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The Impact of Politicized Churches and Party Contact on African American Voter Turnout

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The African American community has faced a myriad of challenges regarding their quest for social equity and social justice in America. Among the challenges is the fight for their right to vote. Researchers document numerous factors that have impacted the voting behavior of African Americans. Underexplored, however, is the historical role and impact that the African American church has had on this process. This article examines the impact of politicized churches and party contact on African American voter turnout. The extant literature suggests that both party contact and politicized churches have an impact on African American political participation. In this article which utilizes data from the 1996 National Black Election Study we find that to hold true. However, we also find that politicized churches have more impact on turnout than do party contact. Further, we find that while linked fate does not have a significant relationship to turnout, African Americans' group efficacy along with age and education play a significant role in who votes.

The African American community has faced a myriad of challenges regarding their quest for social equity and social justice in America. Among the challenges is the fight for their right to vote. Researchers document numerous factors that have impacted the voting behavior of African Americans. Research on African American group-based attitudes suggests that they, too, can be enhanced by politicized churches and party contact.

Underexplored however, is the historical role and impact that the African American church among other factors has had on this process. According to Robnett and Bany (2011), the church provides a means of networks and resources for social movement in communities. Brown and Brown (2003) also found that when church members are exposed to political discussions they are more likely to be involved in political participation.

Walton (1986) contends that the church is the cornerstone of the African American

community and, as such, is an important influence on how African Americans socialize and interact with each other. Morris (1984) also views the African American church as the mobilization source for the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, McClerking and McDaniel (2005) note that the African American church has historically served as the source of African Americans' political activities. Recently in 2008 Buckner illustrates in an article highlighting the Civil Rights attempts in Anniston, Alabama, how in this segregated town, three pastors, two of which were African American, and the other White fought to integrate the city's library. On May 1, 1964—after the library's integration—Martin Luther King Jr. stood before a group of African Americans at the 17th Street Baptist Church, solidifying this church's status as “a battleground for the civil rights struggle,” Reynolds says (Buckner 2008). This event highlights the range of struggles and social inequalities alongside the right to vote that African Americans sought to eradicate in our nation.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone posed a central question in American politics in 1980 that is especially relevant to African Americans. That is; *Who Votes?* This question is still debated in the discipline today. However, maybe an even more important corollary to that is why do African Americans vote? This debate can be traced back to Anthony Down's seminal work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* written in 1957. Down's writings are grounded in expected utility theory which asserts that individuals will vote when they perceive that there is something to be gained from participation. This is followed by the individual rationally assessing whether the benefit gained from participating will outweigh the cost entailed.

The cost associated with casting a vote is paramount in understanding African Americans political participation. Contemporary political theories on voter participation suggest that individuals with the material and psychological resources are more likely to incur the cost associated with participation. These resources include education, income, political experience, political efficacy and interest in politics (Verba and Nie 1972).

Turnout is typically modeled, empirically, as a function of socio-demographic and psychological variables (Conway 1991; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). However, African American politics scholars have posited a group-based heuristic approach when dealing with African American voter turnout (Dawson 1994; Tate 1993).

According to Verba and Nie (1972) there are tremendous differences in Caucasians and African Americans when it comes to contacting public officials and participating in campaigns. They concluded from data analyzed using a nationwide survey that African Americans participate at as high a level as Caucasians when everything else is held equal. They attribute this to African Americans group consciousness. Verba and Nie (1972) further contend that this shared consciousness for African Americans has led to higher levels of political participation for them than others at the same socioeconomic status level that do not exhibit this consciousness. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), using a mobilization perspective posit that by the 1980s' African Americans political resources had decreased because of a younger less experienced population. Given the importance that resources play in traditional models of political participation this could be problematic for African American political participation. They further note that this was also in part due to a less supportive community structure for African Americans as well as a decline in home ownership and church attendance. Again, these are all factors that do not bode well for increasing participation levels among African Americans. Yet, they conclude that the most significant cause leading to the decreased turnout for African Americans is a decline in party contact and political efficacy of African Americans in recent times. They assert that the decline in mobilization efforts is directly accountable for two-thirds of the drop in

African Americans voter participation since 1968 (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993).

Walton (1985) notes that there are three dominant explanations of African American voter turnout. They consist of the standard Socio-Economic Status (SES) explanation, the fear and apathy index, and group consciousness. The statement made by Walton (1985) is still accurate more than a decade later. While there have been attempts made to test the three explanations in one model, these attempts have been few because of the lack of adequate data on African Americans. However, some of the most consistent findings have come from models that included all three explanations of African American voter turnout (Shingles 1981; Gurin et al. 1989; Hackey 1992; Tate 1993).

This paper focuses on the voter turnout behavior of African Americans. Given that multiple models of political participation posit different approaches to studying the issue we have decided to construct a model that attempts to bring many of the aspects of the competing models together in order to ascertain their relative impact on African American voter turnout. Thus, we are looking specifically for the driving forces of African Americans voter turnout regardless of the separate approaches that past researches have used.

The political behavior literature identifies numerous factors that impact such behavior. However, a comprehensive examination of such factors has yet to be explored. This research seeks to bridge the gap between these factors by providing a holistic examination of these factors into one model.

This research examines the patterns of African Americans' voting behavior through the lens of three theoretical frameworks. More specifically, this research extends beyond previous African American voting behavior literature by providing an analysis of the impact that mobilizing institutions, group based attitudes, and standard predictors of voter turnout have on one's voting behavior. The first section provides an overview of the mobilizing institutions theoretical framework and how factors such as the church and political parties have been found to impact African Americans' voting behavior. The next section of the theoretical framework discussion outlines the group-based attitudes literature and the relationship that factors such as linked fate and group efficacy have been found to have on African Americans' voting behavior. The last section of the theoretical frameworks discussion provides an overview of the impact that the standard predictors of voter turnout; the control variables have been found to have on African Americans' voting behavior.

Following the theoretical frameworks discussion the hypotheses are provided. Then an overview of the methodology and data employed in this study. In the last section of the article conclusions are drawn and the implications of the findings are presented.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in combining threads from the models described above into one comprehensive model of African American voter turnout. Party contacting and politicized churches have both been found to mobilize participation, but which is more influential? Do they have the same impact on different types of African American voters? Is the path from mobilization to participation mediated by group-based attitudes? These questions and others are explored in this study.

Mobilizing Institutions: The Church

Institutions and organizations can provide resources and access to resources. One institution of particular importance to African Americans has been the church. According to Walton (1985), the spiritual and political center of the African American community is the church.

Thus, one of the best ways to mobilize African Americans is through the church. This is clearly evident by looking at the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The African American church, and African American Ministers like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy, played a central role in mobilizing African American protesters. Therefore, a large portion of the African American electorate can identify the church as a place where it can gain political as well as spiritual inspiration (Harris 1999; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Walton 1985). The church has not abandoned that role in current times. Calhoun-Brown's (1996) findings from the 1984 and 1998 National Black Election studies indicate that there are many African American churches that provide their parishioners with a politicizing message which encourages active political participation.

Peterson (1992) and Harris (1994) find a statistically significant relationship between church involvement and voting for African Americans, and an absence of such a relationship for Caucasians. Religious activism was found to be a particularly important political resource for African Americans in comparison to Anglos and Latinos (Verba et al. 1993). Wilcox and Gomez (1990) note that:

Many studies suggest that Blacks have significantly higher levels of religiosity than Whites, and a few studies have suggested that church activity is associated with greater demands for civil equality. Moreover, the Black church clearly has played a major role in the mobilization of Black political participation (Wilcox and Gomez 1990, 528).

In addition to the empirical evidence comparing African Americans to Caucasians, there is research focusing on African Americans alone. Allen, Dawson, and Brown (1989) show the connection between religious behavior and political participation for African Americans. Their index of religious behavior not only has an effect on low forms of participation like voting, but it also has an impact on higher forms of political participation. Peterson (1992) found a positive relationship between church involvement and both overall participation and voting turnout for African Americans. This finding is supported by other studies that conclude that church attendance serves as a mobilizer for African American voter turnout (Harris 1999; Wilcox and Gomez 1990; Milbrath and Goel 1977). Wilcox and Gomez (1990) also found that religiosity, in addition to church involvement, was a strong predictor of voter turnout for African Americans. Calhoun-Brown (1996) finds in her research that religiosity itself is not necessarily a precursor to political participation for African Americans. However, her research does support the notion that church attendance at politically active or "politicized" churches greatly enhances the political participation of African Americans.

According to Liu, Austin, and Orey (2009), in the African American community the church also enhances their social capital. The facilitation of social capital via the church in these communities is important because it aids African Americans in finding ways to work collaboratively in achieving their goals of dealing with challenges that they collectively face. In regards to voting and political participation such networks associated with social capital have yielded higher rates of voter turnout among African American church members compared to Caucasian church members (Liu et al. 2009).

Mobilizing Institutions: Political Parties

A second institution that provides resources to African Americans and Caucasians for mobilization purposes are political parties. Political parties also provide a multitude of mobilization services for candidates, particularly at the state and local level. One of the most important functions of state and local political parties is canvassing voters. This

includes contacting potential supporters of the political parties and asking them to participate in the electoral process. Prior research indicates that individuals who are contacted by a political party are more likely to participate in electoral politics than those who are not (Wielhouwer and Lockerbie 1994; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992; 1995). Party contact serves as a mobilizer because it lessens the cost of participation by providing voters with information, motivation and possibly transportation. As previously mentioned most of the literature on electoral participation stresses the role of these resources and also concludes that African Americans possess fewer resources than Caucasians. Thus, it would seem that party contacting should be particularly important for mobilizing African Americans because they tend to be more resource poor than Caucasians.

Research has documented the importance of party contacting for mobilizing African Americans. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) found that mobilization had the third largest influence on African Americans political participation after easing registration laws and increasing resources. Wielhouwer (2000) notes that even though African Americans are contacted at somewhat lower levels than Caucasians party contact significantly enhances African Americans political participation. Party contacting of African Americans has a predictable partisan bias; Republicans contact African Americans at extremely low levels, while Democrats contact African Americans at approximately the same rates as their percentage of the population, roughly 11 percent. Wielhouwer (2000) concludes that this is because of the historic place of African Americans within the Democratic coalition.

Group-Based Attitudes

Understanding the impact of African Americans group-based attitudes on voter turnout for African Americans will provide us with a better understanding of their relative impact. This is important because a number of studies have shown that African Americans group consciousness and group efficacy enhance political participation (Koch 1995; Dawson 1994; Gurin et al. 1989; Walton 1985; Shingles 1981; Verba and Nie 1972). More research is needed because it is important to determine the mechanisms by which the mobilizers produce participation. Thus, this paper examines these two African American group-based attitudes' direct effects on voter turnout.

Individuals can have multiple social and political identities that impact the way they view the political world and participate in politics. However, it has been well established by political scholars that racial solidarity dominates other group identifications for African Americans (Walton 1985; Gurin et al. 1989). African Americans group consciousness involves identification with other African Americans and acknowledgment that African Americans have shared interests. African Americans consciousness also can include feelings that society and the political system are, in part, responsible for their group's position in society.

Group Based Attitudes: Linked Fate

One form of African Americans consciousness is what Gurin et al. (1989) labeled "common fate," the notion that "members recognize that they are often treated categorically despite variability in their personal characteristics" (Gurin et al. 1989, 122). These authors also predict that, "identification and its transformation into consciousness should be greatest among those strata whose mobility is most blocked and whose channels for redressing grievances are most limited" (Gurin et al. 1989, 33); that is, higher status African Americans. They did indeed find common fate to be more widespread among more affluent,

higher educated African Americans. Moreover, African Americans that exhibited high levels of common fate were found to be more active than others in all forms of political participation.

Dawson (1994) refers to this phenomenon as African Americans “linked fate.” His work, although similar to that of Gurin et al. (1989), differs in that it links “perceptions of self-interest to perceptions of racial group interest” (Dawson 1994, 76). Dawson refers to the work done on self-categorization and social identity theory as a basis for his argument (see Turner 1987 and Tajfel 1981). He further argues that to understand linked fate among African Americans that one first has to understand the cross-cutting effects of the category “Blacks” and the importance that it plays in how people are treated with the context of American society. Dawson (1994) notes that “as long as race remains dominant in determining the lives of individual Blacks, it is ‘rational’ for African Americans to follow group cues in interpreting and acting in the political world” (Dawson 1994, 57-58). Thus, the more recent research by Gurin et al. (1989) and Dawson (1994) supports Verba and Nie’s (1972) original finding that African Americans group consciousness enhances electoral participation.

More recently, Price and Hampton (2010) illustrate in their discussion of the African American community’s response and reaction to Hurricane Katrina the connections that bind the African American community. What they find is that events such as Hurricane Katrina show how African American attitudes surrounding the events remain consistent as a group, even across economic classes; African Americans saw their fate of this crisis as linked to that of other African Americans.

Group-Based Attitudes: Political Efficacy

Political efficacy has long been recognized by political scientists as a psychological resource that promotes participation in the political process. Scholars have noted that people participate in politics when they feel they can make a difference (Miller and Shanks 1996; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba and Nie 1972). Most of the existing literature on political efficacy is limited to its treatment as a personal or self-judgment. However, Koch (1995) posits that “citizens make assessments of how much political influence they believe various groups in the American political system are able to exercise, and with these assessments, make inferences about their own subjective political competence” (Koch 1995, 88). Koch also found that individuals were more likely to work to provide benefits for groups to which they felt the closest. Thus, Koch made the argument that reference groups can play an important role in creating feelings of efficacy.

Grafstein’s (1991) findings are similar. He notes that individuals in the electorate do not act on an individual basis; they act as members of a group because they know that the group’s actions may bring about change while individual efforts probably will not. He posits that actors, regardless of other factors, will attempt to “supply themselves with a public good” (Grafstein 1991, 1004). Moreover, in times of decision making or crisis, a sense of “the things that people have in common become most salient” (Grafstein 1991, 1004), leading to group efficacy.

Because of the discrimination against African Americans throughout American history a sense of group efficacy should be a particularly important determinant of their electoral participation. Gurin et al. (1989) suggest that this feeling of group efficacy among African Americans can be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Then in 1984, a heightened sense of group efficacy was spread throughout the African American community due to Jesse Jackson’s candidacy for the Democratic Party

nomination. While this sense of group efficacy did decline after the election, it did not disappear. Gurin et al. (1989) conclude that African Americans have learned the effectiveness of participating as a group.

The institutions above are external mobilizers. There are also internal motivating factors related to voter turnout. As previously mentioned, several studies have shown the importance that African Americans group-based attitudes (linked fate and group efficacy in particular) have on African American political participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Shingles 1981; Gurin et al. 1989; Dawson 1994; Koch 1995). According to Verba and Nie “Black Americans have, in group consciousness, a great resource for political involvement” (Verba and Nie 1972, 173). Therefore, it is important that these measures be included in any research on African American voter turnout.

The literature on party contacting and politicized churches suggests that party contacting and politicized churches can be important factors in stimulating overall political participation. This paper examines the direct effects of party contacting, politicized churches and African Americans group-based attitudes on the voter turnout of African Americans.

Standard Predictors of Voter Turnout

According to Verba and Nie (1972) while the SES model is commonly used to help explain voter participation behavior, we need to investigate other resources and go beyond the SES model. Most scholars agree that, more educated, older, higher income individuals are more likely to vote, yet the literature on the impact of gender and the likelihood to vote is mixed. Scholars tend to associate this willingness to participate with the idea that these individuals are more informed about politics and feel more efficacious toward government.

Standard Predictors of Voter Turnout: Education and Income

Prior research has shown that the control variables education, income and age all have an impact on the political participation as well as on the group based attitudes of African Americans (Verba and Nie 1972; Gurin et al. 1989; Tate 1991 and 1993; Dawson 1994). Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) found that education was the most important factor contributing to voter turnout. They asserted that education has more effect on turnout than income because it plays the role of facilitator in voting. This is because education provides people with the skills and ability to pay attention to and participate in politics. However, Tate (1993) found that education was not directly associated with electoral participation for African Americans. She notes that it was indirectly associated due to political orientation. She observes that in the absence of attitudinal measures that education is significantly related to African American voter turnout. Verba and Nie (1972) note that resources are important because they provide (1) the skills to be active, (2) the disposable income to contribute to candidates or parties, (3) the social contacts, and (4) the time to participate. Also explored in the literature is the impact that human capital, defined by Becker (1993) as an individual’s educational level, has on their voting behavior. Exploring the role that human capital has on an individual’s voting behavior, Liu et al. (2009) assert that individuals with higher levels of human capital vote more than others.

Standard Predictors of Voter Turnout: Age

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) attribute some of the decline in African Americans voter turnout, to the growing proportion of young African Americans as compared to older

African Americans in the population. They assert that as individuals' age the cost of voting diminishes because they are not as mobile or resource deficit as younger individuals. Flanigan and Zingale (1994) further this argument by saying that much of the difference between younger and older individuals participation is due to younger people being less settled because of college and geographic mobility. Additionally, Tate (1993) noted that electoral participation increases with age and tends to drop off among the elderly.

Standard Predictors of Voter Turnout: Gender

Previous research on gender and turnout among African Americans has mixed findings. Some scholars posit that African American women participate and vote at higher rates than men (Shingles 1981; Verba and Nie 1972). However, Tate (1993) found that there is no significant difference in actual voter participation of African American women and men. However, she points out that "Black women tend to be more politically engaged than Black men" (Tate 1993, 86).

Hypotheses

Based upon the extant literature on voter participation the following hypotheses are proposed and explored in this research. The first hypothesis is based upon the importance of the church in the lives of many African Americans and their loyalty to the Democratic Party as explored by Verba and Nie 1972; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie 1994; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Harris 1999; Wielhouwer 2000.

H1: There is a positive and direct relationship between party contact and African American voter turnout.

H2: There is a positive and direct relationship between politicized churches and African American voter turnout.

H3: There is a positive and significant relationship between Linked fate and higher turnout rates for African Americans, even when controlling for party contact and politicized church.

H4: There is a positive and significant relationship between African Americans group efficacy and higher turnout rates for African Americans, even when controlling for party contact and politicized church.

Data Source and Methodology

Employed in this study is data from the 1996 National Blacks Election Study (NBES). It consists of a pre-election and post-election survey in which 1,216 respondents were interviewed before the election and 854 respondents were re-interviewed following the election.

The National Black Election Study (NBES) is one way in which scholars have overcome limitations in researching African Americans. The NBES is a telephone survey that focuses on African Americans political attitudes and participation. It consists of a broad range of questions structured to obtain demographic characteristics as well as measures of other important politically significant issues to African Americans. However, we are interested in the NBES principally for two reasons. First, because it provides us with a larger number of African American respondents than do other surveys like the National Election Studies or the General Social Surveys. Second, because it provides us with adequate measures of concepts like group consciousness, psychological engagement and mobilization variables that are associated with turnout.

The models used to analyze African American voter turnout will be estimated using

logistic regression. This is because the dependent variable is dichotomous, thus, requiring a statistical technique like logistic regression to provide a dependable measure of African American voter turnout. The dependent variable will be labeled 0 for people who did not vote in the 1996 general election and 1 for those who did vote.

Logistic regression coefficients are much harder to interpret than are ordinary least squared regression coefficients because they are not linear. This is because logistic regression coefficients indicate the amount of change on the cumulative normal probability distribution that results from a unit change in the independent variable. Therefore, in order to make interpretation of the coefficients easier we have converted the significant coefficients to probabilities. We will report the lowest value and highest values within the text of the paper (Aldrich and Nelson 1984).

Analysis of the Results

The logistic regression estimates are presented below in Table 1 for the voter turnout model. The findings confirm the first and second hypotheses outlined in this research, which state that direct positive relationships will exist between party contact, politicized church and voter turnout. Party contact is significant at the .05 level, while politicized church is significant at the .001 level. However, the third hypothesis on African Americans group-based attitudes is only partially upheld because only African Americans group efficacy attains significance in the model. The model predicted 80.3 percent of the cases correctly with a proportional reduction in error of 0.165.

Table 1. Logistic Regression Model Voter Turnout

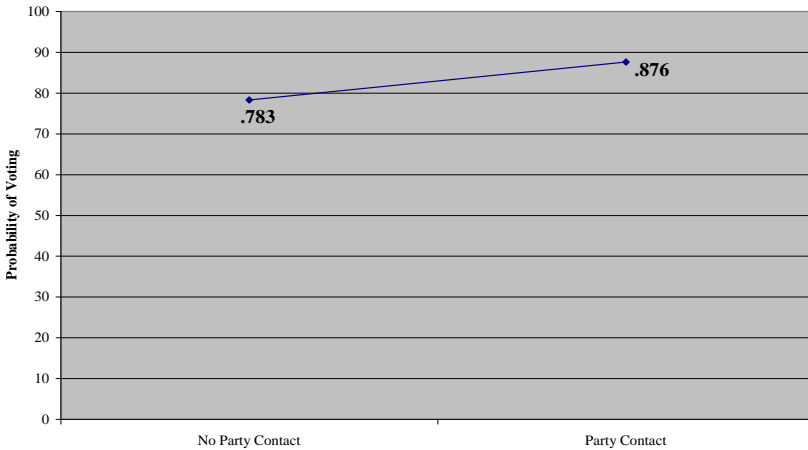
Independent Variables	Coefficient	Sig
Party Contact	.672*	.018
Politicized Church	.817***	.001
African-American Group Efficacy	1.124*	.018
Linked Fate	.095	.697
Controls:		
Education	.388***	.000
Age	.385***	.000
Gender	.356	.099
Family Income	.047	.292
Constant	-3.54	.000

Chi Square = 110.821 (p=000) ***p< .001, **p< .01, *p< .05 N= 641
 % predicted correctly = 80.3 -2 Log likelihood = 572.138
 Proportional Reduction in Error = 0.165

Given the difficulty of interpreting logistic regression coefficients, the best way to determine the substantive impact of the mobilizing variables is by computing predicted probabilities. Figure 1 displays the predicted probabilities of voting for those not contacted by a party compared to those contacted by a party. Controlling for the other variables by holding them at their means, party contact increases the likelihood of voting by about 9.3 percentage points (0.876-0.783). This finding reinforces the previous literature, which posits that party contacting enhances the voter turnout of African Americans (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wielhouwer 2000).

Figure 1

Predicted Probabilities of Voting by Party Contact



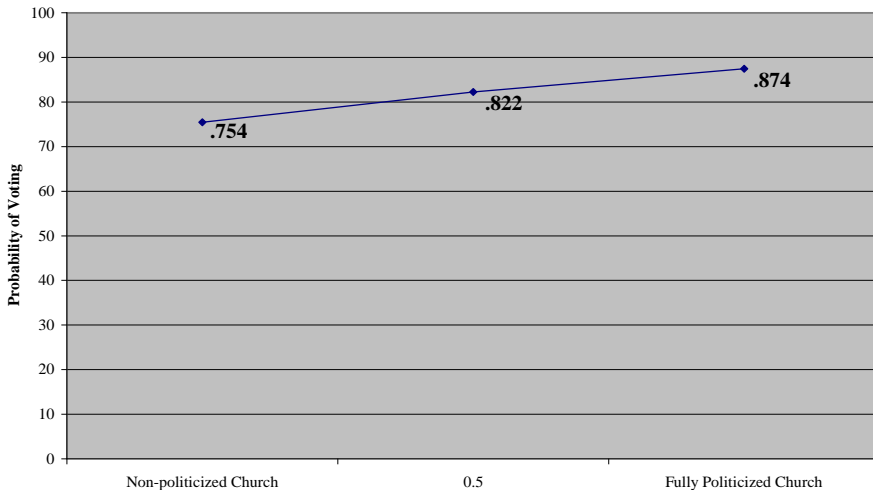
Difference = 0.093

Figure 2 displays the predicted probabilities of voting for the three levels of politicized church. The results show an increase of 12 percentage points (0.874-0.754) in the probability of voting between an individual who receives no politicized messages at church and those who indicated that they receive politicizing messages in church.

The politicizing messages were based on questions asking if they had heard any political announcements in church and if anyone had encouraged them to participate politically in church. Therefore, attending a politicized church enhances the likelihood that individuals will vote.

Figure 2

Predicted Probabilities of Voting by Politicized Church

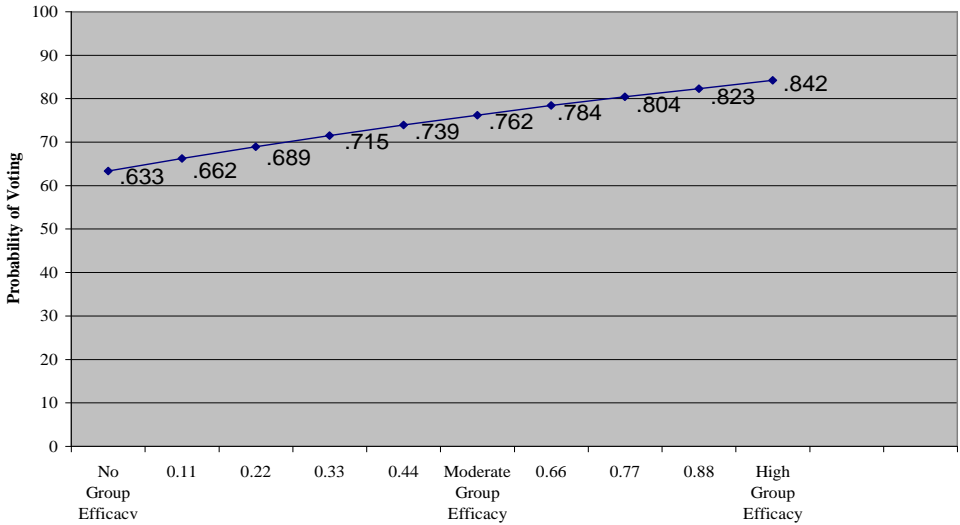


Difference = 0.120

Turning to the effects of African American group based attitudes on turnout, it appears that linked fate is not a significant predictor (Table 1). However, African Americans group efficacy was significant at the .05 level. Figure 3 displays the predicted probabilities of voting for the various levels of African Americans group efficacy. It shows that a change from no group efficacy to the highest level of group efficacy increases the likelihood of voting by 20.9 percentage points (84.2-63.3), indicating a substantial impact on the voter turnout of African Americans. This finding provides us with additional evidence that group based heuristic approaches are important in studying the political behavior of African Americans.

Figure 3

Predicted Probabilities of Voting by Black Group Efficacy

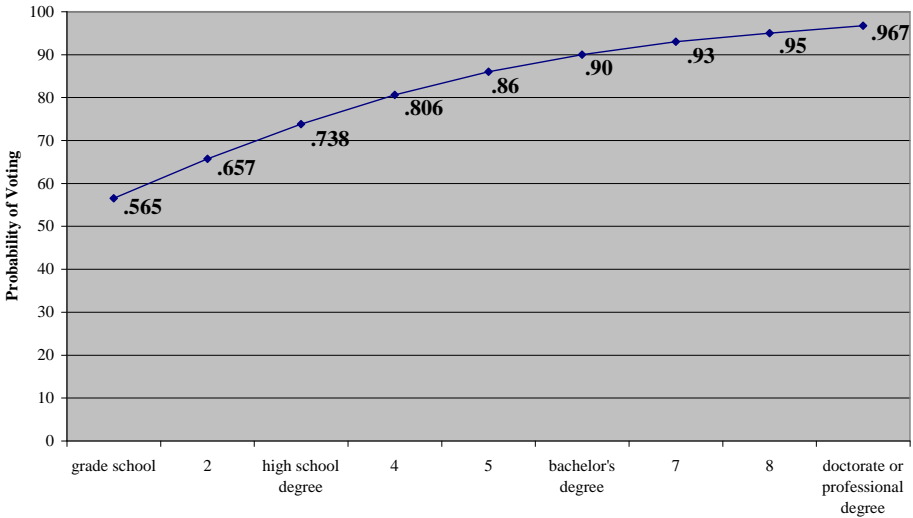


Difference = 0.209

Predictably, education also affects turnout. Figure 4 displays the predicted probabilities for voting at various educational levels while holding all other variables at their means. The predicted probabilities show that going from a grade school education to a professional or doctorate degree increases the likelihood of voting by 40.2 percentage points (96.7 - 56.5). The greatest increases in turnout occur in the earlier stages of education. For instance, between grade school and high school graduates, there is about a 17 percentage point difference in probability of voting as well as approximately a 16 percentage point difference between a person with a high school degree and a baccalaureate degree. The substantive increases become smaller for levels of education higher than a baccalaureate degree. This suggests that while people with higher educations are most likely to vote across the board, perhaps the earlier stages of education are most influential.

Figure 4

Predicted Probabilities of Voting by Education

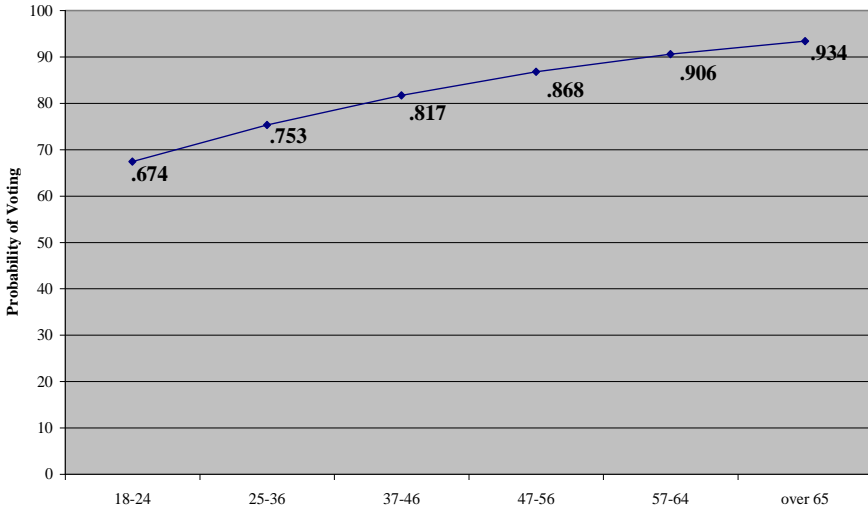


Difference = 0.402

Age is significant at the .001 level and a graph of the predicted probabilities can be found in Figure 5. The results are consistent with the findings of other scholars about age in that they suggest that older African Americans are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts. The predicted probabilities indicate that holding all other variables at their means, the youngest African Americans, those between the age of 18 and 24 are 26 percentage points less likely to vote than the oldest category of African Americans, those that are 65 or older. Thus, these findings reinforce the findings of earlier work done on age differences in turnout among African Americans; older African Americans are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts (Gurin et al. 1989; Walton 1985).

Figure 5

Predicted Probabilities of Voting by Age



Difference = 0.260

Discussion and Implications of the Findings

This research explored the factors that impact the voting behavior of African Americans. The findings from the voter turnout model presented in Table 1 lend support to the participation literature in that both mobilization variables (politicized church and party contacting), positively impact voter turnout among African Americans. Further, African Americans group efficacy also exerts significant influence on voter turnout. This is important because other scholars have posited that group based efficacy existed, but little empirical work has been done to confirm that African Americans group-based efficacy actually influences voting (Koch 1995; Gurin et al. 1989; Grafstein 1991).

Further, this research provides evidence for the first time that both politicized church and party contacting can attain statistical significance within the confines of the same model. Party contacting and politicized church both exert independent and separate effects on voter turnout. Moreover, African Americans group efficacy affects turnout above and beyond the mobilizers. These three variables all have independent effects on the dependent variable even when controlling for the classic demographic predictors like income, age and education.

Historically, the African American church has been thought to play a crucial role in mobilizing African Americans and this research supports those findings. In sum, the tangible and intangible resources that both politicized churches and group efficacy provide for African Americans do not necessarily act in the same manner to enhance Caucasian political participation. Our findings suggest that while voter turnout for African Americans conforms to a certain degree with the larger Caucasian society there are other ways that it is dynamically different. These differences in many ways are centered on the role of group-based attitudes and politicized churches which has a historical link for African Americans going back to slavery. Thus, the historical role that the church has played as an organizer for

African American social justice and political equality seems to be alive and well in this new era of politics. The importance of these differences should not be overlooked especially in light of the election of Barack Obama as President and his subsequent reelection.

APPENDIX 1

Measures and Distributions

This appendix provides the wording of the questions used to measure the independent and dependent variables in this research. All additive scales are rescaled from 0 to 1 to ease the interpretation. Further, all “don’t know” and “refused” responses have been coded as missing.

Politicized Church: An additive index

1. “Have you heard any announcements or talks about the presidential campaign at your church or place of worship so far this year,” (no/yes).
2. “Has your church or place of worship encouraged members to vote in this election,” (no/yes).
Cronbach’s Alpha = .59

Party Contact

“As you know, the political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate. Did anyone from one of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year?”

Linked Fate: An additive index

1. “Do you think generally what happens in this country to African American men will have something to do with what happens in your life?” (no/yes)
2. “Do you think generally what happens in this country to African American women will have something to do with what happens in your life?” (no/yes)
Cronbach’s Alpha = .77

African Americans Group Efficacy: An additive index

1. “If African Americans vote, they can make a difference in who gets elected president,” coded as 1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly.
2. “If African Americans, other minorities, the poor, and women pulled together, they could decide how this country is run,” coded as 1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly.
3. “African American people can make a difference in who gets elected to Congress,” coded as 1 = disagree strongly to 4 = agree strongly.
Cronbach’s Alpha = .63

Income

Which of the following income groups includes the income of all members of your family living here in 1995 before taxes? This figure should include salaries, wages, pensions, dividends, interest, and all other income.

Categories:	1 (\$9,999 and less)	7 (\$40-49,999)
	2 (\$10-14,999)	8 (\$50-74,999)
	3 (\$15-19,999)	9 (\$75-89,999)
	4 (\$20-24,999)	10 (\$90-104,999)
	5 (\$25-29,999)	11 (\$105 and above)
	6 (\$30-39,999) = 14.5%	

Gender

By observation

0 (male)

1 (female)

Age

Categories:

18-24 = 1 47-56 = 4

25-36 = 2 57-64 = 5

37-46 = 3 65 and older = 6

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