

**THE ANALYSIS OF COMMON SOLUTIONS:
EVALUATING EDUCATION**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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I, Amber Mannie, certify that all research compliance requirements related to this Undergraduate Research Scholars thesis have been addressed with my Research Faculty Advisor prior to the collection of any data used in this final thesis submission.

This project did not require approval from the Texas A&M University Research Compliance & Biosafety office.

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ABSTRACT

The Analysis of Common Solutions:
Evaluating Education

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This piece includes research and an in- depth analysis of the African American voting bloc with the independent variable being whether or not the voter has obtained a post-secondary education. The Black voting bloc remains a vital, but understudied demographic in American history. The writing includes various scholarly statistics and in-depth research of the historic voting patterns of African-Americans. I have decided to test the theory of higher education having a positive correlation with African-American political participation in the form of interest. Throughout this piece the research aids in determining whether there is a positive, negative, or net correlation effect on the Black voting bloc and their obtainment of a post-secondary education. Within this piece, although we are focused on one aspect and proving or disproving its validity, we have taken into account the longstanding and historic challenges African Americans have faced that will always serve as an effect on this demographic's voting patterns overtime. This piece is to serve as a critical thinking and research based piece to add to, or flesh out the literature surrounding Black voting patterns. There have been statistics included

from several different codebooks, textbooks, political-science journals, and many other academic resources.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Carol Chapman, an academic and personal inspiration who I hope to make proud every day. I work extra hard in your memory and hope to accomplish everything I can to make you beam with joy from above. Also dedicated to my family, friends, and peers who have kept me motivated and aided me throughout the writing process. Thank you all for everything.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributors

I would like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Erik Peterson, and Dr. Brittany Perry for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research. The URS program has also provided an amazing opportunity in allowing me to conduct research with Texas A&M.

Thanks also go to my friends and colleagues and the department faculty and staff for making my time at Texas A&M University a great experience. All other work conducted for the thesis was completed by the student independently.

Thank you for the contributions made to me by Dr. Erik Peterson in the Texas A&M Political Science Department. Dr. Erik Peterson aided me in drafting this piece as well as collecting research data and performing the regression analysis from other political scholars and codebooks. Thank you to the contributions made by Dr. Brittany Perry of the Undergraduate Research Scholars program at Texas A&M with a research scholarship award of \$600. Thank you to Alex Diaz, Saron Araya, and Matthew B. Francis Jr. You all have made this thesis possible and continue to be an amazing support system. I would also like to thank all of my Texas A&M peers, friends, and family for an amazing undergraduate experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Framework

Overall, the Black voter has been widely sought after, but not always studied fully. The Black voting bloc is very unique because of the history African-Americans have within the United States political systems. A long time disenfranchised, but continually sought after, demographic for major national elections are African American voters. This project will be studying the ways in which Black voters are represented within scholarly works, and if the longtime go-to solution of higher education will have an increasingly positive effect on Black voters. The following thesis will look into creating a layered research analysis that takes all factors into account, and widely looks into the Black voter as a diverse demographic- while taking focus on one point of their political socialization. Knowing that a higher education is not always attainable, and not a “quick fix” solution for increasing political interest or knowledge will be in the underlying theme of this analysis to avoid oversimplifying the issues of Black voter history within America.

Literature Review

The Black voter is a very analyzed, yet misunderstood demographic. Oftentimes the Black voter participation can sway elections one way or another in several battleground states. Although the Black voter has been analyzed, the question of whether Black Americans participate in politics in large numbers is hotly debated. Misrepresentation and lack of definition for political participation often stem from the overall topic of political knowledge. Throughout each reading, each author defines political knowledge in different ways. The two most used subcategories are: Formal and Social political knowledge. (Althaus, 2003) Social political

knowledge relates to the idea that political knowledge can be based on what is important to the voting bloc as it affects their specific community. Oftentimes the socialization of a movement, or an issue immediately affecting a community allows voters to increase their awareness on that subject especially. (Jennifer Jerit et al, 2002) Formal political knowledge relates to a knowledge of how political systems take place within the United States. (Brian Schaffer, 2001) A formal political knowledge is typically acquired from higher education, or high political interest resulting in the self-education of our governmental and political systems.

These two definitions are not the only definitions used when speaking about the Black voter, but they are the most prevalent amongst readings discussing and comparing political knowledge among groups of people. Political knowledge is extremely important when beginning to analyze a voting bloc, such as the Black voting bloc. Political knowledge (whether social or formal) often comes with uneven distributions, and can create a biased narrative when discussing Black voters. (Althaus, 2003) Political knowledge is also important for driving overall political participation. (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996)

A large part of the political knowledge theory is the “*knowledge gap hypothesis*.” This is a gap between disenfranchised voters, and voters with the availability of both social and formal political knowledge over the course of their lives. (Luskin, 1990) The knowledge gap has been worked and re-worked by several political scientists in an attempt to understand why voter turnout is different amongst socio-economic classes, races, genders, etc. Within the Black voting bloc particularly, the knowledge gap hypothesis has had an adverse effect on the labeling of the demographic as “less informed.” Scholars are beginning to round out this hypothesis by increasingly noting several barriers that can lead to a less politically informed environment. Factors such as the media, availability of higher education, and socio economic status all

contribute to adverse effects within the knowledge hypothesis. (Hutchings, 2001) The knowledge gap hypothesis has also been challenged by more socially driven political scientists. Rather than an issue of Black Americans falling prey to an “inherent” knowledge gap, the questions asked when testing the gap can lead to a biased, or an incomplete conclusion. (Cohen & Luttig, 2017) Traditional studies of politics lean into a single dimensional understanding of voting across all fields. This traditional look often does not account for the extreme differences between the average White American voter, and the Black voter. (Cohen & Luttig, 2017) Contemporary American political scientists like Cathy Cohen and Matthew Luttig express their concerns with more traditional political theories as well. These authors challenged the notion of a single-dimensional study that does not account for “*carceral violence*” specifically against Black voters. (Cohen & Luttig, *Reconceptualizing Political Knowledge*) Cohen and Luttwig created a more contemporary framework for political knowledge to include the knowledge of relevant political hot topics, challenging the notion that formal political knowledge is the “best-tested.” When looking at social political matters, such as violence against citizens from government entities, Black voters were much more knowledgeable than their White counterparts. (Cohen 2017) Rather than there being a “knowledge gap” Cohen argues that there are different types of political knowledge between races. (Cohen & Luttig, 2017) Neither of which sets Black voters below White voters. Understanding of carceral violence against oppressed groups allows for a broader understanding of social-political issues. Political efficacy is actually increased through different forms of socializations, which again, closes the gap even further. (Delli, Caprini, & Keeter, 1996) James David Barber concludes in his piece, that there is a much greater political knowledge amongst Americans who understand differences between what the “rules” are

(formally) and what the government does and does not adhere to for certain peoples. (Barber, 2001)

Another important factor to note as the analyses of political participation deepens is how political knowledge plays into civic knowledge, both formally and informally. Civic knowledge can be classified under formal political knowledge. Civic knowledge, while defined slightly differently by some authors, is widely defined as possessing an understanding of political positions, government systems, and political processes. (Galston, 2001) Civic knowledge increases our awareness of how public policies affect everyday life, which increases voter participation. (AKA voting, poll working, monitoring local and state elections, etc) Without civic knowledge it is much harder to incorporate new information into our “political character” as described by Galston. It is equally as important to note increased formal political knowledge leads to a less fearful voter, and one more open to certain political hotspots like immigration. The more a voter knows the less likely they are to be fearful of politicians, or the rather challenging world of politics. (Delli, Carpini & Keeter, 1996)

Political knowledge, while broad, has factors that can directly affect certain voting blocs. One of the most powerful predictors of political knowledge is individual political interest. (Jason Barabas & William Pollock, 2014) Individual political interest can be hard to measure in strict terms, but another equally powerful player in political knowledge is education. (Delli, Carpini & Keeter) Education, for the purpose of this piece, will be defined as: *The opportunity to engage in the transfer of specific information, often influencing socialization, and holding great influence over work and career goals.* This definition combines the definitions of educational socialization from Delli & Carpini, and Jason Barabas. Education and political interest, whether direct or indirect are highly linked. (Delli & Carpini, 2014) Through several empirical studies it has been

shown that education does have the highest influence on political engagement over any other factors. (Martin Gilens, 2001) A limitation on the educational analysis is that education is not the same across all boards whether it be primary or secondary education. Education typically focuses on formal political knowledge and operations. (Bennet, 1993) (Jerhit, 2009) Educational opportunities are also a limitation in its studies, because while the effects are positively correlated with higher political knowledge, not every person has the same opportunity threshold to obtain higher level education. This does leave a question of just how much prior political interest can increase knowledge, even without a formal political education.

It can be said that although the effect of education has been studied and proven helpful, some questions have not been fully analyzed throughout political pieces. Education, while very important, does tend to steer towards formal political knowledge as recently stated, but does education increase understanding of social political issues? When collecting data on the effects of political education the type of question asked may create a brand new conclusion. Most tested hypotheses do look briefly into how the “knowledge gap” theory and educational improvement theory go hand in hand when analyzing race. I challenge the notion that formal political education must come before socialization politics. The types of questions asked when collecting data leans into more formal topics. (i.e..Senate terms, mayor elects, how voting runs, etc...)

(Barabas, 2014) When questions were slightly changed and focused more on issues that affect a certain demographic, the knowledge gap and higher educational attainment gap tends to close.

(Pollock,2014) Across race, college educated White voters tend to outperform their counterparts when asked about formal processes, but under performed Black voters when questioned about specifically “Black” voter topics such as racial injustice, police reform, and specific names of victims of police brutality. (Jodi & Inger Benenson, Who Participates, What do They say?)

Politics is an expansive topic, often hard to study unless broken down with a focus on one factor. Education, specifically higher education allows political scientists to see politics less as a one dimensional topic, and a more complex series of layers. Throughout several pieces looking specifically into the Black voting bloc, it is found that high education does increase voter knowledge and participation. Black voters are 2 times as likely to turnout to vote as non-formally educated Black voters. (Autumn, 2004) The increase in education oftentimes increases socio-economic status, which allows for two large increases in voter participation. (*A rise in socio-economic status is also related to increased political participation.*) (American Journal of Black Voters, 2004) The US Census Bureau shows that African-Americans without high school diploma register and turn out to vote in higher numbers than their white counterparts without a high school diploma, but as education rises, turn out to the polls does as well. White voters typically register in larger swaths after attaining a high school diploma. Black and white voters with Bachelor's degrees tend to register to vote in the same amount, but White, similarly educated voters, show up to the polls more than similarly educated Black voters.

There are challenges to the theory of higher education leading to higher voter turnout, because of observed patterns with the 2008 election. African-American voters without a secondary education turned out to the polls significantly more than their similarly educated White counterparts. However, Black voters with graduate degrees did not turn to the polls in higher numbers than their white cohort. (Autumn, 2004) 700,000 African American voters with a college degree or higher did not turn to the polls in 2008, with the first Black president on the ticket. (Autumn, 2004) This pattern challenged the notion that education can influence Black voter participation positively. 76.2% of registered, and degree seeking or holding Black voters did turn out in 2008, but at lower rates than the 79.1% of White voters. (Autumn, 2004)

Theoretical Argument

Throughout this piece, I expect to analyze whether or not a formal education could influence a person of already low political interest. The Black voter has often faced extreme bias, and disenfranchisement within the American voting systems which can lead to a less-than-enthusiastic portion of the voting base. Throughout this piece I hope to answer the question of whether or not prior political interest, and self-teachings could have a positive effect in the same way that a formal education would on the average Black voter. Education, although highly requested, may not be the most significant way to increase interest or knowledge of formal political patterns.

Throughout my piece I will be evaluating one hypothesis. I believe that if there is an increase in formal education, then there will be an increase in political knowledge and across the Black voting bloc.

Thesis Statement

The Black voting bloc has long been misrepresented throughout scholarly writings because of a lack of multi-dimensional review in what truly adversely affects the political interest or knowledge within Black voting communities. I will be comparing research conducted by multiple political science scholars to analyze how higher education in a formal setting increases, decreases, or has no effect on the Black voting bloc's political interest or knowledge overall. The Black voter has not been holistically analyzed, and I want to provide a start by reviewing an independent education variable to observe the final effects of participation.

1. THE RHETORIC

There are several common findings when studying and analyzing the African American voting demographic. Oftentimes scholars begin to analyze why African-American voters are less likely to turn out to vote without exploring each finding individually or applying much needed context throughout their research. The common findings include common solutions that may not be realistic or true for all of those in the African American community. Findings often suggest obtaining a higher education, an increase in personal salary, higher familial income, etc. Scholars will suggest these findings and state them to be true without also adding the context that several families may not have access to each of these solutions. Along with consistent solution errors the way in which African American people are studied has turned to a very monolithic point of view. Monolithic language is language that suggests that African American voters perform political behaviors in a uniform way. This includes voting or not voting, the political spectrum that is more heavily favored, and several other political activities. The theory that Black voters do not turn out to vote includes findings such as a lack of knowledge about politics and increasing impoverishment, along with lack of a secondary education. These findings increase the negative rhetoric surrounding the Black voting demographic, and allow for an increase the use of monolithic language from politicians. Studying the Black voting population as a monolith leaves an exorbitant amount of room for error within the findings and solutions. For example, Pat Buchanan, Georgia state representative, described Black voters as being trapped on a “democratic plantation.” (NYTimes, *How the Black Voter Became a Monolith* Theodore Johnson, 2020) While Political polling does show that Black voters tend to vote for the Democratic party with an overwhelming majority, generalizing an entire demographic without

the context behind each poll and statistic will continue to emphasize a regressive outlook on African American voters. (Joint Center for Political and Economic Study)

This overlook finds its way into many aspects of research when discussing Black voters. That same overlook has inspired this research thesis to look into one specific finding that is often used when speaking about African-American voters, education. The cross section between education and voters' turnout has been one of the longest, most extensive, and in - depth studies from "traditional" political scientists. (Donald Green, Yale University, *Studying the Effects of Education*) While education has been suggested and studied time, and time again, there has been little to no work specifically on how education can correlate with Black voting rates, and the reality of which ways education can be defined. When education is mentioned, the statistic that is brought up the most frequently is: some Black families have an overall lower rate of education from White families (which seems to be how authors connect the lower voter turnout.) With this common finding education has not been expanded on and researched in depth for Black families. Throughout this piece the theory of the education conclusion being a "catch all" will be challenged.

The starting questions include: Does education actually have a statistically significant effect on voter turnout for the African-American demographic? What is the true definition of "education?" Education has become so catch-all that it is often used as an escape from inherent racial systems that take a large effect on voting. While some research may not be all inclusive some contemporary political scientists have begun to include context throughout their writings. Academic and non-academic writings have begun to express background and delve slightly into the distinct and complex history of African American voters. One writing that will be heavily

referenced throughout this piece is a scholarly article by the name of “Reconceptualizing Political Knowledge. (Luttig and Cohen)

1.1 The Background

Political knowledge, in a traditional sense, often left out extremely important aspects of history and systemic racism that still take place today. A definition created by Delli, Carpini, and Keeter suggests political knowledge solely to be “*factual information about politics that is stored in long term memory.*” (Delli, Carpini, and Keeter, 1996) While this specific definition may be factually sound, it does not completely include in aspects of more social politics. The broad definition of formal political knowledge can only be applied as its own entity, but cannot act as a “catch-all.” This formal definition cannot truly embody findings or conclusions that come about when studying complex racial groupings or histories.

Another variable to be considered is the overall interest in politics as given by Black voters. This measure is essential to understanding the findings throughout this piece. While political interest is a self- reported variable that can be hard to measure, it plays an important role in analyzing how education may or not improve, decline, or nullify who stays interested. Other versions of knowledge traditionally fall into categories such as general knowledge and domain specific knowledge. (McGraw and Pinney, 1990). Several political theories will reach more towards domain-specific knowledge when discussing issues that affect under- represented demographics such as women or minorities. Domain specific knowledge covers socio-political aspects, while not properly covering formal political knowledge. While a domain-specific survey can be seen as more inclusive it begs the question of why formal knowledge and domain-specific knowledge are seen as mutually exclusive. With varying definitions by political theorists the way

to cover both formal and factual political awareness with socio-political awareness would be to cover both simultaneously when studying minority groups.

More contemporary political scientists have slowly begun to diversify their definitions, and combine the definitions of Delli, Carpini, and Keeter, and McGraw and Pinney. Theorists like Luttig and Cohen have set the pace for a more contemporary coverage of political behaviors broken down by race and cross sectioned with the history behind each racial group. Luttig and Cohen have re-defined political knowledge to encompass all knowledges and activities that coincide with politics and a theory included “carceral violence.” (Luttig, Cohen) Carceral violence can be best defined as the recognition and acknowledgment of past violent histories that have had adverse effects on minority voters. The inclusion of carceral violence represents a more inclusive look into how political knowledge is being defined. Carceral definitions aim to include three main goals: 1. One’s personal and collective interest. 2. The direct impact of information on one’s life. 3. The timing and availability of information throughout someone’s community. (Cohen and Luttig)

This increase in knowledge of carceral violence especially aids scholars in understanding the history behind Black voters. It has been found that Black Americans have a more increased understanding of carceral violence than any other minority demographic. With an emphasis on carceral violence there is a context provided in modern day political literature that may not have been highlighted in the past. As previously mentioned the works of this thesis is to provide context where it was not given previously and work to include more inclusive and diverse language when speaking about the Black voter. The relevance to this project lies within the broaden definition of education, political education, and the much needed context before discussing voters.

Throughout this piece the definition of education can be split between two main focuses.

1. Formal education. Formal education can be evaluated as a secondary education provided by an institution or University. The breakdown ranges from a 2-year education to a 4 year education finishing with a Bachelor's degree. The second concept of education can be noted as personal interest education. This will be defined as a self reported interest variable. Personal political interest includes those who maintain an interest in politics and political landscapes with or without the formal education variable. Having a distinction between formal and personal interest education will allow a broader scope as data is revealed throughout this work. When discussing politics there is a need for very specific distinctions that can still encapsulate the idea as a whole.

2. THE RESEARCH

2.1 The Method

I have collected data from the CCES better known as “The 2010-2014 CCES Panel Study” done by Brian and Stephen Schaffner of Harvard University. This codebook allowed me to collect most of my data included in the graphs above and below in Figure 2.1 and 2.2. The panel study allows for cross analysis of several differing topics while focusing the data to only analyze Black respondents. The information provided also increases the validity of my data taken because of the use of differing time frames. Researching mostly individual interest or knowledge patterns over time can be a very trying task, but the codebook allowed for code to be run to make each grouping easier and more efficient.

Some specific variables are self reported such as political interest and education. While survey groups from the panel study were allowed to self report the study also includes a change over time variable that was measured alongside education and political interest.

I have also collected statistical data from several pre-election questionnaires, US census results, and recorded observations from political scientists specifically in the race and politics field. Increasing the accuracy of this study was a very vital factor to ensure the soundness and validity of my writing while also accounting for what some assume to be bias since I do identify as a member of the African-American voting demographic.

Before beginning research the main hypotheses to be found is as stated: If formal education is increased, then formal political knowledge will increase as well. This hypothesis was expected due to the nature of politics being a somewhat tedious field to navigate. Before conducting in-depth research it was expected that an increase in formal education would live up

to the solution that it has become. This hypothesis was not all encapsulating to the results of this thesis, but did allow for extensive research to be taken to debunk or expand on the myth of education being a sole factor in increased political awareness.

To formally conduct research there was a cross sectional regression and panel regression run to estimate education's effect on personal interest and political knowledge between 2010 and 2012. The CCES Panel study allowed the change over time variable to provide a closer look and identify patterns. Before conducting formal and drafting codes research also took place through several political concepts involving the Black voter that were provided in the form of scholarly articles, books, and overall political works that heavily discuss the Black voter. Taking into account the theme of several pieces there was work to be done to flesh out the meaning behind differing variables such as the education variable (described above) but also what it meant to be politically active according to scholars in the field.

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> apsrtable(pol.interest.model.cs.withcontrols)
\begin{table}[!ht]
\caption{}
\label{}
\begin{tabular}{l D{.}{.}{2} }
\hline
& \multicolumn{1}{c}{ Model 1 } \\ \hline
% & Model 1 \\
(Intercept) & 2.21 ^* \\
& (0.19) \\
educ\_10.binary & 0.23 ^* \\
& (0.07) \\
age & 0.02 ^* \\
& (0.00) \\
income & 0.00 ^* \\
& (0.00) \\
I(region == "West")TRUE & 0.08 \\
& (0.11) \\
I(region == "Northeast")TRUE & 0.11 \\
& (0.13) \\
I(region == "South")TRUE & -0.04 \\
& (0.09) \\
$N$ & 547 \\
$R^2$ & 0.11 \\
adj. $R^2$ & 0.10 \\
Resid. sd & 0.80 \\ \hline
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{Standard errors in parentheses}} \\
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{$^*$ indicates significance at $p < 0.05$}} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

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A

```

> apsrtable(pol.interest.model.did)
\begin{table}[!ht]
\caption{}
\label{}
\begin{tabular}{l D{.}{.}{2} }
\hline
& \multicolumn{1}{c}{ Model 1 } \\ \hline
% & Model 1 \\
(Intercept) & 0.07 \\
& (0.15) \\
I(educ\_12.binary - educ\_10.binary) & -0.03 \\
& (0.11) \\
age & -0.00 \\
& (0.00) \\
income & 0.00 \\
& (0.00) \\
I(region == "West")TRUE & -0.05 \\
& (0.09) \\
I(region == "Northeast")TRUE & -0.11 \\
& (0.11) \\
I(region == "South")TRUE & 0.01 \\
& (0.08) \\
$N$ & 547 \\
$R^2$ & 0.01 \\
adj. $R^2$ & 0.00 \\
Resid. sd & 0.66 \\ \hline
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{Standard errors in parentheses}} \\
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{$^*$ indicates significance at $p < 0.05$}} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

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B

Figure 2.1 A-B: A) The 2010 Political Interest Binary Variable crossed with education, age, and region B) the 2012 Binary as compared to 2010.

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> apsrtable(gov.knowledge.model.cs.withcontrols)
\begin{table}[!ht]
\caption{}
\label{}
\begin{tabular}{l D{.}{.}{2} }
\hline
& \multicolumn{1}{c}{ Model 1 } \\ \hline
% & Model 1 \\
(Intercept) & 0.72 ** \\
& (0.05) \\
educ\_10.binary & 0.02 \\
& (0.02) \\
age & 0.00 ** \\
& (0.00) \\
income & 0.00 \\
& (0.00) \\
I(region == "West")TRUE & 0.01 \\
& (0.03) \\
I(region == "Northeast")TRUE & 0.07 \\
& (0.04) \\
I(region == "South")TRUE & 0.01 \\
& (0.03) \\
$N$ & 534 \\
$R^2$ & 0.05 \\
adj. $R^2$ & 0.04 \\
Resid. sd & 0.22 \\ \hline
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{Standard errors in parentheses}} \\
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$}} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

```

A

```

> apsrtable(gov.knowledge.model.did)
\begin{table}[!ht]
\caption{}
\label{}
\begin{tabular}{l D{.}{.}{2} }
\hline
& \multicolumn{1}{c}{ Model 1 } \\ \hline
% & Model 1 \\
(Intercept) & -0.02 \\
& (0.07) \\
I(educ\_12.binary - educ\_10.binary) & 0.03 \\
& (0.05) \\
age & -0.00 \\
& (0.00) \\
income & 0.00 \\
& (0.00) \\
I(region == "West")TRUE & -0.02 \\
& (0.04) \\
I(region == "Northeast")TRUE & -0.05 \\
& (0.05) \\
I(region == "South")TRUE & -0.01 \\
& (0.03) \\
$N$ & 533 \\
$R^2$ & 0.01 \\
adj. $R^2$ & -0.01 \\
Resid. sd & 0.28 \\ \hline
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{Standard errors in parentheses}} \\
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\footnotesize{* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$}} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

```

B

Figure 2.2 A-B: A) The 2012 Formal Political Knowledge in the form of governor approval B) the Variable difference between 2010 and 2012.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 The Data

In the beginning of the data analysis it was hypothesized that secondary education would have a significant impact on how Black voters were interested in politics. All regression data was run to highlight specifically Black respondents within the text. The regression shown in Figure 2.1 compares personal, self-reported, political interest in 2010 and 2012 alongside several control variables like age and region. The political interest variable can be understood on a four-point scale as presented by the codebooks. The higher values on the scale indicate a higher level of interest where 4 is the highest and 1 is the lowest. 4. "Most of the Time" 3. "Some of the time" 2. "Only now and again" 1. "Hardly at all" These four points allow the respondent to concisely answer the question of "Would you say you know what's going on in government and public affairs?" This interest variable is coded as "newsinterest" and is accessible for both the 2010 and 2012 surveys. Figure 2.2 compares knowledge some respondents have of a state governor. The analysis of governor knowledge includes the same control variables of: Age and Region. The education variable within the code book has been broken down into three main parts consisting of: A 2-year degree, 4-year degree, or Post-Graduate degree. For this study respondents with a 4-year degree or higher were recorded in the dataset. The governor knowledge variable has also been split into categories as follows: strongly approve, somewhat approve, strongly disapprove, somewhat disapprove, and don't know. Coding a governor knowledge variable analyzes how/if respondents can offer an opinion on their sitting governor. This knowledge variable is organized as a binary. 1 representing whether or not the respondent can offer an opinion of approval of their governor, and 0 representing a lack of personal

assessment of their state governor. This measure is vital in understanding respondent's awareness of their governor throughout each state.

Regions are broken down as classified by the United States Census. Each region has been described as follows. The South contains the states: Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. The West includes: California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Alaska. The Midwestern states include: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. Lastly, The Northeastern states include: Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

In Figure 2.1, the 2010 reporting of personal political interest does carry a statistically significant, positive effect on education for Black respondents. The data run demonstrates that as the education variable increases personal political interest by roughly 5% of the scale's width in 2010. While education can be found to have a positive effect on personal political interest, other variables such as region carried a positive correlation that was more significant than expected. The positive correlation between region and self-proclaimed political interest was very interesting. Specifically, the Northeastern region had a substantive positive correlation with political interest that could be delved into further. The first part of Figure 2.1 is consistent with the hypothesis that an increase in education has a positive correlation on personal interest in both 2010, however an interesting run of data concluded there to be a negative correlation between 2010 and 2012 in terms of respondents who gained a college education in between both surveys. This finding presented data that is not consistent with the overarching hypothesis. It was

hypothesized that both 2010 and 2012 would conclude positive correlations between education and political interest as one gained an education over time.

In Figure 2.2, the formal political knowledge variable, knowledge of state governor, was run against the same controls. Interestingly enough, education does not present a significant effect on whether a Black respondent approved of or knew of their governor. This result disproved my hypothesis that education would increase formal political knowledge amongst Black respondents. While the data run did present a positive correlation between education and formal political awareness, the results were not statistically significant on the scale given. This result presented a new outlook on how education may actually increase interest, but not increase formal knowledge among Black Americans. The control variable “region” presented a more statistically significant impact on Black respondents. Again, the Northeastern region presented a positive correlation higher than the education variable. While this result may not be comprehensively statistically significant it presents a very valuable outlook on how region may significantly affect Black voter’s political interest and formal political knowledge.

After the analyses run for both Figure 2.1 and 2.2 it can be concluded that education does not live up to its original reputation of being a necessary solution in political interest or formal political knowledge. Both conclusions went against a common hypotheses, and disproved a majority of the rhetoric surrounding education and its benefit to Black respondents. It is noteworthy that while education may not be substantial in the increase of voter knowledge and interest there is an inherent difference to be questioned or noted between voters who acquire a political interest or formal knowledge of politics and those who do not. Education may have been a traditional suggestion, but a more individualized outlook on the difference between informed

and interested individuals could be researched in-depth to provide a statistically significant and substantial answer of the cause behind an increase in interest and knowledge.

A real world solution to come alongside these findings may be to encourage the research behind what yields an interested and informed voter and what does not. A question left is: What are some factors that highly contribute to an interested Black political participant as well as a formally informed participant? As presented above in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 a formal education does not guarantee an increase in interest overtime, and also does not increase formal political approval. Rather than a sole drive for, or several conclusions of, an increase in education being the method behind the Black voter's interest and knowledge, a more holistic view on Black respondents can possibly lead to an increase in political participation. Emphasizing social political driving forces along with inherent differences that may lay between respondents who take a personal interest and gain a formal education and those who do not would better the approach on African-American respondents.

CONCLUSION

While gaining university knowledge was found to be beneficial in 2010, the increase in education was not found to be significant in 2012. This study coincides with the findings in this literature showing that a formal education may not always increase awareness and knowledge over time. The guarantees in votes, or the increases in votes are often seen when Black constituents feel as though a change is being made in the overall governmental system. (Pew Research, 2015) Formal teachings of politics to those who are not priorly interested may increase knowledge in political systems, but does not teach informal political systems. This again, adding a layer onto the thought that a formal higher education will be the way to increase the amount of Black constituents who decide to take an interest in politics.

In future studies of Black respondents a more holistic view can provide context to all data found, and conclusions drawn. The unfortunate reality of the United States political system as a whole shows that is significantly more likely that an African American voter, regardless of social status, socio economic class, or education will face voter discrimination in some way, shape or form. Whether that occur with the change of polling locations, extreme ID rules that maintain their legality under loose laws, or being locked outside of a polling place. (*Library of Congress, Voting Rights for African Americans*) These findings are not meant to discourage political activity, but to change the narrative that African-Americans simply do not take an interest or learn about politics in the way other racial groups may for simple reasoning. These conclusionary findings bring about context and a true answer to the factors that do or do not maintain negative effects on African-American voters. Within this conclusion I have come to

find that often suggested methods of increasing Black interest and knowledge may not always be something that has a large effect on Black populations, if any at all over time.

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