

The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation

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The election of African Americans to Congress is a primary achievement of the post-civil rights transition from protest to politics. I evaluate the link between black congressional representation and political engagement, as measured by voting participation. There are two related objectives: Construct a broader model of participation that takes into account a key component of the political environment since the civil rights era, and more fully appreciate the political significance of minority officeholding by considering its nonpolicy consequences. Using precinct data from eight midterm elections, I demonstrate that the election of blacks to Congress negatively affects white political involvement and only rarely increases political engagement among African Americans.

Facilitated by the creation of majority-minority districts under the Voting Rights Act, a political world of white lawmakers and black activists has given way to one in which black legislators figure prominently. Voting rights advocates have long expected minority officeholding to usher a small-scale revolution in electoral politics: Black congressional representation will lead not only to more progressive legislation but also to greater appreciation by African Americans of the instrumental value of political participation. At the core of these expectations is the presumption that political interest and engagement are as much a response to the political environment and the opportunities it is perceived to present as they are a function of individual resources, such as education. Black congressional representation, by contributing to new political optimism, could prime the pump of minority voter participation and pull the black community into the political process.

The presumed link between black congressional officeholding and political engagement has not been examined directly by either political scientists who study participation or those concerned with minority representation. The latter emphasize legislative activism over political behavior, and the former are slow to recognize minority officeholding as a salient external stimulus. In the absence of rigorous analysis, political observers are left to speculate about the participation effects. On the basis of low aggregate turnout rates in districts represented by black members of Congress, many conclude that black officeholding has failed to make voters out of unengaged minority Americans and may even depress turnout among these constituents (Donovan 1992; Duncan 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Swain 1995). Morris (1992, 169, 172) dismisses the strategy of political office seeking as a “myopic quest” and argues that minority officeholding often degenerates into a “ritual of process” that fails to build interest, knowledge, or a sense of efficacy among blacks. The anecdotal evidence is not encouraging, but more systematic analysis is required. The social and economic dislocation common to many of the congressional districts represented by blacks may be a factor in the low turnout observed in these areas; the conventional wisdom about black officeholding fails to take this into account.

I will evaluate the link between blacks in Congress and political engagement, as measured by voting participation. There are two related objectives: Construct a broader model of participation that takes into account a key component of the political environment since the 1960s and more fully appreciate the political significance of minority officeholding by considering its nonpolicy consequences. The analysis will consider separately the political behavior of African Americans and whites, who often account for as much as 40% of the constituents represented by black House members. Using precinct data from midterm elections in eight states, I will estimate race-specific turnout rates and test a model that explains the variation in rates (across precincts) as a function of black officeholding, controlling for differences in socioeconomic resources and electoral competitiveness.

I will demonstrate that the election of African Americans to Congress is accompanied by a lower level of political engagement among whites and only rarely contributes to greater political involvement among black constituents. Indeed, observers have misread the anecdotal evidence. The low turnout characteristic of districts with a black representative and uniformly attributed to African American constituents must be disaggregated. In reality, political participation among blacks is generally consistent with (and occasionally higher than) what one would expect for African Americans who have limited resources and reside in districts with limited competition, and it is lower than what one would expect among whites.

After a brief review of the context for this research, I will discuss the data, explain the ecological inference and causal models applied, and outline the primary hypotheses. The subsequent analysis finds support for the hypothesis that black congressional representation affects the level of participation among whites and African Americans. I then will examine the empirical results and alternative explanations for the political behavior observed. The article concludes with some

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The author thanks Chris Afendulis, Mike Alvarez, Zoltan Hajnal, Gary King, Jeffrey Lewis, Katherine Tate, Sid Verba, and the anonymous *APSR* referees for comments and assistance on earlier drafts. The author is also grateful to the National Committee for an Effective Congress for access to its electoral data.

thoughts on the implications of this research for the literature on participation and racial representation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social scientists have devoted decades of research to identifying the factors that influence an individual's decision to participate in the political process (e.g., Conway 1991; Teixeira 1987; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). To a great extent, whether concerned exclusively with voting or with participation more generally, this research emphasizes the primacy of individual resources: age, education, and income. Some believe this traditional model falls short and introduce such variables as racial group consciousness to complement the baseline model and reinforce the focus on the individual (Conover 1984; Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981). These scholars argue, in effect, that the decision to participate is primarily an internal process, a function of ability, knowledge, and interest, and is largely unresponsive to social and political cues.

In the last ten years, a body of literature has emerged that recasts the participation issue, moving beyond the dominant socioeconomic framework to consider the role of political context in shaping individual political behavior (e.g., Leighley 1995; Mitchell and Wlezien 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Tate 1991, 1994). The aim is to reconstruct a compelling account of political life by recognizing that political choices are contingent on the surrounding environment, that is, reflect its constraints and opportunities (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1993). Rather than abstract individuals from time, place, and setting in an effort to make sense of their politics, contextual models argue for the necessity of multiple levels of analysis: In order to understand how people behave, we must understand where they live. In practice, the constraints and opportunities are as varied as registration laws that depress political participation (e.g., Nagler 1991; Timpone 1998), court rulings (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education*), political campaigns (e.g., Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988) that inspire activism (McAdams 1982; Tate 1991), public policy reforms (e.g., more restrictive welfare provisions) that spur record rates of naturalization (Shaw, de la Garza, and Lee 2000), or economic heterogeneity that stimulates local political interest (Oliver 1999). As Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, 5) conclude, to understand electoral behavior we need to place individuals in society and identify the "aspects of political life that make people accessible and amenable to the appeals of political leaders."

Adopting the logic of this systemic perspective (Barker 1994), some scholars have asked whether local changes in the political status of African Americans affect political engagement (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Gilliam 1996; Gilliam and Kaufmann 1998; Kaufmann 1999). In the most complete research to date, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) find that African Americans in areas of high black empowerment—as indicated by control of the mayor's office—are more active than either African Americans in low empowerment areas

or whites of comparable socioeconomic status. Empowerment, they conclude, influences black participation by contributing to a more trusting and efficacious orientation toward politics (see also Abney and Hutcheson 1981; Howell and Fagan 1988) and by greatly increasing black attentiveness to political affairs. As for whites, the findings suggest that they pay less attention to local politics when blacks control local offices but do not become generally less trusting and efficacious as a result. In later research (Gilliam 1996) these conclusions are refined: The influence of minority officeholding on white political behavior is contingent on ideological compatibility. That is, white residents who might be considered members of the governing coalition (liberal Democrats in a city with a black Democratic mayor) remain engaged, but members of the outgroup retreat to the political margins.

Despite the mounting evidence of a relationship between minority officeholding and political behavior, the study of participation effects has not made significant inroads into the scholarship on black congressional representation. (Also, minority empowerment scholars have not extended their research to include black members of Congress, arguably the most prominent class of black officeholders). To date, analytical efforts have focused on the policy consequences of minority representation in Congress (Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Canon 1999; Hutchings, McClerking, and Charles 1999; Lublin 1997; Swain 1995; Whitby 1998). From this perspective, black electoral success is significant only insofar as it serves as a unique guarantor of continued influence on the legislative process.

Two studies depart from the legislative bias manifest in much of the research on black members of Congress. Analyzing data from the 1996 congressional elections in Georgia (Bositis 1998; Voss and Lublin 2001) and Florida (Voss and Lublin 2001), the authors find evidence of black mobilization in districts represented by African Americans. In addition, Bositis (1998) finds that white registered Democrats may choose not to participate rather than support a black Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger. Although these studies are a useful starting point, the exceptional circumstances surrounding the congressional elections in Georgia and Florida limit our ability to generalize from the findings. (The three African American incumbents were running for reelection in majority-white districts, following a court order that eliminated the majority-black districts from which they initially were elected.) The observed behavior may be an artifact of unique electoral conditions and a poor indicator of what to expect in a more typical scenario (i.e., a black incumbent running in the district from which elected originally). Furthermore, Voss and Lublin (2001) and Bositis (1998) do not consider factors, such as socioeconomic resources, that influence participation and distinguish the constituency of black representatives from other constituencies.

I will extend the approach developed in the minority empowerment literature to evaluate the relationship between black congressional representation and polit-

TABLE 1. Black Congressional Representatives in the Sample

| Election Year | State | District | Representative | District Type |
|---------------|--------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| November 1990 | Georgia | 5 | John Lewis | Newly black |
| | Michigan | 1 | John Conyers | Historically black |
| | | 13 | George Crockett | Historically black |
| | New Jersey | 10 | Donald Payne | Newly black |
| November 1994 | Pennsylvania | 2 | William Gray | Historically black |
| | Maryland | 4 | Albert Wynn | Newly black |
| | | 7 | Kweisi Mfume | Historically black |
| | Missouri | 1 | William Clay | Historically black |
| | | 5 | <i>Alan Wheat</i> | <i>Majority white</i> |
| | Tennessee | 9 | Harold Ford | Historically black |
| | Virginia | 3 | Robert Scott | Newly black |

Note: "Historically black" is defined (Swain 1995) as a majority-black congressional district with black representation in Congress for at least ten years. Alan Wheat, who served from 1982 to 1994, was the first and only black congressman to represent Missouri's majority-white Fifth District. He gave up his seat in 1994 to run for the Senate and will not be discussed in this analysis.

ical participation among whites and African Americans. I will use King's (1997) solution to the ecological inference problem to estimate race-specific turnout rates from aggregate data, and I will take into account the effect of socioeconomic resources and electoral conditions on voting participation.

THE DATA

This article uses turnout data from midterm elections in eight states: Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in November 1990; Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, and Virginia in November 1994.¹ Together these states have 102 congressional districts. Ten were represented by blacks at the time of the midterm election, as shown in Table 1. These members of Congress represent a diversity of political styles, experiences, and constituencies. The sample includes virtual newcomers (e.g., Donald Payne and John Lewis in 1990; Albert Wynn and Robert Scott in 1994) and veterans of elected office (e.g., John Conyers, Harold Ford, Bill Gray, George Crockett, Bill Clay); those who appealed to and enjoyed white support (e.g., Lewis, Payne, Gray, Mfume, Wynn, and Scott) and those who largely ignored the white constituency (Crockett, Conyers, Clay); majority-black districts with a long history

of black representation (e.g., Michigan's First) and two districts, Virginia's Third and Maryland's Fourth (the nation's largest black suburban community), newly created in the 1990 redistricting.

With the exception of George Crockett, all the black officeholders were running for reelection. Crockett announced his retirement in March 1990, and most of the activity for his seat, which represents downtown Detroit and Grosse Pointe, took place in the primary. Idelson (1990a, 3319), reporting for the *Congressional Quarterly*, noted in August 1990 that the race "crystallized early into a scramble to catch the front-runner [Barbara Rose] Collins," who had an immediate base from her strong 1988 House campaign (Idelson 1990a). City Councilwoman Collins, with the crucial support of Mayor Coleman Young, defeated a crowded field to enter the November election with virtually no competition, a position not unlike that enjoyed by strong incumbents nationwide (Idelson 1990b).

The data for each state are aggregated at the precinct level and consist of turnout results and Census demographics for every precinct in the state. (The data are not limited to the precincts represented by African Americans.) In total, there are more than 28,000 precinct observations. The primary turnout measure is total ballots cast as a proportion of the total voting age population in the precinct.² (Below, I will discuss how this aggregate figure is used to derive race-specific turnout rates.) In addition, the data include information about the race, party affiliation, and tenure of each precinct's congressional representative. Measures of electoral competitiveness are also included (from Barone and Ujifusa 1991, 1995; Duncan 1991, 1995).

The data on electoral participation and political

¹ Since 1990, congressional districts in 21 states have elected African Americans. The eight states covered in this analysis were selected with attention to two criteria: geographic diversity and variation in district type. Southern and border states account for slightly more than half of the 21 states that have elected blacks to Congress, with the remainder drawn equally from the Northeast and Midwest. The eight states analyzed here reflect that regional variation. The sample includes historically black and newly black congressional districts. This analysis borrows the terminology developed in Swain 1995 (p. 47), which defines historically black districts as those with a black voting age population of more than 50% that have had black representation in Congress for ten years or more. The sample also includes one majority-white district (Missouri's Fifth) represented by an African-American incumbent, Alan Wheat. Because Wheat did not run for reelection in 1994, he is not discussed here.

² For the 1990 elections, the turnout data were assembled by the author as part of the *Record of American Democracy Project* (King et al. 1997) at Harvard University. For 1994, the turnout data were provided by the National Committee for an Effective Congress, an organization that offers consulting services to political candidates.

context are supplemented by a number of demographic indicators that measure the social and economic conditions within each precinct. The demographic measures differ slightly by election year but are similar enough to be considered comparable. For November 1990, the Census data were extracted from the state's PL94-171 file, compiled by the Bureau of the Census (with the voluntary participation of the states) in preparation for the 1990 redistricting cycle, and from the state's STF3A file.³

PL94-171 files provide information on the racial composition of precincts but not detailed socioeconomic information, which is taken instead from the minor-civil division (MCD) in which each precinct is located. The loss of accuracy that results from the substitution of MCD data for precinct data is relatively minor, since in many cases MCDs consist of no more than a handful of precincts.⁴ The MCD surrogate allows for a sense of the socioeconomic context in which precinct residents live. The available MCD data are disaggregated by racial group, with separate socioeconomic indicators for whites and for blacks. From the MCD data I extract several measures. For each racial group, *Education* is measured as the proportion of residents (over age 25) in the MCD with at least some college education, including those who complete college and graduate work. *Per Capita Income* for whites and for blacks in the MCD is included. Finally, I use as a measure of homeownership the proportion of white and black households that are renter occupied (*Proportion Renters*).

As opposed to the 1990 data, which were assembled by the author, the November 1994 data were provided by the National Committee for an Effective Congress (NCEC). Rather than socioeconomic data at the MCD level, that information for 1994 was at the precinct level, based on the 1990 Census *but updated to reflect population changes as of 1995*. The one limitation is that the precinct information is not disaggregated by racial group. (The data do indicate the racial composition of each precinct.) Education for the 1994 election cycle is measured as the proportion of total precinct residents (over age 25) with at least some college education. Income is measured as median household income rather than per capita. Neighborhood stability is measured as the proportion of total precinct households that are renter occupied. Despite clear differences in the precise measures employed across these election years, there is no reason to believe that these should significantly alter the estimates of the primary relationship of interest—that between black representation and voting participation.

³ Each state's 1990 Summary Tape File 3A (STF3A) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990b) contains detailed population and housing characteristics collected by the Bureau of the Census using the long form, the extended questionnaire mailed to one in six American households. The Public Law 94-171 file (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990a) also contains data compiled as part of the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. The file contains only the selected decennial Census tabulations—race and Hispanic origin—that the Bureau of the Census is required by law to provide to the states by April 1 of the year following the census.

⁴ See Appendix A for summary statistics on the distribution of MCDs and precincts.

TABLE 2. The Ecological Inference Problem

| Race | Voting Decision | | Voting Age Population |
|-------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | Vote | No Vote | |
| Black | B_i^b | $1 - B_i^b$ | X_i |
| White | B_i^w | $1 - B_i^w$ | $1 - X_i$ |
| | T_i | $1 - T_i$ | |

Note: In precinct i , both X_i (proportion of the voting age population who are black) and T_i (proportion of the voting age population who vote) are observed. B_i^b (proportion of voting age blacks who vote) and B_i^w (proportion of voting age whites who vote) are unobserved and must be estimated.

THE MODEL

Two Stages of Analysis

Identifying the relationship between turnout and black congressional officeholding is a two-step process. The first stage applies a model of ecological inference to estimate the rates of white and black turnout for each precinct and congressional district in the sample. In the absence of individual-level data (e.g., survey data), these rates are calculated on the basis of aggregate statistics on the voting age population in each area. Table 2 illustrates what is involved in using these available aggregate statistics to infer back to the specific quantities of interest. In Table 2, X_i represents the proportion of the voting age population who are black, and T_i represents the proportion of the voting age population who turn out to vote in precinct i .⁵ The goal of the first stage is to use these marginals, the only observed data, to estimate the quantities within the body of the table that are not observed directly. Specifically, the quantities of interest are B_i^b , the proportion of voting age blacks who vote, and B_i^w , the proportion of voting age whites who vote.

In stage one, B_i^b and B_i^w (and accompanying standard errors) are calculated for each precinct in each state using the estimation procedure, *EI*, developed in King (1997).⁶ In order to control for electoral effects, the analysis first sorts the precincts by congressional district and then independently analyzes each of the 102 district groups.⁷ The ecological inference model applied here takes into account the multiple precinct- and MCD-level factors that may influence the (unobserved) precinct-level rates of black and white turnout. Namely, the model posits that B_i^b and B_i^w are each functions of four exogenous covariates: (median or per

⁵ Latinos are included in this analysis on the basis of their racial identification. See Appendix B for a discussion of implications.

⁶ This analysis employed EI: A Program for Ecological Inference, versions 1.62 and 1.63 (King 2000) available at <http://Gking.Harvard.Edu>. The programs were run in GAUSS 3.2 for Windows and GAUSS for Unix.

⁷ The reason for grouping the geographic units in this way is fairly straightforward. In estimating the parameters of interest in precinct i , King's (1997) method of ecological inference not only uses the aggregate statistics available for precinct i itself (i.e., X_i and T_i) but also "borrows" from the information available in the other precincts. If the estimates of precinct i are partially determined by the information in the rest of the data set, then that information should be made as relevant as possible. The more that all these precincts have in common, the more relevant their information will be to estimating the quantities of interest in any one precinct.

capita) income, homeownership, education, and black population density.⁸ The literature on participation has demonstrated the role of such factors in both motivating and enabling political participation.

These factors may be particularly important to understanding differences in voter turnout between districts with and without black representation, in light of the social and economic dislocation characteristic of many of the majority-minority districts that elect African Americans to the House.⁹ Furthermore, by explicitly modeling the dependence of B_i^b and B_i^w on these demographic and socioeconomic factors, the first-stage analysis sidesteps the well-documented problems (Cho 1998; Cho and Gaines 2001; Freedman et al. 1998; Freedman et al. 1999; Herron and Shotts 2000a) associated with the basic application of King's EI technique (i.e., the problematic assumption of no aggregation bias).¹⁰

There are two states for which precinct-level B_i^b and B_i^w estimates are generated using a pared down EI model: Michigan and Pennsylvania. All the precincts in Pennsylvania's First, Second, and Third congressional districts fall into a single MCD (Philadelphia), as do all the precincts in Michigan's First and Thirteenth (Detroit). Because of the resulting constancy in MCD-level covariates within each of these five district data sets, the EI model used to generate B_i^b and B_i^w estimates for the precincts in each data set could only include precinct-level black population density as a covariate. Although it is possible to apply the full model to precincts in every other district in these two states, in the interest of comparability, I extend the pared down specification to the analysis of all the districts in Pennsylvania and Michigan.¹¹

In the second stage of analysis, the precinct estimates of B_i^b and B_i^w are pooled across districts for each state and used as dependent variables in regressions that model black turnout and white turnout as functions of district-level political conditions—including black congressional representation and electoral com-

petitiveness.¹² This second stage regression uses Lewis's (2000) feasible generalized least-squares (FGLS) estimator.¹³ As does the more common variance-weighted least-squares approach, the estimator takes into account the uncertainty in the estimates of B_i^b and B_i^w . Lewis demonstrates, however, that FGLS also significantly improves on the inefficiency and overconfidence that can result from the weighted least-squares approach to models with estimated dependent variables.¹⁴

Hypotheses

I will examine two hypotheses about the relationship between black congressional representation and political participation. First, African Americans residing in areas represented by a black House member are more likely to go to the polls than are similar blacks in districts with a white incumbent. Second, white constituents in these same black-represented districts are less likely than their counterparts in white-represented districts to go to the polls.

In testing these hypotheses, I take into account elements of the electoral context that distinguish precincts and districts in ways relevant to participation.¹⁵ These elements are whether an *Incumbent* is running, how long s/he has been in office (*Tenure*), and the competitiveness of the House race (*Winning Vote Margin*). To the extent that black representation is correlated with these political factors, the variable serves as a proxy for both the racial and nonracial characteristics unique to these members of Congress. In particular, electoral competition is credited with boosting participation (Barker, Jones, and Tate 1999; Gilliam 1985). The lack of competition characteristic of politics in the congressional districts that most African Americans represent may itself be a major barrier to participation. Taking this factor into account allows us to evaluate whether political engagement is any higher or lower than what one would expect under a white representative in an equally uncompetitive district (e.g., in a district drawn to preserve partisan advantage).

⁸ Black population density (X_i) is included separately as an exogenous covariate, even though it primarily seems to affect turnout indirectly through the other three socioeconomic covariates. (That is, in ordinary least-squares regressions of T_i on X_i , including the other covariates often drives the coefficient on X_i to statistical insignificance.) There were enough cases, however, in which the relationship between turnout and black population density extended beyond these intervening variables to justify separate inclusion in the EI model.

⁹ Taking these factors into account in explaining the low turnout in congressional districts represented by blacks is a significant departure from previous academic research and journalistic inquiries (Bositis 1998; Donovan 1992; Duncan 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Voss and Lublin 2001).

¹⁰ See Appendix B for further discussion of this issue and details on EI model specification.

¹¹ For precincts in all the districts with variation in the MCD-level covariates (Pennsylvania Fourth through Twenty-third, Michigan Second through Twelfth and Fourteenth through Eighteenth), I tested the full array of seven models discussed in Appendix B. The correlations observed across these specifications were similar to those observed in other states. (The B_i^b estimates in Pennsylvania were generally more stable across specifications than the same estimates in Michigan.) The final EI model adopted for these two states includes only precinct-level black population density, dichotomized at the district median.

¹² In the case of Michigan and Pennsylvania, the MCD-level socioeconomic covariates—income, education, and homeownership—that could not be included in the first EI analysis were included as controls in the second-stage regressions.

¹³ The FGLS procedure is implemented in Stata 6.0 using program code written and generously provided by Jeff Lewis.

¹⁴ Lewis's (2000) FGLS estimator does not, however, correct for the statistical inconsistency identified by Herron and Shotts (2000b) in their critique of EI-based second-stage regressions. As a result of EI estimates that are themselves inconsistent, and measured with an error negatively correlated with the parameter's true value, Herron and Shotts argue that coefficient estimates in regressions that use EI estimates as dependent variables will have attenuation bias. In practical terms, the regression results presented in tables 3 and 4 may understate the effect of black representation on voting participation. Herron and Shotts outline a potential solution that may correct for the statistical inconsistency. At the time of this writing, that solution has not been sufficiently tested, and the tradeoffs involved in its implementation, such as the effect on variance, have not been fully enumerated.

¹⁵ Recall that, with the exception of Pennsylvania and Michigan, the socioeconomic influences on political participation are taken into account in the first-stage EI model.

RESULTS

In the first stage of the analysis, I used ecological inference to estimate white and black turnout rates for each of the precincts and congressional districts in the eight states covered. Figure 1 summarizes the (weighted) district-level estimates of black and white turnout, allowing for an initial look at the variation in behavior across political settings. Each plot has standard error bars, which capture the uncertainty in the district estimates. The horizontal bars measure uncertainty (± 1 standard error) in the black turnout estimates. The vertical bars measure uncertainty in the white turnout estimates. The overall pattern in the relative width and height of the error bars reflects the far greater certainty of estimates for white as compared to black turnout.

Because most congressional districts are dominated by precincts that are overwhelmingly white, the data typically contain more information on which to make inferences about white as compared to black voting behavior. For example, imagine a precinct that is 80% white and 20% African American. A 40% voting age turnout is consistent with a black turnout rate ranging from 0 to 100% but a range for whites between 25% and 50%. Thus, the data are sufficiently informative to produce narrow error bars around the white estimate but there is great uncertainty in the black estimate. The districts represented by black members of Congress—identified by name in each plot—are the exceptions, because they consist of precincts that are predominantly black. In these districts, the estimates of black turnout have the narrow error bars more characteristic of the white turnout figures elsewhere in the plots.

With the exception of Tennessee, participation in the November 1990 and 1994 midterm elections was generally low; it rarely exceeded 45% of the voting age population among either whites or blacks. In 75% of the House districts, African-American turnout ranged between 15% and 44%; it dipped below 15% in half a dozen cases. White turnout, more tightly clustered in the 20–40% range, never fell below 17% of age-eligible adults. Within states, African-American turnout tended to be considerably more variable across districts than was white turnout. The white participation gap between the lowest and highest turnout districts in a state never exceeded 15–20 percentage points, whereas the gap among black voters was never less than 35 percentage points.¹⁶

In slightly more than half the congressional districts, white adults of voting age participated at higher rates than did African Americans in the same district. Black turnout in many of these districts trailed white turnout by more than 10 percentage points. (In Missouri, there were two cases in which white turnout exceeded black turnout by more than 25 percentage points.)¹⁷ Yet, there were a number of districts (46) in which African Americans participated more than whites. Most of the participation gaps were relatively small (e.g., more than half were less than 10 points), but in Georgia's Tenth

the gap reached 29 percentage points. New Jersey is the one state in which voting participation rates among blacks and whites were roughly comparable (within 3 percentage points) in most districts.

Tennessee, by far, had the highest turnout rates for both whites and African Americans. In the majority of districts, well more than 50% of voting age blacks cast ballots. In the Ninth, represented by ten-term black Democrat Harold Ford, African-American turnout was highest (77%). White participation was similarly high throughout the state, ranging from 51% to 69%. In three cases, including Ford's district, white turnout trailed black turnout by about 10 points.

The pattern observed in Ford's Memphis district was similar to the dynamics witnessed in two other districts represented by black members of Congress. In Pennsylvania's Second (represented by Bill Gray) and Michigan's First (represented by John Conyers), black turnout exceeded white turnout by 6 and 4 percentage points, respectively. Among the remaining seven congressional districts represented by blacks, African-American turnout was either comparable to (Virginia's Third) or slightly trailed white turnout. Aside from Tennessee, white participation was often at its lowest in districts represented by blacks. For example, in New Jersey, where white voters turned out at rates as high as 33%, in Newark only 18% of whites went to the polls.

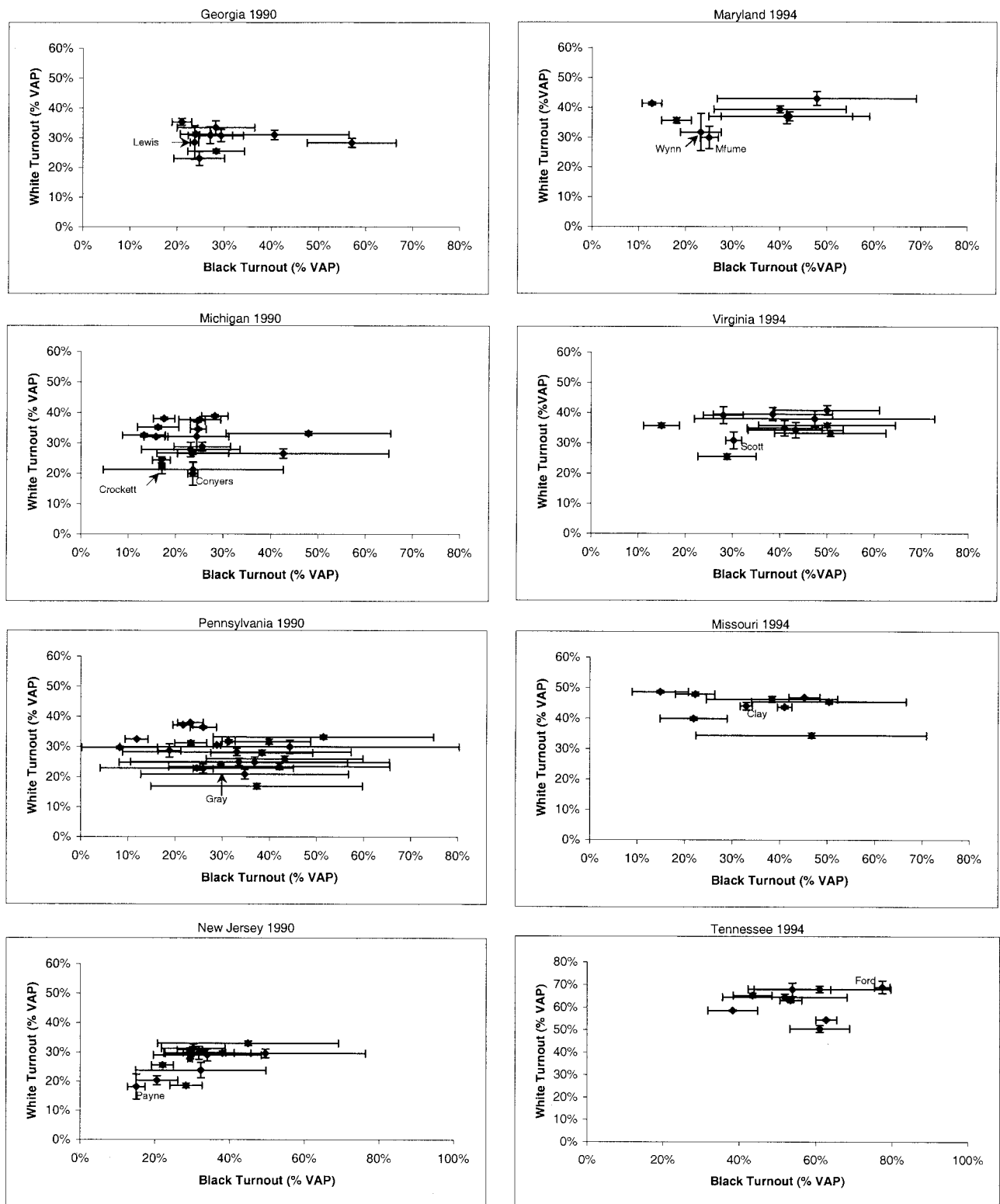
Even at the aggregate level, taking only socioeconomic covariates into account, there is some evidence that political behavior may differ under black representation. The patterns in Figure 1 most strongly hint at demobilization among white constituents and show only limited signs of higher turnout among African Americans. As noted earlier, however, the districts and precincts represented by black members of Congress typically face electoral conditions, such as less competition, that distinguish them from other areas in the state in ways relevant to participation. In order to isolate voting behavior unique to precincts with black representation, these areas must be evaluated in light of the patterns observed among other constituents under comparable political conditions. The multivariate analyses presented in tables 3 and 4 disentangle race from other aspects of the political environment, which allows a fuller appreciation of the political salience of black representation.

Table 3 summarizes the results of multivariate models that predict white turnout. Each model has controls for party affiliation, tenure, incumbency, and electoral competitiveness. In addition, the models for Pennsylvania and Michigan include the MCD-level socioeconomic covariates that could not be incorporated in the first-stage EI model due to constancy in the values of the covariates in several districts. The results are consistent with what was observed at the aggregate level. With only two exceptions, white turnout rates in precincts represented by black members of Congress trailed those observed in precincts represented by other (white) Democratic incumbents who faced limited electoral competition. The difference between the number of eligible voters who went to the polls in precincts represented by black as compared to white

¹⁶ This is calculated on the basis of the point estimates. The gaps are even wider when uncertainty is factored in.

¹⁷ In the aftermath of the 1994 midterms, many commentators cited this participation gap between whites and blacks as critical to the success of the Republican sweep.

FIGURE 1. Estimated Congressional District Turnout, November 1990 and November 1994



Note: These panels capture the weighted district-level estimates of white and black turnout rates. The error bars measure the range of values within one standard error of the point estimates. Vertical bars capture uncertainty in the white turnout estimates. Horizontal bars capture uncertainty in the black turnout estimates. The estimates are generated using King's (1999, 2000) *EI* software from an ecological inference model that controls for all precinct-level and MCD-level covariates (black population density, income, homeownership, education). (Michigan and Pennsylvania are exceptions. Due to constancy in MCD-level socioeconomic covariates for PA-1, PA-2, PA-3, and MI-1, MI-13, the models control only for precinct-level black population density.) Districts represented by black members of Congress are identified by name.

TABLE 3. Predicting White Turnout in 1990 and 1994 Midterm Elections

| Independent Variables | Turnout 1990 | | | | Turnout 1994 | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Georgia | Michigan | New Jersey | Penn. | Missouri | Tennessee | Virginia | Maryland |
| Constant | .389 (.040)*** | .844 (.109)*** | .314 (.018)*** | .347 (.115)** | .351 (.053)*** | .871 (.045)*** | .520 (.058)*** | .240 (.081)** |
| Black Representatives | | | | | | | | |
| John Lewis | -.115 (.050)* | | | | | | | |
| George Crockett | | -.056 (.017)*** | | | | | | |
| John Conyers | | -.072 (.015)*** | | | | | | |
| Donald Payne | | | -.183 (.019)*** | | | | | |
| Bill Gray | | | | -.152 (.009)*** | | | | |
| Bill Clay | | | | | -.168 (.015)*** | | | |
| Harold Ford | | | | | | .073 (.021)*** | | |
| Robert Scott | | | | | | | -.045 (.018)* | |
| Kweisi Mfume | | | | | | | | -.046 (.023)* |
| Albert Wynn | | | | | | | | .071 (.440) |
| SES Conditions^a | | | | | | | | |
| Per capita income | | -.052 (.012)*** | | -.015 (.012) | | | | |
| Proportion renters | | -.340 (.019)*** | | -.053 (.016)** | | | | |
| Education | | .303 (.026)*** | | .014 (.025) | | | | |
| Electoral Conditions | | | | | | | | |
| Incumbent candidate | | -.013 (.008) | .038 (.008)*** | | .047 (.018)** | .042 (.014)** | | -.166 (.011)*** |
| Party of incumbent | -.044 (.021)* | -.017 (.005)*** | -.036 (.004)*** | .061 (.004)*** | .004 (.012) | -.016 (.015) | -.015 (.020) | -.322 (.015)*** |
| Tenure × incumbent | -.013 (.003)*** | -.001 (.000)*** | -.011 (.001)*** | .012 (.001)*** | .001 (.002) | -.004 (.001)*** | .008 (.002)*** | .068 (.004)*** |
| Winning vote margin | .061 (.069) | .025 (.021) | .113 (.027)*** | .015 (.012) | .174 (.086)* | -.349 (.063)*** | -.227 (.062)*** | .428 (.128)*** |
| Number of cases | 715 | 4,462 | 5,283 | 8,372 | 2,827 | 2,254 | 2,022 | 1,553 |
| Std. error of regression | .13 | .13 | .13 | .16 | .19 | .19 | .16 | .11 |

Note: Table presents FGLS coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The dependent variable is scaled from 0 to 1, measuring white turnout as a proportion of the total white voting age population. Turnout estimates are generated using King's (1999a, 2000) EI software. "Incumbent" equals 0 for open-seat races; 1 if the House incumbent runs for reelection. There were no open seat races in Georgia 1990, Pennsylvania 1990, Virginia 1994. Party is coded 0 (Republican) or 1 (Democrat) for the party affiliation of the House incumbent. "Winning Vote Margin" is scaled from 0 to 1. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

^aFor all states except Pennsylvania and Michigan, all precinct- and MCD-level covariates (black population density, income, homeownership, education) are included in first-stage EI model. For Pennsylvania and Michigan, only precinct-level black population density can be included in first stage EI model. "Per Capita Income" is measured as the log of white per capita income. "Proportion Renters" is scaled from 0 to 1 for the proportion of white households that are renter occupied. "Education" is scaled from 0 to 1 for the proportion of whites over age 25 with at least some college education.

representatives ranged from as little as 4.5 (± 1.8) percentage points in Virginia (Robert Scott) to 18.3 (± 1.9) points in New Jersey (Donald Payne). The white constituents of Grosse Pointe and Grosse Pointe Park, the wealthy enclaves in the far eastern corner of Crockett's Thirteenth, turned out at a rate 5.6 (± 1.7) percentage points below that of their counterparts in similar areas elsewhere in Michigan represented by white legislators. In John Conyers's neighboring district, where the white population consists primarily of middle-class ethnics in the northeastern and southwestern corners of Detroit, white turnout in 1990 was 7.2 (± 1.5) percentage points lower than what one would have expected. In states such as Georgia and Missouri, where summary statistics suggest that white constituents of black House members should behave no differently from their counterparts elsewhere in the state (recall Figure 1), turnout lagged by 11.5 (± 5.0) and 16.8 (± 1.5) points, respectively.

Whether the incumbent is fairly new to the political stage or has more than a decade of service, white electoral participation is lower when the congressional representative is black. Even in Philadelphia, twelve years into the tenure of a man whose moderate style actively deemphasized race and racial issues, white constituents showed political reticence. This reticence is substantively significant when one considers the generally low level of participation characteristic of midterm elections, when rates rarely top 45%. In that context, the 4.6 (± 2.3) point lag among Kweisi Mfume's white Baltimore constituents is noteworthy.

In two instances, white constituents departed from the norm of political disengagement. In Maryland, Albert Wynn, a young black congressman who—like many of his political generation—adopted a biracial approach to representing his newly created majority-black district, made his first bid for reelection in 1994. Wynn's white constituents, concentrated in the middle

TABLE 4. Predicting Black Turnout in 1990 and 1994 Midterm Elections

| Independent Variables | Turnout 1990 | | | | Turnout 1994 | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Georgia | Michigan | New Jersey | Penn. | Missouri | Tennessee | Virginia | Maryland |
| Constant | .719 (.071)*** | .328 (.317) | .339 (.029)*** | 1.55 (.295)*** | 1.28 (.681) | .688 (.362) | 1.53 (.420)*** | -.826 (.516) |
| Black Representatives | | | | | | | | |
| John Lewis | .104 (.022)*** | | | | | | | |
| George Crockett | | -.216 (.176) | | | | | | |
| John Conyers | | -.012 (.021) | | | | | | |
| Donald Payne | | | .007 (.016) | | | | | |
| Bill Gray | | | | .064 (.017)*** | | | | |
| Bill Clay | | | | | .255 (.109)* | | | |
| Harold Ford | | | | | | .192 (.069)** | | |
| Robert Scott | | | | | | | .200 (.141) | |
| Kweisi Mfume | | | | | | | | -.043 (.090) |
| Albert Wynn | | | | | | | | .137 (.086) |
| SES Conditions^a | | | | | | | | |
| Per capita income | | .009 (.030) | | -.119 (.031)*** | | | | |
| Proportion renters | | .035 (.050) | | .269 (.045)*** | | | | |
| Education | | -.099 (.057) | | -.291 (.064)*** | | | | |
| Electoral Conditions | | | | | | | | |
| Incumbent candidate | | -.147 (.177) | -.093 (.013)*** | | -.372 (.125)** | .228 (.063)*** | | -.056 (.104) |
| Party of incumbent | -.153 (.037)*** | .142 (.020)*** | .080 (.005)*** | .279 (.023)*** | -.325 (.093)*** | .064 (.126) | -.361 (.205) | -.087 (.131) |
| Tenure × incumbent | .037 (.007)*** | .001 (.003) | .001 (.002) | .032 (.003)*** | -.001 (.013) | -.012 (.010) | .000 (.014) | .039 (.038) |
| Winning vote margin | -.699 (.111)*** | -.142 (.039)*** | -.178 (.045)*** | -.815 (.069)*** | -.821 (1.12) | -.257 (.470) | -1.39 (.467)** | 1.39 (.816) |
| Number of cases | 647 | 2,999 | 4,768 | 4,797 | 2,504 | 1,955 | 1,861 | 1,551 |
| Std. error of regression | .02 | .06 | .08 | .07 | .11 | .07 | .13 | .07 |

Note: Table presents FGLS coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). The dependent variable is scaled from 0 to 1, measuring black turnout as a proportion of the total black voting age population. Turnout estimates are generated using King's (1999a, 2000) EI software. "Incumbent" equals 0 for open-seat races; 1 if the House incumbent runs for reelection. There were no open seat races in Georgia 1990, Pennsylvania 1990, Virginia 1994. Party is coded 0 (Republican) or 1 (Democrat) for the party affiliation of the House incumbent. "Winning Vote Margin" is scaled from 0 to 1. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

^aFor all states except Pennsylvania and Michigan, all precinct- and MCD-level covariates (black population density, income, homeownership, education) are included in first-stage EI model. For Pennsylvania and Michigan, only precinct-level black population density can be included in first stage EI model. "Per Capita Income" is measured as the log of black per capita income. "Proportion Renters" is scaled from 0 to 1 for the proportion of black households that are renter occupied. "Education" is scaled from 0 to 1 for the proportion of blacks over age 25 with at least some college education.

and upper-middle income communities of Montgomery County, showed no signs of political reticence: Turnout rates were consistent with levels observed in similar precincts elsewhere in the state. Judging by this response, neither black electoral success nor the mechanisms that secured it undermined the perceived utility of political engagement. In fact, the continued engagement of whites in the electoral process may reflect the wisdom of Wynn's decision to "eschew expressions of militancy for pronouncements on national issues" (Barone and Ujifusa 1995).¹⁸

In the second instance, black-represented precincts in Tennessee were the sites of political mobilization among whites (and, as will be discussed below, among

blacks). The "revolutionary" zeal that propelled the state to dramatic political changes in 1994—evident in the summary statistics in Figure 1—showed no signs of moderation in Harold Ford's Memphis district. In fact, participation rates in that district were 7.3 (\pm 2.1) percentage points higher than in precincts represented by other long-term Democratic incumbents with moderate competition. Ford is unique among African-American incumbents in that he represented a racially balanced district in which whites (as a sizable minority) posed a credible threat to black political dominance. Ford's district has the smallest black majority of any in this sample: African Americans make up only 54% of the voting age population. Rather than withdraw from politics (the response in eight of the ten cases examined), white constituents may have recognized and adapted to the opportunities made available by their sheer size. A history of relatively narrow margins (Ford won with 58% of the vote in 1990, 1992, and 1994)

¹⁸ By comparison, Robert Scott, who also practiced the "politics of commonality" (Canon 1999) in his Virginia district, experienced demobilization among his white constituents. This pattern may reflect the "disenfranchisement" and "adverse" effect alleged by the plaintiffs in *Meadows v. Moon*, (1997) the U.S. district court decision that struck down Scott's district.

served as a constant reminder that black electoral success is fragile in areas where racial polarization in vote choice is the norm. Ford may have mobilized white constituents because he symbolized the triumph of a narrow black majority.¹⁹

Ford's district was the site of heightened political engagement among African Americans as well and for that reason is somewhat unique: Only rarely does black representation favorably affect black turnout. Table 4 summarizes the results of FGLS regressions that predict black turnout as a function of black representation, controlling for the electoral conditions in the precincts under study. As evidenced by the coefficients in the top half of the table, in only four cases can one conclude that black House members experienced a level of African-American political activity that differs from what one would expect in similar districts represented by whites. In six cases, there appears to be no appreciable difference. A word of caution is in order here, however. As detailed in Appendix B, the black turnout results from Michigan (Crockett and Conyers), Virginia (Scott), and Maryland (Wynn and Mfume) proved to be highly sensitive to changes in the EI model specification. The results of the second-stage regressions for these three states varied between a finding of no statistically significant effect, which is the result reported in Table 4, and a statistically significant positive effect. Because the results did not hold across multiple specifications, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about black political behavior under black representation in these three states. For the other five states, the results were robust across EI model specifications, including the finding of no statistically significant effect in New Jersey (Payne). We can feel confident in that set of results.

Although rare, when black congressional officeholding is associated with greater voter turnout, thousands of African Americans participate who otherwise would play no role in the electoral process. In Missouri, black voter participation was 25.5 (\pm 10.9) percentage points higher in Bill Clay's St. Louis district than in any other district represented by long-term Democratic incumbents. In Atlanta, where turnout among whites lagged almost 12 points behind rates in similar districts in Georgia, political engagement among African Americans was up 10.4 (\pm 2.2) percentage points. Again, these patterns of heightened mobilization under black

representation hold up across multiple model specifications.

New Jersey stands out as a case in which the results of the second-stage regressions consistently indicate that black mobilization did not accompany black electoral success. Although the Tenth had been majority-black for more than a dozen years, Donald Payne, elected in 1988, was the first African American to represent the district. His election followed the reluctant departure of Peter Rodino, who was encouraged to retire by black leaders eager to send an African American to Congress. Perhaps the unresponsiveness of black constituents in Newark reflects the racial indifference that kept Rodino in office long after the makeup of his district had changed. In that respect, African Americans in Newark exhibited the same independent streak witnessed in the Atlanta area in the early 1980s. After court-ordered redistricting, Georgia's Fifth was transformed from a majority-white district that elected an African American to Congress (Andrew Young in 1972, 1974, and 1976) to a majority-black district with a white incumbent (Wyche Fowler).

DISCUSSION

One limitation of aggregate data is that it does not provide a window into individual motivations. I can only speculate about the reasons for the political behavior observed under black representation, in particular the striking asymmetry between its uniformly negative relationship to white voter participation and its much less consistent effect on black turnout. Future research should explore more fully the individual attitudes that animate the political dynamics in these districts. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) suggest that the influence of minority officeholding on trust and efficacy accounts for its effect on political engagement. To some extent, the patterns of participation documented in this research lend themselves to a similar interpretation. In Georgia, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Tennessee, where greater political activity was exhibited among African Americans in black-represented districts, black officeholding may foster confidence in elected officials (and, possibly, in the institutions in which they serve) and the perception of greater minority influence on the direction of politics. Conversely, and apparently more consistently, black officeholding may erode confidence among whites.

The increase (among blacks) and the erosion (among whites) of trust and efficacy may be the by-products of purely symbolic politics, or they may reflect substantive concerns about policy responsiveness and/or constituency service. Abney and Hutcheson (1981, 100) argue that "leaders may be significant agents of opinion change simply as a result of the images they project," regardless of the policies they pursue. After an era in which it was not uncommon for states and localities to discourage minority political participation, black representation may help eliminate the impression among African Americans that elections are none of their business. Furthermore, blacks in

¹⁹ The political dynamics in Memphis hint at what might be expected in any district with a delicate racial balance, such as a heterogeneous majority-minority district with significant numbers of Latinos as well as African Americans and non-Hispanic whites. In such a district, in which blacks and Latinos comprise a narrow and fragmented majority, whites may recognize the potential electoral influence of a highly mobilized minority. This potential influence may be enhanced by the high rate of noncitizenship that keeps many Latinos of voting age from the polls. In California, for example, it is estimated that 52% of Latino adults cannot vote because they are not citizens (Stiles et al. 1998). There are very few Latinos in any of the black-represented districts covered here. More than half of the heterogeneous majority-minority districts created in the 1990 redistricting cycle are in California and Texas. Future research should focus on the multiracial dynamics in these districts.

Congress may build group pride, providing what Gilliam and Kaufmann (1998, 743) describe as “a reservoir of psychic benefits” that contributes to political engagement. From this “symbolic politics” perspective, it is African-American elected officials in their capacity as role models who pull the black community into the political process. Meanwhile, the message of black electoral success for whites may be that they play a diminished role in political life.

Alternatively, the relationships may have more to do with the substantive consequences rather than symbolic significance of black congressional officeholding. Conyers and Wallace (1976, 115) observe that constituents tend to define black elected officials as the “specialized representatives of black people.” In a country in which politics historically has been an important vehicle in the mobility (and “mainstreaming”) of racial and ethnic groups, white and black constituents alike may equate minority officeholding with the advancement of a minority public policy agenda. (In reality, the link is more ambiguous and, as Canon [1999] demonstrates, involves fewer tradeoffs.) For white constituents, the perception that a black officeholder’s chief priority is to “solidify, manage, and protect” (Morris 1992, 170) minority interests—and that minority interests and white interests are necessarily incompatible—may erode confidence in the utility of political involvement. We would expect African Americans, however, to embrace and be energized by these priorities. (Add to this the special efforts of black members of Congress, guided by an election calculus that defines African Americans as their “natural constituencies,” to maintain the political involvement of this core of voters.) Of course, this only begs the question of why we do not observe a more consistent pattern of African-American mobilization in districts with a black representative. Perhaps there is an element of truth to Morris’s (1992, 173) lament that, with the election of black politicians, the “black masses have tended to become politically quiescent, believing that their black elected officials would realize their interests.”

Evidence from survey data suggests that a preoccupation with the substantive consequences of black congressional representation probably accounts for the behavior I observe. Research has found that white constituents perceive greater ideological and policy conflict with black members of Congress, tend not to assess them favorably, and are reluctant to contact them on issues of concern (Gay 1997, 2000). The political reticence evident in Table 3 may be another implication of these perceived failures in representation. To African Americans, black members of Congress appear to hold policy preferences consistent with their own, although not necessarily more consistent than the priorities of liberal white Democrats. This ideological and policy congruence encourages particularized contact and may account for the more intense ballot box activity in Atlanta, St. Louis, Memphis, and Philadelphia. The fact that African Americans are inclined to see similarities between black Democrats and more liberal white Democrats also may help

explain the inconsistent pattern of mobilization and restraint; in the absence of a categorical difference, there is no categorical effect. Future research should explicitly investigate the link between participation and perceptions of responsiveness.

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider how these findings compare with earlier research on minority empowerment in American cities. Recall that areas of high black empowerment have greater participation by African Americans; there is more limited evidence of white demobilization under black mayors. As compared to local officeholding, the influence of black congressional representation differs more in degree than in kind (limited evidence of black mobilization, consistent pattern of white demobilization). These parallels are interesting for two reasons. First, one might expect black congressional officeholding to have little or no significant effect on political participation because of the nature of the office. Unlike black mayors, whose activities can affect everything from neighborhood police patrols to the frequency of trash collection, members of Congress do not have the executive authority to make decisions that directly affect the daily lives of constituents. Despite this more limited relevance, there still seems to be an influence on political participation. Second, the more consistent pattern of white demobilization observed in this research suggests that earlier findings may have been confounded by “white flight from cities to suburbs.” To the extent that this phenomenon precipitates or comes on the heels of black empowerment in urban areas, the absence of pronounced participation effects tells us more about whites who choose to remain in the city than it does about white responses in general. The more fluid, less stable nature of congressional district boundaries makes white flight a less feasible alternative; as a result, one would expect to see a more pronounced relationship between officeholding and participation.

CONCLUSION

In districts in which African Americans enjoy political prominence, white constituents are more likely to remain on the margins of the electoral process. Black congressional incumbents routinely experience white turnout rates that are 5–18 points lower than at polling places elsewhere in the state. This consistent pattern of white demobilization is not offset by an equally consistent pattern of black mobilization. The optimism of some who champion minority representation (and, by extension, the districting mechanism that ensures it) as a way to increase black voter participation may be misplaced. Only occasionally is there greater political involvement among African Americans represented in Congress by an African American. Those black officeholders who do succeed in making voters out of previously unengaged minority constituents may experience black turnout that is 6–26 percentage points higher than rates in other districts. But, more often than not, African Americans represented by a black

member of Congress display the same patterns of behavior as their counterparts in other districts. In short, black electoral success can have a measurable but strikingly asymmetric effect on political behavior, both engaging (some black) and disengaging (many white) constituents in the electoral process.

This research bridges the literatures on political participation and minority congressional representation and expands our understanding of both. The political significance of black congressional representation cannot be reduced strictly to measures of policy activism or constituency service, and it cannot be understood by singular attention to its consequences for black Americans. To a great extent, the behavior of white constituents truly distinguishes the political dynamics of black-represented districts. The findings of this study should alert us to the significant role that minority representation has played in compromising the appeal of politics for many white Americans, while fostering a more dynamic political life for only some African Americans. (This dichotomy puts into doubt any hope that black electoral success might lead to an attenuation in racial conflict.) If we look beyond individual resources, we realize that political participation today reflects the tangible successes of the post-civil rights era.

APPENDIX A: DISTRIBUTION OF PRECINCTS AND MINOR CIVIL DIVISIONS IN THE 1990 DATA

Table A-1 summarizes the distribution of precincts across MCDs, as well as the distribution of MCDs across congressional districts, for the subset of states whose November 1990 elections are analyzed. (For the November 1994 elections, all the data are available at the precinct level.) In most cases, MCDs consist of no more than ten precincts. In Michigan and Georgia, 90% of MCDs contain fewer than five precincts. Two important exceptions should be noted. All the precincts in Pennsylvania’s First, Second, and Third congressional districts fall into one MCD (Philadelphia). Similarly, all the precincts in Michigan’s First and Thirteenth congressional districts fall into one MCD (Detroit). As a result, there is no variation in the MCD-level variables (e.g., education, income, homeownership) among the precincts in these districts. This has significant implications for the subsequent analysis, as is discussed in the text.

APPENDIX B: EI MODEL SPECIFICATION

Classifying by Race and Hispanic Origin

Latinos are included in the EI analysis on the basis of their racial identification. All respondents to the 1990 Census of Population and Housing were required to indicate an ethnic origin (Hispanic, Not Hispanic) as well as a racial identification (white, black, American Indian, Asian, other). Nationwide, 52% of people of Hispanic origin self-identified as white. Latinos who racially identified themselves as white in the 1990 Census are included in the “white” racial category in this analysis. For most of the states and congressional districts covered here, Latinos do not constitute a large segment of the population. In 79 of the 102 districts, they account for 3% or less. The districts with larger numbers of Latinos (10–18%) are concentrated in the Northeast; only one of these “outlier” districts was represented by a black member of Congress, Donald Payne of Newark, New Jersey. Twelve percent of Payne’s constituents were of Hispanic origin. (New Jersey was also the home of a majority-minority district that was 41% Latino, represented by Robert Menendez.) The only southern black incumbent with an above-average proportion of Latino constituents (6%) was Albert Wynn.

Sensitivity of Findings to EI Model Specification

In the first-stage EI analysis, I explicitly modeled the dependence of B_i^b (proportion of black voting age population who vote) and B_i^w (proportion of white voting age population who vote) on a set of demographic and socioeconomic factors found by previous research to affect levels of political participation. This approach sidesteps the well-documented problems (Cho 1998; Cho and Gaines 2001; Freedman et al. 1998; Freedman et al. 1999; Herron and Shotts 2000a) associated with the basic application of King’s EI technique (i.e., the problematic assumption of no aggregation bias). Although King (1997, 1999b) maintains that EI is robust to violations of the aggregation bias assumption—in part, as a result of leveraging information contained in the deterministic bounds—other researchers argue theoretically and demonstrate empirically that in the presence of aggregation bias King’s (1997) technique produces biased and statistically inconsistent estimates of the quantities of interest (Cho 1998; Cho and Gaines 2001; Freedman et al. 1998; and Freedman et al. 1999). In addition, Herron and Shotts (2000a) argue that researchers risk logical inconsistency by assuming away aggregation bias in first-stage EI, only to include covariates in a second-stage regression.

Correctly modeling the dependence of B_i^b and B_i^w on a set

APPENDIX TABLE A-1. Distribution of Precincts and Minor Civil Divisions

| State | Total No. of MCDs | Number of Precincts per MCD | | Number of MCDs per District | |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| | | Median | 90th Percentile | Median | 90th Percentile |
| Michigan | 1,284 | 1 | 5 | 44 | 231 |
| Pennsylvania | 175 | 11 | 120 | 56 | 73 |
| New Jersey | 82 | 21 | 190 | 27 | 41 |
| Georgia | 282 | 2 | 4 | 26 | 49 |

of covariates presents its own challenges. One important objection raised to King's (1997) technique concerns the apparent variability in the parameter estimates across different model specifications and the lack of an objective test for whether one specification is superior to another (Cho and Gaines 2001). Concerned about the practical implications of this issue for this research, I tested seven different model specifications and generated seven sets of B_i^p and B_i^w estimates for each of the roughly 28,000 precincts in the eight states. The models were as follows: Model 1 (basic EI with no covariates); Model 2 (black population density covariate); Model 3 (income, homeownership, and education covariates); Model 4 (income, homeownership, education, and black population density covariates). In models 2 through 4, the covariates are coded as continuous variables. In three additional models, I include the same covariate combinations as models 2 through 4 but dichotomize these covariates at their district medians (e.g., coded 0 below the median, 1 at or above the median: Model 5 (black population density covariate, dichotomized); Model 6 (income, homeownership, and education covariates, dichotomized); Model 7 (income, homeownership, education, and black population density covariates, dichotomized). This more flexible functional form was meant to accommodate the House districts in which precinct-level black population density, X_i , is generally low and does not cover the unit interval. In those cases, the linearity assumption implied by the use of continuous covariates—especially black population density itself—forces EI to extrapolate to portions of the parameter space for which there are few observations (King 1997). I was concerned that the resulting estimates would be too sensitive to outliers.

For B_i^w , the estimates across specifications were remarkably stable, showing little evidence of the variability Cho and Gaines (2001) note in their critique of Burden and Kimball (1998). Most of the correlation coefficients fell between .90 and .99, and they rarely dipped below .80, which is strong consistency for a simulation-based estimator. The estimation benefits from the high degree of residential segregation characteristic of most American cities (i.e., in the precincts with any whites there are many whites and thus a lot of information) as well as from the overall racial balance (i.e., whites account for 72% to 90.3% of the population for the states in my sample, so predominantly white precincts abound). The result of all this information is very tight bounds on B_i^w . The tight deterministic bounds on white turnout for most of the precincts help to avert extreme sensitivity to slight changes in model specification. The weakest correlations across alternative models can be found in the precincts with few whites. In these cases, not only are the estimates sensitive to model specification, but also the inclusion of covariates greatly increases the standard errors on these estimates. That said, in light of the overall stability in the parameter estimates, I felt comfortable choosing the EI model most consistent with the findings from earlier research on political participation (i.e., Model 7). For the record, however, all the models yielded the same conclusions.

For B_i^p , the estimates across model specifications were considerably less stable. In some districts, correlations dipped below .10. Ecological inference on black turnout benefits from the high incidence of residential segregation, but it suffers from the simple fact that there are very few precincts with any appreciable numbers of black residents (e.g., in New Jersey, the median precinct-level black population density is 2%). When I restrict the EI analysis to those precincts with at least 15% black population, all the correlation coefficients rise to levels similar to those observed for B_i^w . Only in the districts with majority-minority populations are there significant numbers of precincts with a large black population and,

thus, plenty of information with which to generate robust ecological inferences. For precincts elsewhere, not only are the estimates highly variable across specifications, but also the inclusion of covariates severely strains the limited data (i.e., the standard errors are substantial).

In the final analysis, there were five states (Georgia, Missouri, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee) whose substantive results and conclusions were unaffected by changes in EI model specifications. In the other three states (Maryland, Michigan, and Virginia), results varied across specifications. The measured effects of black representation estimated in the second-stage regressions for these three states varied between no statistically significant effect and a significant positive effect. As in B_i^w , I adopted Model 7, which is most in line with the literature on participation. As can be seen in Table 4, for the three specification-sensitive states, Model 7 yields statistically insignificant results on the relationship between B_i^p and black representation. Because these results do not hold across multiple specifications, however, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about black political behavior in those three states.

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