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Black Empowerment and Mobilization:
A Comparison of Urban and Small City Trends

by

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Black Mobilization and Empowerment: A Comparison of Urban and Small City Trends

Abstract

This research to follow compares voting trends between blacks in urban cities and smaller, non-urban cities. The research aims to replicate the findings based on studies of large cities that blacks tend to have higher or lower turnout rates when there is a black public office holder.   Election results were taken from mayoral elections in Alexandria, LA and Monroe, LA. Previous research indicates that blacks have a high rate of turnout in urban areas when there is a black elected official. However, does this effect hold true in non-urban, small cities? Blacks in smaller, non-urban cities, this study finds, do not mobilize at the same rate as this in urban areas. This directly contradicts popular theory on black voting.

This study is significant because it contributes to our knowledge of those who have been left out of the discussion of black voting—blacks outside of urban cities—and suggests further research is needed to understand the difference between urban blacks and their smaller city counterparts.

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Introduction

Blacks in the past and currently have been considered an underprivileged group. They have faced many trials and tribulations to obtain basic rights.. Eventually, blacks gained more civil rights than they previously had, such as property ownership, business opportunities, higher education, and so on. Most importantly, they gained the right to vote. Black voting patterns have been well researched, often in large cities. This research extends one aspect of this literature to black voting behavior in small cities.

In order to understand the intent of this study, a few key words and phrases must be defined. Black empowerment is the election of black candidates into public office. The relationship established through research thus far is that black mobilization depends on black empowerment, where black mobilization is represented through an increase in black voter participation. Generally, it is argued that black voter participation increases in the presence of black empowerment.

Within the black community, there have been periods of stagnant or low voter participation. Yet, there have been times when black voter participation has irregularly spiked. Researchers have set out to explain this phenomenon. Research has been conducted in order to identify trends amongst black voters and explain how and why blacks vote. As previously explained, black empowerment has had a positive effect upon black voter participation. Current research has found that when there is a black holding office, blacks are more likely to mobilize and participate politically through voting. Yet, this information has only been found to hold true for certain geographical areas. Studies

on black empowerment and black mobilization typically focus on data gathered from considerably urban cities—cities with a population over 50,000. Rural areas and smaller cities have not been included in previous research. The goal of this study is to take what has been found about trends in urban cities and attempt to recreate that effect in rural areas (or what could be called considerably smaller cities in this study). This study will attempt to see if black voting trends in less urban areas are similar to that of urban areas. Are blacks more likely to vote when there is a black official holding office in both smaller cities and urban areas? The goal of this research is to answer this question by comparing black voter participation in two smaller cities.

The aim of this research is to add to work that has been completed thus far within the field. Previous research has been used to generalize black voting behaviors and patterns. However, there is possibility of error when incorporating the behavior of blacks in rural areas and smaller towns into the flow of those patterns. Most prior research cites the National Black Politics Study of 1993, which will be discussed in the literature, which provides a national scope but does not provide information on populations of smaller cities. Though on a smaller scale, this research can provide some of the missing information in the area of black voting behaviors and patterns.

The original research design is different from the research design that was conducted. It included a wider range of cities for comparison, but due to lack of record keeping by many states, the plan had to be changed. Two cities in Louisiana will be used as points of comparison in this study. Despite the necessary changes, the study still has merit because it provides information on a subject that has not been highly researched.

The working hypothesis of this study was that the effect of black empowerment on black mobilization would be reduced, but still present, in smaller cities.   In smaller cities with a black mayor, blacks would mobilize but not at rates as high as those of the urban cities. The literature review that follows derives reasons for this expectation. First, the review will present previous research on this topic. Second, possible differences in voting patterns, between large and small cities, will be discussed. The next section explains the research design for the present study, followed by the results. Finally, I discuss the findings as well as the drawbacks (shortcomings) of this particular study.

Literature Review

During the Civil Rights Movement, blacks fought for equal rights to those of the dominant group. Whites had privileges that those of minority groups were denied. Blacks were the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, particularly blacks in the South. Their questioning of majority perspectives led them to mobilize and organize a mass movement for equal rights for minorities.[1] Among those rights was the right to vote. Several groups, such as Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) became prominent in their efforts to further black suffrage.[2] The different groups had their varying approaches but all held the same principles. To provide a mainstream platform for blacks, a leader emerged to be a representative of the community and their shared mission.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was the leader the black community had been searching for. He had a way with words. As he would say, "A leader has to be concerned with

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[1] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1986), xii.
[2] Peter B. Levy, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 6.

semantics." The people felt a leader must be able to articulate and reinforce the beliefs

and values of the group. A leader must be able to educate and sell others on old and new

ideas. They must also inform the masses (members of the community) what actions are

necessary. He or she must also be able to construct support and enthusiasm and stimulate

the people toward action.[3] Martin Luther King, Jr. embodied all of the aforementioned

characteristics of a leader and became the representative for the black community during

the Civil Rights Movement. Despite their position as an oppressed group, blacks united

under a single platform to advance in political and social power.

 The concept of having a representative, which allows political control for a

community or specific group of people, is age old. Yet, it has only received a political

term in the case of the black community. This concept is called black empowerment. The

term describes the action of a black being elected into public office. The person is

thought to be symbolic for the power of blacks in society and in the political arena.[4] A

promise of positive, beneficial change in the area of public policy is essential to black

empowerment. The idea of change is what allures the voters. It acts as a call to action.

This symbolic approach to politics has been compared to that of a messiah-like

government. A messiah has been sent to correct the flaws of society and provide a

favorable situation to those supportive of the messiah.[5] The favored representative is

seen as someone that has potential to fix the current political and social problems of the

supporting community.

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[3] Donald T. Phillips, *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership: Inspiration & Wisdom for Challenging Times* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 2000), Chapter 4.

[4] James Jennings, *The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 15.

[5] Robert Weissberg, *The Politics of Empowerment*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 195.

A few studies have examined the impact of black empowerment on black mobilization. These studies attempted to reaffirm whether the concept of black empowerment is still in effect in modern times. Spence and McClerking (2010) studied mayoral elections to reaffirm the relationship of black empowerment and black mobilization in the modern era. What they found proved that the relationship was still in existence. When there is a black mayor already in place, blacks are more likely to vote in general as well as vote in sequential elections. They are also more likely to participate in other areas of civic engagement.[6] In a previous study, Gilliam and Kaufmann concluded with similar results. They, too, focused on mayoral elections. They selected major cities (Cleveland, Atlanta, and Los Angeles) and studied the black voter participation rate of those cities. What they found, like Spence and McClerking, was that blacks are more likely to vote when there is black candidate. They are also more likely to cast their vote for the black candidate.[7] One of the most popular and most referenced studies in the area of "black politics" is the National Black Politics Study of 1993. The researchers of this study conducted forty-five minute phone interviews with a national sample of black Americans. The research included information about respondents' attitudes toward their community, political involvement, public policy, political leaders, and political groups. This study provided data that supported the correlation between black empowerment and increased black voter participation.

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[6] Lester Spence and Harwood McClerking, "Context, Black Empowerment, and African American Political Participation," *American Political Research* 38, no. 5 (2010): 909-930.
[7] Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. and Karen M. Kaufmann, "Is There an Empowerment Life Cycle? Long-Term Black Empowerment and Its Influence on Voter Participation," *Urban Affairs Review* 33, no. 6 (1998): 748-760.

The focus of the National Black Politics Study is to determine why blacks engage politically and explain their attitudes toward occurring political happenings. The study breaks way for the idea that racial identity plays an important role in the black community. Through research, a link has been established between shared fate and defeated obstacles. Despite the black community's experiences with racial inequality, the black community has historically favored preserving black cultural ties and its communal identity.[8] The concept of community and shared fate has led to many successes seen by the black community.

Research has been published on black empowerment and black mobilization. Recent studies have proven that the positive relationship between black empowerment and black mobilization still exists. However, current research only reflects the existence of that relationship within urban areas. It has become popular belief that those of rural areas and small cities are not as politically active as their urban counterparts. The following research seeks to verify or disprove the existence of increased black mobilization caused by black empowerment in less urban areas. Rural areas and small cities were once hotbeds for black political activity. Blacks of rural areas started the mass movement of blacks into political participation. This is evident with the multitudes of blacks in lesser urban areas that mobilized during the Civil Rights Movement.[9] It is true that blacks of urban areas participate in mass numbers at particular times. No recent research has been done to provide information for the blacks of rural areas or smaller

[8] Gay, Claudine, "Putting Race in Context: Identifying the Environmental Determinants of Black Racial Attributes," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 547.
[9] Robert Anderson Jr., "Rural Poor and Southern Directions of the Civil Rights Movement," *Southern Changes* 2, no. 3 (1979): 21.

cities. The aim of this research is to see to what extent blacks of smaller cities exercise their right to vote in comparison to their black urban counterparts.

The researcher predicts similar trends in voting behavior between urban areas and smaller cities but that the intensity will be different.   The rate of participation within smaller cities will not be as dramatic as it is in urban areas. The smaller cities will see a considerable spike in black voter participation and participate in higher numbers than previous elections with white office holders. Both the urban and less urban (smaller cities) areas will have increased voter participation, but the blacks of urban areas will be more successful in the area of black mobilization.

Possible Difference in Voter Patterns

Why might it be expected that there is a difference in voting patterns between urban and non-urban blacks? The reason is that blacks are mostly urban, meaning that most blacks live in large cities according to "We, the Americans: Blacks:" "Blacks are largely an urban people. Most of us live in cities and in largely metropolitan areas. The majority of us live in the 20 largest metropolitan areas of the Nation."[10] Knowing this, it must be said that numbers matter. There are several factors that can affect whether a person votes. There are the costs of voting—time to register, the drive to the precinct, voting lines, and so forth—which vary with population and population density. There are also the socioeconomic factors, such as education and class. Both cost and socioeconomic factors suggest there would be variances between the different types of cities. However, the main reason people vote is because they believe that they will be able to influence election results. There is a "group-based" model in turnout. Members

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[10] Claudette E. Bennett, "We the Americans: Blacks," United States Census Bureau, September 1993: 3.

of a particular group participate because they expect to be rewarded by the leaders and/or they feel ethically obligated to support the interests of the group.[11] Voters mobilize if they feel there are benefits. Yet, what are the implications for this research?

Conclusions can be drawn from research on general turnout in less urban areas. According to Alan D. Monroe, the less urban an area, the higher the turnout. He bases his research on the work of others. However, in his analysis, he looks to the counties and cities of the state of Illinois. Within the study, he looks at local elections to determine which cities had the best turnout. What Monroe concludes is what many would deem surprising. Those in urban areas, in fact, vote at rates lower than those of the rural and smaller city counterparts.[12] Though Monroe includes rural areas in his analysis of turnout, he does also include smaller cities. Monroe's research may be considered irrelevant because it does not consider race. Minority groups, as already displayed, are differently situated; therefore, they may behave differently than those of the majority. But this research cannot be dismissed because blacks are indeed residents of the areas researched by Monroe. Monroe's research gives a reason to expect different voting behavior among small city blacks.

Support in numbers is another potential factor for mobilization after black empowerment. Urban blacks have the numbers that non-urban blacks do not. There are more blacks in urban areas than in non-urban areas. Urban blacks have more of a chance for success because they have the numbers to "accomplish" whatever political goals they have been envisioned and set forth. Blacks in urban areas will see the benefit of voting

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[11] Timothy J. Feddersen, "Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no.1 (2004): 100.

[12] Alan D. Monroe, "Urbanism and Voter Turnout: A Note on Some Unexpected Findings," *American Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 1 (1977): 71-78.

after black empowerment because they know there is a likely chance that there will be beneficial effects. For those in non-urban areas, it is possible that they will see less incentive to participate. Therefore, the possibility exists that even if there is black empowerment that it might not result in black mobilization, or, in black mobilization that is as strong as in urban areas. This is why this research is crucial. There is evidence to suggest that there is a difference between urban and non-urban voters without reference to race. Does this evidence hold true to the theories of black empowerment and black mobilization when applied to significantly smaller cities?

Methodology

Due to extensive research in the area of black empowerment and mobilization, the existence and possible effects in non-urban areas will be the focus. The focus will be cities considered small cities or non-urban cities. Small cities or non-urban cities, within this survey, will be defined as cities containing a population of less than 50,000 people to provide a clear contrast to urban cities, especially, those used in previous research.

The cities of comparison are located in the state of Louisiana. The selection of cities can be attributed to record keeping in Louisiana. The Department of State in the state of Louisiana provides election results along with voter demographic information, which is information this study heavily relies upon. Choosing cities within the same state also eliminates institutional differences among states that could skew the results.

Table 1 City Information

City	Alexandria	Monroe
Population 2010 (Total)	47,723	48,815
Population 2010 (Black)	57%	64%

Black Mayor	No	Yes

The two chosen cities are that of Alexandria, Louisiana and Monroe, Louisiana.
All of the following information is based on the 2010 Census. The first city is
Alexandria, Louisiana. It has a population of 47, 723. Approximately 57% of the
population is African-American.[13] The second city is Monroe, Louisiana. Monroe has a
population of 48, 815. Approximately 64% of Monroe is African-American. [14] The city
of Alexandria has never had a black mayor while the city of Monroe currently has a black
mayor. The significance of that statement is that mayoral elections will be the starting
reference point. Voters need a leader under which they can mobilize. The best way to
establish whether mobilization will occur would be under what would be perceived as the
leader (of the city)—the mayor.

Although Alexandria has not had a black mayor, the information from election
results of Alexandria will provide crucial information. Past election results will be
viewed to gather information on black voter activity without black office holding.
Alexandria will provide information as to what typical black voter turnout would look
like when there is not black empowerment. The results of Alexandria will be the point of
comparison to Monroe, rather than comparing previous elections in Monroe itself,
because the State of Louisiana does not provide demographic data consistently before
2000. Turnout data by race, therefore, cannot be obtained for Monroe prior to having a
black mayor. It is only in recent decades that the State began to keep these records.

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[13] "Alexandria, Louisiana," United States Census Bureau, (2010).
[14] "Monroe, Louisiana," United States Census Bureau, (2010).

The election results from Monroe, Louisiana will provide turnout results for after the presence of black empowerment. The impact will be visible in the case of Monroe because there has been a black mayor elected in Monroe since 2001. Therefore, it will be possible to view any impact on black voting in subsequent elections. The case of Alexandria will represent a baseline. All data was collected from the Louisiana Department of State and aggregated by the researcher.

Results for turnout were based on precinct-level data obtained from the Louisiana Department of State. The Louisiana Department of State provides very specific information, from which a percentage can be calculated. The LA Department of State provides precinct level data. For each precinct, there is a demographic breakdown. Each precinct provides the number of blacks that voted along with the number of registered black voters in the precinct. A list of precincts that were a part of city limits and could vote in the mayoral elections was compiled. Second, the number of blacks that voted from the precincts was calculated. That number was divided by the number of blacks registered to vote in all of the precincts. The limitation of this method is that the total number of blacks eligible to vote in either of the cities could potentially be higher than the number of blacks actually registered to vote. The method used provided the percentage turnout for both cities.

The statistics gathered for the study can be easily replicated. The data is public information, and no special or inaccessible software is required. A calculator and sheet of paper or Microsoft Excel should suffice. Using other cities is also possible, as long as the cities selected are located in states that keep records of turnout for various racial demographics. All of the tables featured are of black voter turnout. All turnout rates

discussed are of blacks in the aforementioned selected cities in the state of Louisiana. Finally, all those attempting to replicate the following results must be warned that the elections of the following cities were not all held in a regular election cycle (every four years, for example). Therefore, those attempting to replicate must search through the files of the Louisiana Secretary of State election results for all mayoral elections.

The purpose of the study is not a traditional "comparison." It is an attempt to recreate an effect that was demonstrated in urban cities. The effect demonstrated in the urban cities is that black empowerment triggers an increase in black mobilization. The success of the hypothesis depends upon whether or not the same effect can be recreated in the smaller cities and the strength of that effect.

Results

There is extensive research on black empowerment and black mobilization, but the focus has been on urban areas, such as Atlanta, Detroit, and Cleveland. Researchers found that when black empowerment takes place that black mobilization, will occur.[15] In the urban areas of previous research, black mobilization rates were considerably higher after black empowerment. The object of creating the data set for Alexandria and Monroe is to compare to the findings of that in urban cities and recreate the effect.

Table 2 Alexandria, LA (Black Turnout)

Year	Mayoral Election (10/2/2010)	Subsequent Election (11/2/2010)
2010	31%	34.5%
Actual	4, 912	6,239

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[15] Lester Spence and Harwood McClerking, "Context, Black Empowerment, and African American Political Participation," *American Political Research* 38, no. 5 (2010): 909-930.

Possible	15, 771	18, 073
Winner	Jacques Roy	Jay Dardenne

Both of the elections in the table occur in 2010 within one month of each other. As already mentioned, there is no black mayor in Alexandria. However, there were four black candidates on the ticket for this mayoral election. Yet as can be observed from the table, there was little change in blacks in participation. Although there is a little spike, there is not a significant one.

Table 3 Monroe, LA (Black Turnout)

Year	2000 (3/14/00)	2004 (4/17/04)	2008 (2/9/08)	2012 (4/21/12)
Turnout	42.2%	37.5%	33.2%	30%
Actual	7, 946	7,413	5,917	5,936
Total Possible	18, 822	19, 752	17,184	19,803
Winner	Melvin Rambin	Jamie Mayo	Jamie Mayo	Jamie Mayo

There was a bit of difficulty in tracking the black turnout rate because Monroe mayoral elections are quite aligned with Presidential primary elections. However, this does not eliminate Monroe from this discussion because we are looking for change over time. In 2000, when a white candidate won the election, the black turnout rate is significantly higher than those that follow. In 2001, a special election was held in which a black candidate, Jamie Mayo, was elected to his first term as mayor. Mayo is currently still mayor of Monroe. In each of the elections following Mayo's win, turnout actually fell, reaching a low of 30% in 2012. The black turnout rates in Alexandria and Monroe are in the same range even though one has a black mayor since 2001 and the other has

never had a black mayor. Even during the 2008 election, the voter turnout rate does not spike after black empowerment. This particular election was almost dismissed due to this expectation. A spike would be expected since it was during an election year that coincided with the presidential elections even if it is only the primaries. However, that does not happen in this case. This discovery is quite alarming. It would be expected that federal elections alone would result in higher turnout.

Discussion

The goal before beginning the research was to determine if the effects of black empowerment on black mobilization would be the same between urban and non-urban areas. This has not been confirmed by this study. The cities of Alexandria and Monroe have similar compositions and are cities that exist within the same political structure (as set by the state government of Louisiana). However, there does not seem to be any major difference between the turnout rates of a city that has had a black mayor since 2001 and a city that has never had a black mayor. All of the results are within a small range of each other. There is even a drop off in the city of Monroe after the election of its first black mayor. However, there is a very slight increase in Alexandria, which has never had a black mayor in its city history. The data suggests that black empowerment does not mobilize blacks outside of the urban cities. The pattern of black mobilization with black empowerment does not apply in this case.

There are many factors associated with who votes or does not vote, many of which have been previously mentioned. The reason to reintroduce these factors into this discourse is to provide some possible explanations for the failure to replicate the black empowerment effect in small city Louisiana. One of the most important factors that

affect voter participation is education. There is a correlation between voter participation

and education level. The consensus among many researchers is that those with higher

levels of education are more likely to vote.[16] Yet, this does not play a major role in the

lives of blacks when the comparison of urban and non-urban is made. Blacks of urban

cities have increased turnout in comparison to their non-urban, small city counterparts

after black empowerment. In the small city of Monroe, there was a decrease in turnout

after black empowerment. The reason that education level cannot explain the results here

is because the groups with lower levels and lesser quality of education actually turned out

to vote at an increased level. Blacks in urban cities usually attend public schools. Urban

public schools have a lower quality of education in their primary and secondary schools,

simply because many schools in urban cities are failing. Only twenty-three percent of

blacks reach basic levels in reading in comparison to their non-urban counterparts, of

which forty-six percent reach basic reading level. For math, the ratio is thirty-three to

sixty-one percent. For science, the ratio is thirty-one to fifty-six.[17] Non-urban blacks

have higher rates of achieving just basic levels of these disciplines than their urban

counterparts. With regards to higher education, even blacks outside of urban cities are

more likely to attend college and receive bachelor's degrees.[18] In this case, obtaining

higher levels of education does not explain a decrease in black turnout after black

empowerment in small cities.

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[16] Timothy J. Feddersen, "Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no.1 (2004): 100.

[17] Marion Orr, "Reforming Urban Public Education Systems," Brown University Department of Political Science (2003): 1

[18] National Center for Education Statistics, "Urban Schools: The Challenge of Location and Poverty," U.S. Department of Education (1996): 35.

What could possibly be true is the theory of numbers. The theory of numbers is simple. A mass (or large) group can make a difference. According to the American Psychology Association, people like to believe that their vote will and is going to make a difference. This can differentiate between a voter and abstainer. Smaller city blacks do not have the numbers to make what could be perceived as a "difference."[19] Small city blacks do not feel as motivated as can be seen in the evidence of decreased mobilization. Blacks of small cities could have the motivation, but many might possibly believe that they cannot make a difference due to lack of numbers. For urban city blacks, black empowerment is motivation for an increase in black mobilization.

Despite the motives associated with black empowerment, they do not apply to blacks of small cities. The idea that a person could possibly advance things for blacks within the black community and make positive changes does not seem to have the same impact as it does within urban cities. Also, the typical factors associated with voting, most importantly education (as already cited previously), do not function as well when applied to blacks.[20] Blacks in smaller cities, according to what has been accepted in many studies (including Feddersen) should be more likely to vote because there is better education.[21] Education for blacks in urban cities is actually poorer than that of the small city and rural counterparts. Furthermore, blacks of urban cities are less likely to pursue

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[19] Christopher Munsey, "Why Do We Vote?" *Monitor*, 39 no. 6 (2008): 60.
[20] Timothy J. Feddersen, "Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no.1 (2004): 100.
[21] Timothy J. Feddersen, "Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no.1 (2004): 100.

higher education, and more education is considered a "telltale" sign of a most likely voter.[22]

Even if the argument of education falls, other explanations of the results can be offered. There are other factors that could differentiate between the political mindset of blacks in urban cities and their smaller city counterparts. First, there is the idea that those outside of less privileged areas do not feel race is as important in their political decision making. According to Gay, depending on the socioeconomic character of the neighborhood, race can have less of an impact.[23] Once again, with reference to the work of Bennett, blacks mostly live in urban areas and are exposed to less financial and educational resources and opportunities that their suburban or smaller city counterparts.[24] Under Gay's logic, blacks in urban cities are more likely to consider race as a factor when politically participating. This is highly evident in an increase in black mobilization in urban cities and a decrease in smaller cities.

Because blacks of smaller cities are more likely to have access to more resources than their urban counterparts, they are typically more educated and wealthier on average.[25] As previously mentioned, this factor explains why race is not important to blacks of smaller cities. Many researchers, including those referenced in this study, have argued that the perception of shared struggles, obstacles, and fate are and have been important within the black community. However, over time, this has changed as many

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[22] Claudette E. Bennett, "We the Americans: Blacks," United States Census Bureau, September 1993: 3.

[23] Gay, Claudine, "Putting Race in Context: Identifying the Environmental Determinants of Black Racial Attributes," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 550.

[24] Claudette E. Bennett, "We the Americans: Blacks," United States Census Bureau, September 1993: 3-9.

[25] Claudette E. Bennett, "We the Americans: Blacks," United States Census Bureau, September 1993: 1-10.

blacks have been afforded the opportunities that those of the majority experience daily.

They do not experience the same feeling of "competition" because there are less people

to compete with. As a result, they do not believe they are constant targets of

discrimination. Therefore, they are not "brainwashed," which is a term used to describe

voting based on racial issues.[26] They do not fall into the category of those considered

"brainwashed" by onlookers because they do not politically participate due to racial

group interest.

From the presented research, the research shows that it is the geographical and

demographical situation that explains the differences of black mobilization in urban cities

and smaller cities. Those of smaller cities do not have the increased numbers of

motivated people that their urban counterparts display. Second, on average, they are

exposed to more educational and financial opportunities. Therefore, they do not feel the

need to racially unite due to lack of a sense of constant discrimination.

Conclusion

The research provided through this study is not complete. There are drawbacks to

this study. The cities used for comparison are located within the same state in a region

considered different from the rest of the United States—The South. This does not make

the difference true, but this is something that must be kept under consideration. The

reason is that all of the states do not provide turnout data by race or on the precinct level

by race. The precinct level by race is the most desirable because the researcher can omit

data from outside the city limits. However, access to this type of data is difficult (for free

and/or at all). Also, election results for many states have only recently started to include

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[26] Andra Gillespie, "Black Voters Aren't Brainwashed," *CNN*, October 2011.

this type of data. Therefore, it is quite difficult to collect data from past elections.

Another possible issue with the research is that there is a small selection of small cities to

actually choose from. Many small cities have not elected black mayors. Furthermore,

those with black mayors do not have an extensive amount of regular, patterned elections

results along with demographic information that information could be drawn from.   This

issue puts a strain on researchers to measure the effects of black empowerment for

lengthy periods of time and extend the time focus into the past for a significant number of

elections. The major drawback to the research exists due to the inability to obtain

demographic information because many states just simply did not obtain store it.

Also, more socioeconomic data should be gathered about the cities used for

comparison. It is difficult to gather data about the socioeconomic status of blacks in

those urban cities because it is not reported at the precinct level (not even by the Census

Bureau). This information would be beneficial to obtain in order to definitively prove

what research says about those of smaller cities and those of urban cities. Traditionally,

income and education have been regarded as factors that determine voting behavior of

persons in general. In this case, it has been regarded as what separates these

geographically distant groups of blacks.   There must be other factors that cause an

increase in black mobilization. Therefore, this information could provide more substance

and weight to the argument being made in this study.

Another factor to be discussed in a separate or future study is the level of

socioeconomic authority the elected official holds. As stated within the literature review,

the promise of economic improvement can cause blacks to vote at higher rates. If those

of a particular city believe that they can actually gain from political participation, will

they? Yet, there would have to be extensive research done, especially in the case of mayors, to determine if they hold enough political authority to make substantive change—job creation, policy reform, and so on. In the case of mayors, the ability to make changes within the state or even nationally could be a deciding factor for potential voters.

With regards to future research, there are recommendations to be made. Results from different cities in different regions would provide more conclusive data. More research on states and different regions of the United States that do maintain the types of records necessary would have to be done at an extensive level. Generating data for black voters outside of the southern region of the United States would be beneficial to this discussion. This would require an extensive amount of research (and financial dedication) to any willing researcher because it appears that a significant amount of black mayors were elected mostly in the southern states of the United States. Also, interviews could be done with urban and small city black voters in the selected cities to determine if, and why, black empowerment plays a role in why they vote. The questions left unanswered require a more conclusive look. To expand the scope, presidential elections could also be included, following the election of Barack Obama, to investigate whether there is a pattern to black voting in small cities (and possibly rural cities). These possibilities represent several directions in which this research could be expanded.

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