orders with one group enjoying the perks of privilege and power (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). These ladders are entrenched into the society and not easily changed. The limitations put in place according to this theory can be based on informal processes or formal ones (Sidanius and Petrocik 2001). Whatever the case, societal structures allow the dominant ones to use those frameworks for their own particular benefit (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006).

These few models are presented to show various methods for defining and evaluating political participation for Africa Americans. While it is not a perfect way, the theories do shed light onto the forces that motivate the political behavior of Blacks in America. The theories, alone or in a combination, help define the fight for freedom and human rights by African
Americans. What makes them important to the analysis is their ability to explain the political experience of African Americans and the history of discriminatory practices, racist behavior, and even the conflict that has led them down the path of protest, demonstration, and other alternative forms of participation.

Why Protest?

The first official census in the United States occurred in 1790 just after Washington’s inauguration. The categories for enumeration were (Bureau of the Census 1975):

1. Free White males over 16 years of age
2. Free White males under 16 years of age
3. Free White females
4. Any other free persons
5. Slaves

There were only two categories for race in this count – White and Negroes (Wright and Hunt 1900). This racialization of the population has deep consequences for Blacks. Only free citizens were counted as whole people. Slaves were counted as three-fifths to keep the larger states in the north from having greater representation in the House over smaller Southern states (Applestein 2013). This counting method came as a compromise over concerns of Northern and Southern states, with James Madison, conflicted slaveholder that he was, proposing that slaves be counted as “people and property” (Applestein 2013). If you were a free person (White male) then you mattered in the census. It is notable that even those who were not slaves still may not be truly “free”. Many people who were considered free still had to register themselves along with their race, have a legal guardian, and still possible be considered and handled as slaves despite that status (Berry and Blassingame 1982).
During this first effort at counting the U.S. population, African Americans were treated as one large body and not as individual persons. It would not be until after the end of the Civil War, in 1870 that Blacks would be counted separately and even that number would be suspect as most were probably not counted in the Southern states for many reasons (Lipscomb and Hutchinson 1994). Over the course of American history, African Americans have dealt with having a status in society that be described as differential at best. From their time on plantations as chattel to Jim Crow segregation, African Americans have historically been the lowest rung on the ladder of social order. Even after being granted citizenship, they have remained on the outside circle of the system from the denial of equal education, broken communities through housing segregation, inequities in the criminal justice system, economic dependence, and even lack of healthcare (Barker, Jones and Tate 1998).

It can come as no surprise that Blacks have also received unequal treatment in American politics. It is difficult to successfully advocate for group needs when there is a lack of resources to do so. Access to the normal routes of the political system has been a difficult path at best. Since the United States sits on the leading edge of democracy in western society, there are many organizations that cut across race, gender, socioeconomic status and other aligning factors to support strong civic participation (Putnam 1993). These groups are not necessarily political in nature, but still play by the established rules and regulations of the political game. And pluralist design aside, there is little arguing the fact that African Americans do not have complete access and participation in the U.S. political system. Even in the face of Blacks having greater organizational participation than Whites, the super organizational nature of Blacks has not meant greater status and therefore access (Morris 1975).
The most important result of this lower status and failure to have access to the political system is that it has not stopped Blacks from challenging the system. African Americans have persistently used routes that are not within the normal system. This acting outside the typical mechanisms of politics started before the arrival of the first slaves in the Americas and continues to the present day.

**African American Alternative Participation**

*Slavery and Early Opposition*

A closed overland route to India brought the previously unheard of practice of forced labor to Africa. The search for a sea route led the Portuguese to the Guinea Coast (present day Senegal to Southern Angola) where they would begin gathering slaves to help with the gold trade (Newson and Minchin 2007). As early as 1441, the Portuguese would carry Africans to Europe to be enslaved. Within 20 years, close to 1000 slaves were sent to Spain and Portugal as labor on plantations. By the end of the century, the desire to trade for gold had waned and a more lucrative business found its way into the hearts and pockets of the Portuguese. With the blessing of a papal bull issued by Nicholas V in 1455, justifying the belief that some humans deserved to be slaves, the acquisition and possession of slaves began in earnest (Redman 1994).

Toward the end of the 15th century, while the Portuguese continued to search for a waterway that would get them east to Asia, their Spanish neighbors went westward, establishing colonies and starting what we know as the Transatlantic Slave Trade. At the start, indentured labor was brought in from European nations (Rodriguez 1997). These laborers as well as the native residents showed themselves to be less than up to the task of working in the mining companies as well as on the cotton, sugar, and coffee plantations. But Africans had already
shown they were of a bit hardier stock – able to withstand the hotter climate and tropical
diseases. By 1607, when the colony at Jamestown established itself in Virginia, Africans had
been in the Americas for over 100 years. Before their arrival in the Americas, enslaved Africans
protested their situation through bloody insurrections aboard slave ships. The struggle to regain
their freedom on the vessels can be considered more than a fight to return home. It is a revolt
against the first prison state in America and a fight against death.

The earliest forms of protest for African Americans began in African nations where
people were either captured or sold. Early on there were fights against the slave traders, some of
whom were African themselves. No matter the method of imprisonment, the prisoners were
resistant and nonaccepting of being captured. The ship’s crew had to handle not only frightened
passengers but fighting ones creating “prison ships” (Harding 1969). The captives were chained
and shackled on lower decks with no exits or chance of escape (Masseaut 2013). While the
number of revolts on ships is hard to calculate, estimates for French slave ships is roughly every
20 out of 3,500 known trips. Jean-Marc Masseaut (2013) describes various revolts on ships
during the French slave trade.

“…the captain who was not experienced for these kinds of voyages, decided to unshackle
20 negroes to let them free on the deck despite the warnings from his second mate. All
the negroes of the ship revolted behind those who had been unshackled…” – 1754

“In 1752 the Nantes slave ship l’Heureux, which means “the happy,” spent 5 months
along the African coast loading prisoners, and then 3 months at sea crossing the Atlantic
Ocean. At the end of the voyage, near by the Island of St Domingue, which is Haïti
today, the health condition of the whole population on board was a disaster. Tens of
people, Africans and Europeans had died. Many survivors were sick, probably because
of scurvey. There were not enough healthy crew members to maneuver the ship and the
captain decided to use some of the stronger enslaved prisoners. After months of life
incarcerated on a ship surrounded by the sea, invaded with illness and death, these
prisoners had still enough energy for revolting. But again, this revolt finally failed.”
“The ship Concord was at anchor when some prisoners revolted against the crew members still on board, the others being ashore for trading. They killed three sailors and took possession of the ship. And the following day African people came from the shore with their canoes, picked up the revolted prisoners and hid them in the forest.” – 1769

“In 1742 on the 13th of August, the prisoners of the slave ship La Sainte Hélène at anchor along the coast of Nigeria, revolted. They killed 8 crew members and picked up all the weapons on board. They took possession of the ship and cut the rope of the anchor. And the ship crowded with more than 300 people went drifting along the shore. There were other Portuguese and French slave ships at anchor in the area. The crew members of these ships tried to recapture the drifting ship but without any success. The revolting Africans repelled them. When finally the ship ran aground, the rebels set her on fire, and tried to escape by jumping in the sea. Many of them drowned or killed themselves and few of them could escape.”

Generally, rebellions started when the ships were still close to the shore. The possibility of revolt was always close; and those that occurred were not typically successful. Even on those with successful escapes, it should be noted that not all enslaved Africans ever got away. Only a few ever escaped and were not recaptured. This led to more desperate behavior in the form of individual or group suicides. Masseaut (2013) recounts an incident from a ship just outside of port on the coast of Nigeria.

“While we were praying God, in the same place, all together, in the same time, in a same movement; 14 Black women jumped out from the poop [deck] down to the sea. The sea was very rough, the wind was blowing strongly, [and] Whatever diligence that we tried, some of them were killed by the sharks and we could only save 6 of them…”

These are only a few instances of insurrection during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Many additional occurrences of rebellion on and offshore have been documented. A majority of the scholarship documents ship insurrections aboard European ships. Some document the more violent rebellions on American ships ferrying rum to West Africa in trade for captured Africans that would later be traded in the West Indies for molasses and other goods (Greene 1944). David Richardson (2001) documents evidence of approximately 485 cases of rebellion, including 93
instances of on shore attacks by Africans that were still “free.” Of the 392 shipboard revolts, 90% took place in roughly a 100-year timespan between 1698-1807 (Richardson 2001). Overall one in ten ships had some type of rebellion on board with the greatest number of revolts occurring in Senegambia, now modern-day Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and parts of Mali, Guinea, and Mauritania (Richardson 2001). One of the important notes to these mutinies on slave ships is that women and children were often left to move around more freely and were not chained unless they were a threat to the crew. While the increasing number of captives made things dangerous for the crew members, the adult male population were placed in manacles to decrease any attempts at resistance.

Not all insurrections were unsuccessful. One successful rebellion in 1839 involved the Spanish ship Amistad. During the voyage, the enslaved Africans rebelled while in route from Havana, Cuba to another plantation in the Caribbean. The captain and cook were killed and although the plan was to force the vessel back to Africa, it ended up being seized off the coast of Long Island, New York (Office of the Historian, Department of State 2016). During the appeal of the case to the Supreme Court, successful arguments by former President and Secretary of State James Madison caused a ruling for the Africans against the United States (Office of the Historian, Department of State 2016). Other fruitful instances occurred as well. One successful rebellion happened on the Creole in 1841. During the voyage, the enslaved Africans rebelled and demanded passage to an English colony as England had stopped the practice of slavery in 1833 (Hendrick and Hendrick 2003). After arriving in Nassau, the Africans escaped, and the United States requested that Great Britain return the slaves, to which Britain refused to comply (Harding 1969).
**Protest and the Plantation**

Many attempts have been made to count the number of enslaved Africans carried to North and South America during the years of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Estimates are that approximately 12.2 million Africans were enslaved and transported to the Americas in a 321-year time span (Eltis 2001; Eltis and Richardson 2008). Only a paltry 472,000 captives disembarked in the United States between 1626 and 1875 (Voyages - The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database 2019). Early on, the status of these enslaved individuals was clearly designed to keep them from being a part of politics. During these times individuals and groups used one or two routes to protest: through independence in their living space, or head on resistance to fight their status as property and show some political influence.

On the plantations, the one area that the enslaved people had some ability to manage was the living space. As a community, the people were able to maintain some continuity with their culture. In many cases, the enslaved Africans were able to mimic the circumstances of their original sleeping quarters in the slave quarters with great fidelity (Blassingame 1979). There are also cases of using music to send encoded messages (Raboteau 1978). However, much of the resistance by the enslaved people was simply a matter of survival and attempts to have some semblance of normalcy to their lives. Much of the activity tended toward preservation of the family even as the structure of slavery did not allow for it (Gutman 1976).

While many acts of protest were a result of trying to feel as humane as possible, some acts received a harsh response. The consequences would include mutilation, whipping, beating, and various other acts of terror. It is important to note that opportunity is a large factor in the protests. Violence used against the “masters” and overseers in the fields were in some part
efficacious. As the enslaved people were spread around the plantation in a variety of jobs, faking illness or even runaway attempts were common (Parker 1993). Runaways were common with over 2,000 successful tries a month and over 200,000 total tries (Starobin 1970). As the source of income on the plantations were often just the one crop of cotton, sugar, rice, or indigo, it became easy to cripple a plantation’s profits by destroying tools, theft, fires, and other sabotage. In many instances, the acts were viewed as a sign of unwillingness to work which furthered the idea that Africans were dull-minded and lackadaisical. These acts were political and aimed directly at ownership, other actions such as suicide or even filicide to end to desperate life of being enslaved were undertaken (Franklin and Moss 1994).

In addition to these everyday acts of protest, there were well planned political acts designed to end the system of slavery or assist enslaved Africans in escaping the institution. There were multiple revolts along with the abolitionist movement and the most notable escape route known as the Underground Railroad (Siebert 1968). Runaway attempts were not singular acts of rebellion. Most tries were usually aided in some way. Probably the most organized system for escape was the Underground Railroad, through which Harriet Tubman assisted in the escape of many slaves (Franklin and Moss 1994). Escape attempts became so numerous over time, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 (as a part of the Compromise of 1850) was enacted. This controversial legislation mandated that citizens assist in the recovery and return of escaped persons to slave-owners (Horton and Horton 1993). Many of the states employed various forms of patrols to staunch the bleeding of runaways in support of the law.

It is documented in many sources that rebellion was a common occurrence but often got lost in the more well-known revolts (Aptheker 1937). Aptheker’s research records over 250
uprisings during American slavery. Many were organized efforts that reflected much planning and organization like those planned by Gabriel Prosser and Denmark Vesey (deB. Kilson 1964). These rebellions were designed to overthrow the system and create new, separate states for the former enslaved people (Aptheker 1987). Other insurrections, like the one led by Nat Turner in 1831, are more indicative of rebellion occurring by happenstance. The spontaneous nature of the Turner Rebellion shows no intent beyond destroying slave owner’s property and hopefully ending the lives of the “masters” and their families (deB. Kilson 1964). In addition to these instances of protest by those enslaved on the plantations, other rebellions also occurred. Up to 100 slaves participated in the Stono Rebellion of 1739. This uprising was led by 20 Africans that has previously served in Angolan wars before being captured and sold to slavers (Rogers 1995).

Protest during times of slavery is important to document as it refutes the idea that enslaved people could be accepting and happy to be in these dire circumstances. The number of plots and uprisings combined with the everyday actions of running away show that these people were far from accepting let alone pleased with their lives. The men and women of these rebellions during the Middle Passage and even on the plantations serve as evidence of political behavior outside the window of formal participation.

**Oppositional Politics During Abolition, Reconstruction and Jim Crow**

As early as 1787 African Americans banded together and created many mutual aid societies. The Philadelphia Free African Society was among the first, with similar groups later organizing in Boston, New York and Newport, Rhode Island (Encyclopedia of African American Society 2005). These benefit societies were later joined by the Negro Masonic Order and the Boston African Society (Aptheker 1951). Churches would also spring about with the Baptist and
African Methodist Episcopal churches being among the first (Aptheker 1951). Most of these organizations were only at the local level but would in time become politically based.

In the 1830’s the National African American Convention was held for the first time, dedicated to the building and support of systems and policy that would help or change the plight of African American people in the United States (Walton 1972). The organization consisted of local and state level units from which delegates would attend the national meeting and worked with states and localities that lacked resources to organize branches (Walton 1972). The National Convention would be the first of many organizations dedicated to improving the condition of African Americans. It would soon be joined by other groups including the American Moral Reform Society and National Reform Convention of Colored People (Foner and Walker 1979) as advocates for the abolishment of slavery. Although the organizations were short lived, they brought on a cry for stronger strategy to better the lives of African Americans.

**Abolitionist Movements**

During this time, election protest played a role in the abolitionist movement as well. The more aggressive activists were drawn to the fledgling Liberty Party which got its start in 1840. While not an organization founded by African Americans, it was formed by abolitionists who were antislavery (Ridpath 1912). Party leadership included James Birney and Gerrit Smith who were against William Garrison’s nonpolitical take on slavery (L. M. Johnson 1941). The party focus was on change through elections, but support was weak in their first electoral entry in 1840 garnering only 7,000 votes. The 1844 election saw a bit more success, with over 60,000 votes for the party candidate, costing Henry Clay New York, and giving the election to James Polk (R.
Johnson 2009). The party remained active until 1848 when it joined forces with the Whig and Democrats united against slavery to form the Free-Soil Party.

The protest during abolitionist times can be seen from two different views. There is the top-down view, where the lobbying of the federal government to address the needs of African Americans occurred. Then there is the grassroots or bottom-up view whereby politics at the local level grew to national organizations and protest politics. What is important for these two methods is how they set up the future of organizing and lobbying interests for African Americans. There would now be a system in place to approach the government for redress of specific economic, political, and even social issues facing African Americans. Organizations lobbied Whites and African Americans, plus state and national legislatures to impact laws regarding voting, education, equality, and the abolition of slavery (Foner and Walker 1979). Lobbying changed based on the situations, not only of slaves but of free Blacks. This resulted in a variety of outcomes like the Dred Scott case, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and even Black Laws enacted by states.

**Pamphlets and Prose**

Another form of activism and protest during this time frame came in the form of speakers, clergymen and pamphlet writing. Prior to the organization of conventions, churches and benefit societies, African American activists used pamphlet writing in the same manner as Thomas Paine to call for a stop to the inequalities of discrimination and slavery. David Walker’s groundbreaking writing in the pamphlet entitled *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, exposed the horrors of slavery encouraged slaves to rise and rebel against plantation owners (Wesley 1969). Walker was determined that his writing reach men and women enslaved in the
South, going so far as to sew copies of the pamphlet into clothing transported between Boston and the South (Franklin 1943). His activism through words was well received by slaves while terrifying slave owners. It would bring about passing laws banishing any writings considered anti-slavery and forbid enslaved persons from learning to read (Eaton 1936). Although seen as extreme by many in the abolitionist movement, Walker’s polemic is influential not only socially, but politically as well. The writings were one way to speak to the plight of enslaved people outside of formal organizations such as the mutual aid societies. *Appeal* would also influence other activists and leaders in lobbying for protections of free and enslaved African Americans.

The stories of enslaved people would also be told through slave narratives. These autobiographical texts told the story of escaped slaves and served as a form of inspiration for escape through the sharing of utterly horrific tales of slavery (Botkin 1945). The written history of these former slaves would move from stirring prose to powerful verbal accounts. Many of the abolitionist movements provided supports to new leaders such as Frederick Douglass whose voice would lead them to the forefront of the discussion on race during the Civil War and beyond. Douglass, a great leader in the African American community, was able to utilize written and verbal mediums in his activism through organizations such as the National Negro Convention (Douglass 1962). He would also later be involved in the formation of the Republican Party and become instrumental in the activism of the party on behalf of enslaved African Americans (McFeely 1991). The use of narratives and pamphlet writing as a form of lobbying and protest would grow in the latter part of the 19th and throughout the 20th century through the works of W.E.B. DuBois and James Baldwin (Lewis 2000).
Organized Religion: Lobbying through the African American Church

No organization has existed in the African American community longer than the church. As scholar and activist W.E.B. DuBois elegantly stated, it “… is the only social institution of the Negroes which started in the African forest and survived slavery”. (DuBois 1898). He stated that the improvement of the church in the African American community was due to the priests transported from Africa. The clergymen provided spiritual and emotional support to many enslaved Africans on the plantations (Pollard III 2011). It is also argued how difficult it is to connect African religious practices and the African American church that developed and grew strong here in America (DuBois 1898). However, it was in Christianity, particularly the Baptist and Methodist denominations that enslaved and free African Americans would find beliefs, practices, and expression of feelings to help them relate to their circumstances in slavery (Frazier 1957). The church found itself in a position to respond to the many needs of its members well beyond the spiritual. In response to the overwhelming instances of discrimination, racism and exclusionary practices, the church found itself an organization engaged in support of oppositional behaviors (Harding 1969).

Although the African American church has been driven by tenets of traditional theology and interpretation, the church was a great influence on devotees. In any ranking of slave revolts, probably the most well-known is the one led by Nat Turner. Turner was a Baptist minister who after many years of reading the Bible, claimed that the only way to end the evils of slavery was through rebellion (Frazier 1957). Even though the rebellion failed, Turner was the beginning of many religious leaders in the African American community to lead and influence protest.
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of many ministers to push the church to resist the injustice of segregationist practices in the United States. He would be opposed by Joseph Jackson, president of the National Baptist convention, who thought the church would be better off staying away from protest as not to detract from the church’s true mission (Hitchmough 2011). The Black church is one that faces the difficult crossroad of teaching obedience and enfranchisement at the same time (Warnock 2013). It is important to note that the Black church is a different animal than most Christian denominations. They are local, grassroots organizations where daily life is one of struggle in the face of continuously racialized conditions.

Since it is the institution closest to the struggle, it is one of great influence as it brings to light information that affects opinion (Welchel Jr. 2011). The church is also a source of leadership for the African American community. Numerous leaders have started at the local levels as ministers, only to become spokespeople with great impact on the political behavior of African Americans. Adam Clayton Powell served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and as a leader of protest, along with other eminent religious leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Andrew Young, and even Malcolm X. Indeed, the church may be the greatest protest and lobbying institution in the African American community.

Protest in the Courts and the Rise of the NAACP

With the passage of 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments (commonly called the Reconstruction Amendments), the need to distinguish between free Blacks and slaves seemed to be over. Everyone is free and a citizen with rights and privileges. America’s newly acquired citizens for a brief time would engage in the political system in almost the same manner as other Americans. However, this period would be short lived, lasting only a few years after the end of
the Civil War. Frazier (1957) points out the failure of Reconstruction may lie in Lincoln’s lack of a concrete plan to integrate these newly freed persons into American society and the political system. Nonetheless, the negotiations to settle the election of 1876 led to the eventual election of presidential candidate Rutherford Hayes over candidate Tilden, and the agreements would end the military presence in the Southern states (Marable 1984).

The deal to settle the election would become known as the Compromise of 1877 and would quickly put an end to the enfranchisement of the newly freed persons. Within a few short years, new codes would deprive African Americans of rights and privileges creating a period of the most extreme segregation and racial conflict the United States has ever known (Woodward 1966). Once again seeing themselves on the outside of the political system, African Americans would find a new way to protest their inability to participate – the federal courts. At the forefront of legal protest during this period would be the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The organization was founded shortly after the Niagara Movement meeting in 1905 with the goal of securing the rights of citizenship for African Americans in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments (Hine 1979). The organization pushed for legal tests of policies that affected many areas of African American life beginning with challenges to rules designed to disenfranchise Blacks. The first major fight occurred in Guinn v. United States (1915) over the grandfather clause which limited voting to citizens whose relatives were able to vote after January 1, 1866 (Frazier 1957). The ruling that grandfather clauses went against the 15th Amendment was a victory for the group on behalf of African Americans and led to continued lobbying for the eradication of practices like lynching through legislation (NAACP 2019).
Legal protest was not the only method used during this time. After World War I, demonstrations and marches organized at the local level returned to popularity. Using the legal approach worked only so well since the rulings were enforceable only to the extent local officials would pursue it. Mass movements through Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association and A. Philip Randolph’s March-On-Washington were created to push for greater race consciousness and understanding of the issues facing African Americans (Frazier 1957). Randolph’s protest was in response to Roosevelt’s failure to act on the discrimination in federal contracts. The threat of the march worked as Roosevelt would later sign an executive order to ease the suffering of African Americans working in the federal government (Hornsby 1997). A subsequent march planned would force the hand of President Truman to end segregation in the armed forces (Garfunkel 1959).

The Next Reconstruction: The 1960’s and Civil Rights

There is little doubt the end of slavery is the biggest mark towards greater political participation by Blacks in the United States. But as history shows the de jure end to slavery simply led to de facto and other informal methods designed to deny the full rights of political participation to African Americans. The Emancipation Proclamation left serious issues regarding voting, citizenship, and equal protection in its wake to be solved. During what we consider the first Reconstruction period after the Civil War, Black participation through voting had record numbers of African Americans in political office (Brown-Dean, et al. 2015). The numbers cannot compare to the growth in representation following the civil rights movement in the 1960’s (Brown-Dean, et al. 2015). The period brought about unheralded change with its attack on segregation, discrimination, and the denial of voting rights.
During this time American society was forced to look deep inside at the exclusion of its citizens based on their race. In a testament to the strength of democracy in the United States, this clash brought about the greatest civic engagement by Blacks since constitutional ratification. The civil rights movement represents a definite high mark in American politics and the integration of Blacks in the everyday fabric of American life. In the Southern United States post 1876, a return to life pre-Civil War occurred through state laws, and with the help of the US Supreme Court and the key ruling to uphold the separate but equal doctrine in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896).

Northern Whites should not receive a pass when it comes to social equality and their treatment of African Americans. While the abolishment of slavery was a hard-fought battle by many Whites, the unequal treatment and the resulting disillusionment caused many Blacks in the North to migrate to the South by the 1960’s. This low point lasted for many years for African Americans until the movements of the 1960’s made serious moves to change the existing state of affairs. This new “reconstruction” showed gains in representation for Blacks across the country, not just the Southern United States. Starting in the 1970’s African Americans in the South sent representatives back to Congress for the first time since 1870 (U.S. House of Representatives 2008).

Beyond the improvements in representation at the national level, the road to change was being paved by actions at the state level and other parts of American society. The Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 sparked challenges to the system of segregation that changed the entire face of race relations in America. In the end, the tactic worked, ruining the public transportation system and resulting in the Supreme Court ruling that bus segregation was illegal (Lewis
The city of Tallahassee, Florida would experience a similar boycott whose end only came as a result of the outcome in the Montgomery bus ruling (Morris 1975).

The year-long embargo on transport in Montgomery would propel a relatively unknown Martin Luther King, Jr. to the head of mass movements. King used his affiliation with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to engage clergy across the country and take a local movement national (Hitchmough 2011). From the bus boycott came the March on Washington in 1963 which brought about a host of other instances of mobilization efforts based on King’s use of nonviolent campaigns (Branch 1998). From this point, Southern states were besieged by events including the lunch counter protests in North Carolina, Freedom Summer, and James Meredith’s fight for admission to the University of Mississippi (Hornsby 1997). The carpe diem attitude of these activists created a wide variety of American society to support their cause and brought about unforeseen successes in the struggle against the disenfranchisement. The rallies, protests, demonstrations, and other acts of civil disobedience that followed served to broaden the scope and make this racial battle one that now belonged to the entire country.

**Protest and Electoral Engagement**

Political participation has several landmark studies related to voting behavior and party choice, and the growth of community in politics. Over the course of U.S. history, political participation in its various forms has grown, mainly with new forms of participation joining the conventional methods. As the society and the scope of government grows so have methods of engagement. Technological advances have encouraged more outreach as representatives become easier to contact.
Analysis of alternative participation in specific areas remains small. It is worth investigating effects of nonconventional participation on conventional participation. African Americans have typically been major participants in protest and other forms of alternative participation for politically marginalized populations. An investigation to determine if protests, rallies, petitions, etc… increase the likelihood of voting is also of value to the literature.

The prior sections have highlighted some ways in which African Americans have engaged in lobbying and interest group politics on slave ships prior to their arrival in the Americas. Multiple tactics have been used to influence policy including protest, rallies, interest groups (e.g. NAACP), legalism (courts), and speeches. The 2008 election of America’s first African American president, Barack Obama, was heralded by many in the popular media, including the New York Times, Boston Globe, and Wall Street Journal, as the start of the post-racial society. After the election many scholars cautioned that it was either too early for that claim or a bad assertion altogether (Dawson and Bobo 2009; Giroux 2009; Lum 2009; Verney 2014).

Some two years after Obama’s exit from office, the U.S. seems far from the track in the wake of the murders of African Americans at the hands of law enforcement and private citizens. This, combined with the increasing mass incarceration of African Americans highlighted in Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* (2010) and Becky Petitt’s *Invisible Men: Mass Incarceration and the Myth of Black Progress* (2012), has led African Americans back down the road of resistance. The fight against systemic racism has led Blacks once again down the path of organization and advocacy on behalf of human rights and dignity with renewed vision and focus. For many, this new protest includes
The Movement for Black Lives, a group dedicated to the improvement of the community through policy change. The Electoral Justice Project is dedicated to developing Black political identity and power through mobilization. These efforts are based in local action much like the early protests of African Americans.

The actions of enslaved Africans and African Americans show that political participation is not limited to the normally acceptable engagement such as voting. In the case of this group, the lack of suffrage drives what is often considered to be socially unacceptable activity. While protest among African Americans is documented in the literature, the effect of protest on voting behavior is not. However, there is support in the broader literature that individuals who engage in protests are as likely to vote as those who do not.

Protests most definitely have an impact on election outcomes. Americans have engaged in protests, marches, and rallies from the Vietnam War to Occupy Wall Street to the Tea Party (Andrews 2018). Research by Gillion and Soule (2018), indicate activity by liberal and conservative protesters tend to provide a boost to the parties in terms of votes on the Republican side and challengers to incumbents on the Democratic side. The last few years have seen record numbers of protests that have had an effect in the 2018 midterm elections (Gillion and Soule 2018). Protests after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri led to an increase in voter registration (Greenblatt 2015). Although no guarantee on an uptick in voting behavior, it is somewhat encouraging.

A tweet by President Donald Trump questioned why those engaged in post inauguration marches on January 22, 2017 didn’t vote (Dinan 2017).

"Watched protests yesterday but was under the impression that we just had an election!"
"Why didn't these people vote? Celebs hurt cause badly." (Savaransky 2017)

Trump’s statement suggests what is probably a mainstream thought for those whom social sciences are not a vocation – people who protest do not vote. While protest among African Americans is documented in the literature, the effect of protest on individual voting behavior is limited.

However, there is support in the broader literature that individuals who engage in protests are as likely to vote as those who do not. Research by Aytac, Stokes, and Rau (2017) indicate that indeed, those who protest vote. Using the American National Election Studies (ANES), the researchers found some interesting data. Among people who engaged in protest at least once in the four years prior to Election Day in 2012, 85% reported voting versus 78% of participants that did not participate in a protest. The numbers are similar for the 2008 election, with 89% of protesters reporting a vote and 79% of non-protesters voting (Aytac, Stokes and Rau 2017).

The research is not entirely reliable as indicated by the authors. Over-reporting of voting behavior is a chronic problem in political participation studies for several reasons. Many nonvoters report voting, especially those in groups that are typically expected to vote such as Republicans, those that are highly religious, educated, etc… (Bernstein, Chadha and Montjoy 2001). As overreporting plagues surveys (Stout and Martin 2016, Taylor 2012) and make it hard to rely on the data, how are researchers to get solid data? Using verified voter turnout is one way. Although some states such as Georgia do provide data for individuals (McKee, Hood III and Hill 2012)), the ANES does not support that level of analysis at this point in time.

Aytac, Stokes, and Rau (2017) turned to the British Election Studies (BES) for help. The BES employs a variable entitled Vote Validation to check if respondents did cast a vote in the
election in question (British Election Study Team 2016). Using this survey, the researchers found impressive numbers regarding protesting and its effect on voting behavior. Citizens in the United Kingdom seem just as likely to protest and vote as those in the United States. Using the 2005 and 2010 BES, the team found people who self-identify as protestors also have a greater propensity to vote. The 2005 and 2010 studies indicate 70% of likely protesters vote (Aytac, Stokes and Rau 2017). While this data is generally encouraging, it is a bit disheartening for predicting effects of protest on voting behavior for people of color. The 2005 British study contains a microscopic number of Blacks, people of African descent and those who are mixed-race that similarly plague the datasets available on American voters (Clarke, et al. 2006).

**Modeling the Effects of Protest on Voting for African Americans**

What does the information we have portend for African American voters who engage in protest? Using the 2005 Black Feminist Study, we will look to examine the effects of protest on voting. While the survey is modern enough to capture things such as anti-war sentiment (i.e. 2003 war in Iraq) in the protests, it unfortunately is not recent enough to capture potential participation in events such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, or the 2017 Women’s marches. Conducted by Evelyn Simien at the University of Connecticut (2005), the survey consists of approximately 500 African Americans interviewed via telephone during November 2004 and January 2005 (Simien 2005). Although it is not a large sample, it is an all African American population. The questions in the survey are appropriate for the testing and will not require the use of proxy questions. The sample is overwhelmingly female 61% (305) to 39% (195) male (Simien 2005). The ages range between 19 and 94, with 295 (59%) of the respondents born before 1964 and 205 (41%) of the participants belonging to Generation X (post
baby boomers and before Millennials) (2005). Eighty-seven percent of respondent report voting in the sample (Simien 2005). This may be a result of overreporting discussed by many scholars in social science, which is somewhat common for minority voters (Bernstein, Chadha and Montjoy 2001, McKee, Hood III and Hill 2012, Stout and Martin 2016).

For this research, I utilize a standard logistic regression to test the following hypotheses regarding the effects of participant engagement in protests, marches and petition signing on voting.

**Hypothesis 1:** African Americans who participate in protests are more likely to vote than those who do not.

**Hypothesis 2:** African Americans who sign petitions other than those for political candidates are more likely to vote than those who do not.

The dependent variable for the models will be voting. All standard demographic categories will be used as independent variables (age, gender, income, education, etc…) with the expectation that they will have the expected effects in the model. The questions from the survey along with coding are listed in the Appendix. In Model 1 the independent variable is protest which was asked in the survey as: “Have you attended a protest meeting or demonstration?” (Simien 2005). Petition, asked as “Have you signed a petition in support of something or against something?” (2005) is run in a separate model as the reported response rate is interesting and may yield a more significant result. It is expected that the results will yield similar answers to what has been reported by Aytac, Stokes and Rau (2017), leading to a similar conclusion that African Americans who engage in informal political activity will vote.
Results

Model 1: Impact of Protest on Voting

In this model most of the independent variable protest (Figure 4.1) shows to be somewhat significant and loads according to what is mostly in the literature (see results table in Appendix C.2). As can be expected, participants over the age of 50 and women have a slightly greater propensity to vote. When it comes to protest, young people are just as likely to vote when they engage in alternative activity (Aytac, Stokes and Rau 2017). The numbers are strong for party affiliation which is not surprising. It is significant for the category of Democrat but that may not be altogether remarkable since the number of democrats in the sample heavily outweighs the other categories. In a cross tabulation of protest and party, the number of Democrats outpaces the next group (Independents) almost three to one. Of the demographic variables category 1 in the education variable (high school or less) reaches significance. Typically, I would not have expected that particular variable to show such significance but the 2016 general election exit polls show that the majority of voters had either some college, high school, or less in the way of education (CNN 2016).

The protest variable and march variable support the hypothesis with an expected positive direction. Protest is barely significant, and march is not at all significant as can be seen in Table C.2. The outcomes are not particularly solid as can be seen in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. There is a greater likelihood of voting for those in the survey that engaged in a protest or march of some kind. In the sample, the number of participants that engaged in protests and marches are identical to one another which may have confounding effects on the outcome (Table 4.1).
Model 2: Impact of Petition Signing on Voting

The goal of this model was to test for the impact of signing a petition on voting behavior. The demographic variables appear almost identical to those of Model 1. As such, no additional discussion of those variables will be conducted in the part. However, what is interesting about the variable anypetition in this model is the level of significance. The variable loaded in a positive direction with the likelihood as having some effect on voting behavior as seen in Figure 4.3. In addition, the variable is highly significant. Of 499 responses for the question “Have you signed a petition in support of something or against something?” (Simien 2005), 269 participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>16.30</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>83.70</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 2005 Black Feminist Study*

Figure 4.1. Effect of Protest on Voting
indicated they had signed a petition for something other than in support of a political candidate. Of those 269 that claimed to have signed a petition, 251 respondents indicated they had also voted in the 2004 general election (Simien 2005).

![Adjusted Predictions of march with 95% CIs](image)

**Figure 4.2. Effect of Marches on Voting**

**Conclusion**

It is apparent from the results that informal, alternative participation in the form of protest, marches, and even petition signing matters regarding the voting behavior for African Americans. Both hypotheses confirmed the original idea behind the research. African Americans protest because for most of their history in the Americas, it was the only form of political participation available. From an interest group perspective alone, it was the only way to be heard and have their issues seen as something of value by the majority. It seems that even with suffrage, these alternative forms of participation remain an important pathway of engaging political elites in the issues that matter in the African American community. With the vocal criticism against his actions, Colin Kaepernick’s choice to protest and bring awareness to
Figure 4.3. Effect of Petition Signing on Voting

the political elites in the issues that matter in the African American community. With the vocal increasing actions of violence toward minorities has worked. Many citizens, from the President of the United States to team owners, coaches, broadcasters and even the everyday citizen at the barbershop or beauty salon, have spoken on this issue.

As Daniel Gillion comments – protest is a very effective type of political activity for minorities (2012). However, he goes on to state that no matter how powerful protest may be there is a shortage of effective analysis in the literature (Gillion 2012). He does find in his research that protest is effective in shaping how members vote on issues related to their home districts (Gillion 2012). For certain, protest impacts the institutions of government in the United States, be it Congress, the Supreme Court or even the President (Gillion 2013).

The fact that protest is barely significant and the failure of the march variable to achieve significance may indicate separate issues that will require further in-depth investigation. First, it
may be of major import to understand why citizens and African Americans in general bother to join protests and vote. Given the history, the reasons are most likely deeper than can be understood using a single data set. It is of great importance to understand the impact of emotional and psychological factors on engaging in these activities over simply voting as researched by Barnes and Kaase (1979). Perhaps as they suggest, it is not just the act of protesting that is important but the attitudes toward unconventional political activity. These activities have great costs attached to them, especially protesting and marching. But there is an even bigger cost it would seem with staying away from these activities which could explain the participation (Aytac and Stokes 2019).

It is also worth looking into the ways in which the concept of protest is operationalized. Is it violent or nonviolent protest? Nonviolent protests have been shown to increase support for policy favorable to the group, while violent protest creates a decline in support for policies (Wasow 2017). Not because the issue is unworthy, but violent protesters are viewed in a different light. A recent study found that protesters that engage in violent behavior leads to support for the opposing group (Simpson, Willer and Feinberg 2018). The research by Simpson, et al. (2018) found that the use of violent tactics leads to a perception of disagreeableness creating a bigger push for the protesters. This is true in the case of White nationalist protesters being opposed by antiracist counter-protesters (Simpson, Willer and Feinberg 2018).

Or, is the protest an attempt to create a social movement? Social movements tend to be much more successful in engaging people in working for the cause and pushing for change. The ways in which organizers brand their protests can engage more participants, making the psychological factors more important to those who would be a part of these events (Khazan
2019). These questions matter when it comes to how protest can or should be defined for more rigorous study in the discipline. The answer found in this paper only scratches at what the potential answers to the question of African American protest, engagement in alternative activities, and measuring these activities for future study. We can take a note from Max Kaase and frame this piece of research as follows – political activity, whether voting or protesting is something individuals engage with as an aside (2010). However, for African Americans, it could be that protest is how they work for greater political power and although it can be a thankless activity, it does have importance within the larger context (Kaase 2010).
### Appendix C.1

#### Table C1.1. Coding for National Black Feminist Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Activity</td>
<td>anypetition</td>
<td>Have you signed a petition in support of something or against something?</td>
<td>0 – No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Activity</td>
<td>protest</td>
<td>Have you attended a protest meeting or demonstration?</td>
<td>0 – No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Activity</td>
<td>march</td>
<td>Have you taken part in a neighborhood march?</td>
<td>0 – No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote Choice</td>
<td>vote</td>
<td>Did you vote in the 2004 presidential election?</td>
<td>0 – No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>party</td>
<td>Do you usually think of yourself as Republican a Democrat an Independent, or what?</td>
<td>1 – Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 – Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 – Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 – No Preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>maritalstatus</td>
<td>Are you currently married, widowed, separated, divorced, have you ever been married, or are you living with a significant other?</td>
<td>0 – Unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>edu</td>
<td>What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed and gotten credit for?</td>
<td>0 – Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – HS or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 – Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 4 years college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 – Postgrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>income</td>
<td>Is the total yearly income of all members of your family now living at home $40,000 or more, or is it less than $40,000?</td>
<td>1 – More than 40K a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 – Less than 40K a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Ownership</td>
<td>homeowner</td>
<td>Do you own your home, are you buying it, do you pay rent, or what?</td>
<td>1 – own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 – rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 - other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>age</td>
<td>Recoded from year to decade groups</td>
<td>0 – 0-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – 18-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 – 30-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 40-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 – 50-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 – 60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 – 70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 – 80-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>gender</td>
<td>Male or Female</td>
<td>0 – Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Southern region</td>
<td>0 – non-South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - South</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C.2

Table C2.1. Models of Protest and Petition Signing Effect on Voting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Vote</th>
<th>(2) Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.084 (0.351)</td>
<td>0.076 (0.376)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>-0.393 (1.197)</td>
<td>-0.239 (1.204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>-0.263 (1.196)</td>
<td>-0.002 (1.211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>-0.368 (1.192)</td>
<td>-0.269 (1.208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>0.391 (1.195)</td>
<td>0.664 (1.218)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>0.448 (1.276)</td>
<td>0.866 (1.289)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>1.476 (1.517)</td>
<td>0 (empty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>1.19 (0.894)</td>
<td>1.364 (0.918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1.417** (0.551)</td>
<td>1.490** (0.576)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>0.791 (0.592)</td>
<td>0.860 (0.616)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>-1.014 (0.768)</td>
<td>-1.132 (0.769)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small City</td>
<td>0.002 (0.734)</td>
<td>0.048 (0.739)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>-0.056 (0.779)</td>
<td>-0.267 (0.786)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large City</td>
<td>0.15 (0.715)</td>
<td>0.057 (0.715)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeowner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>0.906 (0.390)</td>
<td>-0.681 (0.405)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-0.673 (0.780)</td>
<td>-0.493 (0.786)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.151 (0.338)</td>
<td>-0.643 (0.354)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS or Less</td>
<td>-2.405 (1.081)</td>
<td>-2.114* (1.086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>-1.255 (1.087)</td>
<td>-1.085 (1.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years or more</td>
<td>-1.039 (1.130)</td>
<td>-0.747 (1.149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.174 (0.329)</td>
<td>0.083 (0.341)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 40K</td>
<td>0.114 (0.399)</td>
<td>-0.016 (0.420)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>0.095* (0.538)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AnyPetition</td>
<td>1.163*** (0.364)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cons</td>
<td>2.961 (1.798)</td>
<td>2.009 (1.841)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.1603</td>
<td>0.1802</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Bibliography


*Guinn & Beal v. United States.* 1915. 238 U.S. 347 (United States Supreme Court, June 21).


Key, Francis Scott. 1814. The Star Spangled Banner.


*Plessy v. Ferguson*. 1896. 210 (United States Supreme Court, May 18).


CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Politics, particularly the how and the why of political engagement is at best a puzzling venture. And that is for those of us in the discipline. It seems that those on the outside keep their heads down and hope for the best. However, political scientists often find themselves asked to answer questions like why citizens even consider voting when it is so obvious it doesn’t make a difference, or how a specific person came out of nowhere and got elected. And we try in our best manner to be patient and soothingly explain that political engagement should be a frustrating thing for them. There are free riders that benefit regardless of participation. Even those that do vote are using their vote as a form of expression. It can be expression of their political identity as a Republican or a Democrat, expression of their duty, loyalty to the flag, or even peer pressure to sign a petition for better lunches at the local school. Although considering the typical quality of food in schools, who could ever argue with that idea? Perhaps what they are expressing is unclear at times and that is what makes the discipline so fascinating and maddening at the same time.

In the first essay, the research goal was to discover if mistrust and efficacy increases voting for African Americans. As a group that has been historically marginalized and denied access to basic rights (citizenship and voting) and basic equality (economically, politically), it is no wonder their trust has been shaken to the point of assumption they would not vote. And when the core of who a person is has been the reason they are denied access, it makes perfect sense to not go to the polls. Instead African Americans have fought for more inclusion and not accepted
less. And as such, it is an appropriate assumption that being Black affects the sense of trust. The results of the research show a clear link between lack of trust and voting behavior. African Americans who have the least amount of trust are most likely to go to the polls. Blacks with stronger external efficacy as evidence by their belief that they can understand what government is about and what goes on in government operations also have a greater likelihood of going to the polls. These attitudes impact voting behavior. As indicated in the essay though these results may be impacted by the sample being all African American and not as robust as desired for generalizing the results. As discussed in the essay the models while testable, may be tested in many ways and those differences may influence the outcomes seen in the paper. It is hard to know which demographic variables to include, how the variables should be operationally defined and a host of other specifications that may provide a less than perfect specification.

In the second essay, the research sought to investigate why some African Americans choose to identify as Republicans. The Party of Lincoln aside, why does such a small percentage choose to express their party identity with this particular party, especially one that brings with it negative connotations for most Blacks? Using interviews with 16 African American Republicans, it was clear that the attachment is not out of any loyalty to the party of a President that “freed the slaves” and as a result Black people are somehow beholden to support that party. No, these Republicans are very loyal to the African American community. They believe it is the choice to make for Blacks to have what is an authentic life. A life in which they are part of the decisions that affect their lives and not passive recipients of social handouts from the government. These citizens are subject to the discontent of their friends, families, and colleagues.
They are often put to the side and disengaged from their own party. While their race consciousness may be high, that does not carry over to their party.

The third essay attempted to discover if African Americans who participate in alternative politics via protests, marches, and petition signing would carry that activism to the polls. African Americans engage in protest as it has been throughout their troubled history in the United States, one of the few methods available to them. It has been the one way they have to lobby for rights long denied them through normal channels. The subordinate position of African Americans found them fighting for suffrage and other basic equalities in unique ways. And when African American athletes in the National Football League choose to make a statement about unequal treatment of minorities by refusing to stand for the national anthem, it is a political statement. And one being made in the one way that has been available to Blacks. The research did find support for the theory of protesters being more likely to vote. That finding is in line with the literature. What is more interesting in the research is signing a petition makes African Americans more likely to vote.

Much remains to be done for this research. There are additional factors in addition to mistrust and efficacy worth investigating for their effect on voting. Although not tested, how would a test of group consciousness have turned out in this study? If protest encourages voting, is there a magic number where it will decrease voting? Truly engaging in protests, marches and rallies is a costly venture with time off from work, travel, etc. and cost to an individual reputation. Does that even matter to the individual if the cause is important enough? Perhaps the costs change based on the election. If it is a local election that will increase property taxes by
20%, maybe that is worth getting out and making sure citizens are aware, speaking at town hall meetings, and working with the community development council.

While there are African American conservatives in this country, at what point are they willing to change party identification and choose the Republican Party? It is hard for some to go against the vestiges of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal programs and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society legislation. As stated at the end of the second essay, perhaps the research is looking in the wrong direction. Although the Republican Party could take steps to make themselves more inclusive and appear less racist to African Americans, perhaps there is another way to view this. Why are so many African Americans still Democrats?

The purpose of this research has been to provide another lens for viewing African Americans and their part in the United States political system. The methods and means of participation have differed greatly for African Americans. The democracy spoken of in the Introduction to this piece of work quickly happened in the new republic for one group but came much slower for others. So slow that some would argue various groups are still working to achieve equality in participation.

For African Americans and their part in the political process - the struggle that began hundreds of years ago continues.
Erinn Wilcots was born in Dallas, Texas. After completing her high school education, she began her postsecondary education at Texas Christian University. After receiving her bachelor’s degree in government and politics, she attended Amberton University, earning a master’s in business administration. Erinn earned her master’s in political science from The University of Texas at Dallas in 2012. Erinn has spent the last 17 years in education, lighting the fires of learning for future generations.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Erinn D. Wilcots

The University of Texas at Dallas
School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences
Department of Political Science
800 W. Campbell Rd., GR31
Richardson, TX 75081

EDUCATION

The University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, TX (2009-present)
Doctoral Candidate in Political Science
Field: American Politics, Judicial Politics
Dissertation: “African American Political Participation in the United States”
Chair: Robert Lowry

The University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, TX (2012)
Master of Arts in Political Science

Amberton University (2001)
Master of Business Administration, Strategic Leadership

The University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, TX (1995)
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science

EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

2019-present       Dallas Independent School District       Dallas, TX
Manager, Advanced Academic Services
• Assist in developing district policy governing the identification and education of gifted and talented students
• Facilitate professional development sessions on research, pedagogy, and implications of gifted education
• Coach Gifted/Talented and Advanced Placement Instructional Specialists to provide teacher support that ensures the unique intellectual and social-emotional needs of gifted and talented students are met
• Assist with development and roll out of districtwide elementary enrichment and talent development curriculum
• Oversee the planning and implementation of Advanced Placement Saturday student prep sessions
Serve on district AP Task Force to improve racial inequities in AP course enrollments and qualifying scores
Act as the College Board’s district coordinator for all PSAT 8/9, PSAT/NMSQT, and AP Exams
Proactively communicate with middle school and high school campuses to support proper administration of PSAT 8/9, PSAT/NMSQT, and AP Exams
Support AVID Coordinators to ensure program implementation

2017-2019  Dallas Independent School District  Dallas, TX
Instructional Specialist, Gifted and Talented Education
- Assist the director in providing overall program coordination of curriculum development and implementation
- Assist with the identification of current effective teaching practices in curriculum and instruction
- Responsible for development, training, and implementation of Gifted and Talented assessment procedures district-wide
- Compile data for and work with program evaluation in assessing program effectiveness
- Prepare or review presentations, summaries, required reports, and other documents as needed for distribution to the director, executive director, Chief Academic Officer of Teaching and Learning, School Board, T.E.A. and all other persons as assigned
- Develop, revise, prepare, and present staff development and professional training for teachers and peers, and others, such as principals in Gifted and Talented districtwide
- Serve as a liaison and collaborate with campus administrators, coordinators and other departments
- Assist in the development of instructional programs that utilize technology in the classroom
- Assist in the selection of appropriate materials and resources in order to be used for classroom instruction
- Assist with the development of curriculum for gifted and talented, Pre-Advanced Placement, Advanced Placement, and other Advanced Academic Services programs.
- Assist campuses with adherence and compliance to the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students
- Perform all other tasks and duties as assigned
- Member, Teaching and Learning Standards of Professional Development Committee
- Member, Teaching and Learning Curriculum Champions Initiative
- Member, Dual Language/Gifted Pilot Program Initiative
- Member, K-2 Assessment Initiative
- Theory of Action Compression Planning Team
2016-2017 Dallas Independent School District Dallas, TX

Instructional Specialist, Advanced Placement Social Studies
- Provide instructional and technical support to teachers of programs that lead to Advanced Placement (AP), include Pre-Advanced Placement and Gifted and Talented
- Assist and monitor campuses with the College Board AP Audit Process
- Plan, coordinate and implement AP student prep sessions
- Assist campuses with the ordering and reconciliation of AP Exams
- Assist in scheduling, proctoring, and monitoring campuses during AP testing
- Assist teachers in assigned areas with identifying and securing appropriate resources
- Design, develop and implement quality professional development experiences for AP teachers, Pre-AP and GT teachers in person and through video or other forms of technology
- Collaborate with various departments to improve instruction and participation in AP courses
- Foster public relations with other departments and the community regarding Advanced Academic Services
- Support the implementation of the district's Teacher Excellence Initiative
- Compile data for and work with program evaluation in assessing program effectiveness
- Assist campuses with adherence and compliance to the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented students

2004-2015 Richardson ISD- L.V. Berkner High School Richardson, TX

Advanced Placement Social Studies/AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) Teacher, Social Studies Department Chair, and AVID Coordinator
- Plan a program of study that meets the individual needs, interests, and abilities of students, create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and appropriate to the maturity and interests of students.
- Guide the learning process toward the achievement of curriculum goals and establish, in harmony with the goals, clear objectives for all lessons, units, projects, and the like to communicate these objectives to students.
- Employ instructional methods and materials that are most appropriate for meeting stated objective.
- Assess the accomplishment of students on a regular basis and provide progress reports as required.
- Participate in and organize extracurricular activities such as UIL competitions
- Maintain and improve profession competence.
- Promote use of WICOR strategies in all classes.
- Promote equity and access for students in advanced courses.
- Organize and participate in field trips to various colleges.
- Develop relationships with students’ content teachers to maintain awareness of AVID student progress.
- Ensure AVID students are participating in appropriate college testing, work with AVID site team for parent night meetings
- Supervise and model higher level thinking strategies for tutors, work with data collection and examination of disaggregated data to make program improvements.
- Assist in budget planning, review of site plan, work in the preparation for certification, share and model AVID methodologies for colleagues.
• Maintain records of RISD Social Studies Instructional Resources and Materials.
• Act as instructional leader and team member.
• Handle campus fiscal responsibilities.
• Serve as campus liaison with district curriculum director

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Dissertation: “African American Political Participation in the United States”
• “The Effect of Trust and Efficacy on African American Voting Behavior”
• “Why Aren’t More African Americans Republican?”
• “From Others to Kneeling Brothers: Protest as Alternative Political Participation and the Effect on Voting of African Americans”

PRESENTATIONS
• Texas Association for Gifted and Talented – (2017) “Invisible Gifts – Hidden Factors and Minority Student Success”
• AVID Summer Institute – Implementation, History through Social Sciences Strands
• AVID Path Training – Implementation, Critical Reading
• Texas Council for Social Studies – (2009) “Project Based Learning in the Social Studies Classroom”
• Critical Reading in the Social Studies Classroom
• Developing 21st Century Learners
• Inquiry and Higher Order Thinking in Your Classroom
• Student Led Socratic Circles and Philosophical Chairs

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS
• University of Virginia “Best Practices in Differentiated Instruction” Institute
• College Board National AP Equity and Access Colloquium
• North Texas Consortium for Teaching about Asia
• Advanced Placement Summer Institute – Psychology, Pre-AP World Geography, Human Geography, U.S. Government and Politics, World History
• Advanced Placement Workshop – Psychology, U.S. Government, Human Geography Micro/Macroeconomics
• Houston World Affairs Council – “Portrait in Brazil”, “Portrait in the Middle East”
PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
- American Political Science Association
- National Conference for Black Political Scientists
- International Society for Political Psychology
- Southwestern Social Science Association
- Midwest Women’s Caucus for Political Scientists
- American Psychological Association
- Association for Texas Professional Educators
- Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented

CERTIFICATIONS
- State of Texas Teacher Certification
  - Social Studies (8-12)
  - Business Education (6-12)
  - English as a Second Language Supplement

OTHER SPECIALIZED TRAINING
- Advanced Placement Reader for Psychology
- Asian Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund Reader
- College Board Training
  - Advanced Placement US Government
  - Advanced Placement Psychology
  - Advanced Placement Human Geography
  - Advanced Placement World History
  - Pre-AP World Geography
- State of Texas Advanced Placement Advocate

AWARDS
- Teacher of the Month (March, 2004)